

Pass It On®...

A Legend On and Off the Court.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar sold his four championship rings and three MVP trophies for \$2.8 million. Then he donated all of the money to support youth education programs.

Known for his unstoppable “skyhook,” Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was a graceful force on the court who held the NBA’s all-time scoring record for 38 years. The game changed a lot in those nearly four decades. But during that time, the man behind the competitive stare only got deeper, more pensive and more involved in communities, believing that “I can do something else besides stuff a ball through a hoop. My biggest resource is my mind.”

Soon, Kareem became a gracious force off the court. He is the author of 13 books and a comic book series. His writings add perspective on African Americans who fought in WWII, his experience with his mentor John Wooden, his time spent on an Apache reservation helping coach a youth basketball team, and street basketball, through a series of books for kids. His articles have appeared in Time Magazine, The Huffington Post, Newsweek and others. Alongside his six NBA Championships and six MVP awards are his two Columnist of the Year awards.

His writings are always thoughtful expressions on how to improve the human condition, particularly for those who begin their lives a few steps behind the rest. He has championed a more equitable health care system, improvements to education access, the rights of expression for artists and filmmakers, and anti-racism.

Kareem has long been involved in community projects, and his focus for the last 10 years has been on introducing underserved students to STEM. He aims to “give kids a better idea of where they can go with their education.”

Kareem’s Skyhook Foundation starts with giving Angeleno fourth- and fifth-graders “a shot that can’t be blocked.” It’s an immersive outdoor experience that opens young students’ eyes to the possibilities. The success rate of students participating in this program is impressive: They have a 96% graduation rate.

“It puts them on a path to becoming scientists, technicians and engineers,” Kareem says in an interview with CNBC. “Kids all want to become LeBron James or Jay-Z or Beyonce, and they really don’t have realistic ideas about what they can do with their educational opportunities.”

Kareem knows that getting an education is the key to a more fulfilling life. That’s especially important now, when the pandemic put nearly every secondary student behind academically. And those students who go on to pursue a STEM major make four times more money. But it’s more than income; it’s about getting a shot at opportunity.

“Everybody needs to contribute what they can,” Kareem says. And to show that contributing to our communities is greater than any award we receive, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, one of the greatest basketball players to ever play the game, sold his four championship rings and three MVP trophies for a whopping \$2.8 million to help fund his projects.

“Great players are willing to give up their own personal achievement for the achievement of the group,” he says. “It enhances everybody.”

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