

# The NBA and China. It's not a game

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Kentavious Caldwell-Pope of Los Angeles Lakers slam dunk during NBA China Games 2019 between Los Angeles Lakers and Brooklyn Nets at Shenzhen Universiade Center on October 12, 2019 in Shenzhen, China.

An Oct. 4 tweet from Houston Rockets General Manager Daryl Morey regarding the

Hong Kong protests started a series of events that have continued to play out in the mainstream media over the last several weeks. Morey's tweet expressed his support for U.S. flag-waving, "Trump Please Liberate Hong Kong" demonstrations.

This statement came days before Morey's Houston Rockets were set to play two exhibition games in China. These games are part of an ongoing exchange between the NBA and Chinese Basketball Association. The exchange between the NBA and China is complex. The NBA is wildly popular in China. Many players have relationships with the Chinese government and various Chinese companies. Some of the biggest NBA stars spend portions of their off-season in China promoting their brands and holding public-relations events for Chinese fans. Previous NBA star Stephon Marbury went as far as to [become a permanent resident](#), after having a successful post-NBA career playing professional ball in China.

The NBA stars who have large followings and strong relationships in China include Rockets' star James Harden and the Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James, [widely considered to be the face of the NBA](#). Both players were in China at the time of Morey's tweet. Soon after the tweet, Chinese government officials and business people alike [denounced the statement and demanded an apology](#).

Morey's criticism put the entire series of NBA games in China at risk. It was for this reason that James Harden went in front of the media and publicly apologized to the Chinese people, saying, "We apologize. You know, we love China. We love playing here." It was soon after this that LeBron commented on the issue, asserting that Morey "wasn't educated on the situation at hand and he spoke."

LeBron went on, "So many people could have been harmed not only financially but physically, emotionally and spiritually."

Since LeBron's comments, he has faced criticism from the media and U.S. politicians. These were mostly the same media and politicians who were critical of

NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick when he took a knee during the national anthem  
[to protest racist police brutality.](#)

