

Handout:

Timeline of the NBA Controversy

1. The Utah Jazz moved swiftly, investigating the incident. Based on video evidence and eyewitness testimony, the fan was found guilty of the accusations and was permanently banned from all future events at the Salt Lake City arena.
2. The following tweet went out to explain the ban:

x - Utah Jazz 
@Utahjazz 

Statement from the Utah Jazz:



Statement from the Utah Jazz
March 12, 2019

The Utah Jazz and Larry H. Miller Group announced today a permanent ban of the fan who engaged in the inappropriate interaction with the Oklahoma City Thunder's Russell Westbrook last night at Vivint Smart Home Arena. The ban is effective immediately and includes all arena events.

The organization conducted an investigation through video review and eyewitness accounts. The ban is based on excessive and derogatory verbal abuse directed at a player during the game that violated the NBA Code of Conduct.

The Utah Jazz will not tolerate fans who act inappropriately. There is no place in our game for personal attacks or disrespect.

"Everyone deserves the opportunity to enjoy and play the game in a safe, positive and inclusive environment," said Steve Starks, president of the Utah Jazz. "Offensive and abusive behavior does not reflect the values of the Miller family, our organization and the community. We all have a responsibility to respect the game of basketball and, more importantly, each other as human beings. This has always been a hallmark of our incredible fan base and should forever be our standard moving forward."

1:45 PM - 12 Mar 2019

4,864 Retweets 19,235 Likes 

 795  4.9K  19K

3. In a closed-door meeting with the president of the Jazz the next day, [Jazz players] ... shared stories of similar experiences they'd had — of feeling degraded in ways that went beyond acceptable heckling.... This wasn't the first time they'd taken part in conversations about race in their NBA careers, and it wasn't the first time they'd had to address the hateful actions of others."

4. Westbrook was fined \$25,000 for “directing profanity and threatening language to a fan,” which is in violation of National Basketball Association regulations.
5. The Utah team’s Black players immediately came to Westbrook’s defense, especially center Rudy Gobert, forward Thabo Sefolosha, and guard Donovan Mitchell. Mitchell stated, “As a Black man living in a community I love and playing on a team that gives me the opportunity to live out my dreams, this incident hits close to home. Racism and hate speech hurt us all, and this is not the first time something like this has happened in our arena.... Over the coming months I will work with the team, my teammates and the league to help make our arenas and our communities more inclusive and welcoming. That includes bans on hate speech and racism.”
6. “I stand 100% with Russell Westbrook on what happened in yesterday’s game,” [Utah Jazz player Thabo] Sefolosha wrote. “I love our fans but there are lines that cannot be crossed! Support and cheer for your team and enjoy the action but fans like Shane Keisel, who use that platform to share their hateful and racist views need to be held accountable.”
7. Former Knicks player Raymond Felton said: “It’s a touchy subject, man. I’m going to speak on this and I want everybody to hear it and to really tune into this and really understand. At the end of the day, we’re human beings and we have feelings. Just like [fans] got feelings, we have feelings, too. That was unnecessary what they said to Russ [Russell Westbrook], that’s not fair, that’s not right. And this ain’t the first game it’s happened It’s happened in pretty much every arena we go to. They’re always picking on Russ, and it’s just not right I’ve been around this guy ... since he’s been in the league, 10 years, I know him personally, he’s like a brother, and he’s not that type of guy. They’re trying to make him out to be this bad guy.”
8. Jazz president Steve Starks said in a statement: “Everyone deserves the opportunity to enjoy and play the game in a safe, positive and inclusive environment. Offensive and abusive behavior does not reflect the values of the Miller family, our organization and the community. We all have a responsibility to respect the game of basketball and, more importantly, each other as human beings.”
9. An email went out to the Jazz’s mailing list, in which behavior violating the NBA’s Code of Conduct was detailed: “We do not permit hate speech, racism, sexism or homophobia. We also do not allow disruptive behavior, including bullying, foul or abusive language, or obscene gestures. Violators may be subject to ejection and other penalties, including a lifetime ban.”
10. Jazz owner Gail Miller delivered a speech ahead of the game against the Minnesota Timberwolves (three days after the incident with Russell Westbrook and the white fan) in which she claimed that Salt Lake City is not a racist community. “We believe in treating people with courtesy and respect as human beings. From time to time, individual fans exhibit poor behavior and forget their manners. Some disrespect players on other teams. When that happens, I want to jump up and shout, ‘Stop!’ We have a code of conduct in this arena. It will be strictly enforced.”