

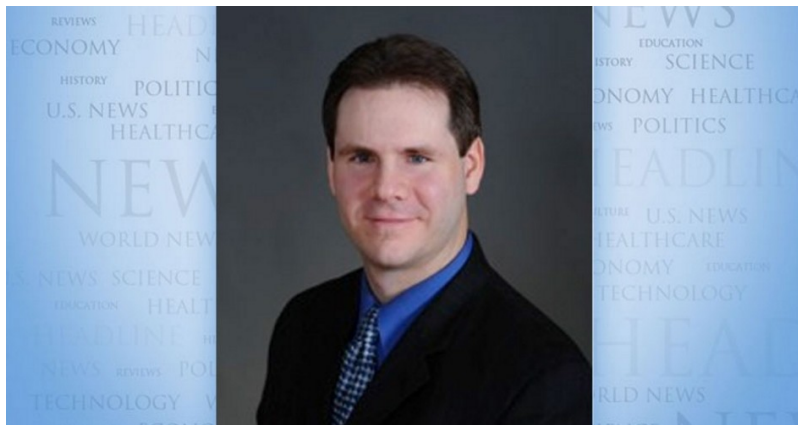


Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 7, 2022

## Arrested in Russia: Some Say “America Has Failed Brittney Griner”

How much should people be paid for a product that doesn't sell? According to those upset about the Russians' arrest of basketball player Brittney Griner, oodles of money is the answer — if that unmarketable product happens to be the WNBA.

In fact, say these critics, that Griner is charged with “large-scale transportation of drugs” — for allegedly trying to leave Russia with vape cartridges filled with cannabis oil — is America's fault.



Selwyn Duke

Griner is in Russia because since 2014, “she's suited up for Russian powerhouse UMMC Ekaterinburg alongside a rotating group of fellow WNBA superstars, including Breanna Stewart, Jonquel Jones, Allie Quigley, Courtney Vandersloot, and Emma Meesseman,” [wrote](#) Business Insider's Meredith Cash Saturday. The allure is that Griner is reportedly paid \$1 million yearly for her months-long Russian gig, vs. the \$227,900 annual salary she commands from the Phoenix Mercury.

But “Brittney Griner should be at home right now,” [lamented](#) Deadspin's Jesse Spector in his Sunday piece, “America has failed Brittney Griner.” The woman “should have been getting what she's worth from the Phoenix Mercury,” he later grouched.

Cash added, “Had she made even a fraction of what her NBA counterparts do while playing domestically, Griner could have stayed in the United States for the offseason without fear that she wouldn't have enough money for retirement.”

Yet absent from both articles is a simple fact: The WNBA *exists at the NBA's pleasure*. For the former has been losing more than \$10 million annually every year since its 1990's birth — with total losses in the neighborhood of a quarter of a billion dollars.

The league is still around because the “NBA subsidizes [it] out of the goodness of its politically correct heart,” as Sport-Net [put it](#) last year. It's basketball's affirmative-action-program charity case.

Also absent from the blame-America-first articles is that on top of Griner's \$227,900 WNBA salary — about four times the average American's — the 31-year-old also makes money off endorsements. Her current net worth is [approximately \\$3 million](#) while for the average household “under 35,” the [figure is \\$76,300](#). Most Americans would love having her finances.

But the Situational Equality Crew isn't interested in that comparison. They insist on rating her pay against that of NBA players, a fact evidencing how too many people are children of their age who don't see beyond its conditioning. That is to say, it's not just that the NBA pays the freight with its whopping [\\$7.4 billion](#) in yearly revenues. It's also this:

Where is it written that skilled athletes *must* become filthy rich dribbling, kicking, or hitting a ball around?

For most of history, the idea of becoming outrageously wealthy playing a game would've been alien to



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people. In ancient Athens, the most even great war heroes received was free meals for life. And legendary golfer Bobby Jones never made money from competition (he remained an amateur) and retired at 28 to pursue a law career.

So why is it assumed that a “great” athlete today, Griner or otherwise, must leave his sport with enough money to henceforth enjoy a workshy life of silk-and-satin luxury? Is there anything wrong with moving on to a new career to supplement your savings?

(It’s far better, too, than a Devil’s-playground idle mind occupying itself with drugs.)

“But wait,” some will say, “the NBA players *do* enjoy that workshy benefit.” This reflects the second spirit-of-the-age assumption.

There are perhaps countless examples of market-determined pay discrimination among groups. Some may say lightweight boxers do the same “work” as the heavyweights, but they don’t make nearly as much money. Female fashion models earn considerably more than their male counterparts. Fifty-year-olds command higher incomes on average than 25-year-olds in the same profession. And while [high-level 14-year-old boy soccer players](#) can and do [beat the female professionals](#), the latter get rich while they (and all junior athletes) get nothing.

For that matter and as some have lamented, why do sportsmen and movie stars earn infinitely more than doctors and policemen, people who, objectively speaking, are far more necessary for civilization?

Because the market says so.

So what should determine earnings? The market or some Ministry of Fairness™ oligarchy?

In truth, the “equality” shouters don’t question market-determined group-pay discrimination in *most* cases. They do so when *their* favored groups earn less than supposedly “privileged” ones, as they demand the privilege of cherry-picking who gets a special dispensation from market realities. Why, writing at NBC last Monday on the U.S. women’s soccer team’s [successful con-job extraction](#) of another \$24 million from their governing body, Perdue professor Cheryl Cooky [actually wrote](#) that a “true win for equality would be for ... both the men’s and women’s teams to receive equal treatment by the federation, regardless of how much revenue they generate.”

(One could perhaps ask Cooky why college professors should earn more than schoolteachers and “average” Americans.)

Of course, unsaid here is that if any female athlete wants the men’s money and thinks she deserves it, there’s a simple way to get it and prove that worthiness: compete in — and succeed in — the men’s arena. The point?

It takes chutzpah lobbying for the same pay based on an equality argument while simultaneously supporting an inherently unequal system: having separate, protected (from the best competition) tours, leagues, and teams for women. It’s a bit like creating a basketball league for only white guys and then demanding the NBA’s money.

As for Griner, some worry the Russians may wish to use her as a sort of high-profile hostage, given the current situation. Perhaps. Nonetheless, her WNBA fellows in Russia apparently remained unmolested, and it’s unlikely that anyone planted the cannabis on her.

Yet despite what appears a very unwise decision to break a non-Western country’s laws, for which she faces a possible 10 years in prison, the athlete’s plight “is America’s fault.”



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What is America's fault is tolerating, even for a second, such brazenly childish excuse-making.



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