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'NBA Show You Care' Campaign Demands League Condemn Racist Housing Discrimination and Discipline Team Owner

A new online petition and video released today urges the National Basketball Association (NBA) to discipline Los Angeles Clippers' owner Donald Sterling. The campaign, launched by Tenants Together, a statewide coalition of tenants in California, follows the announcement last week by the U.S. Department of Justice of the largest settlement ever obtained in a rental housing discrimination case.

Referencing the NBA's own "NBA Cares" slogan, campaign organizers are demanding, "NBA: Show you care" and have launched the website www.NBAshowyoucare.org. The website includes a short video and a petition to NBA Commissioner David Stern.

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), Sterling "Engaged in a pattern or practice of discriminating on the basis of race, national Origin, and family status." The DOJ stated that Sterling "refused to rent to African Americans" and that his conduct was willful.

This is not the first time that Sterling has paid out millions to make housing discrimination claims go away. In 2006, the Housing Rights Center in Los Angeles sued Sterling for discrimination, a case that Sterling settled for an undisclosed amount that included over \$5 million in fees. Sterling has also been sued for harassment and employment discrimination based on race by NBA legend and former Clippers General Manager Elgin Baylor, a case that is pending.

According to the "NBA Cares" mission statement, "the NBA is dedicated to demonstrating leadership in social responsibility." However, when sportswriters responded to the DOJ announcement by asking the NBA what it plans to do in response, the NBA has said it has no plans to comment or investigate Sterling. As noted by Jemele Hill of ESPN, "The Commissioner has offered only disappointing silence." Dan Wetzel of Yahoo Sports asks, "Where is the outrage?"

Tenants Together launched its online video and petition to put pressure on the NBA to discipline Sterling. "The DOJ busts this NBA team owner for denying housing to people based on the color of their skin, and the NBA has nothing to say?" commented Dean Preston, Executive Director of Tenants Together, California's statewide organization for renters' rights. "The NBA must take swift decisive action to condemn racist housing discrimination and discipline this team owner."

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 GM 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 Commissioner David Stern is about to see a storm like he has never seen before – sports fans, civil rights leaders, tenants, housing advocates, African Americans and thousands of others are going to make their voice heard," predicted campaign organizer Andy Blue. "We will not take NBA silence as an answer on something so important."

The video and petition, along with more information, is available at NBAshowyoucare.org.

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