



**National
Urban League**

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Don't Mess with Magic: A Man Too Busy to Hate

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"My whole life is dedicated to urban America." NBA Hall of Famer Earvin "Magic" Johnson

Every time ostracized Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling opens his mouth, he reveals how deeply out of touch and stuck in the past he is when it comes to the issue of race. He also appears to have especially mean-spirited and distorted views about a man who has been both a champion in the NBA and a champion for urban America – Magic Johnson.

Last week, in an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper, Sterling said that Johnson, who was diagnosed with HIV in 1991, was not a good role model for kids, "should be ashamed of himself" and "should go into the background." Ignoring the extraordinary contributions Johnson has made to HIV/AIDS awareness and education and urban economic development, Sterling went on to say, "What does he do for the Black people? He doesn't do anything." These comments could not be more wrong. Johnson himself could only respond by saying "I'm going to pray for this ... man" and that Sterling was "living in the stone ages." Magic Johnson needs no defense. His extraordinary record of giving back to the Black community is well known to almost everyone, including Donald Sterling – even if he cannot bring himself to recognize it. But, lest Sterling's words have cast any doubt, we want to take this opportunity to set the record straight.

Since 1991, Magic Johnson has become one of the most successful business leaders and most generous philanthropists in America. For the past 23 years, the Magic Johnson Foundation has worked to develop programs and support community-based organizations that address the educational, health and social needs of ethnically diverse, urban communities. Through the Foundation, Johnson has provided HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, and treatment opportunities to countless numbers of people. The Foundation's Taylor Michaels Scholarship program has awarded millions of dollars to help deserving minority students go to college, and Johnson's network of Community Empowerment Centers is helping to close the digital divide in urban communities through the innovative use of technology.

Johnson has also inarguably become one of the most powerful African American businessmen in the country. In the 1990s, after being repeatedly turned down for bank loans, he believed in the promise of urban America so much that he put up his own money to bring businesses where few others wanted to invest. He started Magic Johnson Enterprises, which has become a billion dollar empire largely devoted to “fostering community/economic empowerment by making available high-quality entertainment, products and services that answer the demands of ethnically diverse urban communities.” His investments have included AMC movie theaters, Starbucks franchises, restaurants, fitness centers, sports teams (Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Dodgers) and the Aspire cable TV network -- all of which are bringing jobs and services to urban communities long underserved by major corporations.

Magic Johnson has also been a great friend to the Urban League movement. He has supported our annual Equal Opportunity Awards Dinner and has served as national spokesperson for “Know Your Money,” the National Urban League’s highly acclaimed curriculum-based financial literacy program targeted to African American communities. We also awarded him with our Legends Award during our 2010 Centennial celebration in recognition of his accomplishments in urban communities across the nation. In 2012, the Urban League of Greater Atlanta also honored him as the “Business Champion of the Year.” Like Atlanta, which has been called “the city too busy to hate,” Magic Johnson, one of the foremost business and charitable leaders in urban America, is clearly a man too busy to hate.

Donald Sterling should follow his lead.

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