

Daily Journal

SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

TOP 100 2020

LITIGATION

Louis R. “Skip” Miller

In an era of racial reckoning, Miller took to the U.S. Supreme Court claims that discrimination stood in the way of his African American client’s effort to get his entertainment network a place on television.

“He couldn’t get carriage,” said Miller of client Byron Allen. “He was frozen out, and we alleged it was for racial reasons. Blacks in the entertainment media business have been few and far between.” *Comcast Corp. v. National Association of African American-Owned Media*, 18-1171 (U.S. Sup. Ct., op. filed March 23, 2020).

Miller has now settled with Comcast and his client’s Entertainment Studios channels—including Court TV and an assortment of sitcoms, game shows and syndicated specials—now are distributed there. The settlement came after what Miller called a “narrow” ruling in Comcast’s favor that to prevail under the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which prohibits racial discrimination in contracts, race must be the key factor when a defendant makes a contractual decision.

“That early civil rights law was written to bring freed slaves into the economy,” Miller said. “People are coming to realize that there remains massive institutionalized racism today.”

In May 2020, Miller settled a case on behalf of the City of Inglewood and its mayor over plans to construct a new arena there for

the NBA’s Los Angeles Clippers. Madison Square Garden, the New York owners of The Forum, sited nearby, had sued to block the plan. *MSG Forum LLC v. City of Inglewood*, YC072715 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed March 5, 2018).

After nearly three years of litigation in seven different lawsuits, the issue resolved when Clippers owner Steve Balmer bought The Forum. The Madison Square Garden filed suit in “a pure blocking position,” Miller said. “Now, we just got the EIR approved,” he added, referring to the required Environmental Impact Report. With SoFi Stadium there as home of the Rams and the Chargers, “Inglewood will be the new sports and entertainment center for the western United States. We have remade the face of Los Angeles and Inglewood both.”

Miller also represented Los Angeles County in the 2015 Aliso Canyon gas leak litigation. He obtained court orders to extend the county’s residential relocation program and for Southern California Gas Co. to clean residents’ homes. The county sought nuisance abatement plus civil penalties and cost recoveries and in 2019 finalized a settlement that caused the gas company to pay \$119.5 million, of which \$25 million will go towards a long-term health study of the effects of exposure to natural gas; \$26.5 million for greenhouse gas abatement; and \$45.4 million to fund other environmental



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LOS ANGELES

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remediation projects. Southern California Gas Leak Cases, JCCP 4861 (L.A. Super. Ct., filed Feb. 2, 2016).

“Groundbreaking and important cases: that’s what we do,” Miller said.

— John Roemer