

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



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Honoring the Life and Legacy of Our Brother Muhammad Ali

As-Salaamu-Alaikum!

The Conveners of Imams associated with the Community of Imam W. Deen Mohammed express our deepest sympathies and condolences to the family of our Brother Muhammad Ali on his recent passing. We pray that Allah will forgive him his sins and grant him the Paradise. We also thank Allah for Blessing us with the gift of our Brother, for his life, spirit, love, compassion, and legacy.

Muhammad Ali's life and legacy touched us all and made us proud, as Americans, as Muslims, and as citizens of the world. Words cannot begin to capture the essence of his humanity, the genius of his mind, and beauty of his soul. He has been an internationally loved and respected icon for athletic excellence, faith, character, integrity, humanitarianism, and social justice. His life exemplifies the struggles of our time for freedom justice and equality. He lived his convictions, loved people, and refused to be cowered by the forces of money or power, no matter what the cost.

For Muslims throughout the world he has been our hero and source of boundless pride as he stood solidly on his faith in the face of ignorance and bigotry. Despite his fame and fortune, he refused to be bought and humbly submitted himself to his belief in Allah, the faith of Al-Islam, and his service to humanity. As Muslim Americans, we followed every step his life journey. We were touched with such pride as he boldly pronounced to the world his Muslim name and prayed openly for all to see in the corner of the ring before his fights. We soared in exhilaration as he conquered his opponents in his epic exploits in the ring and in life. His wins were our wins. His pain was our pain, and his struggle was our struggle. He touched all of us. His generosity and support of Islamic causes and interfaith efforts was endless. His universal fame and

admiration made him one of our most effective representatives for the face of Islam in America. His life was the personification of our struggles and aspirations.

He also loved his people and traveled all over America and the world speaking to the struggle of African Americans for freedom, justice and equality. His exceptional ability to touch our hearts and inspire our souls with his legendary poetry, wit and humor. He redefined the image and challenged the stereotypes of Black manhood and culture. He was pretty, proud, bold, brash and unapologetic. He was the personification of "Black Power!" He dedicated his life speaking to the plight of the weak, poor, forgotten and underprivileged. Muhammad Ali spent his time, energy and wealth on numerous causes benefiting the lives of his people. He never forgot his roots in the community. He loved to walk and talk among the common people, especially the children. He was truly the "Peoples' Champ!" For African American celebrities, athletes, and leaders he set an unprecedented standard for character and integrity, standing on his principles, not shying away from controversy, and always putting the interests of his community first. He was a true role model, spoke truth to power, and refused to sellout! Money was not his god and fame and fortune was not his master.

As Americans we celebrate the life of a national treasure! Muhammad Ali exemplified the character, spirit, and promise of America. Coming from humble beginnings, he rose to be the most recognizable and beloved person in the world! He first emerged on the international scene in the 1960 Olympics as a Gold Medal winner in boxing, representing our country. He later became the "Greatest Heavyweight Boxing Champion of All Time," defeating the most formidable of giants and heavyweight legends in the world, transforming the sport, and displaying unmatched athleticism and mastery of his art. His flamboyant personality and exploits in the boxing ring became American sports legend. He also navigated the most difficult issues of our time including race, religion, politics and social justice, with dignity, passion, powerful insight, wit and humor. He stunned the world when he stood up to the U.S. government, sacrificed everything for his religious beliefs, and refused to fight in the Vietnam War. However, in time, even those that once hated or opposed him came to respect him for his character, courage and integrity. His love and compassion for all people endeared him to millions and made him one of our most respected ambassadors to the world. In the last decades of his life, he accepted his struggle with Parkinson's Disease with humility and grace and became another champion for the rights and dignity of the disabled. When he stepped from the shadows, trembling with his affliction, lit and raised the torch at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, we all cried! He will be remembered as one of our nations' "greatest" heroes!

We thank Allah for Blessing us with his exceptional life! May he forever rest in Peace!