

HEATNATION

Alonzo Mourning opens up on 'neglected' communities in Miami as he looks to give back



Alonzo Mourning is reflecting on his connection to the Miami community with a heartfelt message tied to a significant anniversary and fundraiser.

“First of all, I’ve been here over half my life,” Mourning told the *Miami Herald* regarding why he feels so connected to Miami. “What has attracted me to this community is understanding that there’s a certain population here that has been neglected. They have. Unfortunately, not enough is being done for all the folks and the families that are west of 95. ... Still there’s communities like Overtown, Carol City, Liberty City, Opa-Locka, the list goes on. There are inner cities that are extremely impoverished and these are the fans that lifted me up over the years. So I feel like with all the contributions that have been made to my life and has allowed me to get to where I am, I feel like I owe this community. I do, I feel like I owe them the support necessary for their children’s children to accomplish their dreams just like I accomplished mine.”

On Saturday, Mourning and his ex-wife Tracy Wilson Mourning will be serving as hosts of the Overtown Youth Center Miami's "It's All Overtown" 20th Year Celebration Platinum Affair. The OYC provides service to children, families and adults in urban communities across Miami-Dade County and South Florida.

The Hall of Fame big man developed those ties playing for the Heat in 11 seasons over two stints. The first was for seven seasons running from the 1995-96 season through the 2001-02 campaign. Then, after sitting out the 2002-03 season because of kidney disease and a very brief stint with the New Jersey Nets, he returned to finish his NBA career in Miami from the 2004-05 season until retiring after the 2007-08 campaign.

He played 593 regular season games for the Heat, averaging 16.0 points and 8.1 rebounds per contest and was a member of their 2006 NBA championship team. ESPN pundit Stephen A. Smith said that **Mourning was more feared than teammate Shaquille O'Neal** in those 2006 NBA Finals against the **Dallas Mavericks**.

In addition, Tim Hardaway has credited Mourning with **helping to start the famous Heat culture**, along with Pat Riley and others. An intimidating presence on the court, the Georgetown University product was the No. 2 overall pick in the 1992 NBA Draft, behind O'Neal at No. 1 overall by the **Orlando Magic**. He played three seasons for the **Charlotte Hornets** before arriving in Miami in a blockbuster trade in November 1995.

Mourning undoubtedly must be proud that the Heat culture exists to this day, with Miami getting ready to try to make another long playoff run after reaching the Eastern Conference Finals in three of the previous four seasons, including two trips to the NBA Finals.

With two games remaining in the regular season, both at home against the **Toronto Raptors** on Friday and Sunday, the Heat are in eighth place in the Eastern Conference. They look bound for the play-in round for a second straight year after emerging from there to reach the 2023 NBA Finals, which they lost to the **Denver Nuggets**.