



How black WNBA players became collateral damage

By By A.R. Shaw



(Black Press USA Newswire) - Caitlin Clark is more than a WNBA player; she has become a tool of weaponization against Black women. And now the federal government is involved.

Led by Texas Rep. August Pfluger, 11 Republican lawmakers signed a letter to WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert, threatening to have the Department of Justice investigate the league because fouls against Clark “may be racially motivated.”

“As Commissioner, you have an obligation to ensure that every player competes in a safe and professional environment, both on and off the court, free from violence, discrimination, or retaliation. If discrimination or retaliation is occurring and creating a hostile work environment, we support any appropriate investigation by the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. If true, such conduct could constitute violations of federal civil rights laws,” the letter stated. The letter creates a false narrative and is irresponsible and dangerous.

Stephanie Christmas, a former women’s basketball player at Georgia Southern University, has remained a WNBA fan since its inaugural season in 1997. Christmas has never seen politicians use their platforms to sway the league’s direction.

“If you want only one player to play the game, that’s not basketball anymore,” Christmas shared. “I don’t think that they should be putting any legislation in place. They are making it worse for the players and the WNBA game.”

The people who are using Clark as a tool couldn’t care less about what occurs in between the lines of a basketball court. Statistically, Clark is a decent shooter and above-average passer, but she lacks offensive efficiency and is a liability on defense. Her most staunch defenders are not basketball enthusiasts; instead, they view Clark as a symbol to further their hatred for Black women.

Every moment of discomfort Clark appears to face on the court becomes an opportunity for her supporters to unleash vile and racist language against the alleged perpetrator. If Clark is fouled hard, engages in trash talk with an opponent, or receives what she views as an unfair call by a referee, her defenders are incited to unleash their wrath.

During a tightly contested match between Clark’s Indiana Fever and Phoenix Mercury in June, the Mercury’s Alyssa Thomas and Clark were on the court battling for a loose ball. Thomas’ arm briefly pressed against Clark’s neck during the scramble, but no foul was called. Following the game, Thomas was issued a flagrant one and suspended for one game by WNBA officials. The play triggered Clark’s supporters, and they aimed racial slurs and death threats at Thomas. Thomas responded by calling out WNBA commissioner Engelbert for not protecting athletes in the league.

“We still have yet to hear anything from Cathy. It’s no surprise,” Thomas shared in a press conference after her suspension. “You can see what’s being said on social media. It’s unfortunate, but as usual, she remains silent. That’s unfortunate when our lives are being threatened.”

It was only after Thomas’ statement that Engelbert responded to the threats sparked by Clark’s supporters.

“The WNBA vehemently condemns any and all forms of hate,” Engelbert said in a statement. “The safety and well-being of everyone in our community is always the league’s top priority. We aware of Alyssa Thomas’ comments, and what she and her teammates have experienced is completely unacceptable and not representative of the WNBA community.”

Weeks later, Chelsea Gray of the Las Vegas Aces faced racial animus following a simple foul call that went against Clark. While driving to the basket, Gray was fouled on the arm by Clark, who collapsed to the ground and held her stomach as if she was in pain. Clark yelled at the referee, claiming

that Gray had hit her, but video replay proved that Gray never initiated contact with Clark.

But an otherwise normal basketball play led to Gray enduring racial slurs and harassment. Following the game, Gray reposted a screenshot on Instagram of a man using a racial slur against her, and she wrote, “People act like we make this s— up.”

The post went viral, and the man, who worked for Hilton Grand Vacations, was fired within days.

Gray responded to the ordeal in a press conference, revealing that she and other WNBA players have faced ongoing harassment.

“Enough is kind of enough,” Gray said. “These messages are not the first time. It’s not. There was other stuff, too. I just decided to share that one. This time I got fed up with it, and I just decided to share it. And maybe I don’t share the other ones, but I know people will think twice.”

Clark never asked to become a symbol for those who aim hatred at Black women, but is she doing enough to distance herself from the position?

She issued a statement after hearing of the harassment Thomas experienced. “The harassment, the hate. None of that is OK,” Clark said. “There should never be a question of character, as I’ve always stood up here and said that, and that’s truly what I believe; that’s how I was raised. So, none of that is okay, and I don’t want anyone to experience that.”

It’s similar to another statement Clark made in 2025 after Angel Reese faced racial slurs while playing against the Fever in Indianapolis. “There’s no place for that in our game, there’s no place for that in society,” Clark said. “Certainly, we want every person who comes into our arena, whether player or fan, to have a great experience. I appreciate the league doing that. I appreciate that the Fever organization has been at the forefront of that.”

A competitive moment between Clark and Reese during the 2023 NCAA Championship game sparked a cultural division that followed both players to the WNBA. Their star power has coincided with the league’s recent emergence, but the overall success continues to be marred by the divisiveness initiated by Clark’s supporters.

“I would like for to have addressed her fans,” Christmas said. “Her fans are making threats, and they’re making racist comments. And it’s only racial coming from her fans. They don’t even really love the game. They just love her and then try to make it about race. At some point. I would like to see her stand against her fans when she sees them attacking people on the court.”

Beyond her polarizing fanbase, Clark has also been accused of presenting herself as a victim and throwing tantrums on the court when things don’t go her way. During a recent game against the Golden State Valkyries, Clark used her hand to create distance while driving for a layup against the Valkyries’ Kiah Stokes. Clark fell to the ground after the layup and began berating referee Gerda Gatling while yelling, “Give me a f—g call! I got fouled five times!” Replay video revealed that Stokes initiated no contact, and Gatling showed restraint by not giving Clark a technical foul.

The clip of Clark’s tantrum went viral, and she faced backlash online for her negative attitude.

“Caitlin Clark is a liar and the most dangerous type of white woman,” @mama4obama wrote on X. “One whose lies get Black women death threats. She wasn’t even touched and should have been thrown out of the game for the way she behaved toward the ref.”

“The Caitlin Clark experience serves as a microcosm of America’s divided socio-political atmosphere.”

The Caitlin Clark experience serves as a microcosm of America’s divided socio-political atmosphere. She has been chosen as a figurehead for hatred and division while her Black colleagues on the court remain prime targets.

It’s become an inescapable stain for a league that fought for years to garner interest and respect.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Detroit Native Sun.

Call issued for more black youth in baseball

By Alvin A. Reid | The St. Louis American
Black Press USA Wire

Shortly after Jordan Walker’s 12th and clinching blast of the Home Run Derby final against hometown hero Kyle Schwarber had landed among bitter fans at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, the St. Louis Cardinals right fielder spoke of the importance of his achievement.

“I hope it means a lot to [Black kids],” Walker told reporters. “I want to be a role model for the Black kids, and I want more Black kids in baseball. Hopefully this raises some awareness. I know a lot of them are playing basketball [and] football.

“I want them to know the baseball route is open to them, too. There are a lot of kids that are athletic enough and mentally strong enough — Black kids that can play this game — and I want to see them do it.”

As for Walker, he has become a rarity — a Black star in baseball. They have been few and far between at Busch Stadium since the days of Bob Gibson, Curt Flood and Lou Brock.

Walker, who grew up in suburban Atlanta, said Braves third baseman “Chipper” Jones was his favorite player until Jason Heyward made his debut with the team. “For Black kids, I want to kind of be a role model for them,” Walker said, “like [Heyward] was for me.”

The 2026 All-Star Game rosters featured several Black players, who shared their hopes on inspiring more Black participation in baseball.

“I think once kids see more people to look up to, the more kids will get back into baseball,” said Washington Nationals outfielder James Wood.

Modest gains
New York Yankees right fielder Aaron Judge and Minnesota Twins center fielder Byron Buxton missed the game because of injuries, but were voted in as American League All-Star starters. Nationals shortstop CJ Abrams joined teammate Wood on the NL squad. And, of course, there was Walker, who stole the show in the Home Run Derby.

“I feel like there’s been like a little surge in getting more Black players in the game,” Wood said.

“We’ve got four [Black players] on our team right now. Last year at one point, we had five..”

The Cardinals’ opening day roster featured three Black players: outfielder Victor Scott II, shortstop Masyn Winn and Walker. After struggling offensively the first months of the season, Scott was sent down



to Triple-A Memphis.

When the St. Louis trio took the field on opening day, Major League Baseball reported that 6.8% of players on rosters, injured lists and the restricted list were Black.

That was up slightly from 6.2% at the start of the 2025 season. It marked a two-year increase from a 6% rate at the beginning of 2024. It was the largest increase in a season since a 0.7% rise from 2017 to 2018.

MLB Commissioner Robert Manfred, who to his credit has ignored criticism of baseball diversity programs, sees progress and hopes for more.

“[Y]ou have to continue to invest, grind it out, do that grassroots work to attract more people to the game and then nurture them in a way that gets them into this elite pipeline,” Manfred said.

Cincinnati Reds pitcher Chase Burns, who was named to the NL All-Star team and just signed a seven-year, \$105 million contract extension, said he is perplexed by the low number of Black baseball participants.

“You don’t see a lot of Black athletes in baseball. I don’t know why that is,” Burns said. “I think it’s great for guys like me and [Walker] to strive to get Black athletes into the game of baseball, whether it’s talking about it or doing stuff in the community. I think it’s great he pointed it out.”

As for Walker, he has become a rarity — a Black star in baseball. They have been few and far between at Busch Stadium since the days of Bob Gibson, Curt Flood and Lou Brock.

Hopefully Cardinal Nation will appreciate Walker’s stardom, and the team will reward him with a lucrative contract extension soon.



**iHeart
RADIO**

**RJ WATKINS & CO
TV STUDIOS**

VIDEO TOUR

SSWATKINS.COM

**GET YOUR
PODCAST
ON
IHEART RADIO!**

**CONTACT US
FOR MORE INFO**

313-868-6612

160 VICTOR STREET
DETROIT-HIGHLAND PARK, MI 48203
WHPRTV33@GMAIL.COM

**WHPR
POWER TALK
90.1 FM
DETROIT LIVE**

DOWNLOAD OUR APP

