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Sharpton Calls Green's Tactics 'Bigoted'

By Curtis L. Taylor
STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Al Sharpton and prominent local elected officials yesterday demanded a public apology from Democratic mayoral nominee Mark Green for "bigoted campaign tactics" — and threatened to boycott the November general election.

Sharpton — joined at his Harlem headquarters by Bronx Democratic Party Chairman Roberto Ramirez, Rep. Jose Serrano (D-Bronx) and Assemb. Roger Green (D-Brooklyn), among others — said it may not be possible for Green to heal the wounds inflicted by 11th-hour campaign tactics used to help Green inch out Fernando Ferrer in Thursday's Democratic runoff for mayor.


The Rev. Al Sharpton

"We are not going to be the backboard for nobody's shot," said Sharpton, who stopped short of blaming Green for a late campaign push that Ferrer backers said was coded with messages to elicit a white backlash. "We are going to score together or we are going to sit it out."

Sharpton said the tone changed after Ferrer won the Democratic primary and became the frontrunner.

"When Ferrer came in first, hysteria happened," Sharpton said. "Then people who had been posing as liberals took off all of their pretense and ran a campaign in this town that reminded us not of New York 2001 but of Mississippi '71." He was referring to the efforts to register disenfranchised black voters in the South and to increase the participation of blacks in the Democratic party.

The Ferrer backers specifically pointed to a last-minute televised campaign ad for Green that they said attacked Ferrer and was divisive.

Sharpton said it would be hard to unite behind the party and Green "when you [Green] could have squelched some of this polarization" last week.

"I want to know if anybody in the Green campaign that participated or condoned what happened is going to be fired and pay a price for what was done to insult us," said Sharpton, who has not yet spoken with Green.

But Joe DePlasco, Green's spokesman said: "What am I supposed to apologize for? We didn't run a negative campaign. We ran an aggressive campaign that reached out to every community . . . and focused on the issues."

DePlasco said Green is reaching out "to all of the people who supported Fernando Ferrer" because "we all have the same values as Democrats. Our campaign against [GOP candidate] Michael Bloomberg will benefit, as the city, from their [Ferrer backers'] ideas."

Sharpton and Ramirez also denounced the state Democratic party leadership for being "missing in action."

A defiant Ramirez said that "everything was not OK" and he was willing to "play out of the box" and walk away.

"We brought into this city a new political force, Latinos," Ramirez said.

Serrano said Bloomberg had already placed phone calls to Ferrer supporters seeking their endorsement.

"Right now I can't think of anything Bloomberg has said and done to insult my community," Serrano said. "I want to hear something from Mark Green to get excited about."

Green would be considered the odds-on favorite to defeat Bloomberg in a city that votes 5-to-1 Democratic.

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