

Magic Johnson Talks HIV Advocacy and New Billionaire Status

How HIV advocate Magic Johnson redefined himself after basketball and became a billionaire.

June 25, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

[Earvin “Magic” Johnson](#) sat down [with BBC News](#) to discuss [HIV advocacy](#), becoming a billionaire and more.

Johnson retired from the National Basketball Association in 1991, at the height of his stardom, after being diagnosed with HIV. This was before effective combination treatment became available and at a time when an HIV diagnosis was widely viewed as a death sentence.

Johnson, 64, said the HIV-related discrimination he faced from the public, the NBA and his own teammates at the time made him “upset, then very angry.” He recalled rival teams refusing to play against him, losing sponsorships and more.

“I had to really just adjust to that until they got comfortable again,” he said. “I’m a guy that can adjust. Thank God I had that in me. I think I was the right person. I was just the right person at the right time.”

Johnson discussed how he redefined himself after he retired from professional basketball.

“I’ve always wanted to become a businessman after I was done playing,” he said.

Today, Johnson owns stakes in several Los Angeles professional sports franchises, including the WNBA’s Los Angeles Sparks and Major League Baseball’s Los Angeles Dodgers. He also invests in a variety of industries.

Over the last 30 years, Johnson has also launched a chain of movie theaters, in partnership with Loews, in predominantly Black neighborhoods in major cities in the United States, including Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles and New York City. Additionally, he has a 50/50 venture with Starbucks to open cafés in Black neighborhoods.

[Forbes estimates Johnson's net worth](#) to be \$1.2 billion, putting him in the ranks of only three other professional athlete billionaires: Michael Jordan, LeBron James and Tiger Woods.

"From a poor kid growing up to even think about [becoming a billionaire] is a blessing," he told BBC.

In November 2021, [Johnson marked the 30th anniversary of his public disclosure of his HIV status](#) with press interviews and public statements with a post on Twitter (now X): "God has really blessed me! Today marks 30 years living with HIV so the message resonated with me in such a tremendous way. I thank the Lord for keeping me, giving me strength, and guiding me for 62 years but especially the last 30."

To read more, click #Magic Johnson. There, you'll find headlines such as "[Nope, Magic Johnson Has Not Been Cured of HIV](#)," "[Magic Johnson on HIV Awareness in 2023, Grandkids, Marriage](#)" and "[Magic Johnson Did NOT Contract HIV From a Hepatitis Vaccine](#)."