

# [***'All you have to do is dribble a stupid basketball': Charles Barkley criticizes Ja Morant and opens up about his own politics***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69P2-9TH1-JBSS-S0H3-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

October 27, 2023 Friday 11:47 AM GMT

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**Length:** 911 words

**Byline:** By Ben Church and Chris Wallace, CNN

**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; NBA great and popular TV analyst [*Charles Barkley*](https://cnn.com/2023/04/22/media/cnn-king-charles-announcement/index.html) has urged [*Ja Morant*](https://cnn.com/2023/06/16/sport/ja-morant-suspended-25-games-nba-spt-intl/index.html) to focus on basketball and "stay out of trouble" as the Memphis Grizzlies' star continues to serve a lengthy suspension for incidents involving firearms.

In June, the NBA suspended Morant for 25 games without pay after he was involved in several incidents where he was caught on video with guns which were published on social media.

The suspension runs through the start of the current 2023-24 regular season, which tipped off on Tuesday. The first game Morant would be eligible to play is on December 19 against the New Orleans Pelicans.

Morant had already been suspended from team activities in May after an Instagram Live video appearing to show him flashing a gun while in a vehicle with others circulated on social media, just two months after he was suspended over a similar video.

The NBA had previously suspended Morant for eight games without pay in March after he was seen in a different Instagram Live video holding a gun in a nightclub in Glendale, Colorado, a suburb of Denver.

Barkley, who is set to host a new prime-time show on CNN alongside Gayle King, has previously criticized Morant and explained his reasons for doing so in an in-depth interview with Chris Wallace host of "Who's Talking to Chris Wallace" streaming now on Max.

"He's caught with a gun, he gets suspended and then, less than two months later, he gets filmed again on Instagram with a gun and you're like, 'Kid can't be that stupid,'" said Barkley.

"[The] kid is getting paid close to $100 million and the only thing you have to do is don't be a fool. Just play basketball. Ain't like it's a real job.

"We're not like teachers. We're not like firemen. We're not like policemen. We're not somebody who's in the service. We're not a doctor. Those are five real jobs.

"Real jobs [with] people who will never make a lot of money and all you have to do is dribble a stupid basketball and stay out of trouble."

After receiving his suspension, Morant apologized and said he would use the time off to work on his mental health and decision-making.

"I'm sorry for the harm I've done," he said in a [*statement*](https://cnn.com/2023/06/16/sport/ja-morant-suspended-25-games-nba-spt-intl/index.html).

"To the kids who look up to me, I'm sorry for failing you as a role model. I promise I'm going to be better. To all of my sponsors, I'm going to be a better representation of our brands. And to all of my fans, I'm going to make it up to you, I promise."

CNN has reached out to Morant's representatives for comment.

Outspoken

Barkley said he would never shy away from giving his opinion on air, adding that "you lose credibility" when you don't tell the truth on television.

His authenticity and willingness to speak his mind have helped the former NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP)become one of the most popular television personalities in the US.

It follows a brilliant career in the league, where he played 16 seasons and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006.

Despite never winning an NBA Championship, the 60-year-old won two Olympic gold medals, made 11 All-Star teams, won the MVP award in 1993 and was named to the NBA's 50th and 75th anniversary teams.

Since retiring, Barkley has built a successful media career, but had briefly hinted at a possible switch to ***politics***, expressing an interest in becoming the governor of Alabama.

However, the NBA legend said he was, and is still, uninspired by the major political forces in the US.

"I consider myself an Independent because I hate the words Republican, Democratic, Conservative and Liberal," he said.

"I think you can be one of those things, but you don't think that way on every subject.

"I really thought hard about running for governor but then I realized, like, I don't think either one of these parties are really concerned about people and that's what America is: people."

Barkley said he was equally unimpressed about next year's US election, which may once again be fought between US President Joe Biden and previous incumbent Donald Trump, saying he didn't "feel good about a rematch."

While not afraid to delve into the world of ***politics***, Barkley still holds a deep love for the game of basketball.

It's a sport which gave him the platform to speak about matters he's passionate about and a career which changed the entire trajectory of his family's life.

"I wanted to be successful," he said, looking back at what inspired him at the start of his playing career. "You know, basketball, it meant so much to me."

"I think about my life. I'm from a small town of a couple thousand people. My mom was a maid, my grandmother worked in a meat factory. You know, I grew up in the projects.

"All I had to do was be good at basketball and I was able to change the entire dynamics of my life and my family's life. I was thinking about that the whole time.

"I don't want to be poor anymore. All I got to do is rebound and the rest is history," added Barkley, who has donated millions of dollars to a number of causes, including [*supporting*](https://cnn.com/2020/01/10/us/charles-barkley-miles-college-spt-trnd/index.html) historically Black colleges in the US.

With the new NBA season back underway, Barkley isn't shy about predicting this year's champion.

"The Boston Celtics," he said, with his trademark confidence.

Barkley's new CNN show, 'King Charles,' is set to start this fall and continue into 2024.

**The full interview on "Who's Talking to Chris Wallace" is streaming now on Max.**

By Ben Church and Chris Wallace, CNN

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**Load-Date:** November 26, 2023

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