

White supremacy on the court: Angel Reese targeted

written by Lev Koufax
May 31, 2024



Angel Reese is a professional basketball player for the Chicago Sky of the Women's National Basketball Association.

Over a year ago, Struggle-La Lucha covered the media offensive against LSU women's basketball star [Angel Reese](#).

Even before the events of 2023, Reese rose to prominence in the broader basketball world not only because of her prowess on the court. Reese is a strong and outspoken advocate for the rights [of Black women](#).

Furthermore, she was one of the first big college stars to embrace the new "Name, Image, and Likeness" deals. College athletes finally could be paid for their labor after the [Supreme Court](#) found that the NCAA's restrictions on such deals violated the Sherman Antitrust Act. This SCOTUS decision forced the NCAA's hand, which soon after voted to allow "NIL" deals.

Reese and many others immediately and understandably took the opportunity to finally take a small share of the mega profits being raked in by the [NCAA industrial complex](#). In reality, nobody should make money from the players' labor except the players.

Due to the general [capitalist backlash](#) against NIL money and the racist backlash against Reese personally for her Black pride, Reese has become somewhat of a controversial figure, meaning she is constantly disrespected in the big business media.

The LSU Tigers women's basketball team should have basked in the sunshine that was their program's first national championship in 2023. Instead, Reese and her predominantly Black teammates came under vicious racist attack after Reese directed John Cena's "you can't see me" gesture at Iowa Hawkeyes' Caitlin Clark in the waning moments of LSU's victory. Clark, who is white, used this gesture

throughout the 2023 tournament but never faced criticism.

As soon as Reese responded in kind, the sports media establishment answered with a smear campaign that labeled Reese as a classless troublemaker. Professional windbag and former MSNBC host Keith Olberman even went as far as to tweet that Reese was a “fucking idiot.”

The 2023 saga climaxed when Jill Biden invited Iowa’s Clark to LSU’s championship White House visit. Black winners are dissed, and white losers are rewarded.

Much to her credit, Reese responded with strength and pride. Angel Reese has never run from who she is: a young Black woman from Baltimore committed to the highest excellence in her craft. The racists have never stopped hating her for it.

If only the saga ended there. Unfortunately, a year later, the collegiate sports landscape has only slid further into racism and reactionary backlash. Let’s start with the continued stories of Reese and Clark.

‘Great white hope’ narrative escalates

Caitlin Clark continued to shine despite the Hawkeyes’ loss to LSU. Her remarkable 2023-2024 season, averaging 28.1 points, 7.1 rebounds, and 8.2 assists per game, are incredible numbers. These outstanding stats earned her a second consecutive title as the most outstanding player in women’s college basketball. To cap it off, Clark broke Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s all-time collegiate basketball scoring record.

Clark shattered collegiate records and led her Hawkeyes to back-to-back NCAA title games. There is no doubt that Caitlin Clark is a skilled player who was welcomed into the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) in April 2024. However, as women’s basketball legend Diana Taurasi analyzed, it is highly unlikely that she will repeat her college dominance against WNBA talent.

Clark's basketball skills aside, the narrative surrounding her has only become more pernicious and widespread since her defeat in the national championship game last year. Disney, Fox, and Hearst executives smelled an opportunity.

Disney owns the ESPN sports media conglomerate. Fox has built its own sports media empire over the past decade. Hearst owns NBC, which has also built an extensive sports media network.

All of these channels, social media personalities, and talking heads were strangely united when it came to talking about Clark's greatness. In fact, that greatness was so great that it projected her into being the greatest women's basketball player of all time, the "GOAT."

The WNBA is filled with a history of talented players who have won championship titles in leagues on multiple continents.

Maya Moore, for example, is a four-time WNBA champion, a two-time Euroleague champion, and a three-time champion in the Women's Chinese Basketball Association. She has a WNBA scoring title and two Olympic gold medals.

There are dozens of players with accolades similar in stature to Moore. To name just a few: Lisa Leslie, Sue Bird, Candace Parker, Cheryl Miller, Tamika Catchings, and Diana Taurasi. Between these six names alone, there are countless national championships, Olympic medals, and individual awards.

Yet somehow, this 22-year-old from Iowa is unquestionably the "GOAT," though she has only now entered the WNBA as a player with the Indiana Fever and has yet to win championships or medals. Sports history is filled with college heroes who faded away in the professional leagues.

To be clear, this is not meant to be a hit piece against Caitlin Clark as a player. It is essential to separate Clark, the player, from Clark, the figure. Still, there is no doubt

that Clark the figure's stature in the sports media landscape exposes a racist double standard in organized sports.

This disproportion between Clark's lack of professional achievement and her massive stature in the sports industrial complex exposes an agenda within the capitalist sports-media complex, an agenda to assert a "[great white hope](#)" narrative in response to continued Black excellence in college and professional basketball.

White supremacy is a system that has to be enforced at every turn and in every arena. Collegiate basketball is no different.

Reese: 'I haven't had peace'

That brings us back to Angel Reese. A year removed from LSU's triumph on the court against Clark's Iowa, Reese and her teammates still found themselves feeling under siege from the media and the broader college basketball industrial complex.

On the evening of April 1, the LSU women faced "great white hope" Catilin Clark and her Hawkeyes in the Elite Eight round of the NCAA tournament, commonly called "March Madness." Iowa and Clark were victorious this time in a hard-fought 94-87 game.

Following her team's loss to Iowa, Angel Reese spoke of the hell she and her teammates have faced as punishment for being great: "I've been through so much. I've seen so much. I've been attacked so many times ... Death threats. I've been sexualized. I've been threatened - so many things, and I've stood strong every single time."

Reese continued, "I'm still a human. All this has happened since I won a national championship. I haven't had peace since then."

Describing this scene as heartbreaking does not even scratch the surface. All Angel

Reese did was succeed and be unabashedly herself. White athletes are lionized for fierce competitiveness and dramatic gestures.

Black athletes face everything ranging from widespread scorn to outright death threats. Think about that. This young woman, age 22, has already faced a wave of racism reminiscent of the terrible attacks the Black community faced under the Jim Crow South.

Reese's revelation regarding the horrors of the past year comes on the heels of the [horrific racist attacks](#) on the University of Utah women's basketball team while in Idaho for the NCAA tournament. The threats were so severe that the team had to switch hotels.

The most unfortunate part of this saga is that it is now part of a long history of racist attacks on Black athletes for no other reason than to punish those athletes for being Black and successful. In 1947, when Jackie Robinson integrated baseball, he not only faced verbal abuse but [physical assault](#) from racist fellow players.

In 1974, as baseball legend and home run king Hank Aaron chased down Babe Ruth's record of 714, Aaron faced hundreds if not thousands of [death threats](#). If only it stopped there. As the 1974 season wore on, the FBI apprehended more than one Klan-aligned group of terrorists that had plans to assassinate Aaron. His only crime was being great.

Black athletes have been under siege in the United States for this long because the Black community has been under siege by racist capitalism since the first African people were brutally kidnapped from their homes in West Africa in the 15th century.

Anyone who considers themselves a progressive or an anti-racist has a responsibility to stand up in defense of Angel Reese and all Black athletes who have and will come

under attack simply for being themselves.

Credit for women's basketball growth

The racism in sports doesn't stop with violent attacks on individual athletes. The entire sports media narrative around Clark is steeped in pernicious racist logic.

Again, there is no doubt that Caitlin Clark is an excellent basketball player and has reached a special level of individual achievement in college athletics. However, she is not particularly unique in being a great basketball player.

In a [thoughtful article](#), Baltimore Black community writer and educator [D. Watkins](#) explored how the pioneers of organized women's basketball and the WNBA, many of whom are Black, have been left behind in the current landscape.

Hundreds of Black women have dedicated themselves over decades to building the WNBA from a dream into a reality and as an international brand. Yet, one wouldn't know that based on the rush of articles and news stories praising Caitlin Clark as the sole savior of the women's game.

And even where the sports industrial machine wasn't asserting Clark as the greatest of all time or "GOAT," they still pushed her narrative to the front of the sport. Young legends like Angel Reese and Kamila Cardoso have been lost in the shuffle, two players who have actually won championships.

Ahead of the WNBA draft, [ESPN](#) asserted in an April 15 article that "Caitlin Clark has been a singular force who has grown the women's game in ways no college player ever has before."

This is an unbelievable, to the point of being sensationalist, statement. To say that Clark definitively played a more significant role in growing the game of women's basketball than forerunners like [Cheryl Miller](#) and [Sheryl Swoopes](#) is as inaccurate

as it is racist.

It is truly unbelievable the lengths the mainstream capitalist sports establishment will go to to defend their “great white hope.” Even after Clark’s second straight championship loss, the [Indianapolis Star](#) published an article asserting that championships are meaningless when assessing Clark’s greatness.

This would be shocking news for athletes such as Baltimore Ravens superstar quarterback Lamar Jackson, who is [incessantly derided](#) for not having a Super Bowl championship, regardless of two MVP wins and dozens of record-shattering statistics. Or one could point to [Reggie Miller](#), an Indianapolis Pacers legend who is constantly analyzed in the context that he never won a championship despite being one of the best scorers in the history of the NBA.

As with everything else in racist U.S. society, the bar for Black people is much higher. Apparently, Caitlin Clark doesn’t need a championship for the country to recognize her utter greatness.

The sports media machine might not be done worshiping Clark and ignoring Black athletes, but all progressives must see through these various narratives around her and her competitors as what they are: racist propaganda aimed at reinforcing age-old double standards for Black athletes.

Stand with Angel Reese! Black Lives Matter! End racist attacks on Black athletes!

