

# Sharpton trumpets presidential bid

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Comparing his situation to that of inmate-turned-president Nelson Mandela, the Rev. Al Sharpton said his current imprisonment has only galvanized his presidential plans.

A federal judge last Wednesday sentenced Sharpton to 90 days behind bars for trespassing on U.S. Navy property as part of a May 1 protest against bombing exercises on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. Of the 11 other activists who were arrested with Sharpton, nine were sentenced to 40 days behind bars.

"Nelson Mandela went from prison to president," Sharpton said, referring to the former South African president who spent 27 years in prison for his fight against apartheid. "I am determined more than ever to give serious consideration to running for president in 2004."

Sharpton made his comments in a statement circulated by his attorney, Sanford Rubenstein.

Sharpton was in a federal prison in the San Juan suburb of Guaynabo, but was transferred Friday to a facility in New York, according to a



REV. AL SHARPTON

U.S. Marshal who declined to give his name. Juan Donato, a local spokesman for the Marshals Service, declined to comment.

Sharpton was arrested May 1 and convicted of a misdemeanor. He was sentenced as a repeat offender because he had prior arrests for civil disobedience in New York.

Sharpton's lawyers plan to file an appeal with the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston, which has jurisdiction over Puerto Rico. The appeal will include a request to release him from prison pending the appeal, Rubenstein said.

Puerto Rico Gov. Sila Calderon, visiting New York on Thursday, said she was

"disappointed" with the sentences issued Wednesday. New York Gov. George Pataki, who appeared with Calderon in a joint news conference, agreed the sentences were "far more severe than necessary."

At least 15 members of Congress signed a letter sent Thursday to Attorney General John Ashcroft asking him to review the sentences, saying the protesters are being punished for their political views.

Other high-profile protesters arrested during the demonstrations included environmental lawyer Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Rep. Luis Guterrez, of Illinois, actor Edward James Olmos and New York labor leader Dennis Rivera. No court dates have been set for them.

The Navy has used its range on Vieques, home to 9,400 people, for six decades and says it is vital for national security. Critics say it poses a health threat, which the Navy denies.

Opposition to the exercises grew after a civilian guard was killed on the range in 1999 by two off-target bombs. The Navy has since stopped using live ammunition, and islanders will vote in November whether the Navy must leave in 2003 or can stay, resuming the use of live ammunition.

Sharpton has built a career out of speaking his mind. He served time in New York in 1993 as part of a 45-day sentence he was given for civil disobedience after being convicted of organizing an unruly 1987 demonstration to protest a white mob's slaying of a black man.

He has toned down in recent years, distancing himself from past controversies that also included falsely accusing a white state prosecutor of taking part in the alleged rape of a black girl. Sharpton was ordered to pay civil damages in the ensuing slander lawsuit, but he allowed the debt to go largely unpaid for years.

Although most of Sharpton's activism has revolved around local cases involving racial violence or police brutality, he has broadened his scope in recent months. He traveled to Florida for the presidential recount, to Cincinnati to protest a police shooting and to Sudan to investigate reports of slavery.

# Washington students get strip-searched

WASHINGTON (AP) - As many as nine middle school students were strip-searched at a city jail during a visit arranged by a teacher and a school aide as a warning to misbehaving children, school officials said.

The teacher, aide and three jail employees were placed on paid leave during investigations by the school district, city corrections officials and the FBI. None of the employees were identified.

The pupils were visiting the jail as part of an in-school suspension because of misconduct. A school official said it wasn't immediately clear if their behavior at the jail prompted teachers to request the search.

"There's nothing a child could do that could warrant that response - nothing," said Steven Seleznow, who is leading the investigation for the school district.

Joseph Bennett, 14, one of the boys from Evans who took the tour, said the students were taken to a processing area where guards told him and four others to go to another room and strip.

"The officers said, 'We're going to make you take your clothes off like real prisoners,'" Joseph, a seventh-grader, told The Washington Post.

He said he removed his two T-shirts, jeans and shoes in front of his schoolmates, at least three corrections officers and one of the teachers. He said an officer removed the rest of his clothes.

D.C. Superintendent Paul Vance said he was "horrified by the chain of events" surrounding the searches. "It nullifies, in effect, all of the great things I've been seeing in the school system over the past three years," he said.

Both Vance and Department of Corrections Director Odie Washington said they would support prosecution of the employees if investigations show they committed crimes.

The jail workers showed "extremely poor judgment, perhaps an abuse of their authority," in conducting the searches, he said.

It was unclear whether the students were touched by guards or were stripped naked, Washington said. While Seleznow said nine of the 12 students may have been strip-searched, Washington said a preliminary investigation at the jail showed that only three students were told to remove their street clothes and don standard-issue jail jumpsuits.

Washington said the students were not subjected to cavity searches, customary for prisoners being processed.

# SNWA landscape watering guide available

The new Landscape Watering Guide has just been released by the Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA).

To make it easier for Southern Nevadans to be "water smart," the new guide provides seasonal watering recommendations for both lawn and plants.

"The new SNWA Water-

ing Guide provides customers with an alternative to monthly clock changes based on their lawn and plants' seasonal watering needs," said Doug Bennett, SNWA conservation manager.

In addition, the guide requires adjusting irrigation clocks just four times per year.

Las Vegas Valley Water

District customers are currently receiving the guides with the water bills. Other SNWA member agency customers (Henderson, North Las Vegas, Big Bend Water District/Laughlin, and Boulder City) will receive the new guide in their bills over the

next two months.

Both seasonal and monthly guides are available in English and Spanish. Customers who want to save even more water can still receive monthly watering times by calling the Conservation Helpline at 258-SAVE.



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