

Statement on the Death of Muhammad Ali

June 4, 2016

Muhammad Ali was “the Greatest.” Period. If you just asked him, he’d tell you. He’d tell you he was the double greatest, that he’d “handcuffed lightning, thrown thunder into jail.” But what made “the Champ” the greatest—what truly separated him from everyone else—is that everyone else would tell you pretty much the same thing.

Like everyone else on the planet, Michelle and I mourn his passing. But we’re also grateful to God for how fortunate we are to have known him, if just for a while; for how fortunate we all are that the Greatest chose to grace our time.

In my private study, just off the Oval Office, I keep a pair of his gloves on display, just under that iconic photograph of him: the young champ, just 22 years old, roaring like a lion over a fallen Sonny Liston. I was too young when it was taken to understand who he was: still Cassius Clay, already an Olympic Gold Medal winner, yet to set out on a spiritual journey that would lead him to his Muslim faith, exile him at the peak of his power, and set the stage for his return to greatness with a name as familiar to the downtrodden in the slums of Southeast Asia and the villages of Africa as it was to cheering crowds in Madison Square Garden.

“I am America,” he once declared. “I am the part you won’t recognize. But get used to me—Black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own. Get used to me.”

That’s the Ali I came to know as I came of age, not just as skilled a poet on the mic as he was a fighter in the ring, but a man who fought

for what was right, a man who fought for us. He stood with King and Mandela, stood up when it was hard, spoke out when others wouldn’t. His fight outside the ring would cost him his title and his public standing. It would earn him enemies on the left and the right, make him reviled, and nearly send him to jail. But Ali stood his ground. And his victory helped us get used to the America we recognize today.

He wasn’t perfect, of course. For all his magic in the ring, he could be careless with his words and full of contradictions as his faith evolved. But his wonderful, infectious, even innocent spirit ultimately won him more fans than foes, maybe because in him, we hoped to see something of ourselves. Later, as his physical powers ebbed, he became an even more powerful force for peace and reconciliation around the world. We saw a man who said he was so mean he’d make medicine sick reveal a soft spot, visiting children with illness and disability around the world, telling them they, too, could become the greatest. We watched a hero light a torch and fight his greatest fight of all on the world stage once again, a battle against the disease that ravaged his body, but couldn’t take the spark from his eyes.

Muhammad Ali shook up the world. And the world is better for it. We are all better for it. Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to his family, and we pray that the greatest fighter of them all finally rests in peace.

NOTE: The statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary as a statement by the President and the First Lady.

Statement on the 35th Anniversary of HIV/AIDS in the United States

June 5, 2016

On June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report on what would later be understood as the first documented cases of AIDS. The past 35 years tell a

story that bends from uncertainty, fear, and loss toward resilience, innovation, and hope.

We’ve learned that stigma and silence don’t just fuel ignorance, they foster transmission

and give life to a plague. We've seen that testing, treatment, education, and acceptance can not only save and extend lives, but fight the discrimination that halted progress for too long. And we've reaffirmed that most American of ideas: that ordinary citizens can speak out, band ourselves together like a breathtaking quilt, and change the course of our communities and our Nation for the better.

Over these 35 years, American ingenuity and leadership has shaped the world's response to this crisis. From the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), we've saved millions of lives at home and around the world. My administration implemented our Nation's first comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy, and we've updated it through 2020.

We've invested in research and evidence-based practices that have given us revolutionary tools like treatment as prevention and pre-exposure prophylaxis. We've made critical investments to help eliminate waiting lists for the

AIDS Drug Assistance Program. We've continued efforts to support the promise of a vaccine. And the Affordable Care Act has resulted in millions of individuals gaining affordable, high-quality health coverage, all without denial for preexisting conditions like HIV.

While there is more work to do—the economically disadvantaged; gay and bisexual men, especially those who are young and Black; women of color; and transgender women all continue to face huge disparities—I'm confident that if we build upon the steps we've taken, we can finish the job.

Nearly 5 years ago, I said that an AIDS-free generation is within reach, and today, the global community is committed to ending this epidemic by 2030. This will take American leadership, smart investments, and a commitment to ensure that all communities are heard and included as we move forward.

So today let's call the names. Let's remember those we lost too soon. And let's rededicate ourselves to ending this epidemic once and for all.

Statement on the Observance of Ramadan *June 5, 2016*

As another new Moon heralds the start of the holy month of Ramadan, Michelle and I extend our best wishes to Muslims across the United States and around the world. For many, this month is an opportunity to focus on reflection and spiritual growth, forgiveness, patience and resilience, compassion for those less fortunate, and unity across communities. Each lesson is profound on its own and, taken together, forms a harmonious whole. It's also a time of year that brings some of the best dishes to the table across the world as families and neighbors gather for iftar.

Here in the United States, we are blessed with Muslim communities as diverse as our Nation itself. There are those whose heritage can be traced back to the very beginning of our Nation, as well as those who have only just arrived. Doctors, lawyers, artists, teachers, scientists, community organizers, public servants,

and military members, each night will all break their fasts together in cities across America.

As Muslim Americans celebrate the holy month, I am reminded that we are one American family. I stand firmly with Muslim American communities in rejection of the voices that seek to divide us or limit our religious freedoms or civil rights. I stand committed to safeguarding the civil rights of all Americans, no matter their religion or appearance. I stand in celebration of our common humanity and dedication to peace and justice for all.

And in this month of reflection, we cannot forget the millions of lives that have been displaced by conflict and struggle, across the world, and in our own backyards. Far too many Muslims may not be able to observe Ramadan from the comfort of their own homes this year or afford to celebrate Eid with their children. We must continue working together to alleviate the suffering of these individuals. This