

Reverend Al Sharpton's Eulogy for George Floyd 6.4.2020

<p style="text-align: center;">Transcription (with some minor cuts)</p> <p><u>Instructions:</u> Read through Reverend Sharpton's eulogy and annotate it for its use of rhetorical patterns. Mark the patterns on the left, and in the right-hand column explain its effect on the listener. <i>What patterns emerge? Why do you think they are being used? How do they affect you?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rhetorical Annotation Guidelines:</p> <p><u>Repetition = underline</u> Omission = <i>circle</i> where the omitted thing <i>should be</i> [Addition] = [brackets] → Direction ← = arrows indicating direction of thought ~~~~~ Substitution = ~squiggles over/under the word/phrase~</p>
<p>I want us to not sit here and act like we had a funeral on the schedule. George Floyd should not be among the deceased. He did not die of common health conditions. He died of a common American criminal justice malfunction. He died because there has not been the corrective behavior that has taught this country that if you commit a crime, it does not matter whether you wear blue jeans or a blue uniform, you must pay for the crime you commit.</p> <p>So it is not a normal funeral. It is not a normal circumstance but it's too common and we need to deal with it. Let me ask those of you that in the traditions of eulogies need a scriptural reference, go to Ecclesiastes 3:1 says,</p> <p>"To everything there is a time and a purpose and season under the heavens."</p> <p>I'm going to leave it there. I saw somebody standing in front of a church the other day that had been boarded up as a result of violence. Held the Bible in his hand. I've been preaching since I was a little boy. I'd never seen anyone hold a Bible like that, but I'll leave that alone. But since he held the Bible, if he's watching us today, I would like him to open that Bible and I'd like him to read Ecclesiastes 3, "to every season there's a time and a purpose." I think that it is our job to let the world know when we see what is going on in the streets of this country and in Europe, around the world, that you need to know what time it is.</p> <p>First of all, we cannot use Bibles as a prop and for those that have agendas that are not about justice, this family will not let you use George as a prop. If you want to get your stuff off, don't use him. [...]</p>	

One of the things [...] that I've always had to deal with is critics would say, "all Al Sharpton wants is publicity." Well, that's exactly what I want because nobody calls me to keep a secret. People call me to blow up issues that nobody else would deal with. I'm the blow up man and I don't apologize for that because you get away with too much hiding things. Funny. It's talked about, y'all putting clothes in the oven to have your clothes dried. Well, I didn't grow in the third world, but I grew up in third ward. I grew up in Brownsville and we had roaches.

Now I know Kevin Hart and some of the rich Hollywood folk here don't know where the roaches are but we had roaches, ludicrous and one thing I found out about roaches is that if you keep the light off, if you're in the dark, a roach will pull up to your dinner table and have a five course meal. So I learned that one of the ways to deal with roaches is if you cut the light on, I could run them roaches and track them down and I've spent all my life chasing roaches all over this country. [...]

George Floyd's story has been the story of black folks because ever since 401 years ago, the reason we could never be who we wanted and dreamed of being is you kept your knee on our neck. We were smarter than the underfunded schools you put us in, but you had your knee on our neck. We could run corporations and not hustle in the street, but you had your knee on our neck. We had creative skills, we could do whatever anybody else could do, but we couldn't get your knee off our neck. What happened to Floyd happens every day in this country, in education, in health services, and in every area of American life, it's time for us to stand up in George's name and say get your knee off our necks. That's the problem no matter who you are. We thought maybe we had a complex, maybe it was just us, but even blacks that broke through, you kept your knee on that neck. Michael Jordan won all of these championships, and you kept digging for mess because you got to put a knee on our neck. White housewives would run home to see a black woman on TV named Oprah Winfrey and you messed with her because you just can't take your knee off our neck. A man comes out of a single parent home, educates himself and rises up and becomes the President of the United States and you ask him for his birth certificate because you can't take your knee off our neck. The reason why we are marching all over the world is we

were like George, we couldn't breathe, not because there was something wrong with our lungs, but that you wouldn't take your knee off our neck. We don't want no favors, just get up off of us and we can be and do whatever we can be. There have been protests all over the world. Some have looted and done other things and none of us in this family condones looting or violence. But the thing I want us to be real cognizant of is there's a difference between those calling for peace and those calling for quiet. Some of y'all don't want peace, you just want quiet. You just want us to shut up and suffer in silence. The overwhelming majority of the people marching wasn't breaking windows, they were trying to break barriers. They weren't trying to steal nothing, they were trying to get back the justice you stole from us. Those that broke the law should pay for whatever law they broke, but so should the four policemen that caused this funeral today. We don't have a problem denouncing violence, Mr. Governor, we don't have a problem, Mr. Mayor, denouncing looting, but it seems like some in the criminal justice system have a problem looking at a tape and knowing there's probable cause and it takes a long time for you to go and do what you see that you need to do.

As Ben Crump said, they would not have been involved in a lot of these fights we started around criminal justice. I did speeches and eulogies at most of the funerals that we've had in this space in the last couple of decades and led the marches and did what we had to do. I look at Martin III, we went to jail together fighting these fights, like his daddy went to jail before. But I'm more hopeful today than ever. Why? Well, let me go back. Reverend Jackson always taught me, stay on your text, go back to my text, Ecclesiastes. There is a time and a season, and when I looked this time, and saw marches where in some cases young whites outnumbered the blacks marching, I know that it's a different time and a different season. When I look and saw people in Germany marching for George Floyd, it's a different time and a different season. When they went in front of the Parliament in London, England and said it's a different time and a different season, I come to tell you America, this is the time of building with accountability in the criminal justice system.

Years ago, I went to march. Now I remember a young white lady looked me right in the face and said, "N--, go

home.” But when I was here last Thursday and Ms. Carr and I was headed back to the airport I stopped near the police station, and as I was talking to a reporter, a young white girl, she didn’t look no older than 11 years old. She tagged my suit jacket and I looked around and I braced myself, and she looked at me and said, “No justice, no peace.” It’s a different time. It’s a different season, and if my Bible carrying guy in front of that boarded up church, if I got him to open up the Bible, I want you to remember something. You know I was late last October to an appointment because the time changed [...] My watch was on the wrong time. Once a year time goes forward and if you don’t [...] move your watch, you going to find yourself a hour late. Not because your watch was wrong, but you had your watch on the wrong time. Well, I come to tell you that they’re sitting in Washington talking about militarizing the country, thinking that you can sell Wolf tickets to people. Who’s had enough of abuse. I’ve come to tell you, you can get on the TV, but you on the wrong time, time is out for not holding you accountable. Time is out for you making excuses. Time is out for you trying to stall. Time is out for empty words and empty promises. Time is out for you filibustering and trying to stall the arm of justice. This is the time we won’t stop. We going to keep going until we change the whole system of justice.

[...]

We are going to change the time. [...] We need to break down because you all don’t know what time it is. You all are operating like it’s yesterday. And the reason you’re late catching up to what these protests means is because you didn’t turn your clock forward, talking about make America great. Great for who and great when? We going to make America great for everybody for the first time.

Never was great for blacks. Never was great for Latinos. Wasn’t never great for others. Wasn’t great for women. Young women had to march to get the right to vote. But lastly is the religious side. I was reading and kept thinking about how I was a little embarrassed because when I heard that George, at this point of suffering, this brutal attack, called for his mama. [...] And I thought about it because I was raised by a single mother. And sometimes the only thing between us and our conditions was our mothers. Sometime the only thing that we had that would take danger away was our mothers.

The only ones that would make sure the food was on the table was our mother. I know why George was calling for mama. But then as I had got that all placed in my mind and I realized why I was always calling and my mother died eight years ago, but I still try to talk to her. Sometimes just dial her cell phone to hear the voicemail on her phone that I never cut off. I still want to reach out to mama, but talking to Quincy last night, one of his five children, Quincy said, "I was thinking maybe he was calling his mother. Because at the point that he was dying, his mother was stretching her hands out saying, 'Come on, George, I'll welcome you where the wicked will cease from troubling. Where the weary will be at rest. There's a place where police don't put knees on you George. There's a place that prosecutors don't drag their feet.' Maybe mama said, 'Come on, George.-"

[...]

So as we leave here today, I say to this family, I know that years ago we told them, Reverend Jackson told us, "Keep hope alive." Then I know that President Obama wrote a book about hope. But I want you to know in my life there's times that I lost hope. Things can happen like this that will dash your hope, but there is something that is sister to hope called faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. Faith is when you got a pile of bills and no money, but you say he will provide all of my needs. Faith is when you got no medicine in the cabinet and you're sick in your body, but you say he's a doctor that never lost a patient. And he'll dry tears from my eyes. Faith is when your friends walk out, when your loved ones turn their back. But you say, "I don't believe he brought me this far to leave me now."

We didn't come this far by luck. We didn't come this far by some fate. We come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord, trusting in his Holy word. He never, he never, he never failed me yet. From the outhouse to the White House, we come a long way. God will. God shall. God will. God always has. He'll make a way for his children. Go on home, George. Get your rest, George. You changed the world, George. We going to keep marching, George. We going to keep fighting, George. We done turned the clock, George. We going forward, George. Time out, time out, time out.

