

Among society, basketball and the National Basketball Association – NBA are among the most popular and most-watched sports in the United States. Nearly 26 million Americans play basketball, and an average of 1.6 million people in the United States watch the NBA according to Statista. Among youth to adults, basketball is shown to be one of the most racially diverse sports. However, the use of racial slurs and racism within basketball is more common than we think, highlighting this as a major issue.

Although some positive steps have been taken to address the issue, the NBA believes more needs to be done. Suspension, fines, and firings are all punishments used in the past for any racial slurs or acts directed at any one player, fan, or official. One recent example of this in the NBA came from former LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling. The former owner was banned from all NBA activities and fined \$2.5 million after he was recorded making racist comments in 2014. More recently, Phoenix Suns and Mercury owner Robert Sarver has been fined \$10 million and suspended for one year by the NBA for sexist and racist language. NBA commissioner Adam Silver believes that racism is still an issue and states, “Racism and racial injustice remain part of everyday life in America and cannot be ignored.”

African American basketball players, in particular, have spoken out about the racism they have faced throughout their careers in the NBA. Former NBA all-star Kareem Abdul Jabbar explains why some players are not the friendliest toward fans. “When you are playing in front of people who are calling you names that are just revolting and vile, and letting you know that they despise you, while you do understand how ignorant they are, that is a very dangerous setting that can get to a point where the situation is on the edge of violence,” Abdul-Jabbar said. Many NBA players not only

speak out on racism on the court but also on racism in America in general, especially following George Floyd's murder due to police brutality sparking a movement across the United States. Players such as Jaylen Brown, LeBron James, and Karl-Anthony Towns spoke about the issue and ensured their voices were heard loud and clear across America.

Asian-American basketball players also fall victim to many fans and players. Ex-NBA player Jeremy Lin, for example, spoke out on anti-Asian racism when being called "coronavirus" during a G-League game ESPN reports. Lin was well known for his run in the Knicks in 2012, being named "Linsanity" for his spectacular play. However, many fans were prejudiced and believed his skill level was not as high as other players and that his moment of glory was based on luck. Lin has repeatedly spoken out about the issue saying, "I just wanted to be recognized for being a great basketball player. I was so tired of, from literally age eight until Linsanity, it was always, 'Oh, he's a good basketball player, but he's Asian.'" Lin has also spoken about how other Asian Americans tired of being mocked, whether about physical appearances, such as their eyes or getting hurtful phrases yelled at them in general. Anti-Asian acts increased to around 11,400 cases in 2022, especially following the pandemic. "We are tired of Asian American kids growing up and being asked where they're really from, of having our eyes mocked, of being objectified as exotic or being told we're inherently unattractive," Lin says.

There have also been efforts in other sports, like hockey, to end racist and hateful behavior. NHL, the governing body for the sport in the United States, has composed efforts to fight behind against discrimination. They declared in delayed October that the

penalties for racial or sarcastic slurs by players would be met by harsher consequences, including a five-minute penalty, ejection from the game, and suspension from further participation – unless the issue is under review. Major sports leagues today continue to fight for racial equality, and the examples set by the NBA seem to be positively contagious. With millions of viewers tuning into these events, the message athletes exhibit on the media impacts many lives.