



# RESPONSES TO BIAS: DONALD STERLING OF THE L.A. CLIPPERS

Donald Sterling is the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, a National Basketball Association (N.B.A.) team in Los Angeles, California. Recently, TMZ Sports obtained an audio recording of Sterling’s comments (viewed as racist) about black people that were made during an argument with a woman named V. Stiviano. There has been a great deal of response and reaction about these comments from fans, players and other people connected to the NBA and the news media, including ADL’s press release, [Racist Remarks Made by L.A. Clippers Owner “Reprehensible”](#). On April 29, the N.B.A. made an official announcement and the details are included below in [Responses to Donald Sterling’s Comments](#).

In this lesson, students will have an opportunity to learn more about Donald Sterling’s statements, discuss what they would do in certain stakeholder roles and explore the different responses so far.

See additional ADL resources on [Anti-Bias Education](#).

**Grade Level:** grades 6–12

**Common Core Anchor Standards:** Reading, Speaking and Listening

## Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn more about the controversial comments N.B.A. owner Donald Sterling’s made about black people.
- Students will consider what they would do, taking on the perspective of different stakeholders.
- Students will explore how other people and organizations responded and actions they took or proposed to take.

## Material:

- “Clippers owner Donald Sterling allegedly tells girlfriend not to bring black people to games, disses Magic Johnson, report says” (*The Washington Post*, April 26, 2014, [www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/early-lead/wp/2014/04/26/clippers-owner-donald-sterling-tells-girlfriend-not-to-bring-black-people-to-games-disses-magic-johnson/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/early-lead/wp/2014/04/26/clippers-owner-donald-sterling-tells-girlfriend-not-to-bring-black-people-to-games-disses-magic-johnson/)), one copy for each student
- (Optional) *The Extended Donald Sterling Tape* audio at <http://deadspin.com/exclusive-the-extended-donald-sterling-tape-1568291249#> (2014, 15 min., Deadspin)
- (Optional) [Responses to Donald Sterling’s Comments](#) (one copy for each student)

**Vocabulary:**

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Glossary of Education Terms](#)" and [Definitions Related to Name-Calling, Bullying and Bias.](#))

- Discrimination
- Investigation
- Racist
- Stereotype
- Ignorance
- Offensive
- Segregation
- Stakeholder

**INFORMATION SHARING AND READING: WHAT DONALD STERLING SAID**

1. Ask students: *Has anyone heard about the comments made recently by Donald Sterling, owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, about black people?*
2. Provide students with the following information:

Donald Sterling is the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, a National Basketball Association (N.B.A.) team in Los Angeles, California. Recently, TMZ Sports obtained an audio recording of Sterling's comments about black people that were made during an argument with a woman named V. Stiviano. Ms. Stiviano had posted photos on Instagram posing with African Americans, including NBA former player Earvin "Magic" Johnson. Sterling was reportedly recorded making statements to her including, "It bothers me a lot that you want to promo... broadcast that you're associating with black people. Do you have to?" and in reference to social media posts, he added, "you don't have to have yourself with, walking with black people."
3. Explain that the Los Angeles Clippers are in the middle of the championship playoffs right now so they are still playing.
4. Have students read the article "[Clippers owner Donald Sterling allegedly tells girlfriend not to bring black people to games, disses Magic Johnson, report says](#)" for background information. Discuss the article by asking the following questions:
  - What happened?
  - What did Donald Sterling say to V. Stiviano?
  - What was the reaction of players and others to Sterling's comments?

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**NOTE:** If you want to play the audio recording for your students, preview [The Extended Donald Sterling Tape](#) in advance as it contains strong and potentially upsetting language.

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**SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?**

1. Divide students into five small groups. Each group of students will discuss their opinions about what actions should be taken from the perspective of a different stakeholder. The different stakeholders are listed below.
  - Group 1: Los Angeles Clippers' Players
  - Group 2: Basketball Fans
  - Group 3: Other N.B.A. Team Owners
  - Group 4: Other N.B.A. Players
  - Group 5: N.B.A.

2. Have students discuss who their stakeholders are and respond to the questions below from their point of view:
  - From your stakeholder's perspective, what happened and how do you feel?
  - Do you believe there should be consequences for Donald Sterling? If so, what should the consequences be?
  - What message do you want to convey?
  - What action(s) would you take in response?
3. Have each group present their discussion and responses to the questions to the class.

### OTHER RESPONSES TO DONALD STERLING'S COMMENTS

1. After the Donald Sterling's audio comments were released to the public, many different people and groups weighed in with their opinion about the statements and what they think should happen. Read aloud the statements in the [Responses to Donald Sterling's Comments](#) handout or distribute the handout to students and have them read it aloud.
2. Engage students in a class discussion by asking the following questions:
  - How do you feel about the different statements or actions made in response to Donald Sterling's comments?
  - What statements or actions most resonated with you?
  - Do you think any of the actions or statements will have an impact? Why or why not?

### CLOSING

Have students each state one action they think should be taken in reaction to Donald Sterling's comments.

### ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [NBA players protest racist talk attributed to L.A. Clippers owner Donald Sterling](#) (CNN, April 28, 2014)
- [NAACP will not present award to Donald Sterling amid controversy](#) (*USA Today*, April 27, 2014)
- [Clippers Owner Donald Sterling in Firestorm over Alleged Racist Remarks](#) (*Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 2014)
- [Donald Sterling's Willing Enablers](#) (*The Nation*, April 27, 2014)
- [Amid Uproar, Clippers Silently Display Solidarity](#) (*The New York Times*, April 27, 2014)
- [The NBA's Ownership Society](#) (*Slate*, April 28, 2014)
- [Clippers Owner Donald Sterling Banned for Life from NBA](#) (*The Washington Post*, April 29, 2014)

# COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## RESPONSES TO DONALD STERLING'S COMMENTS

**National Basketball Association (NBA):** On April 29, N.B.A. Commissioner Adam Silver announced that the N.B.A. has banned Donald Sterling for life from the league and fined him \$2.5 million for his comments, which Silver said Sterling admitted were his. Silver also announced that he will urge the league's board of governors to force Sterling to sell the team.

*The views expressed by Mr. Sterling are deeply offensive and harmful. That they came from an N.B.A. owner only heightens the damage and my personal outrage. Sentiments of this kind are contrary to the principles of inclusion and respect that form the foundation of our diverse multi-cultural and multi-ethnic league.*

**Los Angeles Clippers Team:** Before their first-round playoff game on Sunday, the L.A. Clippers players ran out of the tunnel for Game 4 wearing their warm-ups. Then they huddled at center court and tossed their warm-ups to the ground, going through their pregame routine with their red Clippers' shirts inside out to hide the team's logo. Players also wore black wristbands or armbands. They all wore black socks with their normal jerseys. Clippers star guard Chris Paul could be heard shouting to teammates before they ran out: *It's just us, only us. We're all we got.*

**President Barack Obama:** President Obama was traveling in Malaysia and was asked about the incident at a press conference. His response:

*The owner is reported to have said some incredibly offensive racist statements that were published.... I don't think I have to interpret those statements for you; they kind of speak for themselves. When ignorant folks want to advertise their ignorance, you don't really have to do anything; you just let them talk.... We constantly have to be on guard on racial attitudes that divide us rather than embracing our diversity as a strength.*

*The United States continues to wrestle with a legacy of race and slavery and segregation that's still there—the vestiges of discrimination." We've made enormous strides, but you're going to continue to see this percolate up every so often. And I think that we just have to be clear and steady in denouncing it, teaching our children differently, but also remaining hopeful that part of why some statements like this stand out so much is because there ... has been this shift in how we view ourselves.*

**Earvin "Magic" Johnson,** retired N.B.A. player who played for the Los Angeles Lakers for 13 seasons:

*He shouldn't own a team any more. And he should stand up and say, 'I don't want to own a team anymore.*

**Michael Jordan,** retired N.B.A. player considered the "greatest basketball player of all time" and current owner of the N.B.A. Charlotte Bobcats:

*I look at this from two perspectives—as a current owner and a former player. As an owner, I'm obviously disgusted that a fellow team owner could hold such sickening and offensive views. I'm confident that Adam Silver will make a full investigation and take appropriate action quickly. As a former player, I'm completely outraged. There is no room in the NBA—or anywhere else—for the kind of racism and hatred that Mr. Sterling allegedly expressed.... In a league where the majority of players are African-American, we cannot and must not tolerate discrimination at any level.*