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[King James and King George: Being Royal, Loyal, and Real](#)

As I began to write this article, I heard the news about the death of George Steinbrenner, owner of the New York Yankees. My sincerest condolences go with my prayers to his family and the Yankee community.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, King George is one native who grew up always trying to prove to his father that he could be as smart in things he did. This proof he earned when he organized a team and negotiated the purchase of the New York Yankees for a price of US\$10 million. Now valued at about US\$3.4 billion, he transformed the team into becoming the most successful and most valued sports franchise in the North American continent if not in the world. This was after his failure to buy the Cleveland Indians franchise losing out to the then owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Although he made most of his money in New York and outside of Cleveland, King George, as many called him, never forgot his roots—he credited Cleveland

as the place that shaped who he is. He pursued his dreams, “hitched his wagon to the stars,” always trying to create the perfect winning American baseball team. While many hated the Yankees, Americans still desired watching them because of the star-studded and great-playing ballplayers that composed King George’s team. He demanded excellence and perfection. He always wanted to win and win big. His team attracted loyal and die-hard fans not only in New York but in many places including Cleveland

. In baseball he was Royal; to the Yankee fans, he was loyal; his success was real.

No wonder then that LeBron, who was named and promoted as King James in Cleveland

and beyond, was a Yankee fan. Like King George, he pursued perfection, and excellence desiring to win all the time. Demonstrating extraordinary basketball

skills as a teenager, he was drafted directly from high school to face the challenges of professional playing in the National Basketball Association (NBA). He was very happy that the Cleveland Cavaliers took it upon themselves to team up with him in preparing, pursuing, and eventually winning an NBA Championship not just once but several more.

King James stayed with the team for seven long years—enough to build a core of players who would support the King's quest of his boyhood dream. Under his leadership, the Cavaliers won the most games among NBA teams in the entire league during the last two years. He was also voted the Most Valuable Player (MVP) during the past two years. He obviously did his best but was not enough to win his desired NBA Championship—not with the supporting cast that he had.

The entire NBA knew that LeBron, Wade, Bosh, Stoudamaire, and a few others were going to be unrestricted free agents this year. This means that while the team owners always had the right to buy, sell, or trade players, this time the free-agent players have the unrestricted right to choose which team to go to. It is a legal right that is enforceable and which every owner must respect and obey without reservation.

In recognition of those rights, the players and owners set up a process through which presentation offers were made. The offers are then evaluated and the corresponding free agent decides. The most sought after among the free agents was LeBron James. The same procedures were followed. Team owners and executives went through the process, recognized the jurisdiction of the decision-making player, and hoped for a favorable decision. The Los Angeles Clippers, the New York Knicks, the New Jersey Nets, the Chicago Bulls, the Miami Heat, and the Cleveland Cavaliers made offer presentations to LeBron James. They all knew when the decision was going to be made and how it was going to be announced.

LeBron decided to go to Miami, joining Wade and Bosh to form a Championship caliber team under the tutelage of team president Pat Riley and Filipino-American coach Erik Spoelstra. His decision was fully supported by his mother, his relatives, his friends, and his most loyal fans in Akron, Cleveland, and other places. Understandably, the non-Miami Heat owners and fans, especially those who were pursuing him, were disappointed. In sports, there are always winners and losers. Momentarily, the Miami Heat and their fans are the big

winners.

The reaction of Dan Gilbert, the owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers, was disappointingly immature, inappropriate, and unsportsmanlike. As one columnist wrote, "Gilbert sounded like a scorned lover, a guy who gave his heart to a relationship and found out on national TV that the alleged love of his life didn't care about him at all."

As a lawyer, he knew that he could lose, given the process and the rules that everybody played by. He had all the advantages and the benefits of time, money, and access to show that the best place for LeBron was in Cleveland. As an owner/chief executive, he failed in planning, organizing, leading, and controlling efficiently and effectively all the factors that could have led to LeBron deciding to stay. Pat Riley and the Miami organization were obviously better and more effective.

Gilbert described LeBron's decision and action to pursue his dreams somewhere else as "cowardly betrayal, an act of disloyalty, heartless and callous action." I disagree, and NBA Commissioner Stern agreed with me. That's why Gilbert was fined.

I used to hear people say, "Destiny is not a matter of chance but a matter of choice; it is not to be awaited, it is to be achieved." As a young boy, LeBron was encouraged by elders to choose his destiny and strive to achieve it. At the age of 25, he has chosen his destiny and expects to achieve it within a shorter period of time in Miami. Like George Steinbrenner, he is seeking excellence and perfection so that he could go back to his hometown of Akron with pride and honor.

Gilbert is from Michigan. He maintains his residence in Michigan. Yet he makes his money and roots for the Cavaliers in Cleveland

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Ohio

. Does that make him disloyal to the Detroit Pistons of Michigan?

George Steinbrenner pursued his dreams in New York despite his being a native of Cleveland. I have

Written by Benjamin Maynigo
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friends, relatives, and townmates who left their hometowns to look for greener pastures. There are millions of Filipinos who sought employment in several countries for the betterment of themselves and their respective families. Yet, they are responsible for the remittance of billions of dollars contributing substantially to 7% growth of the Philippine economy.

It is not cowardly but gutsy to leave the comforts of your home and the security of your neighborhood to explore the world and face the challenges of your own future.

It is not betrayal and disloyalty to exercise your right of free agency in the pursuit of your own happiness.

LeBron helped Gilbert increase the value of his NBA franchise. The former helped build the Quicken Arena owned by Gilbert using public funds. Gilbert's real estate properties in Cleveland were exempted from taxes that should have gone to school children.

Instead of casting a spell on LeBron, Gilbert should thank him instead. Or perhaps he should use the equivalent amount of exempted taxes to buy tickets for the school children or the unemployed in Cleveland.

George Steinbrenner remained loyal to his roots in Cleveland despite making it in New York
and establishing residence in
Florida

. His being dubbed King George of Baseball is real.

LeBron James remains loyal to his roots in Akron, Ohio, despite his earnest pursuit for basketball perfection in
Miami

. The title King James of Basketball could be as real sooner than we think.

The Royal, loyal, and real duo should make Ohio proud!

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