

## **What Would Real Accountability Look Like For Don Imus?**

Don Imus' vicious attacks on the Rutgers Women's basketball team were made in the public domain. His apology was, on the other hand, a very private affair. This private process robbed the women, the public and, incidentally, Mr. Imus, of an opportunity for a more authentic and healing process of accountability. Of course, for that process to take place it would have meant devoting time, something our 'sound bite' culture is rarely willing to afford any process, and a public dialogue. If Mr. Imus had chosen to participate in such a process, with authentic reflection and the help of a healing community to guide him, this is the letter, including substantive reparations, that might have been the result.

### **Dear Members of the Rutgers University Women's Basketball Team and All Women and All People of Color:**

In this letter, I want to take accountability for the sexist and racist verbal attacks I made toward you on the Don Imus Show. This is the first step in the process of repairing the harm I have done. I have a long-standing pattern of making assaultive remarks in public and have financially benefited from degrading others through my access to the public airwaves.

In my comments, I used male privilege and white privilege to attack your femininity, strength and power. I felt justified and emboldened by celebrity and popularity to attempt to dehumanize you, take away from your achievements and put you in your place. I did this by using the vicious, misogynist, racist stereotypes of how women, especially Black women, should behave.

Although I previously have been informed about the harm caused by my verbal assaults, I chose to attack you in ways that emboldened all those who are threatened by strong women, especially strong Black women. It was a way of attacking you for stepping outside the narrow role assigned to Black women. In doing so, I added my voice to the chorus of others who historically and systematically have degraded and punished women who strive for liberty, freedom and self-definition.

I inserted myself as an expert into a competition that I knew nothing about. I gave a voice to all those who are threatened by strong women who strive for excellence outside the bounds of men's control. This was an attempt to ensure that you would not be able to walk with heads held high in a spirit of pride and strength.

I am fully aware that my unchecked misogyny and racism on the public airways contributes to a climate that encourages violence and contempt toward women and people of color; emboldening men who already disparage and devalue women and people of color to escalate their violence toward them.

**Alliance for Racial & Social Justice – [www.arsj.org](http://www.arsj.org)**

When challenged, instead of taking an authentic look at who I am, and on whose backs I have built my lucrative career, I was defensive and acted like a victim myself.

I am truly sorry and apologize specifically to the Rutgers Women's Basketball team and to all the women and people of color I have assaulted and oppressed.

I would like to offer the following reparations to begin my work of healing and amends.

- Attend the “Undoing Racism” training created by Ron Chisolm and The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond
- Attend the White Privilege Conference
- Donate \$100,000 annually to a charity of the Rutgers Women's Basketball team's choice
- Underwrite 200 scholarships per year for girls of color to attend summer sports camps
- Finance graduate school for the entire Rutgers women's basketball team
- Use my power and popularity for social justice moving forward in my career

I know this letter and these reparations are only a start to take accountability for my actions and to begin to heal the hurt I have caused. I hope this begins for me a continuing process of understanding my privilege and using that privilege for social justice.