

The Honorable Marsha J. Pechman

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

CITY OF SEATTLE, a first-class charter city,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	No. C07-1620MJP
	)	
v.	)	DECLARATION OF PAUL R. TAYLOR IN
	)	SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT'S MOTION
THE PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL CLUB,	)	IN LIMINE RE MITCH LEVY AND
LLC, an Oklahoma limited liability company,	)	SHERMAN ALEXIE
	)	
Defendant.	)	NOTE ON MOTION CALENDAR:
	)	JUNE 6, 2008

Paul R. Taylor declares as follows:

I am one of the attorneys of record for defendant in this action. The following is true and correct and based upon my own personal knowledge:

1. Attached as Exhibit 1 is a true and correct copy of Plaintiff City of Seattle's Third Supplemental Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(a) Disclosure Statement.

2. Attached as Exhibit 2 is a true and correct copy of a May 23, 2008, article from The Seattle Times, entitled "Punishment is the crime in Sue's bet with Mitch."

3. Attached as Exhibit 3 is a true and correct copy of pages 1, 18, 33, and 34 of Plaintiff's Pretrial Statement.

4. Attached as Exhibit 4 is a true and correct copy of a January 16, 2008, article from The Stranger, titled "Sonics Death Watch."

DECLARATION OF PAUL R. TAYLOR IN SUPPORT OF  
DEFENDANT'S MOTION IN LIMINE RE MITCH LEVY AND  
SHERMAN ALEXIE (C07-1620MJP) - 1

**BYRNES & KELLER LLP**  
38TH FLOOR  
1000 SECOND AVENUE  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104  
(206) 622-2000

1           5.       Attached as Exhibit 5 is a true and correct copy of a November 7, 2006, article  
2 from The Stranger, titled "Net Profit."

3           I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that this  
4 declaration is true and correct.

5           DATED in Seattle, Washington, this 27th day of May, 2008.  
6  
7

8                               /s/ Paul R. Taylor  
9                               Paul Taylor, WSBA #14851  
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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on the 27th day of May, 2008, I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system which will send notification of such filing to the following:

Thomas A. Carr ([thomas.carr@seattle.gov](mailto:thomas.carr@seattle.gov))  
Gregory C. Narver ([gregory.narver@seattle.gov](mailto:gregory.narver@seattle.gov))  
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K&L Gates  
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Seattle, WA 98104

/s/ Paul R. Taylor  
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# **EXHIBIT 1**

RECEIVED

The Honorable Marsha J. Pechman

2008 MAY 27 A 10:38

STANLEY A. GELMAN LLP

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

CITY OF SEATTLE, a first-class charter  
city,

Plaintiff,

v.

THE PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL  
CLUB, LLC, an Oklahoma limited liability  
company,

Defendant.

No. C07-1620 MJP

PLAINTIFF CITY OF SEATTLE'S  
THIRD SUPPLEMENTAL FED. R.  
CIV. P. 26(a) DISCLOSURE  
STATEMENT

Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(a)(1)(A), plaintiff the City of Seattle ("the City")  
discloses the following additional witnesses, who may have information that bears on the  
disputed facts alleged with particularity in the pleadings:

40. Mitch Levy  
950 KJR Sports Radio  
351 Elliot Avenue West, Suite 300  
Seattle, WA 98119

Knowledge of the Seattle SuperSonics ("Sonics") before and after PBC  
purchased the team and Sonics fan interest in the team.

CITY OF SEATTLE'S THIRD  
SUPPLEMENTAL FED. R. CIV. P. 26(A)  
DISCLOSURES - 1  
Case No. C07-1620 MJP

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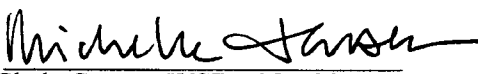
KIRKPATRICK & LOCKHART  
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925 FOURTH AVENUE  
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TELEPHONE (206) 623-7580  
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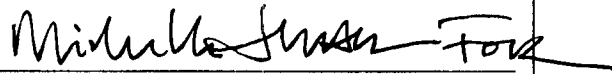
1 The City expressly reserves its right to supplement or amend this disclosure at a future  
2 date. In making the disclosure contained below, the City does not waive, but instead  
3 expressly reserves, any and all objections, including but not limited to the attorney-client  
4 privilege, the work-product doctrine, relevance, materiality and overbreadth, to the  
5 discoverability of information defendant The Professional Basketball Club ("PBC") may seek  
6 in this action. The City will make appropriate claims of privilege or similar reasons for non-  
7 production with its response to any further requests for production. These disclosures are  
8 based on the current status of the City's investigation. The City specifically reserves the right  
9 to supplement these disclosures as its investigation warrants. The City also reserves the right  
10 to call any of the witnesses disclosed by PBC who do not appear in the City's disclosures.

11 DATED this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of May, 2008.

12  
13 KIRKPATRICK & LOCKHART  
14 PRESTON GATES & ELLIS, LLP

THOMAS A. CARR  
Seattle City Attorney

15 By:   
16 Slade Gorton, WSBA No. 20  
17 Paul J. Lawrence, WSBA No. 13557  
18 Jeffrey Johnson, WSBA No. 23066  
Jonathan Harrison, WSBA No. 31390  
Michelle Jensen, WSBA No. 36611

By:   
Gregory C. Narver, WSBA No. 18127  
Assistant City Attorney

19 Attorneys for Plaintiff City of Seattle

Attorneys for Plaintiff City of Seattle

20  
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26 CITY OF SEATTLE'S THIRD  
SUPPLEMENTAL FED. R. CIV. P. 26(A)  
DISCLOSURES - 2  
Case No. C07-1620 MJP

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**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on May 22, 2008, I served a copy of the foregoing:

**PLAINTIFF CITY OF SEATTLE'S THIRD SUPPLEMENTAL FED. R. CIV. P.  
26(a) DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

by US Mail and electronic mail to the following counsel of record:

Bradley S. Keller, Esq. [bkeller@byrneskeller.com](mailto:bkeller@byrneskeller.com)  
Paul R. Taylor, Esq. [ptaylor@byrneskeller.com](mailto:ptaylor@byrneskeller.com)  
BYRNES & KELLER LLP  
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Seattle, Washington 98104



Michelle Jensen

CITY OF SEATTLE'S THIRD  
SUPPLEMENTAL FED. R. CIV. P. 26(A)  
DISCLOSURES - 3  
Case No. C07-1620 MJP

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# **EXHIBIT 2**





Sunday, July 20, 2003 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

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Corrected version  
Steve Kelley / Times staff columnist

## Punishment is the crime in Sue's bet with Mitch

Sue Bird has agreed to be spanked. In public. By sports talk host Mitch Levy. Bird has even agreed, if she loses a bet with the morning maven of misogyny, to cry, "Harder, Daddy, harder," during the spanking.

She says it's all in good fun. That it's just between Levy and her. But it isn't fun. It isn't funny. And the entire community, not just Levy and her, is involved.

"It's terrible," said State Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles, who teaches women's studies at the University of Washington and is a regular at Storm games. "Oh, my gosh, it's really dreadful. It undoes so much of the good she represents for young women in the game.

"It helps feed into the images of violence against women and stereotyping. I don't condemn her. I appreciate that she doesn't have the experience in life that other women have had. But this could be very hurtful. Not just to the WNBA, but to other women and girls."

The bet goes like this: If Bird has better than a three-to-one assist-to-turnover ratio at the end of the season, Levy, a broadcaster's Bobby Riggs, will buy a Storm season ticket next year. If it is better than or two-to-one, Levy still has to buy the tickets, but they can be cheaper ones and he still gets to spank her. If it is lower than two-to-one the spanking will begin and Bird must say "Harder, Daddy, harder," during the spanking.

Bird believes that if she can get Levy to a Storm game, she can make him a convert.

"He symbolizes that guy the league is trying to attract," she told Seattle Times staff reporter Jayda Evans. "He's talking to that guy every morning. I believe that if I can get him in a seat to attend a game, then maybe his opinion will change and he'll talk about it on the air."

The WNBA is having little luck attracting males age 18-35. And the truth is it always will. And it never will attract Levy and his minions.

But this bet isn't promoting the league. It is mocking the league and mocking Sue Bird.

Even if Levy comes to the games, he's not suddenly going to become warm and fuzzy. It's not his style. His yahoo following would abandon him quicker than Lakers fans on a losing Friday night. His ratings would drop and his future in his prime morning-drive-time slot would be in danger.

If Levy started coming to Storm games, he would find other ways to talk about the anatomy of players. He will start other contests and other bets that would degrade women. He's as predictable as a Tim Wakefield knuckleball.

"I don't blame her for this — Sue may not be getting it," Kohl-Welles said. "But it's important to me that athletes who serve as such good role models for girls as well as boys shouldn't be participating in this type of media event."

Nobody should blame Bird. She's 22 and enjoying her life. But the Storm should be blamed.

Everyone involved in local sports knows Levy's act. He's not inviting Bird on his show to discuss the science of the pick-and-roll. He's looking for some angle that involves sex and humiliation. The Storm should have known that, should strongly have suggested that Bird not go on the show.

"We've talked about it with Sue," said Storm coach Anne Donovan, a Hall of Famer and a pioneer in the game. "I mean it's typical Sue. Happy go lucky. She thinks it's all fun and games. And it's her decision."

"We're always trying different avenues to get men into the games. This probably isn't the best avenue. I'm not saying I agree with it. For myself it's not the way to go. But I don't think it's promoting violence."

But it is.

Whenever the bet is discussed on the show, it is accompanied by a sick sound effect that suggests a whip-cracking.

Levy is offering to hit a woman, as part of a bet, end of discussion.

And, in an era when so many male athletes are being accused of so many assault crimes against women, there is something wrong with one of the most visible female athletes agreeing to a bet that involves violence.

It's exactly what the WNBA shouldn't stand for. It's inappropriate. It's Stone Age behavior. This is a league searching for legitimacy with one of its stars submitting to a bet that not one legitimate male professional athlete, or for that matter, female sportscaster, would condone.

"We've tried not to make an issue of it," said Karen Bryant, vice president of Storm operations. "I don't want to give it any more attention than it deserves. He (Levy) is who he is, and that's his audience."

Bird, who has been hobbled by a sore left knee, is on pace to win the bet. After 19 games, she has 137 assists to 62 turnovers. But this isn't about winning or losing a bet.

It's about a young league and its young star making one of those terrible youthful mistakes. It's about the girls who come to the game who might hear of this stupid bet and wonder what it really means.

The league needs to find creative ways to get more men into the seats. But this is not the way to go. Women's basketball's act is better than Mitch Levy's.

*Steve Kelley: 206-464-2176 or [skelley@seattletimes.com](mailto:skelley@seattletimes.com)*

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# **EXHIBIT 3**

The Honorable Marsha J. Pechman

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

CITY OF SEATTLE, a first-class charter  
city,

Plaintiff,

v.

PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL CLUB  
LLC, an Oklahoma limited liability company,

Defendant.

No. C07-01620-MJP

PLAINTIFF'S PRETRIAL  
STATEMENT

Pursuant to Local Rule CR 16(h), plaintiff City of Seattle (the "City") hereby submits  
its Pretrial Statement in the above-captioned case:

**I. JURISDICTION**

This Court has jurisdiction of this civil action under 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a).

**II. CLAIMS**

The City will pursue the following claim:

(1) A declaratory judgment that the City is entitled to specific performance of Article  
II of the Premises Use & Occupancy Agreement ("Lease"), the Professional Basketball Club's  
("PBC's") contractual obligation to schedule and play all Seattle SuperSonics ("Sonics")

PLAINTIFF'S PRETRIAL STATEMENT - 1  
Case No. C07-01620-MJP

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FACSIMILE: (206) 623-7022

1       **925 Fourth Ave, Suite 2900**  
2       **Seattle, WA 98104**

3       Mr. Donaldson will testify regarding the Sonics' involvement in community, charitable  
4 activities, and general benefits to the City from the presence of the Sonics.

5  
6       **Matthew Wade**  
7       **c/o K&L Gates**  
8       **925 Fourth Ave, Suite 2900**  
9       **Seattle, WA 98104**

10       Mr. Wade will testify regarding the Sonics' involvement in community and charitable  
11 activities.

12       **Sherman Alexie**  
13       **c/o K&L Gates**  
14       **925 Fourth Ave, Suite 2900**  
15       **Seattle, WA 98104**

16       Mr. Alexie will testify regarding the Sonics' role in the Seattle metropolitan  
17 community from the perspective of a Season Ticket holder, the diverse nature of Sonics'  
18 crowds, the impact of the Sonics on minority communities, and the impact of sports on family  
19 relationships.

20  
21       **Mitch Levy**  
22       **950 KJR Sports Radio**  
23       **351 Elliot Avenue West, Suite 300**  
24       **Seattle, WA 98119**

25       Mr. Levy will testify regarding his experience with the Sonics before and after PBC  
26 purchased the team.

26       **Greg Nickels**

Trial Ex No	Prefix	BegDoc	EndDoc	Date	Description	Dep Ex No
					Responses to Plaintiff's First Set of Interrogatories	
210				5/15/2008	Professional Basketball Club's Supplemental Response to Plaintiff's Supplemental Interrogatory No 13	
211				5/15/2008	Professional Basketball Club's Responses to the City of Seattle's Supplemental Requests for Production	
212				5/15/2008	Professional Basketball Club's Supplemental Response to Plaintiff's Supplemental Request for Production No 17	
213				5/20/2008	Web Page Capture - <a href="http://www.nba.com/sonics/schedule/results_2007.html">www.nba.com/sonics/schedule/results_2007.html</a>	
214				5/20/2008	Web Page Capture - <a href="http://www.nba.com/sonics/schedule/results_2006.html">www.nba.com/sonics/schedule/results_2006.html</a>	
215				Various	KeyArena Construction Photos	
216					Licata emails from constituents	
217					Letters to Mayors office from constituents	
218					Various Sonics/NBA promotional videos	

The City reserves the right to use any of the exhibits listed by any PBC. The City further reserves the right to supplement this list to use exhibits as the exigencies of trial may require. The City will endeavor to give timely advance notice to the parties of its intention to use any such supplemental exhibits.

DATED this 23rd day of May, 2008.

KIRKPATRICK & LOCKHART  
PRESTON GATES ELLIS LLP

By



Paul J. Lawrence, WSBA # 13557

Jeffrey C. Johnson, WSBA #23066

Jonathan H. Harrison, WSBA # 31390

Michelle Jensen, WSBA # 36611

Attorneys for Plaintiff  
City of Seattle

PLAINTIFF'S PRETRIAL STATEMENT - 33

Case No C07-01620-MJP

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1 **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

2 I hereby certify that on May 23, 2008, I served a copy of the foregoing:

3 **1. PLAINTIFF'S PRETRIAL STATEMENT**

4 by electronic mail to the following counsel of record:

5 Bradley S. Keller, Esq. [bkeller@byrneskeller.com](mailto:bkeller@byrneskeller.com)

6 Paul R. Taylor, Esq. [ptaylor@byrneskeller.com](mailto:ptaylor@byrneskeller.com)

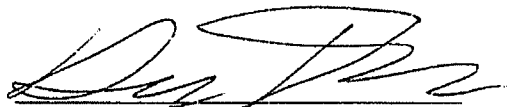
7 Cathy Coleman [ccoleman@byrneskeller.com](mailto:ccoleman@byrneskeller.com)

8 Kim Wolf [kwolf@byrneskeller.com](mailto:kwolf@byrneskeller.com)

9 BYRNES & KELLER LLP

10 1000 Second Avenue, 38<sup>th</sup> Floor

11 Seattle, Washington 98104

12   
13 Dennis M. Tessier

# **EXHIBIT 4**



# The Stranger

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January 16, 2008

**COLUMNS**

## Sonics Death Watch

Vol. I

by SHERMAN ALEXIE

Before Sonics games, I listen to the pregame broadcast on KTTH 770. But if I turn on the radio early, I sometimes hear the right-wing insanity of Michael Savage, who believes that the U.S. should build a fence along key points of the Mexican border. Whenever I imagine that epic fence, I also imagine a pair of border agents, one with binoculars, standing on a nearby bluff.

"Hey, man, do you see anything?"

"Yeah, a bunch of Mexicans. They're carrying something."

"What is it?"

"A big ladder."

Jesus, there are certain murderous right wingers who believe that border fence should be electrified. Double Jesus, I have to listen to their right-wing radio station in order to hear my beloved Sonics lose again. Triple Jesus, I am a leftist bastard who hopes that some wealthy right-wing local bastards buy the Sonics from those right-wing Oklahoma bastards and keep the team in Seattle. Exponential Jesus, I am an Indian boy who prays that white politicians will save him by saving the sport he loves. Instead of Hangs-Around-the-Fort, I am Hangs-Around-City-Hall.

I just hope massive contradictions don't cause cancer. 貴

## More Sonics Death Watch

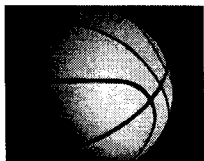


May 20, 2008

Sonics Death Watch

Vol. XIX

by SHERMAN ALEXIE



May 14, 2008

Sonics Death Watch

Vol. XVIII

by SHERMAN ALEXIE

# **EXHIBIT 5**

# The Stranger

---

November 7, 2006

## FEATURES

### Net Profit

Pro Basketball is good for Seattle, good for fathers, good for sons. Save the Sonics.

by SHERMAN ALEXIE



Otto Greule Jr/ Getty Images



After Howard Schultz sold the Seattle SuperSonics to Clayton Bennett of Oklahoma City, I boycotted Starbucks.

For approximately three hours.

Yes, I am a leftist Democrat who likes Starbucks, and might even love the Northgate 24-hour drive-through and the University Village store that serves as a UW study-hall annex.

I'm an insomniac, so it makes sense that I'd need a highly predictable cup of coffee at any and all hours. And Starbucks coffee tastes exactly the same whether I buy it at 3:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. And it also tastes the same in Seattle, Des Moines, Manhattan, Tucson, and Bismarck, North Dakota.

A few years ago, during a room-service breakfast in an Oklahoma City hotel, I drank Starbucks coffee and can assure you that it tasted absolutely familiar.

In fact, it tasted good.

Yes, I said it.

And I'll say it again: Starbucks coffee is good.

I'm sure that many of you readers—especially the coffee purists and lefty peacemongers—think that I am a tasteless and immoral supporter of economic imperialism, charred beans, callous gentrification, and Mitch Albom books.

I am a Native American, so I have personal experience, of course, with hardcore American gentrification.

When Starbucks built a shop at 23rd Avenue and Jackson Street, many folks cursed and condemned that development as gentrification.

How's that store doing now?

Tonight, I walked inside and approached an elderly black man in a tweed suit.

"Excuse me, sir," I said. "Do you think this store is an example of gentrification?"

"What?" Tweed Suit asked.

"Do you think Starbucks gentrified the neighborhood?"

"You some kind of politician?"

"Nope, I just want to know what people think about the social and economic impact of this franchise on the Central District."

"I'm sitting in this here store, drinking this here coffee. What do you think I feel about it?"

I feel good about the store. It's near my office, so I visit on a daily basis.

And the place is always filled with elderly black guys, especially on weekend mornings.

They're often playing backgammon, and they're always talking shit.

Last year, as I waited for my Americano, I heard this conversation between a mustached black man and a bald black man:

"You remember when you could get a hooker on this corner?" the mustached man asked.

"Man," the bald man said. "I remember when I got a hooker on this corner. I must've been 20 years old."

"There ain't no hookers out there anymore."

"The diseases they got now, you wouldn't want a hooker out there."

"Don't matter anyhow. All I got left is my memories and this coffee."

How often do you hear that kind of conversation in the Madison Park Starbucks?

I've visited that upscale store a few dozen times, and I've occasionally seen KING 5's Jean Enersen drinking her nonfat something-or-other.

And I've admired her biceps. The woman might be overly styled and tan, but she is cut.

So why the hell am I talking about Jean Enersen's sinewy muscles and the sexual nostalgia of local black men?

Well, first of all, I love to watch stories happen. And secondly, I know that Starbucks is certainly a huge and generic conglomerate, but each store itself contains multitudes.

And with multitudes come interesting conflicts.

Last week, at the 23rd Avenue and Jackson Street store, I waited behind two white women, a blonde and a redhead. Three black women worked the counter.

"Can I help you?" the cashier asked.

"Yes, I'd like a green tea," the redhead said.

"You want honey with that tea?"

"I need a honey," the redhead said. "I haven't had a honey in a long time. You got a honey back there for sale?"

The cashier politely laughed and made the sale. But when the white women walked away, the black women rolled their eyes.

"That white woman was horny goofy," the cashier said.

The other black women laughed. I laughed, too.

"Oh," the cashier said. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to hear that."

"It's okay," I said. "She was horny goofy."

She laughed, relieved that I wasn't offended. I can't remember the last time I was offended. In fact, I prefer offensive human beings. They make for better stories.

Trust me. I am the great-great-great grandson of a man who was killed by a Ninth Cavalry soldier, so short of genocidal murder, it's very difficult to offend me.

I have a high tolerance for shit, in solid or liquid form.

I have swallowed gallons of truly horrible coffee at various powwows, bingo halls, casinos, and grange-hall meetings, so I know that, in comparison, Starbucks brew is liquid sex.

I grew up dirt-ass poor, so drinking Starbucks feels like a privilege, like something I've earned through luck and hard work.

And for those of you who think that Starbucks coffee is pond water, I suspect that you're elitist bastards who also attend wine-tasting parties and have pledged allegiance to a favorite microbrew.

As for Mitch Albom, well, fuck him and his sentimentalism.

As for my sentimentalism, well, I say fuck me, too.

You see, I admire Howard Schultz. I think his rise from a humble Brooklyn, New York, housing project to head of an epic coffee dynasty is a romantic story.

Yep, I am a believer in that sentimental crap known as the American dream.

Why do I believe in it? Because I am the American dream.

I am a reservation-raised Indian boy, whose mother and father barely graduated high school and never went to college, and I have grown to become a very successful writer. I win awards, draw huge crowds, sell tons of books, and make much money by telling stories. Isn't that crazy and magical?

At least once a day, I laugh in wonder at my great fortune and greater luck.

And while I'm arrogant about my skills, I'm also relatively modest about my exact position in the literary world.

I'm not the best writer in the country. Not even close. I'm not in the top 10. No way. And I'm probably not in the top 50. But I'm certainly in the top 100. In fact, for the sake of argument, let's say that I am the 78th best writer in the country.

According to [ESPN.com](http://ESPN.com), the Seattle SuperSonics' Luke Ridnour is the 78th best basketball player in the NBA.

Yep, Luke Ridnour is the Sherman Alexie of the NBA; and I am the Luke Ridnour of the literary world.

Of course, Ridnour's rise to fame and fortune is even more unlikely than mine.

Jesus, he's a six-foot, 150-pound white kid competing against the best athletes in the world. Do you know how many great white point guards there have been in the NBA?

Well, off the top of my head, I can only think of Bob Cousy, John Stockton, Mark Price, and Steve Nash.

That's four in the last 40 or so years.

And many people think that Luke Ridnour might have the tools to become that great. He has so much potential that the U.S. Olympic Committee named him as an alternate for the national team.

What do I think of Luke Ridnour? I think he's the primary reason why the Sonics were a crappy team last

year and will be a crappy team this year and every other year until we find a better point guard.

I hate Ridnour's game.

Of course, since Ridnour and I occupy similar positions in our professions, this could be a form of self-hate.

And since I am now and have always been an offensive-minded basketball player who can't guard anybody, just like Ridnour, I'm pretty damn sure it's a form of self-hate.

Among my basketball friends, I am vilified for hating Ridnour. My basketball friends defend Ridnour like they are married to him. They think it's love; I think they're battered spouses.

We spend inordinate amounts of time during our weekly pickup basketball games, e-mail conversations, and phone calls arguing about Mr. Ridnour.

We care about Ridnour's failures and successes more than we care about most everything else in our lives.

Isn't that pathetic?

Well, yes, of course it is, but it's also the most common way in which a particular kind of male expresses love for himself, for other men, and for the world.

While my father was dying, he and I talked basketball. Three days before he died, my father still had enough will and character left to deride Kobe Bryant for being a rotten smallpox wound on the game of basketball.

"I know," I said. "I can't stand him."

That meant *I love you, Dad.*

"I still can't believe they traded Shaq instead of Kobe."

That meant *I love you, too, Son.*

Of course, no matter how much I hate Kobe, I still love to watch him play. He's a ferocious poet on the court. And I most especially love to watch him lose.

I hate Kobe like other people hate the New York Yankees. And, man, it feels good to hate like that because I won't start any wars because of it. I get to hate without fear of violence.

And my father hated Kobe like that, too.

When I look back at my relationship with my father, when I put a narrative to it, I realize that every plot



point, every surprise, and every tender and/or painful moment has something to do with basketball.

My father was a great basketball player. I was a very good small-town hoopster but I couldn't beat him one-on-one until I was 16 years old.

And I have never felt better or worse than the day I finally defeated my father.

My father haunts every basketball game.

Luke Ridnour's father was his high-school basketball coach, and the Sonics' power forward Nick Collison's high-school team was coached by his father.

Talk about haunted.

I'd rather my father had been my priest or my doctor than my basketball coach.

Small forward Damien Wilkins's father is the NBA journeyman Gerald Wilkins and his uncle is the all-star Dominique Wilkins.

Imagine pursuing a profession where your uncle is known as "The Human Highlight Film."

We currently have a U.S. president who followed his father into the most highly stressful and public profession in the world and look what happened to him—and us.

When I watch a Sonics game, I certainly see the players as athletic competitors, but I also see them as human beings, as fathers and sons and husbands.

I don't know them personally, of course, and I only know the barest details of their biographies, but I like to guess at their motivations.

It's my job, you know, as a writer, to guess at motivations.

And so I see every basketball game as a chapter of the novel known as a season. And I see each season as another volume in an unending series of mysteries.

I don't watch the Sonics because of their wins and losses on the court.

Of course, I'd much rather see them win every championship for the next 10 years, but I am not going to give up on the Sonics because they've had one bad season. Or two. Or three. Or eight.

Shit, I'm not going to give up on the Sonics if they move to Oklahoma City. I'd fly to Siberia to watch Rashard Lewis shoot a turnaround. And I'd fly to, well, Oklahoma City, to make bets with my friends on how soon Danny Fortson picks up his first foul. Hell, I might even become a fan of Clayton Bennett if he proves to be a smart owner.

And I'm not going to give up on the Sonics for being a poor defensive team, or a team that can't seem to win close games, or a team that can't seem to draft anybody other than extremely tall and mostly useless guys.

Instead, I choose to love the Sonics holistically. Yes, you read that correctly.

I am a holistic basketball fan.

I love the wins and losses. I love the spectacular assists and idiotic turnovers. I love the poetry of teamwork and the pornography of jump shots taken too early in the shot clock.

And, yes, I love Luke Ridnour. And I hate the little fucker, too.

I hope that Earl Watson (or anybody else) will soon replace Luke Ridnour at point guard, but I also hope that Ridnour proves me wrong and becomes the 33rd or 21st best player in the league.

I am obsessed with Luke Ridnour.

I think about Luke Ridnour nearly every day of my life.

If my father were alive, he'd be calling me to talk about Ridnour.

"Jesus," he'd say. "I can't believe they're still playing the little shit."

"I know," I'd say. "I think it's because he's a white kid in a very white city."

"That's a racist thought."

"It's a racial thought."

"There's no real difference between racist and racial. Don't be such a writer."

"Well, okay, then, I think that Luke Ridnour's fans, no matter what color they are, root for him because they see this tiny little guy running around the court and they secretly think they are better basketball players than him."

"That's bullshit."

"Of course it is. Ridnour is the 78th best player in the NBA, which means he's probably the 128th best player in the whole world. But you know how people are."

"Yeah, people hate greatness."

Of course, my father wouldn't have said any of that. He was a fairly simple man. But I put the words in his mouth because I wanted to put the words on the page.

I think that certain people do hate greatness. And I most definitely know that certain American leftists absolutely despise capitalistic greatness.

Can you imagine hating Howard Schultz simply because he's the greatest coffee seller in the history of the world?

Think about it. There has never existed another human being who is better at selling coffee than Mr. Schultz.

He is the Einstein of coffee.

The Michelangelo of coffee.

The Meryl Streep of coffee.

The Emily Dickinson of coffee.

The Oprah of coffee.

The Michael Jordan and/or Larry Bird of coffee.

Yes, Schultz is that good.

He is proof that, once in a while, the United States is a meritocracy. And so I feel like his American dream brother because I think I am also proof that the United States is a meritocracy. And Ray Allen and Luke Ridnour and Rashard Lewis are proof of that, too.

Can you imagine hating Ray Allen (or Alex Rodriguez) simply because he gets paid millions to demonstrate his greatness?

I admire the poverty-stricken greatness of saints. But I also admire the well-compensated greatness of basketball players.

I admire the greatness; the money is incidental.

So, yes, I admire Howard Schultz's greatness.

I also hate him because the fucker gave up on the Sonics. And I hate him for trying to blackmail the city for an arena. And I hate him for selling the team to a boring red-state millionaire named Clay.

And I have wept at least 20 times since the Sonics were sold.

Yes, I wept because I know the Sonics will be leaving us. I don't want them to leave us. But leave they must.

And I know that plenty of you are happy that the Sonics are leaving. And that plenty of you don't give any kind of shit at all.

I know that a few of you, like Seattle City Council Member Nick Licata, think that the Sonics in particular and professional sports in general have negligible cultural value.

Well, I say this to Mr. Licata and to all of you who agree with him:

Fuck you.

I know more poetry and more basketball than any of you do, and both pursuits are equally valuable to me.

I can quote by memory a few hundred poems and I can quote by memory the lifetime statistics of a few hundred basketball players.

I've had Sonics season tickets for 10 years and I've read approximately 1,000 books during that same period.

So, okay, do you understand now how much I love the game and how much I love the Sonics?

Do you love anything in your life that much? Do you love rock climbing that much? Or running? Or yoga? Or gardening? Or football? Or baseball?

So, do me a favor right now, and think of the thing you love most, and imagine that it has been taken from you. Imagine yourself so bereft. And imagine that you live in a city where most, if not all, of the citizens don't care about your loss.

"But, Sherman," you might say. "It's just basketball. It's not as important as feeding the poor or educating our children or providing affordable housing."

And, of course, basketball is not as important as those other social issues. But the health and pride of a city depends on more than its politics. It also needs art and, yes, it needs athletics.

A great city needs to work on its soul, mind, and body.

A great city needs to embrace as much greatness as it possibly can.

And we need to keep the Sonics, or at least remember them fondly, because Ray Allen is the greatest shooter in the world. Maybe the best shooter in the history of the world.

Imagine that.

Yes, right now, in this city, lives the Emily Dickinson of jump shooters. The Michelangelo of three-

pointers. The Meryl Streep of the pump fake and fade away. And most of you have never seen him play.

That's a shame.

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