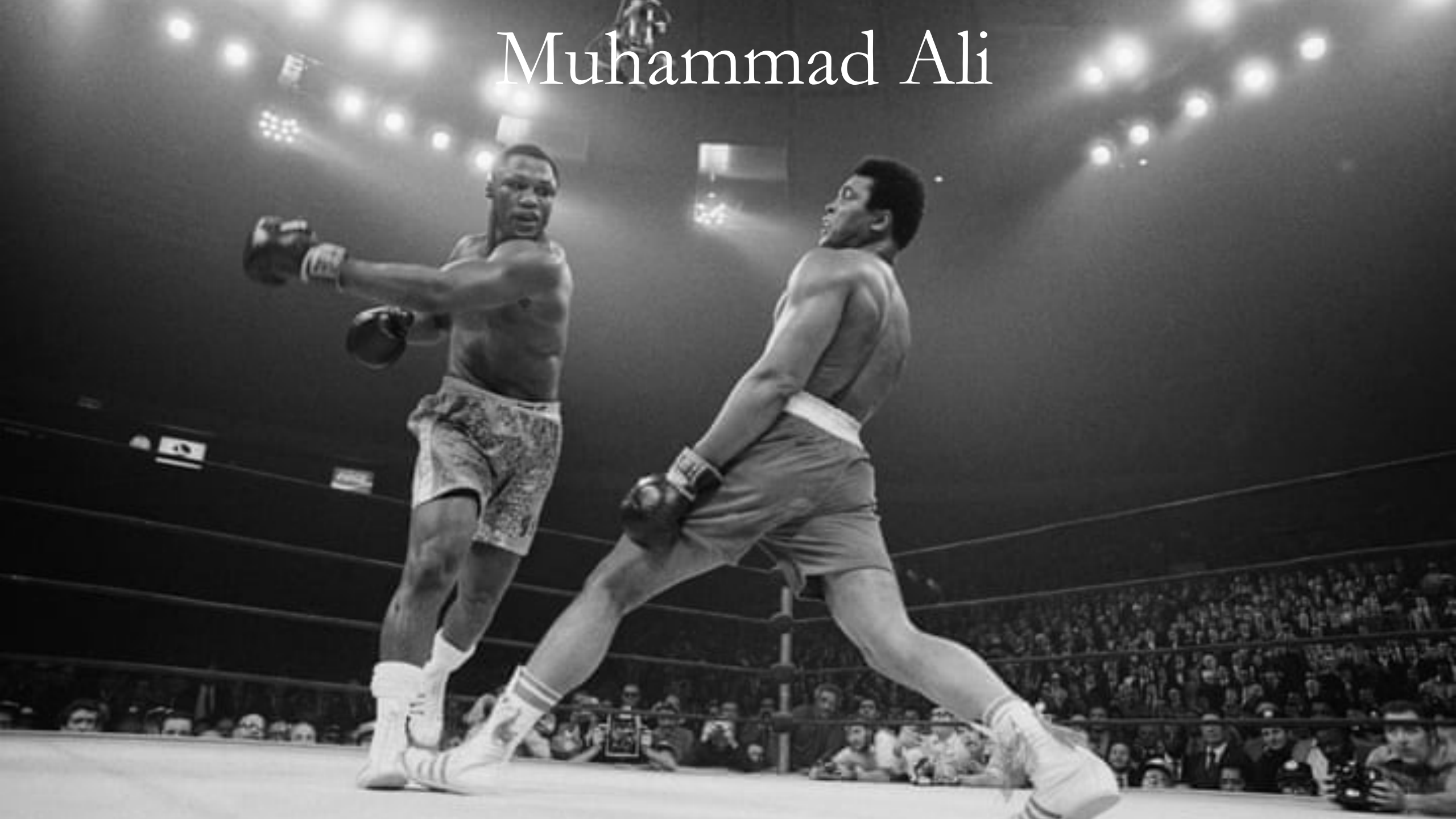
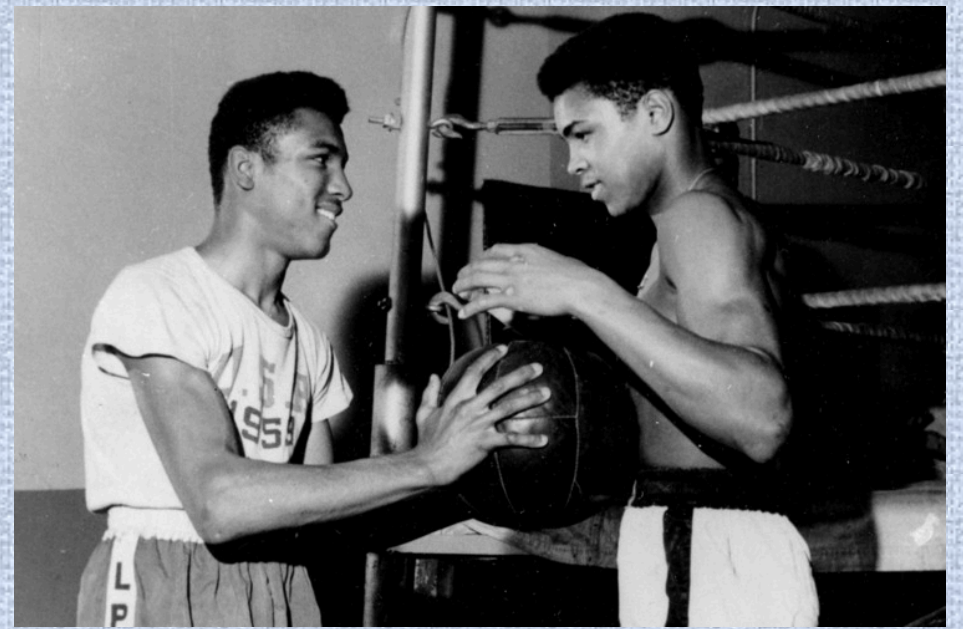


Muhammad Ali



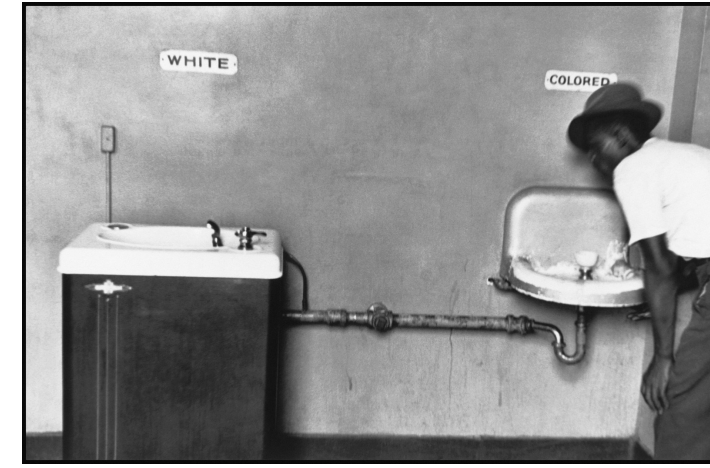


Early Years



- Born as [Cassius Clay](#) in 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky.
- Took up boxing at the age of 13.
 - A police officer introduced Clay to the integrated gym where he trained (a rarity in 1950s Louisville!)
- 6 weeks after he started training, Clay won his first bout.
- By the age of 18, Clay had 2 Golden Gloves titles, 2 Amateur Athletic Union national titles and 100 wins/8 losses.

Context: Life in the South in the 1940s-1960s



- At the time, much of America was still segregated. (MEANING?)
- It was rare to find a public space where blacks and whites shared physical space and worked side-by-side as equals.
 - Boxing was different. Seeing black and white men training & boxing together was one of the things that drew Clay to the sport.



1960 Olympics



Just after his high school graduation, Clay won the light heavyweight gold medal at the 1960 summer Olympics in Rome at the age of 18.

- When he returned home to segregated Kentucky, he wore his medal around his neck everywhere with pride.



- Shortly after he arrived home, Clay and a friend were refused entry to a whites-only restaurant. Clay yelled “this medal don’t mean nothing!” and threw his medal in the Ohio River.

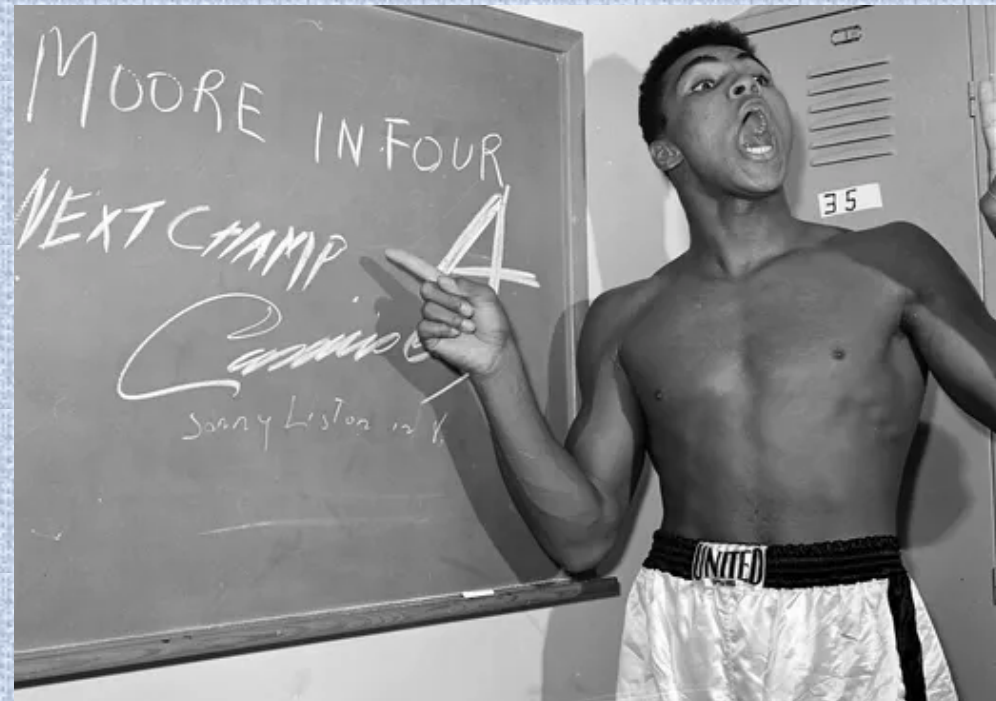
The Louisville Lip

“If you dream of beating me, you better wake up and apologize.”

- After the Olympics, Clay turned pro & landed a sponsorship deal.
 - From 1960-1963, he won all 19 fights he entered.
- Clay became known as a non-stop talker, a self-promoter, and a boxing poet.
 - Called himself “the greatest”
 - Bragged about his wins, often in rhyme
 - Made a habit of predicting the round in which he would beat his opponents



The Beatles visit Cassius Clay





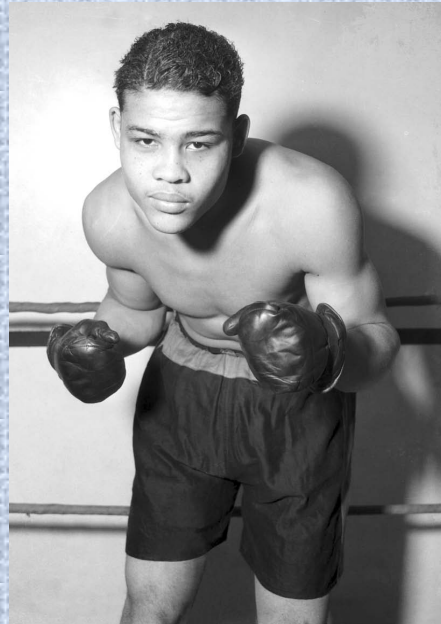


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A different kind of athlete...

- He wasn't like black boxers who came before him:

Joe Louis, heavyweight champ 1937-1949. Known for being soft-spoken, being a good sport, & not being a show-off.



Sonny Liston, heavyweight champ 1962-1964. Troubled youth, arrested 20+ times, 2 long prison terms during which time he learned to box. Intimidating in & out of the ring, terrifying attitude and vicious punch.

- Ali had his own opinions and wasn't afraid to say them (even if people disapproved.)
 - He once told a reporter, “I don't have to be what you want me to be, I'm free to be the person I want to be.”

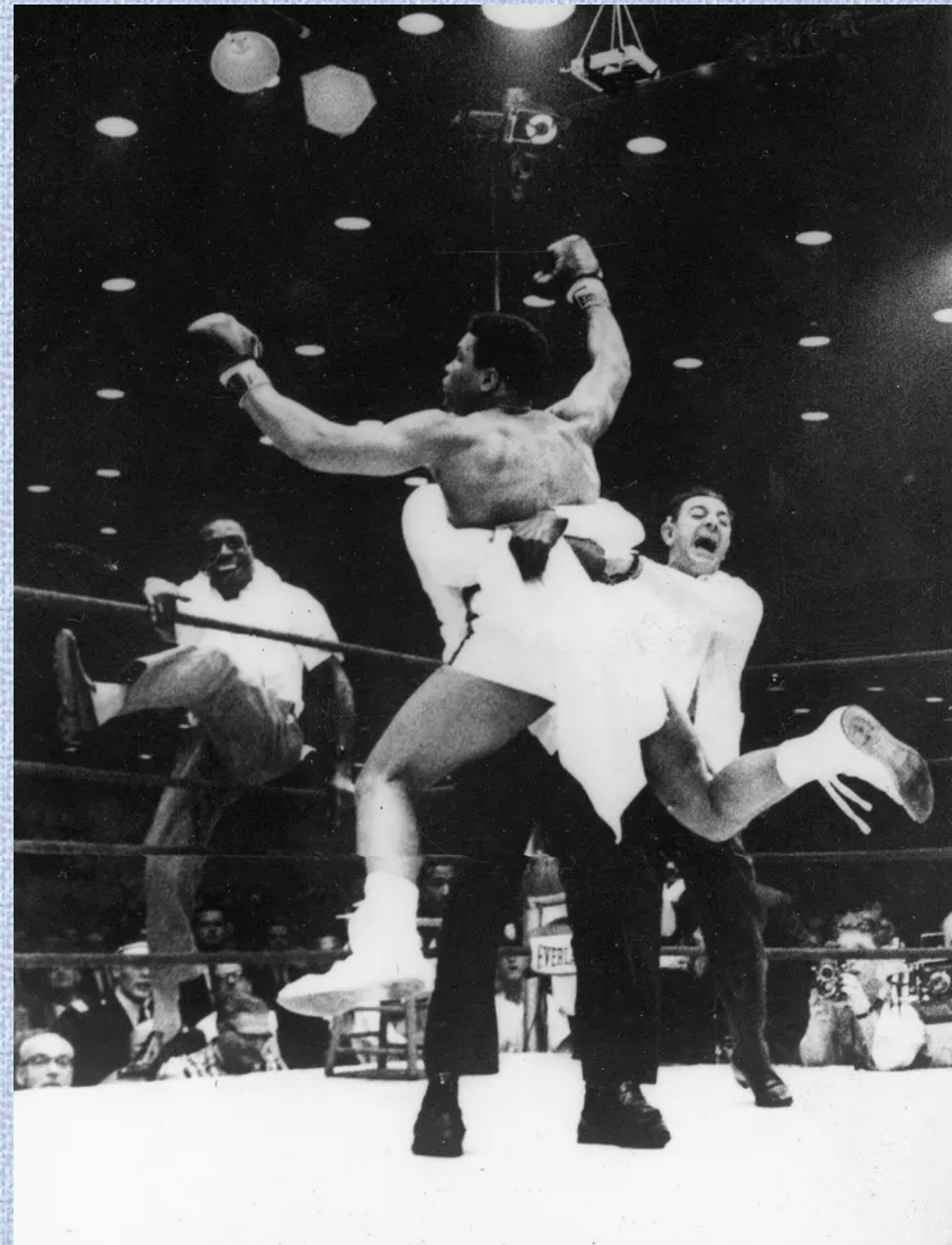
First Professional Fight (Feb. 1964)

- Ali's first professional title fight was against Sonny Liston, the reigning heavyweight champ. The odds were stacked 7-1 against Clay.
- Clay wasn't worried & wrote the following poem predicting his victory:
 - "Ain't he ugly?! He's too ugly to be the world champ. He should be pretty like me!"
 - He even left a bear trap (for the "Bear") on Liston's front lawn prior to the fight to fuel the rivalry.



Ali v. Liston

- Some of the press corps skipped the fight because they were disgusted with Clay's bragging & were convinced that he'd be destroyed.
- No one expected him to win but Ali knocked Liston out, and promptly announced to the TV cameras, "I shook up the world!" & "I am the greatest!"



Clay comes out to meet Liston & Liston starts to retreat,
if Liston goes back an inch farther he'll end up in a ringside seat.

Clay swings with his left, Clay swings with his right,
Look at young Cassius carry the fight

Liston keeps backing, but there's not enough room,
It's a matter of time till Clay lowers the boom.

Now Clay lands with a right,
What a beautiful swing, and the punch raises the Bear
clean out of the ring.

Liston is still rising and the ref wears a frown,
For he can't start counting till Sonny goes down.

Now Liston is disappearing from view,
The crowd is going frantic,

But radar stations have picked him up,
Somewhere over the Atlantic.

Who would have thought when they came to the fight?
That they'd witness the launching of a human satellite.

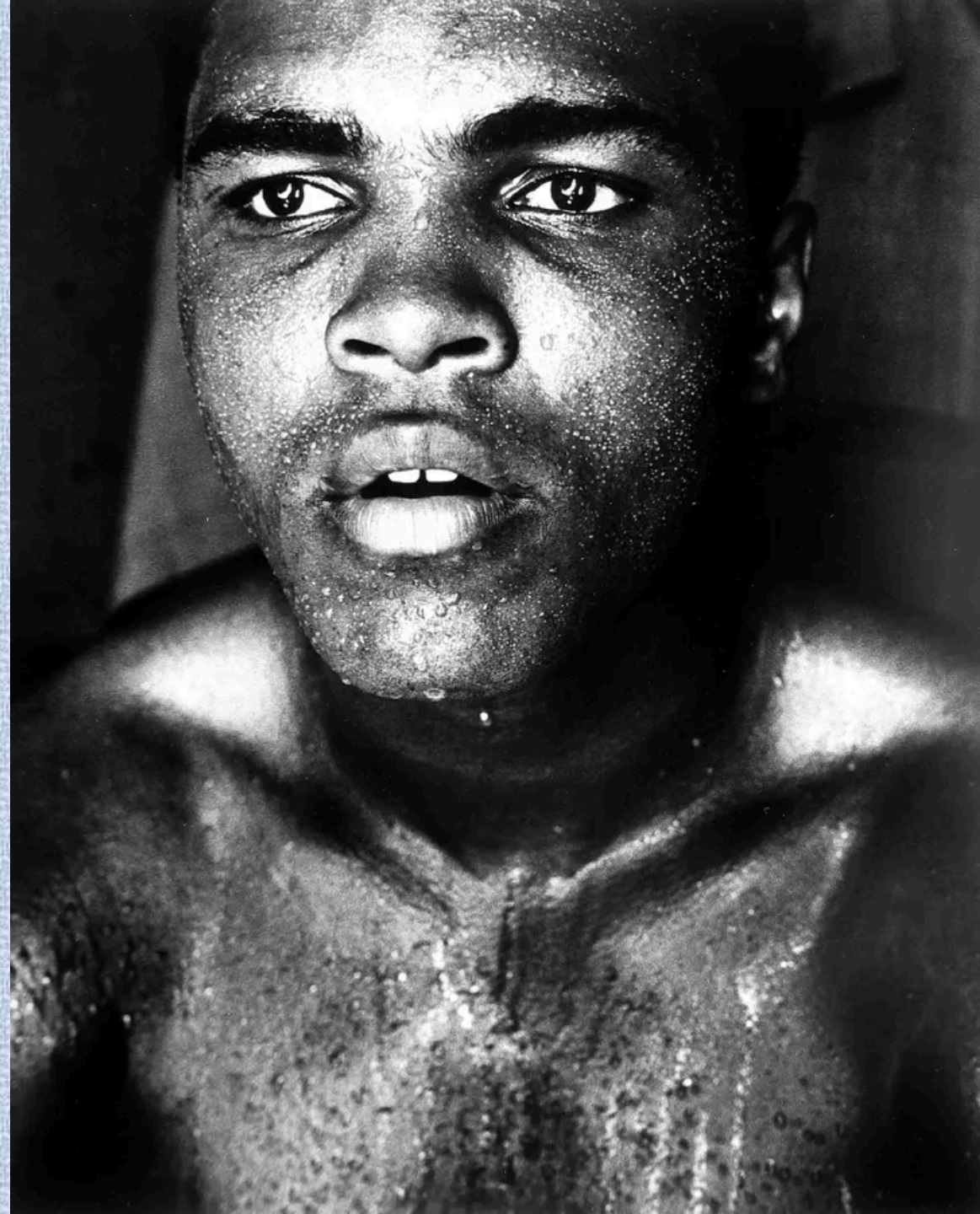
Yes the crowd did not dream, when they put up the money,
That they would see a total eclipse of the Sonny.



Career Stats

Ali defended his heavyweight title 9 times from 1965-1967, including in a rematch with Liston in 1965.

- The 1965 fight against Liston lasted 2 minutes & 8 seconds - some said Liston threw the fight it was over so quick.
- It was in this fight that he coined his signature phrase, “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, you can’t hit what your eyes don’t see...” as a reference to his light-of-foot and quick punching style.



Ali and the Nation of Islam

- Ali became an outspoken member of the Nation of Islam.
- The Nation of Islam:
 - Wanted a complete separation of the races (NOT integration as Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement wanted.)
 - Taught that Allah (God) would bring about a “black nation” made up of all the non-white people of the world – it was just a matter of time...
 - Argued that the enemy was the white man.



New York, 1963. With Malcolm X.

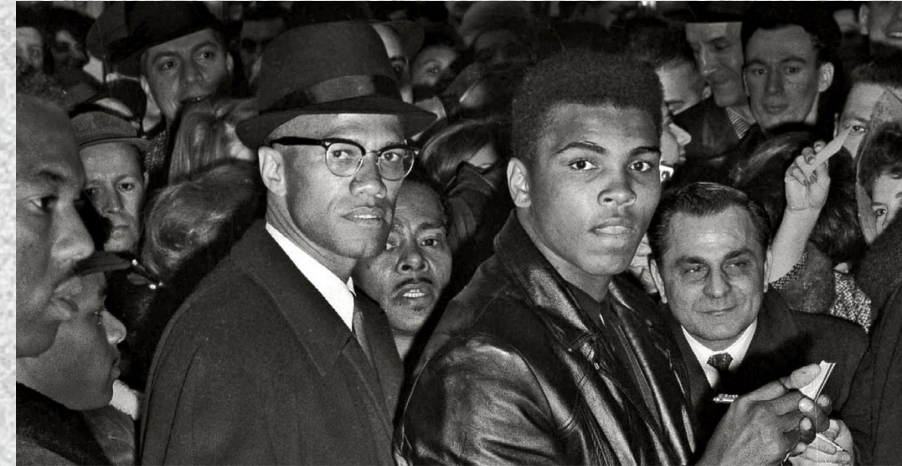


In the words of Ali...

Ali: “I don’t hate rattlesnakes, I don’t hate tigers — I just know I can’t get along with them,” he said. “I don’t want to try to eat with them or sleep with them.”

Reporter: “You don’t think that we can ever get along?”

Ali: “I know whites and blacks cannot get along; this is nature.”



Cassius Clay becomes Muhammad Ali

- In 1964, Cassius Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali

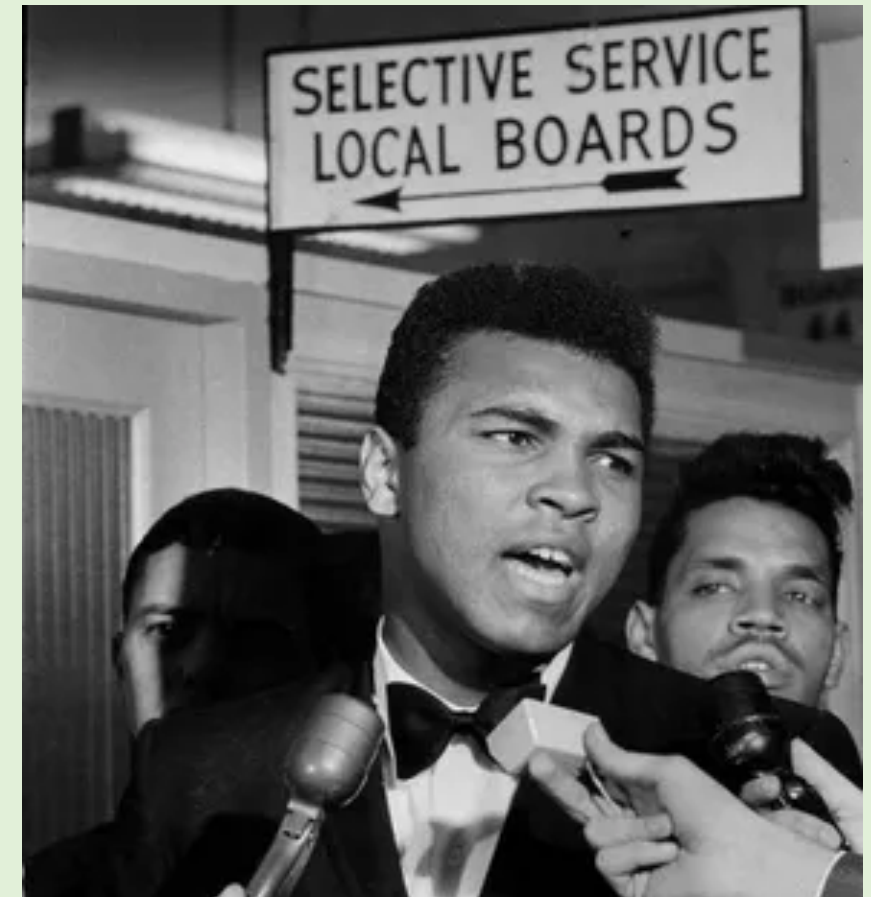
“Cassius Clay is a slave name. I didn’t choose it, and I don’t want it. I am Muhammad Ali, a free name, and I insist people use it when speaking to me and of me!”

- The media, many of his opponents (and even his own parents!) refused to call him by his new name.
 - 3 years later, one of his opponents, Ernie Terrell, also refused to call him Ali in pre-fight interviews. During the fight, Ali laid into him and with each punch screamed “What’s my name, fool? What’s my name?”

Ali and the Vietnam War

- **CONTEXT:**

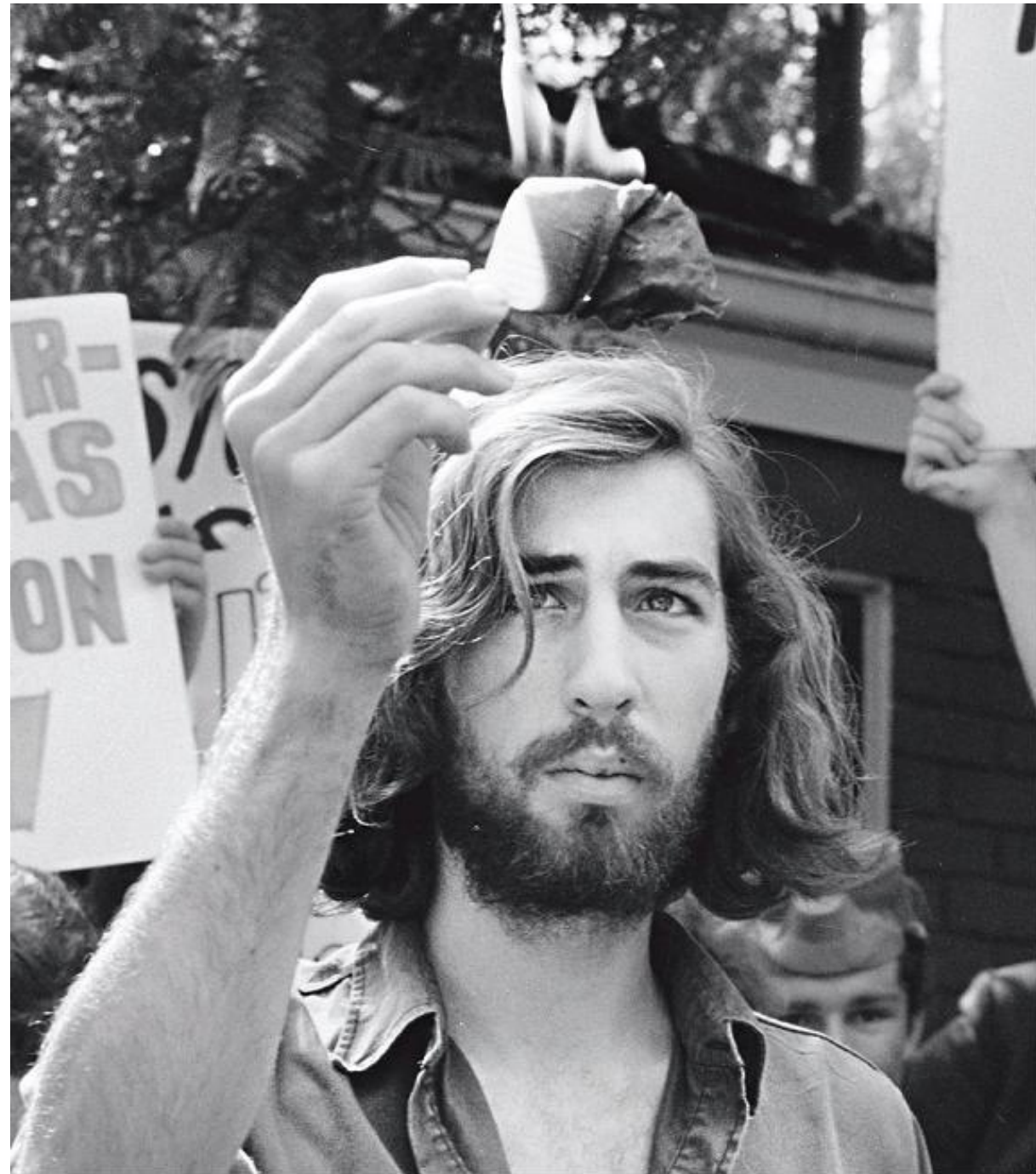
- By the mid-1960s, Americans were split over the US's involvement in the Vietnam War.
- In the late 1960s, the US increased its involvement each year in an effort to win the war.
- Roughly 25% of the military forces in Vietnam were made up of drafted men.

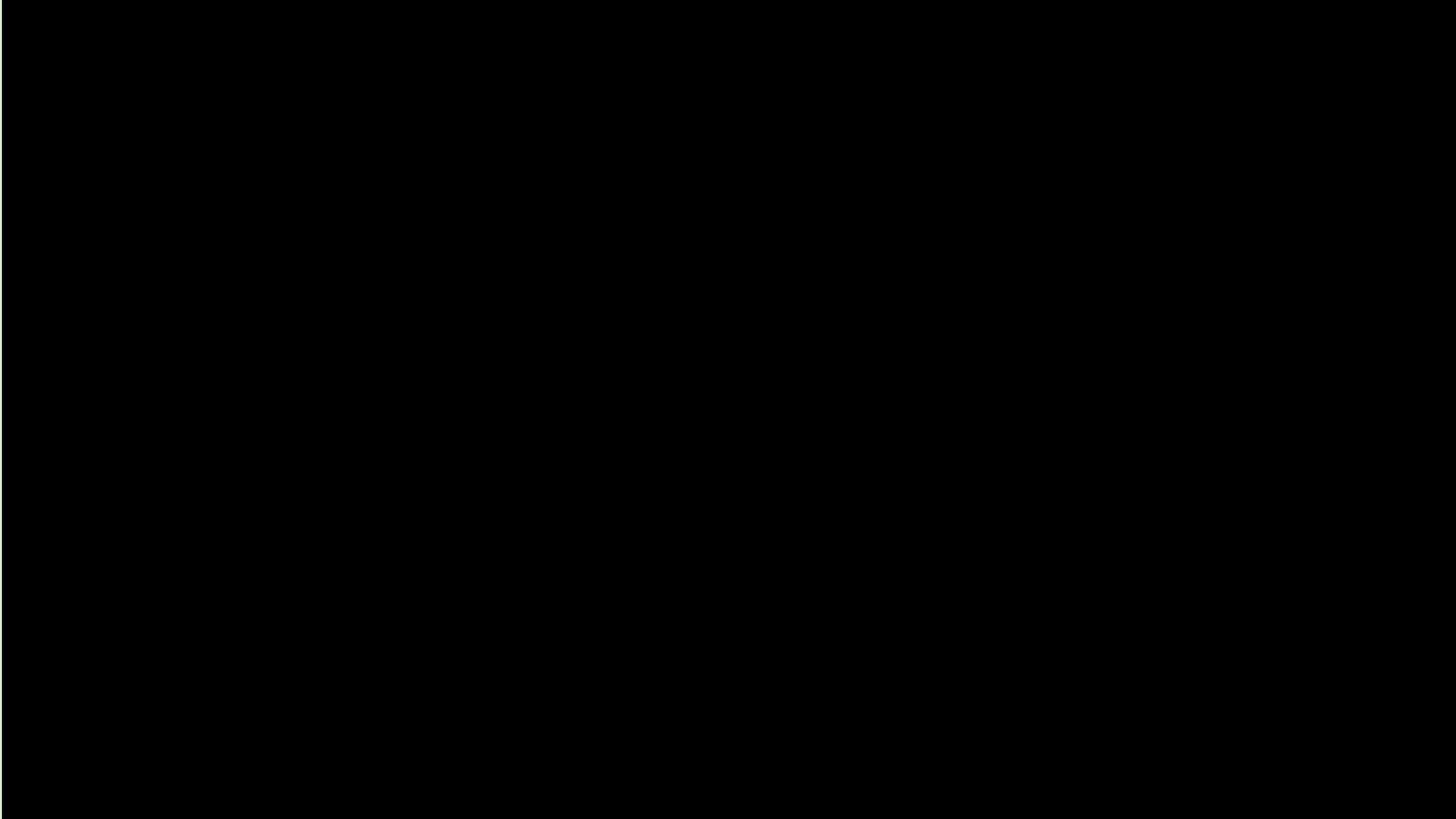


- In 1967, Ali was drafted to serve in Vietnam.
- At that time, roughly 500,000 troops were stationed in Vietnam and nearly 30,000 had been killed.

What is a “conscientious objector”?

- A person who does not want to serve in the military for moral or religious reasons.
 - Quakers, for instance, are known for being pacifists, and therefore object to war or killing.





Ali & the Vietnam War

- When he was called up in 1967, Ali refused the draft and was charged by the federal govt for resisting.
 - In June 1967, after 21 minutes of deliberation, Ali was convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to 5 years in prison and fined \$10,000. He paid a bond and remained free while the verdict was appealed.
- While he awaited his appeal, he lost his license to fight in many states, was stripped of his passport and was forced into a 3 year layoff while he battled the federal govt and state boxing commissions.
 - Ali used that time to speak out against the war on college campuses.
- In the meantime, Ali was called a draft dodger and people questioned his patriotism. Ali was also stripped of his heavyweight title.



Ali's Protest in Historical Context



DR. KING FATALLY SHOT BY ASSASSIN IN MEMPHIS

U.S. Shocked, Saddened by Slaying, Johnson Says

Message Is Given Nation After Assassination

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Johnson spoke Thursday night of an "America shocked and saddened" by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King as he condemned violence, lawlessness and divisiveness.

In a brief message to the nation via television and radio, Johnson disclosed that he is postponing a trip to Hawaii for a Vietnam strategy conference. He had been scheduled to leave around midnight. He said he will leave sometime Friday.

The President appeared in the doorway of the White House offices, stern-faced and spoke on all television and radio networks.

"I ask every American citizen," he said, "to reject the blind violence that has struck down Dr. King, who lived by nonviolence."

The President urged prayers for peace and understanding in the land and said:

"We can achieve nothing by lawlessness and divisiveness among the American people." He said he hopes all Ameri-

ANGUISH VOICED BY U.S. LEADERS

Shock, Grief, Is Reaction; Violence Feared

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's civil rights and political leaders reacted with anguish, shock and grief Thursday night at the slaying of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

There also was fear that the slaying could lead to more violence.

"We have been saddened," President Johnson told the nation on radio and television. "I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King who lived in nonviolence."

TRIP PUT OFF

The President said he was postponing his trip to Hawaii, for a Vietnam strategy conference, until Friday. He had been scheduled to leave about midnight Thursday.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey said the slaying "brings shame to our country."



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING
Rifle Bullet Fells Rights Crusader

King: Been to Mountaintop No Matter What Happens

Dies Hour After Injury; Troops Recalled

By DOUG STONE
MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King Jr., father of non-violence in the American civil rights movement, was killed by an assassin's bullet Thursday night.

King, 39, was hit in the neck by a bullet as he stood on the balcony of a motel here. He died less than an hour later in St. Joseph Hospital.

Gov. Buford Ellington immediately ordered 4,000 National Guard troops back into the city. A curfew, which was clamped on Memphis after a King-led march turned into a riot a week ago, was reimposed.

Police said incidents of violence, including several fire bombings were reported following King's death.

The 1964 Nobel Peace Prize winner was standing on the balcony of his motel here, where he had come to lead protests in behalf of the city's 1,300

Racial violence had broken out in Los Angeles in 1965; in Newark, New Jersey, Detroit, Michigan, and a dozen other cities in 1967.

In April 1968, following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, protest and riots occurred in more than 100 cities.

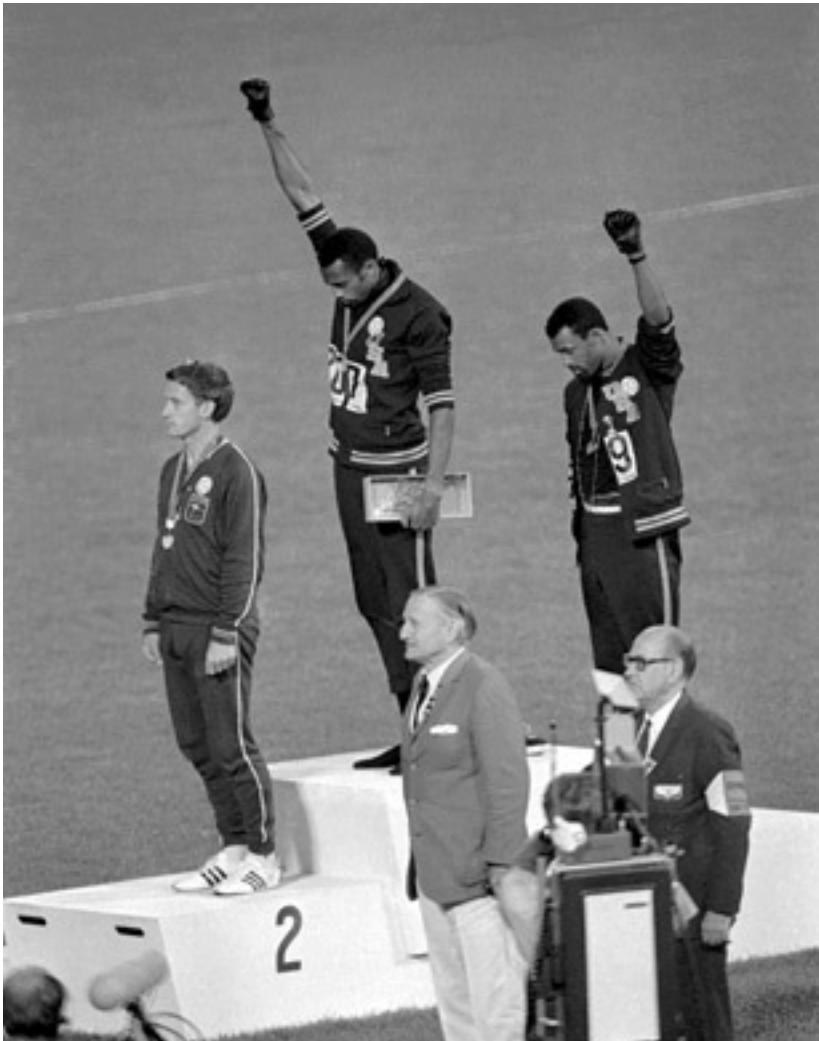
- America's racial politics changed a lot from 1964-1968. Many African-Americans were frustrated with the slow pace of change in America.

Ali's Protest in Historical Context (cont.)

- The Black Power movement had begun by the late 1960s.
 - A movement that focused on black pride & power.



- African American athletes at the Summer Olympics in Mexico City in 1968 had given the black power salute from the medals podium



- In the summer of 1968, the James Brown song, “Say It Loud, Say it Proud,” hit No. 1 on the R&B music chart.

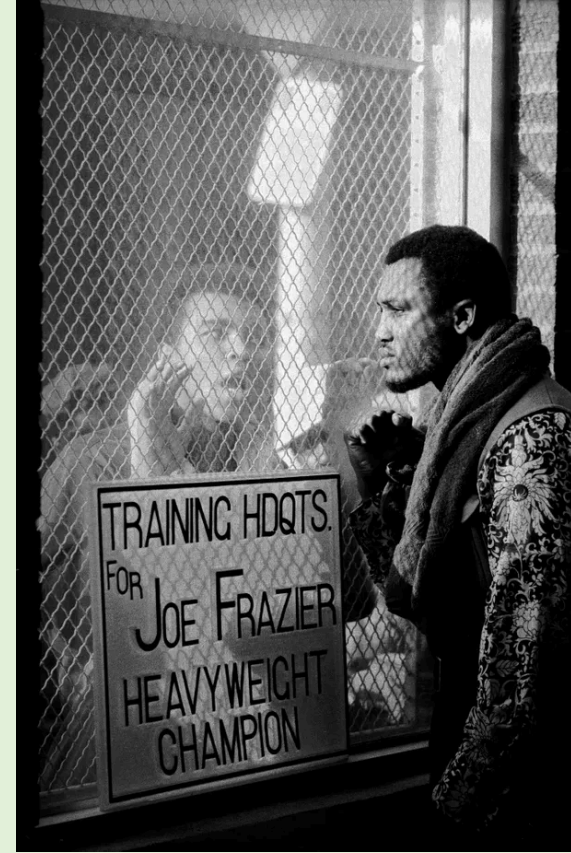




LIKE

Ali v. Frazier (1970)

- Ali was finally allowed to return to the ring in 1970.
- In his third fight back in the ring, he fought Joe Frazier at Madison Square Garden.
 - Frazier, who had a record of 26–0, was the reigning heavyweight champion of the world. He was known as a fierce boxer with a powerful left hook.
 - Ali, the former heavyweight champ, was also undefeated with a record of 31–0 (but coming off a 3 year suspension.)
- LOTS of hype leading up to the fight – Who is the real heavyweight champ?
 - Ali trash talked right up to the fight: *“Frazier is so ugly that when he cries, the tears turn around and go down the back of his head.”*



Before their fight in 1971, Ali arrived to Frazier's training gym in Philly to taunt his opponent. In the words of the photographer, "Ali was walking around outside trying to psych Frazier out but Frazier was this rock."



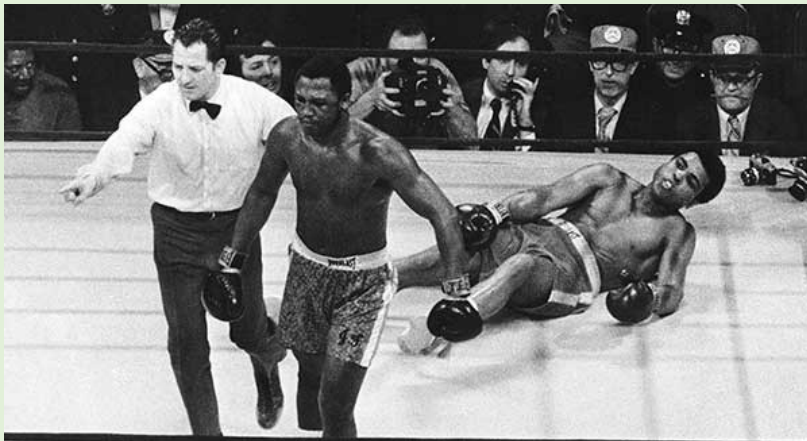
Fight of the Century

Some noteworthy facts from the first bout between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier.

Date	March 8, 1971
Venue	Madison Square Garden
Joe Frazier's record	26-0, 23 KOs
Muhammad Ali's record	31-0, 25 KOs
Ringside seat (2016 dollars)	\$150 (\$886)
Scalper ringside (2016 dollars)	\$1,000 (\$5,908)
Crowd	20,455
Guaranteed purse (2016 dollars)	\$2.5 million (\$14.8 million)
Worldwide viewership	300 million
AP scorecard	9-5-1 Frazier
UPI scorecard	7-7-1 Draw
Knockdowns	Ali in Round 15
Result	Frazier by unanimous decision



Said to be the biggest event in the history of boxing. Ali won the early rounds but Frazier knocked him to the mat in the 11th round and ultimately won.



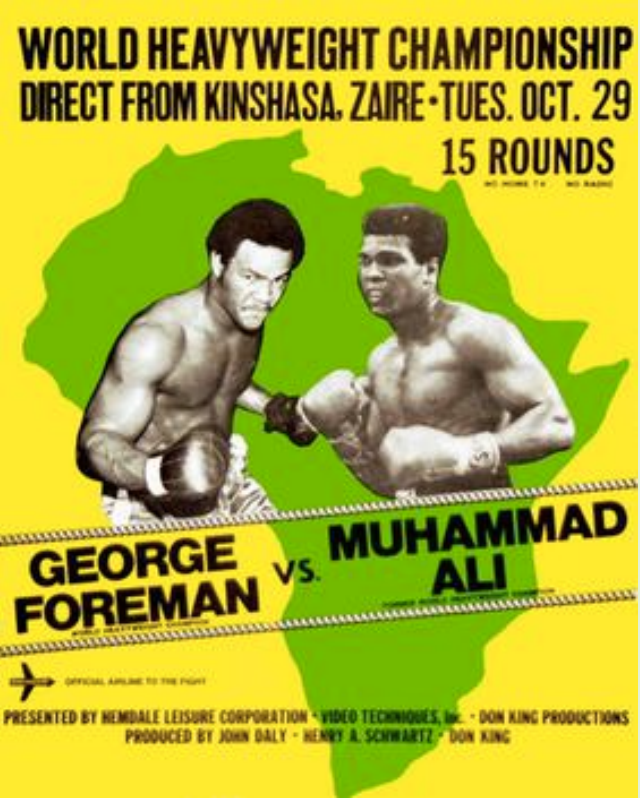
Importance: Ali had lost 3 ½ years at the height of his career – yet he came back, fought and made no excuses when he lost. (Ali did fight Frazier again and beat him in both fights.)

The Rumble in the Jungle

- Ali's most famous bout was the 'Rumble in the Jungle' in 1975 against George Foreman, which no one gave Ali a chance of winning.
 - Foreman was feared throughout the boxing world; his previous 8 fights had not gone beyond the 2nd round!



Ali's trademark confidence and rhyming scheme comes through in a pre-fight press conference...



The Rumble in the Jungle

- The fight was set up by boxing promoter Don King in Zaire, Africa.
- Marketed as a celebration of black power. Hired singer BB King, Sister Sledge and James Brown to perform at the fight as the marquee event.
- \$10 million purse = largest in history



The Rumble in the Jungle

- In the early rounds, Ali let Foreman pummel him, whispering “that all you got George?” By round 8, Foreman was exhausted and Ali had him where he wanted him. Then Ali moved in and stopped Foreman with a knockout. (He later called this move the “rope-a-dope.”)
- Ali’s legend was restored - 10 years after his first heavyweight title.



- In 1971, the Supreme Court granted Ali conscientious objector status, reversing Ali's prior conviction.
- Life after sports:
 - In 1984, at age 42, 3 years into retirement, Ali revealed he had Parkinson's disease. (The symptoms include tremors, tightening muscles, and slowness of movement & speech.)
 - 1990 Ali helped release 15 US hostages from Iraq after meeting with Saddam Hussein.
 - 1996 he lit the flame at the Atlanta Olympic games.
 - In 2005, President George W. Bush awarded Ali the Medal of Freedom.
- Ali remained a public figure until his death in 2016.

