

# Sammy 'Explains' Nixon Hug

By Dorothy Gilliam  
Washington Post Service

## Washington

It was last August when Sammy Davis hugged Richard Nixon. He'd been performing at a rock concert in Miami's Memorial Stadium when the President, beaming from his renomination at the Republican National Convention, appeared.

"Sweat was pouring off me, I was so excited," Davis later recalled. Richard Nixon said the American Dream depended on every American having "a chance to see it come true in their own lives," as, he said, he and Davis had done.

This week, nine months after the squeeze that was felt around the world, Davis, attacked and maligned for his support of the President, sat down for an exclusive interview.

"It hurts," he said of the reaction to his Nixon endorsement. "This thing's left a scar on me that I will wear to my grave.

"They say I'm a white folks' nigger. Nobody has got Sammy Davis. But I'd like to know where all these mothers were when, say, after John Carlos gave the black power symbol at the Olympics, I went on the air and gave the sign for peace, love and togetherness, and then did this"—he thrust his arm upward and the hand briefly contracts into a fist.

### ENIGMA

Davis has emerged as a political enigma. Shortly after coming out for President Nixon, he endorsed Black Panther leader Bobby Seale in his race for Mayor of Oakland and then performed at a benefit for black militant Angela Davis.

Reasons advanced by others for his support of the president range from his needing a favorable tax advantage to a secret ambition to receive a United Nations appointment. He denies them all.

"Listen, publicly, I'll never say why," he said, later hinting that if events (presumably Watergate) take a certain turn he might feel free to talk.

### PROMISES

In earlier published statements, Davis said the president made him some specific promises of ways he would help black Americans in return for his endorsement.



SAMMY DAVIS JR. AND THE PRESIDENT  
All about the American Dream

"Don't ask me what promises," he was quoted as saying last fall, "promises can change."

"Things are easing up now. It was worse right afterward," he said calmly.

### STATUS

Then he recalled criticism that he was abusing his celebrity status and he could barely control his temper.

"That's awfully funny that suddenly I'm symbolic and I'm a leader. Don't tell me that. I was no leader. I never wanted to be a leader." Martin (Luther King Jr.)

A few people defended his right as an individual and a human being to do as he pleased. Several members of the Congressional black caucus refused to condemn him. Julian Bond called him a great entertainer but politically naive.

Davis went to Vietnam, after the Nixon endorsement. "Some of the brothers had decided if I came on 'wrong,' they were going to walk out . . . well . . . they didn't . . ."

As for entertaining the POWs on May 24 at the White House, he did it "more for the men's families than for the administration or the President. I didn't want an all-white evening."

But the President then made a big show of hugging Davis back.

The President had asked him to sit in his box at the Republican national convention—and he drew hearty applause when he entered.

Twelve years before, he had been booed at the Democratic national convention in Los Angeles by a group of southerners, and he was so hurt, he wept.