



# The Trials of Muhammad Ali

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# Using this Guide



**Community Cinema** is a rare public forum: a space for people to gather who are connected by a love of stories, and a belief in their power to change the world. This discussion guide is designed as a tool to facilitate dialogue, and deepen understanding of the complex issues in the film *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*. It is also an invitation to not only sit back and enjoy the show—but to step up and take action. This guide is not meant to be a comprehensive primer on a given topic. Rather, it provides important context, and raises thought provoking questions to encourage viewers to think more deeply. We provide suggestions for areas to explore in panel discussions, in the classroom, in communities, and online. We also provide valuable resources, and connections to organizations on the ground that are fighting to make a difference.

For information about the program, visit [www.communitycinema.org](http://www.communitycinema.org)



# From the Filmmaker

The seed for *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* was planted some 20 years ago. I was a researcher working my first gig in documentary, a six-hour series on Ali's life with boxing as the main attraction. Yet I found myself transfixed by footage of him on college campuses making speeches against war and racism as a minister of the Nation of Islam, all while appealing his 5 year prison sentence for draft evasion. This was Ali with his gloves off, using wit and wisdom for speed and power and faith and conscience for strength and endurance. I knew I was watching a fight that was much bigger than any boxing ring could hold and it stayed with me.

Flash forward many years and Ali is still phenomenally well known across the world. Walk into any third-grade classroom, ask how many youngsters have heard of Muhammad Ali, and 80-90 percent will raise their hand. While name recognition is one thing, reckoning with his impact is something else. His notoriety beyond the ring has been dramatically undervalued, as has the way our collective response to him has evolved. Despite the fact that you can fill a multiplex with Muhammad Ali films, none zero in on his years in exile.

Ali's struggle was revolutionary – and it was common sense. Ali had the courage to define himself on his own terms. Doing that meant defying a lot of expectations about things such as, how a heavy-weight champion is supposed to behave or how a dutiful citizen is supposed to respond to the government's demand that they fight in a war. His steadfast refusal to abide by so-called "societal norms" when they conflicted with his own sense of self is a lesson for any of us who dare. I think the capacity to be yourself on truly principled terms--where you are representing the core of your identity, your beliefs and your morality--exists in all of us. I think we are all capable of doing that, but it means digging deep, accessing the truth of who you are and representing it in words and deeds.

In another part of my life, I work with the Great Books Foundation (<http://www.greatbooks.org>), a non-profit where I train teachers to build students' critical-thinking skills via open-ended texts. My approach to documentary is greatly informed by my work with Great Books and in that sense *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* aims to challenge audiences to think through questions and concerns that continue to confront us. I don't think of it as an "historical documentary." If it's doing its job, it helps make the past present, relevant and useful.

Whether Muhammad Ali inspires confidence or indignation in you, he demonstrates what it means to risk yourself for what you know is just. He was under government surveillance throughout his time in exile, but he wasn't doing anything illegal. People called him a draft-dodger, but he didn't burn his draft card or leave the country; he showed up at the induction center and refused to step forward. And in that period of horrific public assassinations of great leaders, the film shows him being completely unguarded on his speaking tour. He continues to be out in the open as much as his health permits, as he was 10 days after the attacks on 9/11 shaking with Parkinson's and saying "Islam means peace."

As a storyteller, I'm driven by the question of how people get to be who they are. How do you become yourself? It's always a struggle, and everyone does it differently. Ali's public journey covers the span of my lifetime. He was in the crosshairs of epic battles that I saw with a child's eyes, too young to understand what was happening, but feeling it nonetheless. Now, I see Ali's story as a rare prism through which to look at ourselves. I think of his years in exile as our years of national adolescence, a country kicking and screaming, righteous, defiant, and disobeying its elders. I hope that *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* offers food for thought and action, because we're still finding ourselves collectively, still struggling with who "we the people" want to be in the world. This may sound pretentious or corny, but when the film was finally done and I watched it as a complete work, I realized that for me there's a kind of book of life. There's guidance on that question of how to become your righteous self in the world.



Bill Siegel, Director of *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*

# THE TRIALS OF MUHAMMAD ALI

## The Film

*The Trials of Muhammad Ali* covers the most explosive crossroads of Ali's life. When Cassius Clay becomes Muhammad Ali, his conversion to Islam and refusal to serve in the Vietnam War leaves him banned from boxing and facing a five-year prison sentence. When Ali chooses faith and conscience over fame and fortune, it resonates far beyond the boxing ring, striking issues of race, faith and identity that continue to confront us all today.

A gold-medal winner in the 1960 Olympics, in 1964 Ali becomes the world heavyweight champion at the age of 22, taking the title away from Sonny Liston. Following that bout, Ali announces his membership in the Nation of Islam (NOI). He abandons his "slave name" of Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., and takes a new name: Muhammad Ali. His Muslim religion and name are changes that the media, his managers, his boxing opponents, and his parents have great difficulty accepting. But Ali remains adamant about being called by his new name, patiently repeating it to television interviewers and Congressional panels, taunting and punishing opponents in the ring who refuse to use it.

When Ali is drafted to fight in the Vietnam War, he makes his defining expression of resistance: "No, I will not go 10,000 miles to continue the domination of white slave masters over the darker people of the earth." As a minister in the NOI, he claims conscientious objector (CO) status. In 1967, the U.S. government denies Ali's claim, and he refuses military induction. He is convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to five years in prison, and fined ten thousand dollars. His passport is revoked, and boxing authorities strip Ali of his title and ban him from boxing.

As his conviction is appealed, Ali finds a new way to support his family. With the encouragement of his wife Khalilah, he goes on a nationwide speaking tour. Although he continues to be vilified by many in the United States, he steadfastly defends his Muslim beliefs and opposes the war in Vietnam and the racism he sees in American society. His legal case goes all the way to the Supreme Court, and after three and a half years, the Court overturns his conviction on a technicality.

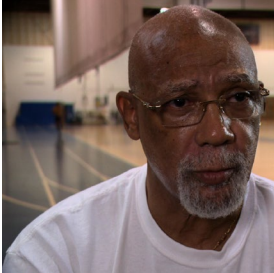
*The Trials of Muhammad Ali* delves into the struggles of a sports superhero who chooses faith and conscience over fame and fortune. Archival footage and recent interviews highlight his resolve, in the face of public anger and strong criticism from many quarters, to maintain his beliefs. In his speeches on college campuses and in media interviews, he fearlessly speaks his mind about his personal choices and about the plight of black Americans.

The film shows how Muhammad Ali, a world-famous boxer, caught up in the biggest and most controversial issues of his time, found spiritual meaning and influenced millions to oppose injustice. Now in his retirement, afflicted with Parkinson's disease, he remains an active philanthropist, an ambassador for peace, and a beloved hero throughout the world.



# Selected Individuals

featured in *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*



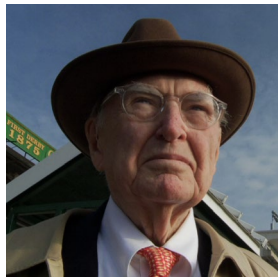
**John Carlos**  
1968 Olympic medal  
winner



**Louis Farrakhan**  
Leader, the NOI



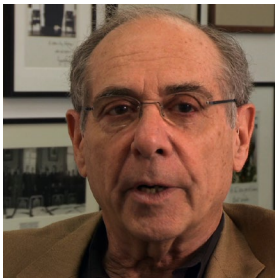
**Rahman Ali**  
Muhammad Ali's brother



**Gordon B. Davidson**  
Attorney, Louisville  
Sponsorship Group  
(Ali's management  
1960–1966)



**Khalilah Camacho-Ali**  
Muhammad Ali's former wife



**Robert Lipsyte**  
Sports writer,  
*The New York Times*



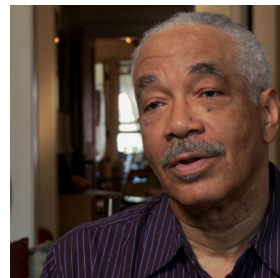
**Thomas G. Krattenmaker**  
Supreme Court clerk,  
1970-1971



**Hana Ali**  
Muhammad Ali's  
daughter



**Abdul Rahman Muhammad**  
NOI minister in Miami



**Salim Muwakkil**  
Former editor, *Muhammad  
Speaks*



# Background Information

## Muhammad Ali: A Biographical Summary

### Birth:

He was born Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr., on January 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky.

### Boxing career:

Beginning as a teenager, he won six Kentucky Golden Gloves titles, two national Golden Gloves titles, an Amateur Athletic Union national title, and the light heavyweight gold medal in the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome.

### Hallmarks of his style:

As a public figure, he was voluble, a nonstop talker, and an unabashed self-promoter who spoke his mind. As a boxer, two of his techniques were the "Ali shuffle," a combination of lightning-speed footwork with constant bobbing movement, and the "rope-a-dope," which involves assuming a protected stance of lying against the ropes, allowing the energy of the opponent's punches to be absorbed by the ropes' elasticity rather than the boxer's body; the idea is to cause the opponent to "punch himself out" and make mistakes which can then be exploited in a counterattack. Ali famously described his style as "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. You can't hit what you can't see."

### Major championship matches:

**1964** – Against Sonny Liston, whom he upset as heavyweight champion of the world

**1971** – First match against Joe Frazier, at Madison Square Garden in New York City ("The Fight of the Century")

**1974** – Against George Foreman, in Zaire (the "Rumble in the Jungle")

**1975** – Against Joe Frazier, in the Philippines (the "Thrilla in Manila")

### Personal:

- He married four times and has seven daughters and two sons.
- He was married to Sonji Roi from August 14, 1964, to January 10, 1966.
- He married Khalilah (formerly Belinda Boyd) on August 17, 1967. They had four children: Maryum (b. 1968), twins Jamillah and Rasheda (b. 1970), and Muhammad Ali, Jr. (b. 1972). They divorced in 1977.
- He married Veronica Porsche on June 19, 1977; they divorced in 1986. They had two children: Hana (b. 1976) and Laila (b. 1977, retired professional boxer).
- He is currently married to Yolanda "Lonnie" Williams (m. November 19, 1986). They have one son (adopted): Asaad Amin (b. 1991).
- He has two daughters, Miya (b. 1972) and Khaliah (b. 1974), from extramarital relationships.

### Public, nonboxing activities:

**1964** – Joined the NOI; takes the name Muhammad Ali

**1967** – Refused military service, claiming conscientious objector (CO) status

**1967** – Convicted of draft evasion, sentenced to 5 years in prison, banned from boxing and stripped of his title

**1967-1971** – Gave speeches at rallies on college campuses explaining his opposition to the Vietnam War and his world view as a minister in the NOI

**1975** – Converted to mainstream Islam

**1981** – Retired from boxing, but still active in civic and humanitarian activities in the United States and in developing countries

**1984** – Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease

**1996** – Lit the Olympic flame at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia

**2005** – Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest U.S. civilian honor

### Sources:

» <http://www.ali.com/>

» <http://www.biography.com/people/muhammad-ali-9181165>



## Short History of Boxing

Evidence of a boxing-like sport exists in the archaeological record going back thousands of years. Boxing was one of the core sports in the ancient Olympics in Greece, which began in 776 BC. With only leather straps to protect their forearms and hands, the fighters kept on until one of them gave up or became unconscious. The ancient Romans engaged in two types of boxing: athletic and gladiatorial. There were few rules, and gladiatorial boxing often ended in the death of one of the fighters. Around the time of the decline of the Roman Empire—the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD—boxing fell out of favor for more than a millennium. The modern sport of boxing evolved from the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century English sport of bare knuckle boxing, also known as prizefighting. The early sport had no written rules. Those came later, in 1838, when the London Prize Ring rules were codified. They stipulated that matches occur in a 24-square-foot ring surrounded by ropes and disallowed such things as biting, head-butting, and hitting below the belt. The Marquess of Queensberry rules, drafted in 1867, expanded boxing rules, establishing rounds three minutes in length, giving a downed boxer a 10-second count, and introducing the use of gloves. When the modern Olympic games began in the late 1800s, boxing was sometimes included, but it did not become an integral part of the modern games until 1920. Today, there are two versions of boxing—amateur and professional—with rules and regulations to distinguish them from each other, but both designed to protect the boxers.

**Source:**

» <http://boxing.isport.com/boxing-guides/history-of-boxing>

## The Nation of Islam

### Beginnings and Expansion

The founder of the Nation of Islam (NOI) was Wallace D. Fard, who has been variously described as a traveling salesman and a con man. He began preaching in the ghettos of Detroit during the Depression. There, Fard Muhammad, as he was sometimes known, met Elijah Poole (later Elijah Muhammad) in 1931 and made Poole his “messenger.” When Fard, who was thought by his followers to be Allah, mysteriously disappeared in 1934, Elijah Muhammad became the leader of the NOI, a position he maintained until his death in 1975.

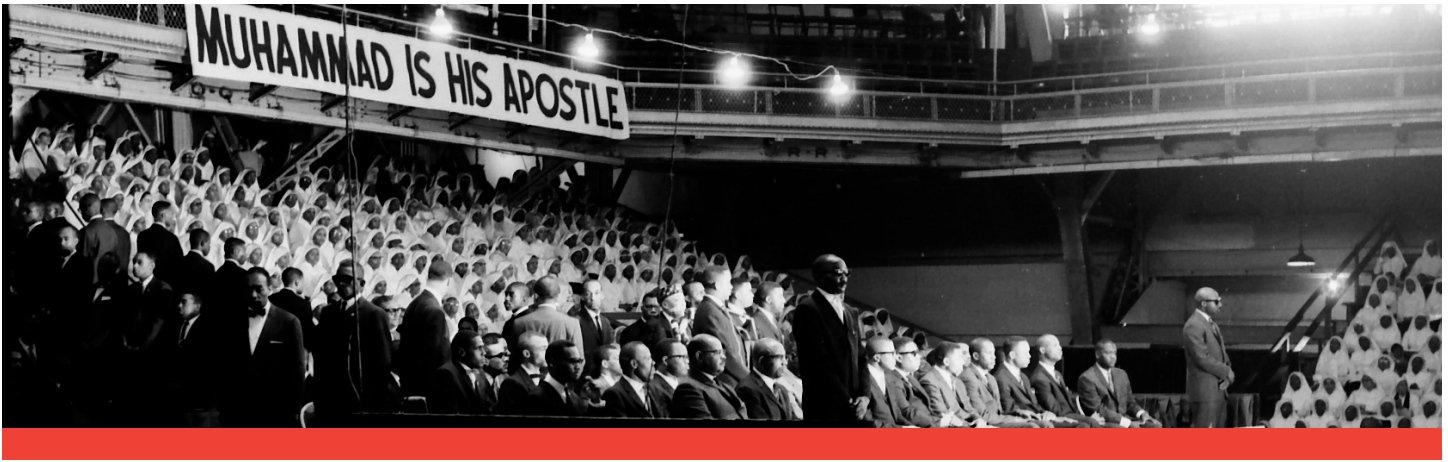
Elijah Muhammad taught that American blacks were descended from the ancient Tribe of Shabazz, which had originally settled the holy city of Mecca. An evil wizard created the white “devil,” destroying what had been a black paradise. Two major tenets of the NOI are that intermarriage between blacks and whites should be prohibited and that the two races should live separately. The Nation’s declared mission is the raising of the moral, social, and economic standing of nonwhites. This has included the vilification of white people, maintaining that the white race is an aberration, the human race having originally been black.

Starting small, the NOI enjoyed a membership surge in the 1950s, with the advent of the civil rights movement and the charismatic preaching of Malcolm X, and again in the 1960s, as urban riots rocked the nation, and the NOI’s message that black elevation could only come through a radical separation from the structures of white oppression continued to resonate for many. The NOI has always been tightly organized. A paramilitary wing, the Fruit of Islam (FOI), was created to defend the NOI against police attacks (*The Trials of Muhammad Ali* shows archival footage of groups of men wearing caps with the FOI insignia). In the 1940s, Elijah Muhammad began constructing what would later be considered the Nation’s “empire,” purchasing the group’s first bit of Michigan farmland in 1945 and founding businesses and educational ventures in several states that a decade later were valued in the millions. Ultimately, the NOI became one of the largest and best-organized groups in the history of black America.

### Changes in Leadership

Malcolm X (formerly Malcolm Little and later El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) joined the NOI in the early 1950s while serving a prison sentence for larceny. Two years after his release he was appointed minister at the prestigious Temple No. 7 in Harlem, becoming the Nation’s second-in-command. Malcolm X was wildly popular and his years as a prominent member of NOI (1952-1964) saw membership skyrocket from around 400 to between 100,000 and 300,000. By the mid-1960s, however, he became disillusioned with the NOI and its rigid teachings, and amid growing tensions between himself and Elijah Muhammad, he left the Nation and embraced Sunni Islam. When he was assassinated in New York City in 1965, three NOI members were arrested and





convicted in the shooting. Louis Farrakhan, a former cabaret singer who had been recruited into the NOI by Malcolm X, took over Malcolm's Harlem temple and became the national spokesman for the NOI. When Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, Farrakhan initially remained faithful to his son, Wallace Deen Muhammad (later Imam Warithuddin Muhammad) who succeeded his father. But the younger Muhammad's dismantling of the Nation's material empire and his attempts to bring NOI into the fold of mainstream Islam ultimately alienated Farrakhan. In 1977, a rebellious Farrakhan, backed by a powerful base, rejected the younger Muhammad and declared the creation of a "resurrected" NOI based on the original ideology of Elijah Muhammad.

While suffering from prostate cancer in 2006, Louis Farrakhan briefly surrendered leadership of the NOI. He also announced that he was moderating his views and turning to mainstream Islam. But his health improved, and he has remained in charge of the NOI, continuing to rebuke Jews, Catholics, and gays in his writing and speeches.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Nation-of-Islam/index.aspx>
- » <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/groups/nation-of-islam>

**About Sunni Islam**

Sunni Islam, one of the two major branches of the tradition (the other is Shi'a), historically and today makes up 80–90% of the global Muslim community. The word "Sunna," translated variously is defined as "the way," "example," or "habitual practice," referring to the example or path of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Islam adheres to the six core beliefs of the tradition, which are: oneness of God, existence of angels of God, authority of the books of God, following the prophets of God, preparation for the Day of Judgment, and Supremacy of God's will.

**Sources:**

- » <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Sunni-Islam.html>
- » [Sunni Islam: Oxford Bibliographies Online Research Guide](#)

## Islam, The Nation of Islam, and Black Muslims

Many people equate mainstream Islam with the NOI, but there are major differences between the two religions:

- The NOI claims that its founder, Fard Muhammad, was the incarnation of Allah. Traditional Islam, one of three Abrahamic faiths, teaches that there is only one God (Allah) and that God never assumes a physical form but sends revelation through prophets.
- The NOI teaches that Elijah Muhammad was a prophet or messenger of God (so appointed in the 1930s), but according to mainstream Islam, Muhammad (who died in AD 632) was the last prophet sent by God.
- The NOI is a race-based belief system, claiming that blacks are superior to whites, and that black elevation could only come through a radical separation from the structures of white oppression. Mainstream Islam teaches that Allah created the human race from a single male and female (Adam and Eve), and that Islam is a religion for all people, regardless of race.
- Members of the NOI are often referred to as Black Muslims, but that term can be misleading. There are many black Americans today who are Muslim – technically, black Muslims -- but not members of the NOI. Mainstream Muslims generally disavow any association with NOI.

**Sources:**

- » <http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20061128083600AAbr845>
- » <http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/society/black-muslims.html>

## Ali's Spiritual Journey

Ali had an unwavering faith in God from an early age. He was born to a Baptist mother and a Methodist father and attended Sunday School at the local Baptist church each week. He credits his parents for instilling his core values of faith, justice, and forgiveness.

As he grew older, however, Ali began to question his relationship to his parent's Christian religion. He asked why everything "good" in the Bible was always depicted as white. Why did Jesus always have blond hair and blue eyes, and where were all the black

angels? That skepticism was only strengthened by the discrimination he endured daily in the Jim Crow South. Ali yearned for spiritual guidance that valued his black identity as much as he did.

He found that in 1961 while training in Miami. Captain Sam Saxon, later Abdul Rahman Muhammad, invited him to attend his NOI mosque. The messages of black pride, discipline, and self-awareness Ali heard that day resonated with him instantly and profoundly. He started attending meetings regularly. In 1962, Ali met Malcolm X, who quickly became his friend and spiritual advisor. Two years later, Ali officially joined the NOI and Elijah Muhammad gave Ali his new name. He considered his role as a public figure a platform for sharing his spiritual beliefs and model of black pride.

When Malcolm X split with Elijah Muhammad, Ali stayed loyal to the NOI's leader until Elijah's death in 1975. Ali ultimately found his way to Sunni Islam by following the path led by Elijah's son, Wallace Muhammad, and remained dedicated to studying its principles for the rest of his life.

**Source:**

» Ali, Muhammad and Hana Yasmeen Ali. *The Soul of a Butterfly: Reflections on Life's Journey*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

## Standing on Principle

*"I believed in myself and I believe in the goodness of others."*

—Muhammad Ali

Ali also believed in dignity and equality for blacks, in peace, and in helping others.

Values and beliefs serve as a person's guides in making life choices and deciding how to act. Values are the rules by which we make decisions about right and wrong, and determine something's degree of importance. Beliefs are ideas to which we have a commitment, or positions we endorse. The Trials of Muhammad Ali reveals the influences that can help a person recognize his or her beliefs, such as a religious leader, a spouse, or a close personal associate. Some people may define their values and beliefs through inspirational reading, observation of others, or quiet reflection.

Adopting a set of values and beliefs is one thing, but acting on them is another. As a rising sports figure, Ali took big risks in announcing his embrace of Islam, in refusing military service, and in speaking out against racial injustice and war. He was not reticent about speaking his mind, and was often labeled a "loud mouth"; nevertheless, Ali's actions spoke louder than his words. His willingness to sacrifice his career for what he believed may seem foolish to some, inspiring to others, but all can agree that what he did took a great deal of courage. How often do we come across a public figure making such a principled stand?

**Sources:**

» [http://changingminds.org/explanations/values/values\\_morals\\_ethics.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/values/values_morals_ethics.htm)  
» <http://www.inspired-personal-development.com/personal-core-values.html>

### Who Can Be a Conscientious Objector (CO)?

Conscientious objection is a principled stand against participating in military service. In the United States it has been recognized as a right since colonial times. Traditionally associated with pacifist religious groups such as the Quakers and the Mennonites, conscientious objection has undergone changes in its definition and application, particularly since World War I. The Selective Service Act of 1917 recognized COs, but authorized their conscription for alternative, noncombat service. A landmark Supreme Court case in 1965—United States v. Seeger—greatly expanded the religious basis for conscientious objection, incorporating people with “general theistic belief systems” and recognizing pacifist objections on the part of Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists. However, the Court left the interpretation of the ruling up to local draft boards, and in the case of Muhammad Ali, this resulted in a five-year prison sentence. During the Vietnam War, another Supreme Court case—Welsh v. United States—once again expanded the basis for conscientious objection, ruling that CO status could be based on moral grounds, regardless of religious beliefs. The draft was abolished in 1973, but during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, a new twist on the issue of CO status arose. More than two thousand men and women who had volunteered for military service claimed CO status in order to avoid going to a combat theater. The army decided to reassign or release most of its COs, but the Marine Corps imprisoned 50.

### Some Famous COs

Besides Muhammad Ali, a few well-known COs are: actor Richard Dreyfuss, poet Robert Lowell, and humorist Dave Barry (all Americans); composer Benjamin Britten and playwright Harold Pinter (both British); and Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi.

**Source:**

» [http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/conscientious\\_objector.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/conscientious_objector.aspx)

*"Ali stood fast and didn't deny what he stood for."*

—John Carlos,  
Bronze medal winner, track and field, 1968 Summer Olympics



# Topics and Issues Relevant to *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*

A screening of *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* can be used to spark interest in any of the following topics and inspire both individual and community action. In planning a screening, consider finding speakers, panelists, or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

**Status of race relations in American society**

**Intersection of religion and politics**

**Intersection of sports and politics**

**Islam /Muslims in the United States**

**The tension between representing your own beliefs and values and service to your country**

**Conscientious objection to military service**

**Sports figures as role models**

**Black separatism vs. integration**

**Black Freedom Struggle**

**The civil rights movement**

**History of dissent during the Vietnam War era**

**Antiwar movements**

## Discussion Questions

1. Why was Ali so vilified when he joined the NOI? Do you think he was being hypocritical by continuing to be managed by a group of white businessmen? Why or why not?
2. How does the film account for the change in public attitude toward Ali from 1968, a time when he was banned from boxing, to 2005, when he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom?
3. What does Robert Lipsyte, a sports writer who appears in the film, mean when he says "We have so many ways of looking at [Ali] that have only to do with us and nothing to do with him"?
4. What words would you use to describe Muhammad Ali? Is there anyone in public life today who you would describe in similar terms?
5. Ali held firmly to his beliefs that the Vietnam War was wrong and that he couldn't kill anyone, in spite of the loss of his livelihood and the risk of going to prison. Is there an issue today that might prompt a similar strong response from a public figure or celebrity? How would his or her actions be received by the public? Is there an issue today that might prompt a similar strong response from you? What is the issue and what kind of risks or sacrifices might you make in expressing your response?
6. Does the film lead you to believe that Muhammad Ali was or was not sincere in his claim that he couldn't join the military because of his religious beliefs? What are the reasons for your opinion?
7. After the death of Elijah Muhammad, his son Wallace took the NOI in a new direction, preaching a less inflammatory version of Islam. Why do you think Ali chose to follow Wallace Muhammad and the path of Sunni Islam instead of aligning himself with Louis Farrakhan and his message of separatism?
8. Many people see sports figures as role models. What is your opinion of Muhammad Ali as a role model? Are there aspects of his behavior that you find worthy of imitation? Are there behaviors you don't think should be emulated? What are they?
9. In the film, Ali says, "We are all black people who are fighting for freedom, justice and equality. Everybody have their approach. One man believe in integrating...One believes in education and politics will solve it. One believes shootin' and lootin', and burning up the country will solve it. One man believe integration will solve it. And we believe separation and somewhere to ourselves will solve it." Is there an approach, either from the ones Ali describes above or another, that you think could best improve race relations in the U.S. today? Explain your response.



## Discussion Questions (cont.)

10. What does Ali mean when he tells William F. Buckley, “And you have the nerve to stand up here and say Elijah Muhammad is poisoning our minds. He cannot teach us that you our enemy, you taught us”?
11. Toward the end of the film, John Carlos says “I think everybody’s looking for truth. Everybody’s trying to find himself. People sit back now in their old age, and reflect on the crossroads of their life. Did I make the right choice?” What does Carlos mean? Do you know anyone in that position of reflecting back on the crossroads of their life? Do you think they made the right choice or the wrong one?
12. Do you agree or disagree with Salim Muwakkil when he says “Since 9/11, Islam has acquired so many layers and dimensions and textures. When the Nation of Islam was considered as a threatening religion, traditional Islam was seen as a gentle alternative. And now, quite the contrary. The Nation of Islam is seen as a tame domestic version and traditional Islam is seen as the threatening thing”?
13. Why do you think that the Supreme Court dug to find grounds for reversing Ali’s conviction that applied only to Ali, but nobody else?
14. What does Ali mean when he says “there is one hell of a lot of difference in fighting in the ring and going to war in Vietnam”?
15. What does Tom Krattenmaker mean when he says, “The Nation of Islam was saying ‘if Allah summons us to war then we will go to war..’ If you really took the law literally, seriously. You cannot distinguish Jehovah’s witnesses from the Nation of Islam on this particular issue...What the Supreme Court had said about the Jehovah’s witnesses was even though they are willing to fight in some hypothetical war declared by God it doesn’t mean that you’re not a conscientious objector. Congress meant to exempt people who in good conscience couldn’t participate in a person-to-person bombs and bullets war”?
16. In the film, a college student asks Ali, “In a time of peace would you allow yourself to be drafted?” What is your answer to that question? Do you think the U.S. government should bring back the draft? Why or why not?





## Suggestions for Action

Together with other audience members, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Help to promote good sportsmanship on the part of your children and others you work with. Two websites that suggest sportsmanship games and activities, primarily for younger children, are <http://www.livestrong.com/article/210736-ideas-for-sportsmanship-games-for-kids/> and [http://www.ehow.com/list\\_6311581\\_sportsmanship-games-kids.html](http://www.ehow.com/list_6311581_sportsmanship-games-kids.html). An Illinois school district has developed a guide for athletes, coaches, and parents that can be useful with older children and can serve as a model for schools and other organizations working to establish similar guidelines. Find it at [http://www.d214.org/educational\\_services/sportsmanship\\_\\_a\\_guide.aspx](http://www.d214.org/educational_services/sportsmanship__a_guide.aspx).
2. Learn more about the rights of conscientious objectors (COs). The Center on Conscience & War conducts an education and outreach program touching on all aspects of conscientious objection, and offers legal and counseling support to COs and young people making decisions about military service. Details and contact information are at <http://www.centeronconscience.org/>.
3. Whether they acknowledge it or not, sports figures and celebrities serve as role models for many people, young and old. Have a family discussion about role models. Who do your children look up to and why? Talk about the role models you had as a young person. Name someone you think is a good role model today and explain why.
4. Use the film as a springboard for a discussion of beliefs and values. Work with your place of worship or another community group to organize a screening and discussion. For a moderated conversation about personal beliefs and values, you might consider using the *This I Believe Small Group Discussion Guide*, which can be downloaded for \$19.95 from This I Believe, Inc.'s store at <https://thisibelieve.org/store/product/discussion-guide/>.
5. Interview a group of elders who remember some of the controversy surrounding Ali as depicted in the film. At the time, did they agree or disagree with Ali? Why? Has their view on Ali changed? How?

For additional community outreach and engagement ideas, visit <http://www.communitycinema.org>.

# Resources

» <http://kartemquin.com/films/the-trials-of-muhammad-ali>

This website contains a variety of information about the film.

## About Muhammad Ali

» <http://www.ali.com/>

The official site of Muhammad Ali contains biographical information, photos, and videos of great moments in the boxer's life.

» <http://www.biography.com/people/muhammad-ali-9181165>

This section of the Biography Channel website provides a brief summary of the major events in the life of Muhammad Ali.

» [http://www.biographyonline.net/sport/muhammad\\_ali.html](http://www.biographyonline.net/sport/muhammad_ali.html)

In addition to a brief biography, this section of the Biography Online site contains links to a list of major events in Ali's life and to some of his famous quotes.

» [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/muhammad\\_ali.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/muhammad_ali.html)

This section of the BrainyQuote website contains over four dozen of Muhammad Ali's memorable quotes.

## Boxing

» <http://www.aiba.org/en-US/home.aspx>

The International Boxing Association (AIBA; formerly known as the Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur) is a nonprofit international organization that governs the sport of boxing, working for the benefit of the sport and all its stakeholders, to help boxing realize its goals within the Olympic Movement and the international sporting arena.

» <http://www.aiba-london2012.com/index.php/about/history-of-olympic-boxing>

This page of AIBA's website for the 2012 Olympics in London provides a brief, comprehensive history of boxing in the Olympics, along with a wide variety of information about amateur boxing.

» <http://www.everything2.com/title/Modern+rules+of+boxing>

This section of the Everything2 website contains a complete list of the rules of professional boxing.

## Nation of Islam

» <http://www.noi.org/>

This is the official website of the NOI.

» <http://voices.yahoo.com/islam-vs-nation-islam-260577.html?cat=49>

This section of the Yahoo Voices site offers clarification of the differences between Islam and the NOI.

» <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Nation-of-Islam/index.aspx>

This page on the Beliefnet website provides a concise history of the NOI along with links to additional information about the organization and its leader, Louis Farrakhan.

» <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-files/groups/nation-of-islam>

This section of the Southern Poverty Law Center's website provides background information and analysis of the NOI.

## Islam

» <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/>

The section of the PBS website about Muslims, a Frontline series, examines Islam's worldwide resurgence through the stories of a diverse collection of Muslims struggling to define the role of Islam in their lives and societies. The "Frequently Asked Questions" page provides a helpful overview of key tenets of mainstream Islam.

## Beliefs and Values

» <http://www.centeronconscience.org/>

The Center on Conscience & War (formerly the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors) was formed in 1940 by an association of religious bodies to defend and extend the rights of COs. The Center is committed to supporting all those who question participation in war, whether they are U.S. citizens, permanent residents, documented or undocumented immigrants—or citizens in other countries.

» <http://thisibelieve.org/>

This I Believe, Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives. It is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow.

» <http://www.greatbooks.org>

The Great Books Foundation is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to advance the critical, reflective thinking and social and civic engagement of readers of all ages through Shared Inquiry™ discussion of works and ideas of enduring value.



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## **ITVS**

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning independently produced documentaries and dramas on public television and cable, innovative new media projects on the internet, and the Emmy Award-winning series *Independent Lens* on PBS. ITVS receives core funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

Learn more at [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org).

