

Barron blasts Sharpton

By HERB BOYD

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Ever since a chilly December in 1987 when the Rev. Al Sharpton and City Councilman Charles Barron were arrested and did jail time during the Day of Outrage, the two activists have been closely linked together.

But the bond they forged during the trial of the young white men charged in the death of Michael Griffith is beginning to unravel. The first signs of rupture occurred Sunday when Barron was a call-in guest to Imhotep Gary Byrd's show on WBLS.

Barron was furious, telling the listening audience that he totally disagreed with Sharpton's decision to back Fernando Ferrer in the Democratic mayoral primary. At a press conference on the steps of City Hall Monday afternoon, Barron, surrounded by a coterie of supporters with C. Virginia Fields placards, was even more vocal in his denunciation of Sharpton and his "antics" and "drama games."

"We want to send a strong message to the Rev. Al Sharpton that we resent your denigration of the only Black



Councilman Charles Barron is surrounded by a number of supporters for C. Virginia Fields in front of City Hall Monday afternoon.
(Herb Boyd photo)

woman in this race just so you can support Freddy Ferrer," Barron began. "You can go on and support Freddy all you want, but we will not accept the disrespect of a Black woman who did nothing but respect our outrage and our movement."

On his radio show "Sharptalk" on Sunday on WLIB, Sharpton cited a number of instances in which C. Virginia Fields was less than committed during the marches and rallies following the death of

Amadou Diallo. After noting that Ferrer had gone to jail with him Sharpton said that Fields didn't participate in the demonstrations at One Police Plaza and did not march across the Brooklyn Bridge with protesters voicing their outrage against the police.

"C. Virginia Fields did march across the Brooklyn Bridge," Barron blasted. "She was there. You need to check your records, Al," said Barron, who chastised

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the 50-year-old civil rights leader. "Check your records. She wrote a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno asking for a federal indictment in the case. She also visited the site [of Amadou's murder] four days later with attorney Johnnie Cochran. Just because Freddy flip-flopped, don't get mad at Virginia."

Barron said that Fields has not wavered in her condemnation of the police in the murder of Amadou Diallo in 1999 in the Bronx. Ferrer said earlier this year that the murder of Diallo did not constitute a crime. Those comments earned him the wrath of the African-American community. Later, he said that his comments were "careless," though he refused to apologize.

"C. Virginia Fields said it was a crime then and it is a crime now," Barron observed. "During the debates she never mentioned Diallo," Barron continued. "She could have but out of respect for unity she never mentioned it."

Fields was careful to distance herself from Barron's comments, saying that the councilman was "speaking for himself." She did however say that Sharpton's characterization of her lack of involvement in the Diallo case was "misleading."

In the radio studio, after his pro-

gram on Sunday, Sharpton was told of Barron's comments. "What you have to understand is that when Charles pulled out of the race for mayor and embraced C. Virginia Fields, he did this without contacting me," Sharpton explained. "He did this without consulting me, and I was largely responsible for his running in the first place."

"Al is a liar," Barron said when told of Sharpton's assertion, adding that he called Sharpton on his cell phone while Sharpton was in D.C. trying to help elect Marjorie Fields-Harris, the executive director of his National Action Network, to the Democratic National Committee. "He said he supported me on the move and would get back to me when he returned. Well, he never did."

Sharpton, appearing on NY1 Monday evening, was read a portion of Barron's speech from the press conference by Dominic Carter, who then sought his response, particularly to the suggestion that Sharpton was trying to "play kingmaker" by endorsing Ferrer at such a late date in the campaign.

"If I was trying to be a kingmaker I would have made him the mayor," Sharpton replied, adding that he initially endorsed Barron for mayor before the Brooklyn councilman dropped out of the race due to lack of the funds. "But he left the race. This is about fighting for

the people of the city. ... Just because I disagree with Ms. Fields, doesn't mean I don't respect her."

Joining Barron at the press conference were Viola Plummer, Nellie Bailey and Mary France Daniels, all of whom claimed that C. Virginia Fields was being ignored by many of the Black male politicians because she is a woman.

"It's a clear case of sexism and the inability of these Black men to accept the leadership of a Black woman," charged Plummer.

One thing that hasn't been broadly reported is that Sharpton's endorsement of Ferrer was not his decision alone, but the result of a collective of community activists and leaders, including State Senator David Paterson and Congressman Jose Serrano, who voted 29-1 to support Ferrer, with one abstention.

But that knowledge has meant very little to Barron, who blames Sharpton for failing to support a Black candidate.

"If he had gotten on board earlier and supported C. Virginia Fields when she was running second to Ferrer there would be no need for him to justify his endorsement now because of [Anthony] Weiner's rise in the polls," said Barron. "All of this is Sharpton's drama game of waiting to the last minute to endorse somebody. It is not serious politics, and it has got to stop."