

Why Donald Sterling's Racism Was So Historic for Black America

By now, everyone knows the story of Los Angeles Clippers' owner Donald Sterling's banishment from the National Basketball Association for his racist comments captured on audio tape last month. What Sterling said was totally stupid and insulting. Period! I don't think there is any disagreement from anyone on that issue.

In the past, I have been very critical of professional athletes for their unwillingness to take a public stand on any controversial issues. You can argue whether the NBA players were aggressive enough in their protests, but at least they did protest. The Sterling issue was so bizarre that even Michael Jordan publicly denounced him. You're talking about miracles!

For a generation of athletes who have no idea what real sacrifice is all about, they made me proud. Yes, they know about sacrifice relative to playing their sport (playing through pain and injury), but they have yet to show a willingness to give up their sport, even temporarily, to take a principled stand on anything—until now.

When I think of professional athletes taking a principled stand in sports, I think of people such as Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, Curt Flood or Spencer Haywood.

So to find out that these NBA players told the commissioner of the NBA in no uncertain terms that they were prepared not to play in their upcoming playoff games if Sterling was not permanently banned from the game and barred from ongoing ownership of the Clippers—this, indeed, was a historic moment

for today's athlete.

This Sterling situation was about racism, bigotry and hate—no question about it. Relative to the black community, there is an issue being overlooked: an alarming rise in the number of people and organizations who have contracted laryngitis when it comes to issues of racism, bigotry and fairness involving the black community. But like fools, many in the black community take up the cause of every other group as their own and then get absolutely no reciprocity when blacks are treated unfairly.

The Human Rights Campaign is supposed to be the homosexual version of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—standing up for the equal and fair treatment of those who are homosexual. The National Council of La Raza is supposed to be the Hispanic version of the NAACP—fighting for the equal and fair treatment of Latinos. The National Organization of Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist activists in the U.S. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is an organization of 2.1 million members united by the belief in the dignity and worth of workers and the services they provide and dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families and creating a more just and humane society.

I went to each of these groups' websites, and none had issued one statement regarding the Sterling issue since it first broke. Not one word; not one sentence. Yet liberal black groups such as the NAACP lose their minds when someone says something considered insulting to homosexuals, against amnesty for illegals, something deemed misogynistic toward women, or in opposition to increasing the minimum wage.

In fact, many of these blacks spend more time supporting amnesty for illegals than they do issues devastating the black community, like double-digit unemployment. Black women constantly take on the battle for affirmative action for white

women, who are the biggest beneficiary of the program. Many of the workers at sports stadiums are black and also members of SEIU.

All these groups claim to stand for fairness and equality for all, but somehow they never seem to be able to verbalize any support when the black community is treated unfairly.

What Sterling said was an affront to all Americans, not just blacks. If these groups hold themselves out to be the moral beacon of America, how then can they selectively show moral outrage when bigotry and racism rears its ugly head?

This type of behavior from other groups toward blacks has been a consistent occurrence, and the main reason is weak leadership within the black community.

These groups all know that these media-appointed black leaders will carry their water for them and will never ask or demand anything in return. These groups, with their words, claim to be in solidarity with the black community, but with their actions, they show that they have little regard for the black community. The only difference between them and Donald Sterling is that Sterling at least was man enough to say how he felt.

Raynard Jackson *is president & CEO of Raynard Jackson & Associates, LLC., a Washington, public relations/government affairs firm. He can be reached through his website, . You can also follow him on Twitter at @raynard1223.*