

Sharpton challenges black homophobia

By James E. Watson
THE AMSTERDAM NEWS

NEW YORK — Alarmed by the staggering number of new cases of HIV/AIDS in the African-American community, Rev. Al Sharpton is launching a new initiative aimed at addressing the stigma in the African-American that has long surrounded the disease.

Sharpton is calling for black preachers to assist him in confronting the issue of homophobia among blacks, a topic long considered taboo, especially in the black religious community.

"There is latent homophobia in our community," said Sharpton, who announced the initiative recently at the home of Allen Roskoff, a gay rights activist.

Over the next year, the civil rights activist will conduct public forums at churches and schools aimed at educating the public about HIV/AIDS, while using his bully pulpit to caution against discriminating against gays and lesbians.

"I'm going to challenge the bias in our community," said Sharpton, who also plans to begin airing public service announcements on black radio stations that will train a spotlight on the epidemic, a

leading cause of death among African-Americans, especially in the South.

"This is a bold step for the Reverend to take," said Roskoff, who has known and worked with Sharpton for more than 20 years. "I think it's always an excellent time to move forward to fight bigotry and homophobia," said Roskoff. He said that Sharpton's decision to focus on this issue will help to generate national attention and could save lives in the long-term.

At the reception held at Roskoff's West Village apartment, Mayoral candidates C. Virginia Fields and City Council Speaker Gifford Miller were joined by other political leaders and city officials, including Thomas R. Frieden, who pointed out that the deadly disease is growing among African-Americans, particularly black women. They pledged to join with Sharpton to assist.

Sharpton's campaign comes at a time when a number of black preachers, including Rev. James A. Forbes, senior minister at Riverside Church in Harlem, have been trying to counter the anti-gay rhetoric resounding from black pulpits across America each week.

At one recent church service, Forbes told his congregation that discrimination against gays and lesbians has no place in society.

"Your job is to get up every day and be grateful to God for your DNA," he said. "It took an artist divine to make this design."

Still, Sharpton, Forbes and others are likely to face resistance from many who remain adamant that homosexuality is a sin.

But Phill Wilson, the executive director of the Los Angeles-based Black AIDS Institute, said that Sharpton, who remains extremely popular among African American preachers, could use his national prominence to help challenge a particular mind-set.

"He can serve to encourage his peers to speak out," said Wilson, adding that the issue has become a lightning rod in the black religious community. He laments that black preachers have not done enough to adequately address the issue.

"Historically, the church has been a sanctuary for black people," said Wilson. "Sadly, black churches have not stepped up to the plate on HIV/AIDS as they have historically stepped up to the plate on other issues."

The absence of a discussion about the disease, coupled with growing sentiments within the black community that homosexuality is wrong, has led black gays and lesbians to hide their sexual identity for fear of being rejected, Wilson said.



Sharpton

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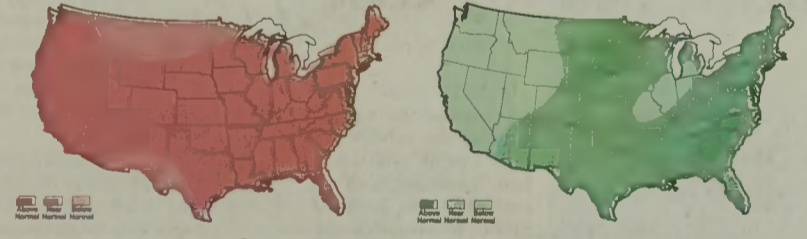


AccuWeather.com 7-DAY FORECAST FOR CHARLOTTE, NC

Thursday	Thu. night	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
A p.m. t-storm possible	Partly cloudy	Partly sunny and hot	A p.m. t-storm possible	A thunderstorm possible	A p.m. t-storm possible	Cloudy with rain possible	Mainly cloudy and humid
92°	72°	94° 70°	94° 70°	92° 70°	89° 70°	87° 69°	87° 67°
RealFeel® 110°	RealFeel® 76°	RealFeel® 99° 74°	RealFeel® 98° 72°	RealFeel® 95° 73°	RealFeel® 96° 72°	RealFeel® 90° 71°	RealFeel® 91° 65°

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WEATHER TRENDS THIS WEEK



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IN THE SKY

Sun	RISE		SET		Moon	RISE		SET		Moon Phases			
	THUR	FRI	THUR	FRI		THUR	FRI	THUR	FRI	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
Thursday	6:40 a.m.	8:17 p.m.	Thursday	12:40 p.m.	11:33 p.m.	First	Full	Last	New	8/12	8/19	8/26	9/3
Friday	6:41 a.m.	8:16 p.m.	Friday	1:44 p.m.	none								
Saturday	6:42 a.m.	8:15 p.m.	Saturday	2:51 p.m.	12:05 a.m.								
Sunday	6:43 a.m.	8:14 p.m.	Sunday	4:01 p.m.	12:44 a.m.								
Monday	6:43 a.m.	8:13 p.m.	Monday	5:08 p.m.	1:33 a.m.								
Tuesday	6:44 a.m.	8:11 p.m.	Tuesday	6:12 p.m.	2:33 a.m.								
Wednesday	6:45 a.m.	8:10 p.m.	Wednesday	7:07 p.m.	3:43 a.m.								

REGIONAL CITIES

City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday			City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W		HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W
Aiken, SC	90	72	t	93	72	t	92	71	t	91	72	t	Memphis, TN	95	77	pc	96	76	t	93	75	pc	92	76	t
Augusta, GA	92	72	t	94	72	t	94	72	t	92	72	t	Myrtle Beach, SC	90	76	t	90	75	t	87	76	t	87	75	t
Charleston, SC	92	77	t	94	76	t	91	75	t	91	76	t	Norfolk, VA	91	75	t	89	74	pc	91	75	pc	90	76	t
Columbia, SC	93	75	t	96	75	t	96	75	t	94	74	t	Raleigh, NC	92	72	t	92	72	t	94	72	pc	94	70	t
Durham, NC	92	72	t	91	71	t	92	72	pc	92	71	t	Richmond, VA	92	70	t	91	69	t	91	71	pc	92	72	t
Greensboro, NC	90	71	t	88	71	pc	88	70	t	90	70	t	Roanoke, VA	91	70	t	88	69	t	88	70	t	88	68	t
Greenville, SC	90	72	t	91	71	pc	91	72	t	91	71	t	Savannah, GA	92	75	t	94	76	t	93	75	t	92	74	t
Knoxville, TN	90	70	pc	93	71	pc	92	70	t	91	70	t	Wilmington, NC	90	75	t	92	76	t	89	75	t	91	75	t
Lynchburg, VA	90	66	t	85	65	t	88	67	t	89	67	t	Winston-Salem, NC	90	72	t	90	72	pc	90	70	t	90	70	t

U.S. CITIES

City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday			City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W		HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W
Atlanta	91	75	t	93	73	t	91	73	t	90	72	t	Miami	90	79	sh	91	79	sh	90	81	sh	91	80	sh
Boston	84	66	t	82	64	pc	89	68	t	85	67	t	Minneapolis	84	66	t	82	63	t	80	60	t	77	59	c
Chicago	86	66	pc	88	68	t	86	68	t	82	66	sh	New Orleans	92	78	t	94	78	t	92	78	t	92	77	t
Cleveland	84	68	t	86	70	t	86	68	t	85	68	t	New York City	92	74	t	90	70	t	90	72	pc	90	74	pc
Dallas	98	76	s	98	77	s	98	76	s	95	77	s	Orlando	92	76	t	92	76	t	92	76	t	92	76	t
Denver	86	60	t	86	58	t	86	58	pc	84	58	t	Pittsburgh	88	66	t	86	66	t	88	68	t	84	66	t
Detroit	86	66	pc	86	68	t	86	68	t	84	64	t	Phoenix	100	80	t	100	80	t	100	82	t	101	84	pc
Houston	96	75	pc	96	75	pc	94	75	t	94	75	t	San Francisco	70	56	pc	72	56	pc	71	55	pc	71	57	pc
Kansas City	92	74	t	93	73	t	92	70	t	89	70	c	Seattle	76	56	pc	76	56	pc	80	56	s	85	58	s
Los Angeles	82	64	pc	82	64	pc	80	64	pc	82	64	pc	Washington, DC	94	73	t	94	73	t	92	73	pc	93	74	t

WORLD CITIES

City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday			City	Thursday			Friday			Saturday			Sunday		
	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W		HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W	HI	LO	W
Amsterdam	67	59	sh	69	58	sh	70	61	sh	68	55	t	Paris	77	62	pc	76	61	pc	79	60	pc	78	55	pc
Berlin	66	51	sh	67	49	sh	66	56	sh	69	51	c	Rio de Janeiro	70	62	sh	72	65	pc	74	65	pc	78	67	pc
Buenos Aires	58	55	s	62	55	s	65	58	pc	60	48	pc	Rome	82	72	pc	83	64	r	85	63	pc	86	65	s
Caro	97	77	s	99	77	s	101	75	s	102	77	s	San Juan	90	78	t	88	78	sh	90	78	t	88	78	s
Jerusalem	65	63	s	66	64	s	65	65	s	65	65	s	Seoul	85	76	t	86	77	sh	88	73	pc	89	75	t
Johannesburg	63	45	pc	68	47	pc	69	49	pc	68	41	c	Sydney	54	41	s	59	42	s	59	46	s	61	46	s
London	75	61	sh	72	63	sh	72	62	sh	70	53	pc	Tokyo	83	73	r	80	76	t	83	77	t	87	79	t
Mexico City	73	54	pc	75	54	pc	75	52	sh	77	54	sh	Toronto	85	66	pc	85	68	t	88	70	t	86	65	t
Moscow	73	54	pc	78	58	pc	69	57	t	74	56	pc	Zurich	74	54	pc	72	55	sh	69	52	sh	72	56	pc

Weather (W) sh-sunny, p-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorm, r-rain, sh-snow flurries, sn-snow, h-ice

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