



**TENANTS
TOGETHER**

California's
Statewide Organization
for Renters' Rights

'NBA, Show You Care' Factsheet

Introduction

On November 2, 2009 Donald Sterling, owner of the Los Angeles Clippers and LA-area mega landlord, agreed to pay the Department of Justice \$2.725 million to settle a housing discrimination lawsuit. This payout adds yet another sordid chapter to Sterling's checkered past. Despite its concerted effort to build a positive public image through its NBA Cares Program, the National Basketball Association ("NBA") has refused to comment or investigate the matter.

Sterling, one of Los Angeles County's biggest landlords, owns and manages about 119 apartment buildings with some 5,000 units through his Beverly Hills Properties.ⁱ

Department of Justice v. Donald Sterling: Largest Monetary Payment Ever

The Department of Justice announced on November 3, 2009, "Donald T. Sterling has agreed to pay \$2.725 million to settle allegations that he discriminated against African-Americans, Hispanics and families with children", representing "the largest monetary payment ever obtained by the department in the settlement of a case alleging housing discrimination in the rental of apartments."ⁱⁱ

Sterling's Shameful Track Record

Sterling has been repeatedly taken to court for race-based discrimination:

- In 2003, the Housing Rights Center in Los Angeles sued Sterling for a pattern of housing discrimination. The case settled for an undisclosed amount that included over \$5 million in legal fees.
- In 2006, the Department of Justice sued Sterling for engaging "in a pattern or practice of discrimination on the basis of race, national orientation, and family status"ⁱⁱⁱ including "refusing to rent to African Americans."^{iv}
- In February 2009, NBA legend and former Clippers General Manager Elgin Baylor sued Sterling for harassment and employment discrimination based on race- the case is pending.

Sterling's former property supervisor, Summer Davenport has stated under oath that Sterling told her he "wanted tenants to fit his image" and that his African American tenants "smell, they're not clean" and his Mexican American tenants "just sit around and smoke and drink all day."^v According to Elgin Baylor, Sterling prevented him from negotiating a fair salary for the team's All-Star, Danny Manning, complaining that he was "offering a lot of money for a poor black kid."^{vi}



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NBA's Response: 'Disappointing Silence'

According to the 'NBA Cares' mission statement, "the NBA is dedicated to demonstrating leadership in social responsibility."^{vii} However, when sportswriters reacted to the Department of Justice's announcement by asking the NBA what it plans to do in response, the NBA said it had no plans to comment or investigate Sterling. As noted by Jemele Hill of ESPN, "The Commissioner has offered only disappointing silence."^{viii} Dan Wetzel of Yahoo Sports asks, "Where is the outrage?"^{ix}

The NBA's inaction contrasts with how the National Football League and Major League Baseball have handled allegations of racism by team owners. In 1996, MLB suspended Marge Schott, owner and general manager of the Cincinnati Reds, for over a year for racially insensitive remarks. More recently, the NFL excluded talk show host Rush Limbaugh from becoming a team owner after a firestorm of controversy over past racist remarks. Clippers' owner Sterling was accused not only of making racist remarks like Schott and Limbaugh, but also of engaging in a pattern of illegal, racist housing discrimination against minority tenants, yet the NBA has no plans to discipline Sterling.

'NBA Show You Care' Campaign Launched

Tenants Together, California's only statewide organization for renters' rights, has launched a campaign to pressure the NBA to condemn racist housing discrimination and discipline Sterling. Referencing the NBA's own 'NBA Cares' slogan, campaign organizers are demanding, 'NBA: Show You Care.' The campaign has set up the www.NBAshowyoucare.org website where an informational video can be viewed and an online petition can be signed.

ⁱ Department of Justice

ⁱⁱ Department of Justice Press Release, *Justice Department Obtains \$2.725 Million Settlement of Housing Discrimination*

ⁱⁱⁱ Department of Justice Press Release, *Justice Department Obtains \$2.725 Million Settlement of Housing Discrimination*

^{iv} Department of Justice, *United States of American v. Donald Sterling*, 2006

^v Keating, Peter. ESPN.com *Uncontested: the Life of Donald Sterling*. May 20, 2009.

^{vi} Keating, Peter. ESPN.com *Uncontested: the Life of Donald Sterling*. May 20, 2009.

^{vii} http://www.nba.com/nba_cares/keyissues.html

^{viii} Hill, Jemele. ESPN.com. *Stern's Silence on Sterling Says a Lot*. November 5, 2009.

^{ix} Wetzel, Dan. Yahoo! Sports *Sterling Suit Seems to Fit NBA Just Fine*. November 5, 2009.