

R.I.P. Muhammad Ali

[youtube id="wKVUBQwhWDM"] Boxing great Muhammad Ali died Friday at age 74 after suffering from Parkinson's disease for decades and recent respiratory issues. Ali was a three-time World Heavyweight champion who became famous for becoming a Muslim and refusing the draft three times. He was close friends with Malcolm X and very outspoken about racism and politics. His stance on the draft cost him his boxing title and he was convicted of draft evasion which kept him from the sport for four years. Ali's personality made him an entertainer as much as a respected boxer and his fights were the biggest events of their kind including his famous fight with George Foreman in Zaire known as The Rumble In The Jungle. James Brown and B.B.King were the performers during a three-day festival that preceded the event. Ali retired from boxing in 1981 after two difficult fights with Larry Holmes and Trevor Berbick. The Parkinson's diagnosis in 1984 did not stop him from embarking on several peace-making missions and going on regular speaking tours. His unapologetic views on racism and pride made him a symbol for Black culture. The pre-game chants he would recite are seen as a precursor to rap music and a huge influence on the confidence of the hip-hop culture. Rapper Will Smith played him in the 2001 biopic, *Ali*. He represents a time in sports before most Black athletes became apolitical and apathetic to any kind of cause. When he is referred to by his famous nickname, "The Greatest" he will be remembered for his boxing ring successes and his commitment to his principles.