

Does Hip-Hop Need Another Reverend

Written by Robert ID1156

Tuesday, 12 April 2005 01:55 -

Not having enough problems of his own, Saturday at the Manhattan Sheraton sharp words flew when the Rev. Al Sharpton called a "town hall meeting" to let the music biz, the radio biz and the community, discuss violence and hip hop.

"There was some heat," reported James Mtume of WRKS (98.7 FM). "But that was good. You need heat to generate solutions to do something, instead of just talking about it."

Sharpton said a critical goal of the session was to hear from regular folks who often feel the music industry pays little attention to their concerns.

Many of the several hundred in attendance said that's exactly how they feel, and demanded artists, radio and the industry clean up their acts.

The gathering also sparked a war of words on the radio yesterday morning between hip-hop radio rivals Hot 97 (WQHT 97.1 FM) and Power 105 (WWPR 105.1 FM).

Rev. Sharpton, a frequent guest on each station, invited both to this gathering: assistant program director E-Bro and afternoon host Angie Martinez from Hot 97 and morning host Star from Power 105.

Sharpton recently called for a 90-day radio and TV ban on artists who promote violence, and since Hot-97 has been the focus of recent discussion on that subject, because of the shooting and the incidents around rap artists 50 Cent and The Game; many at Hot 97 took Sharpton's comments as more aimed at them.

But it was E-Bro and Martinez who showed up Saturday, while Star did not.

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Star said on the air yesterday he was detained by police in Pennsylvania.

Morning host Miss Jones of Hot 97 suggested otherwise, though she didn't mention him by name. "Some people talk a lot, jump on the soap box, then don't show up," she said. "Scared."

Both Miss Jones and E-Bro also expressed annoyance with Sharpton.

"We've supported every cockamamie scheme of his over the years," she said on the air yesterday. "Now he's putting all this on Hot-97. It's not one station's fault for everything. We don't tell artists if they're going to [shoot someone], do it in front of Hot-97."

E-Bro called Saturday's meeting "a publicity stunt," though he added, "The Rev. Al is the Rev. Al."

E-Bro also noted Star's absence, not using his name, but saying, "He didn't show up because he didn't want to see me."

In Star's absence, Sharpton invited fellow morning show member "Crossover Negro Reese" Hopkins onto the panel.

Hopkins said yesterday that things got heated and noted that at one point Sharpton said he would escort people out if they felt it was necessary for their safety.

Hopkins praised Sharpton, however, for holding the meeting and said the audience "kept everyone focused."

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Star said he heard "someone from the sloppy station," an apparent reference to Martinez, "said she had no solution, she was just there to listen. If you got no solutions, why go? If you got no solution, you're part of the problem. Stay home."

Sharpton plans another town hall meeting in three weeks. ([Source](#))

And in related Rev. Sharpton news:

The FBI, as part of an ongoing criminal investigation into the Rev. Al Sharpton, secretly videotaped him pocketing campaign donations from two shady fund-raisers in a New York City hotel room and then asking for more, it was reported yesterday.

One of the donors was later recorded on a wiretap saying Sharpton may not have reported to the Federal Election Commission tens of thousands of dollars in campaign cash, as is required by the law, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The FBI launched the probe into Sharpton's fund-raising for his failed 2004 presidential run after his name surfaced on wiretaps in an unrelated Philadelphia City Hall corruption case, the Inquirer said.

The Post confirmed the FBI investigation of Sharpton. The two dubious donors whom Sharpton met with in the hotel on May 9, 2003 — Democratic fund-raisers La-Van Hawkins and the late Ronald White — suggested that nearly \$90,000 was missing from the official campaign report Sharpton filed with the FEC.

Hawkins is currently on trial in Philadelphia on corruption charges unrelated to the Sharpton case; White also was going to be indicted, but he died before charges could be brought.

An FBI wiretap picked up Hawkins telling White he believed they had raised more than \$140,000 for Sharpton in the previous quarter — but Hawkins fretted because Sharpton had

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reported only about \$50,000 on his federal election filing.

"He's a train wreck — a plane crash waiting to happen," Hawkins told White about Sharpton, according to the paper.

FEC records show Sharpton reported raising about \$54,000 during the period, the second quarter of 2003.

Sharpton has denied any wrongdoing.

In the hotel room, the FBI had videotape secretly rolling as White forked over a wad of campaign checks to Sharpton. Sharpton demanded \$25,000 more, and White promised he'd try to raise it.

Wiretaps show that White and Hawkins supported Sharpton because they believed the candidate could grease the skids in future business deals — primarily a \$40 million deal related to New York City's pension fund.

The feds learned Hawkins, a Detroit fast-food king, sought to create a fried-chicken empire financed with millions of dollars invested from the Big Apple pension fund.

White and Hawkins wooed Sharpton with the campaign checks to set up a meeting with Comptroller William Thompson, who controls the pension funds — though nothing ever came of it. Thompson is not accused of any wrongdoing.

Fearing that Sharpton and the donors were hatching a plan to defraud the pension fund, the FBI got clearance for the videotape from a judge.

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That angle proved to be unfounded — but the FBI surveillance uncovered the possible campaign fund-raising fraud. The precise focus of the FBI probe could not be learned.

Sharpton told the Philadelphia paper the allegations were a "politically motivated smokescreen" to hide the fact the Justice Department is out to get him.

Neither he nor his lawyer returned phone calls from The Post yesterday.

Sharpton told the paper that mistakes could have been made by his campaign, but said they were not deliberate.

"In any campaign, you have irregularities," he said. "I don't say that it's not possible there are people in my campaign who have done something."

Sharpton ripped the federal probe and the secret videotaping of the hotel meeting, saying, "Can you imagine what would happen if it was a white presidential candidate?"

With the help of White and Hawkins, Sharpton collected enough money across the country to qualify for federal campaign matching funds in 2003.

But because Sharpton pumped more than \$50,000 of his own money into the campaign — disqualifying him from getting the taxpayer-backed funding — the FEC said he must give back \$100,000. Sharpton is appealing the FEC decision.

[Source](#)