



BY
T. J. EDWARDS

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?

... MICHAEL AVENATTI?

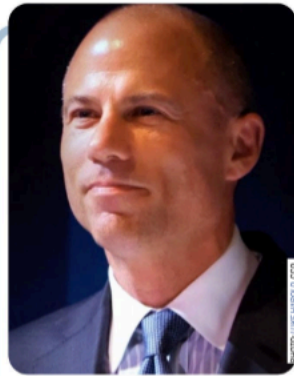


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RISE TO PROMINENCE

DONALD TRUMP'S PRESIDENCY (2017-2021) introduced the world to various fascinating characters and plot lines. One of the most colorful and infamous characters during this time was former attorney Michael Avenatti. In 2018, Michael Avenatti represented adult film actress Stormy Daniels in her legal battle against then President Donald Trump. Stormy Daniels' case received widespread attention due to its implications regarding campaign finance laws and allegations of hush money payments. According to reporter Kate Briquet at the Daily Beast, Michael Avenatti appeared on cable news more than 150 times in 2018. Avenatti's anti-Donald Trump rhetoric made him an extremely popular political counterweight for the left, compared to right-leaning media celebrities like "My Pillow" CEO Mike Lindell and New York City attorney Rudy Giuliani.



PHOTO: MICHAEL O'NEILL / GETTY IMAGES
↑ Stormy Daniels and Michael Avenatti in 2018.

THE STORMY DANIELS CASE: SPOTLIGHT ON MICHAEL AVENATTI

Michael Avenatti's involvement in the Stormy Daniels legal case highlighted his reputation as a lawyer who represents high-profile clients. He had a talent for navigating complex legal matters while handling intense media scrutiny. As details of this legal battle unfolded, media outlets closely followed

the case and provided updates on court proceedings and developments. Almost overnight, Michael Avenatti became an in-demand TV commentator. He was popular on the more left-of-center friendly cable sites including CNN, MSNBC, The View on ABC, and several late-night news and entertainment shows.

While representing Stormy Daniels in her lawsuit against former President Donald Trump, Avenatti began to express personal aspirations for a political career. In 2018, he even traveled to Iowa to explore running for president in the 2020 election. He actively positioned himself as a vocal critic of the Trump administration. He became a polarizing figure within the Democratic party, with many urging him to run for president in 2020 (although you might be hard pressed to find those supporters today; especially since he is now a convicted felon serving jail time in a federal prison).

Do you remember the popular television series, "Better Call Saul" from 2015-2022? Michael Avenatti is regularly compared to this show's main character, Saul Goodman. If you haven't watched the show, Saul is a shady lawyer and con man. Like Saul, Avenatti's political aspirations eventually caught up and collided with his own controversy and legal troubles. In 2019, he was convicted in California of fraud, embezzlement, tax evasion, and stealing \$300,000 thousand from his former client, Stormy Daniels. On February 14, 2020, he was convicted of attempting to extort athletic company Nike, and on July 8, 2021, he was sentenced to 30 months in prison. These



legal battles each significantly damaged Avenatti's reputation and credibility. As a result, his once-promising political and legal career came to an abrupt halt.

CONCLUSION: A CAUTIONARY TALE

Michael Avenatti's legal troubles had far-reaching consequences, both personally and professionally. He is in federal prison today. The lawsuits filed against him highlight the importance of ethical conduct within the legal profession. His story serves as a cautionary tale for those who may be tempted to engage in fraudulent activities or extortion tactics.

Michael Avenatti was sentenced to 14 years in prison for stealing millions of dollars from his clients – and for obstructing the IRS's efforts to collect more than \$3 million in payroll taxes. United States District Judge James V. Selna ordered him to pay \$10,810,709 million in restitution to four clients, and to the

IRS. As a convicted felon, Avenatti can no longer practice law and he is ineligible to run for president of the United States.

Finally, according to United States Attorney Martin Estrada, Michael Avenatti "...stole millions of dollars from his clients – all to finance his extravagant lifestyle that included a private jet and race cars. As a result of his illegal acts, he has lost his right to practice law in California, and now he will serve a richly deserved prison sentence." So, what happened to Michael Avenatti? He is incarcerated at the Federal Correctional Institution, Terminal Island, in San Pedro, California, with his parole eligibility date being in 2026. Instead of putting the former president behind bars as he originally promised, perhaps tonight Michael Avenatti is keeping a light on and blanket ready in a prison cell in preparation for former President Trump's eventual arrival. Time will tell. ■

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