

Under fire, Sharpton delays ads

By Hazel Trice Edney
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WASHINGTON — In the face of mounting criticism over a plan to do television commercials for a car title company that charges interest rates of 300 percent, Al Sharpton says he has now placed his plans on hold until he can obtain more financial data from the firm.

"We're putting everything on hold in terms of this national tour and advertising

and marketing. We put it off until he gets me this data," Sharpton says in an interview, referring to an agreement he has been doing for LoanMax. "Out of respect to him, I'm giving him time to show me. But, if he doesn't have it, then I'm definitely going to tell the world that he had time and he didn't come through with nothing. ... If he's got the facts, then I will make the suspension permanent."

Keith Corbett, senior vice president of the Durham, N.C.-based Center for Responsible Lending, a nonprofit think tank, told Sharpton in a letter that his

commercial airing during prime-time morning news shows in the Washington, D.C., Virginia and Maryland areas were deeply disappointing.

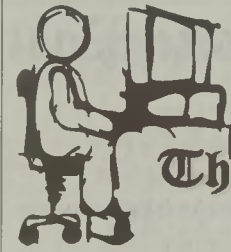
"Over the last few years you have been instrumental in the fight to end predatory lending. Specifically, you lent your voice to stopping predatory lending in North Carolina by urging our Black Caucus leaders to work to put an end to these abusive practices within our state," Corbett writes. "Therefore, I was surprised to hear that you are a spokesperson for car title loans... Car title loans are just as abusive as

payday loans in that they charge triple digit interest rates and trap them in a cycle of debt. Moreover, title lenders structure their loans to evade state usury or small loan rate caps, and they are over-secured."

Corbett continues, "Today we have access to credit, but the 'terms' are abusive and discriminatory. Like we rallied with Rosa Parks, all Black people need to come together to end these practices."

In the commercial, Sharpton stands on a stage by a podium and a United States flag as if he's still running for president.

"Finally, there's someone in Virginia who will loan money to people the big guys won't loan to!" he declares boisterously as if doing a campaign See SHARPTON/8A



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Debate over Tookie continues

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51, was killed by lethal injection at 12:35 a.m., Pacific time. A crowd estimated at 1,000 to 2,500 stood vigil outside of the prison as Williams made the short walk from a nearby holding cell for a somber, highly-publicized event that took 36 minutes and 15 seconds.

According to news accounts, there was a 12-minute delay because the execution team had difficulty finding a vein in Williams' left arm. At one point, Williams winced, lifted his head from the gurney and appeared to say, "Still can't find it?" witnesses said. There were 39 witnesses, including victims' relatives, Williams' lawyers and supporters and journalists.

Lora Owens, the stepmother of one of the murdered victims, Albert Owens, appeared shaken by the execution and at one point was comforted by another woman, witnesses said. Before leaving for San Quentin to witness the execution, she told CNN: "I'm just glad that we're almost to the end of this. I'm glad that finally Albert is going to have the justice he deserves."

Williams' supporters blew kisses at him and said "I love you" as Williams faced his impending death. Prison officials said Williams spent his last day reading mail from around the world and watching TV. He rejected the tradition last meal before his execution. Williams died still denying that he had murdered four people.

He was convicted of killing Albert L. Owens, 26, a clerk at a 7-Eleven store on Feb. 28, 1979. He was convicted of killing Yen-I Yang, 76; his wife, Tsai-Shai Yang, 63, and their daughter, Yee-Chen Lin, 43, during a motel robbery in south Los Angeles on March 11, 1979. A total of \$220 was taken in both robberies.

A jury in Torrance, Calif. convicted Williams of murder in 1981, leading to his capital punishment sentence. By 1992, Williams said he had changed and regretted his gangster past. He issued an open apology for his actions on April 13, 1997, a copy of which appears on his Web site, www.tookie.com.

"Twenty-five years ago when I created the Crips youth gang with Raymond Lee Washington in South Central Los Angeles, I never imagined Crips membership would one day spread throughout California, would spread to much of the rest of the nation and to cities in South Africa, where Crips copycat gangs have formed. I also didn't expect the Crips end up ruining the lives of so many young people, especially young black men who have hurt other young black men. Raymond was murdered in 1979. But if he were here, I believe he would be as troubled as I am by the Crips legacy."

Williams continued, "So today I apologize to you all — the children of America and South Africa — who must cope every day with dangerous street gangs. I no longer participate in the so-called gangster lifestyle, and I deeply regret that I ever did."

The former gang leader wrote a series of children's books with Barbara Becnel, urging young people to stay away from drugs, and brokered gang truces in Los Angeles and New Jersey. Williams' life was the subject of a movie, "Redemption," starring Jamie Foxx.

On death row, Williams became a cause celebre, attracting supporters as diverse as South African Bishop Desmond Tutu and rapper Snoop Dogg as well as Jesse Jackson and NAACP President Bruce Gordon.

Earlier Monday, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger issued a strongly-worded 5-page statement rejecting Williams' request for clemency.

"During the early morning hours of February 28, 1979, Williams and three others went on a robbery spree," Schwarzenegger stated. "Around 4 a.m., they entered a 7-Eleven store where Albert Owens was working by himself. Here, Williams, armed with his pump-action shotgun, ordered Owens to a backroom and shot him twice in the back while he lay face down on the floor. Williams and his accomplices made off with about \$120 from the store's cash register. After leaving the 7-Eleven store, Williams told the others that he killed Albert

Owens because he did not want any witnesses. Later that morning, Williams recounted shooting Albert Owens, saying "You should have heard the way he sounded when I shot him." Williams then made a growling noise and laughed for five to six minutes.

The governor continued: "On March 11, 1979, less than two weeks later, Williams, again armed with his shotgun, robbed a family-operated motel and shot and killed three members of the family: (1) the father, Yen-I Yang, who was shot once in the torso and once in the arm while he was laying on a sofa; (2) the mother, Tsai-Shai Lin, who was shot once in the abdomen and once in the back; and (3) the daughter, Yee-Chen Lin, who was shot once in her face. For these murders, Williams made away with approximately \$100 in cash. Williams also told others about the details of these murders and referred to the victims as 'Buddha-heads.'"

Schwarzenegger noted that over the 24 years that Williams had been on death row, his claims about an unfair trial had been "thoroughly reviewed" by state and federal courts.

"Based on the cumulative weight of the evidence, there is no reason to second guess the jury's decision of guilt or raise significant doubts or serious reservations about Williams' convictions and death sentence," he wrote.

The governor questioned the effectiveness of Williams' anti-gang efforts.

"Williams has written books that instruct readers to avoid the gang lifestyle and to stay out of prison," he noted. "In 1996, a 'Tookie Speaks Out Against Gang Violence' children's book series was published. In 1998, 'Life in Prison' was published. In 2004, Williams published a memoir entitled 'Blue Rage, Black Redemption.' He also recently (since 1995) tried to preach a message of gang avoidance and peacemaking, including a protocol for street peace to be used by opposing gangs."

"It's hard to assess the effect of such efforts in concrete terms, but the continued pervasiveness of gang violence leads one to question the efficacy of Williams' message. Williams co-founded the Crips, a notorious gang that has contributed and continues to contribute to predatory and exploitative violence."

Finally, Schwarzenegger turned to the issue of redemption.

"Is Williams' redemption complete and sincere, or is it just a hollow promise?" Schwarzenegger asked. "Stanley Williams insists he is innocent, and that he will not and should not apologize or otherwise atone for the murders of the four victims in this case. Without an apology, atonement for these senseless and brutal killings there can be no redemption. In this case, the one thing that would be the clearest indication of complete remorse and full redemption is the one thing Williams will not do."

When Williams' lawyers made a second appeal to the governor late Monday night, he also rejected that plea.

At a news conference Monday, Jonathan Harris, one of Williams' lawyers, said: "Our petition for clemency was based on Stanley Williams' personal redemption, his good works and positive impact that those works have had on thousands and thousands of kids across this country and on Williams' ability to continue to do those good works going forward."

He added, "I have spent many hours with Stanley Williams and I refuse to accept that Stanley Williams' redemption is not genuine."

Williams, among the 651 people on death row, became the 12th person executed since California reinstated the death penalty in 1978. Authorities said one of his sons, Stanley Williams Jr., who is serving a 16-year murder sentence in High Desert State Prison in California, was notified of his father's death.

Fred Jackson, who works with Internet Project for Street Peace, Williams' gang intervention project, said Williams spoke with an Oakland support group Sunday. According to Jackson, "He said he doesn't fear death — he doesn't fear what he does not know."

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Food tops wish lists for the holidays

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turkeys that went to Second Harvest, Community Food Rescue and Loaves and Fishes.

Drives are being held across the Charlotte area, including Food Lion stores, where food boxes are available for \$4.99 donation to

Second Harvest and Lowes Foods at Concord Mills' Giving Tree through Jan. 2. The tree will be on display until then, when the 15,000 pounds of food used to create it will be donated. The Giving Tree program aims to collect 650,000 pounds of food for N.C. food banks and member agencies during the holidays.