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Impact Study:

The Anti-War Rhetoric of Muhammad Ali, Born of the Conflict in Vietnam

Introduction

Muhammad Ali, the world championship boxer once known as Cassius Clay, is an internationally known figure recognizable for his outstanding athletic achievement, his witty ringside lyricism, and his unwavering devotion to the civil rights movement and the Nation of Islam. While Ali has been celebrated worldwide for all of the above in the last two decades and showered with accolades for his contributions to society, it has not been forgotten that his past was filled with controversy. As Ali reached the apex of his athletic career in the mid-nineteen sixties, the United States was on its way to reaching an apex of its own—the Vietnam Conflict. The two soon became intrinsically linked.

Ali, as a Muslim and self pronounced man of peace, vehemently opposed war. He made his position quite clear, “I’m against *all* war,” Ali pronounced during an interview given to *Sports Illustrated* writer Tex Maule in 1968 (Maule 28). As a pacifist, during the time of the draft, when Ali was called upon by the U.S. government in 1966 to fulfill his obligation to serve, he steadfastly refused on the grounds that he was a conscientious objector, that his religion and his beliefs kept him from participating in the war (Reed 108).

The backlash for Ali's action was severe. He was publicly vilified, criticized, and degraded. He was stripped of his boxing license and his heavyweight title, and to add insult to injury, he was eventually convicted of draft evasion in 1967, fined ten thousand dollars and sentenced to the maximum of five years in prison (Baldwin and Ernst 105; Smiley 179). Ali remained a free man awaiting his appeal, however he was unable to return to the ring for three years (Baldwin and Ernst 105). Finally, in 1970, Ali made his much anticipated return to boxing, fighting in Georgia where there was no athletic commission to require a license of him (Reed 111). A year later, in 1971, public and political currents had largely shifted and Ali's conviction was unanimously overturned in the U.S. Supreme Court based on the grounds, as Justice William O. Douglas stated, that Ali's objection to the war was "a matter of conscience protected by the First Amendment (Reed 111)."

While Ali is remembered as a model for standing up for his beliefs, far less attention is paid to the rhetoric he used to disseminate his messages and make known his beliefs. During the years 1966-1971, when the controversy surrounding Ali's refusal to enlist peaked, the prolific boxer transformed into a prolific orator. While his rhetoric may not have been like that of a political candidate vying for votes from the masses, or of an activist whose life is devoted to the advancement of a movement, Ali's actions were dictated by circumstance, and he played well the role he was given. He declared his opinions during press conferences and interviews rather than organized speeches and rallies. His words appeared in newspapers and in magazines, on the radio and on TV, reaching millions locally, nationally, and all across the globe. Evidenced by the legacy Ali left behind as a non-violent protestor of war, his words have left a lasting impact. But what sort of lasting impact? An impact on whom? And why and how was this impact left?

Research Question

In the following pages, selected Vietnam Era anti-war rhetoric of Muhammad Ali will be critically analyzed according to Campbell and Burkholder's *Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism*. In order to ensure a deeper understanding of the bigger picture with as little bias as possible, responses and reactions to the words and actions of Ali from both sides of the Vietnam controversy will play a significant role in this analysis. The aim is to understand what role Ali's rhetoric may have played during the anti-war movement of the nineteen sixties and early seventies in order to answer the following research questions: 1) What impact, if any, did Muhammad Ali's rhetoric have on the anti-war movement as a whole? 2) Given the racial tensions also present during this time, did Muhammad Ali's rhetoric have a different impact on whites than on blacks? And 3) If so, what role did Ali's motivations for objecting to the war play in this difference in impact?

To start, Ali's rhetoric itself must be introduced. As he was not the typical rhetor, it would be a challenge to take any one short artifact, analyze and criticize it, and in effect successfully answer the above research questions. Unlike other speakers of his time who were part of the anti-war movement, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, he gave no widely publicized addresses which contain the entirety of his message. While Ali did move about the country lecturing at colleges and universities during his three year hiatus from the ring, no transcripts or recordings of such addresses seem to exist (Ellen and Butterworth 8). To the contrary, the documented artifacts that exist are typically short, segmented, and come from many different sources. And indeed, as wildly popular a figure as he was, he was often misquoted and his words twisted or taken out of context. For example, perhaps Ali's most famous piece of rhetoric is the phrase "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong;" this is perhaps the most commonly

misquoted piece of rhetoric as well. This phrase was often misrepresented as having also contained the words “no Vietnamese ever called me nigger,” however, despite extensive research conducted for his book Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties, author Mike Marquese never found any evidence that Ali had ever spoken these words (“Revolt of the Black Athlete: The Hidden History of Muhammad Ali”). In light of this, when considering what artifacts to analyze, it seemed important to stick to primary and extremely well documented and corroborated resources only. Anything short of this could result in an inaccurate representation of Ali’s intended message and might well corrupt any findings that might result from this research. In addition, it must be remembered that rhetoric is not always one’s spoken or written word. In this case, Ali’s actions, taken as a whole, were extremely symbolic and contained a complex, multi-level communication of a message, and this must also be taken into consideration.

The Rhetoric of Ali

When Ali received notice of his changed draft status in February of 1966 he was approached by a reporter in Miami who asked his opinion regarding that change:

“I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong (Reed 109; Anderson 50).”

This short, impromptu and presumably unrehearsed utterance was one of the earliest and probably the most powerful that Ali gave during the length of his involvement with the anti-war movement. This statement resonated quickly and deeply throughout the nation and sparked the controversy already surrounding Ali and made it headline news.

“Keep asking me, no matter how long, On the war in Vietnam, I sing this song:
I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong (Reed 109).”

This poem, a revision of the previous statement, was read at a press conference at which Ali was expected to apologize for his “un-American” comments and take questions; instead these were his only words (Zirin).

During an interview with Robert H. Boyle, a regular Sports Illustrated contributor, Ali gave the following statements that appeared later in an April 10th, 1967 issue of the popular magazine:

“Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs (36)?”

“I either have to obey the laws of the land or the laws of Allah, God. I'd rather die a Muslim. Six hundred million Muslims are with me to see if I am punished in this land of religious freedom. I have nothing to lose by standing up and following my own beliefs. I'll go down in history. So we've been in jail for 400 years. I'm a 1,000% religious man. If I thought goin' to war would bring freedom, justice and equality to 22 million Negroes, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow. I'm paying \$1,500 a month for 10 years in alimony just for my beliefs. I divorced a beautiful Negro woman. I want to be in good standing with the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. I'm not a slave. I'm free! I've heard the *truth* (36)!”

On April 28, 1967, the hype culminated when Ali appeared, as scheduled, before the draft board. When the name ‘Cassius Clay’ was called Ali did not move a muscle. Traditionally, when an inductee’s name was called by the board, it was protocol for him to take a step forward, thus signifying his induction into the U.S. Army. After the second call Ali still did not move or speak, the world champion boxer was then informed that if he still refused to take the step, he risked a U.S. \$10,000 fine and a maximum sentence of up to five years’ imprisonment. Twice more the representative of the draft board called his name, and twice more Ali refused to move. Then, the ordeal was over. Before leaving the induction center, Ali was instructed to provide a written statement describing his reasons for refusing induction into the Army. He chose simple and pointed words:

“I refuse to be inducted into the armed forces of the United States because I claim to be exempt as a minister of the religion of Islam (Reed 110).”

The significance of this event was enormous. It gave credence to all the words he had spoken previously and to all those he spoke later. No longer just a man of big talk; he was now a man of big action. His reputation in the ring had fulfilled itself in outside of it with the commission of an unprecedented sacrifice by a public figure. Ali took a stand that surely many other men wanted to take but didn't. The controversy had been solidified and history made.

The preceding actions and words taken and spoken by Ali (presented in chronological order), momentous in their implications, represent what will, for the purposes of paper, be referenced throughout as Ali's rhetorical message and will be the basis for the following analysis and criticism. As it would be far too much to undertake analyzing it all, this selection, seems to best encompass Ali's multi-faceted message. Rather than simply discussing Ali's rhetoric from an analytical point of view, it is important to approach such a task bearing some structure in mind. Campbell and Burkholder's *Three Stages of Rhetorical Criticism* calls for 1) a detailed description of the rhetorical artifact; 2) analytical research; and 3) an overall evaluation of the artifact and its possible effects. This structure seemed pertinent and likely an effective methodology.

Analysis

In the first of the individual artifacts chosen for analysis, Ali's statement “I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong,” was probably uttered with very little purpose at all other than to speak his mind (Ellen and Butterworth 8). This proclamation was not given at a formal press conference so it is unlikely that it was a prepared statement; the phrase has an air of spontaneity to it similar to that of his typical pre-fight trash talk. By speaking his mind, Ali clearly gave off a

vibe synonymous with protest; protest, however, was probably not his main purpose. His main purpose, it would seem, was simply to answer a question in an honest and straightforward manner. The rather simple purpose of this artifact is in stark contrast with purpose of the next.

“Keep asking me, no matter how long/On the war in Vietnam, I sing this song/I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong (Reed 109).”

This artifact is in fact an ancillary statement to the one above; the poem, an evident reconstruction of the initial reactionary statement, was delivered by Ali at a press conference at which he was expected to apologize for his initial “un-American” statements. This alone speaks volumes about his purpose. Unlike the previous artifact, the intent of this act was deliberate, premeditated, and clearly thought out. In addition to speaking his mind, Ali’s intent of protest begins to take shape here. Like nearly all forms of protest, this act was purposefully intended to elicit a reaction; Ali knew, at a time when the majority of the general public and nearly all of those in politics were in support of the war, that this poem would face overwhelming negative criticism (Newfield 26). Nevertheless, he boldly took a stance that many before him had feared to do. In sum, Ali’s purpose here was to solidify the position that he had taken previously, as if to say “yes, I really did mean it,” and to show that, despite the negativity and potential consequences that he knew he might face, he was willing to brave the adversity to stand up for a cause in which he believed.

The tone of each of these statements is clearly one of defiance, a tone that is fairly constant throughout Ali’s collection of rhetoric. His rhetoric with an attitude challenged the beliefs and ideals commonly held throughout the United States at the time; Ali, never afraid to speak his mind, made it abundantly clear that he was not afraid to go against the grain.

The next statements, both taken from the same Sports Illustrated article in which excerpts from an interview Ali gave to SI contributor Robert H. Boyle were printed, have a much

deeper purpose than the preceding two artifacts. The entirety of Ali's message can be seen as analogous to the structure of a simple essay. If the first artifact was the topic and the second was the introduction, then this artifact would be the body of the essay, where the majority of the information is found. Here, through this interview, instead of giving just a short statement, Ali was given the chance to elaborate on his previous messages. The earlier statements took care of the 'what;' now, the purpose of this interview was to give people the 'why.'

Presumably, the public understood right from the start that Ali was opposed to the draft and to the war in Vietnam, but until now he had only been able to embody the role of 'Ali the boxer.' The two previous artifacts were delivered in the style and with the tone and attitude that Ali was known for: quick, witty, and with an air of pompousness. Through this interview, though, Ali was finally able to embody the role of 'Ali the man' and convey to people his reasoning for objecting to the war at great length. Ali was certainly able to keep his wits about him; however, he turned the pompousness down a bit (still managing to fit in somewhere that he would "go down in history") and relayed his message to people in a way that press conferences just did not allow. It is important to note however, that while Ali may have been trying to embody a different role through this interview, he was certainly not trying to please the masses as he was doing so. His reasons for objection were not consistent with the typical sentiment that was beginning to develop across America by 1967 that the war was unnecessary and downright cruel; his reasoning was that his religious beliefs as Muslim precluded his participation in war, that it was unjust to tell him otherwise in the "land of religious freedom," that the draft was racially selective, and that he would not go and fight for the freedom of others thousands of miles away in a foreign country when there were "22 million negroes" in the U.S. who were without "justice, equality, and freedom (Boyle 36; Reed 107)."

In this artifact, Ali's tone was equally as defiant as it was before, however it seemed to become more serious as well. While Ali's recital of his poem at the 1966 press conference was clever, witty, and almost humorous (given that he was expected to apologize), these excerpts did not share the same feeling. Ali reveled at the opportunity to explain his position, taking advantage of it to the fullest. He elaborated at great length on the two topics about which he seemed to feel the strongest: racial inequality and his religious beliefs. His tone, best described as defiant, serious, and somber, was accentuated by the content of his rhetoric. Quite unlike the first artifact, Ali was evidently well prepared going into this interview and seemed to know well what he was going to say. His strategic use of numbers and figures throughout these passages drew attention to the solemn nature of the subject matter and his serious tone, making it stand out more than it might have stood out otherwise. Each use of a number or figure seemed to be intentionally chosen to elicit certain emotions from his audience; the words "ten thousand miles from home" were sure to remind anyone with a loved one in Vietnam how far apart they really were and how little control they had over what might happen; in saying "six hundred million Muslims are with me" Ali probably intended to remind his fellow Muslims that although they were in the minority, they were by no means alone; likewise the words "we've been in jail for 400 years... If I thought going to war would bring justice and equality to 22 million Negroes, they wouldn't have to draft me, I'd join tomorrow" were clearly intended to remind Americans that racial inequality runs deep in American history and is still affecting millions of people—putting a specific number to it was probably intended to shock those who never really thought about it and to remind African Americans that they were not alone in their struggle; and finally, by saying "I'm paying \$1500 a month for 10 years in alimony just for my beliefs (Ali had divorced his first wife in part because she was not a dedicated Muslim)" Ali was making it clear

that he was willing to make sacrifices for his beliefs, as he said he is a “1,000% religious man (Boyle 36).” This strategy was likely a very effective one; bringing forth feelings of helplessness, camaraderie, sympathy, and pride in different members of his audience allowed a wide array of people to relate to Ali in many different ways, allowing his message to resonate in ways it perhaps had not before.

The last artifact that represents Ali’s message has yet a different purpose still. In keeping with the essay analogy, this last artifact corresponds to the essay’s conclusion; the summary and reinforcement of the main points. The purpose of this written statement, besides the obvious legal purpose it served, was to irreversibly set in stone the culmination of Ali’s prior rhetoric. By providing to the draft board the following statement: “I refuse to be inducted into the armed forces of the United States because I claim to be exempt as a minister of the religion of Islam,” Ali had crossed the hypothetical Rubicon to the point of no return. This gave even more meaning to the already meaningful messages he had previously conveyed. His prior rhetoric would have been meaningful had he not followed through; taking the kind of stand that Ali did was bold, brave, and unprecedented. But that he did follow through gave new meaning to the entirety of Ali’s rhetorical repertoire. It meant that Ali was not just the type to take a stand, but the type to take a stand and refuse to back down, even in the face of extreme adversity and the prospect of facing huge financial losses, the loss of his career as a prize fighter, and worse yet—the loss of five years of his life to a dismal federal prison. Those who had doubted Ali’s integrity or his intent to follow through could doubt him no longer. He had proven beyond any shadow of a doubt that he was the kind of man that would stand by his beliefs, no matter what. This, it seems, was the rhetorical purpose of this final artifact; to prove to the world that he had done

what he said he would do all along, and to prove to the U.S. government that there was nothing they could threaten him with that would break him.

The tone of defiance in Ali's message was never stronger than it was here, as this act was the ultimate act of rebelliousness and defiance. There was also a tone of finality in these words; while Ali had made his intentions clear all along, it had never been said so frankly and directly or as officially as it was said here.

Ali's messages were directed at and reached a huge audience. Individual parts of his message were sometimes tailored more towards one specific demographic than another (such as phrases specifically aimed at his fellow Muslims and African Americans), however this last artifact, just as much as the first, transcended all boundaries despite having obvious religious connotations. While his reason for refusal was largely based on his religious beliefs, the message that he was sending through his actions was not intended to be heard only by his fellow Muslims. During a time when the Vietnam Conflict dominated international headlines and the attention of millions, Ali's audience was the world. He sent the message around the globe that it was honorable to stand up for what you believe in and to do what you know is right.

This message was not received with overwhelming positivity from the start however; there were many competing persuasive forces surrounding Ali's rhetoric throughout these years. It is important to remember that Ali's messages were far from the only rhetoric that Americans and people all over the globe were being exposed to. At a time when controversy was the norm rather than the exception, it seemed that everyone had something to say about the war in Vietnam. There was an abundance of both pro-war and anti-war rhetoric flooding mass media, demonstrations, and speech circuits during the nineteen sixties (as well as a great deal of civil rights related rhetoric), all of which had great potential to influence Americans' beliefs, attitudes,

and values, as well as the messages of other rhetors. All of this must be taken into consideration when attempting to determine the effects that any one orator's rhetoric may or may not have had on a nation as there were numerous both opposing and supporting forces.

Life Magazine is a perfect example, containing rhetoric which reflects the nation's ever changing sentiments over the course of the war. Until about 1968, Life had publicly and steadfastly supported the American war effort in Vietnam; in fact in 1966, one of Life's many pro war cover stories was titled: "Vietnam: The War is Worth Winning ("Muhammad Ali: The Brand and the Man")." Slowly but surely, however, that began to change as the horrors of the war began to take center stage, and in June of 1969 it became clear that the popular magazine had adopted a new stance; the June 27th, 1969 cover story "The Faces of the American Dead in Vietnam: One Week's Toll" featured pictures of almost all of the 242 American servicemen who had been killed in action the previous week ("The Faces of the American Dead in Vietnam: One Week's Toll"). This article was a powerful piece of anti-war rhetoric that had a profound effect on the collective American psyche—seeing photographs of all these men put faces and names to an otherwise inert number that was typical of all the weeks prior ("The Faces of the American Dead in Vietnam: One Week's Toll"). While this article hit the stands almost two years after Ali's official refusal to enter the armed forces, it surely would have had an impact on how people viewed his actions. A force that was once stood in opposition to Ali's anti-war rhetoric now seemed to support the same cause as he.

Unlike Life Magazine many entities remained unswervingly pro-war throughout the sixties, however. Some groups even managed to oppose the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement all at once. The Ku Klux Klan, for example, played a large role in making draft dodgers aware that their actions were perceived as unpatriotic and un-American; routinely

targeting and harassing families (especially those of African American descent) whose son's had avoided being inducted into the armed forces (Baldwin and Ernst 110). In fact, in many southern states, city police often sided with the KKK and refused to assist families who were being targeted or to prevent further harassment (Baldwin and Ernst 110). One Texas woman, in 1967, was even advised to move by local police who ignored her repeated complaints of break-ins, slashed tires, harassment, and shattered windows and told her that the "organization" did not "take kindly to draft dodgers" after a local newspaper revealed that her son-in-law was in exile in Canada (Baldwin and Ernst 110)."

The U.S. military also represented an opposing force to Ali's cause, as it goes without saying that they supported their own efforts in south-east Asia until the conflict ended. Most politicians sided with the military until long after Ali had made his formal stand, while some were more outspoken about it than others, a few even spoke directly about Ali when it came to the issue of draft dodging. A South Carolina congressman spoke out passionately against Ali even before his 1966 change in draft status:

'Clay's deferment is an insult to every mother's son serving in [Vietnam]. Here he is, smart enough to finish high school, write his kind of poetry, promote himself all over the world, make a million a year, drive around in red Cadillacs—and they say he's too dumb to tote a gun? Who's dumb enough to believe that (Reed 108)?'

His words offer some insight into the contempt that many felt towards Ali for avoiding participation in the war. And surely enough, this one congressman did not represent an unusual instance of politicians having something to say about Ali and the controversy surrounding him. On April 11th, 1966, only a few months after Ali had made his famous "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong" remark to a Miami reporter, Sports Illustrated printed their first article of many that chronicled the events surrounding Ali's

refusal to enlist. Writer Jack Olsen compiled and published a series of remarks made by U.S. politicians on the subject and the responses to their comments that soon followed:

“The governor of Illinois found Clay ‘disgusting.’ and the governor of Maine said Clay ‘should be held in utter contempt by every patriotic American.’ An American Legion post in Miami asked people to ‘join in condemnation of this unpatriotic, loudmouthed, bombastic individual,’ and dirty mail began to arrive at Clay's Miami address. (‘You're nothing but a yellow nigger.’ said a typical correspondent, one of many who forgot to sign their names.) The *Chicago Tribune* waged a choleric campaign against holding the next Clay fight in Chicago; the newspaper's attitude seemed to be that thousands of impressionable young Chicagoans would go over to the Viet Cong if Cassius were allowed to engage in fisticuffs in that sensitive city (100).”

While comments like these, especially so early on, may not be surprising, Ali did face some criticism from members of the African American community as well. Fellow boxers Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson as well as the NAACP both criticized Ali's actions heavily when the controversy was in its infancy (Reed 108). Joe Louis, who had volunteered for service in the Army during the Second World War had become a “symbol for his race” and “reassured whites about the loyalty of all black Americans” was not shy about his feelings towards Ali and his membership in the Nation of Islam:

“The things they preach are just the opposite of what we believe. The heavyweight champion should be the champion of all the people. He has responsibilities to all the people (Reed 108).”

Louis then went on to graphically describe how he would have defeated Ali in the ring during his prime as a prizefighter (Reed 108).

Floyd Patterson, an Ali contemporary, shared similar feelings, offering to challenge Ali in a bout in order to “take the title back from the Black Muslim Leadership,” another obvious reference to Ali's involvement in the Nation of Islam organization (Reed 108).

The World Boxing Association, who tried early on and would eventually succeed in stripping Ali of his title, felt equally disturbed by Ali's actions; President Ed Lassman spoke on

behalf of the WBA stating in 1966 that Ali was “provoking world-wide criticism and setting a very poor example for the youth of the world (Reed 108).”

Ali, of course, also had some supporters throughout the African American community and beyond. Perhaps most notably was the attention that Ali received from none other than Martin Luther King; alluding to his approval of Ali’s actions and overall support for his cause Dr. King had said:

“Like Muhammad Ali puts it, we are all—Black and Brown and poor—victims of the same system of oppression (Ellen and Butterworth 9).”

The Nation of Islam was probably Ali’s most vehement supporter throughout the entire ordeal as Ali was obviously very closely involved with the organization (Reed 107). While this association may have alienated some, it certainly did not alienate the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a national anti-war group common across U.S. college campuses, who also became fervent Ali supporters (Ellen and Butterworth 9).”

As is quite evident, there were several persuasive forces during this era, both pro and anti-war, that would have had the opportunity to influence anyone looking to form judgments about the conflict in Vietnam as well as the controversy surrounding Muhammad Ali. Unfortunately, this fact is one that presents a certain level of difficulty for anyone trying to make a concrete judgment about the effect that Ali’s rhetoric in and of itself might have had.

While it is clear that Ali’s rhetoric has left a lasting impact on our society, as Ali is known as a role model for doing what’s right, it is still unclear whether or not Ali’s anti-war rhetoric had an impact on the anti-war movement as a whole during the Vietnam Era. Throughout this paper, Ali has certainly been shown as an influential figure in the anti-war movement; however there were many figures that were equally as influential. As discussed above, there are so many influential rhetors, points of view, and persuasive forces from this era

that determining any one's overall impact is a difficult task. Perhaps, then, what becomes more important is remembering how the anti-war movement came together as a whole and the value of each individual's contribution.

To address second research question, did Muhammad Ali's anti-war rhetoric have a different impact on whites than on blacks; this also, like the first research question, is somewhat difficult to substantiate. His rhetoric was clearly geared more toward the black community than towards the white community, however, it is hard to say whether or not one group was impacted more or less than the other.

And so it seems, to answer the third research question, that while Ali's motivations may have been based on his cultural and religious experiences and beliefs, the message in the end was the same. While Muslims and African Americans may have been able to better relate the message, the message was no different in its connotations and meaning. In a time where progressive and liberal mentalities were starting to emerge and become stronger, people were inspired to stand up for their beliefs like they saw Ali unconditionally stand up for his own; and they were reminded by Ali's words of the inequalities that still existed on American soil and that there was still a war to fight at home for the true freedom of all Americans before a war could be fought on foreign soil for the freedom of others.

Ali has been continually applauded for his actions and unwavering commitment to the cause in which he believed since his conviction was overturned in 1971. At the age of 65, despite his battle with Parkinson's Disease, Ali remained clear headed and resolute about his convictions. At an event celebrating his achievements in 2007, he gave this answer when asked about the decades old controversy:

"Some people thought I was a hero. Some people said that what I did was wrong. But everything I did was according to my conscience. I made a stand all people,

not just black people, should have thought about making, because it wasn't just black people being drafted. The government had a system where the rich man's son went to college, and the poor man's son went to war ("Muhammad Ali: The Brand and the Man")."

It seems as if Ali intended to answer these research questions himself with these words; a seemingly appropriate conclusion; Ali's message, even years later, remains as powerful and meaningful as ever.

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