The sixth finger: Jack Johnson, Muhammad Ali, and the unconscious race hero in sports

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ABSTRACT

HISTORY

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THE SIXTH FINGER: JACK JOHNSON, MUHAMMAD ALI,
AND THE UNCONSCIOUS RACE HERO IN SPORTS

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This study examines both the mentality of black race heroes in American sporting history and the surrounding atmospheric influences on personality, mentality, masculinity, and global perspective on said heroes, using the case studies of iconic boxers Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali as the primary focus. This study was based on the premise that both boxers initiated a conscious effort of racial pride, black agency, and global hegemony through their consistent success both inside and outside the ring. The researcher found that in almost blind adoration, African Americans chose two unconscious, self-righteous, and raceless blacks who utilized their gifted abilities as boxers to only capture full masculinity in the forms of wealth and power. In response to their considerable inferior treatment at the hands of the majority, blacks actively sought dominant representations of success and defiance of the norms to carry their dreams of black pride. However, both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali repeatedly rejected their anointed statuses of “race men” for the chance at true wealth and power in the commercialization and exploitation
of their masculinity. In addition, the background environments of both figures are essential to the true analysis of the mentality and perception of the boxers. The conclusions drawn from the finding suggest that both individuals rejected their hometown communities' ideals of agency and activism and instead opted to embrace the more lucrative ideals of independence (Johnson and Galveston) and interdependence (Ali and Louisville). As the black community witnessed both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali continuously thrive and capture success in a predominantly white and commercial environment, they also saw the potential to showcase the greatest aspects of the American black race not just nationally, but also globally to other black groups. Therefore, race consciousness would both intensify and spread if powerful, masculine icons continued to dominate in societal contests like sports. Because of these desires, blacks across the nation supplied insurmountable support and sustenance to these figures throughout their careers. In fact, to most blacks throughout the nation, both pugilists possessed superhuman qualities, or a “sixth finger.” As the twenty first century thrives, blacks continue the practice of selecting sporting representatives of the race to showcase dominance in athletics, society, and unconscious racial pride.
THE SIXTH FINGER: JACK JOHNSON, MUHAMMAD ALI, AND THE UNCONSCIOUS RACE HERO IN SPORTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I SHOT AN ARROW INTO THE AIR: BOXING AND THE SEARCH FOR RACE CONSCIOUSNESS AND MASCULINITY IN AMERICA

There was a moment in time when those who were brilliant and powerful were also sportive and playful. When they took recess from their exhausting and magnificent strides towards glory, they replenished their darker passions with a myriad of “fun and games.” The Ancient Egyptian, Roman, and Greek societies embraced brutish games that served as both an indentation from the harsh realities of life and as an assessment of individual authority and influence. In this multicultural and exceptionally diverse world, such pastimes have since been civilized, and drained of all but their last few drops of blood. In fact, the violent and destructive games of yesteryear have been replaced with more moderate contests today that personify the exceedingly profitable and productive elements of entertainment, commercialization, and sectionalism. Accompanying these elements are underlying social factors, particularly varying degrees of racial hierarchal practices, which have devastatingly affected the atmosphere of sports. Indeed, racial hierarchies have existed throughout international sports history, but the distinguishing factor in recent memory suggests the increased individualization in sports. Originally hailed as a team of heroes for major American cities like New York and Boston, a gradual shift to singular iconic worship in twentieth century sporting has resulted in major social and cultural ramifications worldwide.
This research simultaneously explores, analyzes, and dissects these implications specifically in the area of boxing, one of America’s most popular pastimes. Prizefighting’s first attempts at modernization and popularization began in 1719 when James Figg, the first bare knuckles boxing champion in history, travelled around England showcasing exhibition fighting.\(^1\) At first, the English were unimpressed as they considered sporting amusements to be both crude and counterproductive. As the Revolutionary Era approached and prizefighting extended to the American colonies, both Puritans and Republicans spread anti-sporting propaganda equating athletics to the oppressive nature and decadent monarchies of Europe.\(^2\) More religious groups, especially Protestant sects, followed suit, citing the Sabbatarian restrictions against gambling, amusements, and drinking.\(^3\) However, similar to the decline in white middle class male manliness in the twentieth century, the economic shifts in prosperity and transforming thought patterns on society ushered in a golden age of sporting at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The sport’s popularity exploded with the coming of Jack Broughton, called the “father of boxing rules” because he introduced a prohibition on eye gouging and attacking a fallen opponent. Broughton exemplified the demographics that dominated the pugilist sport for centuries: white, working class males with intent to settle a dispute or earn money. In addition, Broughton added an entertainment value to the sport. Bare knuckle brawling was brutal and violent, but Broughton’s charisma and untouchable defense added intrigue that drew supporters. In fact, by the 1820s, industrialization had brought an influx of immigrants to the nation, prompting more citizens to desire sporting and its facets of amusement and gambling to offset the tiresome work days. Historian
Dale Somers noted that, “as the tempo of industrialization and urbanization accelerated, America became a mass society composed of people whose lives were governed increasingly by the machine and time clock.” In similar fashion to the conquerors in history, Americans’ desire for “fun and games” effectively muted the previously thunderous voices in opposition to sports.

Regardless of the boom in popularity for prizefighting to the public, Northern politicians convinced the judiciaries to continuously rule boxing illegal. In effect, supporters devoted the larger part of the nineteenth century dodging police, bribing law officials, and holding lucrative fights in secluded areas like barns and abandoned shipyards. As the objectors correctly predicted, gambling immediately took control of pugilism, which many viewed as a major facet of an immoral society. Bookmaking, according to protestors, gradually leads to more degenerative practices in a society like vagrancy, debt and prostitution. Plus, along with excessive gambling came violent riots, which prompted state legislatures to pass concrete laws outlawing any simple example of fistfighting at any time. Political objectors wasted no time in celebrating these measures and looked to spread the message harshly. By 1849, in connection with their Puritan past, Massachusetts in particular set the precedent by upholding numerous convictions of their anti-prizefighting laws.

On May 30, 1880, Irishman Paddy Ryan defeated Englishman Joe Goss in Colliers, West Virginia to become the first world heavyweight champion in boxing. This momentous event represented the southward shift of prizefighting in America as simultaneously more citizens embraced prizefighting and law enforcement sought out violators. By this point, advertising for bouts was everywhere and the occupation of
“promoter” became a vehicle towards popularity and money. Also at this point, boxing, particularly heavyweight fights, began to be identified as a “manly” art for only the strongest, most authoritative males in the society. Manliness, which became an important facet in American culture, enveloped the nation as Americans sought boxing as the judge for their Social Darwinist ideals.

On February 7, 1882, John L. Sullivan, the son of Irish Boston immigrants, defeated Paddy Ryan to become the first true world heavyweight glove-fisted champion. What was most noteworthy of Sullivan’s triumphs and significance to the sport actually occurred both inside and outside the ring. As Sammons notes, Sullivan followed in Broughton’s footsteps and sanitized and conventionalized the brutality of the sport; however, Sullivan made boxing an international phenomenon, fighting overseas and linking all classes of people, particularly the ones that originally found the sport distasteful. Outside the ring, he single-handedly commercialized the sport by becoming a national celebrity, selling out fights, and becoming the first American athlete to earn over one million dollars. In essence, Sullivan’s reign as champion introduced a new wave of individuals, particularly middle class males, to a sport that epitomized power, wealth, and ultimately, masculinity.

Therefore, blacks were not deemed as acceptable to engage in the struggle for power and wealth with whites in prizefighting for quite some time. It wasn’t until the American Revolutionary War that blacks were seen as a possibly profitable commodity in prizefighting. When they were allowed to fight, blacks fought each other or white patrons who looked to exhibit the inferiority of the colored people during a lopsided beating. Elsewhere on plantations, slaveholders sometimes consolidated considerable
control by holding no holds barred fighting between slaves. Frederick Douglass was noted as stating that boxing was “among the most effective means in the hands of the slaveholder in keeping down the spirit of insurrection.”

Tom Molineaux represented the first bondsman that broke the conventional design of blacks fighting in confined, singular bouts when he transcended slavery and excelled in international sport due to his talent at prizefighting. Trained by his father on a Virginia plantation, Molineaux won such a large amount of money in bouts for his master that he was eventually freed. He then moved to England and became the first black to fight for the heavyweight championship. Despite international fame, Molineaux’s story faded from memory. Another globe-trotting black boxer, Bill Richmond, known as the “Black Terror,” beat numerous British boxers in the late eighteenth century but was defeated by Tom Cribb in 1805. Like Molineaux, Richmond was purposely erased from memory by historical revisionists due to his outright challenges to white supremacy and manliness at the time. They effectively proved that blacks could not only compete in a brutish, dominant sport, but they also could excel at it and corrupt the ideas of white superiority and black inferiority. Nonetheless, after Bill Richmond and Tom Molineaux, black pugilism became a popular tradition, even though they remained segregated from both white fighters and white America…until the appearance of Jack Johnson.

When Jack Johnson became the first black heavyweight champion of the world in 1908, the aforementioned racial hierarchies in sports were dramatically transformed forever. Over the next century, black fighters dominated boxing with a “chip on their shoulder” due to Johnson’s antics. From his bravado of taunting his white opponents and prejudiced spectators to his often criticized defensive fighting style, Johnson displayed an
unconscious, egocentric, and independent attitude that was shaped by the social factors of his environment.

By the early twentieth century, Jim Crow segregation was a conquering force, especially in the South. *Plessy v. Ferguson*’s Supreme Court ruling of “separate but equal” created an overwhelming paradox between both races and social classes throughout the South. Blacks received the lesser quantity and quality of supplies, support, and respect in regards to the social climate. They were heavily persecuted for displaying any form of self-righteousness, including socioeconomic success, political aspirations, or politico-religious assertiveness. In fact, central to the sanctioned extralegal violence in the south was the peculiar southern code of honor that the institution of slavery simultaneously perpetuated and strengthened. While Americans elsewhere turned to judging self-worth according to notions of dignity and decorum, southerners steadfastly retained a “code of honor” with its corollaries of the glorification of motherhood and feminine virtue, as a gauge for measuring a man’s worth. In a culture where skin color determined status, white women were enshrined on the pedestal of femininity, particularly against sexual aggression by blacks. For many, white femininity became the symbol of white racial purity.

When Jack Johnson emerged as the unlikely savior of black pride and self-righteousness, the largest contributing factor was the racial, political climate of the post-Reconstruction/Jim Crow South. This “New South,” which C. Vann Woodward described as a complex, corrupt political and socioeconomic system that developed gradually over the years, was a voluminous sleeping monster for Johnson. By the time Johnson’s rank had risen around boxing circles, a culmination of “Redeemer” Democrats
and Populists had seized power in every major government in the South, immediately breeding an atmosphere of economic dependency, social disintegration, and oppressive politics (due in large part to the Supreme Court). The disenfranchised, subordinate African American was without many successful victories in the South; Johnson’s bravado and violent, controversial pugilism provided blacks with an unconscious, reluctant race hero that heated the nation for decades.

Despite his purported status as the symbol for black pride and advancement, Johnson’s antics proved predominantly self-centered and degenerative. In terms of blacks, Johnson greatly distanced himself from the community and social life, opting to engage in illicit behavior and social interactions with middle and upper class whites. Despite an alleged affair with a black woman named Clara Kerr, all of Johnson’s sexual relationships, whether lawful or unlawful, were with white women. Although his biography claims that he chose this lifestyle primarily due to past betrayals by his own race, it must be noted that the champ’s lower class background and assertive urban slavery heritage in Galveston, Texas helped create an independent, self-reliant attitude that mutated into a seizure of masculinity, power, and wealth in the early nineteenth century. Joining the ranks of middle class white males, Johnson became obsessed with capturing traditional ideas of masculinity. However, due to his background, prizefighting appeared to be the only viable option for him to exercise that manly dominance.

In what sense did Johnson’s masculinity and manliness affect whites and why was it such a crucial element in society? As noted by Gail Bederman in her authoritative work on masculinity, *Manliness and Civilization*, turn-of-the-century middle class white
males were infatuated with manhood. At the heart of the matter were underlying class issues. Between 1820 and 1860, manhood evolved into the centralized theme of middle class consciousness. Between those years, males expressed manliness in both their socioeconomic and commercial environment by earning livings as entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers of companies. At the same time, gender was crucial to the era as women were celebrated as “pious, maternal guardians of virtue and domesticity.” With these figures creating and raising middle class nuclear families, male children were taught to build strong character and adopt masculine passions not just over themselves, but over weaker peoples, like women and the lower classes and races. In essence, the white middle class was overflowing with “honor, high-mindedness, and strength” thanks to controlling mechanisms of wealth and power that would be deemed “manliness.”

By the 1890s, the middle class consciousness experienced an identity crisis as traditional signifiers of manliness began to weaken. Central to the issues were drastic shifts in economic opportunity, as the Panics of 1873 and 1893 forced many males to reexamine their financial ventures after thousands of bankruptcies and foreclosures had claimed a plentiful amount of small businesses. In fact, commercial confidence and stability took a major hit for entrepreneurs. By 1910, the 67 percent of middle class white males that were self-employed in 1870 had plummeted to 37 percent. The cause in the drop could also be attributed to the rise in young men taking entry level, clerical jobs that did not promise promotions to management positions. In that sense, a new generation of middle class male sons lacked self-confidence in the possibility of possessing the same wealth and power that had defined their fathers of the nation.
At the same time that masculine independent entrepreneurship became unachievable, working class males, both black and white, began challenging the social authority of middle class whites in politics. For much of the nineteenth century, partisan politics proved to be a battleground for male identity. According to Bederman, electoral politics reinforced men’s connection to the very real power of government. This connotes the exhaustive rejection of women’s suffrage and immigrant participation in city government as white males sought to keep control of the political atmosphere in America. The catalyst of the power struggle involved the explosion of labor unrest at the end of the nineteenth century. Beginning in the 1880s, violent labor demonstrations like the Haymarket Square Affair and the Pullman Railroad Strike challenged middle class ideas on manhood’s supposed authority to wield civic authority and control strife and unrest. Lastly, women’s sexual liberation and independent migration into the urban labor field damaged the patriarch’s control of the family and his manhood (this will be discussed in full in chapter six). To reaffirm Bedermen’s thesis, “middle-class men’s inability to fulfill these manly obligations and exercise this manly authority, in the face of challenges by working class men, immigrants, and black men, reinforced their focus on manhood.”

Very few economic and political venues towards recapturing manliness were viable, so middle class whites looked towards social opportunities, particularly the male body and sports. Returning to the Victorian cultural definition of manhood, white males looked to the powerful, large body of heavyweight prizefighters as the epitome of manhood. Also, the prizefighter represented full individualistic success due to the sport’s independent process of conquering the opponent. According to Bederman,
American whites held the heavyweight’s male body at such high regard that they sought vigorously to withhold anyone they felt lacked the right to wield social, economic, or political influence from obtaining that type of male identity and power. For the middle class, social authority identified with bodily strength, so African Americans were denied the opportunity to challenge for the heavyweight title. When the Galveston Giant climbed the ranks of the black heavyweights and began to challenge white opponents, he seriously disrupted one of the main attempts by white society to exhibit and control masculinity. His physically imposing blackness amalgamated with his “Bad Nigger” mentality seriously upset the supremacist doctrine set by nativist politics.

The search and seizure for masculinity worked as a complex module for Johnson. While being heavily restricted and plotted against in Jim Crow America, Johnson efficiently utilized those same cultural constructs to favorably position himself to control manliness in society. He mimicked the traits of twentieth century male dominance and power inside the ring, beating all opponents, and outside the ring, controlling white women and spending money freely. He openly practiced entrepreneurship, lived amongst whites, and remained indifferent to the needs and desires of second class citizens. The fact that a black man represented the grossest elements of both masculinity and degenerative immorality and caused black idol worship seriously disturbed the elite class. In effect, Johnson’s practices explicitly disturbed whites, primarily the males because of their obsession with masculinity. Although a conscious race man was dangerous enough to upsetting the racial order, an unconscious race hero threatened to evolve into a symbol of disorder, thus prompting crusade-like response behavior in aspects of society. If Johnson were allowed to continue his self-determinant, independent successful streak in
sports for the first quarter of the century, he had the potential to change long-held
traditional beliefs about American society. This set in motion widespread mass hysteria
and panics from the controlling sector of society. In effect, these “Children of Panic” in
all areas of the nation, especially government and commercialism, effectively targeted
and removed Johnson from the public while in exile. His anti-American views during the
first great World War, like Muhammad Ali, would paint him in an unfavorable light that
would continue to hurt his collapsing career.

Fifty years later, at the dawn of the turbulent 1960s, Cassius Clay of Louisville,
who had wowed the Olympic crowd in Rome with his undeniable talent and patriotic
overtones, experienced a different ascension to the top of the boxing world. Considering
the fact that he was following in the footsteps of famous, patriotic, and humbled black
fighters like Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson, and Sugar Ray Robinson, Clay was in a more
advantageous place in history than Johnson to succeed in masculinity. In similar fashion
to the Galveston Giant, Ali’s immediate environment drastically influenced his actions.
Bolstered by the legal successes of the modern civil rights movement, African Americans
at that time transformed the manner in which they were viewed and how they viewed
themselves. Across the nation, activist organizations like the NAACP, SNCC, and
CORE engaged in both direct civil disobedience and legal clashes to ensure complete
social, political, and economic equality between all races. Considering the interracial
support for these demonstrations, the country gradually progressed to more tolerance of
racial harmony. In effect, as was the case at the beginning of the century, middle class
white male hegemony took a major hit as black males were accepted as equals in suffrage
and opportunity.
The civil rights activities, pushed thoroughly by agency driven blacks, had only flourished greatly at the midpoint of the twentieth century. However, in progressive urban centers like Louisville, blacks collectivized agendas concerning racial egalitarianism and experienced moderate successes of activism from the late nineteenth century to the end of the 1960s. Although it was more progressive than other southern cities, Louisville fought against the black agenda, attempting to keep masculinity and power at the helms of white supremacy.

Louisville’s turbulent history in confronting racial hegemony can be traced back to antebellum times. At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, as abolitionists and slaveholders fought over the Commonwealth state’s authority, Louisville’s middle class flexed its economic and commercial muscle. The slave market in the city was one of the most valuable in the nation at the time. Thousands of immigrants flooded the River City to work for the dominating middle class managers and traders in tobacco and pork packaging. In fact, the Louisville population dramatically increased from 10,000 in 1830 to 43,000 in 1850. Earning power increased with the addition of the “Hart County” locomotive at Ninth and Broadway that connected the city to the rest of the nation. These elements contributed to the city’s remarkable wealth, which by 1850 was an estimated $20 million in sales. In addition, the Louisville-New Orleans river route was considered the top ranked system in freight and passenger traffic in the entire western river system.16

However, the economic atmosphere could not cloak the issue of impending war. In the Presidential election of 1860, less than one percent of the Commonwealth elected fellow Kentuckian Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln’s Republican Party, which favored the decline of migrant chattel slavery, angered the Louisvillians in particular because of their
lucrative slave sales. Although most Kentuckians opted to vote for Illinois senator and Democratic Party Candidate Stephen Douglas and Tennessee senator John Bell, who ran for the Constitutional Union Party, nobody was surprised when Lincoln took the election, prompting the Children of Panic to predict the eradication of slavery and the “Old South” way of life entirely. When the Confederate states seceded from the Union, one after another in the 1860s, Kentucky remained stagnant, allowing slavery to continue, yet recognizing the illegitimacy of secession. Senator Henry Clay worked towards a compromise, which allowed the state to remain in the Union, but residents in Louisville were sharply divided on which side to support. Finally, on May 20, 1861, Kentucky declared neutrality in the Civil War. Both sides respected the decision due to the Commonwealth’s abundance of natural resources, manpower, and the L&H railroad. Neither President Lincoln nor Davis risked tipping the state into the other’s grasp, fearing that it would be the strategically located smoking gun to possibly win the war.17

The conflicting sides of the city would clash throughout the war, especially towards the end. Many believed that the Union’s usage of the state as a means to stockpile weapons and resources meant that they retained the advantage. However, immediately after the Confederacy fell apart, the state began to behave in a sympathetic manner. On December 18, 1865, the Kentucky Legislature repealed the Expatriation Act of 1861, which allowed all who served in the Confederate Army to have their Kentucky citizenship restored without fear of prosecution. At the same time, the legislature repealed all laws that declared Confederate soldiers as guilty of treason. Most significantly, all Confederate officers were allowed to run for public office, thus setting up the permeation of former Confederates, Redeemers, and nativists in law, insurance,
business, real estate, and politics. By the end of the 1880s, middle class former Confederates had taken control of the River City, in effect practicing the same manliness and masculine control that swept the nation at the time. Immigrants and freedmen flocked to the new industrial jobs, but Jim Crow legislation and nativist politics hindered progress immensely. The extralegal act of lynching blacks, which contributed to white dominance and authority over the environment, spread quickly through the city. This forced many African Americans to utilize civil disobedience, militancy, and agency in damaging the barriers to racial equality in the city. In essence, the masculinity of the white middle class male population in Louisville was being threatened by numerous demonstrations against their political and socioeconomic control.

Following World War I, blacks increased efforts to destroy Louisville’s confinement to white supremacy, thus prompting a new wave of black middle class citizens to adopt the principles of manliness. Middle Class blacks began operating businesses on Walnut Street, winning public office, and raising their children to collectivize and utilize agency to achieve progress. Wealth and power, in other words, became the focus of the black middle class in Louisville, but sporting and the male body had not been as successful until the arrival of Cassius Clay Jr., whose journey towards unabashed masculinity would shatter the perceptions of activism in the nation.

With the creation of various sporting organizations like the National Basketball Association and the National Football League, crowds of sporting supporters began to value the athlete’s celebrity as much as his ability. Due in part to John L. Sullivan, Jack Johnson, Jack Dempsey, and Joe Louis, by the 1960s, boxing had chiefly become an excited, commercial locomotive phenomenon that emphasized iconic recognition and
ticket selling personalities. What separated it from other sports leagues was its emphasis on the individual’s success and persona, not the team. By 1961, Clay recognized his wealth and power depended on the public’s admiration of theatrical characters. With the help of the Louisville Sponsorship Group, he created such a villainous, egotistical figure that the public was forced to embrace him. As his career continued, Clay continued this trend of reinvention based on both will of the people and the social forces of the atmosphere, associating himself with various groups like the Nation of Islam during the rise of the Black Power Movement and most importantly, the anti-Vietnam War Movement, in which he became a global icon. In other words, Ali’s desire for masculinity forced him to utilize interdependent relationships to benefit his wealth and power in boxing.

As with Jack Johnson, Muhammad Ali was a product of his environment. Whereas Johnson’s lower class, uneducated, poverty stricken background limited his exposure and commercialism early, Ali utilized his middle class upbringing to rely on the commercial ventures of powerful groups from both races to achieve success and masculinity. Because of these factors, Johnson embarked on a strictly independent route to success and manliness while Ali chose to utilize the power, wealth, and discipline of other groups to achieve his success. Also, because of his middle class background, Ali was raised with a more solid understanding of the importance, function, and definition of middle class masculinity and how best to seize and manipulate it.

Regardless of their own goals, both boxers gained fascinating reputations as racial revolutionaries that challenged American ideals on white supremacy and black inferiority. What is most astounding is the perpetual belief that these men willingly
accepted their heroic statuses from blacks and represented the race for the purpose of upsetting and destroying Jim Crow mentalities. The black community actively sought representatives for their race that displayed first class citizenship qualities, defied white restrictions on their political and socioeconomic goals, and possessed enough immense popularity to have the potential to transform and transmit ideas. Most attractive to blacks were individuals that embraced race consciousness.

Race consciousness, in American terms, includes any and all examples of past, present, and future black pride and essentially what it means to be identified as black in America. Artists of the Harlem Renaissance in particular made it a priority to transform the negative, ex-slave stereotypes concerning blacks into positive images of "race bearers." According to social scientists like W.E.B. Du Bois, race consciousness was in direct conflict with the modern Civil Rights Movement, which sought to establish a raceless society. Race consciousness emphasizes identity based on racial heritage and acknowledges the value of the race's contributions. Unlike the Black Supremacist movement advocated by groups like the Nation of Islam, race consciousness does not utilize abhorrence for other races for the purpose of self-upsurge. In fact, Du Boisian scholar Richard Delgado strengthened Du Bois' race consciousness theory with the Critical Race Theory (CRT), which mainly focuses on the importance of race recognition to self-worth and social independence. According to Delgado, if the idea of "racelessness" was abandoned, blacks would experience full liberation in culture-making and self-worth. Other Du Boisian scholars, like John Shuford, agree with Delgado's assessment, adding that racelessness allows white supremacist doctrine to remain the norm which leads to a continuous cycle of racial resentment from both groups.
consciousness destroys racial norms in society and creates awareness and self-determination in the racial community.

As the black community witnessed both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali continuously thrive and capture success in a predominantly white and commercial environment, they also saw the potential to showcase the greatest aspects of the American black race not just nationally, but also across the seas to other black groups. Thus, race consciousness would both intensify and spread if powerful, masculine icons continued to dominate in masculine, societal contests like sports. Because of these desires, blacks across the nation supplied insurmountable support and sustenance to these figures throughout their careers. To most blacks throughout the nation, both pugilists possessed superhuman qualities, or a “sixth finger.” According to folklore, Homo sapiens sapiens’ next step in evolution includes the growth of a sixth finger on each hand that would symbolize the forward movement towards superiority and enhancement of all human qualities. The sixth finger indicates that the current human species has progressed so fully that they would be at what we believe to be superhuman levels. For the black community to acknowledge the extraordinary abilities and characters of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali was their acceptance of these two icons as race conscious men; the devotion to these boxers was so extreme in nature that no type of incident or action could be deemed inappropriate, degenerative, or selfish. As referenced in the preface of this work, the black community’s continued practice of recognizing black athletes as symbols of race consciousness and treating them as though they are impervious and invincible to degenerative behavior began with the “Galveston Giant” and the “Louisville Lip.” In almost blind adoration, African Americans chose two unconscious, self-righteous, and
raceless men who utilized their gifted abilities as boxers to capture full masculinity in the forms of wealth and power. Blacks, due to their considerable inferior treatment at the hands of the majority, actively sought actual representations of success and defiance of the norms to carry their dreams of black pride. Although de jure Jim Crow legislation has since been outlawed, the examples of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali as representatives of race consciousness in the black community still continue today, whether in their own legacies or through the legacies of other athletes. However, these symbols of black pride in the sporting world have repeatedly rejected their anointed statuses for the chance at true wealth and power in the commercialization and exploitation of their masculinity. Like Johnson, who expressed his self-righteous egotism by adopting a middle class white lifestyle and abandoning any forms of black pride, Ali refused to accept his unconscious race hero status, electing instead to focus on anti-American ideals that challenged the nation's theories on military service and nationalism. In essence, both men were highly regarded by blacks to represent the race, but both chose to ignore that position in their chase of masculinity.

At the core, this work's main focus is to dissect the roles of black sporting heroes focusing on the case studies of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali. Both primary and secondary source evidence reveals that both boxers, while iconic and well deserving of longstanding legacies as pioneers of black success, rejected the ideas of race consciousness and black pride. Indeed, Johnson must be remembered for breaking the color barrier in gaining the world heavyweight championship while Ali must be remembered for winning the title four times, intensifying the anti-Vietnam War movement, and increasing the popularity and economic success of the Nation of Islam.
However, their acts were not part of any black political, social, or economic movement for culture-making. Although both manipulated and exploited the white supremacist system for their own benefit, neither directly nor willingly assisted blacks in gaining an advantage through their leadership and pride. Each had their own motivations. For Jack Johnson, he was a careless individual that concentrated on his own desires and goals; Ali on the other hand, was the exact opposite, caring for everyone regardless of race or color. He may not have respected or liked certain groups, especially Africans and dark-skinned people, but Ali always demonstrated genuine affection and caring for anyone that crossed paths with him.

A major fault in existing research about both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali is the lack of background analysis in determining the subjects' motives. This work dedicates substantial effort to linking the environmental factor to the conduits of the boxers' masculinity quest. Both Galveston and Louisville were not only significant to the history of the nation, but also to the creation of both boxers' mindsets and actions. The first two chapters are dedicated to dissecting the history of the two major cities, thus illustrating a consistent pattern between the citizens of the area and the behavior patterns of the two icons. Ironically, both individuals reflected their communities' ideals of independence (Johnson and Galveston) and interdependence (Ali and Louisville), which indeed proved lucrative.

This type of comparable study is important for a variety of reasons. First, black sports historiography is dramatically underwritten. Because of its youth, the variation of scholars writing on black sports is extremely narrow, represented by the few individuals who write multiple works on the same topic. Although black history, as a major subject
being researched, has increased gradually since the 1960s, many subtopics have been overlooked by major historians in favor of more popular ones, including the Civil Rights Movement and the machinations of the United States bondage system. Black historiography is in need of serious scholarly research on all topics in black sports history. Second, the majority of research on both pugilists is strictly biographical, lacking serious scholarly analysis. Third, it recognizes a much desired objective analysis of two boxing legends. Far too many studies published on the boxers, especially Ali, are written to influence favoritism or lack sufficient details to elucidate the full story. This work attempts to include all possible variations to provide a thorough examination of the most accurate depiction that can be studied.

The two time periods compared are prime examples of civil unrest and transforming attitudes that redefined the identity of both boxers. This work will prove simultaneously that Johnson and Ali were both instrumental in their respective eras tumultuous race relations and that those same societal factors drove their egos to achieve the only true goal of their self-determinant quest: victory in capturing full masculinity. Indeed, both boxers are exemplary examples of black success that was needed during periods where African Americans faced futile socioeconomic and political hardships and they should be celebrated as such. However, when faced with aiming for the race conscious bulls eye with Johnson and Ali, the black community shot an arrow into the air that crashed exactly at its launch point.
NOTES

1 Derek Birley, Sport and the Making of Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 118.


3 Ibid.


6 Ibid.


9 Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, 2004 ed. (Prestwick House Inc., 2004), 84-89.


12 Ibid, 11-12.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid, 14.

15 According to Bederman, whites ignored the smaller weight classes in prizefighting, including the middleweights and lightweights. Their bodies were considered weak and fragile, which meant that their position in society was not strong enough to exhibit masculinity or manliness.

17 Damian Beach, Civil War Battles, Skirmishes, and Events in Kentucky. (Different Drummer Books, 1995), 13-16, 17, 18-20.


21 This theory is described in explicit detail in the short story written by Ellis St. Joseph, titled “The Sixth Finger,” which was the fifth episode of the Outer Limits television show that ran from 1963 to 1965. Original air date was October 14, 1963.
CHAPTER II

THE ARCHITECTS OF FEAR: BLACK SELF-DETERMINATION AND REDEMPTIONIST POLITICS IN URBAN TEXAS, 1850-1900

In 1929, long after his best boxing experiences had since become distant memories, Jack Johnson was approached to write a series of syndicated articles detailing his extensive career. In one particular piece, Johnson proposed that the current black heavyweights of the era, including Sam Langford and George Godfrey, could never achieve the accomplishments that he himself had gained due to in part to their unconsciously embedded “Old South” beliefs of black inferiority and white supremacy. According to the Galveston Giant, those same systems of antebellum southern traditions that had controlled the last three generations of their families continued to shape their mentalities. Scholars have debated over the possible motivating factors behind Johnson’s ignorance of the de jure racial hierarchy that plagued the United States following the Civil War, yet few have ventured into his hometown, the southwest Texas port city of Galveston, where ideas of black inferiority varied vastly from the rest of the south. In fact, throughout the period of bondage, blacks exhibited self-determination and various forms of “freedom” in Galveston due to both inconsistent and passive enforcement of slave codes. Following emancipation, however, Texas as a whole, reeling from the loss in the Civil War and the inevitable consequence of competition from blacks in both the socioeconomic and political atmosphere, imposed harsh black codes to transport white supremacist doctrine to the forefront of the Texas mentality. Unfortunately for those
Democrats promoting the “Redemptionist” policies of the Reconstruction Era, urban areas of Texas, especially Galveston, like its black champion, had ignored the “Architects of Fear” for enough years to create a community of independent self-determinant blacks. This chapter will simultaneously explore the sociology and politics of Galveston, Texas, exposing the city as an aberration to the “Old South” mentality that was prevalent during the mid to late nineteenth century. This same deviant mentality was shared by the parents and neighbors of John Arthur Johnson, who developed the self-determination and communal ignorance of strict racial laws that would carry him to the heights of American society.

Located on a barrier island about three hundred miles west of New Orleans, Galveston possesses one of the best natural harbors on the Gulf of Mexico and its boosters crowed that if Texas became the South’s Empire State, Galveston would be its New York City. In fact, by 1860, Galveston had swelled to over seven thousand people while surrounding cities barely peaked at three thousand. The state’s richest plantation districts lay in the counties surrounding Galveston, which like its neighbors Austin, Little Rock, and Shreveport, was a thriving center for urban slavery in Texas. However, unlike its neighbors, Galveston attracted slave owners mainly due to its harbor, which was strategically located at the heart of oceanic trade for Texas. Business and trade flourished, yet industry seemed to remain stagnant at best, due to mediocre transportation methods, lawless groups, and competition from smaller towns. Therefore, the urban bondsmen experience can be described as an amalgamation of varying experiences that originated from both the passive atmosphere of the city and the booming population at the time.
Upon arrival, Texas urban slaves were heavily impacted by contact with a variety of people and social opportunities that was minimal at best throughout the rest of the antebellum south. Many slaves who traveled to urban centers like Galveston were exposed to the inequalities of slavery, inspired by alleged economic prosperity, enthralled with knowledge, and enveloped with new experiences and acquaintances. Few municipal and state laws were present which specifically prohibited blacks from areas frequented by white people. Slaves were able to travel around the town in freedom, congregate at dances and church, and most significantly, provide their own housing and jobs. The true confirmation of this lifestyle was the white counterparts, who not only condoned the activities, but also participated in secret meetings and friendships with enslaved blacks. These whites, who were mostly lower class, would purchase alcohol and engage in card games and gambling with blacks while white women sought interracial public intimacy. Bondsmen who wanted to marry were also thrown “extravagant” weddings by their white masters. Slave traders, used to immoral practices when selling their merchandise, traded differently in Galveston. Respect was desired when dealing blacks in urban Southwest Texas. Colonel John S. Sydnor, a prominent businessman, refused to sell a Galveston bondsman to an undesirable buyer. Numerous slaves whom migrated to urban cities in Southwest Texas noticed distinct changes in demeanor, attitude, and authority. Gus Johnson, a former slave who was interviewed well after his ninetieth birthday, described his change of scenery from Alabama to life in Urban Texas:

“ol Missy,, she sho’s a good woman, and all her white folks, they used to go to church at White Chapel at ‘leven in the mornin’. Us cullud folks goes in the evening’. Us never do no work on Sunday and on Saturday after twelve o’clock us can go fishin’ or huntin’.”
Laura Cornish, who was born in Liberty County, Texas, described the relationship with her master:

"we belong to Mr. Day, his name was Isiah Day, but we all calls him Papa Day' cause he won't let 'low none of his cullud folks to call him master. He says we is born just as free as he is, only the other white folks won't tell us so, and that our souls are just as white....None of Mr. Day's cullud folks worked Sattidays and Sundays. They have that time off to do what they wants to, mebbe visit neighbors, and we don't have to have no pass like other cullud folks...they never was no whippin' on our place neither,' cause Papa Day say we is human bein's and not beasts."12

These types of attitudes were prevalent in urban Texas, forcing many whites to question the behaviors of their bondsmen. In actuality, like Jack Johnson, black bondage in urban areas like Galveston rejected traditional chattel systems and racial ideologies of segregation and black second class citizenship. Colonel Fremantle witnessed firsthand the usual Sunday afternoon activities of Galveston slaves, who told him that they were in a different situation from other Texas slaves. "I saw innumerable Negroes and Negresses parading about the streets in the most outrageous grand costumes-silks, satins, crinolines, hats with feathers, lace mantles, & c., forming an absurd contrast to the simple dress of their mistresses. Many were driving their master's carriages."13 In the summer of 1854, the editor of the Austin State Gazette printed that dances attended by blacks and lower class whites were common in Galveston and anyone observing such an event "almost imagines himself in the land of amalgamation, abolition meetings, and women's rights conventions."14 Other Democratic backed newspapers shared this same belief that allowing slaves to freelance independently, which included hiring out their own labor, led to vagrant like behavior, including gambling and drinking. Whites also feared talks of an uprising due to the enhanced leisure and meeting times of slaves. John Marshall, editor
of the *Texas State Gazette*, accused blacks of gathering for nefarious purposes and planning rebellions. “These prayer meetings were the places where the negroes were seldom interfered with by the presence of the whites, and every kind of thievish plot, incendiary work, and conspiracy were concocted, circulated, discussed, and attempts made to mature them.”¹⁵ Based on the statistics at the time, a conspiracy of armed insurrection was more than possible. By the mid-1850s, slave insurrections were commonplace with thousands of blacks involved. The editor of the *Austin State Gazette* warned that “we will ere long have a Southampton insurrection, or a general Negro stampede for Mexico.” Only a stricter ordinance to control the outlandish behavior of the slaves and “unprincipled” white men would save the state from hellish rebellion.¹⁶ *The Cherokee County Texas Inquirer* wrote “Servile insurrections seem to be the order of the day in this state.”¹⁷ *Galveston News* published a damming article on the crisis of black insurrections due to their excess free time:

> “never has there been a time in our recollection when so many insurrections, attempts at insurrection, have transpired in rapid succession during the past six months. The evidence in regard to some of these has indeed proved very unsatisfactory, showing nothing but that the negroes had got hold of indistinct and vague ideas about obtaining their freedom...In other cases the plans have been more matured, and in some instances, arms have been provided, and all the necessary arrangements made not only to effect escape, but to slaughter their owners.”¹⁸

Town governments across the state took notice and Austin was the first to respond by passing an ordinance in 1855 that granted “the Council generally and the Marshal and his assistants particularly control and supervision” of “the conduct, carriage, demeanor, and deportment of any and all slaves living, being, or found within the city limits.”¹⁹ While the law was extremely vague, the codes passed were dependent upon the location in the state. Most cities began banning the purchase of alcohol, firearms, gambling,
fraternization, and disorderly conduct. Galveston Mayor James E. Haviland and City Secretary Leroy H. Smith issued decrees that would institute a curfew for slaves.\textsuperscript{20} While these laws were decreed with strictness and a sense of urgency in mind, consistency remained the major problem. While state government officials insisted that bondsmen be granted limited access to freedoms, local government often neglected or refused to comply for various reasons. City managers enjoyed the lucrative gains earned by allowing their bondsmen to seek their own employment and living quarters. However, hired slaves knew that a temporary slaveowner, or "boss" showed little to no interest in the material wealth or state of mind. Hired slaves often sought to live in "black buildings" which were in a disastrous state, but served as a means to embrace segregation from the white supremacy ideology. Whites in response reported these houses as regulating "rebellious tendencies" and their occupants as "violent rebels."\textsuperscript{21}

An attempt was made in the late 1850s by Galveston to bribe slaveowners, through taxes and bonds, to stop hiring out their chattel. However, mayors and city councilmen continuously deleted and added laws, were undecided on punishment, and refused to update the methodology of enforcing such slave codes. Records of some district courts in Texas display inconsistencies in punishments for violating slave codes. Thomas Kerchoff of River Red County was found guilty on three counts of selling liquor to a slave and fined $20 on each charge; J and N. Alexander of Smith County were each found guilty for buying corn from a slave without written consent and charged $25.\textsuperscript{22} All local governments sought a harbinger that would enforce the weak slave codes. This task belonged to the town constable, which was an overworked, constantly harassed, unorganized position with the power of regulating tax collection, street laws, and police
patrol. When the constable made an arrest, it was mostly thrown out or overlooked by the state courts.\textsuperscript{23}

All factions of government sought a scapegoat for the growing problem of black self-determination in the urban Southwest. One group, the free blacks, was blamed for brandishing a clear example of freedom and encouraging the pursuit of illicit activities. Although there was a small group of free blacks in Galveston (thanks to barriers from town governments), whites sought more preventative measures to force free blacks out of the port area completely.\textsuperscript{24} Local politicians enacted regressive taxes, bond securities, and other means to dwindle the income of free blacks. The same urban slave codes that were minimally enforced on slaves were more explicitly administered on the free colored people in most towns. Within a decade, these measures were successful in destroying the perceived social threat of free blacks in Galveston, decreasing the number from thirty-eight in 1848 to just two by 1860.\textsuperscript{25} With nearly zero free blacks, the incidents of self-determination and defiance continued throughout the urban southwest.

Institutional weakness, unorganized police efforts, and lack of public support fostered an atmosphere of invincibility for blacks in towns like Galveston. Although there were isolated incidents where violators of the new slave codes were severely punished, as a whole, blacks were allowed to embrace a feeling of equality with whites that would continue into the Civil War. In essence, according to their own words, bondsmen were not afraid of punishment anymore. Police in urban Southwest Texas exhausted most of their time harassing slaves instead of commanding strict obedience. With these passive times, reputation of cities like Galveston spread fast. Rural slaves in East Texas began running away to Shreveport and Galveston. These runaways explored
the town and spread stories of the freedoms enjoyed by the urban bondsmen, prompting numerous runaway cases in the 1850s.26

The black response to white attempts to curve their freedom in Galveston further fueled the fire. Galveston fostered an atmosphere that influenced the blacks to seek their own freedoms. Throughout the city, examples of the “Bad Nigger” mentality were prevalent. Many slaves would destroy livestock, poison food, and physically attack their masters without hesitation.27 Bondsmen continuously acted in an “unsavory, insolent manner,” according to upper class whites. Many democrats often noted slaves using foul language loudly in the presence of their white counterparts, abruptly disappearing at all hours of the night, and most alarming of all, displaying high self-esteem. Governor of Texas Elisha M. Pease owned a girl named Maria, who was a cheerful, great worker until she was hired out in Galveston. After a year in Galveston, Maria experienced a drastic personality change, often running away, engaging in vagrancy, and arguing back to her masters. Manuel, a Bondsman from Little Rock, disobeyed his master often and left home to live with his wife, who was owned by another man. Manuel often challenged this man verbally, and on one occasion, threatened to burn his land and everything on it.28 The indifference and lack of consistency amongst the towns in Texas allowed the bondsmen to exploit a faltered system. The antebellum period in Galveston established an example in the South that the majority of cities had not witnessed before. Urban slavery in Galveston advocated and allowed self-righteous behavior and control depended on the master. As a result, communities of independent, power-seeking blacks emerged throughout antebellum urban Texas cities.
With gradual destruction of economic practices and constant battle, the breakout of the American Civil War also brought to Galveston more strife, carnage and increasing volatile bondsmen/master relations. During this period, vagrancy, gambling, prostitution, burglary, and challenges to white supremacy dramatically intensified with the voluminous influx of soldiers, foreigners, Mexicans, and Native American transients. The authorities claimed that they had lost full control of the “demoralized negro population.”29 Slaves in other cities flocked quickly to the city to escape rural plantation life. In addition, cities in Texas had been spared the damage that many Southern cities received, so slavery was almost uninterrupted during the war.30

Black Texans received word of independence on June 19, 1865 (Juneteenth) when General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston to issue the order:

The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present home and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.31

What did African Americans desire at the end of bondage? While educated blacks wanted full access to political and economic rights, the masses of blacks preferred land, a chance at education, and social mobility to reconnect with lost family members.32 Many sought new beginnings, especially in highly successful and more modern, passive racial ideological cities like Galveston.

At the beginning of the Reconstruction Period, the urban areas of southwest Texas demonstrated the same self-determination as it did during the antebellum period. The freedmen in Galveston, whom had resisted aggressive chattel slavery, were not as
vehement about abandoning their areas as the blacks in the rural parts of Texas. Many stayed to fully enjoy the religious, educational, and social aspects of life. Plus, full emancipation meant increased mobility from rural lands. Rural freedmen flocked to the urban areas to relish the city life that had only been passed through rumor. Indeed, city life provided better protection from Redemptionist southern whites who wished to continue illegal chattel slavery or intent on vigilante violence. In other words, adjusting to full emancipation for Galveston blacks and other southwest urban freedmen was effortless due to their passive, least restrictive environment during bondage. In fact, blacks began displaying a heightened extension of the same self-determinant independence that was prevalent during the antebellum period. Not all former bondsmen easily accepted the newfound freedom associated with emancipation. The security of employment, regardless of environment, was too much for some freedmen, who resisted the unorthodox racial relationships of urban Texas. On the orders of Lieutenant Colonel R. G. Laughlin, several blacks remained with their former master, now known as their contracted employer, to work under contract. As a result, they experienced a resurrected slave code, which forbade them from traveling and assembling in public without their employer's permission. Army soldiers were futile in protecting these freedmen from harm and enslavement.33 Not surprisingly, the self-righteous attitude blacks had displayed was met with contempt and violence from white supremacists who sought revenge for their loss during the war.

Violence against blacks was a major component of postwar Texas.34 Such actions were taken when the roles of blacks and whites had to be re-written to fit the new parameters of the state under the Thirteenth Amendment. For Southern whites, violence
meant the suppression of black ideas of equality or superiority in society. Fortunately for white supremacists, the bondage system no longer protected the lives of valuable chattel. The “rebellious” behavior blacks demonstrated under slavery could finally be severely punished by extralegal means. During the Presidential Reconstruction years especially, black lynching data was abysmal. Between the years of 1865 and 1868, of the 939 people killed in Texas, 373 were blacks murdered by whites and 10 were whites murdered by blacks. What’s staggering about these numbers is that not only are they not complete, but only forty of the two hundred plus counties were polled and it ignores other data sources, specifically numbers from the Freedmen’s Bureau. The Freedmen’s Bureau’s version, *Criminal Offences Committed in the State of Texas*, focuses on voluminous detail, from the town and county where the violence occurred to the names and races involved in each incident. According to the Bureau, between the years of 1865 and 1868, approximately 124.33 blacks were killed each year on average, by whites. By 1870, there were 253,475 African Americans living in Texas. Therefore, the estimated annual death rate for blacks in extralegal violence from whites was 49.05 per 100,000 with adult black males being the key demographic affected. If 126,278 of the 253,475 blacks were male, then the death rate for black males rises to a staggering 95.03 per 100,000. The worst case of white extralegal violence was the Houston Massacre of February 8, 1875, where twenty five blacks were surrounded next to a church, disemboweled and quartered, then hung from the trees while the entire city watched.

Galveston blacks experienced similar violent patterns, especially from their former masters. These patterns of extralegal violence, similar to other urban areas at the time, were more prevalent than during the antebellum years, suggesting that the
Redemptionist ideology had spread throughout the state. The same masters that had accepted the self determination of the bondsmen now tried to eviscerate it. The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands published several reports while in Texas that pays particular attention to Galveston. Henry Jones, a freedman, was shot to death on May 14, 1866 after defending his wife from his former owner, Robert A. Jones. Two months later, Godfree Robinson's body was found decapitated with shotgun holes throughout his body from his former master, Mr. Ledbetter. Robinson was accused of stealing twenty seven dollars, which were not found by the coroner. Three months later, another freedman, Ben, who was having a dancing party, was beaten with a revolver by a mob of whites led by Bill Obar, and finally shot to death in the stomach. On September 13th, Mneys Cook, a freedman working for D.A. Harris, was beaten by Harris with a wooden pallet during an argument.\(^{39}\)

In essence, President Johnson's Reconstruction allowed Redemptionist whites to inflict massive damage to the self-righteousness of the blacks in Texas and Galveston in particular. The office of the Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau sent an expository letter to the Assistant Attorney General of Galveston reporting the escalating violence against freed blacks.

"the Freedmen here have been kept in perfect terror of their lives and by the desperate men of the County who are hostile and active in abusive assailing and murdering this inoffensive people all over the County...These malcontents, villains, and murderers are numerous and vicious and smarting under a sense of lost mastery over their former slaves and determined they shall not enjoy freedom....many of the freedmen express themselves dissatisfied with freedom, preferring to be slaves as they once had some protection on their life."\(^{40}\)

These escalated incidents of extralegal violence on blacks demonstrated the willingness of Redeemers to destroy the black voice that had been so strong in the past.
As expensive chattel, urban slaves had very little to fear, considering the passive, inconsistent means to destroy their self-righteousness were minimal at best. The institution of chattel slavery had been abandoned by its legal support and the "Old South" was being tested like never before. The idea of "pitying" the black man convinced white supremacists that their actions were justified. After the February 22nd, 1866 Reconstruction speech by President Johnson, which called for the dominant re-conquest of the healing nation by whites, former secessionists were forced to attempt a full retroactive erasure of black pride and self-awareness that could only increase in the coming decades. Unlike the remainder of the south, the urban blacks in Texas were off to an advantageous start to capturing their much desired socioeconomic and political rights, but difficult barriers persisted.

In the political sense, white resistance to black self-righteous behavior outside of violence was an amalgamation of actions across Reconstruction. Redeemers, dismayed at the treatment of Reconstruction politics, claimed that they "had not been conquered and would renew the fight at a later date." An atmosphere of denial enveloped the state as slave contracts were continued and purchasing blacks remained constant. As long as possible, owners sought out blacks to do as much as possible in fear of the new Thirteenth Amendment being reinforced. On January 1st, 1866, a promissory note was executed by Henrietta Arnis for the pay of three Negroes, two men and a woman, for twelve months of labor. Others, distraught over the financial burden, exploited the judicial system by suing for property rights based on the actual death date of slavery in Texas.
The media, controlled by southern Democrats, sought every opportunity to remind Texas of black inferiority and white supremacy during Reconstruction. Newspapers were littered with blacks being described as “niggers,” “apes,” and “subhuman.” Speeches filled the air throughout the day emphasizing “white” as “pure and innocent” with black symbolizing “wickedness and death.” Whites sought to block freedmen from testifying in courts unless it was against other freedmen. In effect, southern Democrats adopted Redemptionist politics to control the behavior and state of equality for Texas blacks. For the majority, property, economic, and political rights must be kept in the control of whites. The Southern Intelligencer warned that if black self-righteousness led to a race war, then the annihilation or re-enslavement of the black race was necessary to maintain superiority. The “Bad Nigger” that dominated urban Texas for so long had to be subdued for inequality to persist. In the same manner that the United States government would pursue the dethronement and discrediting of Jack Johnson’s masculine challenge to Jim Crow ideology, Redeemers devised numerous strategies to quell black self-determination in urban Texas before it reached a level of social disorder.

One such tactic was the usage of desperadoes. This process involved the systemic destruction of the reluctant bond between lower class whites and freedmen. This would serve the upper class whites for two reasons. First, because blacks and lower class whites shared a bond, whites could manipulate the blacks through control and violence. The trust that blacks had for working class whites would not be the same for upper class whites. Second, it could be used by the upper class to control a lower class and to keep yet another entire race, in constant fear. In other words, complete control over the socioeconomic atmosphere of the area was at stake. The blacks in towns like Galveston
faced very little challenges to their freedom due in part to their allegiance with the lower class whites, which now could be severed to usher in new forms of resistance to equality.

Federal support for white supremacy was minimal at best until the creation of the Texas Black Code of 1866. Some historians suggest that when these codes were introduced, their main purpose was the introduction of freedmen to their new living conditions, a “generous” support system for the protection of the black family, and the “softening” of strict prewar legal control throughout the South.47 A thorough analysis of the codes implies that the federal government tirelessly sought to re-enslave the blacks and put an end to the notion of equality.48 In essence, these codes were the true responses to the freedoms allowed throughout urban Texas in the antebellum and Civil War period.

The key to the Texas Black Code was Governor James W. Throckmorton, who assured that the code passed against blacks would be extremely harsh. He stated at the end of 1865, “I do believe we will be enabled to adopt a coercive system of labor…” and to give blacks rights would lead to “hellhounds of radicalism” which would upset the balance of white superiority.49 He also advocated the full removal of the Freedmen’s Bureau and the limiting of legal protect for all freedmen. These institutions created an atmosphere of independence that would dull the cruelty of the new codes. His clear bias against blacks implies a manifestation of Redeemers’ feelings towards the northerners and their Republican Reconstruction. Similar to the laws that controlled Alabama, Mississippi, and the Carolinas, the Texas black codes were relentless in limiting black freedom, including denying rights to testify in court, allowing employers to inflict harsh punishment on black workers for any reason, advocating the bondage-like crop-lien system, creating an apprenticing statute, an intense vagrancy law, and limiting the
The punishments for crimes were elevated as well. For theft of property valued under twenty dollars, a freedman could receive up to a year in jail and a fine. Any livestock utilized without permission of the owner would count as larceny and the accused would receive up to two years in jail and a one thousand dollar fine. If a court decided guilt for a person accused of rape, then the punishment was death. To African Americans, the codes were a deterrent from the abridged independence. The act was definitively aimed at all persons with at least one black grandparent.

Almost immediately, blacks throughout the urban areas especially felt the weight of the new laws. To fully ascertain the severity of the codes, William H. Sinclair, an inspector for the Freedmen’s Bureau, conducted a survey of black offenders in Texas jails. In February of 1867, Sinclair found that of 411 inmates in the Texas Penitentiary, 225 of them were black. Of those 225, 198 of them were there for crimes against property. Sinclair also noted that between 1875 and 1876, white violent crime was six percent higher than black violent crime.

Blacks responded to these Redemptionist politics in a manner similar to their response to urban chattel slavery: with open defiance. By 1867, nativist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and later the White League, had created autonomous chapters with the goal of destroying black participation in politics. Tactics to steer freedmen from voting included murder, intimidation, torture, kidnapping, and property destruction. In response, black Texans began exercising political awareness and achieving political objectives with the organization of the Loyal Union League in Galveston. Established by Northern African American George T. Ruby, the Loyal League experienced a voluminous amount of early success, registering 47, 581 blacks to vote in its first year. Because of
its overtly anti-white supremacist objectives, the Loyalist League was forced to simultaneously remain clandestine and actively seek support for the Republican Party, which the majority of freedmen supported due to their advocacy of full emancipation. Although acts of extralegal violence plagued the city, the effectiveness of the League was on full display at the Republican state Convention in July of 1867, where the majority of delegates in attendance were African American.\textsuperscript{55}

A different form of self-determination emerged in the socioeconomic characteristics of black society in the post Reconstruction era. One area heavily affected was the black family, which represented actions caused by both “Old South” politics and Redemptionist attitudes. During bondage, slave marriages were not often revered by the slave master and therefore, slaves were forced to breed often and with numerous partners.\textsuperscript{56} Especially in the cities where bondsmen had the social mobility and freedom to mate with different partners, black relationships would falter somewhat in the early years following the Civil War. However, the black community’s response to these attempts of fragmentation was nothing short of self-righteous. With the help of Radical Republicans in Congress, who legalized slave marriages in 1865, and the work of the Freedmen’s Bureau, black urban Texans established long term family life in opposition to white supremacist doctrine. Black males were forced to start supporting abandoned children, white males were punished severely (both monetarily and criminally) for rape against black women, and Bureau agents acted sometimes as relationship counselors.\textsuperscript{57}

Also essential to the black family model was the institution of black schools. The first real scare for Southern democrats came at the hand of a revised Freedmen’s Bureau Bill, passed on July 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1866, which provided for the creation of black schools.\textsuperscript{58} By
the beginning of 1866, the Freedmen’s Bureau had created ten day schools and six night schools that housed over one thousand pupils, particularly adults. After this, many whites rushed to avoid school integration between whites and former slaves. One proposal suggested free schools for blacks, conducted at night, and far away from white facilities. Some felt the church could educate blacks instead, which led the Methodist churches in Galveston to set up locations for African American schools. At this point, when black schools and black churches combined their respective practices, black education and black family life experienced its strongest sense of self-determination that would remain for the next few decades. Both teachers and preachers, under the duress from repeated threats of death and violence, passionately created a postwar curriculum for freedmen on how to successfully behave and thrive in urban Texas. Day and night, morality, sobriety, and responsibility were taught with reading, writing, and mathematics in all classes to all ages. Outside of the classroom, preachers would assist black families in freeing children that had been imprisoned in illegal apprenticeships. The U.S. Census Bureau displayed the stability of the black family in 1870, showing that in three counties, only twenty nine percent of blacks 18 years or older were unmarried to thirty three percent of unmarried whites.

In the 1870s and 1880s, blacks expressed serious momentum in employment in urban areas. Those that moved from rural life sought non-agricultural work. These two decades saw an increase in black policemen, soldiers, coachmen, butchers, Laundromat workers, band leaders, and store owners. Nonetheless, black employment was resisted throughout the city in essential fields. One such professional organization that fiercely resisted black membership was the longshoremen union in Galveston. In 1872, at the
International Workingmen’s Association, a white union member said, “if the colored man is to be taken into full fellowship in this society and politically, I must decline to become a member.” Due to recurrent banning of blacks from various unions, freedmen organized their own longshoremen unions by the mid-1870s. At that time, the National Labor Union, the African American labor union, was operating out of Houston. In short, blacks refused to allow Redemptionist politics of Southern democrats to destroy their self-righteous personalities and communities in urban Texas employment.

On another hand, there were a select few of blacks that chose to leave the urban areas of Texas following the Civil War. Some freedmen believed it was their destiny to own land and settled in the rural areas called “Freedom Colonies.” Although some historiography suggests a dark, malevolent storm on black farmers in the post-Reconstruction south, some neglect to mention the twenty five percent that by 1890 were able to purchase their own land. These blacks sought to avoid the restrictions and abundance of Redemptionist politics that had flooded the cities. Although most did not develop past the “settlement” phase and sorely lacked the community characteristic, they represented black expression of independence and entrepreneurship that had been denied by white supremacy.

The emergence of Jack Johnson in the early twentieth century exposed the deeply rooted self-determination that had existed in urban Texas since the mid nineteenth century. Those same bondsmen who utilized their independence to seek their own labor and social life, would continue to thrive in that mindset during the Reconstruction Era and the late nineteenth century. With the success of Galveston blacks in establishing their own independent, thriving communities, masculinity and power rested firmly in the
hands of the patriarchs of the families. This massive quality would find itself in the home of Tiny and Henry Johnson, former bondsmen who would associate black success against white supremacy with power, independence, and self-determination. However, unlike Muhammad Ali, who would embrace the agency and interdependent relationships of his middle class Louisville black community, Jack Johnson, due to his lower class black upbringing and radical, selfish mentality, would excel only after abandoning the familial aspect of urban Texas. Indeed, his environment shaped his path towards independence and self-righteousness, but his desertion of interdependence points directly to a fantastical, unmitigated journey for true masculinity and manliness in sports and society. In retrospect, the Galveston community, reeling from an aggressive black code and Jim Crow legislation, was powerless to support their Giant as he migrated throughout the nation in search of his power.
NOTES

1 George Godfrey’s real name was Feabe Smith Williams. He renamed himself George Godfrey after the famous black Canadian heavyweight of the same name.


3 Although the hometown of Galveston, Texas is mentioned in their works, Geoffrey C. Ward, Finis Farr, and Randy Roberts do not provide in depth analysis of the environment of Jack Johnson’s background.


5 Ibid.


7 Ibid, 48-53.


10 Galveston Weekly Journal, 4 March 1853; Tyler, The Slave Narratives of Texas, xii-xliv.

11 Andrew Waters, I was Born into Slavery: Personal Accounts of Slavery in Texas. (John F. Blair Publisher, 1st Edition, 2003), 60-61. Gus Johnson was unaware of his actual age at the time of the interview.

12 Ibid, 102-103. Laura Cornish’s last known address was 2915 Nance Street, Houston Texas and was interviewed in 2002. She has no recollection when she was born but claims that she was "bout twelve or mebbe thirteen years old when all the cullud folks was turned loose."

13 Tyler, The Slave Narratives, xxxvi.

14 Austin State Gazette, 22 July 1854.

15 Texas State Gazette, 14 March 1857.


17 Texas Inquirer, 12 January, 1857.


20 Charter, Amendments, and Revised Ordinances of the City of Galveston 1855, pp.52-54


24 U.S. Census estimates that there were 182,556 enslaved blacks in the state of Texas in 1860, which would make them thirty percent of the state’s population. There were only 355 free blacks throughout the entire state.


26 Ibid, 36.

27 Barr, Black Texans, 27-29.

28 Ibid, 36-40.


30 Glasrud, Black Women in Texas History, 31-35.


32 Glasrud, Black Women in Texas History, 38-44.

33 Barry A. Crouch, The Freedmen’s Bureau and Black Texans (University of Texas Press, 1999), 12-40.


35 Journal of the Reconstruction Convention, Which met at Austin, Texas, June 1, 1868 (Austin, 1870), 193 (June 30, 1868). It is reprinted in Senate Miscellaneous Documents, 40th Cong., 2nd sess., No. 109 (serial 1319), 3-8. See also Crouch: The Dance of Freedom, 97-99.

36 U.S. Census, 1870.

37 Ibid.

38 Crouch, The Dance of Freedom, 127.


Although June 19th, 1865 is considered the day slavery legally ended in Texas, many residents, who had bought slaves in the past three years, attempted to get their money back by protesting that slavery technically ended in Texas on January 1st, 1863, the opening day of the Emancipation Proclamation. The court case Williams v. Arnis was the first of many to go before the Texas Supreme Court and the court ruled in favor of Arnis, who received $700 for three slaves bought after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued.

Barr, Black Texans, 41.

Crouch, Texas Reconstruction, 119-130.


Ibid., pp.140-141.

H.P.N. Gamel, comp., The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, pp. 988-1050.

To be targeted in the Texas Black Code of 1866, an individual had to have at least one-eighth of African blood, or one grandparent of African or African American ancestry.

Crouch, Texas Reconstruction, 160-167.

G.T. Ruby started his career as a newspaper reporter and educator whose main political goals included establishing schools freedmen. Throughout the late 1860s and 1870s, he served on several senate committees that improved black life in cities like Galveston, including state economic development and the creation of a state militia.

Barr, Black Texans, pp. 44-45.

Ibid.


Ibid, pp. 73-75.

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands Act, 14 Stat 173, July 16, 1866.

Barr, Black Texans, 61.


Barr, Black Texans, 59.


CHAPTER III

THE MONSTERS ARE DUE ON WALNUT STREET: BLACK AGENCY AND SELF-DETERMINANT ACTIVISM IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, 1865-1975

In the heart of present day Louisville, Kentucky between 8th Street and 6th Street lies Muhammad Ali Boulevard, the center of black societal and cultural hegemony in the commonwealth state. Walnut Street, as it was previously known, was renamed after the boxing great and black activist due to its significance in collectivizing the black agenda. Esteemed Kentuckian historian, Tracy K'Meyer, described Walnut Street as maintaining “a thriving black business and cultural district...which yielded a politically active black community in Louisville that won some victories against Jim Crow.” Louis Mudd, an African American Louisvillian, said this about Walnut Street’s dominance of black life in Kentucky:

“I was lucky enough to get [Louisville’s] old Walnut Street experience. I mean, I could name you the stores from block to block. That represents a memorable aspect of my life...There were night clubs. No denying it. But there were grocery stores, there were drug stores, there were restaurants. There was an aura, a flavor, a way of life. It was a gathering point. It was a community—it was almost like a pivotal point within the central area of the city. Sometime during the day, if you were a black person living in Louisville and you lived anywhere within a stone’s throw of Walnut Street you would end up on Walnut Street...its something that I feel so sorry for our present kids, from the standpoint that I just don’t see any mechanism that can begin to duplicate it. The camaraderie and the closeness and the fraternization that took place on Walnut Street is something you have to experience...”

For citizens like Louis Mudd, Walnut Street personified the agency and self-determination of Louisville blacks that had been restricted in other cities in the state of Kentucky. The reputation placed upon the commonwealth state by historians identifies it
as progressive in the realm of race relations with Louisville as the key evidence.

However, the reality remains that Kentucky and Louisville, in fact, were far from progressive and liberal without the forcefulness of its black residents. Like Muhammad Ali, whose Black Nationalist religious views and interdependent mentality characterized his vicious, embattled rise both in the ring and in global society, black Louisvillians realized early and often that the only way that their civil rights would be recognized by the white segregationists that controlled the political atmosphere of the city would be through direct aggressive behavior, which included self-determinant agency, civil disobedience, Black Nationalist militancy, and communal agency. In other words, the only way that Louisville would verify its “liberal” image was to force the issue. E. Deedom Alston, minister of the Church of Our Merciful Saviour, described Louisville’s “progressive” reputation as a “velvet glove” that can “sort of soothe your victim, make them think they are doing a lot, when you’re not doing nothing.”3 Another activist, Murray Walls, believed that “people don’t give up power easily, sometimes it has to be taken.”4

This chapter will examine that between the years of 1865, the onset of Reconstruction, and 1975, Black Louisvillians launched a deliberate offensive attack on the city’s white supremacist and segregationist practices that often resulted in both large and small successes, thus proving that Ali, like Jack Johnson in Galveston, Texas, was the product of a self-determinant, urban environment of African Americans.5 Ali, however, would embrace the agency and familial lifestyle of the middle class blacks of the River City that Johnson would reject for self-righteous independence. Although black agency and activism was sometimes met with extralegal violence and failure, this
section will prove that the challenges to the racist conditions were often met with success in Jim Crow Louisville. In similar fashion to the Louisville Lip, blacks throughout the city tirelessly challenged the unequal practices of the Jim Crow system and second class citizenship to set the stage for every predominantly black street, like Walnut, to be free from the corrosive monsters of white supremacy. In effect, Louisville would represent a transforming, ever-changing entity that progressed in parallel distinction to the environment of the era in the same fashion that Ali would in the 1960s and 1970s. Ali, however, would embrace the agency and familial lifestyle of the middle class blacks of the River City that Johnson would reject for self-righteous independence. Regardless of the decisions and processes of gaining masculinity, both boxers were products of their environment.

The start of black activism and agency in Louisville was an unconscious, voluminous effort. On July 4th, 1865, Thomas James and a committee of African Americans hosted a mass celebration of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in their city, causing thousands of blacks to both migrate and visit the River City. Surprisingly, Kentucky was the only state in the Union to originally reject the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. Despite the rejection, on the morning of Independence Day, the streets filled with music played by a crowd of blacks carrying flags and banners. As the crowd paraded through the streets, saluting the black church row, over six hundred Sunday school children and bands joined the crowd. After another two blocks, 150 government workers and organizations such as the Sons of Union, West Union Sons, and the United Brothers of Friendship joined as well. This continued well into the day, as the crowd swelled from one thousand to twenty thousand
by evening, which featured a “great” dinner and, ceremonies with speakers detailing the success of black heritage, and final word from General John M. Palmer, who declared the bondage system in the state of Kentucky illegal. This demonstration greatly displayed the earliest evidence of black agency’s role in gathering people for self-determination in Louisville and its far-reaching effects around the commonwealth. Because of this parade, surrounding counties held a similar celebration at Camp Nelson the same day, showcasing the state’s exoneration of slavery. While this may appear to be a mere celebration, this creation of a virulent, triumphant black merriment was the first of many successes in the civil rights of black Louisvillians.

When analyzing success in the realm of civil rights through agency, the first statistic that has to be measured is population. Indeed, the growth of Louisville’s black population helped usher in the agency and the black community setting of the city. In 1810, there were only 495 blacks in the River City which was one third of the population. However, when Louisville’s population began to grow during the Civil War, the blacks made their presence known. By 1860, the eighth official year of the United States Census, there were 6,820 blacks in the city, although they only made up ten percent of the overall population. While this may not seem to be many, Louisville had the most dominant number of blacks by 1870 with over half of the state’s black population being in that city. Because of the mass quantities of families and freemen travelling to and through the city, rural freemen increased the black population when they migrated to the city in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As they entered, they immediately sought communal relationships with families of their own race. There were four distinct clusters where blacks resided in large numbers in Louisville: Downtown,
California, Parkland, and Smoketown. If not here, then blacks could be sparsely found throughout the city in substandard housing projects.14

By 1870, the River City blacks, who were promised a progressive, liberal atmosphere when they arrived to Louisville, were met with a number of harsh conditions due to the failed promises of Radical Reconstruction. Employment competition became a harsh battle between the working class blacks. The jobs that were offered required skillsets that had not been acquired by most freedmen. Housing was the city’s most significant problem, thanks to the swelling black population. Although some blacks sought to purchase their own homes, most rented homes, prompting unsanitary conditions and a lack of resources.15

When the Freedmen’s Bureau reluctantly arrived to Kentucky on December 26, 1865, they only exasperated the growing problems for freedmen.16 For a full year, Congress refused to fund the Commonwealth’s Bureau, thus resulting in a deficiency of resources, monetary debt, and excessive corruption for the remainder of the Bureau’s existence. In addition, there was a lack of workers. After the distribution of lands to a chief superintendent, an acting assistant adjutant general, and finally a clerk, the Bureau was left with only thirty six workers for field service for the entire state. The agents who did not quit from the countless death threats were grossly underpaid, causing the majority to exhibit indifference and abuse to the freedmen’s plight.17

The incidents of violence against blacks increased dramatically in the 1870s. As in all lynching data, there are discrepancies in the statistics. George C. Wright’s Racial Violence in Kentucky suggests that at least 138 blacks were lynched between 1866 and 1891, while the newspaper, Freeman, lists 1,405 blacks killed between 1869 and 1885.18
Regardless of the unverifiable data, lynchings were prevalent in Louisville following Reconstruction. The Kentucky Black Code of 1866 sought to continue black inferiority throughout the state, thus allowing intimidation and extralegal violence to reign free. One incident in particular involved John Sims, a Henry County freedman who had to travel to Louisville for help after being wounded in target practice by Ku Klux Klan members and finding his wife shot to death. These conflicts festered in Louisville, but black pride and self-determination would be the ultimate components to challenge white supremacy in the city.

Immediately following the Civil War, blacks throughout Louisville began demonstrating agency to protest the restrictions set forth by Jim Crow. In January 1866, blacks held a protest convention in Louisville and petitioned for the removal of all prejudice laws and the instatement of full civil rights. Although a resolution was not reached, the precedent for future meetings and classes on boosting morale and such were implemented. Victory was not far away. In October 1870, blacks experienced the first true example of civil rights success in the Louisville streetcar demonstrations. While some routes allowed both black men and women to ride on the streetcars at that time, some refused to seat blacks and forced them to either stand on the outside platform or not ride at all. The day before Halloween, three hundred African Americans marched to the streetcar stop at the intersection of Tenth and Walnut streets. When a white patron entered the streetcar, three blacks were asked to leave. When those three blacks refused, it led to the driver physically removing them while rocks were thrown at the car by the demonstrators. The three ejected riders returned to the car with rocks in hand, demanding to ride. The police were called and soon arrested everyone for disorderly conduct. The
streetcar company was sued by one of the ejected African American activists, Robert Fox, and on May 11, 1871, the court ruled in Fox’s favor, thus giving blacks the right to ride all streetcars simultaneously with whites. In this example, a mixture of militancy, agency and civil disobedience was not only present, but extremely effective in gaining success for racial equality. This was also the first true instance of the sit-in method, which most historians believe began in the 1960s.23

More successes following a similar amalgamation of belligerency, agency, and civil disobedience would follow in the next decades. As more African Americans acknowledged the unfair treatment throughout the city, they actively sought the same beneficial rewards of society that whites had enjoyed for centuries. Towards the end of Reconstruction, social clubs were targeted by blacks as symbols of progressivism within the social order. However, Louisvillian blacks were barred from joining any social clubs owned by whites. In direct response, black clubs were vehemently created all over the Commonwealth, especially in the River City. To exemplify defiance and self-righteousness, blacks chose to name clubs after famous defiant blacks in history. The Frederick Douglass Lyceum, formed in 1870, and the Nat Turner Club, both were filled with members from all classes in black Louisville and focused on speeches and debates. The Dumas Literary Club, named after the black Frenchman Alexandre Dumas, performed stage plays to raise charity for black orphans. For African American women, the Lunwood Club and Starlight Club sought to raise money for charity and advocate women’s rights.24 Black Lodges became the most popular social clubs due to their historical reputation. These organizations included the Masons, Odd Fellows, United Brothers of Friendship, Independent Sons of Honor, and Daughters of the Samoa.25
In the political sense, postbellum blacks in Louisville chose to deal with their issues head on. Although political power couldn’t be garnered fully, it could be utilized to protest the subordination of the race and second class citizenship, and advocate improved status. The arrival of the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave African Americans the right to exercise suffrage, led to a celebratory day in Louisville for black politics. For this day, over ten thousand blacks marched, played music, ate, and sang the newly created hymn, “The Fifteenth Amendment,” to express their joy:

Colored citizens, prepare ye; your manhood’s complete,
   God grant that “we all may have peace.”
The ballot-box is open to all of our race,
   Put in your snowy flakes;
For the Republican Party will vote in a mass,
   For they have guarded well “Thermopylae’s Pass.”
Vote for them long, vote for them strong,
   Vote for the brave and true.26

At the Civil War’s end, Louisvillian blacks were staunchly Republican due to the party’s support for emancipation, but the small percentage that blacks represented weakened their influence. Statewide, issues arose as well. With all the esteem and love that the Commonwealth blacks gave to the Kentucky Republican Party, they were met with more restrictions. Black Republicans were refused seats and black voting was not supported. In response, blacks began to both organize their own local chapters of the Republican Party while pressuring white policy in the state party. On February 23, 1870, with Louisville’s own H.J. Young presiding, the Colored Men’s State Convention welcomed representatives from nearly one hundred counties to meet and form the black Republican Party for the state of Kentucky. With confidence, the representatives intelligently played the political arena from all sides by agreeing to denounce the Kentucky Democratic Party for harassing blacks, praising the federal government for its
outstanding work with blacks in the Freedmen’s Bureau, and pledging support for the Republican Party. With these measures, the whites in the Republican party were forced to welcome black voting and party membership. The Convention was well attended and publicized heavily, prompting pressure to build on the party. Black agency and interdependent self-determination allowed the blacks to muscle into the party before the Civil Right Bill of 1875 was ratified. The evidence of the impact of self-determinant blacks on the Republican Party came in the gubernatorial race of 1871, where Republican candidate John M. Harlan received 41 percent of the vote, which was a 56 percent increase over the 1868 Republican nominee. The bump came from thirty-five thousand African Americans, prompting the Republican Party to remain powerful in Kentucky politics for decades after. By 1921, blacks accounted for forty five percent of the Republicans in the city and it continued to grow as the years continued. Soon, because of the sway that the black vote had in the Kentucky votes, and the rising number of blacks in the state, blacks began to notice that their political power could be utilized more effectively if they had their own party and voice. In that same year, a group of black voters formed the Independent Lincoln Party with the following candidates nominated to conquer the city and state elections: A.D. Porter for mayor; A.C. Garvin for county judge; W.F. Haley, Lindsay Garrison, and Dr. William Ballard for alderman; William Warley for magistrate; N.M. Willis, for county attorney; Mrs. Nora King for park commissioner; Dr. J.O. Catalan for coroner; I. Willis Cole, for senator; and W.W. Wilson for legislature. This act of political activism by Louisvillian blacks was met with astonishment and violence. Both Porter and Warley’s newspaper buildings were vandalized right before the election. Over two thousand ballots were thrown into the Ohio River. Despite this,
the formation of the Lincoln Party was a key success and the efforts and centralization of black political power in the city that year fueled new ideas and demands for a political voice that would lead to increased black activism.30

It will not be until the mid-1930s that blacks in the River City begin to show small amounts of favor to the Democratic Party, in part because of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies aimed at assisting African Americans.31 With these measures, black representatives ran for political seats in the Democratic Party in 1935. Democrat C. Ewbank Tucker ran against Republican Charles T. Anderson for the State legislature seat in Fifty-eighth district. Anderson won and would serve six consecutive terms in the state legislature from 1935 to 1947. This race indicates the attempt of blacks to achieve political power by strategically holding stake in all parties available. Although they represented feuding parties, the majority of blacks in Louisville were committed in agency to gaining equal rights, no matter which side won.32 As long as an African American won, their activism would have not been in vain.

The Civil Rights Act of 1875 struck Louisville with a thunderous clap. For the first time in history, black Louisvillians were presented with free access to public transportation, public accommodation, and jury selection, but extreme hostility towards freedmen by whites attempted to destroy the bill as early as it arrived.33 One of the most pressing issues to freedmen following the Civil War in Louisville was education. In the past, seeking education in the Commonwealth as an African American was strictly prohibited, but without the restraints of the bondage system, whites were forced to accept the scholastic desires of former slaves. Almost immediately, racially segregated schools were met with black agency and activism. In 1883, Edward Claybrook sued Owensboro,
Kentucky to stop the usage of black taxes to fund all educational institutions throughout the state. Plus, well over nine thousand dollars was given to two white schools with a full school year while only seven hundred dollars was given to one inferior black school with a three month school session. In the end of Edward Claybrook v. Owensboro (1883), U.S. Circuit Judge John Barr ruled that unequal funding to racially separate schools was unconstitutional. With this decision, blacks received support for equal funding, but the Jim Crow legislation would continue to haunt black schools when the Day Law was passed in 1904.

Founded by renowned abolitionist John Gregg Fee before the onset of the Civil War, Berea College became the first non-segregated, coeducational post-secondary school in the South. By 1866, Berea had 96 black students and 91 white students. As Berea continued to thrive towards the beginning of the twentieth century, the Commonwealth passed its restrictive Day Law, directly for Berea, to destroy the representation of racial mixing and equality that the school displayed. The Day Law equated sentencing for a felonious charge to schooling black and white children together. Although its main provisions set the precedent for racially segregated learning institutions, its most unsettling aspect was its harsh penalties. Any institution, at any level, caught educating both whites and blacks in the same building would be fined one thousand dollars per day; the guilty instructor or student received a fine of one hundred dollars for everyday that the school was in operation. In 1908, Berea College vigorously challenged Kentucky and its Day Law, citing that the government cannot force a private institution to segregate, but the challenge failed and Berea was forced into segregation. Once legal defiance was shunned, then direct defiance was utilized and
black education supporting philanthropists, including robber baron Andrew Carnegie, helped the Berea Foundation establish the Lincoln Institute. By 1912, with the leadership of black graduate Dr. James Bond, blacks from all over the state, especially Louisville, flocked to the new school. Soon, more black leaders used activism to position themselves to change black education in the state. In 1951, Dr. Charles Parrish became the first black professor at the University of Louisville, which led to the absorption of Louisville Municipal College for Negroes. In 1949, Charles Timberlake, a graduate of Kentucky State Industrial Institute and advocate for vocational schooling, became the first African American to serve on Kentucky’s State Textbook Commission. Although it took many years of conflict, Timberlake was able to convince the commission to adopt a black history component as a supplement for Kentucky schools. One of the biggest instances of black self-determination to obtain educational opportunities came in 1948 when African American Lyman T. Johnson, both teacher and civil rights activist, was denied admission to the Graduate School at the University of Kentucky. With the help of the Louisville Chapter of the NAACP, Johnson challenged the decision in the U.S. Federal District Court, claiming that the facilities for blacks were unequal and lesser than those of whites in Kentucky. As a result, Judge H. Church Ford delivered the historical ruling that University of Kentucky must accept black students to its colleges of engineering, pharmacy, law, and the graduate school. Integration of one of the largest post-secondary institutions in the nation was a major success for blacks in the River City, brought upon by challenging Jim Crow segregation with direct action. Whatever the situation, Louisvillian blacks, like Muhammad Ali, were willing to utilize agency and their environment to achieve success.
Despite these examples of success and defiance in black educational gains, black rights to an equal and opportunistic education continued to experience challenges due to poor funding, inadequate facilities, and subpar textbooks. This, in effect, led to a dramatic increase in black agency and activism throughout the twentieth century in the Commonwealth. At the onset of the first great World War, Louisvillian blacks were at war with the city council after the city’s aldermen passed an ordinance that banned blacks from living around white dominated blocks. Dismayed by this act, black leaders of Louisville held a mass meeting at Quinn Chapel AME Church in early June to raise funds and awareness of the ordinance. The meeting attracted more distinguished black leaders, including Dr. Charles H. Parrish, Sr., local president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Dr. Joel Spingarn and Dr. Chapin Brunsmade, both national officers of the organization. The lure of these individuals brought hundreds of protestors and thousands of dollars to the city, prompting African Americans to challenge the law in court. Although it was deemed constitutional twice by the local and state courts, the push led to the Supreme Court reversing the ruling in 1917 on the grounds that the Fourteenth Amendment gave all persons of color the right to own land and property anywhere in the United States. In effect, discrimination in private housing was destroyed in the state of Kentucky due to the strength of black agency and defiance in Louisville. Racial housing issues would again rise the following year when African American William Warley was sued for breach of contract by white man Charles Buchanan, because he failed to pay for a house that violated a racial zoning law in the River City. Thanks to Warley and Buchanan, the court struck down the zoning law, citing that “it destroyed the right of the individual to acquire, enjoy, or dispose of his
property," which was protected by the Fourteenth Amendment as well. Once again, segregated housing statutes had been eliminated in Louisville due to the repeated defiance of blacks.

These instances of black success in early civil rights struggles resonated throughout the nation. Due to this landmark Supreme Court decision, the years following the onset of the Great Depression brought a major socioeconomic change to Louisville's atmosphere in the form of black mobility. Although the Great Migration of the World War I years and the early 1920s saw mass movement of blacks to northern cities in search of employment opportunities, there also existed a mass movement of blacks to the city of Louisville after 1930. Between 1930 and 1970, over 17,000 black migrants invaded the city, seeking to join the active role of River City blacks in challenging the oppression of Jim Crow legislation. The biggest boom came between the Great Depression and World War II years. These black migrants reiterated black collectivization in the city with their boom of entrepreneurship. Prominent black businesses throughout the city were controlled by migrants, like C. Ewbank Tucker from Baltimore, James Crumlin from Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Charles W. Anderson, from Frankfort. These men, according to historian Luther Adams, brought a "wealth of experience with urbanization to Louisville." In other words, these black migrants came to the city for two reasons: the city's illustrious history of black activism and agency, and to positively impact black commercialism and business. In 1935, the Louisville Leader published an article from a migrant, I. Willis Cole, advocating militant, self-determinant black political action. Some statements included, "Negroes Urged to Play Politics Like the White Man," and "take
advantage of the moment, think independently, and in terms of Negroes, first, last, and ALWAYS!"  

Up into the war years, blacks fought vigorously in Louisville for equal rights and opportunity, leading to many changes in the city during the Second Great World War. The River City’s black effort during World War II was nothing short of spectacular. In agency driven droves, blacks volunteered, at the reluctance of the whites, to serve as air raid wardens, war plant workers, and the USO and YMCA work and scrap metal campaigns. Under Mayor Wilson Wyatt, blacks pushed for and were allowed to serve alongside whites on the defense council board, regulating the rationing of tires, cars, gasoline, and food throughout the city. As the only city in the south that allowed interracially mixed defense council boards, Louisville set the standard for civil rights integration in labor for the entire south. When asked about his city’s concessions to integration during the war, Mayor Wyatt exclaimed,

“I appointed the first black member of the Board of Equalization, the first black member of the Library Board, and Louisville’s Interracial Commission; doubled the number of blacks on the police force; and elevated the first black policeman to officer’s rank.”

In addition, Louisville was home to one to the best fighting units in the war, the 43rd Aviation Squadron, a Colored regiment which got their name from their community presence and participation in sports competitions in black Louisville. They were activated on July 28, 1942 and remained active for 2 years. To the excitement and honor of the black Louisvillians, the 43rd Aviation Squadron would often practice close quarter drills in public parades throughout the war years. Along with the Colored USO, these black war organizations were able to attract over one million volunteers and raise $200 million dollars between 1941 and 1946.
The mid to late 1940s saw blacks continue to injure the already terminal Jim Crow policies of the Nineteenth Century. In this period, Louisville activists argued that blacks as citizens had the right to equal access to jobs and facilities. By the end of World War II, blacks, through legal and direct self-determination, secured an amendment to the Day Law, allowing black doctors to take up residencies in white hospitals and black nurses to enroll in white nursing programs. These gains were not incidental. An amalgamation of black activism, white democratic support, and World War II’s role of raising public awareness of the importance of democracy, which worked to expose definite parallels between Jim Crow racist ideology and Nazi fascism, led to more acceptances of black civil rights aims and goals throughout the nation.

As soon as the Kentuckian black troops arrived home from the war, they immediately set upon direct defiance and civil disobedience in numbers. NAACP branches throughout the state doubled in the four years after the war and created drastic changes. In 1950, the Interracial Hospital Movement began rather small in Louisville, seeking equal treatment in hospital care for both blacks and whites. Soon, it spread to over sixty counties, earned thousands of signatures, and thanks to a state investigation, led to state order of “nondiscriminatory treatment for all hospitals receiving public funding.” With the increase in black population and agency, the increase of civil rights activism and successes is evidently clear.

Black organizational activism also played a role in the turbulent 1950s Civil Rights Era. In 1954, the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that separate but equal educational facilities for blacks and whites were unconstitutional. As was the case in many large Southern cities like Atlanta and Birmingham, Louisville
fought against the ruling, in part because the decision was extremely ambiguous to state and local officials.\textsuperscript{56} It was not until 1956 that the Supreme Court mandated a speedy process to integrating schools.\textsuperscript{57} At this point, Governor Lawrence Wetherby announced his support of the decision and the NAACP heavily investigated the school systems to ensure that desegregation was running efficiently.\textsuperscript{58}

In 1951, African American college student Mattie Jones enrolled at the University of Louisville after transferring from Indiana University. She gave an account of her first day of class registration in her new city:

"I needed a course in P.E., so I signed up for bowling, not knowing that Louisville at that time did not have a public accommodation law on the books…my instructor told me, “Where will you bowl? You cannot go over there to P Parkview Bowling Alley and bowl….Colored People can’t go over there.” That was like someone had cut my leg off, I tell you…I left the campus crying…So I told [my mother] what had happened to me. She says, “Well, you can’t do anything alone all by yourself.”\textsuperscript{59}

Like most students at the time, Mattie was faced with the harsh realities of Louisville’s public accommodations section. It is true that since the beginning of Reconstruction, blacks in Louisville had made gains in politics, social organizations, employment, and education, but the public accommodations fight was more stagnant than the others. It will not be until the mid-1950s that black agency and activism reached the public accommodations fight. Contrary to the popular belief by historians that the NAACP was strictly a passive aggressive organization which sought to win the racial battle in the courtrooms, evidence here shows that they engaged in direct civil disobedience, like rivals in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The first target, selected by the NAACP, was the Fourth Street District. Three direct action organizations were at the center of Louisville’s
public facilities struggle: CORE, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the most militant group, the Louisville Youth Council. Between 1956 and 1959, the Youth Council participated in numerous sit-ins at five-and-dime stores that restricted blacks from eating at the lunch counter. One such restaurant was the Blue Boar, managed by a former chairman of the Louisville Board of Education. At the same time, hundreds of students picketed and protested segregated restaurants, soda fountains, and stores along Fourth Street. By the end of 1957, numerous lunch counters on Fourth Street began to serve black customers at their counters. These examples of civil disobedience predate the much more media publicized and federally targeted Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins. The incidents in Louisville resulted from youth learning and mirroring the earlier examples of black self-determination in the city. Lyman T. Johnson and others set the example for black activism and reminded the youth that Louisville has always been a self-determinant, aggressive black city when it came to civil rights. In the same realm of Greensboro, civil rights in Louisville were going to have to be taken instead of given. Soon, after the success of the lunch counter demonstrations, black youth targeted drug stores in Louisville.

Black activism in public accommodations only intensified when the Democratic candidate for mayor, Bruce Hoblitzell, gave a speech rejecting passing laws to force private businesses to desegregate. Hoblitzell would claim that to do this now would destroy all the successes the black civil rights movement has garnered so far. Maurice Rabb would respond to Hoblitzell saying, “If we’re going to listen to people who tell us how nice things are, nothing will happen. The things that have happened here happened because we did something, because we did muddy the waters.” In 1960, blacks targeted
Taylor’s Drugstore, Ben Snyder’s Department Store, Louisville Police Department, and Algonquin Bowling Center, amongst other sites.63

The black voice in Louisville was louder than ever with most of the noise coming from youths. At the beginning of 1961, after seven students were arrested for protesting in Stewart’s Department Store, the student protests increased to newfound heights that shocked CORE and the NAACP. By February of that same year, over one hundred members of the organizations were arrested for demonstrating civil disobedience. During this period, black agency was unprecedented with ninety-eight percent of Louisvillian blacks supporting the protests. Runnette Robinson, a student protester, had gotten soaked with a dirty liquid from whites sitting at the intersection of Fifth and Chestnut Street protesting. She continued to protest without hesitation.64 Raoul Cunningham was spit on and had rocks hit him in the head while protesting at the Porgy and Bess Theater, yet he remained dedicated to black agency.65

But what level of success did these waves of protests and agency achieve? By the end of March that same year, major hotels, theaters, restaurants, and tearooms had agreed to desegregate. Fontaine Ferry Park, the amusement park with swimming pools exclusively for whites, was picketed and was soon integrated as well. It seemed as though Louisville’s youth had chosen aggressive civil disobedience and interdependent relationships as a way to give Jim Crow its final knockout punch. In fact, the Louisville Board of Aldermen, on May 14, 1963, passed an ordinance that made it illegal to discriminate based on race “in any place of business open to the general public.”66

As in other parts of the nation, Louisville in the late 1960s saw a drastic change in the popular method of protesting equal rights for African Americans. Activists replaced
the ideals of equality and access to all levels of education and public facilities with Black Nationalist ideology and race consciousness as the primary focus. In essence, the Black Power Movement was a step beyond the Civil Rights Movement and more towards the tenets of W.E.B. Du Bois’ Critical Race Theory. Black Power advocated self-sufficiency and independent socioeconomic and political thought while embracing Afrocentric themes and pride. It also promoted self-defense violence if necessary, first initiated by activist Robert F. Williams in the Durham, North Carolina black community and popularized by the Lost-Found Nation of Islam’s Malcolm X. This change came about out of frustration from that same youth, whose distaste from the “slow moving process” of reversing black powerlessness and oppression in America had reached a new high. In actuality, elements that made up the Black Power Movement had existed in Louisville as early as the 1870s. As stated earlier, the 1870 Street Car Demonstrations involved both civil disobedience and militant behavior. Blacks in Louisville on Walnut Street had been advocating self-defense violence for decades before the Nation of Islam had come to the city. However, by 1967, this sudden wave of Black Nationalist movements, the threat of black violence, and antiwar demonstrations resulted in Louisville’s attempts to crack down on activism in the city.

In Louisville, the main Black Power groups were comprised of local units of national organizations from SNCC, CORE, SCLC, and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The first and most active group to declare their Black Nationalism central to the new trends of activism, however, was the West End Community Council, run by leftist Hulbert James. The group’s main priority was to organize fully black populated movements for community awareness and race consciousness. With major success
throughout the 1960s and 1970s, their lasting legacy would be the creation of the Black Unity League of Kentucky (BULK), which was a group exclusively for black youths to promote racial pride. Their aim was to teach people how to “think black” and “instill identity and self-righteousness in Negroes.”

The young members would accomplish these goals by creating a black centered curriculum that was taught at a donated “Black House,” planning workshops for parents teachers, and ministers, negotiating with the Louisville Board of Education to add the black aesthetic to all subjects in school, and engaging the community in art and music fairs often. Other Black Power groups in Louisville sprang into action in the late 1960s, which included the Southern Conference Educational Fund, and the Louisville Welfare Rights Organization.

With these groups, black communities in Louisville in the early 1970s set aside ideas of equal opportunity and focused heavily on promoting protection, empowerment, and pride in their race. At a time when volatile movements to both destroy and build black culture occurred throughout the commonwealth, Louisville once again demonstrated its leadership in activism and agency with its plethora of African American leaders heading the charge. Robert Cunningham, who organized a black workers movement in early 1970, was inspired by visiting Black Panther activist H. Rap Brown in California. Cunningham immediately fused Brown’s ideas into his efforts. Blaine Hudson, who became leader of the Black Student Union, enacted radicalization programs throughout the city, including displaying posters of black power advocates Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali, selling African clothes and art, and hosting discussions on Afrocentricism throughout the city. Hudson’s events were attended by many, including non-blacks. This in effect, brought black agency together with white leftist groups,
white moderates, and all others in combat against racism. The will of Black Power would be severely tested in June 1970, when six black activists were charged with attempting to blow up the Ohio River oil refineries during a weeklong violent riot in the city. The Commonwealth’s attorney could not produce evidence that the six met and conspired to commit such an act. Plus, the witnesses who testified claimed that the violence only began when police were brought to the riots. Because of this, Judge S. Rush Nicholson ordered a not guilty verdict based on insufficient evidence. While this was a victory for the Black Power Movement, it remained a loss for black progress as a whole, due to the issues at hand—poverty, police brutality, unemployment—being ignored by the city. That racial violence was still occurring into the mid-1970s in the so called “Progressive Border State” demonstrates the unwillingness of white supremacist groups to accept black agency and activism.

Louisville continued its advocacy for equal rights and black self-determination well into 1980 but seriously declined with the dissolution of the Black Panther Party. Louisville’s history effectively demonstrates the self-righteous attitude of African Americans to seize their rightfully deserved privileges. Muhammad Ali witnessed these assertive, self-determinant blacks march, protest, and fight for their recognition. He mirrored their transformations and aggressive adaptations to their surrounding environment for the purposes of success. Most importantly, Communal interdependency fueled the activism in the same manner that it fueled Ali’s rise to the top of the boxing and activism world. His parents often related the stories of Louisville and its plight to him. It is more than appropriate that Walnut Street became Muhammad Ali Boulevard because the same black activists that made Walnut Street into the successful, culturally
aesthetic center for black Louisville transcended Ali in his battle against the government, his opponents inside the ring, and himself, a battle that could not fully be won.
NOTES


2 Ibid. 25-29.


4 Ibid.

5 See Chapters 5-7 of this work.

6 Cassius Clay, who would become Muhammad Ali in 1964, had various nicknames. The Louisville Lip, which was the hometown favorite nickname, was given to him for his outlandish and brash interviews. He was also known as “The People’s Champ”, and his self-titled, “The Greatest.”


8 The Black Church row in Louisville contained Ashbury Chapel, Quinn Chapel, Fifth Street Baptist, York Street Baptist, and Center Street Methodist churches.


10 Ibid.

11 Louisville is called the “River City” because the Ohio River lies within it.

12 8th Census of the United States, 1860. See also Marion Lucas’s History of Blacks in Kentucky, xxviii.

13 9th Census of the United States, 1870.

14 Adams, Way Up North in Louisville, pp. 40-41. According to Adams, Parkland, an area south of Broadway and west of Twenty-eighth street, was settled by “Deep South Negroes.” Smoketown, located between Broadway and Kentucky, and Shelby to First Street, was a large black enclave located east of the central business district. Other small black areas included Uptown, Fort Hill, The Bottoms, Cabbage Patch, Highland Park, and Churchill Downs. Map of the black areas in Louisville is provided on page 42 of Adams’s work.

15 Lucas, History of Blacks in Kentucky, 294-298.

16 Kentucky legally lies beyond the jurisdiction of the Freedmen’s Bureau, so it took Major general Clinton B. Fisk and Major General Oliver O. Howard to intervene so that the Bureau extended to the Commonwealth.


Jim Crow, which was the term for racial segregation in the United States following the Civil War and Reconstruction, got its nickname from a minstrel character. The character was created by Thomas Rice, a white performer from Louisville. For a full account of the history, see: Robert C. Toll, Blacking Up: the Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America (galaxy Books) (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1977). See also: Catherine Fosland and Tracy K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky, 13.

Lucas, History of Blacks, 298.


K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border, 80.


38 See Louisville Defender, 11 February 1971. Details on the rise of Lincoln Institute.


40 K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border, 51.

41 Horton, Not Without Struggle, 26.

42 Ibid, 24-27.

43 Ibid, pp. 6-7, 9.

44 Buchanan v. Warley, 245 U.S. 60 (1917).


47 Ibid, 85. See also Louisville Leader, 20 April 1935.


49 Ibid.


53 K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border, 50.

54 Ibid, 82-83.


56 Brown v. Board of Education stated that segregating schools was unconstitutional, but it did not state how schools would be desegregated, when they start desegregating, and in what capacity did the local and state levels had to do to enforce the law. Atlanta was one city where many of the school districts did not fully desegregate until the 1970s.

57 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas 349 U.S. 294 (1955)

Adams, Way Up North in Louisville, 127-129. The Youth Council was headed by Jewel Rabb, J. Andrew Bishop, and Lyman T. Johnson, all members of NAACP and all teachers at Central High School in Louisville. They were chosen to lead the Youth Council because of their militancy and activism in the 1940s. The goal of the NAACP in selecting these organizations was to desegregate the Fourth Street District, which would branch outward and desegregation would come to all streets.

Ibid.


Ibid, 136.

K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border, 93-94.

Ibid, 92-93.

K’Meyer, Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South, 77.


K’Meyer, Freedom on the Border, 89-94.

K’Meyer, Civil Rights in the Gateway of the South, 184-185.

Ibid, 194-197.


Ibid, 198.

"You do not know these men. You may have looked at them, but you did not see them. They are newspapers blowing down a gutter on a windy night. For reasons both sociological and psychological, these men have never joined or been invited to join society. They have rarely experienced love and friendship, rarely formed any lasting or constructive relationship outside of family, but today, at last, they will become a part of something. They will “belong.” They will come a little closer to their unrealistic dreams of power and glory…"

These words, taken directly from an episode of the acclaimed television series, The Outer Limits, personify the societal and identity woes of oppression in the twentieth century. The Outer Limits, which during the early 1960s addressed the socioeconomic and political issues of America against the backdrop of the highly popular theme at the time, Cold War science-fiction, aired an episode, ‘The Invisibles,’ in which mysterious strangers are thrust into the powerful positions in society they have sought after vehemently, only to realize that their individualized patterns to success were met with challenges, strife, and the destructive nature of an oppressive civilization. Although the superior class in this particular serial was extraterrestrial in origin, the resemblance to the resistance of black progress in America is alarming, but the resemblance to the rise of both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali is downright staggering. The “Invisibles,” through mechanized programming from environmental stimuli, the creation of new identities and personalities that showcased their successful attributes, and their incredible strive to conquer the superior class, invaded a society that refused to recognize them as
legitimate homo sapiens. With both Johnson and Ali, two pugilists who thrived during different, yet parallel eras, the world witnessed two hometown bred heroes that vigorously fought to establish their own individualized identity in the Jim Crow atmosphere that rejected any notion of black race consciousness or equality.

This chapter will simultaneously compare and analyze the dissimilar paths that both fighters chose from the beginning of their lives to the zenith of their respective successes inside the ring. While Johnson, whose lower class, impoverished Galveston background forced him to vigorously pursue a more independent, self-righteous path to success, Ali’s structured, agency-driven, and more highly interdependent commercialized Louisville community allowed him to expose himself globally, which gave him the attention of disciplined power and commercial groups that appealed to his ideas of superiority and masculinity. In short, I will prove that Ali’s structured, popularized path to success allowed him to experience more success than Johnson, whose autonomous journey more harshly challenged white superiority. In comparison to the “Invisibles” of the Outer Limits, both Ali and Johnson fought simply for power: power of manhood and masculinity; the power to dominate all racial classes of men, especially the whites that had denied privileges throughout their lives, and centrally, the power to exercise their self-determination. Like Louisville during the twentieth century, Ali represented change based on environment, atmosphere, and mentality while Jack Johnson’s immobile self-righteous mentality remained unmoved throughout his entire career. This chapter will also expose the various differences in the fighters’ styles both inside and outside the ring prior to their championship runs.
I. PARENTS

Despite revisionist historian claims, both black extended and nuclear families rose dramatically in the South following the Civil War. These households grew out of the protection and community of blacks in major urban areas, especially when the mass migration of freedmen left the rural lands for employment opportunities in the cities throughout the South. As discussed in the previous chapters, both Galveston and Louisville's successes in black agency and self-determination resulted from this mass exodus of freedmen who desired both a new beginning in life and a shift in the establishment of their places in society. With the help of the already secure value system established by the powerful black church and communal support (primarily in Louisville), black patriarchs raised their children and protected their families enveloped in these intimate racial climates segregated from the harsh, brooding white supremacist milieu throughout the South. When Arthur John Johnson and Cassius Marcellus Clay entered the world, they both equally received the care from parents derived from the black, religious aesthetic that cherished the community and fought for socioeconomic power. While Muhammad Ali would embrace and integrate that secure community aspect to his demeanor and personality, Jack Johnson would in effect shun the factor and adopt his independent, self-righteous attitude, which will be discussed in later chapters.

Although both boxers were raised in patriarchal, religious, nuclear families, their parents were anything but similar, mostly due to their respective time periods. Henry Johnson, born a slave in Maryland, migrated to Galveston at an unknown period. Numerous stories passed throughout history recall Johnson as a very successful slave boxer and master soldier and spy for General Robert E. Lee's army during the Civil War.
Other accounts, including those from his son, list that he served as a civilian teamster for United States Army’s 38th Colored Infantry. According to renowned Jack Johnson biographer, Randy Roberts, these accounts are non-credible due to their lack of verifiable sources. What is known, however, is that by 1878, the year of the Galveston Giant’s birth, Henry was a forty-two year old woodcutter, who was both illiterate and physically handicapped. His right leg was atrophied, allegedly due to rheumatism caused by prolonged exposure to cold rain and snow in trenches during the war.

It was fairly obvious that the community element established by the Galveston blacks during the antebellum period played an integral part in Henry Johnson’s personality. Regardless of his economic and physical situation, Johnson, living in the impoverished section of the city on 808 Broadway Street, made sure his family was both fed and secure. In the 1880s, to support his nine children, Johnson worked various jobs, including as a porter in a saloon and mainly as a janitor for both the black public school district, then the entire East School District. Humbled by his father’s work ethic and physical disabilities, Jack would often help his father sweep schoolrooms, similar to Cassius Clay Jr. assisting his father paint signs. His wife, Tiny, however, who was also illiterate and a freedman, became the major influence on Lil’ Arthur’s life.

Unlike the young Cassius Clay, it was Jack Johnson’s mother who influenced him to engage in fighting. In fact, Tiny often noted that her first son was indeed a “coward” due to the fact that his older sister would have to defend him from bullies in the schoolyard. One day, Tiny told a crying, bruised Johnson that if he ever came home crying again, she would “whip him worse than the bully.” Johnson never lost a fight at school again. Both boxers would later admit that their mothers were the major
inspiration for their continued success and they both showered their mothers with gifts and adoration as long as they lived.⁹

For a young Cassius Marcellus Clay, born January 17, 1942 to Cassius and Odessa Clay, life was a bit more lavish. In contrast to Henry Johnson, Cassius Marcellus Clay Sr. bought a house on Grand Avenue in the West End District of Louisville, which was the black middle class section of the city. The house was far away from Smoketown, the impoverished black area of the River City, and the East End, where both white and black elites lived.¹⁰ Ali’s brother, Rahaman, formerly Rudolph Arnette Clay, described a picture of black middle class Louisville that was in stark contrast to the disadvantaged area where Jack Johnson was raised. “Louisville was segregated, but it was a quiet city, very peaceful and clean. There wasn’t much crime; no drugs; very little drinking or prostitution.”¹¹

As was the case with Henry Johnson, Cassius Sr. toiled tirelessly to provide his family with everything they needed. He worked both as a sign painter and artist that drew religious murals and landscapes. He was paid reasonably well and both boys never suffered economic hardships. Lamont Johnson, a schoolmate of Clay, stated about Ali that “He wasn’t a kid who ever missed a meal. In those days, there was no other way to think of his circumstances as anything other than black middle class.”¹² Cassius Sr. admitted to Thomas Hauser that “I dressed them as good as I could afford, kept them in pretty good clothes. And they didn’t come out no ghetto. I raised them on the best street I could. I made sure they were around good people; not people who would bring them into trouble.”¹³ The “ghetto” element is a major factor in the childhood of both fighters, which will be discussed later.
Similar to Tiny Johnson, Odessa Clay became the figure that resonated throughout her son’s life. Ali would later say of his mother that “I’ll tell you what I’ve told people for a long time. She’s a sweet, fat, wonderful woman, who loves to cook, eat, make clothes, and be with family. She doesn’t drink, smoke, meddle in other people’s business, or bother anyone, and there’s no one who’s been better to me my whole life.” Odessa was of mixed race with her great-grandfather on her father’s side and her grandfather on her mother’s side being white. Although her occupation was sometimes cooking and cleaning in upper class whites’ houses, Odessa, like Tiny Johnson, was mainly a housewife and mother to her children. Tiny was a housewife because the era in which she lived required it, but Odessa chose to be a housewife and work simultaneously because of the stability and masculinity that her husband provided for the family. Her choice reflected both the changing times in World War II era black Louisville and her status as middle class.

In comparison, both families were deeply religious and made it a priority that their children were exposed heavily to the Bible. Jack Johnson would often note in his biographies that his father was “a man of a pious turn of mind” and would help preach sometimes on Sunday at the Methodist Church they attended. After his mother’s death, Johnson delivered a pulpit sermon titled “The Influence of My Christian Mother” in front of African Americans in numerous major cities. In the Clay family, religion was second to none, especially for Odessa. Ali would later recount:

“My mother is a Baptist and when I was growing up, she taught me all she knew about God. Every Sunday, she dressed me up, took me and my brother to church, and taught us the way she thought was right. She taught us to love people and treat everybody with kindness.”
Cassius Sr. would also account his love for the church and the impact it had on his two sons:

“They didn’t give us any trouble growing up; they were church boys, because my wife brought them to church every Sunday. She was a good Baptist. I was a Methodist....their mother taught them to believe in God and be spiritual and be good to everybody. Sunday school every Sunday.”

Equally, the mothers are more significant to the boxers’ lives than many have suggested in historiography. Because of Tiny Johnson’s ultimatum, Lil’ Arthur faced his first challenge to maturity, which created a bond he would always share with her. Tiny represented the only brash, volatile action that Jack Johnson would adopt in his adolescence. She was, ironically, his access to black masculinity, which he used repeatedly to combat the white racism that followed him repeatedly both inside and outside the ring. For Ali, Odessa served as a safety net and retreat for him due to his father’s repeated violations of the value system established in the community.

Interestingly, both sets of parents raised their children through these order values, yet their children responded in dissimilar ways.

II.CHILDSHOOD

In the development of children, their relationships with their fathers play an integral part in how they view the sociological environment. Numerous studies have reported that parental behavior can often alter and/or duplicate the child’s behavior and personality. In the realm of amoral behavior, both Clay and Johnsons’ families contrast heavily. As stated in an earlier chapter, Galveston was filled with alleyways containing gambling houses, saloons and dives, brothels, and other forms of unscrupulous activities. There is little evidence to suggest that Henry or Tiny Johnson engaged in any unethical behavior, which gave Johnson a moral security blanket to clutch whenever he returned
home from troubles across the nation later in life. Randy Roberts described Henry’s personal life as that of many other freedmen: he settled down with one woman, provided for his children, and did not roam the cities at night. With Johnson, who was an independent self-determinant, self-righteous man, the stable, secure, moral house on Broadway Street was a metaphorical “Escape Clause” to run to when life got rough. His rebellious nature towards society in the realm of prostitution, infidelity, and crass self-righteous egotism was a response to the quiet, sheltered home life Johnson endured from his parents. As he encountered the Jim Crow racism and nativist ideologies throughout the country, Johnson would often return home and “escape” his turbulent life.

In stark disparity, Cassius Clay Sr.’s amoral behavior is well documented. Louisville police records document Cassius Sr. being arrested numerous times for reckless driving, disorderly conduct, disposing of mortgaged property, and twice for assault and battery. Under the influence of alcohol, which he often abused, Cassius Sr. would physically attack his wife and sons, prompting the police to remove him from the house. “I like a few drinks now and then,” Cassius Sr. would claim, but he failed to mention that as he ravaged bars for libations, he also ravaged women for promiscuous sex. Those sexual escapades would sometimes turn violent as well. Sports Illustrated interviewed John “Junior Pal” Powell, a store owner in the West End, who told the magazine that Cassius Sr. had arrived to his apartment one night covered in blood from being stabbed by a woman. Ali, as an adult, would joke about his father’s personal life to reporters, stating that, “My daddy is a playboy. He’s always wearing white shoes and pink pants and blue shirts and he says he’ll never get old.”
While the jokes provided laughter and ratings, it is conceivably clear that Cassius Sr.’s behavior disrupted the security blanket of Ali’s environment. The structure, value, and religious atmosphere that Odessa had tirelessly worked to create for her children was often interrupted and belittled. There are numerous theories to why Cassius Sr. turned to alcohol, but one impactful reason was his stagnant economic and social status. He himself, like Henry Johnson, had to face the everyday realization that they were indeed “Invisibles.” While he often found work throughout the River City, Cassius Sr. was grossly under-talented and untrained, which caused him much strife and resentment. His immobile economic situation also resulted from lack of formal education, which he shared with son. While Ali, like Johnson, finished school, Cassius Sr. dropped out after ninth grade, citing white racism as the ultimate obstacle to his and other blacks’ progress.

The violent outbursts would sometimes occur after a mixture of spirits and anecdotes concerning white superiority over blacks that Cassius Sr. would often tell his sons. In essence, Cassius Sr. saw in his sons a real chance for his family to break the straps of the Jim Crow racism in assurance that they would not grow up to become “Invisibles” as well.

Because of this, Ali, unlike the rambunctious Lil’ Arthur, who spent nights away from home illegally fighting and shooting craps, had a very quiet, straight and narrow childhood, doing everything possible to avoid the risky behaviors that would lead him down his father’s unethical and unsuccessful path. He rarely got into trouble, except for teachers reprimanding him for chatting in the school hallways, but Ali did everything necessary to live an unassuming childhood. This was essential to Ali’s growth into adolescence because, quite frankly, he was very much “his father’s son” in more ways
than many realize. Like his father and in essence, like Jack Johnson, Ali was a charmer, bragger, and most importantly, a dreamer and storyteller. Both Odessa and Cassius Sr. noted to Thomas Hauser that young Ali “loved to talk” and would often entertain all the boys in the neighborhood by just talking and telling stories. Fantastical and exaggerated stories became a part of Ali’s life due to his father’s outlandish tales about his own personal life, especially in regards to second class citizenship as a result of institutionalized racism. In the same vain as his father, his education was extremely poor. He was only able to graduate thanks to the support of the principal, who convinced the faculty to award Clay with a certificate of attendance.

The response to racism is especially noteworthy in comparing the two pugilists. As a youth in Galveston, Johnson’s experiences with racism were firsthand, direct, and independent while Ali’s views, were more complex and a mixture of firsthand and secondary experiences, and sometimes exaggerated sources. In other words, both race men, by their teenage years, were aware and astonished by the race problem in America. How they responded displayed early evidence of their differing paths to global stardom and as representatives of the African American race.

III. BEGINNINGS IN BOXING

Immediately from the start of their historic run in sports, The Galveston Giant and The Louisville Lip both knew their true purpose in Jim Crow society: to fight. Both men were faced with the harsh realities of their socioeconomic status, yet their situations altered slightly due to their respective eras and environment.

For Johnson, his lack of definitive education, his dark black skin, and his impoverished Galveston background led him to believe that few choices to thrive were
available. He had worked various jobs following school, including training horses, painting wagons, baking bread, and unloading ships at the Galveston docks. These jobs proved to provide quick cash, but they lacked certain elements that satisfied Johnson. Firstly, these jobs paid very little, especially to black workers. Johnson could indeed feed himself and find shelter, but not much was accessible with such little money. Most importantly, his personality required feats that would exhibit his masculinity and power. There simply was no break away from the structured, secure, yet passive lifestyle of working class blacks that Johnson had witnessed as he grew up in Galveston. For Johnson, the non-structure and violent, dangerous element in sports aroused his independent desires. He felt as though he needed to prove that he was above not only the average black American and white American or even the average American. He wanted to prove he was superior to ALL MEN.

One activity that he always liked to do for leisure time that proved lucrative and powerful was engaging in Battle Royals. These free-for-all contests were set up by white enforcers to subordinate the black youth in the Jim Crow system. In back alleys or abandoned warehouses, numerous black youths, sometimes up to a full dozen, were placed in a ring, blindfolded, and forced to fight until one man was left standing. As they fought, the white audience would entice them by stripping them naked, throwing coins and food at them, and watching them attack one another in a confusing, bloody frenzy. If a fight between only two occurred, the whites would add a twist to the bout, like having handicapped kids missing legs or arms fighting each other. As Randy Roberts correctly assesses, these contests contained no winners, only losers. It was in essence a sporting version of a minstrel show: black youth degrading one another for a white audience
cheering at the success of the racial caste system at play. Nonetheless, the clandestineness, feats of strength, and barbarity attracted Johnson, who was extremely proficient in these matches. No matter how they strategized, the opponents usually lost to the towering giant. In his first contest outside of Galveston, Johnson fought for Johnny Connor, an ex-bantamweight and friend to the legislators in Chicago. When the bell rang, Johnson immediately knocked out two opponents with a right and left jab to the jaw. The third man was lowered to the ground with a devastating punch to the gut and after a threat from Johnson of death, the fourth one simply collapsed after a shot to the body.

Similar to how Ali would present his personality in the decades to come, Johnson’s early bouts exhibited his independent, self-righteous attitude. He would often taunt his battle royal opponents, angering them while enticing the cheering audience. For Johnson, it was a display of masculinity along with a taste of commercialization. Due to his surroundings, Johnson had to set himself apart from his competitors to show he was special. By branding himself with his “big golden smile,” he depreciated the competition along with white dominance of prizefighting one step at a time, which according to Texas history, was no easy task.

By 1889, the Texas legislature had turned its nose up at pugilism. All prizefighting bouts were deemed legal only if a tax of five hundred dollars was paid. Two years later, money was not viable enough to save the sport, as it was fully prohibited by law. Interpretation of the law varied, so fighting continued throughout the 1890s. For most, prizefighting involved monetary or material compensation for combat, admission, or wagering. With this in mind, the Galveston Athletic Club promoted
mythical pugilist contests where no money was allegedly paid or no money was made at the venues. By 1897, Johnson arrived at the Club, beating opponent after opponent, "not" collecting the winning purse and "not" bringing praise and money to the Athletic Club with his fighting.30

What is worth noting is that unlike Ali, whose successes as an amateur were both unmatched and powerful, Johnson’s first official decade of boxing was marred by absolute obscurity and inconsistencies in the ring.31 As he continued to fight up the ranks, he received no notoriety, publicity, or wealth. He was still an "Invisible," only satisfying the sparring desires of the first light heavyweight boxing championship, Jack Root.32 The only reward that compensated the starving, penniless Johnson was his excess days of experience in the ring, which would prove useful in the future.33 By 1899, nobody was talking about The Galveston Giant, and it was mainly due to Galveston’s clandestine efforts at pugilism. As days continued, the mystique of fighting escaped Johnson more and more. On May 7, 1899 in Chicago, Johnson, extremely malnourished and weak, quit in the fifth round against Klondike Haynes, failing to take advantage of the opportunity to shed the "Invisible" lifestyle. The weight of mediocrity multiplied by increasing gambling debts and relentless migration defined the late teenage years of Jack Johnson. Fortunately, like Ali, his fanatical, possessed adoration for fighting and his desire to reach the zenith of masculinity fueled his early pedestrian existence to commanding, dominating success in the first decade of the twentieth century. By now, the infamous “bicycle incident”, which instantaneously erupted Muhammad Ali’s legendary boxing career at age twelve, has been reprinted and retold in various fashions and revisions.34 What has been forgotten or ignored altogether, however, is that Ali’s rise
to power in the late 1950s and 1960s was mostly due to his voluminous amount of commercialized and global exposure to the world. This complex system of publicity impacted Ali’s livelihood and amateur career so seriously that unlike The Galveston Giant, a vastly, intricate highway system of sorts was in place to facilitate the Lip’s success to the top of the boxing and commercial world. In fact, Ali’s early beginnings in boxing were undoubtedly prosperous and rewarding, mostly due to Louisville’s viable abilities.

Immediately upon meeting young Cassius Clay, Joe Martin was both unimpressed with him physically, but overtly impressed with his mentality and personality.

“I guess I’ve taught a thousand boys to box, or at least tried to teach them. Cassius Clay, when he first began coming around, looked no better or worse than the majority. If boxers were paid bonuses on their potential like ballplayers are, I doubt he would have received one. He was just ordinary, and I doubt whether any scout would have thought much of him in his first year. About a year later, though you could see that the little smart aleck had a lot of potential. He stood out because I guess he had more determination than the other boys...He was a kid willing to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve something worthwhile in sports. I realized it was almost impossible to discourage him.”

This intricate similarity in an otherwise vastly, dissimilar path to triumph points directly to an unconscious drive and fortitude to reach the heights of masculinity. Like Johnson, Ali could only achieve true happiness if he was successful in fighting. Beginning with the three minute defeat of Ronnie O’Keefe, twelve-year old, eighty pound Ali relented in victory in the ring. Some aspects of his desire for success derived from his Jim Crow background and the alleged futility of his racial situation. The other aspect was what Michael Ezra called his “simplistic” nature. Although prizefighting contains multiple layers of density in its composition, the core factor remains simple: knock your opponent down for a count of ten or more and win. The goal of pugilism is as unassuming as
Cassius Clay was when he entered Joe Martin’s gym. In fact, that unassuming, clean-cut approach to life is what garnered the most attention for Ali in his early years. What individuals witnessed was a talkative, Bible-carrying, mild-mannered, middle class, light-skinned, attractive kid who avoided trouble and simply wanted to box for money.36 Louisville’s close-knit, agency driven black middle class community had given Ali a realistic presentation of life, which was not keen to an individual with such lackadaisical educational skills as Ali. He knew that if he simply trained every day in the form of running and punching, then he could shake the “Invisible” tag quickly and gain prosperity, a rarity in his community of working class black Louisvillians. “When I started boxing,” Ali recalled to Hauser, “all I really wanted was someday to buy my mother and father a house and own a nice big car for myself.”37 More success than imagined would engulf Ali, whose immense commercialized image was utilized heavily in his early years.

Unlike Jack Johnson, Ali’s early commercialization was first captured on local access television. Martin, who became Ali’s main trainer, arranged for the young fighter to appear on Tomorrow’s Champions, a gateway to both the appeal of Louisvillians and the pockets of local businessmen.38 What many noticed, according to Remnick, is that Ali was a sweet, naïve kid who was not an amoral street fighter.39 Christine Martin, the wife of Ali’s trainer, would often drive Ali and other boys to Indianapolis, Chicago, and Toledo for boxing tournaments in the summer. She noted that:

“Cassius was a very easy-to-get-along-with fellow. Very easy to handle. Very polite. whatever you asked him to do, he would do. On trips, most of the boys were out looking around, seeing what they could get into, whistling at the pretty girls. But Cassius didn’t believe in that. He carried his Bible everywhere…and while the other boys were looking around, he was reading his Bible.”
This image greatly influenced the people to support this kid, who exhibited the likeable quality that was in essence, safe and secure, unlike Jack Johnson. The safety and security of the black Louisville community permeated through Ali in his teenage years, which are traits that Jack Johnson chose to dispose of while he developed his own independent persona in society. It is almost accurate to equate the young Ali with Jackie Robinson, whose marketability as the safe, secure Negro was massively appealing to whites and blacks alike. Ali’s training by a white cop was also instrumental in his appeal to the masses. In such a violent sport as boxing, an African American remaining docile and childlike while allowing a white policeman to train him was a major spectacle of amiability and conformity during the early modern Civil Rights Movement.40

Tomorrow’s Champions also gave Ali his first taste of legal prizefighting, something Jack Johnson struggled to achieve early. For every appearance on the show, young Cassius was paid four dollars, a sum that Johnson, due to the brutality of the Battle Royals and the harsh restrictions on prizefighting in 1890s Jim Crow Texas, would rarely make legally. The money provided Ali with the sense of security from such a simple task as fighting. From then, it was overtly feasible that he could make a living from fighting, and he sought vigorously to do so.

From television, Ali continued to please the nation in tournaments, but his first global fame and support came in the 1960 Summer Olympics, where he simultaneously won the Gold Medal and pleased the Roman spectators. When he was not in the ring dominating the international competition, he initiated conversations with everyone he saw, proclaiming that he would be the greatest champion one day. In essence, the “Mayor of the Olympic Village” marketed both himself and the nation together, exposing
a nationalistic, self-determinant attitude. Famed gold medal winning sprinter Wilma
Rudolph recounted Ali’s amiableness and loquaciousness in Rome:

“Everybody wanted to see him. Everybody wanted to be near him. Everybody
wanted to talk to him. And he talked all the time. I always hung in the
background, not knowing what he was going to say.”41

These collective sentiments followed the victorious Ali back home to Louisville, where
the River City relished in his grandiose celebration. In fact, these festivities
demonstrated that the first six years of Ali’s boxing career in Louisville had amounted to
unabashed, thriving success and secured marketability for the fighter. He was welcomed
back by Mayor Bruce Hoblitzell, six cheerleaders, three hundred cheering fans of
different races, and a twenty-five car motorcade. Police cars flooded the street, providing
escort service for the champ. As he rode along, Cassius Jr. again promoted his patriotic
side with a poem:

“To make America the greatest is my goal.
So I beat the Russian, and I beat the Pole,
And the USA won the Medal of Gold.
Italians said ‘You’re greater than the Cassius of old.’…
So make Rome your home if you will.
I said I appreciate your kind hospitality,
But the USA is my country still,
Cause they waiting to welcome me in Louisville.”42

More comparable to the patriotism of Joe Louis than the independence and masculinity
seeking of Jack Johnson, eighteen-year old Cassius Clay began his expansion from
simplicity to complexity when he adopted a political and nationalistic tone. His
dedication to America during this time is often unnoted in Muhammad Ali analyses, but
it undoubtedly gave rise to his credibility and popularity with the commercialized
business class voluminously. What they saw in Ali are the same characteristics that
Elijah Muhammad recognized in 1964 when he asked the new champion to represent the
Nation of Islam. Unlike Jack Johnson in his earlier years, Ali was an appropriate investment. It is no surprise that Ali was flooded with management offers from all over the nation, including training packages from Rocky Marciano, Archie Moore, and Cus D’Amato. Also, it is not surprising that Louisville’s most wealthy businessmen adopted the vivacious Ali for their own capital venture.

It is essential to say that World War II’s effectual features played a significant role in shaping Ali’s early nationalistic and self-determinant attitude and attainment. When he talked as much as he did, he was saying all the right things that Americans wanted to hear at the time. America was still salivating over the win in the Second Great World War, and Ali’s nationalism led many to feel great pride. The wicked cruelty of the Rape of Nanking by the Japanese, the disgusting fascist spectacles by the Italian government, and the explicit genocidal acts by the Nazi Party throughout Europe gave the global environment an unabashed, shameless view of the zenith of racism in modern history. Immediately following the war, international response to the atrocities were more than drastic, as European powers gradually abandoned their African colonies, fascist governments around the globe crumbled, and numerous public facilities and educational institutions in America began to change their ideas on race relations. It is possible, as many civil rights supporters would advocate in postwar America, that blacks and whites could prosper together in America on the ideals set forth by the Declaration of Independence. To many, Ali represented these American ideals of wholesomeness, masculinity, national pride, and most importantly, the transforming race relations in America. It was in fact profitable to the investment corporations that a good-natured, mild mannered kid like Cassius Clay Jr. could bring nationalism to the forefront for
blacks to a greater extent than Joe Louis did a decade ago. Atwood Wilson, the principal of Central High School that demanded that young Cassius be given a high school diploma despite his horrific performance in class, reminded the crowd in Louisville of the Louisville Lip’s national symbolism:

“When we consider all the efforts that are being made to undermine the prestige of America we can be grateful we had such a fine ambassador as Cassius to send over to Italy.”

Even Cassius Sr., who often cited America as degenerative for allowing the racial promises to remain broken, painted his front steps red, white, and blue and sang “God Bless America!” when his son returned home. It was as if America had adopted Ali and Ali had equally welcomed the racially torn nation. When questioned by a Soviet Union reporter on why he embraced a country that refused to even allow him to eat at a lunch counter, Ali responded:

“Tell your readers we’ve got qualified people working on that problem, and I’m not worried about the outcome. To me, the USA is still the best country in the world, counting yours. It may be hard to get something to eat sometimes, but anyhow I ain’t fighting alligators and living in a mud hut.”

Whether it was to disrespect the Soviets or brag on the elite quality of the United States, Ali managed to convert more individuals to his support system with his quotes in Rome. Patriotism elevated the reputation of Joe Louis, but it is often forgotten in Ali’s reputation, regardless of its short-lived embrace. When Ali’s motorcade swept through downtown Louisville in its most conquering way, he was parading as a patriot, something Jack Johnson would never do, especially in his mediocre, unsupported early years. Johnson lacked the social mobility and nationalistic attitude created by a major war; in effect, his era, similar to Ali, defined his unconsciousness. The minute Ali became patriotic, he became an American protagonist; but after his stunning upset of
Sonny Liston in 1964 and his subsequent liberal stances on religion and politics disrupted the trusted bond between the nationalistic, good-natured athlete and his audience, he became an antagonist, which will be discussed in a later chapter. All criticism of early Ali was not overtly positive, and like Jack Johnson, he was attacked most harshly early in his career for his fighting style.

IV. STYLES

In May of 1885, Robert Emmet Odlum, brother of women’s rights activist Charlotte Odlum, died attempting to survive a stunt jump off the Brooklyn Bridge of 135 feet, or a fourteen-story building. Allegedly, on a $200 bet, Steve Brodie, a New York City citizen, completed the same jump and survived to live in folklore as one of the only four men to have made the jump. Massive skepticism followed and most contemporaries do not believe he completed the feat. But the jump was more than a simple “stunt” to Lil’ Arthur. According to his seminally fictional autobiography, In the Ring and Out, Jack Johnson detailed a meticulous adventure he supposedly undertook in search of the infamous Brodie in New York City at the age of twelve. Although dubious and more than likely untrue, this anecdote of unbridled enthusiasm, independent voyage, imaginative self-righteousness, and dangerous element would define the style of the Galveston Giant. In similar fashion to Ali, Johnson found an idol at an early age. But unlike Ali, Johnson more so developed an obsessive fixation on Brodie that was so colossal that he created a fantastical escapade. To Johnson, Brodie was a man who was willing to accept unnecessary dangers and criticisms for the achievement of fame and
money. To Johnson, Brodie was independent, self-righteous, perilous, and flashy. To
Johnson, Brodie was what he considered to be a man. A man has the power to control his
own destiny. A man exhibits his wealth and power. A man commands the room.

So as Johnson began to experience success, he incorporated an independent,
masculine style that resembled that of a “celebrity millionaire.” According to Geoffrey
Ward, the Galveston Giant’s mass appeal and popularity began in 1903 after the Denver
Ed Martin bout. A Los Angeles Times Reporter and his friend were approached by
Johnson on the street and were shocked at what they saw. The reporter recorded:

The clothes that garmented the strolling colossus spoke emphatically. In place of
wrinkles in his trousers there were orderly creases, fresh from the tailor’s iron.
An inch from the boots these creases stopped, allowing the stylish pantaloons to
break smartly and set trimly on the kid-covered instep. The boots gleamed—not
with the vulgar shine of blacking, but with the lustrous gloss of $7 patent leather
polished to the point of refraction. Stetson’s latest block adorned the towering
one’s head, and against the ebon darkness of the figure’s Abyssinian neck shone
the whiteness of newly-laundered linen. The high, modish collar found
fashionable complement in a scarf of ermine silk, knotted with perfect neatness
and adorned with a diamond pin. From the magnificent shoulders fell in faultless
lines a double-breasted sack, unbuttoned to show the vest of olive green.
Afternoon gloves of pearl-gray suede were carried nonchalantly by a hand that
bore on one of its chocolate-hued fingers a flashing gem of rather more carats
than one. The other hand swung languorously a cane of nobby choice. 48

When the reporter asked Johnson what he did with the large purse ($1,260, or $25,000
adjusted to modern times) he earned in the fight, Johnson responded:

“Well, I’ve got about $200 dollars left. I was “mortgaged” for about $500 by the
time the fight came off-training expenses, mostly. Then, I always like the very
finest clothes and I generally wear them. So I bought some new togs. And I put
a few hundred in diamonds and I gave ’em to my wife. I like diamonds, and so
does she. Then, if you’re in my profession you’ve always got to have your hand
in your pocket when you meet the crowd in the bar—and all that sort of thing
counts way up, you know. A hundred a week won’t near last a first-class boxing
man.” 49
What is mightily apparent about Johnson was that by this time, he had totally abandoned the second class citizenship persona of his Galveston roots and adopted his own brand of first-class citizenship as a successful black fighter. His swagger was complete with unconscious counterattacks toward the supposed black inferiority complex that Jim Crow promised to quell even in the most powerful black man. As Geoffrey Ward put it, Jack Johnson never considered himself an activist or even a representative of the people, most likely because he felt as though he was beyond both races. Unlike Ali, who would artificially adopt race man characteristics later in his career as the result of ever-changing social forces, Jack Johnson remained what he simply always wanted be: a boxer. Sport was enough to satisfy his hunger for masculinity because whether black, white, or any other race, Johnson assured he would be the best.

The early response to this newly defiant masculinity directly correlates with the relationship between sports, male anatomy, and identity in twentieth century America. Returning to Gail Bederman’s theory of American masculinity, she states that “Late Victorian culture had identified the powerful, large male body of the heavyweight prizefighter as the epitome of manhood.” As discussed in the introduction, Bederman’s theory points effectively at the link between social authority and bodily strength that dominated the Jim Crow period in sports. Every victory that Johnson obtained was a break in the linkage of white dominance in the political and socioeconomic environment. In essence, being the best drastically upset the boundaries of white supremacy in the early twentieth century. African Americans were not supposed to comprehend, let alone experience the rewards that first-class citizenship offers. Even before he became the first black champion of the world, Johnson, like Ali, had awakened the black masses and
provided a rare representation of black first-class behavior. He was the “Bad Nigger” because he sought first-class economic and social status in a world that refused to accept that type of blasphemous behavior. He did not simply destroy the “Invisible” characteristic that haunted his early career in the 1890s: he vanquished it forever, hell bent on being the most powerful man in the world. The “Bad Nigger” style effectively corrupted the “New South” mentality, especially during the “Great White Hope” campaign that attempted to end his legacy.

Besides apparel and accessories, Johnson’s style was heavily dependent on money. Money was the gateway to parade Johnson’s version of masculinity to the masses, and he often treated it as poorly as he treated his prostitutes.

“There ain’t much money in my profession nowadays unless you get to take a big purse, like $10,000 or so. I’ve been to California a year now, and I’ve fought on the average of once every two months and I haven’t been licked yet. But I’ve only made about $8,000 in that year and I’ve only got a couple hundred cash to my name. I’m going to try mighty hard to cut a clean thousand out of my next fight…and if I do, you bet I’ll sock it away. I’m going to bet $500 on myself for one thing…”

Gambling was a frequent vice of the Giant, and it served his self-righteous ego as much as his self-determinant mentality. For instance, in the win over Sam McVey on October 27, 1903, Johnson took home $2,796 plus an additional $600 he had won from betting on himself. After the fight, famous Los Angeles gamblers, like T.C. Lynch and Will Tufts, gave him monetary gifts in appreciation for his talents. Within weeks the money would dwindle down, but it would often live on in Johnson’s style. When his girlfriend, Clara Kerr, abandoned him and stole every stitch of clothing and money that was not attached to his person, he borrowed more money that he eventually gambled away to find her.

The price of masculinity and self-determinant independence in Jim Crow America had
made Johnson the most suffered, unconscious race hero of the black race. At the same
time, he began to drink heavily to cope with the pain of maintaining that mannish
swagger. This same masculine swagger had promised him a life better than the
impoverished, yet communal Galveston one that allowed Tiny and Henry Johnson to own
a house, raise their children, and remain self-determinant in the face of white supremacist
doctrine and practice.

Fame and self-righteousness were costing Johnson his sanity and migration was
crucial often to “start a new beginning.” Debtors were always hot on Johnson’s trail,
which probably caused much of his frequent travel as well. As long as he lived in the
realm of first class citizenship, he felt he was untouchable. With an aggressive campaign
to popularity in five years, Johnson had undoubtedly found his pathway. His ascension to
celebrity like status in such a rapid time proves that America was as drawn to his style as
he was drawn to it. Four years before he would defeat champion Tommy Burns in an
easy victory, Johnson’s bravura and reputation had mutated into an uncontrolled monster.
Newspapers throughout the nation raced to cover stories on this so-called, “New Negro.”
As his celebrity grew, so did his antics and expression of style. He taunted his opponents
and critics mercilessly. His flamboyant and flashy suits mocked the norm of apparel
vigorously. Various reports stated that Johnson owned no fewer than twenty two suits,
and often changed clothes throughout the day, always looking luxurious for dinner. In
public, in between sips of his beer and wine through a straw, he would laugh extremely
loudly, rolling his head back and facing the sky. He wore extravagant diamonds,
including one implanted in his front teeth and large stones for cuff links. During training
sessions, he wrapped his penis in excess bandages and tape to make it appear bigger. He
flaunted his entourage of all white prostitutes throughout segregated cities. Indeed, Johnson’s swagger was completely outrageous and radical, and his act wore thin quickly with some critics. Author Bohun Lynch, whose book *Knuckles and Gloves* was the essential reading on boxing and boxers when it was published in 1922, stated that “with money in his pocket and physical triumph over white men in his heart, he displayed all the gross and overbearing insolence which makes what we call the buck nigger insufferable.”

In complete contrast to his lifestyle and mentality, Johnson’s fighting techniques inside the ring proved deceptively passive, but devastatingly effective. His main focus was in simultaneously controlling the environment and his fate, two keys to elevating his masculinity. Due to his smaller stature as a heavyweight (he weighed only 180 pounds), he adopted a defensive technique complete with a superb right uppercut. Generally, he fought with his weight on his back foot and his shoulders directly above that same foot, almost as if he were daring his opponent to attack him. His hands were always held chest high to keep an accurate view of the enemy. Randy Roberts equates Johnson’s style to that of “an artist leaning back from a canvas to evaluate the picture from a distance.”

With this pose, Johnson, as Stanley Crouch said, allowed his opponent to transform into an assistant to his own “ass-whipping.” Geoffrey Ward agrees that Johnson was “an artist in the ring who was smooth, laid-back, and tricky, and refused to let the crowd see him hurting.” I equate this to his dominating egotistical self-righteousness and masculinity.

Unlike Ali, he took very few chances in the ring, and preferred to catch his enemy’s punches in his gloves and counterpunch. Johnson himself explained it best:
“It’s not how hard you hit that other fella, it’s how tired he gets tryin’ to hit you... by gradually wearing down a fighter, by letting himself tire himself out, by hitting him with my left as he came to close quarters with me, then by clinching or executing my uppercut, I found that I lasted longer and would not carry any marks out of the ring.”

Most boxing historians refer to Johnson as the greatest defensive fighter in history.

Bohun Lynch, who witnessed firsthand Johnson’s defeat of Burns in 1908 praised the Giant’s skill set:

Excepting Peter Jackson, he was about as good as a black boxer that had ever been known. He was very strong, very quick, a hard hitter, and extraordinary skillful in defense. He was by no mean unintelligent, and not without good reason, was regarded generally with the greatest possible dislike.

Unfortunately, in the same vain as Muhammad Ali, Johnson was heavily criticized for his lack of menace as a big man and his “cowardice” in defensive fighting. To witness prizefighting, a fan longs for the bruising battles, the punishing offense, and blood-soaked canvases. The fighter is the epitome of masculinity and the opponent challenge represented a gross mistake and violation of manliness. When both Johnson and Ali entered the ring, they equated entertaining with winning, instead of associating punishing with entertaining, which is what the masses desired. Although the defensive fighting style was originated with whites and Jim Corbett won the heavyweight title utilizing the strategy, Johnson’s alleged cowardice in the ring was deemed “lazy,” “shiftless,” and closely linked to the so called “yellow streak” that all blacks possessed. Johnson was, in fact, the next in a long line of black boxers, including Hank Griffin, Denver Ed Martin, Sam McVey, Harry Wills, Sam Langford, Peter Jackson, and Joe Jeanette whom all utilized defensive methodologies.

Various theories try to explain why black boxers favored defensive over offensive in the twentieth century. Randy Roberts effectively ascribes it to economics. Aggressive
black boxers, in an effort to shelter white opponents from possible humiliation and the undercutting of white supremacist ideology, would not receive lucrative cards to fight white boxers. Sam Langford, considered the greatest “uncrowned” champion of all time, confessed to passive fighting so as not to embarrass his white counterparts.\textsuperscript{62} White boxers of the era like Jim Jeffries, John L. Sullivan, Tom Sharkley, and Robert Fitzsimmons adopted more aggressive offenses while the black fighters allegedly embrace passivity.\textsuperscript{63} What some experts saw, however, was Johnson and other black boxers setting the tone as “boss” in the ring, which I equate with exhibiting masculinity to control the contest.\textsuperscript{64} One sparring partner stated that Johnson would stand flat-footed as a way to lure his opponent; when you came in he would “rip your head off with uppercuts and cut you to pieces.”\textsuperscript{65} It was Johnson’s way of maintaining his power over any man, race, or challenger. Similarly to Ali, his style personified his true character outside the ring.

While Johnson used the idea of Steve Brodie to develop his own brand of independent, self-confident, masculine swagger, Cassius Clay Jr. adopted the persona of one of the most influential entertainers in history to completely abandon his simplistic style. Outlandish, flamboyant, and wholly charismatic, “Gorgeous” George Wagner captured the hearts and minds of Americans in the 1940s and 1950s as he dominated the first golden age of Professional Wrestling. He also introduced the idea of entrance music in sports, sprayed the ring canvas with Chanel No. 5 perfume, wore curlers in his long, blonde hair to the ring, and worked the crowd like no one could. Most significantly, Wagner embraced the “cowardly villain” role, cheating in every match and exclaiming, “Win if you can! Lose if you must! But always cheat!”\textsuperscript{66} Wagner’s act was the epitome of
narcissism matched with early examples of androgyny, a sexual ambiguous grace that would transform into a massive movement in the mid-1980s. Ali, as a youth seeking to progress into a complex theatrical role found this all very mesmerizing. After all, Ali’s original style consisted of nationalistic, self-righteous acclaim; however, its success could not be extended that much further than local fame and appreciation. The Lip was hungry for more exposure and notoriety.

Changes were overflowing throughout America. The Cold War and Civil Rights years brought ideas of rebellion, race consciousness, and activism, which Ali had not focused on as much. Plus the upsetting stalemate in the Korea War, the artificial mentality of the Joseph McCarthy Communist witch hunt, the unclear situation in Cuba, and campaigns in Southeast Asia by the government had influenced some Americans to question the motives of their government. Patriotism was not going to advance Ali into the realms of infamy, so it had to be abandoned. In examining Gorgeous George’s antics, narcissism was a method in displaying one’s masculinity, similar to challenging authority or going “against the grain” had made Jack Johnson a household name. The Louisville Lip was hell bent on conquering the media, but he knew it could not be in his usual fashion. It was time to utilize his commercial appeal and self-determination to set himself apart from not only boxers, but also other entertainers in America. Masculinity and success in the ring meant that an individual must achieve celebrity-like status, similar to how Jack Johnson challenged traditional norms of black second-class citizenship to reach new heights of infamy.

In 1961, Ali conducted his first promotional radio interview with the forty six year old Gorgeous George and watched his wrestling match at ringside. In the locker
room after the match, Wagner gave Ali the advice that would lead to the development of
his sixth finger: “A lot of people will pay to see someone shut your mouth. So keep on
bragging, keep on sassing, and always be outrageous.” 67 Ali immediately alerted
longtime friend and trainer Angelo Dundee of his adoration for Wagner’s persona and
swagger.

“I hear this white fellow say, “I am the World’s Greatest Wrestler. I cannot be
defeated. I am the Greatest! I am the King! If that sucker messes up the pretty
waves in my hair, I’m gonna kill him. I am the King! If that sucker whups me,
I’m gonna get the next jet to Russia. I cannot be defeated. I am the prettiest!
I am the Greatest!...When he was in the ring, everybody boooooed, boooooed.
Oh everybody just boooed. And I was mad. And I looked around and saw
everybody was mad. I saw fifteen thousand people coming to see this man get
beat. And his talking did it. And I said, ‘This is a g-o-o-o-o-o-o-d idea!’” 68

For Cassius Jr., Wagner was the gateway to his ultimate goal of being the best boxer and
receiving the most money, therefore establishing true masculinity. In entertainment,
controversy sells. In essence, Ali did the exact same thing as Johnson, barring minor
details due to their respective eras. Johnson’s self-righteousness and egotism carved an
independent, masculine path towards success that was not normally allowed for African
Americans in the early twentieth century. Ali, who had the exposure of the commercial
and business class and the support of an agency driven Louisville black community,
sought a symbiotic, secure style because he felt there was no other way for someone of
his education and race to achieve success. Johnson’s style and rise came through
independent defiance and challenges of white masculinity; Ali’s style and success rose
from interdependence and defining social forces of the era. The “sixth finger” that these
Invisibles sought would finally be realized after defining changes to their self-
determinant paths towards masculinity and power in American culture.
Immediately after his encounter with Wagner, Ali began his path towards self-determination minus the patriotic undertones. Thus, a theatrical, loudmouth caricature was created to keep the public’s eye. Unable to swim, Ali took pictures punching underwater in a pool. He would arrogantly predict the number of rounds it took to knockout an opponent in the ring, with most predictions being accurate. He would taunt and humiliate his opponents while they struggled to survive in the ring. After banging away at Alex Miteff in his hometown of Louisville, Ali screamed to the assembled press, “I am the King! I am the Greatest! Nobody can stop me! They’ll all fall!” Before dismantling Willie Besmanoff, Clay exclaimed, “I’m embarrassed to get in the ring with this underrated duck. I’m ready for top contenders.”

To keep the psychological advantage over his opponents, one character Ali created was that of trickster. Hours before the bout with Ernie Terrell, Ali sent a group of women to Terrell’s hotel room for a raid of his boxing gear. They rummaged through his drawers and closets, screaming “you aren’t big enough to beat Ali!” For weeks prior to his first heavyweight fight for the title, Ali harassed champion Sonny Liston, chasing his car, taunting him, showing up at night to his house to insult him, and throwing a lunatic type fit at the weigh in. Despite the humorous aspects of his psychological character, it did not deter his rigorous training; he vowed to back up the trash talk he was famous for throughout his career. As the boxers came, the Lip destroyed them all, establishing an undefeated record and style in the process. The swagger was similar to Johnson, the elements and pathways differed, but the outcomes remained parallel to one another.

As Wagner had foretold, massive backlash soon accompanied the People’s Champion. Boxing purists, upset at the blatant disregard for old-school sportsmanship,
depended on the fans to let Clay know how much they despised his antics. He was booed often, especially after the Alonzo Johnson and Alex Miteff victories, and Dean Eagle stated that he knew many people “hoping to see Cassius Clay get knocked out his white trunks.”72 In the same way the Galveston Giant’s taunts, laughs, and outlandish, cocky behavior caught the ire of nativist supporters, Ali’s extreme, self-righteous egotism made him infamously popular. Like Gorgeous George, and Jack Johnson, he became “the man you love to hate.”

Fighting wise, many similarities can be made between Ali and Johnson. Like the Galveston Giant, Ali was undersized as a heavyweight. Chuck Bodak, an amateur boxing official, noted that “…when Cassius first came in, he looked like a young colt, very spindly legged and wiry.”73 This attributed to his greatness in the ring, because many considered him to be the quickest heavyweight fighter of all time. But his speed was only one aspect of his success in the ring. Ali’s training was nothing short of intense and excessive. The champ enjoyed it because it was both simplistic and essential. It only involved daily running, punching bags, and jumping rope. Plus, it provided stability and discipline, two attractive features to Ali. In retrospect, he treated training as if it was the key component of his masculinity. In Rome during the Olympics, Wilbur Skeeter McClure, Clay’s roommate, noted that of boxing training “I don’t know anybody on any team who took it more seriously than he [Clay] did. We’d walk around and he’d go up to people and shake hands with them, but he had his mind on training…he trained very, very hard…when I watched him train, he was one of the hardest trainers I’d ever seen.”74

The continuous, extensive hours of training helped Clay mold his fighting after imitations of numerous boxers. He duplicated the speed and slickness of Willie Pastrano
and Luis Rodriguez, two regulars at Angelo and Chris Dundee’s gym; he “sand-danced” like Jersey Joe Walcott; but he mostly imitated the man he called “the king, the master, my idol,” which was Sugar Ray Robinson. Although his 1977 biography, *The Greatest*, downplays the relationship between Robinson and Ali at the behest of the Nation of Islam, most historians have resurrected the true nature between the two icons. This is especially noteworthy considering the voluminous impact that Robinson had on Ali’s career and personality. By removing Robinson from Ali’s biography, the Nation of Islam revised an essential part of boxing history.

Walker Smith Jr.’s rise as Sugar Ray Robinson was not as easy and celebrated as Ali’s. As the son of an Ailey, Georgia cotton and peanut farmer, he constantly relocated for his father’s work until his parents divorced at age twelve. When he moved to Harlem with his mother, he was constantly getting into trouble with the local street gangs. His aspirations of being a doctor stalled when he dropped out of high school at age thirteen, which limited his future aspirations. Like Ali, his only outlet became boxing, and he excelled at it. His quickness with powerful punches left many critics to call him “sweet as sugar,” which he adopted as his nickname. Over his amazing career, he amassed a record of 173-19 as a professional with 103 knockouts. It is no wonder that Ali looked to Robinson as a mentor like figure. Despite his first biography removing Robinson from his life altogether, evidence shows that Ali visited and called Robinson often throughout his career, seeking advice on various matters. The day before the first Sonny Liston fight, Robinson stayed with Ali all day. When asked how he should fight Liston, Robinson told Ali, “The same way I fought Jake LeMotta. The matador and the bull. You can’t match strength with Liston, just like I couldn’t match strength with LeMotta.
He was the bull, and I was the matador and I outsmarted him. You can beat Liston the same way.” As soon as the seventh round bell rang and Liston refused to get up from the seat, Ali spotted Robinson in the crowd, pointed at him, and yelled, “Matador and then bull!” It was an amazing relationship, based on Ali’s attempt to seize masculinity in the same vein as the rural, lower class background fighter that was Robinson.

Set with an attitude that nobody could beat him, Robinson was known for his quick jab and knockout power. Noted boxing historian Bert Sugar claimed that “Robinson could deliver a knockout blow going back. He was seamless, with no fault lines; his hand speed and leverage were unmatchable. There was magic to him. He was ‘Grace Under Pressure.’” The same would soon be said of Ali, whose imitations of Sugar Ray dazzled critics and shocked opposing boxers. Robinson himself noted that “Cassius Clay is the fastest heavyweight I’ve ever seen.” Archie Moore was devastated by that same godlike speed. “His speed was too much for me,” he called, “and he had a style, he would hit a man a lot of times around the top of the head...shake up his thought patterns...he made me dizzy and knocked me out.”

Like Johnson did with Sam McVey, Denver Ed Martin, and Hank Griffin, Ali copied and imitated the defensive, quick fighting style of others, but to a varying degree. Johnson was especially fanciful in his defensive style inside the ring, but just as fanciful and flamboyant outside the ring, something that black boxers refused to do at the time in fear of white extralegal violence. Ali, on the other hand, had predecessors who were flamboyant and outlandish, including Gorgeous George and Sugar Ray Robinson, to duplicate. Every part of Ali’s demeanor was a replica from another source. His fighting style came from Sugar Ray; his loud mouth from his father; and his flamboyance came
from Sugar Ray, Archie Moore, and Gorgeous George. Clay once told the Associated Press that “I copied my left hook from Floyd Patterson, my infighting from Ray Robinson, my back pedaling and hit and move from Hurricane Jackson and my shuffle from Kid Gavilan.” In short, Ali’s entire persona was a massive doppelganger blueprint; yet the major reason he was able to experience more success than his predecessors was his determined strive towards masculinity and power. David Remnick associates Ali’s narcissistic self-promotion with a modern day Davy Crockett and Buffalo Bill Cody, complete with the “dozens.” These symbiotic elements represent the complete transformation of Ali into a complex figure, setting the stage for his social environment to shift again towards the structure of the Nation of Islam in the early 1960s.

Johnson, in another sense, combatted symbiotic elements and remained independent of influences outside the ring. While independence worked in Johnson’s favor, interdependence worked well in Ali’s.

As their careers shifted in mentality and persona, so did their success and popularity. For Jack Johnson, he experienced his first level of infamy and showmanship thanks to his utter defiance of his second-class citizen status. For Muhammad Ali, his already celebrated amateur career skyrocketed once he embraced the villainous, self-righteous character. But one common theme amongst the pugilists is their insistence on creating their own path of self-determination for the purpose of achieving success in the ring, and therefore, in masculinity. The only true difference is that Ali strategically allowed his path to be influenced by other successful individuals.

One lasting theme in Ali’s career that will be discussed extensively throughout this work is his conflict with simplicity versus complexity. With Jack Johnson, his
independent, vicarious mentality relocated him throughout the nation for much of his younger years; but Ali, whose simplistic and wholesome image carried him from the West End district to the front stage in Rome, began a significant transformation to full complexity when he relocated to Miami and experienced a shift in atmosphere. The simplistic Ali wants to fight, win and make money, but the complex Ali craves a structured, disciplined environment. When he is approached by Sam Saxon in Miami, Ali is already aware of the Nation of Islam and its expanding movement in America. The problem lies, however, in its hypnotic, militant control over Ali’s life. Soon, he realized, as Jack Johnson did early, that controlling mechanisms can disrupt destiny. Unfortunately, both fighters will not take action until it is far, far too late. The sixth finger finally grew, but it came equipped with immense consequences.
NOTES

1 Quoted from Joseph Stefano, “The Invisibles,” The Outer Limits, Episode 19, Season 1, February 3, 1964.

2 Due to assistance of the Freedmen’s Bureau in many states, blacks were able to locate lost family members. Also, slave marriages, which were illegal during the bondage period, were qualified as legal by the United States during Reconstruction, thus allowing the growth of black families. For more on the rise of black families in the South, see Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925. Vintage Press, 1977, 768 p.

3 Geoffrey C. Ward’s Unforgivable Blackness claims that Henry arrived in Galveston in 1867, but sources to verify that date are unavailable.

4 Jack Johnson said of his father that his father fought in the Civil War, from beginning to end. Johnson states that his father was at the Siege of Vicksburg and with General Ulysses S. Grant at the Battle of Appomattox, amongst other battles. Civil War records and United States census records do not verify these accounts. See Jack Johnson, My Life and Battles (Westport, CT: Potomac Books Inc., 2009), 2-3. See also Geoffrey C. Ward, Unforgivable Blackness: the Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson (Vintage, 2006), 4-5.

5 Henry Johnson does not make an appearance in the historical records of Texas and Galveston until the 1870s. See Randy Roberts, Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes [paperback] (Free Press, 1985), 2-3. See also Denzil Batchelor, Jack Johnson and His Times (Trafalgar Square, 1990), 9; Heller’s Galveston Directory (Galveston 1878).

6 Jack Johnson, My Life and Battles, 2-3; Geoffrey Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 6.

7 Randy Roberts, Papa Jack, 3-4; 6.

8 Ibid, 4-5.


10 The whites in Louisville also lived in the River Road Area, Indian Hills, and Mockingbird Valley; The black elite, which was extremely small, included the ministers, merchants, and funeral directors. See David Remnick, King of the World, 82-83.

11 Thomas Hauser, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, 17.

12 Remnick, King, 82.

13 Hauser, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, 15.


15 After his conversion to Islam, Ali would often state that his mother’s white blood derived from white men raping her black ancestors. Odessa would never agree with this statement and evidence suggests that her ancestors married and rape was not involved. For more, see Jack Cashill, Sucker Punch, 6-7.

16 Jack Johnson, My Life and Times, 3.


20 One such incident alleges that Cassius Sr. cut Cassius Jr. with a blade. See Louisville Police Records;

21 David Remnick, *King of the World*, 84; 85


25 Federal Bureau of Investigation records show that in the school year of 1957-1958, Clay made poor grades, including a 65 in English, 65 in American history, 70 in biology, and 70 in general art. By the time he graduated on June 11, 1960, he had a grade point average of 72.7. His class rank was 376 out of 391. He also took College Qualifications Test and scored in the 27th percentile, meaning that 73 percent of the people who took this test scored better than Clay. Hauser, Thomas. *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, 21-23.

26 Some incidents that young Ali encountered was watching his mother be denied a drink at a water fountain in downtown Louisville, whites cutting in front of him at the Kentucky State Fair, and looking at the pictures of Emmitt Till in his coffin. These in particular raised many questions in Ali's mind as a youth about race relations in America.

27 The preliminary bout before the 1901 Jack Johnson and Joe Choynski fight was two one Legged "color boys" fighting each other. See Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack*, 6-7; *Galveston Daily News*, 26 February 1901.


29 The 1891 ban on prizefighting in Texas stated that: "Anyone involved in a pugilistic encounter between man and man, or fight between man and bull or between man and other animal is guilty of a felony punishable by a fine between $500 and $1,000 and by a jail term between sixty days and one year. For 4 years, Charles Culbertson, Governor of Texas was at odds with State Judge J.M. Hurt over the legitimacy of the law. By 1895, the 1891 law was upheld with a stricter punishment of two to five years added. For more on the history of prizefighting in Texas, see David G. McComb, *Galveston: a History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 116-120; Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack*, 10-11.

30 Due to prizefighting being illegal, Johnson's record in the Galveston Athletic Club is skewed. The *Ring Record Books* states that Johnson fought 5 bouts between 1897 and 1898, but he obviously fight many more. Ibid.


33 Jack Johnson, *In the Ring and Out*, 40-42.
Muhammad Ali's biographer, Thomas Hauser and author David Remnick (two most reliable sources for the incident), recorded that in October 1954, Muhammad Ali, along with a friend, rode his new sixty dollar red-and-white Schwinn bike to the Columbia Auditorium where a bazaar featuring black merchants was being held. After a few hours of walking around and eating, the boys returned to find their bikes were gone. Ali went searching for a policeman and found Joe Martin at the Columbia Gym, where he threatened to "beat the hell the out of the kid" who stole the bike. See David Remnick, *King of the World*, 92; Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, 15; Michael Ezra, *Muhammad Ali: the Making of an Icon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009, 7.


Ali's original trainer was Joe Martin, but he also mentioned in his biography with Hauser that he also trained with a black man named Fred Stoner. There is little to no verifiable explanation into the role that Fred Stoner played in Ali's early training. According to Ali, no specific timetable or regiment with Stoner is revealed; In Michael Ezra's *Muhammad Ali: Making of An Icon*, Fred Stoner is said to either had hid his relationship with Ali so that Martin would not ban Ali from the television show or that Stoner kicked Clay out of his gym due to refusal to listen to instruction. See Ezra, *The Making of An Icon*, 10; Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times*, 18, 19; David Remnick, *King of the World*, 93-94.

Remnick, *King of the World*, 94.


*Ibid*, 103-104.

Most skeptics believe that a dummy was thrown off the bridge and that Brodie was in a passing boat and fell into the water as a hoax. For more info, see “A Leap From the Bridge,” *New York Times*, 24 July 1886. For more info, see “Steve Brodie: Daredevil or Hoaxter?,” *New York Post*, 5 November 2007.


53 Ibid, 64.

54 Ibid, 77


59 Ibid.

60 Lynch, *Knuckles and Gloves*, 149.

61 Geoffrey Ward notes that when Jim Corbett won the heavyweight championship through a barrage of counterpunches, critics praised his skills as “scientific” and deemed him the “cleverest man in boxing.” See Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness*, 51-52.

62 Langford is considered the greatest non-crowned champion because no champion ever gave him a chance at the title. For more information on Sam Langford’s boxing career, see Clay Moyle, *Sam Langford: Boxing’s Greatest Uncrowned Champion*. Bennett and Hastings; 1st Edition, 2008.

63 Randy Roberts’ supports the idea of white aggressive offense in pugilism by calculating knockout percentages of the popular white boxers. Sullivan’s knockout percentage was 71 percent, Sharkley was 68 percent; Jeffries was 71 percent; In contrast, Jack Johnson’s was 40 percent, Sam Langford’s was 39 percent, Peter Jackson’s was 44 percent, Joe Jeanette’s was 36 percent; Sam Mcvey’s was 41 percent. See *Papa Jack*, 26.

64 Ibid, 52.

65 Ibid.


67 Ibid.


70 As far as we know, every prediction that Clay made from the beginning of his professional career to his defeat of Sonny Liston in 1964 was correct. Sources are not valid of such. Dundee, *My View form the Corner*, 68-69; 70.

Thomas Hauser, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, 20.


Jack Cashill, Sucker Punch, 65.


Bert Randolph Sugar, Boxing's Greatest Fighters (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2006), 1-3.


Thomas Hauser, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, 49.

The Post Register, 23 March 1960.

The “Dozens” is an African American pastime where two separate individuals or groups hurl insults at each other until someone gives up or the conflicts escalates. The “Dozens” originate from West Africa, specifically in Ghana, where Igbo people insulted each other over social status, intelligence, physical appearance, or economic status. Most modern historians believe that the Dozens represent a passive aggressive methodology for blacks to express their grievances with society by insulting each other. Also, it heightens self-defense. For more info on “The Dozens” see Harry Lefever, “Playing the Dozens: A Mechanism for Social Control.” Phylon, Vol. 42, No. 1, pp.73-85. David Remnick, King of the World, 120.
On the cool night of December 28, 1908, two days after Jack Johnson won his legendary heavyweight title, the champ stopped for a drink at the Palace Hotel in the gold-mining town of Kalgoorlie in the heart of Australia. In celebratory fashion, Johnson nursed a glass of whiskey while numerous Australian boxing fans complimented him on his exceptional defensive skills in the aforementioned battle with the ex-champ Tommy Burns. One particular patron, however, noted Johnson’s superior defensive fighting style, but acknowledged that there would not have been much of a fight if Burns had not been so offensive in his style. Johnson vehemently disagreed, stating that his style forces the opponent to lead in attacks while Johnson delivers devastating counterattacks. At this statement, Larry Foley, the sixty-one year old father of scientific Australian boxing, dressed to the highest quality, sternly approached Johnson and informed him that he could “never in a million years” force him to lead unless he wanted to do so. As soon as the mysterious antagonist was identified in the bar, a wave of murmurs swept through the atmosphere, prompting Johnson to answer the alleged challenge. Described by one bystander, Charlie Rose, in his autobiography Life’s a Knockout, the Galveston Giant nonchalantly detached himself from the bar, raised his massive fists and began swaying slowly with his feet planted firmly to the floor. The next three minutes were filled with Johnson punching, feinting, and making fake attacks while Foley, who was vastly
experienced, stood his ground, refusing to even blink an eye at any of the champion’s movements. As the exhibition continued, the crowd suddenly grew restless and began jeering as Johnson, who was undoubtedly unaffected, smiled as always. Without warning, the champion leaned forward and whispered a derogatory comment connecting Foley’s parents with dry excrement, causing Foley to simultaneously loudly swear and lash out with his right hand. Johnson immediately deflected the blow by easily grabbing Foley’s bicep, at which point he whispered to the still outraged citizen, “Drinks on you.”

This incident proved to be both Johnson’s first public exhibition since winning the title and one of many occurrences of self-righteous defiance and deliberate confrontation against the establishment in global society. In fact, throughout his esteemed career, Johnson repeatedly exposed his self-determinant lifestyle to the public, disregarding both the community that adored him and the race that hated him. By 1908, he had, after all, battered his way from anonymity to the highest prize in American sports—a prize that had always been the sole possession of white fighters. Outside the ring, in a nation where whites owned and controlled virtually everything, he lived his life as if color did not exist. While most African Americans struggled to survive in a society that advocated restrictive measures, including prohibition of interracial courting, Johnson reveled in his riches and fame while engaging in sexual intercourse with whomever he chose. Because of this, whites, and eventually blacks, saw the arrogant, amoral, dark menace as a serious danger to not only society, but to the natural order. However, he was America’s purest form black first class citizenship, thus setting himself apart from stereotypical subordinate undertones of black citizenship. Towards the end of the first decade of the
twentieth century, his actions would set the precedent for voluminous changes and reactions that would shape black society across the globe. In fact, between the years of 1908 and 1910, especially, the Giant proved to be America’s greatest threat, both nationally and internationally. This paper examines the public response and reaction to the enigma of Jack Johnson, paying particular attention to the years of 1908 to 1910, demonstrating the public’s combination of approval and disapproval of the champ’s climb to the notorious top of the sporting world, a large part dependent on the Jim Crow segregationist atmosphere of the turn of the century. Those same segregationist attitudes followed the champion across the globe, effectively showcasing racial hegemonic practices in various societies. Regardless of where Johnson landed, the cultural responses to his self-determinant character were multifaceted; a complex amalgamation of bias, racism, pride, and passion. By the end of 1910, Johnson’s behavior was so exponentially disruptive worldwide that the United States was forced to address the situation in an emergency and legal matter.

Between 1908 and 1910, Johnson’s popularity was comparable to President William H. Taft. During his reign as world champion, nearly every politician and newspaper expressed strong opinions on either Johnson’s revolutionary lifestyle or his conquering of white hopes. In fact, by 1908, when he pursued Tommy Burns in England to challenge him for the title, Johnson was already a national celebrity.

Born three years after the Galveston Giant in 1881, Noah “Tommy Burns” Brusso spent his formative fighting years in the United States although he developed his championship style in rural Ontario, Canada. Unlike many champion fighters of the twentieth century, Burns honed his fighting and defense skills engaging in violent team
sports like lacrosse and hockey. When not on the field, he worked odd jobs as a painter and factory worker to make ends meet. His luck forever changed in 1900 when he fought his boss aboard a Great Lakes steamship, prompting him to move to Detroit, Michigan where he began his fighting career.⁴

Immediately, Burns gained a reputation as a “little giant” that conquered men much bigger than him. At only five foot seven and weighing one hundred and seventy five pounds, he was determined to earn legitimacy in an uncomfortable, controversial atmosphere surrounding the sport. When champion Jim Jeffries retired in 1905, Burns took the title from his anointed successor, Marvin Hart the following year, but many critics were unimpressed. Jeffries was still considered the real champion, and Burns had not beaten him. Instantly, Burns began a campaign declaring that he would “defend my title as heavyweight champion of the world against all comers, none barred...by this I mean white, black, Mexican, Indian, or any nationality without regard to color, size, or nativity.”⁵ In affirming his decision, Burns established an unconscious promise with nativist culture that he would reassure the white dominance of prizefighting, which has experienced potential danger with the rise of black boxers in the late nineteenth century. With Jim Crow as a fairly young monster in America, boxing was too dangerously close to injuring segregation in its formative years. Burns’ role, like Johnson’s, was that of unconscious race hero in sports; his mission was to keep the championship away from African Americans for as long as possible.

Not surprisingly, when the Galveston Giant answered the challenge, Burns changed his tune. His heroic rhetoric transformed into racist ranting as he vowed to “never fight a nigger.” To make the situation impossible, he revoked his statement and
agreed to meet Johnson in the ring if the price was increased to an unreasonable $30,000. Global sportswriters were shocked to say the least. It was the first time in history that a fighter had requested such a large sum, win lose, or draw. Most believed that Burns’ request would go unanswered and the fight would never happen. When news reached Johnson of Burns’ obviously incongruous demand, he responded by exposing the fear in the champ, which in effect exposed the weakness of white masculinity in prizefighting. “Burns does not want to fight me,” Johnson exclaimed. “It is he and not me who has the yellow streak.”

By this point, the international critics were taking notice of the cat and mouse game between Johnson and Burns. Johnson utilized this global publicity to showcase his readiness and athletic prowess to those familiar with professional boxing but unfamiliar with his character. After displaying a few exhibitions of fighting power and uninhibited willingness, London writers, like John Gilbert, spread word across the globe of the Giant’s skills. Soon, the rulers of England had a high opinion of Johnson and his abilities and a negative reaction to Burns’ cowardly racism. King Edward VII remarked that Tommy Burns was “a Yankee bluffer….in my opinion.” In response, Johnson said, “I want to thank His Majesty for his sentiments. But he has committed a typical British blunder. Tommy Burns is no Yankee, he is a Canadian. Nevertheless, His Majesty is a sportsman, specializing in rats, so he oughta’ know about Tommy.”

Without a deal in place, Burns left England while Johnson stayed behind. Apparently, after the sudden departure of Burns from England to Australia, the majority of the famous English writers joined the American critics in the belief that the fight would never occur due to Burns’ cowardice. According to Johnson, “The English
newspapers declared that any chance of a fight between Burns and me was lost and added all sorts of comments that weren’t exactly flattering to the world champion. The general opinion was that Burns was terrified by the idea of finding himself inside the ropes with me and that he had left because he realized that he was going to have his hands full defending his title.”

The difficult situation between the two boxers proved economically degenerative as well. By the middle of the 1910s, boxing had entered a world of trouble. The problem was the decline in interest in the sport by whites and the almost absent interest by blacks. In fact, boxing, due to a lack of a major sports personality on a national level, the refusal of white athletes, in compliance with the pervasive Jim Crow doctrines of the era, to compete with Blacks, and the non-support of the black leaders of the time, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, could not generate much enthusiasm amongst African Americans. Those inside the boxing circle, however, believed that the Galveston Giant was the figure that could summon immense attractiveness to the sport if given a chance at the title. In addition, the factor of an interracial title bout was too delicious to ignore, especially for Sam Fitzpatrick, the boxing promoter that coerced Burns to sign the contracts in November 1908 to defend his title against Johnson. The economic potential of the fight, thanks in part to the global publicity, motivated Fitzpatrick to persuade Burns to beat the “Bad Nigger” and end his chances to upset the white power dominance in prizefighting. Also, it must be mentioned that there were no other worthy contenders to the title. Every boxer that challenged Burns and Johnson were humiliatingly beaten. The final straw was the embarrassing defeat of Australia’s top boxers, Squire and Lang, by
both Johnson and Burns, which caused a large public outcry for the champ to defend his
title against Johnson.9

The fight was to occur on 26 December, 1908 in Sydney, Australia. Upon
hearing the news, Johnson stated, “How does Burns want it? Does he want it fast and
wiling? I’m his man in that case. Does he want it flatfooted? Goodness, if he does, why
I’m his man again. Anything to suit; but fast or slow, I’m going to win.”10

Internationally, the racial factors had overshadowed the bout. Johnson especially
felt that the power of Australian racism in an interracial fight would result in an unfair
match. It did not help when a major editorial from Sydney’s Illustrated Sporting and
Dramatic News stated “Citizens who have never prayed before are supplicating
Providence to give the white man a strong right arm with which to belt the coon into
oblivion.”11 Most Australians viewed Johnson as a buffoonish representative of his
inferior race, fit for entertainment only. The Sydney Truth described him as “somewhat
babyish looking, and of the type of the little coons who may be seen devouring
watermelons in a well-known American picture.”12 As a fixture of Australian theatre,
American minstrelsy, according to Theresa Runstedtler, was an exposure of American
racial politics that led to the adoption of stereotypical racial rhetoric to Australia. On the
streets at night, “nigger” bands and minstrels dressed in oversized clothing and paraded
throughout neighborhoods. However, minstrelsy was not the only facet of American
racial ideology that Australia embraced. As with Jim Crow society, the ideal person in
Australia was a muscular white man, which perfectly justified the exclusion of people of
color from the socioeconomic and political atmosphere. In 1901, the Australian
parliament passed the Immigration Restriction Act, also known as the White Australian
Policy. This law set forth the full exclusion of nonwhite people from immigrating to the continent. In support, Free Trade Party opposition leader George Reid declared the need to avoid black challenges to racial superiority:

"We have all seen the problem caused by coloured people in the United States. we do not want that to happen here. The Opposition wants the new Australia to be a land for the finest products of the Anglo Saxon race. This [immigration restriction] bill will make that happen."³

Black boxers were the quintessential example of catalytic disruption to the United States, Australia, and other areas that embraced white dominance based on physical prowess.⁴

Initially, most Americans felt the match would concern not only the boxing championship, but also the plight of white supremacy. The color line had, by de facto segregation, outlawed championship matches between the races and this equal opportunity in the ring could result in possible thoughts of equality in other aspects of American society. In the early days of December, former boxing champions expressed great distrust in Johnson’s potential to reach the zenith of the boxing world while displaying their support for Burns and his race. John Sullivan, for example, criticized Burns for breaking the color barrier, exclaiming “SHAME ON THE MONEY-MAD CHAMPION! Shame on the man who upsets good American precedents because there are dollars, dollars, dollars, in it.” Another ex-champ, Jim Corbett, claimed that his blessings were all with Burns, as they always have been when a “white man meets a Negro.”¹⁵ In his book Knuckles and Gloves, Bohun Lynch explained the beliefs shared by whites around the world concerning black boxers and mixed bouts, which would be tested now that the championship was on the line in an interracial contest. Lynch is revitalizing the idea that the simple, childlike African American, when triumphant, transforms into a ravenous, spoiled, demonstrative fiend:
Negroes have fought with certain exceptions under the severe handicap of unpopularity. We may say this unpopularity comes from tradition. The vast majority of Negro boxers have been slaves or descendants of slaves...In early days....they were savages, or almost savages. Also it was recognized from the first that the African Negro and his descendants in the West Indies and America were harder headed than white men, less sensitive about face and jaw; most black boxers can take without pain or trouble a smashing that would cause the collapse of the white man. This is occasionally balanced by the Nigger’s weakness in the stomach, but the white man is at a disadvantage. Niggers are usually children in temperament...and when his physical success over a white man is manifest, he generally behaves like the worst kind of spoiled child.....As a rule, it is better that negroes, if they must fight, fight amongst themselves.\textsuperscript{16}

As more and more whites opposed the fight for breaking the color barrier and ushering in slight chances of equality, more whites aggrandized the bout because of its possible implications of gaining more support for the idea of white supremacy. Although white supremacy recognizes the idea that blacks are indeed more savage and brutal, hence making those ideal candidates for a sport as brutal as boxing, whites have for such a long time been the dominant force in sports that to challenge that hierarchy would be to damage the systemic, psychologically embedded racism. If the African American is defeated at the hands of a white champion, it would further progress the notion of black inferiority. As the \textit{St. Louis Post-Dispatch} stated, “Johnson is a colored man but entitled to a match in which he should set to rest for all time the matter of fistic supremacy between him and Johnson, between white race and colored.”\textsuperscript{17}

On the wet, humid night of December 26, 1908, Johnson taunted, jeered, and toyed with his opponent, Burns, for thirteen rounds. At the midpoint of the fourteenth round, Johnson delivered an overwhelming uppercut that effectively shattered Burns’ consciousness, making Johnson the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. As soon as Burns was revived, he crawled back to his stool, and wept. Through two busted lips, he screamed “THE FIGHT SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN STOPPED!
JOHNSON COULDN’T HIT WORTH A CENT! If the police hadn’t interfered, I might even have won because the big nigger was tiring fast.” The crowd fell silent and dreadfully marched out of the stadium. The Australian nation, which had mixed emotions concerning Johnson as a great challenger (his reputation was shattered completely when he was seen courting Lola Toy, a white Australian), never believed he could actually be victorious. Hours after the bout, newspapers all over Australia denounced Johnson as a “gloating coon” with “only the instincts of a nigger…pure nigger. Had Johnson’s nods, becks, wreathed smiles, etc. occurred in America, a prominent citizen would inevitably have risen impressively somewhere about the close of the fourth round, and, amid encouraging cheers, have drawn a gun upon Johnson and shot that immense mass of black humanity dead.” The paper further stated that since Johnson’s insolence in beating a white man had been captured on film, any jury of white men allowed to view it would have exonerated his assassin.18

The new champ enjoyed the notoriety in Australia and mocked the people by praising the Aboriginal people, whom he knew the Australians despised. To many whites in Australia, Johnson’s victory was as direct an insult as a spit in the face. He had successfully challenged and defeated white supremacy, and to most, he did it efficiently with little to no trouble. He had performed as a champion, showcasing a brutality and fury that the prize ring had never before witnessed, and never to be matched, nor surpassed. He had avenged his people, and ended not only a myth of black inferiority, but that of a black man being yellow, cowardly, and unwilling to fight as white men.19 Therefore, according the nativist ideology, what was to stop a blitzkrieg of black infiltration into all societal factions?
The immediate response from Southern white American papers was unbridled reluctance with a hint of deniability. In fact, many of the major newspapers refused to either report the results or brandished the story with a neglectful size or disparaging remarks. *Raleigh News and Observer*, in a three sentence paragraph, wrote that a “Texas Darky” had won the title. The *Dallas Morning News* didn’t print a story, but instead released a cartoon displaying a thick red-lipped, wide eyed Johnson holding a large slice of watermelon in one hand and the championship belt in the other, screaming, “GOLLY, OLD SANTY SHO’ WAS GOOD TO ME!” The *Melbourne Herald* said of Johnson’s victory, “Already the insolent black’s victory causes skin problems in Woolloomooloo….It is a bad day for Australia and not a good day for America. The United States has 90,000 citizens of Johnson’s colour, and would be glad to get rid of them.” More harrowing were the comments by poet Henry Lawson, who took the fight as a harbinger for destruction of the pure white race to come.

It was not Burns that was beaten—for a nigger has smacked your face.  
Take heed—I am tired of writing—but O my people take heed.  
For the time may be near for the mating of the Black and the White to breed.

Most northern papers offered complete coverage of the victory, yet many were simply alarmed by it. “Is the Caucasian played out!?,” asked the *Detroit Free Press*. “Are the races we have been calling inferior about to demand of us that we redraw the color line in everything if we are to avoid being whipped individually and collectively?” Other white newspapers ignored the cries of lynching and fear of the destruction of white supremacy and expressed objectivity and in some cases, praise for the new champion. The *New York Evening Journal* stressed the superiority of Johnson over Burns and ran a picture of Johnson covering nearly the entire front page and was the
first time in history that a picture of an African American that size had ever appeared in a white newspaper. The majority of the praise for Johnson, however, originated in the black newspapers in America. Across the nation, the black press awarded Johnson his sixth finger, effectively granting him superhuman-like status amongst the black population. In bold type, the *Richmond Planet* printed, “A SOUTHERN NEGRO IS HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION OF THE WORLD” while the *Savannah Tribune* wrote, “It is fit and proper that we doff our hats to Mr. Johnson because he had succeeded in [the] first important athletic event in which a black man had participated.” The *Cleveland Gazette*, which believed that Johnson’s victory was a much needed thorn in the side of prejudice and racism, printed that, “he left an awful sour taste in the mouths of many prejudiced Americans.” The *Colored American Magazine* bragged, “today is the zenith of Negro sport.” Besides the exclamations in newspapers, blacks were relatively subtle and displayed no overt manifestations of festivity after this legendary victory, in due part because the fight was not billed in the papers as a fight for “racial superiority.” Another possible reason was that the event occurred overseas, defusing the explosive factor of observing a momentous occurrence in history. In fact, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that there was a “total lack of arrogance in the African American’s manner towards white men and many of them tried to conceal their delight…It was purely pride of race that made them joyful…”

The most far reaching and notable comments came from *New York Herald* writer Jack London. Hours after the fight, London wrote, “there was no fight. No Armenian massacre could compare with the hopeless slaughter that took place in the Sydney stadium.” The next day, London issued a challenge to not only the sporting arena, but
the entire white race: “But one thing now remains. Jim Jeffries must now emerge from his alfalfa farm and remove that golden smile from Jack Johnson’s face. Jeff, it’s up to you. The white man must be rescued.”

So thus began the search for the great white hope. The search was dire to the restoration of white supremacy in sports. With Johnson, America felt extreme fright because his charisma when speaking to the press, his cocky attitude, and even his aura when he appeared in a doorway, were all unmatchable and unpredictable. It was hauntingly possible that whites would begin to admire and possibly imitate the Galveston Giant. His societal vices, including prostitution and gambling, could potentially balloon into the norms of middle class culture. The problem lied with Johnson’s capricious behavior, undetectable and untrustworthy by the white masses due to his race. Even President Theodore Roosevelt hinted that the highest honor in sports being in possession of blacks was “disturbing.” The hunt went beyond national boundaries, reaching as far around the world as possible.

But why was the great white hope search so passionate and fervent? Prior to the Burns fight, Johnson had intensified his act of displaying the characteristics of the “Bad Nigger.” Tracing back the term to the bondage period in America, the “Bad Nigger” was seen by white slaveholders and sympathizers of the institution of slavery as bondsmen who were dangerous and difficult to control. To blacks, the individual in question was one who refused to submit to his shackles without the active resistance and “Bad Niggers” were willing to fight the system. In direct parallel with the postbellum black community, the “Bad Niggers” were generally admired by their fellow slaves and were considered to be holders of badges of honor. Blacks were unconsciously drawn to the
“Bad Nigger” because of his authoritative and heroic challenge to the monstrosity of racism. Metaphorically, the “Bad Nigger’ was the protagonist of the story, representing a superhero like faction that hurt whites as much as helped blacks. The main attribute of a “Bad Nigger” is the total disregard for danger or death, which directly applied to the Galveston Giant. As whites watched Johnson climb into the square ring to do battle with a white pugilist in front of a predominantly white audience, or observed him walking head held high staring directly into the eyes of Ku Klux Klansmen and other anti-black organizations, or gasped in horror as he strutted through predominantly white Southern towns attached to ten blond hair, blue eyed women all with golden smiles as large as his, they witnessed the most pure archetype of the twentieth century “Bad Nigger.” If that was not enough, to further agitate whites, Johnson committed many atrocities that seriously violated deep rooted black codes of society that would have resulted in the disembowelment and parade of organs of any regular black citizen, including hanging a larger than life portrait of himself holding his white wife in his interracial Chicago nightclub, wrapping his penis in guaze bandage, enhancing its size for onlookers, and strolling around the entire arena, the setting the heavyweight crown on top of his bald head, which was the most aggravating act. While he was champion, he was impossible to intimidate and virtually indestructible. The only possible notion that could deter the champ’s abrasive and maniacal egotism was to erase his name from the heavyweight title. Indeed, Johnson had found the masculinity that had eluded him on the ports of Galveston.

The hunt initially began in the United States with retired pugilist Jim Jeffries. Jeffries, in an effort to avoid fighting Johnson, retired as champion to enjoy an accomplished life on a farm. However, instantly after Johnson won, reporters, writers,
and politicians begged Jeffries to return to the ring as the rightful champion.

Unfortunately for the majority, Jeffries was sedentary in his decision both voluntarily and involuntarily. By 1909, Jeffries, who like Burns also vowed to never battle an African American in the ring, held tight to his belief, but now also weighed over three hundred pounds. In his autobiography In the Ring And Out, Johnson recalled the commotion after Jeffries refused to fight. "At any rate," the champ declared, "I was not permitted to rest secure in the title. I was constantly harassed and criticized. The hunt was long and bitter with all kinds of condemnation on me only because of the fact I’m not white. A large proportion of the public, or that part that’s interested in boxing, at least, insisted that Jeffries still was the champion and that I must defeat him if I wished to retain the belt."  

By the end of 1909, Johnson had defeated five “white hopes”, all with little to no difficulty. It was not until Tex Rickard, a shrewd Texas businessman with dreams of a spectacular event, convinced both Johnson and Jeffries that they both would gain immense wealth from fighting each other and manipulating the racial factor that everyone salivates for in America. Unlike the Burns fight, which was not promoted as a bout for racial superiority, the Rickard campaign of exploiting both contenders races was successfully effective in playing hand in hand with the long withstanding, deep racial fears and stereotypes of the American public. One particular incident that demonstrated Jeffries’ willingness to abuse the race issue was the publication of his anecdote in the New York Herald concerning Johnson’s initial approach to battle him.

Several amusing things happened while I was out of the ring. Jack Johnson, the black fighter, didn’t amount to enough when I retired to be considered as an opponent….one day, I accused Johnson of challenging me to get advertising.

"Ah really want to fight yo’, Misto Jeff,” said Johnson.

"You really want to fight, do you?” I asked.

“I shore do,” said the black man.
So I handed him $2,500 and said let's go to the cellar and fight. Whoever emerges first gets the roll of money. As I started for the cellar, Johnson just stood and looked at me with his eyes popped out. "Dear Misto Jeffries," he said. "I ain't no cellar fighter." And he and his manager walked away.37

Not only was Jeffries agitating the champ and African Americans, but he was also labeling Johnson a coward, a title that other boxers have tried desperately to prove. Judging from the outlandish bigotry towards the champ from whites and unconditional praise from the blacks, it was more than obvious that the last thing Johnson could be labeled was a coward. For propaganda purposes, the only ease for prejudiced whites who feared another victory by Johnson was to strike away at his masculinity, hopefully exposing a nonexistent fear. Jim Corbett, the general manager, main propagandist, and chief of psychological warfare for Jeffries, told every major newspaper man, "Take it from me. The black boy has a yellow streak, and Jeff will bring it out when he gets him in that ring."38 By the midpoint of 1910, there existed a distinct atmosphere of racial tension and power struggle between both pugilists and both majority races in America.

Meanwhile, when much of the international public eagerly awaited the "fight of the century," a large storm of protest erupted in the United States. Everywhere, religious and social organizations, newspaper editors, and several major politicians united against the fight, mostly due to the apprehension that a culture-transforming race revolution would occur if Johnson won. If the Galveston Giant pummeled Jeffries to defeat, argued Reverend Edward Young, it would dramatically increase self-assertion in multitudes of blacks and make life miserable for whites, especially in the Southern region.39 Across California, preachers sermonized against the fight while the powerful Presbyterian
Ministerial Association Gillette sent a protest letter to the President of the United States, stating that the bout would lead to national disgrace.

In his book, *Bad Nigger!*, Al-Tony Gilmore notes the irony in how white ministers were metaphorically shouting across the world to prohibit this fight, yet they rarely spoke out against the extralegal institution of lynching. All over the country, black ministers challenged the white minister’s overt, favorable choice of lynching over boxing. In fact, it was this obvious contradiction that efficiently weakened the anti-fight position in the nation. In black communities, similar figures worked tirelessly to dispel the racial factor of the championship fight. As soon as he was declared champion, voices sporadically erupted questioning the champ’s race man position. For many, Johnson’s unconscious race hero status was as much a joke as the white challenge for his title. Reverend Reverdy C. Ransom of the Bethel African Methodist Church in New York City said, “No respectable colored minister in the United States is interested in the pugilistic contest between Johnson and Jeffries, from the standpoint of race. We do not think that Jack Johnson thinks or has ever thought of holding the championship for the ‘black race.’ Johnson is not trying to win the Negro championship, but to hold and defend his title against all comers, regardless of race and color.”

Both sides, however, felt true relief on June 23, 1910, when the governor of California, James Gillette, announced that the fight would not occur in San Francisco. Rickard, in his usual upbeat and manipulative fashion, arranged the bout to take place on Independence Day in Reno, Nevada. Infuriated by the decision, *Independent* magazine heavily criticized the state of Nevada for “serving the devil for the last time,” for this fight it was hosting would pour down on the state the reproaches of the entire country.
Nevertheless, fans from around the world, including China, Brazil, and Cuba,\textsuperscript{43} descended on Reno, accompanied by thousands of reporters from America's top periodicals and newspapers from Australia, France, and Great Britain. From famous literary giants like Rex Breach to muckraking journalists like Alfred Henry,\textsuperscript{44} these writers were responsible for transcribing the showdown that promised to establish the racial hierarchy for the pugilist arena. As for Johnson, his arrival to Reno was more of a parade, likened to a regiment of war heroes returning home. As soon as he pulled into town, he escorted his first wife, Etta Duryea, into the voluminous crowd of bystanders, shaking hands, kissing babies, taking pictures, and laughing. The celebrities were on hand as well, awaiting entrance to shake the hands of the superstars. When John Sullivan approached Jeffries' living quarters, he was denied entrance for accusing the fight of being fixed. After visiting Johnson, as most well-known individuals did when they first arrived in Reno, Stanley Ketchel attempted to call Jeffries, but was told "I don't want you here...you been foolin' around with that nigger.\textsuperscript{45}

The truth was that most everybody was fooling around Johnson. While Jeffries kept an alienated, quarantined distance from his numerous fans, Johnson boisterously invited everyone to Rick's Roadhouse, a resort on the outskirts of Reno. One prominent characteristic of Johnson was that he was excellent company and seemed to always have fun. For instance, at this resort, days before the fight, Rex Beach described it as, "the air was poisoned with ragtime. There are two roulette tables going constantly with drunken men everywhere. The rooms, the porches, the yards, are packed with all classes and conditions of people." Apparently, the resort stayed this way all day and night, open to
anyone. In the same fashion as Muhammad Ali, Johnson indeed loved the crowds he
drew and he always did his best to entertain his entourage.

By the time the moment of the “greatest battle of the century” had arrived, the
strident overtones of the capacious crowd of well over 20,000 had deafened to a
thunderous silence at ringside. Jack Johnson described the scene as having “a
tremendous crowd in attendance with a suspense at times that was unnerving.” The
atmospheric observance was significant for two reasons. First, the crowd was nervously
uncanny concerning the results. If the Galveston Giant knocked out the former champ,
what would happen to blacks? What would happen to whites? What would occur if
Jeffries became the first to erase the “big golden smile” from Johnson’s face? The
uneasiness regarding the outcome overshadowed the physical bout itself. Secondly, there
were rumored gunmen in the audience that would assassinate Johnson if he won the fight.
Would a shooting or attempted murder spark an even larger malevolent event? Would
the first “bad nigger” sportsman be taken away, leaving a major void of self-
righteousness in the black community?

Elsewhere, the nation was glued to the newspaper offices, awaiting the fight
results. Crowds of over 30,000 gathered outside the New York Times building in New
York while in Atlanta, over 10,000 people camped outside the Atlanta Journal and
Atlanta Constitution. Dallas, San Francisco (the fight’s original destination), St. Louis,
New Orleans, Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston all experienced thousands of individuals
thirsting for that hand to be raised in the sky in Reno. The fight was big. This fight was
so big that private clubs and universities across the landscape set up personal fight
parties. Tuskegee Institute set aside a large banquet hall for the sole purpose of hearing
the results. The wealthy Edgemore Club in Long Island, New York allowed the nation’s richest whites to gather for the results. This fight was big. This fight was so big that the officials and police task forces across the nation prepared for possible violent outbursts. In Birmingham, Alabama, an ordinance was issued that banned blacks and whites from assembling together in parks, theatres, and halls while the fight results were displayed. In Beaumont, Texas, authorities completely barred blacks from hearing the results.47

At the ringing of the bell, even after the majority of the heavily white crowd sang “All Coons Look Alike to Me” when Johnson entered the ring, the champ was as bright eyed and big-smiled as ever. For fourteen rounds, in the burning, hot sun, Johnson toyed with the rusty Jeffries, efficiently knocking him out in round fifteen. Immediately after the referee’s count went to ten, the champ felt the same as the majority of fans in attendance. “Whatever possible doubt existed,” he later recalled, “as my claim to the championship was wiped out.”48 The great white hope that everyone came to witness had not only failed, but failed miserably. As he sat in complete disgust and awe, Senator of New York Tim Sullivan stated, “Like many others, I had come to Reno hoping that the white race would again triumph over the black. It was not to be.”49

The air of dismalness left the stadium and infected the entire nation. The major newspapers reporting the fight results were a little more than upset. San Francisco Examiner read in giant, bold letters, “JEFFRIES MASTERED BY GRINNING, JEERING, NEGRO,” while Atlanta Journal displayed their mockery of the fight in artistic fashion by simply having a picture of Jeffries being ruined by a spilled bottle of black ink that was labeled “Johnson.” Another newspaper in New Orleans ran a similar picture, except with an added caricature of Uncle Sam pointing at the spill exclaiming,
"Who'll Wash that off?" Other major newspapers reported that a tragedy had occurred on that afternoon. In actuality, a paradoxical climax had eclipsed the bout itself. Now that the Galveston Giant had defeated the greatest chance for a "white hope," could the whites totally ignore their stance that this fight was the ultimate battle to determine racial superiority, or do they admit that white supremacy has been inflicted with a gangrenous wound?

The reaction was, indeed, clouded with amnesiac, backtracking quotes. The *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, after running story after story about the fight’s significance in determining racial hierarchy, reversed its views, stating, “The result means nothing as to race conditions or superiority, it will be sometime before the colored people supplant Booker T. Washington with Jack Johnson.” Other papers, followed suit, including the *Boston Globe, Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and the *Richmond Virginian*, which said that because Johnson won, all over the country, a simple-minded race is getting into its head a false pride, a foolish impression, and a disastrous ambition. However, it was the *Los Angeles Times* that addressed the most nefarious, unsettling editorial to blacks following the championship bout titled “A Word To the Black Man.” This piece acted as a firm reminder to African Americans that they were still an inferior, subservient, subhuman race that had the same dismal, disadvantageous chance for equality that had existed before the bout:

Do not point your nose too high. Do not swell your chest too much. Do not boast too loudly. Do not be puffed up. Let not your ambition be inordinate or take a wrong direction...Remember, you have done nothing at all. You are just the same member of society today you were last week...You are on no higher plane, deserve no new consideration, and will get none...No man will think a bit higher than you because your complexion is the same as that of the victor at Reno.
The responses to the Reno event were of versatile magnitude. Besides threats, many whites published unintelligible scapegoat stories to justify the Johnson victory in Reno. One publication blamed the results on Johnson’s fondness for music. The music had a therapeutic effect on Johnson’s temperament, thus giving him the patience to win. Another individual, Colonel Jack Dempsey, explained to his black troops that Johnson was not really an African American, but a member of a lost tribe of whites. Johnson was a Numidian because “no coon could lick a white prize fighter.” Other whites published reports that suggested that although the Negro may have surpassed the physical advancement of a human, they were still seriously lacking in the mental and moral department. *Washington Herald* reported that blacks had physically acquired full stature as men, but whether they will ever breed brains to match their muscle is yet to be proven.

Other whites disapproved of Jeffries’ performance and deemed his loss a chance for a real “white hope” to step up and knock out the Galveston Giant. Jim Corbett said of English boxer “Bombardier Wells” that “that white man could dangle the scalp of the illustrious darky.” A few Socialist whites manipulated the fight results to further embarrass and expose the American system for their political beliefs. The *Pittsburgh Solitary*, in describing the significance of the success of a black champion, expressed that “we rejoice exceedingly when an uppercut brings down one of the barriers that divides us.” Surprisingly, the individual who commented on how “bad of a nigger” Johnson was for so long had dissimilar comments from his white brethren. “I guess it was my own fault,” Jeffries remarked during an interview the day after the fight. “I was getting along nicely and peacefully on my alfalfa farm, but when they started calling for me, and mentioning me as the white man’s hope, I guess my pride got the better of my good
judgment. I don’t think I could have beaten Jack Johnson at my best. I don’t think I could have beaten him in a thousand years,” he said with his bruised, bloated head to the ground. The battle itself was so momentous that white supremacists struggled to answer for their fallen ideal. White superiority had indeed suffered a cancerous wound and it spread to the farthest regions of the planet. The white response to Jack Johnson’s historic day was largely improvisational, lacking credibility and truth due to its contradictory and ridiculous nature.

The black response, however, was more uproarious and celebratory than the announcement of ratification of the thirteenth amendment. From the south, east, north, and west, African Americans united in festive jubilation in driving their first stake through the heart of Jim Crow white supremacy. Not only had the color line been crossed; it had been blasted wide open. In New York, Les Walton observed that “I have never seen so many colored people reading newspapers as since the fight.” Robert H. DeCoy, a personal friend of Johnson’s, wrote in his biography The Big Black Fire that in Chicago, thousands of black “subjects” poured into the streets, beating buckets and dishpans, whooping and hollering, running and laughing, crying tears of joy, dancing in a long parade up State Street, popping firecrackers, and moving through white neighborhoods to make sure the “crackers” “got the news right.” Over $75,000 in bets were collected in the black communities in New York. That night, wine flowed like a river around the city.

Around the nation, individuals could not wait to express the significance of the fight. Poet Lucille Watkins, in her highly popular poem, “Jack Johnson, articulated the feelings of the black population in America over the championship bout.
Jack Johnson, we have waited long for you
To grow our prayers in this single blow
Today we place upon your wreath the dew
Of tears—the wordless gratitude we owe
We kiss the perspiration from your face
And give—unbounded love in our embrace.

In the south, where Jim Crow segregation and extralegal Judge Lynch reigned supreme,
black residents found the victory a serious deterrent to the horrors of white supremacy.

The Yankees hold the play,
The white man pull the trigger,
But it makes no difference what the white man say,
The world champion’s still a nigger. 55

The black communities’ excessive celebration, while more than understandable,
prompted disturbing, fierce reaction from wounded white supremacy. Approximately
2,500 miles from the site of the “battle of the century,” blacks in Greenwood, South
Carolina were badly beaten by whites. In the city of Uvalda, Georgia, three blacks were
shot to death while five were critically wounded for singing and praising the Galveston
Giant’s victory. Even more blacks in the surrounding area that tried to escape were
viciously hunted down and beaten within an inch of their lives. In Houston, Texas,
Charles Williams, a well-respected African American, proclaimed Johnson’s victory in
open celebration. Immediately after, a vengeful white citizen openly approached
Williams and opened his throat from ear to ear with a barely used switchblade knife.
While Williams’ screams were muddled with bloody gurgles for help, two black youths
argued with a white teenager on a moving streetcar over the results of the bout. Within
minutes, both black youths were dead from the hands of the angered white citizens,
proclaiming that Johnson’s color still makes him the loser.
As that streetcar passed a station, six black males were critically wounded in Roanoke, Virginia while scores of blacks were beaten by white sailors in Norfolk, Virginia. When the last body hit the wet, muddy soil in Norfolk, two white youths were stabbed to death by a black male in Washington, D.C. A few miles away in New York City, a black male was lynched while many others were wounded. Across the Great Plains in Pueblo, Colorado, thirty men, women, and children were murdered in a race riot. In Shreveport, Louisiana, three African Americans were killed by white assailants. On the east coast, Nelson Turner barely escaped lynching after he shouted at the top of his lungs “We blacks put one over on you whites, and we’re going to do more.”

Although the number of deaths and wounded vary with each witness, the cause of the wave of swift violence throughout the nation between the days of July 4 and July 6, 1910 was undoubtedly the triumph of America’s “bad nigger.” The unfortunate victims of the riots, in unmitigated racial pride, extensively commended and displayed unconditional admiration for Johnson’s success over the white challenger. The celebrations were boisterous, loud, and brave. In St. Louis, blacks rented cars, drank freely, offered to do battle in imitation of Johnson and ran alongside streetcars jeering at white passengers. Not surprisingly, demographics played a large role in who participated in the rioting. In the major cities, major gangs, like the Hounds of Hell and Pearl Button Gang, searched every inch of their city for blacks to beat or kill. In smaller towns, lower class whites often attacked lower class blacks, such as the case in Uvalda, Georgia. Anger, outrage, and utter disappointment were the fuels that ignited the racial blaze that smoldered the nation. To white supremacists, the Johnson victory signaled racial disorder, or a destruction of traditional values set forth by the Jim Crow atmosphere. An
individual like Johnson, who personified the complete deviation from the safe, passive, Sambo-ish Negro that was accepted by whites, presented a danger to the racial structure. He could possibly set a perilous example for other African Americans that rebelling against the Jim Crow laws and de facto racial codes would result in success. With the celebrations and festivities across the country, white supremacists’ worst nightmare began to materialize in the form of ideas of black equality and civil rights. Jack Johnson was much larger than a representation of black pride and revolutionary behaviors in an oppressed society. He represented the very nature of deviation and disorder that Americans fear in a structured, common, comfortable society. In his 1912 speech about Jack Johnson, Booker T. Washington vehemently states that no one can do so much damage to the Negro race as the Negro himself.57

In the eyes of Washington, Johnson, because of his egotistical and abrasive, revolutionary personality, was an unfortunate victim and harbinger for the oppression of the black race. The champ repeatedly reminded the world that he was indifferent to the plight of his race. He continued to openly engage in intimate relationships with white women to the disgust of African Americans. His excessive gambling and spending continued a trend of cyclical, degenerative behavior that caught the attention of the United States government. His public displays of physical and verbal abuse against white women was an unadulterated signal of racial Armageddon. His continued disrespect for American customs and insults overseas embarrassed the evolving nation. Faster than many had imagined, Jack Johnson was becoming a dangerous symbol of disorder in a nation that was entering a reformation period. The Progressive Era was a newborn child to the United States, hellbent on ridding the environment of immoral, corrupt, and un-
American symbols and individuals. What Johnson embodied was an amalgamation of all qualities deemed undesirable by society. Many hated him because he conquered white hopes both inside and outside the ring, but his self-determinant egotism would be the true villain that ended his reign at the top.\textsuperscript{58} It was time for the United States to step in and deal with the Johnson problem before the Children of Panic intensified their voice of despair.

In Walt Whitman's classic poem, "I Sing the Body Electric," Whitman emphasizes and romanticizes the importance of the human body in connecting humans in any environment. The body, in essence, is such a voluminous force, that its mere appearance potentially shatters the boundaries of the most horrific hindrances to freedom, especially chattel slavery. Most of all, the body is so sacred that it in no way deserves second-class status. Jack Johnson's championship run personifies these words as a man utilized his body to effectively destroy limitations on his freedom and first class citizenship. The masculine objective of the Galveston Giant has always centralized his goal to reach the top, but his body was the only means he had to drastically alter the social forces in twentieth century America. Nonetheless, that same body would be battered, bruised, and broken within the following decades. I sing the body electric, indeed.
NOTES


5 Ibid, 46.


7 Jack Johnson, My Life and Battles (Potomac Books Inc., 2009), 67.

8 Gilmore, Bad Nigger, 26.

9 Kent, The Great White Hopes, 4.


11 Ibid, 58.

12 Runstedtler, Rebel Sojourner, 32.

13 Ibid, 37.

14 Ibid, 33.

15 Indianapolis Freeman, 19 December 1908;


18 Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 128-129.

19 Decoy, The Big Black Fire, 83.

20 Raleigh News and Observer, 27 December 1908.


28 *Chicago Tribune*, 26 December 1908.


30 *Ibid*, 68.


36 It may not have been promoted as a battle for racial superiority, but it created a massive, legendary break in the color in sports. The Johnson-Jeffries fight, however, was promoted heavily as a race war, complete with manufactured stories about each pugilist that were fed to the public up until July 4, 1910.


38 Farr, *Black Champion*, 81.


40 Gilmore, *Bad Nigger!*, 34.

41 Farr, *Black Champion*, 82.

42 Gilmore, *Bad Nigger!*, 34.

43 Decoy, *Big Black Fire*, 103-104.


46 Johnson, *In the Ring and Out*, 62.
47 Gilmore, *Bad Nigger!,* 41.


49 *Dallas Morning News,* 5 July 1910.


51 *Los Angeles Times,* 6 July 1910.


55 Gilmore, *Bad Nigger!,* 49.


CHAPTER VI

"JACK JOHNSON'S GHOST IS WATCHING YOU!"
THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO THE MUHAMMAD ALI ENIGMA, 1960-1964

In February 1965, while recovering from emergency hernia surgery that delayed his much anticipated rematch with Sonny Liston, the newly crowned heavyweight champion of the world, fitted with his new name, Muhammad Ali, was invited to Jamaica by "the king, the master, my idol," Sugar Ray Robinson.¹ After being offered one thousand dollars to come, Ali, along with new wife Sonji, arrived in Kingston to share a vacation with Robinson and his wife, Millie. Following a festive dinner one night, the two couples sat on the terrace by the swimming pool, enjoying the cool breeze sweeping through the tropical, warm, cloudless sky. Simultaneously and abruptly, a bright shooting star wheeled through the sky and Ali hurdles to his feet and ran around the pool in bewilderment, scaring everyone in the process.²

"The white man! The white man is destroying the world!" Ali screamed.

"Don't talk foolish. You don't make any sense." Robinson replied. Ali then explained that Allah is the only chosen one that can save Robinson and the black race and the only prophet is the honorable Elijah Muhammad. Once a black man has accepted Allah, he will be saved from the hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs dropped by the "Mother Plane" on the eve of the destruction of the white Race. Surprisingly, Ali then proposed a bribe of sorts to Robinson, offering seven hundred thousand dollars, from
Elijah Muhammad, for him to join the Lost-Found Nation of Islam and embrace and spread Fardian Islam. In response, Robinson explained to Ali:

“For seven hundred million, I wouldn’t change my belief. Cassius, a religion is something you’ve got to believe in. You believe in yours and I respect your right to believe what you want... You know your slogan, ‘The white man is a devil, the white devils.’ That’s not right. You can’t live without the white man, or the black man, or the red man, or the yellow man. People should be against hate, not with it.”

When Robinson declined to represent the Nation of Islam, it is believed that the NOI sponsored autobiography of Ali, *The Greatest: My Own Story*, vanquished Sugar Ray from the Ali experience. In fact, throughout the book, other true aspects of The Lip’s life were either overshadowed or ignored altogether and replaced with fantastical myths. In retrospect, the Nation utilized this account to both revision the public image of Muhammad Ali to fit their brand of ideology and to erase the former patriotic, Americanized, commercialized, and Christian-based past of the champ. For Ali to be both profitable and powerful for the movement, the NOI needed their new celebrity to appear completely conscious of their principles and beliefs.

This trend of manipulating Ali for media and community criticism followed the champ for his entire career, beginning with his return from Rome in the fall of 1960. In fact, Ali’s professional boxing career and life was marred with transformations and interdependency, which resulted in an amalgamation of response from all races and classes in society. Although his mentality remained simplistic in upholding masculinity and power, Ali’s professional career proved that he was an adaptive, complex creature, complete with the skills to maintain his masculine stance inside the ring and his profitable appeal outside the ring. Unlike Jack Johnson, who refused to abandon his defiant, self-aggrandizing personality in the face of race riots, legal issues, and exile, Ali flatly refused
independence and defiance to the racial hegemony set forth in this nation. Whether it was the commercialization and profiteering of nationalism of the early 1960s, or the anti-Vietnam War and black pride movements of the late 1960s, Ali acted as a chameleon, adapting to his surroundings well, both voluntarily and involuntarily. In truth, Ali had a blueprint to achieve and maintain his sixth finger, and regardless of what the public felt, he fought vigorously in the ring, he attached himself to masculine, disciplined organizations and individuals, and he kept an unconscious rhetoric defied the public with inconsistent, untraceable acts.

This chapter objectively examines the public response to Muhammad Ali's professional career from its onset in 1960 to his first championship win in 1964; this analysis will demonstrate Ali's interdependence towards social forces that dominated throughout a particular period that required him to create a blueprint for success while rejecting the proposed path of others. This theme will continue in the next chapter, which covers Ali's career following his announcement of NOI membership to the famous "Thrilla in Manila" bout of 1976. Utilizing mostly the viewpoints of newspapers and the people who knew him, this chapter will also repudiate the idea of Ali as a conscious "race hero." Like The Galveston Giant, Ali was involuntarily mandated into the role of race savior for African Americans, which he often rejected as he struggled with his political, social, and religious aspirations. The simplistic, good natured, caring Ali was forced into a complex, politically strategic world that made him realize that the "sixth finger" that had been awarded to him was going to lead to his downfall. In other words, Ali's religious and structural aspirations were overshadowed and conquered by the sociopolitical atmosphere that surrounded him for much of his career.
It was nearly impossible to find fault in the Louisville Lip’s early career in the ring. By his nineteenth birthday, Clay’s amateur, yet revered career included an astonishing record of one hundred wins and eight losses, two national golden gloves championships, and two National Amateur Athletic Union titles. The Summer Olympics of 1960 only helped in solidifying Clay’s reputation as a serious contender in the heavyweight division. His swift, fast-paced movements in his final victory over Zbigniew Pietrzykowski made many American media outlets give notice to the rising kid. Journalist for The New Yorker, A.J. Liebling, recalled that Clay’s performance in Rome was “attractive,” and had a “skittering style, like a pebble scaled over water.” Lima News went so far as to call him “the next Floyd Patterson,” noting that “The lean, deceptively slender slugger is that good.”

The Patterson comparison was more than accurate, considering Clay’s “good boy” image, his patriotic ideals, and his indifference to the racial climatic problems at the beginning of the decade. As discussed earlier, Clay was perfect for American commercialization and business ventures. He was marketable as a braggart with a nationalistic heart, which sold tickets; he was controllable due to his adherence to discipline and his structured background in Louisville; he was exploitable and manipulated due to his poor formal education and simplistic nature. In terms of physical appeal, Clay could potentially outperform past fan favorites like Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson due to his light-skin and attractiveness.

Most notable and aspiring of the nineteen year old Louisville Lipp was his drastic dissimilarity to another rising contender, Charles “Sonny” Liston. Everything about Liston’s public appeal pointed towards negative depiction of blacks, the collapse of
structured middle class black representation, and morality in sports. After escaping his harsh life fit with child abuse in rural eastern Arkansas, Liston bought a ticket to St. Louis, expecting a better life in an urban setting, similar to what Cassius Clay received, yet was met with more disappointment. "When I got to the city," he recalled, "there were too doggone many people there, and I just wandered around lost."  

The hardships of life as a black youth in America would only continue to jab at Liston as he grew in age and size. The polar opposite of Clay’s teenage years would read as a depressing take in comparison to Clay.

“I sold coal. I sold ice. I sold wood. I got fifteen bucks a week in a chicken market cleaning chickens…On the good days, I ate. On the bad ones, I told my stomach to forget it. And me and trouble was never far apart. If a colored kid’s going to get by he’s got to learn one thing fast—there ain’t nobody going to look after him but him. I learned…Anyway, these kids come along and they had the bright idea of knocking over this store. All I could see at the end of it was a great plate of food, and if we had to take a gun along to get it that was okay too.”

As the infamous “Yellow Shirt Bandit,” Liston and his gang spent evenings mugging civilians and robbing gas stations and luncheonettes. He was finally arrested on January 14, 1950, and sentenced to five years in the Missouri State Penitentiary, where he was introduced to organized boxing. After being paroled in 1952, he won the golden gloves amateur tournament and attracted the eye of Frank Mitchell, who was an associate of the Boss of the Sicilian Crime Family in St. Louis, John Vitale. Between knocking out opponents in the ring and working muscle at Vitale’s Union Electric Plant, Liston had garnered a reputation by 1960 as a menacing, violent, and anti-American black criminal, a scary prospect for the future of boxing now that Americanized, “good Negroes” like Joe Louis and Floyd Patterson were either retired or in decline. Liston was even quoted as saying that he was “ashamed to be in America,” prompting calls to boycott his fights.
For many, Clay was boxing and sports last hope. It had been decades since sports and masculinity in the racial hierarchy of America had faced immediate danger. The last truly “Bad Nigger,” Jack Johnson, had unconsciously battered traditional old beliefs of white supremacy and black inferiority, but his own indifference, self-righteousness, and outright dismissal of his sixth finger had led to his demise. Unlike Johnson, however, Liston was controlled by one of the most powerful mob families in the country, which could ensure his dominance for years to come and the continual trend of criminality in an already controversial sport forever. It was Clay’s duty to silence the degenerate, criminal element of boxing and to rid the sporting arena of any “Bad Nigger” threats.

For this task, Clay’s management had to represent the path that the disciplined, structured Clay would travel on for his professional career. At the same time, to achieve the level of masculinity and power he needed, Clay’s representation had to secure a stable situation that benefitted him both economically and somewhat politically. Clay did not play the politics game, but he did not mind others playing for his benefit. As Michael Ezra put it, Clay “had to realize that there was a strong relationship between his choice of management, his cultural image, and his ability to make money.”

Although he was a hometown favorite after winning the gold medal in the Olympics, he was still a new and untested amateur, so most critics still were not convinced of his status as a serious contender. Plus, although black boxing had risen over the past fifty years, Clay knew that whites still controlled the majority of the sport. Business wise, it made sense to seek out the powerful white conglomerates. Their money would be efficient and secure enough to provide the minimum requirements for the champ. But Clay also made sure to pursue black figures in key positions. The Louisville
middle class black community provided efficient examples of pride and trustworthiness for the champ, so he utilized blacks throughout his career as handlers, custodians, jesters, or entourage members. However, Clay was very careful in his selection of his black assistants. He immediately sought out his two childhood heroes, Joe Louis and Sugar Ray Robinson, to be his trainer, but both declined. He hired a stern, black female lawyer, Alberta Jones, to negotiate his first contract. He almost signed a managerial contract with Archie Moore. Blacks would provide intimate services while the whites would handle the business ventures.

Following his first professional bout and win against police chief Tunney Hunsaker, who said after the loss that “Cassius Clay can be a future heavyweight boxing champion,” the Lip was met with numerous management offers, but the best offer had already come from William Faversham, a millionaire investment counselor and spokesman of what would be known as the Louisville Sponsoring Group. It is not overstating to say that this contractual negotiation paved the way for Clay to win the attention of world and become the most popular athlete at the time. The money was flowing from the beginning of the negotiations. These ten prominent Louisville citizens, who were either millionaires at the time or were heirs to eight figure fortunes, controlled the most dominant industries in the River City, including bourbon, tobacco, banks, the horse track, and newspapers and now had their sights set on prizefighting. The management contract offered was for six years, with the LSG taking half of Clay’s earnings for the first four years and forty percent for the last two years. The most generous portion of the contract gave the LSG all training, travel, and promotional expenses to pay in full. Overall, the contract guaranteed the Lip at least $18,000 over the
first two years, a $10,000 signing bonus, and the chance to triple that salary if he reached his estimated potential and challenged for the heavyweight title. The last part, which Clay objected to but had to swallow, was that fifteen percent of his share of the earnings was put into a trust fund that could not be touched until his thirty-fifth birthday in 1977.

“I don’t want money in no bank,” Clay explained. “I want it in real estate where I can point to a lot with an apartment on it and say ‘There, that’s mine.’ I want to be able to see it…”

On October 26, 1960, Clay became the property of the Louisville Sponsoring Group, accompanied by acclaim for both sides of the deal. For Clay, the deal was everything he had wanted. First, it meant financial security. Clay began as a child with little education who knew the only way he could support himself was through a simplistic activity, such as prizefighting. The sixth finger was within reach. Second, the LSG had the funds to deliver the best trainers, travel, medicine, and promotion available. Their money was long, plentiful and they had no issues providing for the young upstart. Plus, with their type of money, there would be less incentive for the group to steal from Clay. Third, and most important, the deal meant solidified protection. By 1960, the Kefauver Commission was heavily investigating the obvious presence of organized crime in boxing. Both voluntarily and involuntarily, racketeering controlled many boxers across the nation. The elite status of the LSG safeguarded the champ from the mobsters and corrupt politicians who were afraid of the group’s power. Last, the association with the group reiterated to the world that Clay was a guy who would not attempt to alter the social customs of the turbulent times. Although his personality was eccentric, he posed
no threat to join the Civil Rights Movement and was truly indifferent to the activism around him.\textsuperscript{15}

For the LSG, the boxing venture with the champ served as a low risk, harmless side hustle-like caper. Initially, each man invested a meager $2,800, which was tax deductible. For a group worth almost $20 million, their total investment to launch Clay’s professional career only cost about $25,000, which points directly a borderline disinterest in the fighter. The elite whites did not believe that Clay deserved top shelf money. In actuality, it was more of a handout to an inferior entity for the LSG. If successful, the benefits would far exceed the costs, but if a disaster, the group would only be responsible for zero dollars.

“We are behind Cassius Clay to improve the breed of boxing, to do something nice for a deserving, well-behaved Louisville boy, and finally to save him from the jaws of the hoodlum jackals... What I want to do, like a few others, is to make a bundle of money.”\textsuperscript{16}

The only investment Clay was worth was apparently a charity package that could be disposed of if it failed.

The response to the LSG contract was overwhelmingly positive. The press saw the group as the heroic chain that held the loquacious, black youth in check in case he forgot his place in society. The \textit{Miami Herald} wrote that Clay was “financed by 10 citizens of the solid, solvent type.” Another periodical wrote that Clay “couldn’t have found ten men with higher aims for his future.” Huston Horn believed that “innocent of prizefighting’s bad old ways, these gentlemen hope by their example to put an end to the exploiting of boxers.”\textsuperscript{17} In effect, the LSG and the Louisville Lip greatly benefitted each other over the next 6 years, especially in the first couple of years as Clay claimed the
sixth finger through an undefeated streak that would bitterly divide critics and fans around the world.

Immediately upon the beginning of the partnership, Clay was met with challenges to his independence by the LSG. One negative aspect of the management contract was that all preparatory aspects were controlled by the group. This meant that trainers, equipment, and public relations were at the approval of the management. In November 1960, Clay was sent to Archie Moore’s training facility in San Diego, California. To the champ’s displeasure, Moore mandated that all boxers at the facility complete chores to earn their keep. Due to Clay’s repeated offenses at the camp, it was decided that a better training situation was in Miami with the rising star Angelo Dundee.

This would not be the last time that the LSG and their fighter would clash on issues. Before he would beat Sonny Liston for the title in February 1964, Clay would be muscled into training in Miami, forced to change public comments on issues, and manipulated into hiding his Nation of Islam affiliation. Clay was willing to sacrifice specific elements of his persona in return for interdependence from the group. This meant monetary compensation and being the best in the ring. In all, the LSG was lenient in some ways due to potential revenue. For instance, the conglomerates allowed Clay to continue his villainous, boastful character because it meant bigger ratings and more money. There would be only a few episodes where the LSG were forced to quiet the champ’s loudspeaker.

Throughout the contract, the treatment and rewards from the LSG far exceeded the promises at the beginning. Clay’s security was far above any security team that had been seen in boxing. The group’s political connections placed Clay in advantageous
situations. The two lawyers, Gordon Davidson and Arthur Grafton, were close with former mayor and lieutenant governor Wilson Wyatt. They also worked the system to increase Clay’s and the group’s profits from each bout. They saved him from debt with the IRS when the champ overspent his money. In fact, the biggest protection that the LSG provided was strictly monetary. One of Clay’s major problems throughout his career was his excessive spending and giving money away to anyone. The LSG often loaned him money without interest attached. After five years of professional fighting, the champ was in debt $45,000 to the group, which they knew they would not get back without taking the champ to court. Most importantly, after Clay’s conversion to the Nation of Islam and challenging of his draft status, the group would work overtime in restoring Clay’s moral authority in the eyes of the public (this will be discussed next chapter). In effect, these practices by the conglomerates show that they grew to actually care for the champ and his level of success. After all, Clay’s success and popularity were tied directly to his cultural connections and moral authority, so the group’s monitoring and controlling meant more revenue.\textsuperscript{20}

Inside the ring, Clay’s professional career differed from the humbled, troubled beginning of Jack Johnson’s professional career. After the Hunsaker victory, the Lip initiated a violent, flawless, barrage of knockouts in his next five fights that captured the awe of the public. After a unanimous decision against the revered Alonzo Johnson, Clay captured another nine knockouts, ending with a TKO on Archie Moore. Sportswriters took notice of Clay’s prowess in the ring. The \textit{Miami Herald} described the Herb Siler knockout as “a right to the midsection and a left hook to the jaw.”\textsuperscript{21} Ralph McGill of \textit{The Abilene Reporter} wrote “he [Clay] is a boxer of skill and a man whose jabs have a quick,
cumulative effect.” By the end of 1962, global media outlets, like Japan’s *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, were noticing that the Louisville Lip’s “combination of speed, power, and braggadocio have done him alright.” Boxing managers across the nation became aware of the rising phenomenon as well. After beating Sonny Banks, Harry Wiley described the fight, saying “Things just went sour gradually all at once. He’ll [Clay] pick you and peck you, peck you and pick you, until you don’t know where you are.” After the LeMarr Clark second round knockout, Clark’s manager exclaimed that “Clay has the fastest hands I’ve ever seen on a heavyweight. He’s faster than Patterson; This guy isn’t far away from a title shot, as far as I’m concerned.”

Masculinity and the sixth finger was grasping to Clay at a frightening pace; the Olympic victory introduced the world to Clay; his first years as a professional allowed him to intimately engage with the public, something Jack Johnson would do over half a century ago without the necessary technology and social climate that assisted Clay.

Reminiscent of Johnson, Clay received a fair share of negative criticism throughout his first years in the ring. Firstly, the media attacked the champ’s age, which many believed was too young to be considered a serious professional. *Lawrence Journal World* asked the question, “is Cassius Clay too young to be fighting top-flight heavyweights?” Hank Hollingworth noted Clay’s “good boxing instinct and lightness on his feet” but also added that “he isn’t very heavy with his fists” and “would be scrambled all over the Appian Way” if he fought Ingmar Johansson. Bill McCormick exasperated the weakness criticism, writing that:

“The Louisville Loud Speaker is easier to hit than the Daily Double, especially in the midsection...the perspiring Kentucky belles in the live audiences waved fans with more ferocity than Clay’s punches...Clay can’t fight a lick...he is even better qualified for Patterson because he [Clay] can’t punch and isn’t vicious
enough to trod heavily on an insect...\textsuperscript{24}

McCormick then attacked the LSG partnership and its hindrance on Clay and how it will eventually destroy his artificial career:

"Clay is smug, self-satisfied, and well-fed... Young Cassius has not the "lean and hungry look" which so disturbed Julius Caesar and is the hallmark of a dangerous fighter. This Cassius is managed by a syndicate of well-heeled and well-intentioned do gooders who support him in regal style on a regular salary, win, lose, or draw. The fighter is fat cat sleek-and it shows in the ring."\textsuperscript{25}

Two years later, after Clay had climbed the heavyweight ranks and become second in line to fight for the title, critics like McCormick refused to relent on the champ's lack of heavyweight talent and pampered, bratty personality;

"Cassius Marcellus Clay is a human hi-fly stereo...spending a day with the one-man filibuster is like being cooped up for a week in a record store jammed with teenagers trying out Bossa Nova albums...A one trick magician, the 20 year-old self-proclaimed wonderboy changes a silk handkerchief into a cane with a flick of the wrist. Unlike most magicians, he cannot wait to explain how the trick is done...The only moments Clay isn't babbling or materializing walking sticks is when he is asleep, which fortunately, is about half the time. ..he hasn't been napping, but has been shamming so he could think up new things to say."\textsuperscript{26}

True, Clay's speed and defensive style won his fights, but it would be almost a decade until he received his full respect and acclaim from critics in the ring. What really upset boxing stalwarts and placed Cassius on their hit list were his repeated prophecies pertaining to becoming the youngest heavyweight champion in history and the number of rounds in which he would defeat his opponents. In fact, as soon as he returned from the Olympics, before he had signed a professional contract in the United States, the eighteen year old told all reporters that would listen that "in three years I'll have the heavyweight championship."\textsuperscript{27} His lack of morality and good sportsmanship made critics more cynical to the idea that prizefighting's reputation was improving. For Clay, sportsmanship was not a trait of his entertainment persona. After all, it was counter-
productive to his ascension to masculinity and would have signaled a weakness in his character. With this, critics, who cherished the strenuous journey that past favorites like Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano faced, felt the kid was speaking too loud when he had not fought professionally long enough or displayed any real power skills that most heavyweights demonstrated often. Plus, considering the fact that the Lip predicted the knockouts of preferred heavyweights and followed through, it really set critics off to be embarrassed by the “Loud Speaker” every time their ideal heavyweight hit the mat. 

Ironically, the knockout round predictions were a brilliant publicity stunt as it drew more attention to the champ, prompting the public to start a support system to dethrone the “criminal” Sonny Liston in the near future. For a while now, boxing had belonged to the back alleys, the gamblers, the crooks, and the underworld. America distrusted the sport with Sonny Liston, but with Clay, a new hope emerged. The Charleston Gazette expresses the sentiment of the public in choosing Cassius Clay as their Great American White Hope to bring boxing back from the criminality of the Kefauver Commission and deliver it via entertainment:

“Not only is Cassius Clay fresh of spirit and resolved to meet all perils very constantly but he announces beforehand his prediction of the round in which each peril shall be vanquished. He has guessed right in 13 of his 19 professional fights, couching his speculation in poetic language. The vile rhymes, the cheerful boasting, and the sunny outlook of Cassius Clay make him the most refreshing figure in a rather dismal sport...”

Angelo Dundee remembered how overwhelmed the public was with this kid:

“Everytime the phone rang, the voice at the other end wanted to know more about Cassius. You’d think, what with all the other new fighters I handled-they’d want to talk to them since they were new champions. But no, all they wanted to talk about was Cassius Clay and his most recent antics...Cassius was always performing with a presence like a Barrymore or an Elvis, front and center and upstaging everyone around him.”
Freddie Pacheco, the longtime physician for Clay, recalls how enveloped the champ was in this persona:

The more confident he became, the more his natural ebullience took over. Everything was such fun to him. Maybe it wouldn’t have been so much fun if someone had knocked him lopsided, but no one did. No one shut him up. And so he just kept predicting and winning, predicting and winning...\(^{31}\)

The self-promoting, self-determinant Cassius Clay was becoming the trending factor in American sports. At the end of 1962, Clay began his acting career in *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, playing a young, fresh challenger to Anthony Quinn’s has-been champion. In 1963, Clay signed a recording album deal to create *I Am the Greatest!*, an LP consisting of monologues and poems devoted largely to Clay’s persona. Released to modest commercial success, the album contained quotes such as “It’s hard to be modest when you’re as great as I am...They all must lose in the round I choose...I’m a perfect role model for children; I’m good looking, clean-living, cultured, and modest.”\(^{32}\)

Surprisingly, only a percentage was actually written by Clay with the rest being written by Columbia Records, which points to interdependency in the champ. But to the masses, this boxing phenomenon was worth noticing. Clay knew that without his created persona, he would not achieve the masculinity, power, and wealth he wanted as an undereducated African American man. He once told reporters:

Where do you think I’d be next week if I didn’t know how to shout and holler and make the public take notice? I’d be poor and I’d probably be down in my hometown, washing windows or running an elevator and saying ‘yes suh’ and ‘no suh’ and knowing my place. Instead of that, I’m one of the highest paid athletes in the world. Think about that. A southern colored boy has made one million dollars."\(^{33}\)

For African Americans, the question had to be asked if whether this young man could become the new race hero in sports? After all, as David Remnick put it, “here for
once, was a young man energized by fantasies of his own power and gorgeousness and wit who had what it took to fulfill those fantasies." Plus he was a light-skinned, handsome, talented black fighter. He would not reject black society and violate societal norms in the same manner as Jack Johnson. After all, he wanted everyone to love him as much as he loved everyone. His background in somewhat racially harmonic Louisville, thanks to the self-determinant black masses of the city, assures that he holds his race as a dear element to his success as a fighter. In actuality, Clay would not become the icon for the black race, but for the global race of defiance, ideology, and greatness.

For whites, their shift to support Clay, according to Michael Ezra, can be possibly tied to the social unrest of the 1960s. Across the nation, desegregation battles and direct nonviolent demonstrations flooded school campuses, luncheons, and buses. While these protests were praised as racial improvements, many demonstrations received mass amounts of violence from white supremacist groups. The Freedom Rides of 1961, launched by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), were the sights of some of the most violent demonstrations of the 1960s. Many of the protestors, both white and black, were bombed, beaten, and thrown in jail, all to the horrific astonishment of the nation. Night after night, televisions throughout America tuned in to the unrelenting violence as well as speeches, and support from groups advocating racial harmony. Ezra feels as though the presence of black athletes and celebrities supporting the Civil Rights Movement influenced the white class to identify with black athletes, especially a prevalent voice like Cassius Clay. There is great evidence supporting Ezra’s theory, especially when the attendance records for Clay’s fights after 1961 are examined. In fact, for the Doug Jones fight, Clay was able to
sell out Madison Square Garden with minimum media coverage, thanks to a newspaper strike in 1963. For Clay, he had various social forces working in his favor, unlike Jack Johnson, who had to create his own social forces in the early twentieth century, through independent defiance and self-righteousness. Interdependence had led to a greater path to masculinity than independence, but it all originated in the background of these two icons.

The adoration was swelling, both for the entertainment value that Clay brought and his “good boy” demeanor, but what had solidified Clay’s dominance in the public for the long term? How was it that the egotistical loud mouth had not worn out his welcome after two years? Angelo Dundee believes that on March 13, 1961, Clay set the stage for what would capture the hearts of the world when he engaged in a prefight sparring match with World Heavyweight Champion Ingemar Johansson. Dundee was asked by Johanssen’s trainer, Whitey Binstein, to spar with Clay, which did not sit well with Johanssen, since he had never met the kid before. After two rounds of punching the air, chasing Clay, and being taunted with “I’m the one who should be fighting Patterson, not you! Come on sucker, what’s the matter? Can’t you catch me?,” Binstein called the end of the match, noticing his fighter’s embarrassment in front of the press. Gil Rogin of *Sports Illustrated*, which at the time was a small magazine, recalled that:

“I’d heard a little about Clay, but as I sat there watching this amazing exhibition, I thought, ‘Jesus Christ!’ What have we here?...and what I was seeing was the most important story we would ever have. To a great degree it was the story that we built the magazine on.”

Some point to Clay’s November 15, 1962 victory over Archie Moore as his turning point in the public’s eye due to its record setting box office draw. Ironically, prior to the bout, the promoters and the LSG felt as though the fight was uninteresting, so they excluded television and radio rights, which would force spectators to pay full price at the Los
Angeles Sports Arena. After all, Moore was seen as past his prime and incapable of providing knockouts. Clay had proved he was an entertainment draw, but to promoters, he was still a pup. A dinosaur fighting a pup was thought of as not exciting enough to draw numbers. Success in prizefighting was quick and in order to get the real money that he sought, the pressure was on for Clay to bring the crowds. Professional boxing is a business first and a sport second. Clay’s ascension or descent depended on his ability to fill the seats for this fight. So both fighters began a marketing scheme complete with taunting and even a mock debate on television.

“The only way I’ll fall in four, Cassius, is by tripping over your prostrate form,” Moore said.

“If I lose, I’m going to crawl across the ring and kiss your feet. Then I’ll leave the country,” Clay said, restating a similar taunt that Gorgeous George made to his opponents.

With these tactics, the attendance far exceeded expectations with 16,200 sold out seating, $180,000 on-site receipts (the California state record for an indoor sporting event), and an additional $3,000-$5,000 from each of the fifty-two closed circuit television operators. After expenses, the total revenue almost reached $250,000, making Clay the most popular athlete America had seen in years. It only helped that the young, quick, loudmouth kid had his way with the overweight, aging, slow-moving Moore. By the third round, it was obvious that Moore was exhausted and dizzy. At the beginning of the fourth, Moore was down after a devastating uppercut and barrage of straight punches. As the crowd roared, Moore told the press, “He’s definitely ready for Liston. Sonny
would be difficult for him, and I would hesitate to say he could beat the champ, but I’ll guarantee he would furnish with an exceedingly interesting evening."40

At this point, Clay established a dominant, intimate relationship with the public, forever planting an assuring invitation of theatre and melodrama that was sure to excite the public. It was the reemergence of Gorgeous George, complete with the swagger of Sugar Ray Robinson, the self-determination of Jack Johnson, and the heart of Joe Louis. Clay was indeed an entertainer, complete with a created personality that he utilized to achieve the popularity that was required for the masculinity he sought. Utilizing social forces surrounding his era, including technological innovations (satellites and television), the invasion of the criminal element in prizefighting, the wealth and prestige of the LSG, and the turbulent, racial upheaval of the 1960s, Cassius Clay successfully implemented his plan to solidify his sixth finger. By the middle of 1963, it had worked better than he had thought, but soon, when confronted with black consciousness, Clay would abandon the fight as his sixth finger is intercepted and exploited.

The year 1964 saw the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the landmark legislation that outlawed racial segregation and discrimination based on race, sex, and creed in the United States. For America, the ideals of integration that had gradually gained support over the decades had finally reigned victorious. Some believed that the utopian dream of racial harmony and the end of nativist violence had arrived while others viewed the legislation as a governmental power trip and band aid that would qualm the violent rhetoric and action of the time but not fully solve the problem. Such can be said about the year for the People’s Champion, who would transform before the media three times by December. His image promised a harmonic change to the dismal reputation of
prizefighting; an image of witty, talented, race transcending kid complete with the skills to represent the nation on a global stage. However, many felt that Clay’s betrayal in his seizure of the championship and his sixth finger only exasperated the growing hatred for not only boxing but race relations as the nation grew angrier and more violent.

1964 can be divided into three separate chapters in the life of Cassius Clay: His total dismissal of worthiness to contend for the title, his capture of the title, and the stripping of his title due to resentment of his ideology and interdependent relationships with extremist groups. For the first two months of the year, the world prepared for what would surely be a disaster fight between Cassius Clay and the heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. After the horrible performance by the Lip in the Doug Jones fight, critics worried that the champ had been figured out. Also, his win in Great Britain against Henry Cooper turned into a public relations disaster. In the same fashion of Jack Johnson, Clay invoked serious feelings about his character in the global community. While in Britain, Clay had been caught on record saying that “I’m only here to mark time before I annihilate the big ugly bear (Liston),” calling Cooper a “tramp, a bum, and a cripple, not worth training for,” and most damaging, he insulted Buckingham Palace by calling it a “swell pad.” During the fight, he mocked the Queen by wearing a royal-like robe and crown to the ring, creating the theater of attention that fed his massive masculine ego. He may have sold tickets, but the press launched a war against him. British TV called him the “Clown Prince of Boxing” “ostentatious,” and “boisterous.” Angelo Dundee notes that the British citizens “wanted to kill the kid.”

But what lurked around the corner was a frightening picture that the heavyweight division had not seen before. Everybody that came across Sony Liston said the same
thing: he is too strong, too tough, too everything. His fists were fifteen inches in circumference, he had an amazing 84 inch reach, and his 17 ½ inch neck was as strong as steel, thanks to his regiment of standing on his head for hours a day. His left jab had made many teeth turn soft and red. Like the great Jack Dempsey, his left hook was a weapon of mass destruction. He was noted for having the most powerful uppercut in heavyweight division history. He was the Frankenstein of prizefighting, genetically engineered to simultaneously instill fear and beat people down. Boxing feared him, and he made sure everyone knew why you feared him. Angelo Dundee notes that “I saw Liston destroy Cleveland Williams. Destroy him. He hit Williams with a shot and flattened him in two rounds. And when he flattened, he covered the whole ring. It was awesome.”

Cleveland Williams is still considered one of the most powerful, hardest-hitting fighters in heavyweight history, and Liston made him look like a featherweight. Combine these factors with skeptical belief in Clay’s punch power and his routine of keeping his hands low and nearly all sportswriters were expecting a bloodbath.

For the first time in his professional career, Clay was the gross underdog. Veteran trainer Dickie Sadler told the *Oakland Tribune* that “Clay is a year or two away...he shouldn’t fight Cleveland Williams, Zora Folley, or Sonny Liston...Cassius needs to mature mentally as well as physically. He’s just not a seasoned fighter. He has many defects.” Most media outlets did not give Clay a prayer, printing the statement that “Liston is a 7-1 favorite and it’s an even bet that Clay doesn’t answer the bell in the sixth.”

Arthur Daley of *The New York Times* claimed that “the loudmouth from Louisville is likely to have a lot of vainglorious boasts jammed down his throat by a ham-like fist belonging to Sonny Liston...” Jimmy Cannon of the *New York Post* wrote that
“he’s the Fifth Beatle, except that’s not right. The Beatles have no hokum to them. He’s all pretense and gas, that fellow…no honesty.”

What is interesting to note is the varied nature of the reaction to the Clay enigma at the time. Liston, being the representation of degenerative, thug behavior in boxing, became the most hated man to hold the championship belt. The public detested the brash, monotone, unappealing Liston and looked to Clay as an underdog hero. Clay may have been annoying and cheesy, but he was entertaining. Liston was silent, scary, and brooding. Both the NAACP and president John F. Kennedy supported Floyd Patterson when he lost the title to Liston. James Baldwin noted that Liston winning the title meant “the very death of boxing.” However, the media and sports world did not share the same sentiment. The media overwhelmingly favored the hated Liston. David Remnick effectively proposed a theory that the catalyst in the explosive relationship between Clay and media was Joe Louis. To expand on this, the relationship dynamic must be examined. As the hero of the 1940s, Joe Louis’ famous tagline from white America was “a credit to his race.” He was modest, unpretentious, and a representation of what white America identified with as correct black behavior. The white media outlets felt that the controlled, Sambo-like Louis initiated a perfect idolization of what black youth across America should attempt to reach. Plus, it was a relationship of guilt and possible redemption. This was an apologetic marriage, as white America bridged a sorrow gap that contained the horrid memories of centuries of racial violence and indiscretion. When Louis, after taking a beating from Rocky Marciano, finally bowed out of the marriage to the white media, there was a prolonged, undesired absence for the writers of the sports world. They desired the commercial, patriotic, and highly successful attitude that Louis
had spoiled the nation with for over a decade. When Liston arrived, he proved to be the antithesis to what the critics desired, so when the attention went to a young, lively, light-skinned, and extremely talented American hero from Louisville named Cassius Clay, the potential for marriage seemed viable again. However, by 1961, the critics had noticed a different Clay; He was ambitious, unequivocally explicit, and egotistical. Worst of all, he had dropped his nationalistic tone. In effect, the media felt betrayed, thinking they had found their next Joe Louis, but instead had found a minstrel show that embarrassed boxing. The masculinity and integrity of the sport was in jeopardy if this “clown” were allowed to make it his own entertainment hour. Ironically, Clay voluntarily pursued that path, using his adaptive methodologies and ignoring the media. Unlike Louis, Clay did not need the media to supplant him in the minds of Americans. In the exact manner as Jack Johnson, Clay’s self-determination and egotistical antics were enough to establish a reputation with the public. With that said, it must be reiterated that due to the involvement of the LSG and other commercial features, Clay experienced the success early as a professional that escaped the Galveston Giant. This, in actuality is what truly upset the sports world. Famed New York Times reporter Robert Lipsyte, who covered the champ for decades, explains the relationship best:

“Clay upset the natural order of things on two levels. The idea that he was a loud braggart brought disrespect to this noble sport. Or so the Cannon people said. never mind that Rocky Marciano was a slob who would show up at events in a t-Shirt so that the locals would buy him good clothes. They said that Clay lacked dignity. Clay combined Little Richard with Gorgeous George. He was not the sort of sweet dumb pet that writers were accustomed to. Clay also did not need the sportswriters as a prism to find his way. He transcended the sports press. Jimmy Cannon, Red Smith, so many of them, were appalled. They didn’t see the fun in it. And above all, it was fun.”}
And boy was it fun. As the match approached, Clay amped up the theatrical antics, taunting Liston at every turn, carrying signs insulting “the big ugly bear,” and stalking him around Miami (including his house), and reciting poetry to anyone that would listen. On the day of the bout, at the weigh-in, Clay put on a show so grandiose that he was fined $2,500 and should have been nominated for an honorary academy award. On television, though, Clay quoted his most famous poem, “Song of Myself” that influenced many future historians to call him the first “rapper.” Here, Clay expressed his desire for masculinity by painting a visual of self-righteousness for the world to see:

“Clay comes out to meet Liston
And Liston starts to retreat,
If Liston goes back any further,
He’ll end up in a ringside seat.
Clay swings with a left,
Clay swings with a right,
Look at young Cassius carry the fight.
Liston keeps backing,
But there’s not enough room,
It’s a matter of time,
There, Clay lowers the boom!
Now Clay swings with a right,
What a beautiful swing,
And the punch raises the bear,
Clear out of the ring!
Liston is still rising,
And the ref wears a frown,
For he can’t start counting,
Til Sonny comes down!
Now Liston disappears from view,
The crowd is getting frantic,
But our radar stations have picked him up,
He’s somewhere over the Atlantic!
Who would have thought,
When they came to fight,
That they’d witness the launching,
Of a human satellite!
Yes, the crowd did not dream,
When they lay down their money,
That they would see,
A total eclipse of the Sonny!
I am the Greatest!51

For Clay, these psychological traps had to overshadow the physical ones. Clay figured he was no match for Liston if Liston had properly prepared. The poetry, bear traps, and psychotic behavior had significant effects on the bout. For Liston, his indifference to the situation began to show cracks for the first time. Liston had never shown caring or fear for anyone before. Floyd Patterson once told America to “give Liston a chance to bring out the good that is him.” Liston responded with “I’d like to run him [Patterson] over with my car.”52 Now, Liston acknowledged that he believed that Clay was a “crazy man” and crazy men are unpredictable. In effect, Liston trained for a quick knockout, ate improperly, and did not take the bout seriously. Unpredictability had psyched out the strong-willed Liston.

Surprisingly, the world was not as fixated on Clay’s antics as they were on a catastrophic rumor that had begun only a few months prior to the fight. On September 30, 1963, the Philadelphia Daily News reported that Cassius Clay had attended a rally in the city hosted and proctored by the Nation of Islam:

Clay stood out in the crowd of some five thousand that heard Elijah Muhammad unleash a three-hour tirade against the white race and popularly accepted Negro leaders. Clay, who had come here from Louisville, Kentucky, for the rally, was among the throng that constantly applauded Muhammad as the Muslim leader called upon Negroes in this country and the entire world to form a solid front against the white race. Although he said he was not a Muslim, Clay said he thought Muhammad was “great.”53

The story went largely unheard, but whispers began. Alarms were sounded on January 21, 1964 when Clay suddenly left his Miami training center for New York to not
only attend a NOI rally, but also to address the crowd. The *New York Herald Tribune*
covered the story and exposed a contradictory Clay before the nation:

The brash young boxer, who celebrated his 22nd birthday last week, may not be a
card carrying Muslim. But, unquestionably, he sympathizes with Muslim aims
and by his presence at their meetings lends them prestige. He is the first
nationally famous Negro to take an active part in the Muslim movement. Yet
he still has not formally announced support for the Muslims. He will not discuss
the subject publicly. He will talk about his punches and his speed and his good
looks, but he will not talk about the movement.54

As the stories reprinted throughout the nation, the sporting world gasped in
disbelief. Had the American “good boy” turned evil overnight? How could such a mild
mannered, good natured youth get involved in such a violent, corrupt organization as the
Nation of Islam? Speculation aside, there was no verification, so action did not have to
be taken yet. However, more evidence soon came flooding the newspapers. Two weeks
before the fight, Clay was quoted by the *Louisville Courier-Journal* admitting that not
only did he like the Muslims, but “I’m not going to get killed trying to force myself on
people who don’t want me. I like my life. Integration is wrong. The white people don’t
want integration. I don’t believe in forcing it, and the Muslims don’t believe in it.”55

Then, on February 7, Pat Putnam of the *Miami Herald* published a report stating that
Clay’s father, Cassius Sr., had exposed his son. According to his father, Clay was in fact
a Muslim who had been brainwashed to hate white people and as soon as the fight was
over, he would change his name to suit his new lifestyle. What’s more shocking is that
Cassius Sr. accused the NOI of extorting his son’s money and threatening to kill him and
his wife if he did not stop badmouthing the group.56

By this point, the sports world had exploded. The great white hope had crashed,
burned, and been resurrected as a vehicle of hate and racism. Exasperating and playful as
Clay was, he was never associated with anything negative in his life. In fact, his assertion that he “was not going to get killed trying to force myself on people that don’t want me” was ridiculous and obviously spoon fed by the NOI. He had been catered to, paid for, and cheered by whites all over the world. He had surrounded himself with all races throughout his short life. Most importantly, he had been raised in a racially paradoxical and ever-changing Louisville climate that implemented various raceless societal reforms during the Civil Rights Movement. True, the nation’s racial climate was unhealthy and shifting at the time, but Clay’s background in race relations bordered on mild. Still, the world realized that the heroic Clay had transformed into something far worse than what Sonny Liston represented. Boxing promoter, Harold Conrad, explained to Thomas Hauser the backlash and potential disruption of Cassius Clay’s challenge for the title that these stories caused:

“The people promoting the fight went bananas. The Muslims were unpopular in the United States, which is putting it mildly, but it was worse because the fight was in Florida, and Florida was a Jim Crow state...so when word got out that Clay was with Malcolm X and the Muslims, you can imagine what that did to the gate. The whole sales pitch for the fight had been Clay against Liston, white hat against black hat, and now it looked like there’d be two black hats fighting.”

Immediately, Bill McDonald, the main Florida promoter of the fight, called Clay and threatened to call the fight off if Clay did not denounce the Muslims. This incident is particularly significant in the evolution of Cassius Clay. For one, McDonald had invested $625,000 to bring the championship fight to Florida, and he was not going to allow his money to be wasted because his most popular attraction began calling the majority class “devils.” McDonald was under pressure from politicians, sportsmen, and investors, so he was dead serious about cancelling the fight. Yet Clay refused to adhere to the stipulation, putting the fight in jeopardy. Why would Clay risk the zenith of
masculinity that he had pursued for almost a decade now? Would he disappear into obscurity or leave the boxing world? The questions piled on, but one answer remains more evident than others: he was afraid.

By 1964, the NOI was powerful. Freddie Pacheco put it best:

"Ali understood strength. Just like Sonny Liston understood the Mafia, Ali understood that you did not fuck with the Muslims...the Nation was filled with a lot of ex-cons, violent people who would go after you if you crossed them." 58

What had Clay gotten himself into? What attracted Clay to this type of organization? Why had he suddenly shifted power realms from the white economic conglomerates to the black, sociopolitical organization? The answers point directly to the second chapter of 1964 that would forever alter the life and mythology of Cassius Clay.

In actuality, Clay had been interested in the Lost-Found Nation of Islam since 1959. After traveling to Chicago for a Golden Gloves tournament, Clay returned to his aunt's house carrying a record album of Elijah Muhammad's sermons. He had also been secretly reading Muhammad Speaks, the official periodical of the NOI. Then in March 1961, Clay met several characters in Miami that would shape his world based on Fardian Islam: Captain Sam Saxon (Abdul Rahaman), Jeremiah Shabazz, and Ishmael Sabakhan, Clay's first teacher on the religion. 59

Several characteristics of the group fascinated the champ, mostly due to the fact that those same characteristics permeated throughout the West End District of his Louisville community. Instantaneously, he was attracted to the idea of pride and separatism that frequented the sermons and readings. 60 Louisville, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, instilled pride in the middle class black community through agency driven demonstrations and created a sense of successful accomplishments with
numerous infiltrations of the Jim Crow legislation with sit-ins, boycotts, and marches. As a youth, young Cassius was raised in segregated, stable black communities, which made him feel safe. So why not embrace the comfort of separatism when the experience worked so well in the past? No other aspect of the Nation impressed Clay more than their alleged allegiance to promoting manhood and discipline. These two factors had plagued Clay since he was a child. He had always sought a structured, stable, and disciplined environment. He was raised in a disciplined family and community, but once that ended, he found another one in the Louisville Sponsoring Group; however, the problem was that they were white and upper class elites, which Clay had trouble fully identifying with truthfully. With the NOI, most members were composed of lower to middle class blacks who were raised in similar urban surroundings like Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia, so it was in the similar vein of associating with another structured family. The racial factor proved indifferent to the champ. If the racism was a component needed for him to join, then he was completely contradictory to the movement. Although it will be discussed in more detail later it must be stated now that the NOI was a strict Black Supremacist racist organization that advocated the death of all white “devils.” Clay not only loved white people, he loved ALL people. In fact, Clay’s most enduring quality as a sports icon is his love for all people and a raceless society. Because of this underlying genetic trait, Clay was always in conflict with his surrogate NOI family.

Therefore, the shift from Americanized, mild mannered kid to loudmouth, egotistical commercial instrument to anti-establishment, black supremacist idealist Clay remained unconscious to the racial question. The familial structure and interdependent sustenance of the NOI is all Clay sought because he believed it ensured more support and power to
achieve masculinity. He would soon find out that he was wrong. In fact, it did not matter to Elijah Muhammad, his son Herbert, or the minister Louis Farrakhan that Clay was breaking doctrine often because he was their exploitative golden ticket and the main reason that the NOI became a worldwide sensation in the 1960s and 1970s.

To understand the contradictory and inflammatory nature of the NOI in conjunction with black sports historiography and Muhammad Ali, their rise to power and influence must be dissected. On July 4, 1930, a stranger arrived in Detroit Michigan selling raincoats and silk. Because of this, people believed the man to be from an Arab area. He revealed himself as Wallace D. Fard, a prophet of Allah sent from Mecca to both cater to the sociological and religious needs of blacks and set his people on the road to freedom and new identity.61 His message was a simple amalgamation of self-sufficiency and unabashed racism:

“The black man (original man) is ontologically superior to the white man (the devil)...the mental power of a real devil is nothing in comparison to that of the original man. He has only six ounces of brain while the Original Man has seven and one half ounces of brain...The devil is weak-boned and weak-blooded because he was grafted from the Original. The devil’s physical power is less than one-third that of the Original man’s.”62

To further validate his outlandish claims of black superiority, Fard spread the mythological tale of how whites were “created” out of black jealousy and rebellion:

“Sixty six hundred years ago, Yakub was born. Yakub became an evil scientist, Who in rebellion against his people, started a series of genetic experiments to “graft” a new man from the “Orginal” man (black man, or Yakub’s race, or the Human race). From these experiments came the white man. Because they come From the original black man, whites are a hybrid race and inferior in nature to Blacks. Despite his inferiority, the white man came to rule the original people For six thousand years. This he did by tricknology, which was whites using Tricks to lead the black man to doom and despair in order to be master over Them.”63
Of course, redemption and salvation cannot be lost forever. According to Fard, the Original race began to evolve spiritually and mentally in 1914 in preparation to destroy the devil race. When they are prepared, “all Moslem[s] will murder the devil...by bringing and presenting four at one time his reward is...a free transportation to the Holy City of Mecca.”

True, Fard was successful in instilling values, pride, and optimism in one’s race, thus establishing a strong base for Black Nationalism in the twentieth century. He blended the prospects of black self-sufficiency in trade and commerce that Marcus Garvey promoted with notions of black pride and religious adhesion that Noble Drew Ali advocated. However, like Noble Drew Ali, he performed the same wickedness and paradoxical illogicality that he accused the white race of abusing. In fact, the entire origin story of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam reads as a con man’s story, filled with pathological lies, criminal behavior, and cultist activity.

Firstly, Fard was not from the Middle Eastern part of world, but more than likely born in Portland, Oregon in 1891 to Hawaiian immigrants. His criminal record shows that Fard enjoyed providing multiple stories to the police and his followers concerning his origin. According to Mattias Gardnell, the only three possible solutions to Fard’s ambiguous origins is that either he was a former member of Noble Drew Ali’s Moorish Science Temple, he was a rabbi of a black Hebrew Congregation in the 1920s, or that he was a white Hawaiian immigrant fraud from Portland, Oregon. Fard was a functioning illiterate and an ill-tempered gambler and drug abuser. He had police records for bootlegging, drug trafficking, assault with a deadly weapon, and racketeering. In fact, according to police records, Fard told police during questioning that the Nation of Islam
was a “racket” and he wanted to get “all the money out of it he could.” To further validate this theory, it must be noted that in the summer of 1934, after being exiled from Detroit by the local authorities, Fard showed up in Los Angeles at his old girlfriend’s house. When she asked about the religious garments in his car, he told her she could have them because he no longer had use for them.

In addition to his questionable background, Fard’s ideology, Fardian Islam, which is the cornerstone to the Nation of Islam’s belief system, is indefinitely ambiguous, inconsistent and dangerous. For the first few years in Detroit, Fard claimed that he was a messenger of Allah; yet, towards his final years as leader of NOI, he often spoke of possessing divine powers, and being “the Supreme Ruler of the Universe” and that he was a “Christ figure to displace the old Christ that Christianity gave to black people.” For a figure that often utilized Bible quotations to convince his followers of his purpose and message, Fard’s ideology discredits Christianity often. In fact, Fard also taints traditional orthodox Islam, which states that Jesus Christ, while not the final messenger of God, was still a holy messenger or prophet. According to Fardian Islam, Joseph the carpenter did indeed impregnate a woman, Mary, to have his bastard son, Jesus. This anti-incarnational theory violates all tenets of both Islam and Christianity, which points to radicalism at the core of the NOI. Also, Fardian ideology abandons the idea of an afterlife, which is central to Islam. What is most unsettling concerning NOI ideology is their supposed love of black people but pure hatred for non-Muslim blacks. According to Elijah Muhammad, who adopted and spread Fard’s philosophies further than anyone in history, non-Muslim Africans were uncivilized. “Some of us rise up boasting of Africa,” he stated. “I say first get yourself civilized and go there and civilize Africa.”
Muhammad often spoke of “Jungle life in Africa” and how blacks in America accept it and wear “savage dress and hair-styles,” but “the only dignified people in Africa are Muslims or educated Christians.”

Muhammad’s denouncement and racism of Africans points to a gross exaggeration and contradiction of Black Nationalism. In fact, the core belief of the NOI, based on their disgust of traditional African culture, places them among racist elitists and supremacist groups. Their ideals of Black Nationalism are so liberal that white supremacist groups praised their hatred of the traditional African.

Another facet of Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, which was heavily promoted by Garvey, was abandoned by Fard as well. Apparently in Fardian Islam, the Asiatic lands and people were more useful and fruitful than the African areas. It also must be noted of Fardian Islam’s promotion of human sacrifice and ritualistic murder. According to E.D. Beynon, “Fard taught explicitly that it was the duty of every Moslem to offer as sacrifice four Caucasian devils in order that he may return to his home in Mecca.”

Promotion soon became duty on November 21, 1932, when Robert Harris, renamed Robert Karriem, invited his neighbor, John Smith, to his home to be sacrificed and supplant Karriem as “Savior of the World.” At 9 PM, Karriem plunged the knife in Smith’s heart. When questioned, Karriem admitted to the sacrifice, saying the killing was “predestined fifteen hundred years ago.”

The rituals continued long after Fard had left the nation to Elijah Muhammad. On January 20, 1937, Verlene Ali, an assistant minister of the NOI, was arrested for attempting to sacrifice and cook his wife and daughter. He told police that he was trying to “cleanse himself of all sin.” The sacrifices were such a voluminous aspect of the group that multiple schisms developed throughout the years with the other Muslim groups abolishing the idea. Fardian Islam, in effect, alienated and confused blacks
immensely due to its contradictory nature and ambiguity. Ironically, the emphasis on ridding the world of “white devils” became mixed when Fard and his disciples possibly preached the ideas of sacrificing other blacks. Yet the organization continued to grow, thanks in due part to the effects of the Great Depression on African American vulnerability.

Utilizing the state of catastrophic unemployment and exploiting the pessimistic outlook on the socioeconomic situation of blacks in the same manner as Adolf Hitler in the 1920s, Fard convinced hundreds of blacks to attend his public meetings and embrace hate mongering. By 1933, he had inducted at least eight thousand people to what he called the Lost-Found Nation of Islam and soon thereafter, he was collecting enough money to build temples in Baltimore, New York City, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Washington, D.C. With fame came unwanted attention. By 1934, both local police and federal authorities were investigating Fard and his temples. As was the case with the UNIA and Moorish Science Temple, the NOI’s ability to draw thousands of blacks together seriously concerned the authorities. Plus, teachings that blacks are superior to evil whites and the horrific details of the John Smith murder had placed a target on his back. After abandoning his most profitable act as head of Fardian Islam in June that year, Fard left the reigns of the NOI in the hands of trusted minister, Elijah Poole, who eventually became Elijah Muhammad.

When Poole came to Detroit in 1923, he was a confused and angry man. As a youth in rural Georgia, he had witnessed violent black lynchings that both scarred him and challenged his traditional Southern Baptist upbringing. Stressed from frequently changing jobs and the violent nature of Georgia life, Poole took his wife, Clara, and their
children to Detroit in 1923; however, they were met with more labor turmoil due to the mass influx of blacks, effectively causing Poole to develop a drinking problem.

The fantastical stories of the Great Migration proved to be fantasy for Poole. In the same sense as Muhammad Ali, he sought guidance, identity and purpose which he found when he joined the UNIA in 1923, the Freemasons in 1924, and then the NOI in 1931. When he met Fard, who he believed to be Allah in the flesh, he immediately became a top official in the NOI. Soon, Elijah Poole became Elijah Muhammad, Supreme Minister of the NOI.82

As Muhammad took charge, he drastically transformed the Nation of Islam from a predominantly religious based organization to a sociopolitical power group. Ironically, it was Muhammad’s imprisonment that propelled the group into national recognition and prosperity. On September 20, 1942, police raided Muhammad’s temple, Temple No. 2 in Chicago, based on a speech that Muhammad had given in rebellion against the Selective Service Act. “The Japanese,” he claimed, “will invade America with the help of Allah to destroy the white devils.” In the midst of the Second Great World War, Muhammad’s damning comments and evidence that he had contacted Japanese spies were enough for the federal government to call him up for active war duty (although he was 44 years old by then), then indict him for refusing to register for the draft. This was part of the nation’s plan to rid the public of anti-American demonstrations during the war, so he was forced to serve four years in a Michigan prison.83 When he was released on August 24, 1946, he was met with unquestioned despotic authority. Both the followers and many of the schismatic factions that had criticized him before witnessed his unselfish suffering at the hands of oppressive “devils” as verification of his divinity. In effect, the 1950s saw
the abandonment of sectionalism and the growth of centralized power and wealth in the NOI. Muhammad’s main messages began to speak directly to economic self-sufficiency. Soon, followers were buying farms, grocery stores, restaurants, and bakeries. The University of Islam was full of bright, stellar students who set excellent examples for discipline and aptitude. The Fruit of Islam, a paramilitary sector that handles security and enforcement of Fardian practices, was successful in ensuring that members change their lives, pay their membership fees, and convert others. By the end of the 1950s, the NOI businesses had boomed due to black community support. In total, revenue from new apartment buildings, clothing shops, laundromats and other ventures totaled around $400,000 for the organization.84 Success and discipline became the model of Muhammad’s Black Nationalist rhetoric, but underlying the message were the speeches filled with racism, terrorism, and nihilism. As a centralized theme it equates to its most attractive feature: power.

For a young, simplistic, undereducated, interdependent soul, like Cassius Clay, it is no wonder why he was engrossed with the NOI. The life of both Fard and Elijah Muhammad appealed directly to Clay, due to their experiences with the racial climate, their charismatic ability to influence and control others, and most importantly, their gritty, indomitable strive for wealth and power. True, the religion was also extremely appealing to the champ. The power that blacks apparently possessed over whites created a whole new dynamic of manliness for Clay. Growing up as a kid who was told stories of oppression and exclusion because of skin color, the idea that blacks had scientifically created and could effectively destroy white devils appealed to Clay as both a power allegory and an intellectual tool. Although it was verbatim from Malcolm X and Elijah
Muhammad, knowing the history and secrets of the NOI made Clay feel as though he was intelligent for the first time in his life. Plus, scholars must factor in the prospect of self-improvement and self-sufficiency as the centralized theme of the Black Nationalism movement. Clay wanted to improve his position in the sporting world and the world itself and the NOI seemed to have the influence and authority to both secure and propel Clay into a power position. Self-sufficiency for Clay meant that a man can provide for himself and his family economically, which was the definition of masculinity or manliness to the champ. As with all followers of the NOI and to a varying degree, other religious groups, it is always easy to ignore the underlying problems and inconsistencies if personal yearnings are satisfied. Unfortunately for Clay, he would learn that his devotion to the NOI was based on the same lies, criminality, extortion, and exploitation that Fard utilized to create the group and Muhammad employed to consolidate power.

For the second chapter of 1964 to be complete, one catalyst had to be removed from the picture: Malcolm X. Clay and his brother Rudy had driven to Detroit to hear Elijah Muhammad, but they experienced a greater thrill by meeting and befriending Malcolm in 1962. Malcolm was just as enamored with upbeat, strong-willed Clay. According to Malcolm, “Every Muslim was impressed by the bearing and the obvious genuineness of the handsome pair of prize-winning brothers.”85 Malcolm’s first impression of the champ reveals his belief in Clay’s unconscious and caring nature:

“Cassius was simply a likeable, friendly, clean-cut, down-to-earth youngster. I suspected there was a plan in his public clowning. I suspected, and he confirmed to me, that he was doing everything possible to con and to ‘psyche’ Sonny Liston into coming into the ring angry, poorly trained, and overconfident, expecting another of his vaunted one-round knockouts.”86
Here, another charismatic black man with a troubled past presented himself to Clay. Raised in foster care after the death of his Garveyite father and the institutionalization of his mother, Malcolm turned to robbery, prostitution, bootlegging and drugs before being imprisoned in Charleston Prison and the Concord Reformatory from 1946 to 1952. While in prison, Malcolm met John Bembry, who enlightened the angry youth about his black heritage and encouraged him to take pride in his color, not be ashamed of it. Once his brothers Philbert and Reginald dissected the core beliefs of Black Supremacy to Malcolm, he was convinced of the group’s verity and when released became their most prominent speaker and recruiter. Clay may have revered Muhammad, but Malcolm provided a love connection to the NOI that Clay needed. Attallah Shabazz, the daughter of Malcolm, said of her father, “my father’s relationship with Cassius Clay was not as a recruiter…it was a friendship…When he met Cassius, he saw greatness and wanted to offer a focus of motivation. My father loved Cassius like a brother, but once you were brought into the Nation, you become an entity of the Nation.” Clay was in fact, a doppelganger of Malcolm, which would intensify his rise to stardom and the downfall of Malcolm with the Black Muslims. Like Clay, Malcolm thrived on discipline, he was witty, and he was strong. He also identified with the youth because according to Gerald Early, Malcolm made Black Nationalism “revolutionary, hip, and vibrant.” Unfortunately for Malcolm, the NOI viewed him and Clay as interchangeable.

For years, Malcolm shared an intimate, brother-to-brother relationship with the champ, guiding him on numerous facets of life. The relationship between Malcolm and Elijah Muhammad was quite different, however. While historians portray Malcolm and
Muhammad’s relationship prior to 1964 as great, in actuality the two rivals were regularly in conflict. According to Nation of Islam authority Karl Evanzz, the two bickered over Muhammad’s deceptive recruitment practices, the Civil Rights Movement, Malcolm’s aggressive, direct action techniques, and the “stardom” of the national minister. To make matters worse, Malcolm practically expressed cheerfulness that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated, which prompted Muhammad to silence the National Minister for ninety days. The sociopolitical base of the NOI was now in trouble (It is obvious that at this point Muhammad chose political and economic gains over his religious beliefs; otherwise, he would have cheered for the death of a “devil” as well). These problems all stem from Muhammad’s decline in centralized power following the rise of Malcolm X. The consolidated power that he had built over the last fifteen years was now in jeopardy because he was losing control of his most powerful weapon. It is common knowledge that Muhammad was jealous and upset at Malcolm’s prestige amongst followers. Could Malcolm overthrow Muhammad one day? Muhammad believed so, because he knew that Malcolm possessed amazing intelligence, far-reaching popularity, and political aspirations. However, a young, talented boxer named Cassius Clay did not appear to be as intelligent or politically motivated. But success in the ring had to be proven first.

As the 1964 championship bout drew closer, Malcolm’s friendship with Clay upset the leader of the NOI. Firstly, Fardian Islam detests and prohibits professional sports. In the same sense of pork, cigarettes, alcohol and gambling, blacks were told that sports, especially boxing, fattened the commercial pockets of white America off of their work. Also, there was no guarantee that Muhammad could profit from association with
the boxer. Especially considering his disappointing fights against Doug Jones and Henry Cooper, his animated, theatrical behavior, and the monstrous power of Sonny Liston, the NOI did not want to associate with what they deemed to be a “failure” in Clay. Truthfully, the only support from the Black Muslims that Clay had in February 1964 was Malcolm. When asked by Malcolm if he could watch over Clay for the match, Muhammad said, “you will not in any way be representing us because it is impossible for Cassius to win.”

Unfortunately for Malcolm, his departure from Miami was the only way the fight would not be cancelled. In fact, the fight was off for a few hours, until McDonald agreed with Harold Conrad to remove Malcolm X from the city. Unsurprisingly, the voice of the NOI was blamed for almost half of the tickets being unsold to the event. Malcolm agreed to leave, but before he left, he supplanted the metaphor that Clay was fighting for Islam and against Christianity in a modern day Crusades:

“The fight is the truth. It’s the Cross and the Crescent fighting in a prize ring—for the first time...a Christian and a Muslim facing each other with television to beam it off Telstar for the whole world to see what happens. Do you think Allah has brought about all this intending for you to leave the ring as anything but champion?”

On February 25, 1964, Cassius Clay and Sonny Liston engaged in one of the most controversial heavyweight championship bouts in history. Financially, the fight was a failure. Only 8,297 tickets were sold, so McDonald ended up losing over $300,000 after expenses. According to Remnick, the thought may have been that it was a complete waste to watch a “Muslim punk” fight a “terrifying thug.” For the match itself, the predictions proved to be false before they even came true. Clay was both bigger than Liston and possessed a longer reach. Throughout the match, Clay pecked away at
Liston’s face with quick jabs while quickly bouncing away from Liston’s powerful hooks. In fact, after the first round, it was clear that Liston had not properly prepared for Clay’s speed, agility, and reach. In the third round, Clay unleashed a barrage of punches that dazed Liston and cut both his eyes. By round six, Liston was exhausted and noticeably dropped his hands, opening his face to more Clay punches. Clay could see his dreams of a sixth finger about to come true. At the beginning of the seventh round, Liston, complete with two damaged eyes, walked back to his corner and said “that’s it.”

After a minute of pep talk and more Vaseline, Liston shouted, “that’s it!” and sat back on the stool. Drew Bundini Brown jumped into the ring to hug the new heavyweight champion of the world. The dream had finally come true.

The following days forever changed the nation. Firstly, prizefighting had a new, yet controversial champion. In response to Clay’s unbelievable upset victory, critics were all over the place in judgment. Robert Lipsyte exhibited much of the hysteria of nation with his statement, “Incredibly, the loud-mouthed, bragging, insulting youngster had been telling the truth all along. Cassius Clay won the world heavyweight title tonight…” “They thought the kid was fooling,” David Condon of the Chicago Tribune wrote, “He wasn’t. He is to be applauded for one of the most sensational upsets in heavyweight history.” Red Smith of the New York Herald Tribune, after being told to “eat his words,” wrote that “Nobody ever had a better right. In a mouth still upset in many roaring years, the words don’t taste good, but they taste better than they read…” The Mirror’s Pete Wilson exclaimed, “Cassius Clay was right—he is the greatest. At the Convention Hall…he stopped talking, started fighting, and did what he had been screaming for months what he would do…” Will Grimsley of the Associated Press
called it "one of the most astounding ring upsets of all time but one that left the millions of fans pondering unanswered questions." Pete Swannson explained it as simple intelligent boxing. "Though inviting disaster with hands low," Swannson wrote, "Clay kept Liston off balance with jabs, danced away from left hook and leads, and displayed the boxing superiority..."97

The questions surround the fourth round, where Cassius apparently was blinded by a substance that has yet to be identified, and the seventh round when Liston quit due to an alleged "shoulder injury." Jack Cuddy wrote that "Clay's amazing triumph over the "injured" Sonny Liston touched off two investigations today and caused Liston's purse to be held up. Clay didn't land more than six solid punches in the entire match, and only one of these appeared to hurt the stoic-faced Liston." Roy Anderson of the Billings, Montgomery Gazette said that "It smelled. When a championship changes hands on a sprained shoulder, I think the boxing commission ought to be a little bit curious."98 The global world agreed that corruption was at hand. In the Soviet Union, a government representative said that "rumors are already spreading that the business of Sonny Liston's injured shoulder was a trick of the sporting syndicate reigning in American Professional Boxing." In Japan, Lee Kavetski felt that the bout effectively killed prizefighting. He wrote that the fight was "Weird. Bizarre. Stunning. There were even undertones of a fix. It wouldn't surprise me if Liston's camp bet their million dollars on Clay and won seven million. Professional boxing today stinks." In West Germany, former boxing great Max Schmeling disagreed with the victory, calling Clay "amateurish" and his beating Liston "surprising." In Sweden, Ingmar Johansson took it a step further and labeled Clay "unworthy." "I really can't understand why Clay is so happy about this," Johansson said.
“Sure he won the title, but in an unglorious way. I believe this means the end of the sporting spirit of boxing. I believe there will be merely a big show in the future.” In contrast, Great Britain and Henry Cooper, who were disgusted at Clay’s antics while in the country, expressed doubt in a fix and praise in the champ’s abilities. “No world champion is going to throw a world championship fight away,” he declared. “Clay made Liston look slow. He is a good fighter this Clay.”99

The mass of doubt concerning the legitimacy of the bout reiterates the media’s distrust of Clay. He had shown in the past that his allegiance to the sports world media was artificial and only to his benefit. He had possibly betrayed their connection not once, but twice if it was found out that he was now a Black Muslim. Also, it must be reiterated that many felt that as a heavyweight, his skills were lacking. No one ever doubted the ability of Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson, Rocky Marciano, or Sonny Liston as much as they did Clay. In short, Clay had not proved worthy of winning the title. In similar fashion to Jack Johnson, whose 1908 victory over Tommy Burns was not considered valid until 1910, Clay was faced with a bombardment of criticism and lack of respect. For Johnson, it was because his black skin had upset the masculine, white order of supremacy in Jim Crow America; For Clay, it was quite simply because he was so disliked by the media for holding allegiances to various organizations and figures except them, in effect disobeying the “good boy” image that he was given after he won in Rome.

Shockingly, the criticism had not reached its zenith until Clay made his staggering announcement on February 26, 1964 that initiated an all-out government assault on the fighter, his ideology, his profession, his family, and most importantly, his sixth finger.
As Bundini Brown yelled at him repeatedly during the Jerry Quarry fight, Jack’s Johnson’s ghost was watching Clay; and he would continue to watch as America attempted to make sure that Clay, like Johnson before him, never boxed again.
NOTES

1 During their numerous encounters and conversations, Ali would always greet Robinson as “the king, the master, my idol!” This is heavily noted by Sugar Ray Robinson in his autobiography, Sugar Ray.


3 Ibid, 345; 346-347.


5 Ali has since admitted that the Olympic Gold Medal story was made up and that he actually lost the medal one day and was very upset over it. Also, the diner incident, where Ali, who had just returned from the Rome Olympics in 1960, tried to eat at a white lunch counter and was denied although he had on his gold medal, was also a fabrication. See Muhammad Ali, The Greatest, My Own Story / Muhammad Ali, with Richard Durham, 2nd Edition ed. (New York : Random House, 1975).


8 Ibid.


11 Joe Louis reportedly turned down Clay because he thought of Clay as a “Braggart.” Sugar Ray Robinson was asked numerous times to manage Clay, but each time declined because he was still actively boxing. In his biography, Sugar Ray, Robinson dedicates an entire chapter to Clay, praising his talents and chronicling the mentor role that Robinson took for Clay throughout his career.

12 Michael Ezra, Muhammad Ali: The Making of An Icon, 17-18. A twenty-seven year old Harvard University graduate from the same West End district of Louisville as Clay, Jones became the first black woman to be both admitted to the Kentucky Bar Association and Kentucky State Assistant District Attorney.


By 1960, Dundee was considered one of the best trainers in boxing. He had trained future champions featherweight Sugar Ramos, welterweight Luis Rodriguez, and light heavyweight Willie Pastrano. His name was also clean, which was huge at the time of the Kefauver Commission investigating organized crime on boxing. Unfortunately, Angelo's brother, Chris, had to be cut out due to his underworld connections.


Clay began the knockout round prediction publicity stunt with the LeMarr Clark bout; After he knocked Clark out in the predicted round (2), the other early predictions read as: Powell (3), Banks (4), Warner (4), Logan (4), Moore (4), Levorante (5), Besmanoff (7), Miteff (6), Fleeman (6), and Robinson (1). *Indiana Evening Gazette*, 26 January 1963.

Dundee, *My View From the Corner*, 79.


40 Remnick, *King of the World*, 122-124; *Cumberland Evening Times*, 16 November 1962;

41 Angelo Dundee, *My View From the Corner*, 80.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, 89.

44 Most polls during those months project that 93 percent of the writers and press picked Liston to knockout Clay. *Ibid*, 151.

45 *Oakland Tribune*, 19 December 1962; *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 24 February 1964;


48 Ibid.


50 The weigh-in consisted of Clay taunting non-stop while Liston sat watching with an indifferent look on his face. Clay was so animated that his blood pressure spiked too high. Luckily, they took his blood pressure later on in the day when he had calmed down and it was back to normal; if not, the fight would have been cancelled. These are the measures that Clay went through to psyche out Liston.


52 Cashill, *Sucker Punch*, 55.


56 Ibid.

57 Ibid, 66.


60 Remnick, *King of the World*, 127.


64 Fard made sure to equate the date of black evolution with the coming of Noble Drew Ali and Moorish Science Templars and Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association. Because of this blacks could make some type of association between Fard’s prophecy and real events.


66 According to Magida, whenever Fard was arrested, his story to the police was that he was born in 1891 in New Zealand to a Polynesian mother and an Englishman who arrived in New Zealand on a schooner. Occasionally, he claimed he was born in Portland, Oregon, and that his parents, Zared and Beatrice Ford, had both been born in Hawaii. *Ibid.*


70 Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 408.

71 Tsoukalas, *The Nation of Islam*, 42.


In Tsoukalas' work, Sister Denke Majied, a follower of Fard, gave a detailed description of how Fard was able to manipulate the problems of the black community to gain access to their homes. According to her, "he came to our house selling raincoats, then silks...for every woman was eager to see the nice things the peddlars had for sale...So we all asked him to tell us about our own country. If we asked him to eat with us, he would eat whatever we had on the table, but after the meal he began to talk: 'Now don’t eat this food. It is poison for you. The people in your country do not eat it. Since they eat the right kind of food, they have the best health of all time. If you would live just like the people in your home country, you would never be sick anymore.' So we all wanted him to tell us more about ourselves and about our home country and about how we could be free from rheumatism, aches, and pains.” 18-19.

Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 407. Tsoukalas, *The Nation of Islam*, 44. Fard was charging $10 per person to convert to Fardian Islam and to change their name to reflect the Asiatic principles of the "Original Man." $10 times 8,000 converts equals $80,000 in Detroit, plus all the converts in other Temples around the nation made Fard a rich man.

Fard allegedly disappeared and was never seen again, but multiple sightings in Los Angeles and


*Ibid*, 63-64.


Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 230-231; 246-247; 252


Cashill, *Sucker Punch*, 64.


Remnick notes that the three possible reasons for the horrible ticket sales was (1) Liston as a 7-1 favorite, (2) Clay rumored to be NOI, or (3) the horrific storm that had blanketed the city with rain at the time.
95 Ibid.


CHAPTER VII

CHILDREN OF PANIC: JACK JOHNSON, MUHAMMAD ALI, AND SYMBOLS OF DISORDER IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

In December 2009, Arizona senator John McCain and New York Rep. Peter King introduced legislation to President Barack Obama advocating the full posthumous pardon of Jack Johnson from his Mann Act conviction in 1913. After a week, both houses of Congress overwhelmingly approved the resolution, stating that it was their duty “to expunge a racially motivated abuse of the prosecutorial authority of the Federal government.”¹ Surprisingly, the president has yet to sign the measure, citing its uselessness and the Justice Department’s policy of not assigning pardons to deceased persons. Considering that the past two presidents have issued posthumous pardons for two controversial figures, the Justice Department’s decision points directly to an underlying resentment in the government.² In striking dissimilarity from the other two cases, Johnson was not prosecuted and convicted for violation of the law stated in the affidavit, but mostly for his devastating effect and possible infection on morality and social order of the nation.

For a decade prior to his arrest, Johnson had represented the grossest, most degenerative characteristics of twentieth century America. Historians have overstated his repeated arrogances and violations of the Jim Crow atmosphere, yet few have ventured into the causes of America’s strife with the Giant past his skin color. True,
Johnson’s defiance and rebellious self-righteousness cast an overtly targeted shadow on his back, but that shadow was unconsciously manifested from American’s own demons and fear of a misfit infestation. A misfit can be characterized as an individual who is unsuitable or set apart from society due to their behaviors or social habits. If allowed to influence their surroundings, misfits pose the threat of increasing their numbers or damaging fragile or important characteristics of morality. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, there existed a colloquium of groups determined to rid the nation of undesirables and misfits to dissolve their inevitable evolution into symbols of disorder for society. Both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali became symbols of disorder not only because of their assigned “race hero” status, but because of their repeated examples of challenging the American system in their particular eras. In effect, numerous *de facto* and *de jure* persecution acts were sanctioned from both commercial and legal forces to destroy their degenerative, defiant tones before they drifted the country into doomed dilapidation.

This chapter will examine what I call the nation’s “Children of Panic” as they attempted to quell the two iconic symbols of disorder, Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali. The Children of Panic refers to the mass mania atmosphere created in the United States from repeated examples of degradation, anti-Americanism, and challenges to traditional norms. These groups have generally been composed of white upper class elites and middle class citizens who create the guidelines of their environment so as to control it. When rebellious forces roam throughout the area, they create ideas of conquest and overthrow, which in effect causes mass hysteria.
What many sport historians tend to neglect in analyzing both Johnson and Ali is that their persecutions were mainly due in part to this hysteria concerning the state of the union and the rising threat of undesirable behavior in the majority class. In fact, this chapter will examine the mechanizations of how both laws and the Constitution were broken by the United States government and commercialized businesses for the sake of preserving the ascension to progressivism in the 1910s and nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s. For the United States government, these two black heroes, fitted with undeserved yet well recognized sixth fingers, were the catalysts that could divert the nation from white supremacist nationalism to anarchism. With help from the boxers themselves, the government and media succeeded in portraying these individuals as avaricious, contradictory, and self-aggrandizing to the public in their seizure of masculinity. While Ali would recover and thrive after his attack from the Children of Panic, Johnson’s independent egotism efficiently gave world regimes the power to inflict permanent damage on his role in society and sports. In other words, the government’s usage of law enforcement was their only successful mechanism to remove Johnson’s sixth finger and destroy his masculinity.

By the end of 1912, Jack Johnson had ignited a furious firestorm of unparalleled defiance throughout the nation. As discussed in previous sections, his egotistical, self-righteous attitude mixed with his demonstrations of disrespect for the racial hierarchy set forth a crusade of white supremacy to rebuke his championship and god-like status amongst African Americans and the global community. Once Jim Jeffries became another “Great White Hope” to fail in the quest, America sought alternative means to put Johnson back in his second-class place. After relentless investigations and plotting, the
government effectively utilized the Galveston Giant's own vices and shortcomings to hinder his reputation and convict him for becoming an unconscious symbol of disorder.

To understand the validity of the government's plight to destroy Johnson, the background elements of turn-of-the-century American society must be examined. In the late nineteenth century, America was a heterogeneous amalgamation of innovation attempting to escape a haunting sectionalist past. While nativist white supremacist doctrine evolved into Jim Crow legislation for the purpose of reducing African Americans and other races to second class citizenship, big business politics was at war with Progressivism. These progressives, especially the middle class, sought not only the elimination of the spoils system and corruption in the socioeconomic and political sphere, but they also were determined to spread value systems to curb what they believed to be degenerative behavior in society. Degenerative behavior at the time included but was not limited to drug abuse, vagrancy, interracial relationships, and most importantly, prostitution. In fact, the most horrifying reality to Progressives was the seemingly unstoppable, invasive prostitution rings that were spreading around the nation and destroying white women.

For Progressives, prostitution represented a symbol of decline and a manifestation of social dislocations. Also, prostitution weighed heavily on concerns of immigration, urbanization, and the dramatic transformations of women's roles that threatened traditional ideas of sexual control, civilized morality, and masculinity at the turn of the century. The Southern and Eastern European immigrants that flooded Ellis Island in New York between 1880 and 1917 brought with them an overindulgence in liquor, sexual perversion, and miscegenation of so called "decaying civilizations." The panic derived
from the idea that immigrants were spreading prostitution seemed to parallel the number of rising incidents in urban areas around the nation. It is suggested that most brothels in New York City following the turn of the century were owned by foreigners. In 1905, the *New York Times* ran an editorial that claimed “scores of thousands of women had been imported into this country for immoral purposes.” That same year, women activists held a conference discussing answers to prostitution in terms of what would be called “White Slavery.” In 1909 Chicago, a similar conference was held in hopes of drafting a bill that would eradicate white slavery.  

In terms of urbanization, young people for the first time abandoned traditional patriarchal rural homes to seek opportunity in the cities. With this, employment opportunities for women became essential, prompting new ideas of independence and women’s liberation. The breaking of customary family units meant the manifestation of sexual feminism in the form of women experimenting with their carnal liberty. In effect, sexual freedom for women in the city challenged male dominated control over a women’s sexuality and could lead to prostitution. Charles Bryon Chrysler stated that “independence has been the cause of the ruin of many girls.” Chrysler’s statements pointed to a growing trend that most upper class elites deemed immoral. Although not the case for all women, there were a substantial number of urban women, called “Charity Girls,” throughout the nation that engaged in sex in exchange for money, shoes and clothing, and for excitement. To Progressives, there was a very thin line between these Charity Girls and the expansion of invasive prostitution for monetary compensation in mainstream society.
Prostitution had been a taboo subject for much of the eighteenth century and with women seeking liberal ideas and independence, the fear that courtesans would overrun the moral women in the nation intensified. More so than independence, the social ladder played a major part in growing prostitution rings. According to Progressives, the working class females were more susceptible to be corrupted by immoral behavior. Their low rank in society bred urges and desires for acceptance and wealth. Plus, low wages for women in the city were a speculative cause of the spread of prostitution as well. Many women in the early twentieth century earned far less in wages than they needed to survive independently. To make matters worse, yellow journalist muckrakers published articles containing titles like “Wages and Sin,” and “Are Low Wages Responsible for Women’s Immorality?” With these elements surrounding the growing trend of Progressivism, activists worried that urbanization may have degraded American ideals. Jane Addams stated how dangerous urban elements were for the young generations:

These young people are perhaps further from all community restraint and genuine social control than the youth of the community have ever been in the long history of civilization. Certainly only the modern city has offered at one and the same time every possible stimulation for the lower nature and every opportunity for secret vice.

The prostitution scare evolved in 1907 when muckraker George Kibbe Turner published an article in McClure’s Magazine accusing Chicago city officials of protecting a Russian Jewish brothel. While investigating the charge, Progressive Chicago prosecutor Clifford G. Roe found a note from an apparent prostitute claiming she was being held as a “white slave.” Immediately, Roe began a crusade to rescue all women from Chicago brothels whom he believed were being held against their will and sold as
sex slaves. From this point, the nation would develop the “Children of Panic” at the thought of the innocent white race being enslaved and treated as second class citizens.

Thanks to the Roe prosecutions, white slavery grew from a problematic undertone to an alarming epidemic of “social evil.” By 1910, there were at least thirty five commissioned groups around the nation probing the issue. One of the main challenges the commissioners faced was the allowance of segregated prostitution sections in every major city in the nation. In these areas, brothels operated regularly and openly, so long as their business did not invade the middle class communities. In response, the Purity Movement and Social Hygiene Movement, which were two of the first middle class attacks on prostitution, set their focus on moralistic regeneration and expulsion of sexual depravity. Progressive writers published data for the public, complete with yellow journalist persuasion throughout the lines. *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* states that between 1890 and 1909, thirty six articles were published concerning prostitution; yet between 1910 and 1914, over 156 articles on prostitution were published. Nationally, the public was reading articles that spoke of “organized societies for the express purpose of debauching little girls in the way that cattle and sheep and hogs are bought and sold” and “intoxication and drugging are often used to reduce the victim to a state of helplessness and sheer physical violence is a common thing.” Even John D. Rockefeller Jr. initiated a special grand jury to eradicate white slave trafficking in New York that resulted in the arrests of three prostitutes and the closing of six hotels. Now, the public no longer perceived sexual perversion and prostitution as a result of women’s independence; it was considered a damning, kidnapping scheme perpetrated by misfits who wished to degrade the values of American society. The Muckrakers made it a
priority to portray the prostitutes as helpless victims. According to the Immigration Commission, the girls were “ignorant of the language of the country, knows nothing beyond a few blocks of the city where she [they]lives, has usually no money, and no knowledge…little peasant girls, taken from various dens, where they lay, shivering and afraid, under the lighted candles and crucifixes in their bedrooms.”  

The Muckrakers believed that if the public wanted to continue towards a path of progressive growth, there had to be uproar of panic over the slightest hint of disorder.

Progressivism could not advance without the support of the government and the activists placed heavy pressure on politicians to strike out against the misfits. One official, United States Attorney Edwin W. Sims, took the pressure as a personal campaign to both establish anti-white slavery legislation and attack the international community on what he believed to be neglect and outright lawlessness:

The legal evidence thus far collected establishes with complete moral certainty these awful facts: That the white slave traffic is a system operated by a syndicate which has its ramifications from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific ocean, with “Clearing houses” or “distributing centers” in nearly all of the larger cities; that in this ghastly traffic the buying price of a young girl is from $15 up and that the selling price is from $200 to $600…that this syndicate…is a definite organization sending its hunters regularly to scour France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Canada for victims; that the man at the head of this unthinkable enterprise it known among its hunters as “The Big Chief.”

Not only was a white slave trafficking mechanism taking advantage of poor, innocent, ignorant young women, but what nativists saw was the corruption of America from inferior, degenerative, immoral foreigners. The idea that these immigrants were abducting innocent white girls and forcing them to engage in immoral behaviors that are characteristics of poor, racially inferior people was enough to make the government sick. State governments were not ample to deal with the crisis because transportation was coast
to coast, so Sims searched for a federal official to support his act and found James R. Mann. Mann, a U.S. Congressman from Chicago, like Sims, was strategically important because of his position as Chairman of the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. With the aid of Mann, Sims’s legislation could cover the gross atrocities at sea as well as across state lines.

With President Taft already on board with federal law prohibiting transportation of individuals across state lines for immoral purposes, Sims and Mann introduced the White Slave Act (Mann Act) to Congress on December 9, 1909 amid overwhelming public support. Progressive organizations and purity movements wrote thousands of letters to Congressmen to persuade the passage of the bill. Problems, however, surfaced within its language and purposes. It was fairly obvious that Sims and Mann were determined to attack all forms of immorality, but the bill had to be written specifically to target forced prostitution and transportation. “In order to insure her continuance in the degraded life,” Mann’s report stated, “to which she has unwillingly been forced to submit, the procurer has resorted to physical violence and the maintenance of a system of surveillance which makes her, to all intents and purposes, a prisoner.” Indeed, criminal trafficking was the heart of the matter, but was the federal government exercising too much power? In response, a coalition of congressmen, led by Rep. William Richardson, issued opposition on the grounds of states’ rights, citing that the federal government was attempting to “exercise police authority over things subject only to the police authority of the States.”

Despite these accusations, the Children of Panic overpowered the Constitutionality of the law and on June 25, 1910, President Taft signed the Mann Act
into law. In general terms, the act forbade white slavery and the interstate and international transportation of women for immoral purposes. In other words, it is criminality for the “transportation or assistance in transportation with the defendant’s intent and purpose to induce, entice, or compel such a woman or girl to become a prostitute or to give herself up to debauchery, or to engage in any other ‘immoral’ practice.” However, throughout the twentieth century, the term “immoral” would prove ambiguous for the federal government. At the same time, black migrants were gradually migrating to the urban north where scores of white women were practicing new ideas of sexual liberation and independence. Considering the historical stereotype of the insatiable lust for white women by black men, conservatives across the nation began to predict a hellish future of racial miscegenation and black exploitation of white women’s flesh. Beginning with the conviction of Jack Johnson, the Mann Act was utilized often as an unconstitutional and lawless act to suppress and destroy symbols of disorder. American and nativist ideals of both white supremacy and morality were in crisis, and the government was ready to respond. As Kevin Mumford concluded, Johnson would become the “central sexual and racist scapegoat” for American society at the turn of the century.

On September 11, 1912, a month before the Bureau of Investigation would build a fictitious case against the Galveston Giant, Etta Terry Duryea sat above the Café de Champion in an empty bedroom, listening to the loud, joyous party downstairs for her husband. She then aimed a pistol at her right temple and pulled the trigger. As the former wife of business socialite Clarence Duryea, she had left the comforts of family life to become what historians call a “sport,” or a woman who chooses to live life in the fast
As a sport, she wore flashy clothing, flaunted daunting wealth, and attracted athletic superstars, especially boxers and racers. In 1909, she met Jack Johnson at the Vanderbilt Cup Road Race where she instantly fell in love with the idea of travel, parties, and the power of an unconscious black man. Unfortunately, following their secret marriage in January 1911, Etta faced a threefold nightmare: Jack’s unrelenting promiscuity, his frequent angry beatings of her, and most despairingly, the response to her violation of white supremacy. As she was ostracized from friends and family for her misfit-like behavior, her despair grew and severe depression took over her fragile mind. That depression, white journalists claimed, was due to scientific “incompatibility” between the races and Johnson’s ultimate’s failure as a black hero.

“It showed how limited was Jack Johnson’s conquest of the white race. He whipped white competitors in the prize ring…but he could not extend the conquest to those achievements that lie in the province of sentiment and affection.”

Regardless of the motive, Etta’s suicide was a momentous event in the course of Johnson’s run as a symbol of disorder in 1912. Besides the obvious challenges to white masculinity and the unconscious sixth finger that Johnson was given as a race hero for blacks, there was the assumption that he had also contributed to the death of a white woman. The possibility of copycat murders and black brutes abusing white women to death created more Children of Panic. But how would the nation go about destroying the seemingly indestructible Johnson? This “Bad Nigger” had habitually devastated the white athletic superiority put in front of him along with the white supremacist groups and politicians who spoke against him. However, he had shown vulnerability in dealing with law enforcement. Following his victory over Jeffries, Johnson traveled to San Francisco where his car was taken for a nine year old, twenty-five dollar, past due traffic fine. He
was almost shot by the policeman when he attempted to bully the cop. He was also
arrested less than a week later for racing through Golden Gate Park. Usually, Johnson
paid his fines and returned to defiance, but Judge A.B. Treadwell exposed the Giant when
he sentenced him to twenty five days in jail. Johnson hated jail and the white authorities
knew it.20

When Johnson returned to the East Coast, he was continuously arrested for every
mistake he made, including having an out of state license and denying payment to an
artist for a bust of the champion. White authority noticed and adored the champ’s
abhorrent reaction to the checking of his masculinity by law enforcement. When
questioned, Johnson expressed his frustration to the public.

“I goes fast, and they arrests me, and now it seems like if I go slow they does the
same. White man, what’s the trouble now? Next thing somebody’ll arrest me for
bein’ a brunette in a blonde town.”21

The lawlessness of Johnson’s actions was now being checked. However, his egotistical
defiance and self-determination continued to embarrass America and fuel the Children of
Panic. Inside the ring, he continued to crush his unworthy white opponents. Most
notably, fireman Jim Flynn was embarrassed in Reno, Nevada on Independence Day
1912. Outside the ring, Johnson’s invincible presence was growing in popularity. The
black media was heavily responsible for this superiority in society. Periodicals like
Atlanta Independent, Pittsburg Courier, and most notably, Chicago Defender sought to
iconize Johnson throughout the black community. Robert S. Abbott, who was editor of
the Chicago Defender in 1912, viewed Johnson not as a symbol of disorder, but as a
symbol of black success. Indeed, the champ’s actions were brash and outlandish, but his
victories against the white brutes in the ring and the hostile Jim Crow public outside the
ring proved both influential and valiant to an African American middle and lower class
group that was categorized as second class citizens. As Randy Roberts notes, Abbott was
unconsciously blind to the champ’s true persona, favoring an alter ego complete with
racial pride and solidarity.²² Perceived as a race conscious hero, this meant that the
champ also embodied anti-American and degenerative qualities that branded him as a
symbol of disorder and therefore, had to be stopped.

The conviction of Johnson began with a plump white prostitute from Minnesota
named Lucille Cameron. As an eighteen year old, she was already vastly experienced
with brothels and was highly recommended by two infamous Chicago madams, Catherine
Dorsey and Genevieve Grant.²³ Instantly, Johnson began a love affair with Cameron
while being married to Etta. On October 11, 1912, Mrs. F. Cameron-Falconet, Lucille’s
mother, came to Chicago after hearing that her daughter was “under the influence of Jack
Johnson.” According to the mother, Jack Johnson had “hypnotic powers” that he used to
manipulate her daughter and hold her against her better judgment. She also gave her
statement to the Chicago Daily News, which read on the front page “JACK JOHNSON
DEAF TO PLEA OF MOTHER.”²⁴ Inside, the mother fabricated details of a meeting
where Johnson taunted her with lines like, “Some of the best white women ride in this
car,” and “I could get any woman I want.”

This act of defiance was too much to bear. As soon as he read the paper, the
assistant chief of police requested a warrant for Johnson’s arrest. Public outrage spread,
especially to the Department of Justice, who had already been eyeing Johnson and his
obsession with white prostitutes for prosecution under the newly created Mann Act. On
October 18, 1912, Johnson was arrested for abduction and released on $800 bond.
Finally, the government had Johnson on a federal charge and made sure they would not lose him.

The federal government’s case against the champ is undoubtedly one of the most obvious instances of a legal lynch mob. As soon as special agents Bert Meyer and Martin Lins were dispatched to Chicago, the Justice Department would not turn back until it had either destroyed the Giant’s notoriety or ended his defilement of the racial hierarchy and morality in the nation. For Johnson to go down, the government had to prove two things: he had utilized women for immoral purposes and he had traveled across state lines with them in that capacity. The fact that Lucille was a seasoned prostitute that migrated to Chicago made the first part easy. However, the “transportation feature” was absent.25

While they searched for this avenue, the Bureau of Investigation used their influence to deny Johnson a liquor license renewal, thus shutting down his Café de Champion. To make matters worse, Johnson continued his defiance act, stating to the press that he intended to make Lucille his next wife. “I’m going to marry Lucille, no matter what they do,” he said. “They can put her in jail or try to put her in the asylum but I’ll marry her in time, anyway.”26 The response from whites in Chicago proved that the government had little time to waste with Johnson. On October 21st, over one thousand whites gathered at the corner of Clark Street and Montrose Boulevard with a noose, a dummy in blackface, and a sign that read THIS IS WHAT WE WILL DO TO JACK JOHNSON. Although the mob was dispersed, the dummy was left hanging to remind the city of the lack of patience with the symbol of disorder. Across the city, politicians distanced themselves from the champ at his most vulnerable time. Mayor Carter
Harrison, Jr. stated that he hoped “Johnson gets his block knocked off,” while Alderman Ellis Geiger accused Johnson of bringing “burning shame to the fair name of Chicago.” For both the politicians and law officials, this incident had escalated into a fight for salvation of America’s most precious ideals. Johnson’s love of promiscuity and himself was exasperating both the hysteria surrounding white slave trafficking and social order. The possibility that he may marry, and then disrespect, beat, or kill another white woman was unthinkable. The full assault on American degradation was on the brink of materializing.

The Lucille Cameron angle proved to be a dead end. Lucille flat out refused to testify against the man she loved. Her devotion to the Giant was noted, so the federal government decided to keep her jailed in fear that she would marry Johnson immediately upon release. Plus, her reputation as a popular prostitute would prove that the charges against Johnson were trumped up and the only innocent party was the champ. The case was hurting, but Chicago prosecutor Harry Parkin knew he had an obligation to the public to put Johnson behind bars for as long as possible. The masculinity of white males, safety of the white women and the decrease of the white slave trafficking ring were at stake. Plus, the Bureau of Investigation had to prove that they deserved the funding to prosecute Mann Act legislation, and the conviction of the heavyweight boxing champion of the world would be significant.

The break the Bureau had been looking for came in the form of an anonymous letter from someone who wanted to “send this nigger to jail for the balance of his life.” The note urged the Bureau to find a woman called “Belle Gifford,” who was both a widely known prostitute and had traveled all over the country with the champion. Belle
Shreiber, which was her real name, was traced to Grace Sinclair's resort in Washington D.C. where she had been doing great business. Unlike Lucille, the jilted and angry Belle was willing to recite her full life story with Johnson for anyone and everyone that would listen, exposing the prostitution, beatings, and every sordid detail of their illicit relationship. No matter what the Mann Act stated about “immoral purposes,” the vague language of the bill allowed for Johnson’s conviction if he had sexually abused Belle while traveling across interstate lines.

Belle’s testimony was not enough for conviction, but Parkin was extremely crafty and willing to go outside the law to turn a faulty, dubious case into a successful one for America. Quite frankly, the Bad Nigger had to be offended the way he offended white America. As Roberts put it, if the Mann Act had to be perverted to restrict his freedom, than the government was prepared to do it. Firstly, it was clear that Johnson had not traveled with Belle primarily for immoral purposes. From her testimony, her relationship with Johnson seemed to standardize her role as a mistress instead of a prostitute. According to the Director of the Bureau of Investigation, A. Bruce Bielaski, Belle “did not engage in the business of prostitution,” and their relationship was “sexual, not commercial.”29 But because of the transportation proof, the sheer vagueness of the Mann Act, and the Children of Panic’s condemnation of Johnson’s offenses on American society, the grand jury found no trouble in issuing an indictment. The champion was formally charged with transporting Belle Shreiber from Pittsburgh to Chicago on August 10, 1910 for the purpose of prostitution and debauchery.

After being released on bond of $30,000, many expected the champ to fade from the public eye and await his inevitable doom. As a symbol of disorder, Johnson was
oblivious to boundaries set by society, so his hedonistic attitude took charge again when he married Lucille Cameron. As was the case for Johnson throughout his tumultuous life, he chose the wrong time to disregard the public opinion of his actions.

The response to the marriage was fierce and nasty. Many believed that the marriage signaled the end of Progressive America’s move in the right direction towards morality and white supremacy. The Ogden Examiner said that the “vanity of the shallow brained and thick headed Negro boxer once more was tickled...Jack Johnson is in a fair way to reap the whirlwind he himself has sown.” The governor of Virginia, stated that the marriage was a “desecration of one of our most sacred rites,” while the Governor of New York called it a “blot on our civilization.” The Governor of South Carolina exclaimed, “if we cannot protect our white women from black fiends, where is our boasted civilization.” The most impactful response came from Rep. Seaborn A. Roddenberry, one of the nation’s biggest supporters of racial separatism and disbanding mixed racial marriages. His speeches concerning Johnson’s marriage were explosive strikes against interracial harmony and the laws that allow them:

“No brutality, no infamy, no degradation in all the years of southern slavery possessed such villainous character and such atrocious qualities as the provision of the laws of Illinois which allows the marriage of the Negro, Jack Johnson, to a woman of Caucasian strain...Intermarriage between whites and blacks is repulsive and averse to every sentiment of pure American spirit...It is destructive of moral supremacy, and ultimately this slavery of white women to black beasts will bring this nation a conflict as fatal and as bloody as ever reddened the soil of Virginia or crimsoned the mountain paths of Pennsylvania...If the federal government allowed sombre-hued, black-skinned, thick-lipped, bull-necked, brutal-hearted African men to marry white women, then racial warfare would be the union’s first offspring...Let us uproot and exterminate now this debasing, ultra-demoralizing, un-American and inhuman leprosy.”
Roddenberry’s rhetoric was loud and impactful, influencing ten states to introduce bills prohibiting racial intermarriage in 1913. Illinois. Feeling the shame and embarrassment of allowing the monstrous black hero to advance his race, introduced five anti-interracial marriage bills. In similar fashion to Hoke Smith and Thomas Watson’s call for “ballots or bullets” in the Georgia gubernational race that led to the infamous race riot of 1906, Roddenberry forced whites across the nation to feel ashamed, angry, and inspired to fight the symbols of disorder that threaten to upend the social hierarchy. Blacks, who although were not proud of the actions of Johnson, had admired his bravery and success; yet now, they fled in fear at his foolishness. As mentioned earlier, Johnson’s unconscious mentality could not care less of the plight or pride of his race. When Ida B. Wells suggested that he open a recreational center for black youth, he chose to open a saloon instead, only to “cater to the worst of both races...entertaining the wildest of the underworld of both sexes and especially the white race.” His actions were simultaneously encouraging and endangering to his people, but his egotism and obsession with masculinity blocked out the voices of the nation. The voices gradually began to disappear, with good reason. Supporting Johnson had now become dangerous as the law prepared to punish him to their full extent. When Johnson attempted to purchase a house on Lake Geneva, an upper class white neighborhood, the same month of his marriage, very few supporters spoke in favor of the champ. In addition, he was barred from boxing, his money was drying up, and his alcoholism and stress were wearing on his health. The sixth finger that Johnson possessed was not only a threat to the social order, but also to Johnson himself. Like Muhammad Ali, his anti-American values were going to destroy the foundation of unconscious racial pride and masculinity.
On May 7, 1913, *The United States v. John Arthur Johnson* began with Parkin setting the tone with racist, graphic language to infuriate the jury. The tone officially had been set long before the trial started. After all, this was the United States’ morality and Children of Panic versus a Symbol of Disorder, threatening to destroy the nation. Yet, the opening statement was as well prepared as the rest of the prosecution. Parkin effectively portrayed Johnson as a woman abusing monster who targeted innocent white girls to fulfill his sexual perversions and anger needs. Parkin’s statement immediately put Johnson’s attorney, Benjamin Bachrach, on the defense. He was the visiting team entering a hostile environment. With an all-white jury and the prestige of Parkin, this trial would prove to be an uphill battle for Bachrach. His only legitimate claim was that women threw themselves at Johnson because of his wealth and stature in the athletic community. Although valid, it was easily distinguishable as too weak for a single-minded jury.

On May 12, Belle Schreiber, the star witness, was called to testify. The federal government was exuberant that they were getting rid of Belle, for it had been a long, challenging season with her. She had tried to run away from the safehouse numerous times, her constant outbursts in public were embarrassing, and her drug, alcohol, and sex addiction left her in constant withdrawal and boredom. Considering that she was the only reason a trial was possible, she was worth the trouble. Plus, once she heard about Johnson’s marriage to Lucille, she enhanced her story to harrowing heights. But would her erratic behavior and history destroy her testimony in the courtroom? Surprisingly, her trained acting from Bureau agents made her seem embarrassed, innocent, and ashamed at her relationship with a black man. She was sorrowful, soft spoken, and respectful, which
is what Progressives claimed all innocent white girls were before they were absorbed in the corrupt world of white slavery. Her extensive testimony hit every detail precisely, from their first meeting in 1909 to their last fling in 1911, after he married Etta. To corroborate her testimony, Parkin introduced numerous receipts of the champion’s expenses on Belle and a photograph autographed to her.38

Once Johnson was allowed to testify on May 13, the trial continued in a downward spiral for the champ. It is not the fact that he vehemently denied every accusation that Parkin hurled at him, but that he did so with a smug confidence in front of a white courtroom.39 He admitted to travelling willingly with prostitutes and being engaged in a corrupt sport that possibly fixed his fights, but he did it all with a straight face. He refused to apologize and continuously rebelled against the Children of Panic throughout the trial.40

Besides the testimony of chauffeurs, hangers-on, and trainers, the defense had nothing else to preserve the champ. In the end, the last witness, Roy Jones, testified on behalf of the prosecution that Johnson had told him that he beat up his wife, Etta, on Christmas Eve. The only good news came after the closing statements when Bachrach requested that four of the eleven indictments be dropped due to lack of evidence, which the judge granted. In effect, all it meant was that Johnson would be convicted of seven indictments instead of eleven. It took two hours for the jury to find Johnson guilty on all counts.41

Parkin summed up the nation’s boisterous, victorious message of true American ideology and rejection of immorality, black first class citizenship, and anti-Americanism to all symbols of disorder:
“It is the forerunner of laws to be passed in these United States which we may live to see—laws forbidding miscegenation. This Negro, in the eyes of many, has been persecuted. Perhaps as an individual he was. But it was his misfortune to be the foremost example of the evil in permitting the intermarriage of whites and blacks. Five years ago, he was obscure, penniless, and happy. He beat down a man and became famous with a blow. He beat down another and riches poured into his pocket. Money and fame, such as it was, brought white women. One is suicide, the others are pariahs. He has violated the law. Now, it is his function to teach others the law must be respected.”

When Parkin speaks on the “law,” he is referring to the law set forth by the Progressive crusaders and nativists. To contain black behavior and pride, Parkin believed that their source of societal advancement, economic achievement and political aspirations must be neutralized. Letting African Americans strive for success and agency threatened white supremacy. It was horrible when Johnson destroyed white masculinity in the boxing ring, but when he began corrupting the most precious object in the white community, the white woman, then he was not only as guilty as the influx of pimps and immoral immigrants that sullied the cities, but he was also responsible for giving millions of blacks hope in conquering the most precious gift to mankind. True fear derived from the fact that multiple white women voluntarily engaged in intimate and marriage relationships with Johnson, thus commencing his masculine control over members of the white race.

It is a fantastical claim that Johnson set out consciously to alter the nation’s views on race relations, and his unconscious, self-aggrandizing actions ultimately alienated and intensified racial strife. When he was sentenced to a year in jail for his violation of the Mann Act, Jack Johnson the symbol had to be punished although Jack Johnson the man was innocent. Parkin never proved that Johnson commercially profited from his dealing with prostitutes across state lines, but his dedication to preserving the order and
morality of the nation caused him to reprimand Johnson utilizing the most damning vice: lust for white women. Fifty years later, a young man named Muhammad Ali would defiantly engage in anti-American actions, similarly to Johnson; however, his actions while not due to egotistical self-righteousness, were just as unconscious and detrimental as the Galveston Giant’s. Ali’s ordeal with the government will also be due mainly to widespread denouncement by the Children of Panic. Unlike Johnson, he will recover superbly from his attack with his sixth finger intact. Unfortunately, as a symbol of disorder, Johnson’s power epitomized through his sixth finger was fading fast.

* * *

The year 1964 had already proven monumental for newly crowned heavyweight champion Cassius Clay and the United States. The wealth and power he sought for years had finally been achieved with the assistance of media and commercial marketing, immense promotion and connections from the Louisville Sponsoring Group, and the charismatic, the atic persona of the champion himself. In other words, his interdependency propelled him to the top of the sporting world. By the end of the 1960s, his unconscious sixth finger would propel him into unwarranted race infamy and one of the biggest symbols of disorder in history.

The day after his legendary victory, Clay revealed to the world what had been feared the most: he was officially a member of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam.

“I believe in Allah and in peace. I don’t try to move into white neighborhoods. I don’t want to marry a white woman. I was baptized when I was twelve, but I didn’t know what I was doing. I’m not a Christian anymore. I know where I’m going and I know the truth, and I don’t have to be what you want me to be. I’m free to be what I want.”

The statement was an ultrasonic, deafening, yet thunderous roar that America dreaded. Unlike Jack Johnson, whose behavior throughout the first decade of the 1900s
forever personified defiance and rebellion, Clay had betrayed a trusting populace in
similar fashion to a husband catching a wife in the act of infidelity. It was shocking,
maddening, and depressing. America saw Clay as an entertaining, talented, charismatic
goofball who happened to be ridiculously talented in prizefighting. He was a commercial
phenomenon that horrifyingly transformed into a political racist. He was a simple
minded, non-educated poet that cruelly turned to black supremacist rhetoric. In short,
Clay devastated the nation, both black and white, with his newly anti-American
affiliation.

To the black race, Clay was pronounced a traitor, delusional, and he must be
rejected. A black employee of the State Road Commission said, "I used to like Cassius
Clay, despite his big mouth, up until he said he was a Black Muslim. Now I can’t stand
that…" A Washington, D.C. schoolteacher exclaimed, "I rooted for Cassius Clay up
until he said he was a Black Muslim." Civil Rights leader and church pastor Rev. D.E.
King stated that "Clay is not helping the soul of America." Lyman T. Johnson, president
of the Louisville Chapter of the NAACP, expressed his disgust at the decision, stating
that he hopes Clay "will shake himself out of this delusion, less he ruin his chance to be a
great champion." Martin Luther King Jr. was quoted as saying that "when Cassius Clay
joined the Black Muslims, he became a champion of racial segregation and that is what
we are fighting against…I think perhaps Cassius should spend more time proving his
boxing skill and do less talking." Joe Louis joined in on the condemnation, saying that
"Clay will earn the public’s hatred because of his connection with the Black Muslims.
The things they preach are the opposite of what we believe.” Floyd Patterson eagerly
volunteered to fight Clay to take the title away from the NOI.
Some blacks, however, attributed Clay's decision to his simplicity and gullibility due to a lack of education. Kentucky Board of Education member Harry McApin voiced his opinion to the press concerning the sixth finger of Clay:

"In a hero-worshiping society, it is regrettable that Cassius Clay, against a limited background of education and experience, and riding high on reputation gained by his fists and comic rantings, should suddenly turn philosopher...Clay has a right to our democratic society to be a Black Muslim or a blue goose. He has a right to speak and say whatever he chooses. It is regrettable, however, that he has chosen to speak as a wise man on a subject in which he shows a great naivete..."  

In the same way the media felt betrayed by Clay's jilting, African Americans loathed the champ for his betrayal of their God. As a devoutly Christian community, blacks consider the NOI to be anti-Christians who reject their African heritage. Clay was now seen as a traitor to his background and the nation's religion. Also, as a segregationist, he rejected the accommodationist ideals of the more popular Civil Rights Movement, which did not sit well with blacks. After all, accommodation was more appealing and safer than militancy. He was no longer Joe Louis, Sugar Robinson, an independent hero like Jack Johnson, or even a melodramatic like Gorgeous George; he was a misfit.

In defense of McApin, Cassius showed very little understanding in his newfound "religion." In that same announcement conference, he explained the appeal of the NOI:

"They don't carry knives. They don't tote weapons. They pray five times a day. The women wear dresses that come all the way to the floor and they don't commit adultery. The men don't marry white women. All they want to do is live in peace in the world. They don't hate anybody...All meetings are held in secret without any fuss or hate mongering."  

Firstly, it is obvious that everything Cassius said as a member of the NOI was pre-written by another minister or an exact duplication of words from either Malcolm X or Elijah Muhammad. His speeches to college campuses during his exile were a direct parallel for
Malcolm X’s speeches except for a few jokes added. When he did speak for himself, the facets of his beliefs sounded awkward and mixed up. In retrospect, when he spoke, he represented their most vocal apologist, which dramatically popularized the group. As evidenced above, Cassius is noting the characteristics of traditional Islam, which he and the Black Muslims did not practice. The NOI is a cult that advocates racial violence, separatism, and genocide, which are thing Cassius never truly believed in.

No matter the extreme nature of Jack Johnson’s gregarious actions, he was always supported from certain sects of the black community. Cassius X, however, was the Benedict Arnold of the black community, and at a time when the attacks resembled an unflinching holocaust on his character, his interdependence was hurting him for the first time.

The loudest contempt arose from the northern liberals, veteran sportswriters, southern conservatives, and ordinary white citizens. The white media, who already shared a difficult relationship with the symbol of disorder, took this opportunity to ignite a fire large enough for the government to notice. Jimmy Cannon stated that “boxing had been turned into an instrument of hate...Clay is using it as a weapon of wickedness in an attack on the spirit...Clay’s association with the Nation of Islam was a more pernicious hate symbol than Schmeling and Nazism.” Harry Markson echoed similar sentiments, stating that “Clay’s antics have been deplorable. You don’t use the heavyweight championship of the world to spout religious diatribe...the heavyweight champion of the world preaching a hate religion.” For the sports world, it was a multitude of abhorrence for Cassius’s actions. The champ’s Gorgeous George impersonation and threats had evolved from goofy and entertaining to sinister and scary. His anti-American rants for
separatism and white violence disgusted writers. His continuance of neglect and hostility towards the sports world was further evidence that his associations would not adhere to societal standards. Worst of all, his new organization disrespected the Christian God. Regardless of how liberal some media outlets were, in the 1960s, they all supported American ideals of nationalism, Christianity, and racial brotherhood, all of which Cassius now rejected. The Children of Panic had been agitated, and the only means of halt the rise of hate in an already controversial sport was to strip the champ of his new belt. On March 23rd, The chief of the World Boxing Association, Ed Lassman, removed Cassius’s recognition as champion and orchestrated a tournament of worthy contenders, including Floyd Patterson, Doug Jones, and Cleveland Williams, who would fight for the title.\textsuperscript{54} Luckily for Cassius, many state commissions, especially California, New York, and Pennsylvania, refused to strip his championship, citing that titles are “won and lost inside the ring only.”\textsuperscript{55}

Commercially, which was the greatest asset of the Lip’s popularity, he took a major hit in the wake of hysteria. His recording album, \textit{I Am the Greatest}, was banned by Columbia Records. All television appearances were cancelled. All endorsement deals were terminated. Politicians vehemently spoke out against him.\textsuperscript{56} In fact, no business venture wanted their name associated with Cassius. The Louisville Sponsoring Group tried to organize damage control, but even their methods proved useless. One member was quoted as calling Cassius “ungrateful.” Despite this, Cassius remained loyal to the NOI.

Regardless of the loyalty, the NOI’s treatment of their new symbol of disorder amounted to exploitation, artificiality, and control. Almost immediately after Liston sat
back in his stool at the beginning of Round 7, Elijah Muhammad, whose detailed banishment of prizefighting was central to Fardian Islam, Muhammad called the champion and embraced him like a son. Perhaps, the commercially viable boxer was more enterprising than thought. Elijah gave a press conference a few days later with his view that “Clay whipped a much tougher man and came through the bout unscarred because he has accepted Muhammad as the messenger of Allah.” This was a fairly easy transaction considering the dire situation involving Malcolm X, whose suspension following his Kennedy comments was expanded indefinitely. Muhammad knew that Cassius had an immense monetary income and as mentioned before, he had no political aspirations like Malcolm. Therefore, Cassius was safe to exploit and too ignorant to question the means. Soon, Muhammad began a campaign to discredit his National Minister and replace him with two obedient symbols: Louis X, a Boston minister, and his boxing champ with a new surname to establish the connection to the messenger and disconnection with Malcolm: Muhammad Ali.  

It is no secret that after Ali’s new name change, Malcolm was well on his way out of the NOI. The question, however, was would Ali turn his back on the man who mentored him for over a year and treated him as a brother for the sake of pleasing a man who disowned and disrespected him up until recently? Again, Ali had sense to know that you don’t disrespect the Black Muslims. They have power and will not hesitate to use it. On Christmas Day, 1964, Fruit of Islam members beat Leon 4X Ameer, Ali’s press secretary, until his face resembled “raw hamburger.” He had secretly supported Malcolm in the conflict, so the FOI wanted to remind Ali where his loyalties must lie. After the beating, Ameer told the press that he feared Ali might be injured or killed in “Black
Muslim in-fighting.” Plus, Ali was not an analytical man. The exploitative facets of his life with the NOI proved that. Sonia Sanchez, a Civil Rights activist with CORE, said it best when she stated that “Ali was a great man, but he was not a thinker…You couldn’t expect him to make better flash decisions than anyone else.”

With this, Ali chose to reject Malcolm and attack him in the press:

“Did you get a look at Malcolm, dressed in that funny white robe and wearing a beard and walking with that cane that looked like a prophet’s stick. Man, he’s gone…Nobody listens to Malcolm anymore.”

With no support from anyone, Malcolm was vulnerable and ignorant. Once he had left and converted to traditional Islam, he began an offensive attack on the credibility of Elijah Muhammad, citing that for twelve years, he was a “zombie” to the NOI, “hypnotized” to the message. Muhammad, in response, launched a series of death threats at Malcolm, stating that “This hypocrite is going to get blasted clear off the face of the Earth.” On February 21, 1965, Muhammad’s threats came true as Malcolm was violently murdered at the New York Audubon Ballroom during a speech. The autopsy report listed fifteen shotgun and other caliber bullet wounds. Two members of the Fruit of Islam were captured and convicted of his murder.

The very next week, at the Savior Day’s convention in Chicago, Muhammad expressed his disgust and shock at the death of his “brother” Malcolm. With Ali sitting behind him, nodding at every sentence, Muhammad stated that “They know I loved Malcolm…His foolish teaching brought him to an end.” In his book, Bloodbath: The True Teachings of Malcolm X, Muhammad utilizes everything, including Malcolm’s older brother, Wilfred, to promote Malcolm’s obsession with violence as the reason for his death.
Now that Ali was a witness and in some corners, a possible accomplice in the murder of Malcolm, the threat level had never been higher. Evidence that Ali was controlled by Muhammad and his sons would become clear in the future, but for now, the government had to initiate a plan to appeal to the Children of Panic before this symbol got out of hand.

It’s not surprising that Ali was already heavily discussed in the United States Congress. Senator Richard Russell, a staunch Georgia segregationist, caused a stir when he publicly supported Ali’s conversion to Fardian Islam. In light of the Summer of 1964, these separatist ideologies were far and few between in the federal government. In fact, segregation was beginning to repulse members of Congress who were on the verge of passing wide-reaching Civil Rights Legislation. The Freedom Summer, as it was called, was an attempt by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), along with the assistance of other Civil Rights groups, to register as many African Americans as possible to vote in Mississippi. Due to unrelenting violent protests from the white citizens of the state, Freedom Summer was a failure in terms of voter turnout.62 However, Freedom Summer was mildly successful in establishing Freedom Schools, Freedom Houses, and community centers to help the local blacks. What was more extensive about the project was its nationwide exposure of the persecution of Southern black voters. The federal government, already at grips with continuing the Kennedy promise of fixing the racial laws the nation, was dismayed at the constant bombardment of fires and beatings shown on television and in the newspapers. Thus, at the center of the political spectrum were reparation and improvement, not hatred and separatism. Ali,
as powerful a voice as he was, represented problematic elements for the government. But the summer was far from over.

Ali’s greatest threat to the American system began on August 2 when the *USS Maddox* radioed that it was under attack by three North Vietnamese Navy torpedo boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. After another alleged attack a few days later, President Lyndon Johnson ordered retaliatory action and addressed the American people to characterize Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh as the North Vietnamese aggressors that attacked innocent U.S. patrol vessels in international waters. On August 7, as a result of both testimony by the President to the Congress and failure by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to alert the President that the second attack did not happen, Congress passed the Southeast Asia Resolution (Gulf of Tonkin Resolution), which granted the President the authority to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia without declaring war. Finally, the administration had been granted permission to transform a small operation into a full-scale war in Vietnam. The decision was cheered by the majority of the Americans, who believed that the Vietcong Communist guerillas were attacking American ships and killing innocent American sailors.

Nationalism was in full swing by the winter of 1964. As with the last great world war, fighting for American ideals and security was a proud, noble occupation for any male to be tasked with in their lifetime. The outright support for Vietnam was monstrous, engulfing both white and black families in the mix. Everyone praised the war, but the Nation of Islam, unsurprisingly, remained silent. When Elijah Muhammad was conspiring with Japanese agents like Satohata Takahashi to destroy all white devils during World War II, Congress extended the Selective Service Act draft age to forty-four,
which was Muhammad’s exact age. On February 16, 1942, Muhammad, allegedly on orders from Allah, refused to register for the draft, leading to his arrest and jailing for 4 years.64 As would Ali during Vietnam, Muhammad was told that his anti-American actions of refusing the draft and preaching hate had made him a symbol of disorder, prompting the government to silence him until the war was over.

The connection between the leader of the Black Muslims and the newly indoctrinated, popular Black Muslim was too obvious to ignore. This time, instead of allowing a Black Supremacist to gain favor, or an elitist, defiant “Bad Nigger” to disrespect the social order, the government decided to be proactive in appeasing the Children of Panic. This was a chance for the symbol of disorder to defeat himself. On February 27, 1964, Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover ordered his agents to inquire about Ali’s draft status and obtained his high school records in order to prove that the fighter was competent to serve in the military. On that same day, the Louisville draft board informed reporters that Ali may be eligible for military service and could be drafted within three weeks.65 The strategy was simple: Because of his openly anti-American ideals, Ali would reject fighting the war if drafted, thus turning America against him and destroying his sixth finger. The plan was brilliant, but Hoover did not account for the length and thoroughness of the process and how a few years could destroy the fervor for war in the nation. The plan did indeed backfire. By going after Ali, the government unconsciously strengthened both his legacy and his mythology, forever supplanting him the history books as a crusading, black hero.

As an eighteen-year old, Ali registered for the Selective Service Act with Local Board 47 in Louisville. On March 9, 1962, he was classified 1-A, which meant in the
event of a war, he was eligible for the draft. Two years later, one month before his championship fight against Liston, Ali was ordered to Armed Forces Induction Center in Coral Gables, Florida, to take the military qualifying exam. The mental aptitude part of the test proved to be an embarrassment, especially the math section. His Army IQ score was a 78, which ranked him in the sixteenth percentile, well below the passing percentile of 30. “When I looked at a lot of them questions,” Ali expressed, “I didn’t even know how to start about finding the answers.”

There were speculation that Ali had failed the test on purpose, so he was retested again (requested by Hoover), a month after becoming the heavyweight champion, and failed again. On March 26, the champ was reclassified as 1-Y, which meant he was not qualified for military duty. Internally, Ali was humiliated by his scores. Additionally, he was publicly ridiculed for his high school record, but it proved that the champ was honest and forthright during the examinations. For now, the issue seemed to fade away, but the government remained persistent, and the nation’s ideals shifted dramatically.

In the spring of 1966, the United States expanded the Vietnam War with brutal attacks on the major cities that included crop destruction, saturation of bombings, and village immolation. The new disgusting weapons of war included napalm and cluster bombs, resulting in World War II like damage to the nation. These images, while plentiful, were kept hidden by compliant media acting on the whims of the government to promote a nationalist campaign on television and the newspapers. Nonetheless, the pro-war mood began to fade in the spring of 1965, when over one hundred universities around the nation held anti-war sit-ins. What followed was a national shockwave. On April 17, 1965, over 25,000 people marched on Washington D.C. to protest the growing
war. These demonstrators demanded full withdrawal from the Vietnamese Civil War. They demanded America be held accountable for its clandestine and fraudulent domestic and international policies. As Mike Marqusee suggested, the disenchantment, not only with the policies of the American government, but with the promises and premises of America itself, was to grow rapidly, affecting huge numbers of white youth, and incidentally creating a new constituency of support for Muhammad Ali.\(^67\) The anti-war movement, or the true symbol of disorder, had begun.

In terms of protest, blacks were noticeably absent from antiwar demonstrations in the mid-1960s. Ironically, according to Marqusee, blacks were polled to be more likely to support full withdrawal from Vietnam and less likely to support escalation. In effect, the Vietnam War becomes the first American conflict that is overtly opposed by African Americans.\(^68\) Some engaged in direct nonviolent demonstrations while others encouraged draft dodging to Canada and burning draft cards. One likely antiwar stance that became popular at the time was the term “conscientious objector.” All pacifist sects claimed to be conscientious objectors, including the Nation of Islam, mainly due to the NOI’s rejection of an American identity.\(^69\) When Ali was reclassified, he claimed conscientious objector status, but his efforts would fail. On February 17, 1966, Ali’s request was denied, to his horror. Robert Lipsyte recalls being with Ali when he heard the news:

“\(^{70}\)I saw a twenty-four year old scared of being drafted...He thought he had put the draft behind, and now his life was about to be turned upside down. Someone had told him he was going to Vietnam...Of course the Muslims in the house were giving it to him. ‘Yeah, man, they’re gonna get your ass. Some white cracker sergeant is gonna put a shank in you.’ As the afternoon went by, Ali got more agitated and the questions from the reports kept coming...’What do you think about the Vietcong?-Ali exploded, ‘Man, I ain’t got no quarrel with them Vietcong.’ That was what the media wanted.”
The sportswriters responded with the fury of most of America. The antiwar movement was in full swing, but the nation had not turned against the war yet. Red Smith said “Cassius makes himself as sorry a spectacle as those unwashed punks in who picket and demonstrate against the war.” Murray Robinson suggested that “boxing should throw Clay out on his head.” Former champion Billy Conn stated that “I’ll never go to another one of his fights. He is a disgrace to the boxing profession.” Rep. Frank Clark of Pennsylvania said “The heavyweight champion of the world turns my stomach...I urge the citizens of the nation to boycott any of his performances.”

Ali immediately sought an appeal and in August 1966, a judge granted Ali his reclassification on the grounds that he “could not participate in wars on the side of nonbelievers.” For a minute, the champ had won, until the federal government reignited its task to destroy the symbol of disorder. The Justice Department argued that the NOI and its members opposed war on political and social grounds, not religious grounds as they claimed. As discussed in the previous chapter, Elijah Muhammad transformed the NOI into a political and economic group and abandoned many of the religious practices. Plus, Fardian Islam was extremely contradictory to traditional Islam, so Ali’s defense was extremely weak. The judge’s decision was overturned and Ali was again classified 1-A and set to be inducted in early 1967.

The question, however, was what were Ali’s true feelings towards the draft? There is significant evidence that Ali, while reluctant, was planning to go to Vietnam if drafted until Muhammad intervened. On April 14, 1967, fourteen days before he was supposed to be inducted into the military, Ali was asked by the press if he was going into
the service. “I’m sure I will be,” he responded. Before this, the champ had been mum on whether he would accept induction or not, but as of that day, he was preparing to go.

Then, the night before he fought Zora Folley, Ali called Sugar Ray Robinson and expressed his fear and true mentality to his mentor.

“What’s going on, Cassius?” Robinson said. “I mean, Muhammad.”

“Never mind the Muhammad,” Ali said. “You don’t have to call me that.”

“What’s on your mind?,” Robinson asked.

“It’s the army,” Ali said.

“What about the army?

“They want me—soon. But I can’t go.”

“You’ve got to go,” Robinson told the champ.

“No. Elijah Muhammad told me that I can’t go,” Ali responded.

“What do you mean you can’t go?”

“That’s what he told me,” Clay said with his eyes fixed to the floor.

“I don’t care what Muhammad told you. But I do care about you. If you don’t go in the army, you’ll go to jail. When that happens, they’ll take your title away. Do you realize that you’re forfeiting your entire career?”


“Afraid of what,” Robinson asked. “Afraid of the Muslims if you don’t do what they told you?”

Ali didn’t answer.

If this exchange is to be believed, not only was Ali unconscious towards the black race, but his admittance to refusing the draft because of Muhammad’s demand makes him unconscious in his antiwar stance. As Muhammad controlled Malcolm, he also controlled the champion. Plus, this was not the only time Ali admitted to being controlled by Muhammad. When Howard Cosell, one of Ali’s closest friends, interviewed the champ concerning the military, Ali cut him off, stating “Can’t talk to you no more, not without Elijah’s permission.” Cosell noted “This was simply further evidence of the degree of control the Muslims exercised over him.” He would often cite that “if it weren’t for the Muslims, I’d be nothing.” His family, especially Cassius Clay Jr. and his Aunt Mary, refused to believe anything other than that the Louisville
Lipp had been brainwashed and exploited for his capital earning power and recruiting prowess. His first wife, Sonji Clay, spoke about her ex-husband’s dual personality and two faced behavior, citing that while with her, he was a completely different person than with the Black Muslims. In fact, it is widely believed that Ali divorced Sonji because the Black Muslims clouded his judgment concerning the woman. This period marked the zenith at which Ali displayed his interdependence. For the champ, it was a simple concession to further elongate his prominent stature. Both the power and stability were present, so Ali blindly followed. Inside the ring, he continued to dominate and defend his championship against the best, but he was untouchable.

Across the nation, the Children of Panic were writhing in agony at the popularity of Ali. Regardless of his manipulation in resisting the draft, Ali’s power status turned resistance from a non-masculine, cowardly trend to a brave, masculine, racially tolerant movement. Like Jack Johnson, Ali’s motivations were questioned, but his actions were seen as heroic. Especially with the nation’s view being turned against the war, Ali was perfect to add masses of African Americans to the cause. As Cashill put it, Ali destroyed the “lily white image” of the movement.76 Plus, by 1967, the peaceful, antiwar movement removed the violent and militant image from Ali that the rest of the NOI endured. In effect, white America began embracing the champ in large numbers, thus giving him power that Jack Johnson never achieved. Ali knew nothing of the conflict, history, or geography of the war, but his presence as a representative was enough for Leftist groups and antiwar protesters to acknowledge his heroism.77

After numerous calls for reclassification, the government believed it could use the NOI’s political realm to get Ali. On April 28th, 1967, during the military induction
ceremony in Houston, the heavyweight champion refused to step forward. In a letter to
the government, he cited his reason being that he was “a minister of the religion of
Islam.” On June 20th, 1967, Ali was found guilty of draft evasion by a federal grand
jury. Mort Susman, head of the United States Attorney’s Office for Southern District of
Texas, declared after the verdict that “he had studied the Muslim order and found it to be
as much political as it is religious.” Surprisingly, the Nation of Islam remained neutral
and showed no support in Ali’s decision. Elijah Muhammad, however, did comment on
the situation, saying that Ali was being mistreated and harassed “in order to keep the
other mentally sleeping so-called Negroes fast asleep to the fact that Islam is a refuge for
the so-called Negroes in America.” This points directly to more exploitation by
Muhammad, who wanted Ali to go to jail. As a martyr for the cause, Ali’s imprisonment
would signal a rise in popularity for the NOI. It would prompt hundreds of thousands of
blacks to seek conversion and salvation with Elijah Muhammad. In other words, Ali in
prison would place the NOI in its highest notoriety in history.

While Elijah Muhammad flexed his controlling muscle, the government altered
their approach to keep the champ out of prison. In truth, the government’s only objective
was to quiet or discredit the symbol of disorder. Before the conviction, federal attorneys
attempted to negotiate a deal where Ali would serve the military in a non-combat
capacity. As long as they made him wear the uniform, the government knew that it
would invalidate his role as a national antiwar icon. It almost worked, but Muhammad
and his son Herbert, who would continue to exploit the champ’s finances and popularity
as his manager, continued to deny the government. The only other option was to send
the Lip to prison as a reminder to all potential symbols of disorder.
At the beginning of 1969, Ali was in financial restraints due to his exile from boxing. Following his victory over Zora Folley, Ali did not fight again until 1970. He travelled the nation giving speeches at college campuses, but the champ spent his money incessantly. He always made sure everyone in his camp was taken care of, including Drew “Bundini” Brown, who would often get into financial trouble with Ali. Finally, the truth came out in an interview with Howard Cosell. When asked if he wanted to return to the ring soon, Ali said he would because he “needed the money.” Like Malcolm X before him, Ali had angered Elijah Muhammad by alerting the press to the negative aspects of Black Muslim life. In an issue of *Muhammad Speaks*, Muhammad angrily responded, stating that “We tell the world we’re not with Muhammad Ali...Ali had stepped down off the spiritual platform of Islam to go and see if he can make money in the sporting world.”

Members the NOI broke the rules constantly, including murder and torture, but Ali was the symbol of the movement, so he had to be reprimanded for his insubordination. Like the United States government, the Nation of Islam now viewed Ali as a symbol of disorder. On that same day, Muhammad “stripped” Ali of his name, exclaiming that he had no use for “a fool so weak as to go crawling on his hands and knees to the white man for a little money.”

Unfortunately for Muhammad, he chose the wrong time to distance himself from Ali. The Tet Offensive launched on January 30, 1968 created a crisis in the Johnson Administration, which had failed miserably in persuading the American public to believe that it was not a major disaster for U.S. troops. The credibility gap had widened to voluminous proportions between the government and the public concerning the war. To add to the angst, the United States military, on March 16 that same year, slaughtered
over three hundred Vietnamese women, children, and elderly people in the My Lai Massacre. The anti-Vietnam War movement had ballooned out of control with many calling for full withdrawal. Indeed, the nightmare vision of American imperialism had collapsed as the New Left wanted, and Ali was at the center of superstars calling for withdrawal. In effect, his fortunes transformed dramatically. He signed a sponsorship contract of $900,000 for supporting a new food franchise called “Champburgers.” He then signed a book deal with Random House that netted thousands of dollars and his lectures begin to bring in more money. The farther away Ali was from the NOI, the better his life and fortune.

Ali’s popularity reached new heights on June 28, 1971, when his conviction for draft evasion was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. The government knew it was a lost case. The public support for Ali by that time was too massive to ignore. Unlike Jack Johnson, Ali survived the attack from the Children of Panic, not once, but twice. The title “People’s Champion” fit Ali properly after 1971, as the symbol of disorder became the symbol of courage to a damaged nation. It is not a surprise that by 1971, when Ali was at his zenith, Elijah Muhammad re-embraced him. Unfortunately, the support of Ali would lead to his downfall by the end of the 1970s.
NOTES


2 In 1999, President Bill Clinton pardoned Henry O. Flipper, the first black graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Flipper was wrongfully convicted of embezzling commission funds. In 2008, President George W. Bush Jr. pardoned Charlie Winters for illegally selling decommissioned bombers to Israel during the Arab-Israel War of 1948. These are the only two posthumous pardons issued in history. President Obama has yet to issue a pardon to anyone as of July 2012.


5 Langum, Crossing Over the Line, 20.

6 Ibid, 25. According to Langum, Women needed $8 a week to maintain an independent lifestyle in the early 1900s. Many employers paid women far less than this, which could have led to a spike in prostitution or “Charity Girls.”


8 Langum, Crossing Over the Line, 15.

9 Ibid, 21-22. The Purity Movement had many facets, including raising the age of consent (in some states it was as low as ten), it attacked the idea that men mandatorily needed sexual intercourse (which is what many Europeans used to justify prostitution), the challenging of double standard societal norms, where men were allowed to promiscuity while women were disgraced for extramarital affairs, and the rescue of prostitutes and fallen women. Famous activists like William Lloyd Garrison and David Starr Jordan supported the movement’s goal in removing sin and carnal perverseness from American society.

10 Ibid.


12 Atlanta Constitution, 22 May 1910.

13 Langum, Crossing Over the Line, 29-30.

14 Ibid, 38.

15 Ibid, 42.


21 *New York Times*, 16 May 1911.


30 *Ibid*, 158.

31 *The Ogden Examiner*, 20 December 1912.


34 In total, over 21 bills advocating the ban of interracial marriage were introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1913. Although the introduction was met with fervor and intensity, none of the bills passed.


37 At first, the Bureau kept Belle in New York until the trial, which she loved due to the attention. She often told her story about her life with Johnson to anyone who would listen, but soon she got bored and began complaining. She often begged for drugs and alcohol and expressed her desire to go back to work as a prostitute. When she tried to run away, the Bureau had no legal way to keep her in New York, so they told her that Johnson, who is desperate and angry, would use his influence to find her and kill her. Although this calmed her down, she refused to stay in New York, so she was moved to Baltimore. The
federal government hid Belle well because Johnson had put a $10,000 bounty on anyone who had evidence
of Belle’s whereabouts in the country and he never found her. Belle continued her complaining and
withdrawal, but in the end, she was calm and presentable on the stand and told a much more polished story
thanks to Bureau agents who rehearsed with her in the weeks prior to the trial.

39 Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 338-339.
40 Johnson did attempt to win sympathy from the public during the trial in various ways. He sat
next to his mother every day and refused to allow Lucille to attend. The sight of Lucille in the courtroom
could have exploded into verbal and physical altercation.

41 Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 143-144.
42 Ibid, 344-345.
43 Roberts, Papa Jack, 178.
44 Remnick, King of the World, 207.
45 Gazette Mail, 8 March 1964.
46 Jack Cashill, Sucker Punch, 72. Remnick, King of the World, 211.
48 Gazette Mail, 8 March 1964
50 Gazette Mail, 8 March 1964
51 David K. Wiggins, Glory Bound: Black Athletes in a White America (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse
Univ Pr (Sd), 1997), 157.
52 Jack Cashill, Sucker Punch, 73; Remnick, King of the World, 210.
53 Thomas Hauser, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times (New York, New York: Simon &
Schuster, 1992), 104.
54 Salt Lake Tribune, 24 March 1964.
55 Sammons, Beyond the Ring, 197.
56 Marqusee, Redemption Song, 9.
57 Cashill, Sucker Punch, 71, 74-75.
58 Ibid, 76.
60 The Sheboygan Press, 22 February 1965; Cashill, Sucker Punch, 76-77.


62 By the end of 1964, Freedom Summer was known for its violent attacks. The state and local government, the Ku Klux Klan, and the White Citizens' Council used all violent means to prohibit black suffrage. Statistically, four civil rights workers were killed, three black Mississippian citizens were killed, 80 Freedom Summer workers were severely beaten, 1062 workers and locals were arrested, 37 churches were bombed and burnt, and 30 black homes and businesses were burnt and bombed. See Bruce Watson, Freedom Summer: The Savage Season that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy. New York: Penguin Group/Viking Press, 2010.

63 Edwin E. Moise, Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Pr, 2004), 82-83; 106-107


66 Hauser, Muhammad Ali, 142-143.

67 Marqusee, Redemption Song, 165-166.

68 Before Vietnam, black heavily supported American wars and conflicts mainly because they wanted to achieve the perception of full citizenship in the wake of Jim Crow and nativist policies. Going back to the American Revolution, a black man serving his nation at a time of war was believed to be heroic and deserving of an American identity.

69 Ibid, 167-168.

70 Hauser, Muhammad Ali, 144-145.

71 Ibid, 146-147.

72 Cashill, Sucker Punch, 91.

73 Pacific Stars and Stripes, 14 April 1967.


75 Cashill, Sucker Punch, 92.

76 Ibid, 93.

77 Ibid, 93-94.

78 Wiggins, Glory Bound, 162.
On July 18, 1973, John 38X Clark and seven NOI members went to the house of Hamas Abdul Khaalis, carrying loaded guns. They killed everyone that was in the house, including all the children and guests. Elijah Muhammad swept this story under the rug when it happened and more violence followed. For a full detailed description of the horrific crime, please see Cashill, *Sucker Punch*, 141-142.

CHAPTER VIII

NINETY YEARS WITHOUT SLUMBERING: JACK JOHNSON, MUHAMMAD ALI, AND THE COLLAPSE OF MASCULINITY

“Ninety years without slumbering,
tick, tock, tick tock,
His life seconds numbering,
Tick, tock, Tick, tock,
it stopped short,
never to go again;
When the old man died.”

At the midpoint of the twentieth century, ardent abolitionists Alanson and Amelia Work, along with their son Henry, transformed their Connecticut home into one of the most prominent safe houses for the Underground Railroad to assist escaped bondsmen to the Canadian border. Despite arrests, beatings, and death threats, the Work family managed to aid nearly one hundred enslaved persons across the boundary. Adopting his family’s virtues and attitudes towards black equality, Henry embraced the slave dialect and became a famous songwriter and musician during the Civil War. In 1876 came his biggest hit, “My Grandfather’s Clock,” which went on to net over one million dollars in sheet music sales and popularized the phrase, “grandfather clock.” In similar fashion to his previous work, “Grandfather’s Clock” deals primarily with the theme of time as a grandfather awaits for his clock, which has worked perfectly for all ninety years of his life, to finally stop, which would also signal the end his life. In most modern adoptions, the grandfather becomes so obsessed with the impending doom that he neglects everyday activities, especially sleeping, to hopefully prolong his time. In essence, Work’s major
thesis suggests that regardless of the actions or willpower of man, he must utilize his time to the fullest potential because it is definitely limited. All whom attempt to extend that time are met with serious loss and disappointment.

Athletes in particular experience similar struggles with bounded time. Besides the obvious factor of age, athletes have to contend with excessive physical damage, mental anguish, and heightened expectations in performance that contribute to elevated stress. To the everyday citizen, the athlete acts as a conduit to reputational values in society of triumph or failure. In other words, hero worship of the athlete is primarily based on the competitor’s success in the sport. Secondary influences include physical attractiveness and personality, which add overall to commercial viability. With these dynamics, athletes age exponentially faster, especially in the minds of corporates, sportswriters and fans. The clock is always ready to run out, so prolongation becomes not only a desire, but a necessity. Plus, the unprecedented wealth increases the grasp for unlimited time as the hero. As a result, a decline in stature or loss of time as the hero forces the some to resort to drastic and sometimes, destructive measures to remain relevant. In the case of the grandfather, his ignorance of sleep directly parallels the plight of both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali, whose stronghold on masculinity began to crumble under the weight of itself.

As both boxers walked away from their numerous tribulations victorious, they increasingly engaged in self-destructive and degenerative behavior that brought about extreme consequences. While Johnson was able to escape persecution through exile, his increasingly self-righteous, egotistical attitude effectively chipped away at his wealth and power, thus forcing him to return back in defeat to the “Children of Panic” in America.
In dissimilar fashion to the Galveston Giant, Ali's legacy remained intact at the end of his career; however, his one-dimensional interdependent mentality allowed increased manipulation, exploitation, and damage to all components of the masculinity that he earned throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. By the middle of the 1990s, after continuous monetary failures and irreconcilable mental and physical damage, The Louisville Lip was virtually unrecognizable. Gone was the boisterous, flamboyancy; it was replaced with uncertainty and regret. Gone were the Nation of Islam and the exploitation of Elijah Muhammad. Gone was the power and heroism of finishing an illustrious career on top of the prizefighting world. Gone were the numerous women who attached themselves to the champ’s fame and money. What remained, nonetheless, was Ali’s touching sense of humor, the unconditional love and care for all people, regardless of race or color, and the indestructible sixth finger. This chapter will analyze the reasons behind the downfall of these two symbols of disorder, who strangled every ounce of time allotted to control masculinity and manliness in American sports and society. For these two unconscious race icons, who valued all things in life on their status in the self-determinant, masculine world, the haunting pendulum of the clock always swung between life and death and success and failure.

On June 4, 1913, Judge Carpenter sealed the Galveston Giant’s fate when he sentenced him to one year in prison for violation of the Mann Act. For years, Johnson had often danced with the law with indifference and defiance. He had laughed off traffic tickets for his street racing and fines for his acts of violence and abuse, but the idea of actual confinement for such an extensive period of time frightened him. Days and possibly a week in prison upset him, so the sentencing of a full year sent him into
complete panic mode. He had flirted with the idea of flight from the United States before, but now it had become mandatory. After all, prison not only was horrifying due to the conditions of a servitude-like state, but Johnson saw his manliness in jeopardy. A year away from the bright lights, women, money and power behind a devastating punch would surely kill the masculinity he enjoyed so much. Masculinity in sports was too perfect to slip away and Johnson needed more time. If prolongation of time meant risking everything to go beyond the law and leave his homeland forever, then Johnson was prepared.

Still, with a daring and explosive escape being planned, Johnson’s ego almost exposed the entire operation. Exactly two weeks before the escape, Federal Agent X-102 reported to Charles DeWoody that the champ had shipped his two cars to Germany and was planning an extensive tour of Europe. Surprisingly, when speaking with DeWoody, Johnson admitted that he had shipped his vehicles to Germany. With DeWoody and the entire federal government on notice of Johnson’s proposed escape, security suddenly relaxed and Johnson was able to use a flimsy lie of a “fishing trip” to Cedar Lake, Indiana to travel to Canada where Europe awaited him.

On June 28, the headlines read in explosive lettering “CAN’T CATCH HIM, CHICAGO HEARS! But how did such a demonstrative and predatory system that had spent thousands of dollars and utilized extensive manpower allow the symbol of disorder to leave without resistance? The New York Times effectively blamed law enforcement for allowing the “Bad Nigger” to embarrass the nation once again:

Jack Johnson, negro prizefighter, under sentence of imprisonment in Leavenworth prison on a white slave charge, has got away safely, according to Federal officials here, and cannot be caught unless he once more sets foot on United States soil... The negro laid his plans carefully and was guided by expert legal opinion...he
[Johnson] bought here a through ticket to Europe, thereby not coming under the jurisdiction of the Canadian authorities any more than a passenger from Chicago to New York over the Grand Trunk would be amenable to jurisdiction...6

The most popular theory given for Johnson’s easy escape was that the government preferred attrition instead of confinement. The government possibly placed a highly questionable bet on Johnson’s absence positively affecting the nation.7 In other words, law enforcement believed that killing Johnson’s domestic time would damage his influence over time. To add validity to this theory, bits of evidence exists that DeWoody turned his back to the situation. The story exploded on January 19, 1914, when Chicago Examiner published an interview with Johnson where the champ bragged about “bribing” five government agents, including DeWoody, with over $50,000 in cash payments.8

What made matters worse was Johnson’s continued insistence through telegrams from overseas that the transactions had happened and that DeWoody and his men were “robbers” and “blackmailers.” The Chicago Examiner decided to further instigate the situation by publishing replicas of the supposed “checks” that Johnson had paid to the “bag boys, Roy Jones and Sol Lewinsohn to give to the Bureau of Investigation. To further discredit the judgment of the Bureau, the champ’s family conducted numerous interviews, especially his sister, Jennie, who willingly provided a detailed description of her brother and mother, Tiny, visiting Lewinsohn with the payments. The final straw was when M. Evalyn Kritzinger, an employee of the State’s Attorney Office, came forward and accused her boss, State Attorney John Wayman, of extorting Johnson and his family.9

Regardless of the reasoning, the government had allowed Johnson to escape and preferred he stay away. The grandfather clock for the Galveston Giant in America had
stalled; he was Europe’s problem now, but the champ’s global time had would become as strained as it was in his homeland.

As soon as Johnson arrived to his first destination in exile, Paris, his masculinity was instantaneously fatally wounded. Across the seas, African Americans believed Johnson was in great spirits and was receiving even more hero worship now that he had escaped the persecution of the Children of Panic. According to French reporters, he flashed as many golden smiles as thousand dollar bills as he sauntered through the busy Parisian streets, signing autographs and posing for pictures. He also talked in detail concerning his love of Napoleon authored works and Alexander Dumas’ plays. These mythological tales of exile were translated by the black press, especially The Chicago Defender, to provide African Americans with a hopeful account of black power overcoming global racial injustice. In other words, black newspapers sought vigorously to keep the Galveston Giant’s sixth finger status popular while he was away. Race consciousness for the sporting black hero must remain intact. On the day of the champ’s departure, the Defender placed in bold letters on its front page:

JACK JOHNSON IS CRUCIFIED FOR HIS RACE

FAMOUS FISTIC GLADIATOR SAILS FOR FRANCE AFTER BEING PERSECUTED IN THE UNITED STATES.

WHAT HAS HE DONE? IF HE CHOSE A WOMAN OF A DIFFERENT COLOR FOR HIS COMPANION AND LEGALLY MARRIED HER, WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT?

WHAT HAS THE WHITE MAN DONE?

JACK JOHNSON HAS DONE NO DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER BIG SPORT
FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN WHIPPING JEFFRIES
AND BEING A NEGRO IS JACK JOHNSON PERSECUTED.
CONSORTING WITH WHITE WOMEN IS NO CAUSE.

JACK IS ONE OF THAT HOST THAT JOHN COULDN'T NUMBER.¹¹

The Unconscious race hero must appear as race conscious as ever since his absence took away examples of domestic defiance.

In reality, Johnson was miserable and in declining popularity in Europe. Racial injustice followed him around the globe. Paris denounced his grandeur stature by denying him access to their best hotels. He also was running out of money and his acting on vaudeville proved to be a failure as well. The Executive Committee of the Variety Artists’ Federation banned actors from appearing onstage with the champ because “Johnson’s engagements in the existing circumstances are a question of public decency.”¹² When he attempted to perform in Belgium, they outright banned him. For meager wages, he created a show of strongman feats so ridiculous in its rehearsed theatrics that the crowds pelted the stage with vegetables. Everything that Gus Rhodes, the champ’s manager, told the Chicago Defender to print was complete falsehood as Johnson struggled mightily to maintain the masculine lifestyle. Money continued to be in dearth. There was talk of a possible elixir concocted by his mother that he planned to market all over the continent, but it never panned out.

For Paris, the champ’s clock had stopped. What is most notable during this period is Johnson’s decline in international boxing thought. By the end of August, the French Boxing Federation declared the heavyweight title as vacant.¹³ This signaled a true challenge to Johnson’s masculinity. To reassert himself as the only heavyweight
champion of the world, he agreed to fight Jim Johnson, a black heavyweight from Texas, and Frank Moran, a white Pittsburgh heavyweight whom often moonlighted as an actor. Problems arose quickly. Firstly, Jim Johnson was as mediocre a fighter as there was and in no caliber to fight the Giant; this upset numerous sports critics because it reiterated Johnson’s refusal to fight established, challenging pugilists. Secondly, the fight itself was a boring joke. Although this marked the first heavyweight title fight between two African Americans in history, both fighters’ willingness to remain defensive throughout seriously disappointed an already fervent crowd. *The London Times* reported that the fight was “a wholly unsatisfying encounter,” and that “the audience dispersed, continuing to express its disapproval of the whole proceedings.”

Thirdly, Frank Moran proved to be as embarrassing a contender as Jim Johnson. The champ barely trained, excessively overate, and still was the undeniable winner to another snore-fest. *The New York Times*, called the June 27, 1914 bout “positively the poorest bout ever staged as a championship contest.”

The ignoring of Sam Langford created a complex dent that the champ preferred to ignore. True, Johnson was allegedly the controller of his own masculinity and power in boxing, but to what extent did his masculinity still hold credence if he willingly ducked a top contender who exhibited similar physical power? In a more modern comparison, Muhammad Ali’s daughter, Laila Ali, was heavily criticized for fighting only mediocre contenders so as to remain champion and undefeated. True, she is considered one of the greatest female boxers of all time, but critics still question her legitimacy because of her avoidance of top contenders. Currently, Floyd Mayweather, Jr. has experienced similar criticism for his lack of big fights. Notwithstanding the legal issues, his dance around the
contract with the number one contender, Manny Pacquiao, has caused immense
controversy surrounding his legacy. For Jack Johnson, who represented the black race
internationally, refusing to fight Langford, who most critics believed could either match
well or defeat Johnson, placed a precedent of weakness on his mentality. Ironically, the
flight from persecution due to fright, which would normally constitute a negative
reaction, was embraced by blacks as necessary due to the racial implications of the case;
he would still be creating his own destiny through power and wealth, but now
internationally, away from Jim Crow America. His manliness was thought to be intact;
however, Johnson’s fright of big bouts and ridiculous showings of mediocrity cast long
shadows on his grasp of masculinity. Can masculinity be genuine if challenges to it are
not overcome, let alone met?

Regardless of his actions, Johnson’s victory was again celebrated by blacks as his
race hero status remained untouched. Thanks to The Chicago Defender, who
acknowledged in bold letters that “Boasted white hope” is punched at will and anglo-
saxon supremacy in heavyweight class receives crushing blow...,” black pride for the
Galveston Giant was at an all-time high. The willingness of the blacks to accept the
black pride propaganda of the The Chicago Defender reiterates the desire to hero worship
a self-determinant egotist like Johnson as long as his adventures remain triumphant
against the backdrop of white supremacy. As with other Johnson related accounts, The
Defender refused to report on the mediocrity of the fight and Johnson’s performance or
his lack of pay. Also, the black newspapers omitted that throughout his trek in Europe,
Johnson’s increasingly high debt ravaged his mentality and manhood, often making him
depressed. It was a deceptive necessity for the blacks to witness their Galveston Giant
stomping mightily through white Europe in the pages of newspapers while extralegal violence against non-white citizens and Jim Crow practices subdued the domestic blacks.

In similar fashion to the mechanizations that Elijah Muhammad would use to conglomerate political power in the Nation of Islam and Muhammad Ali would utilize to become the symbol of disorder in the 1960s, Jack Johnson inflicted more extensive damage to his fragile masculinity by attacking America during a nationalistic time. After the Moran bout, the champ’s finances worsened and he and his wife were forced to flee to St. Petersburg on July 1. Unfortunately for the fugitive couple, after a month, they were told to leave immediately and set forth for England, the only safe country by August. The day after Johnson lackadaisically silenced the meager roar of Frank Moran, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austria-Hungarian Empire was shot and killed along with his wife by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb student and member of Young Bosnia and the Black Hand organizations. This prompted the “July Crisis,” which essentially was the attempt by the superpowers of Europe (Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary) to manipulate control and dominance in the Western Hemisphere over each other. After all, the alliance systems created at the beginning of the century had been perceived as bullying threats of gang warfare in an ethnically diverse area of the world. In fact, Austria-Hungary involuntarily welcomed the Serbian’s gruesome act against their prince, prompting the superpower to initiate their planned annihilation of Serbian influence in Bosnia. It was inevitable that Austria-Hungary’s ten demands of the July Ultimatum sent to the Serbs would spark the declaration of war as they were intentionally unacceptable and insulting. By the middle of August 1914, the entire continent was engaged in the First Great World War.
Ironically, World War I personified the Galveston Giant’s quest to maintain masculinity greatly. Germany, considered the rising threat at the time, growled and displayed enough immense self-determination, independence, and power enough to alert the Children of Panic in Britain and Russia to devise a plan to demonstrate superior strength. Also, the ethnic conflicts between the Serbs and Austria-Hungarians symbolized a growing trend towards global racial hegemony that would explode by the 1940s, thanks in due part to the onslaught of fascism. World War I was as much about military superiority, or strength, as it was about racial superiority, or dominance in masculinity. As Theresa Runstedtlter notes, Jack Johnson and other black boxers’ ventures across seas during this turbulent timeframe parallels the desires of racial and economic groups to demonstrate supremacy. In Johnson’s case, however, the only supremacy that mattered was the preservation of his masculinity through wealth and power. Unfortunately, due to the war and the champ’s grasping for more time on the clock, the real collapse of his dominance began when he arrived in London.

The most prestigious and important element to Johnson’s personality was his love of money. As discussed previously, the champ’s monetary habits exhibited his masculinity best, as he earned it in his own entrepreneurial way and spent it freely on whatever he chose. Taking care of himself and others economically was expressively powerful, but that same power became one his greatest Achilles’ heel. For almost fifteen years, the increase and decrease in wealth had defined Johnson’s sojourns, but this time, the outlook was more bleak than usual. With his credit almost gone and the war keeping him in Britain, his back was against the wall to take whatever sources of income that
could place him back to his comfort level economically. The answer, according to Harry Frazee, was Jess Willard.\textsuperscript{21}

If there ever was a masculine challenge to the self-righteous attitude of Johnson, Willard exhibited it in more ways than one. Born in Pattawatomie County, Kansas, Willard’s aspirations in prizefighting directly mirrored Johnson’s. Due to lack of education and desire for profit, he quit his cattle ranching job at age twenty seven and began utilizing his size (over 6 feet, 6 inches, weighing 250 pounds) in the ring. “God made me a giant,” he said. “I never received an education, never had any money. I knew that I was a big fellow and powerful strong. I just sat down and figured that a man as big as me ought to be able to cash in on the road to boxing.”\textsuperscript{22} Like Johnson, his early career in the ring varied with unimpressive wins and defeats. He was slow-moving with lackluster defense skills, but as Geoffrey C. Ward notes, Willard was financially viable and a potential threat to Johnson and his legacy because he was big, strong, and white.\textsuperscript{23}

By early 1915, the fight was signed. The only problem concerned the location. As a fugitive, Johnson knew that the fight could not happen in the United States. Europe was in the grips of war and the idea of a heavyweight bout in the midst of a war torn continent proved ludicrous. Mexico became a viable option, but rumors began that A. Bruce Bielaski had arranged an extradition of the champ back to the U.S. if he stepped foot in Mexico. To ease the fears, Havana, Cuba was chosen as the site and Johnson arrived to train for his biggest challenge to date.\textsuperscript{24}

As was the case with Jim Johnson and Frank Moran, Johnson’s ego infected his prefight mentality. As a thirty-six year old man, he was considered “over the hill” for boxing, which should have intensified his training. However, he settled for mediocre,
light training sessions, often failing them. He frequently was absent from scheduled sparring sessions. He was visibly overweight and flabby. Famed boxing writer Nat Fleischer, who stayed at Johnson’s hotel in Havana, noted the champ’s absence of fight readiness:

“The lean, panther-like trim that distinguished him in his fight with Jeffries, was not in evidence. He had grown heavier and thicker around the middle. His magically quick straight left was as deadly efficient as ever but his movements in general were slower, more deliberate than of old.”

When questioned concerning his lack of readiness, Johnson responded with arrogant indifference. “I am the best judge of my condition, and I am satisfied,” he said with that same golden-smile that had become synonymous with his character.

While Johnson ate and conducted interviews, Willard trained harder than ever. Although he, unlike Ali, vocally hated training due to its structure and discipline, Willard felt it was more than necessary to be as perfect as possible. To many, however, Willard’s determination in the gym meant absolutely nothing. Weeks before the bout, rumors began to float that would alter Johnson’s legacy and forever challenge his true stronghold of masculinity. His indifference to the fight and his training mixed with his overbearing confidence gave the citizens of Havana the idea that the championship bout might be fixed. Stories spread across the island that Johnson’s bravado and egotism were pure theatre as he had already agreed to lose in return for a larger purse and possibly a reduced prison sentence upon return the United States. While the rumors were damming enough, the evidence that surfaced after the fight was even more damaging. In actuality, Johnson had indeed approached the Bureau of Investigation with the proposal to throw his bout against Willard in exchange for a reduced sentence for his Mann Act conviction. Bielaski vehemently refused, claiming that Johnson should be treated as any other
The fact that Johnson attempted to rectify his dire situation by taking a dive points directly to his unconscious mentality as a race hero. To eliminate his mounting debt and avoid imprisonment, Johnson was willing to lay down for white supremacy and sacrifice his masculinity. In essence, the champ’s selfish nature threatened to take away his sixth finger, effectively destroying his race hero status among blacks. Johnson admitted in his autobiography that he did not understand or want the responsibility of representing black pride, but this revelation adds to the idea that he was willing to exploit his sixth finger for merely self-preservation. In contrast, Ali utilized his sixth finger to give, sometimes irresponsibly, to others while Johnson used it for the sole purpose of saving himself. Even if it meant stopping his time as the dominant force in sports and society, his own livelihood was more important and worth the risk.

Whether Johnson believed that the deal was secure or not, it was not evident on that April 5 afternoon. Between 15,000 and 20,000 excited fans sweltered in the hot Havana sun when the start bell rang around 1 pm. Another 5,000 gathered in the surrounding hills hoping to catch the fight for free. In truth, they had come to see the champ knock out Willard. Johnson was much more popular in Cuba than in Europe. His skin color, language and interviews appealed to the local citizens. Plus, they applauded his interracial marriage since it was more common there. In the United States, the exact opposite was true. The Americans awaited in anticipation for the Pattawatomie Giant to reclaim masculinity for the white race.

For the first twenty rounds at Oriental Park, the champ looked dominant while he pounded Willard at will. By the twenty-first round, Johnson began to noticeably tire as if something had gone wrong. Fleischer noticed that he kept looking at his wife, Lucille,
while in the clinches. She sat at ringside staring in horror as the challenger caught
Johnson with a windmill right hand under the champ’s heart in the twenty fifth round.
After that punch, Johnson rushed to his wife and told her that he was “all in” and that she
should head for home. The champ refused to allow his wife to watch his masculinity
forever shattered, for he knew the end was near. In the very next round, Willard came
out ferociously with a cyclonic right to the Galveston Giant’s jaw, sending him to the
floor of the ring with a thunderous thud. As he shaded his eyes from the blinding hot
sunlight with his gloves, he saw a small glimpse of referee Welch holding the hand of the
Willard, signifying the most celebratory day in white sports history up to that point.

The first group to show disdain at Johnson’s failure to grasp masculinity were the
Cubans in attendance, who exploded in riot and rushed the ring to tear the former
champion apart. The bloodlust and anger towards Johnson was not merely for the fact
that he had lost; it was not simply for the wagers of money lost on the fight; the Cubans
felt as though he had given up as to show that Willard, the white challenge, was superior.
As a race that included heterogeneous mixes of black, Spanish, and native Cubans, their
feelings paralleled to that of the American blacks who held Johnson in such high regard.
In actuality, the Cubans possibly loved him more. Unlike the American blacks, they did
not question his interracial marriage; they welcomed and celebrated it. His knowledge of
the native language pleased the population. He embraced qualities that the Cubans
admired, so his betrayal of their trust and admiration devastated their hero worship,
effectively stripping him of his sixth finger there. Luckily for Johnson, General Menocal,
President of the Cuban Republic, who Fleischer also noted showed anguish at the
Galveston Giant’s failure, placed his army in control of the rioters while the fighters were ushered away from the ring.

The white response in America was aggressively festive. For the last ten years, Jack Johnson had defied all traditional societal norms and had stolen the white middle class masculinity through the use of his body. Finally, his self-determinant, independent egotism had failed him in such a way that he may not recover. It was not just that Johnson lost; he was knocked out, which provided a redemptionist tone to the Willard victory. White masculinity and supremacy had knocked out black inferiority, defiance and disorder! *The New York Times* wrote that “Willard made it possible for many millions of his fellow citizens to sit down to their dinners...with renewed confidence in their eight-inch biceps, flexed, and their twenty-eight inch chests.”

Evangelist Billy Angel proclaimed that “Every white man should be happy.” *Detroit News* printed that “The Ethiopian has been eliminated...There will never be a black heavyweight champion at least as long as the present generation endures.” The celebration intensified when the new champion arrived back in America, which Geoffrey Ward said “inspired an orgy of white self-satisfaction.” What pleased whites more than the victory was the new champ’s declaration that he would not defend his title again against another black man ever.

Interestingly, Willard’s reasoning points directly to W.E.B. Du Bois’s Critical Race Theory, the color line in America, and problem of race consciousness:

“A championship fight between a black man and a white man makes bad blood between the races. Jack Johnson did more to hurt his people than Booker T. Washington did to help them. I am not saying this in a mean way. I’m not excusing white men for feeling that way. I think it shows ignorance...Who doesn’t remember the whole ‘white hope’ business? And just as ignorant white men though their race disgraced, so did a lot of ignorant colored men think that their race had been proved the better by Johnson’s victory. That’s why I’m going to draw the color line. I say this because I don’t want anybody to think
I'm doing it from any mean, dirty little prejudice. It isn't race or color that counts: it's brains. A sober decent Chinaman looks better to me than a drunken bum of an American. A Negro who uses his intelligence is a finer man than a white man who soaks his mind in a whisky glass. Some of the greatest fighters in history have been black men. And I want to say that they have always showed up as game...as white fighters. 34

Immediately, black newspapers across the nation printed Willard's statement. The statement had challenged traditional Du Bois thought on race pride and consciousness. According to Willard, the blacks' creation of a race conscious hero had inadvertently caused strife and increased hatred amongst the races. By drawing the color line, or embracing segregationist practices, Willard believed that both races would develop mutual respect and admiration for one another. This directly conflicts with Critical Race Theory, which advocates black pride and race consciousness to improve the standing and status of the black race in a society. In effect, Willard's statement confused blacks and whites together, as he seemed to embrace the role of apologist for the white race for its Jim Crow legislation and practices. At the same time, Willard unconsciously agreed to ban the black race from competing for the masculinity and power in individual sports again, thus causing other elements of black society to potentially become the focus of the fight for equality. Looking forward, Willard's idea failed miserably as blacks would retake and dominate prizefighting for decades to come, especially with the rise of Sam Langford, Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Larry Holmes, Mike Tyson, and Evander Holyfield. Race consciousness remained close-knitted with sports, but it also branched out into other aspects of the political and socioeconomic atmosphere.

The first black response to the Johnson loss from America came from Tiny Johnson, the mother who had unintentionally initiated her son's journey towards
masculinity when she threatened her young son if he did not fight back when bullied in grade school. Indeed, she was the same mother who as a former bondsman had experienced an independent, self-determinant lifestyle in Galveston and had provided that same mentality for her many children to control their own paths. Her immediate comeback to the news was a mixture of sympathetic disbelief, saying, "My son licked, knocked out? No siree."35 For Tiny, her son had set a successful path since the day she issued that ultimatum to him. The fact that he finally lost the masculine stronghold was too much to bear. The black press, however, were less than sympathetic. The Chicago Broad Ax declared that "Jack Johnson has been a great menace to the colored race, greatly assisting to retard their progress along many lines...and no doubt there was a great rejoicing among sober and industrious colored people over his defeat." The Kansas City Sun was joyous over the loss as they called Johnson a "maker of race hatred." The Washington Sun went as far as to blame Johnson's defeat on his "connubial connections" with white women and his outright dismissal of black women.36 A portion of the black media seemed to feel betrayal in similar manner to the Cubans. They had supported, gambled, and risked their lives to hero worship a selfish symbol of disorder, regardless of his personality and behavior, because he went beyond traditional societal norms.

Whether he threw the fight or not, the vantage point of blacks was that of a failure who abused his time as the masculine, unconscious defender of black pride. He had let the race down, and he never cared. Therefore, his sixth finger had to be taken away. Very few apologists stepped forward, but James Weldon Johnson made it known that he supported the champ's efforts for the black race:

Johnson fought a great fight, and it must be remembered that it was the fight of one lone black man against the world...The white race, in spite of its vaunted
civilization, pays more respect to the argument of force than any other race in the world. As soon as Japan showed that it could fight, it immediately gained the respect and admiration of the white race. Jack Johnson compelled some of the same sort of respect and admiration in an individual way.  

Here, James Weldon Johnson lays out the argument for Jack Johnson’s unconscious race hero. Regardless of his mannerisms and attitude, Jack Johnson’s securing of the heavyweight championship gave the black race a thunderous, rebellious voice that increased black agency, pride, and self-determination like no other societal act had done before. Because the black race can capture such significant and challenging feats, it deserves the same respect and admiration that any first class citizen receives.

Unfortunately, in doing so, the Galveston Giant had also seized the manliness and masculinity that white males had struggled with for decades; therefore, he was a menace, and much of the black press declared his sixth finger removed.

What is interesting to note is the changing attitude towards boxing in America by this point. When Johnson had won the championship in 1908, whites were hellbent on revenging the white race for a catastrophic failure to maintain racial superiority in sport and the body. At the same time, anti-sporting reformers sought to reduce the popularity of boxing, especially considering the banal, indecent, barbaric nature of the current championship holder. For most reformers, if such a brutish sport remained with a brutish race, it would open more opportunity for the white race to embrace Progressivism and evolve beyond the “fun and games” of yesteryear. Masculinity could be found in other areas of society, and Jack Johnson would be the first in a line of inferior blacks to maintain a degenerative reputation around prizefighting. However, when World War I engulfed multiple continents with its nationalistic overtones, new disgusting weapons of war that exterminated life faster and in larger quantities than before, and its oppressive,
pessimistic aftershocks of fascism and Social Darwinism, it easily reminded males of the importance of the masculinity through the use of the body and outright toughness.

Indeed, the Social Darwinism and manliness of warfare ushered in a new devotion to the brutish sport of boxing, which made it all more satisfying that Johnson had lost his sixth finger. If it had happened before the first great World War, it would not have been as nourishing and defining. To most, the war itself, mixed with the convenience of Johnson losing to a white, middle class cowboy from Kansas, rebirthed the idea of middle class masculinity in the global atmosphere. In other words, a masculine renaissance had occurred that would change male mentality forever.

The day after Johnson lost his title, he applied for a passport back to America under the lie that he had never been convicted of a felony. The risk of perjury was worth the trouble at this point. The former champ was broke, in debt, homesick, and most devastatingly, he no longer had the crown of “champion” associated with his name. The masculinity, the money, and the sixth finger were gone. The clock had stopped. It was finally time to go home. In response, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan denied Johnson’s passport request, thus forcing him back to England to concoct a possible explanation for his manhandling at the hands of Jess Willard. Johnson’s varied responses over time demonstrate that once his power and wealth were stripped, he was mentally lost and his masculinity had collapsed. At first, he assertively admitted defeat at the hands of a better fighter:

“I haven’t any kick coming. I met a young big boy and he wore me down. I didn’t dream there was a man alive who could go fifteen rounds with me once I started after them...And here’s something you didn’t know...Jess ruined my golden smile...It was a left crack...that did it. I felt them drop down on my tongue and my pride wouldn’t let me spit it out. I knew what a howl would go up if they saw them in the sunlight, so I did the next best thing, I swallowed
By the time he had reached England, Johnson had changed his admission of failure to a confession of submission. As mentioned earlier, there is no proof that Johnson purposely threw the fight and most serious historians, including Nat Fleischer, who Johnson sold the "dive" story to first, believe there is no credibility to it. By 1927, Johnson had added a more detailed description to the "dive" story, accusing Jack Curley, his boxing promoter, with planning the whole scenario. For the Galveston Giant, the dive story acted in accordance with his mother's house in Galveston as an escape clause. Whenever Johnson saw signs of declining masculinity throughout his career, he would always go back to his childhood home in Galveston to recuperate. The dive story permitted the former champion to create a setting where he voluntarily relinquished his power, thus reestablishing his dominance in the sport. It was a poor and ridiculous attempt, but for Johnson, who lived high above the majority of America, his self-righteousness needed to be saved.

On May 7, 1915, a German U-Boat torpedoed the British liner RMS Lusitania, killing 128 Americans on board. As a president running on a re-election campaign primarily based on non-intervention in war, Woodrow Wilson demanded the end of German unrestricted submarine warfare, but by January 1917, United States ships continued to be sunk, provoking the nation to abandon its neutral stance and enter the war. It was almost certain that the United States would join the Allied Powers, but concerns over their true involvement remained. Britain especially was more than willing to persuade the Americans to offer full support to the Allies, but certain alterations had to take place first. By the beginning of 1916, Jack Johnson, who was overwhelmingly
unpopular in America, had become a nuisance in Britain as well. He had been accused of refusing to pay his stage manager, Jack du Maurier, and worst of all, damaging his eye with a powerful punch. He was sued for breach of contract by both du Maurier and a theatre poster company, which he both lost. His reputation had soured with the local citizens as well. Theatre seats were completely empty when his shows opened. Britain had had enough of Johnson and when the correspondence to get rid of all American fugitives, especially Johnson, Britain did not hesitate to comply. At the end of February, the Home Secretary, without any type of reasoning, gave the Johnson couple exactly three days to leave the nation. One by one, the clocks were stopping for Johnson everywhere.

For the remainder of the war, Johnson lived in poverty in Spain. He attempted to start an advertising business, but considering the language barrier issues, it was a bad idea for an American to start a business based primarily on communication skills. More business failures followed. Johnson also made an attempt to reenter boxing since it was really the only way he made real money. Unfortunately, the match between the former champion and two unknown exhibition fighters, Arthur Gruhan and Frank Cozier, ended violently as Spanish observers almost immediately noticed the inauthenticity of the bout. The arena was destroyed, the benches were set on fire, and Johnson was almost killed. Another attempt at economic sufficiency was bullfighting. No accurate sources exist to verify if he ever actually fought a bull, but he did make appearances that the crowd summed up as “burlesque performances.” All that was left for Johnson was to associate with the lower class of Spain, which included pimps and prostitutes. Ironically, the same lower class society that he had left Galveston to escape had found him again in Spain.
With options severely limited, Johnson contacted the United States Justice Department and offered his services in war against Germany—for a price, of course. If he would demonstrate American nationalism during a war, Johnson believed that the State Department would allow him to return home without threat of prison. Unfortunately, the former champ had forgotten that he had become such a serious symbol of disorder against the immorality and degenerative aspects of society that the only reconciliation that would be allowed would end with the “Bad Nigger” behind bars. Plus, there was alarming evidence that Johnson was possibly working as a German spy against the Allies. He had been partners with Moritz Moisevics, a known revolutionist. The majority of the Giant’s known associates in Spain had been pro-German. Most shockingly, however, were his comments against the Allied Powers. Besides claiming to have proof that the Allies provoked an unfair war against Germany, Johnson also stated that the Germans were “honorable,” and “the Germans treat me as a man and my wife as a lady.” It is also possible that Johnson’s advertising agency was a front for German revolutionary activities, which turned any American that supported the war firmly against Johnson.

When he left Spain for Mexico in 1919, the anti-American rhetoric continued from the jilted Johnson, who like a bride that had been rejected, felt the need to enact revenge for spite. That summer, America experienced one of the worst labor shortages in history as the military demobilized at the end of the war. African Americans had been increasing moving north to work in industry when thousands of immigrants and returning soldiers ferociously competed for those jobs, causing strife and resentment between the races and classes. Across the nation during the “Red Summer,” hundreds of blacks
were lynched in extralegal mob violence. In response, Johnson bought an advertisement in a Mexico City periodical, *Gale's Magazine*, advocating that blacks leave America for Mexico, where people treat each other as equal.\(^{47}\)

For the first time, Johnson had become political. What is worse for the government is that his language was an alarming amalgamation of socialism and anarchism against the United States government. True, this was a half-hearted attempt to gain some fashion of notoriety and credibility back, but American officials witnessed the resurrection of the symbol of disorder that had haunted them for the entire first decade of the twentieth century. While in Europe, his words were meaningless and frugal; but he was now in a neighboring area where influence could expand. As the year went on, Johnson gave speeches against the “damned American gringos,” and how they were planning an invasion and extermination of the Mexican mainland with only the American blacks there to defend the nation.\(^{48}\)

When analyzing the anti-American speeches of Johnson in 1919 and 1920, it cannot be forgotten that Johnson himself was an ideologically opportunistic anarchist. Unlike Muhammad Ali, another unconscious race hero with a plethora of affiliations, Johnson detested attachment, agency, and interdependence. He was essentially a sporting masculine mercenary, willing to do what he needed if it resulted in the right pay and power. He had switched sides from pro-American to anti-American when he felt scorned and it became profitable. If it made money, Johnson would try it once. Although boxing was still a source of income, revolutionary appealed to the former champ as a possible means to make lots of money. In addition, Mexico paid him generously and they treated
him as an oppressed refugee. He was almost restored, but as it happened in Europe, Johnson’s clock stopped in Mexico and he was forced to leave there as well.

In 1920, Venustiano Carranza, the President of Mexico, surprised the nation when he announced that he was keeping power by endorsing a new president, Ignacio Bonillas, who was obscure and unpopular amongst the citizens. This led to a violent revolution that ended with the death of Carranza and the installation of the new President, Adolfo de la Huerta Marcor. For Jack Johnson, who had enjoyed a hero’s welcome with Carranza and his supporters, this change in power had deadly implications. All friends and supporters of Carranza were declared enemies of the state, including the champ. He was immediately banned from speaking and boxing in the country and by the end of May 1920, Johnson was told to leave Mexico immediately. It was obvious that Mexico had taken involuntarily advice from England and rid their nation of the symbol of disorder so as to appeal for support from the United States. Carranza was unwilling to ask for American aid, but Marcor was ready to do whatever he could to consolidate his new power.49

There was nowhere else to run. There was no way to further prolong his time. Jack Johnson had reached his end. Already extremely overweight, old, broke and tired, he had lost the will to continue to stay awake. He was a major embarrassment to Mexico and they were ready to make any deal with the United States. Johnson knew there was no way to avoid prison this time, so he simply requested to be arrested and transported to Chicago with some form of dignity and honor. The Galveston Giant was completely absent of dignity and honor, so his last request as a free man was to appear as though a sixth finger was still present. On July 20, 1920, Johnson arrived back in the United States
and peacefully surrendered to the authorities. While there, in his usual theatrical ways, he posed for pictures, cracked jokes, and showcased that big golden smile. Anyone that really looked, however, saw the fractured, defeated, yet surprisingly humble man who grasped masculinity so tight that he was in effect conquered by it.

For the last decades of his life, Johnson resembled a hollow shell of his former self while still grasping for any form of masculinity. After serving a year in prison, he constantly apologized for mistakes of the past, fought in unattended, mediocre exhibitions, and joined the underground world of fixed fight gambling. At the World’s Fair, he willingly turned sideshow freak and minstrel show. For the price of one dollar, anyone could step up and take a swing at the Galveston Giant. He was a twentieth century Sambo figure who danced, sang and did whatever whites told him to for money. Ironically, it was the most non-masculine time in his life.

Most unusual was the champ’s continued efforts at chipping away at black pride in his later years. He constantly attacked the black boxers of the 1930s and 1940s, especially a young, upcoming slugger named Joe Louis. Any black fighter that had a meager chance of capturing the lost masculinity, wealth, and power that Johnson once possessed was ridiculed and depreciated by the champ, but Joe Louis was an exceptional case. Louis was the anti-Jack Johnson in more ways than one. He only engaged in intimate relationships with black women. His speech and personality screamed American patriotism, which Americans wholly embraced at the onset of the second great World War. Plus, he refused to challenge traditional, white societal ideas on racial hegemony. In other words, with his powerful punches, Louis brought his own ideas of masculinity that were more conservative than those of the Galveston Giant. For these reasons,
Johnson resented Louis and his popular ways, especially since Louis lacked that independent, egotistical attitude that had propelled Johnson to the front pages of the media. Indeed, Johnson had worked alone in establishing his own path towards success, which definitely caused strife for Louis, who utilized his appeal to climb to the tops of manliness, like Muhammad Ali would in the future.

The hatred of blacks and resentment for black race consciousness was also more vibrant in Johnson's later years. His only friends were white, he remarried another white woman, Irene Marie Pineau, when he and Lucille divorced, and he adopted overt white mannerisms and dialects that closely resembled European. This possibly was a form of rebellion for Johnson for multiple reasons. In one instance, Johnson resented African Americans for involuntarily placing the race hero status upon him. He had collapsed under the weight of his own masculinity and thanks to blacks, he believed that the government initiated more intensified methods to destroy his success. Secondly, it was his last ditch attempt at possible redemption through interdependence. Scholars like Randy Roberts suggest that Johnson attempted to appeal to whites so as recapture popularity, but with a larger, more powerful race. He was overly aggressive in his quest, even speaking on behalf of numerous white politicians during the Great Depression.50

Regardless of his intentions, for the remainder of his life Johnson still attracted people to his jovial, appealing, insightful speeches. In similar fashion to Muhammad Ali, Johnson loved to talk to people. People loved to hear his answers to questions because they usually followed with a story and a smile. Surprisingly, during World War II, he altered his tone again by becoming a vocal supporter for the war.
As much as he loved to speak, he also loved to live recklessly. On June 10, 1946, Johnson was killed in a car crash after driving maniacally to New York. Repeatedly over the years, he was given the advice to slow down, both on the road, and in life. As long as his heart pumped and the clock continued, he refused to stop. With the dismissal of the sixth finger and the total loss of wealth and power, Johnson’s only means of exhibiting masculinity was racing his expensive cars. Through racing expensive, flashy cars at high speed rates, Johnson felt as if he always remained in control of his own destiny, able to appear financially grandstanding, and exponentially dangerous due to the pendulum swinging so close to death.

For Johnson, there was no race; only challengers, champions, sparring partners, and fans. As a twentieth century, colorblind, hedonistic mercenary, his message was deafening, distinctive, and frightening. His methods were unnatural, yet respected by minorities for sheer bravery and heroics. When his egotism overshadowed his involuntarily responsibility to those that worshipped him, his sixth finger was forever shattered, setting in motion a collapse of masculinity so immense that it drastically altered the African American role in sports. Walt Mason, a Canadian-American humorist, issued a lampooning rap that summed up the feelings in America towards the Galveston Giant for most of his life as the masculine, unconscious race hero in sports:

Alas, poor Johnson, badly whipped,  
And of his wreaths and honors stripped,  
When he appeared in yonder ring,  
He was that ring’s unconquered king;  
And when he left it, sick and sore,  
He was a has-been, nothing more,  
And all the country felt relief,  
When Brother Johnson came to grief,  
No words encouraging he heard;  
No breasts with sympathy were stirred,
On December 30, 1970, Muhammad Ali signed the contract to fight the current heavyweight champion of the word, Joe Frazier. The sporting world was understandably ecstatic with unrelenting anxiety over the newly crowned “fight of the century.” In the year leading up to this event, Ali had become a sporting and societal icon with the Supreme Court ruling that overturned of his draft dodging conviction. He had successfully proven to both the federal government and the American public, whose changing mentality and mindset towards unwarranted or inexplicable conflict had influenced the case that a sporting figure, regardless of race, was just as brave, heroic, and masculine as any individual that elected to fight in warfare. As a modern day Andrew Jackson archetype, Ali had appealed to the common working class male, who by 1969 was confused and distraught over the idea of the Vietnamese War. Indeed, Ali was worshipped as a hero in two separate instances: his stance against the war based on conscientious objection, although heavily influenced and controlled by the Nation of
Islam, transformed his sporting reputation into a masculine, political activist legacy, and African Americans witnessed this middle class, attractive, light skinned athlete challenge the government and win. Unlike the late 1960s, which brought about countless disappointments and setbacks in racial equality, Ali, possessed by the ghost of Jack Johnson, unwillingly became a symbol of disorder and disrupted modern white supremacist ideology.

By the time Joe Frazier was fifteen years old, he had already captured a mastery of two Jack Johnson-like qualities: exhibiting a menacing, threatening figure and dreaming of escape from a potential obscure life in a lower class black community. In comparison, Frazier and Johnson’s backgrounds paralleled greatly. Throughout his childhood in rural Beaufort, South Carolina, “Billy Boy” was heavily exploited and feared for his stocky, powerful frame by both neighborhood friends who begged for protection from bullies and violent, racist employers. However, the toil and tumultuous labor practices for rural blacks left Frazier with very little success. Soon, he became disillusioned with Beaufort life and desired a more urban, exciting, and tolerant lifestyle. Like Johnson, his mother supported his decision to leave home at such a young age, saying “Son, if you can’t get along with white folks, then leave home because I don’t want anything to happen to you.”

In 1959, Frazier arrived in New York City. The Johnson resemblance continued as Frazier worked numerous jobs to earn a living, including stocking crates at the Coca Cola plant and building houses. However, the boxing itch continued to fester in his psyche. As did both Johnson and Ali, Frazier felt that prizefighting was a means of demonstrating the same dominating power that had been exploited since he was child.
This time, it would be both globalized and economically lucrative. Between 1962 and 1964, Frazier won three golden gloves championships, Olympic gold, and the notice of boxing enthusiasts.\textsuperscript{54} He battered his way through the heavyweights and captured the world title with amazing ease. Nonetheless, while Frazier believed he was at his zenith, there was something missing, which Ali abused heavily leading up to the bout.

By early 1971, Ali had conquered the power of the media fully from the increasingly unpopular and futile Vietnamese conflict. As Jack Cashill explained, America’s rebellious souls, completely disgusted with the horror of actual warfare, set their sights on alternative and less demoralizing means of brutality.\textsuperscript{55} This led to the resurgence in popularity for boxing in the early 1970s, which would continue to intensify due to the wit, charm, and polarization of Muhammad Ali’s character. In effect, Ali efficiently corrupted the minds of millions with his segregationist and racist rhetoric towards dark-skinned blacks by attacking Frazier’s skin color and personality. In truth, Ali’s assault on Frazier’s blackness was relentless and ferocious, as if it was more personal than his usual theatrical caricature of Gorgeous George. The Lip’s favorite taunt was that of Frazer being the nation’s biggest “Uncle Tom,” or an excessively subservient black who willingly assists white in the oppression of his own people.\textsuperscript{56}

Leading up to the bout, Ali told reporters that “the only people rooting for Joe Frazier are white people in suits, Alabama sheriffs, and members of the Ku Klux Klan...I’m fighting for the little man in the ghetto...Anybody black who thinks Frazier can whup me is an Uncle Tom.”\textsuperscript{57}

Most surprisingly, Ali, with the help of the commercial conglomerates that control the sports world, successfully made Frazier’s physical appearance an
embarrassment to black people nationwide. Due to his unlimited access to all forms of media, the anti-Frazier propaganda was at full force. “Joe Frazier is too ugly to be champ,” Ali often stated. “He’s too ignorant, dumb and ugly to be champ. The heavyweight champion should be smart and pretty like me…” \(^{58}\) In another interview, Ali stated that Frazier was “too stupid to be normal…” and “I look normal. I’m way too smart for an animal like him. Nobody wants a champ like him…” \(^{59}\) For all intent and purposes, Ali wanted Frazier to resemble nothing more than a white-loving, ignorant, Sambo-ish, dark-skinned heathen. Ali’s portrayal of Frazier resurrected the negative connotation of the black turncoat, who purposely sought to demean and hinder his own people through conspiracy and betrayal. Unintentionally, Ali also reasserted the historical superiority complex of light-skinned blacks over the menacing, brooding, dark-skinned blacks.

Ali was both extremely crafty and manipulative in simultaneously destroying black support for Frazier and consolidating his strengthening power within the white community. He knew that he had already gained enormous support from whites through his activist speeches and demonstrations on college campuses. He was fully aware that his defeat of the Supreme Court had influenced the majority of the young, white, middle class America to resent the establishment and embrace the so-called “outcast” of the American system. Indeed, the champ knew he controlled the majority. One unanticipated facilitator in Ali’s plan was the black media. *Jet* magazine mimicked Ali’s taunts, calling Frazier the “white created champion.” \(^{60}\) Black sportswriters immediately jumped at the chance to support the People’s Champion as well. The young, upstart Bryant Gumbel’s article, “Is Joe Frazier a White Champion in Black Skin?,” caused an
uproar as it reasserted amongst the masses that Frazier was “pro-establishment.”

According to author Mark Kram, Gumbel’s article works as a dissertation as it biasedly sets out to prove to the public that Frazier is pro-white and anti-black. To back up his Frazier damnation, Gumbel alludes to Frazier’s repeated usage of Ali’s “slave” name, Clay, his support of the South Carolina Legislature’s attempts at integration, and the fact that Frazier took pictures with Mayor Frank Rizzo, a Philly police Commissar accused of police brutality against blacks, and Richard Nixon, a staunch conservative. 61

In terms of popularity, Frazier faced an uphill battle that he would never win. Regardless of the racial issues, Frazier was a modern day Tommy Burns, having earned the title without beating the rightful champion. Plus, Frazier lacked the social force factor that had attached itself to sports in the past few years. In similar fashion to Sonny Liston and Jack Johnson, Frazier refused to accept the unconscious role as politician and social force, which turned off the fans that had grown to adore the theatrics and voice of Muhammad Ali. In fact, for the rest of his life, Frazier and his family fought to redeem their image after Ali’s assault destroyed their blackness in the African-American community.

On March 8, 1971, the “Fight of the Century” became an unintentional, disheartening remembrance of white control in prizefighting as the heroic and revered Ali fell to the manipulated, “Sambo-like” Frazier. Following the fifth round, Ali was winning the points, but Frazier was winning the fight as he manifested his anger into devastating body shots that countered Ali’s quick jabs. “Hit me, I hit you. I don’t give a damn, I come to destroy you, Clay,” Frazier stated throughout the fifteen-round slugfest. 62 In that final round, Frazier ensured that the superhuman Ali myth that had
been spun tirelessly since his younger days at the Louisville gym was marked with an asterisk. Frazier’s looping left hook devastated Ali’s right cheek as the Louisville Lip, for the first instance in his professional career, hit the canvas. Although Ali was able to regain his footing, his demeanor and expression could not mask the despair of his inevitable defeat. As Ali watched Referee Arthur Mercante raise Frazier’s arm in victory, Frazier issued a final sneer at Ali with “I kicked your ass.”

The story could have been spectacular and praiseworthy for blacks. As the twelfth child of a poverty-stricken rural Gullah family, Joe Frazier had escaped a futile and degenerative lifestyle at an early age and dedicated his life to improving his socioeconomic situation and taking the world by storm with his boxing and humble, gentle personality. African American children had a quintessential folk hero in Frazier, who was a black man who worked all hours of the day only to spend nights punching meat in slaughterhouses to hone his skills. A man full of ambition and determination and little else triumphed over a man who kept the world in his pocket since the beginning. Most significantly, blacks could have praised the fact that a victim of a segregationist and racist rhetoric overcame unpopularity to reestablish a powerful black control over the masculinity in sporting culture. The story could have been groundbreaking. However, for the rest of his life, Frazier was faced with insurmountable unpopularity, an entrenched character role as the villain of both black America and the “voice” of their people, and unrelenting claims of a fixed fight. As with everything else he said, Ali’s exclamation that he was declared the loser because of his religion and attitude towards the draft was immediately popularized and Frazier’s authenticity as champion faded before the bruises
could heal. Instead, the world proclaimed Ali the “People’s Champ,” which he himself coined to distract away from Frazier’s attention.

Ali and Frazier would fight twice more in their career (Ali winning both contests), but the first bout between the two would prove more legendary in society as it exposed significant fallacies in the logic of the People’s Champ. As discussed earlier, Ali’s repeated insults towards Frazier’s dark skin brought to question the possibility of embedded racial animosity towards dark-skinned blacks. Indeed, his countless remarks of being “pretty” and “the right black person” raised minimal eyebrows, but his disgust at Sonny Liston’s “bear” and Joe Frazier’s “gorilla” reenergized traditional white stereotypes of blacks. As pro football legend and close friend to Ali, Jim Brown stated, Ali had disappointedly become “a part of the establishment.”64 Ali would again express his disdain for dark skinned people while travelling through Zaire for his “Rumble in the Jungle” matchup against then-current champion George Foreman. Freddie Pacheco noted that Ali would exclaim “black is beautiful” in public while turning his nose up at black women in Zaire. “These girls are too black,” Ali repeatedly complained. “What they need is a little white blood in them.”65 Ali even jokingly told Foreman that “my African friends will put you in a pot,” which fervently upset the Africans who relentlessly labor to earn respect and destroy colonial racist thought following the end of European settlements. To the Lip, African people were people, yet uncivilized, underdeveloped and inferior. It comes to no surprise that Ali expressed this, considering the vast hatred towards Africans expressed by the teachings of the Nation of Islam. Ali continued to act as an indispensable echo device, simultaneously spouting messages verbatim from Elijah Muhammad and commercializing the Nation of Islam brand for wealth and power.
Regardless of the cost to the reputation of the black race, Ali, in the same fashion as Jack Johnson, continued to extend his time.

Another concern that would follow Ali for the remainder of his career was his decline in consistent motivation and effort in his livelihood. It began in November 1971, when the champ fought ten times in 23 months against decent to mediocre contenders like Buster Mathis, Bob Foster, Al “Blue” Lewis, and an over-the-hill Floyd Patterson. Angelo Dundee notes that this was the period he observed Ali “going through the motions, as if on autopilot...” While this was not the case in every fight, especially in the “Rumble in the Jungle” and “Thrilla in Manila” where Ali performed like he was eighteen years old again, it was happening far too often. On March 31, 1973, Ali’s indifferent attitude resulted in harrowing consequences as he fought heavyweight newcomer, Ken Norton, a constantly moving and jerking knockout fighter with a chip on his shoulder. After the first round, the fight was all Norton’s, especially after Norton landed a punch that broke Ali’s jaw.

By the end of the third Norton bout, Ali’s diminished motivation and skills were more than apparent. Mark Kram, who watched in despair as Ali limped through the September 28, 1976 bout, stated the obvious in his *Sports Illustrated* article:

“There is no question now that Ali is through as a fighter. The hard work, the life and death of Manila, the endless parade of women provided by the fools close to him, have cut him down...there is no excuse for Ali’s showing against Norton. He threw only one good combination. All night. His jab, which once drained and depressed aggression, was only a flick. Only a sure hand on his craft saved him.”

As the training decreased and the age and weight increased, Ali began to experience significant health issues that the majority of his entourage chose to ignore. It began a month after the Ken Norton rematch in October of 1973 when Ali was fighting
Dutch heavyweight Rudi Lubbers. Angelo Dundee notes that once he heard Howard Cosell on the recording of the fight say, “Ali hasn’t used his right hand six times throughout the fight…,” he knew it was problem. The champ had developed calcium deposits in his right hand that spread to both hands by the beginning of 1974. Every time he punched a bag or sparring partner, tears rolled from his eyes. Still, he kept silent as he sought to maintain his masculine hold. If word got around that Ali’s hands were brittle, it could cost him his money and rank, thus stopping his clock. The masculinity and controlling power that he had dominated for the last two decades was worth the precious risk of flailing health. In comparison to the grandfather abandoning sleep to watch the clock, Ali neglected his better judgment to obsess over his time left, making it a priority to remain active and relevant in idol worship as long as possible. Dundee said it best when analyzing why Ali continued to fight regardless of his failing health:

“It was not merely a case of him not knowing how to fill his leftover life once retired. It was more that he understood that accomplishments begin to fade over time and that his idol, Sugar Ray Robinson, had become irrelevant once he retired, his name and feats unknown to many of the younger fans. Knowing that he was the most famous name and face in the world, Ali wanted to remain in the spotlight as long as he could, continuing to be the center of attention. He wanted to stay relevant.”

After Ali’s second defeat of Frazier, the champ’s health began to seriously worry his managers. After all, the Thrilla in Manila was bloody, bruising, and full of devastating blows from both fighters. The morning after, the champ was seemingly paralyzed with pain when he told Dundee that “You may have seen the last of Ali. I want to get out of it. I’m tired and I’m on top.” Nonetheless, as soon as the champ felt better, he had already begun negotiating his next bout, eager to conquer another global entity and keep his clock running. Unfortunately, the next bout would result in one of the
worst debacles in sporting history and a dreadful demerit on the Lip's iconic record. The opponent was Antonio Inoki, a famous Japanese profession wrestler who was skilled in numerous forms of martial arts. For Ali, the potential to not only conquer the boxing world but also the wrestling world was too tempting to ignore. Plus, the Japanese promoters offered the champ six million dollars to fight.

As many press members predicted, the June 25, 1976 fight was one of the most embarrassing moments in America sports history. The entire match consisted of Ali jumping on and off the ropes to avoid Inoki's powerful leg kicks. While Inoki crab walked around the ring for fifteen rounds, Ali only threw six punches. Legendary boxing promoter Bob Arum remembers the disgust of the event:

"Ali-Inoki was embarrassing…no one had any control; no one knew what was happening. Someone put together a set of nonsense rules, with fifteen three-minute rounds…And it was awful, because the Japanese guy was terrified of Ali, so he came out and lay on his ass the whole fight, kicking to keep Ali away from him. At that point, any moron knew it wasn't fixed, because a fixed fight wouldn't have been that awful…" 72

Indeed, Ali was ashamed of the ordeal, but the most significant matter concerned his left leg, which had been kicked so many times during the match that it had swelled rapidly. Ali was diagnosed with severe blood clots in both legs, told by Freddie Pacheco to go to the hospital immediately, but chose to travel to Korea for exhibition bouts because of the money promised. The damage became so severe that by the time Ali returned to the United States, he could barely walk and had to be hospitalized for muscle damage and severe blood clots. 73 If the blood clots had unluckily travelled into his lungs, his clock and life would have been cut extremely short. With his managers growing more worrisome, Ali shunned reason and competency, electing to chase time even further.
On September 29, 1977, Ali defeated hard hitting heavyweight Ernie Shavers, but the fight exposed more than the outcome as Ali took a horrendous punishing at the hands of Shavers. For the majority of the match, Ali exhibited a strict “defensive cocoon,” capturing enough points to win but exposing the fragility of his body to the world. *Sports Illustrated*’s Pat Putnam wrote exactly what most were seeing at this point in the Louisville Lip’s career:

“Rocked by hard right hands, Ali survived, but the legs that had carried him through fifty-six professional fights were beginning to fail. At the end of the Fourteenth round, the champion had to dip into his reserve of strength just to get back to the corner. Wearily he slumped to his stool, his eyes glazed by fatigue. When the bell for the fifteenth round rang, Ali could barely stand.”

Ferdie Pacheco had seen enough of the champ’s gross obsession with maintaining masculinity and chasing unlimited time. According to Pacheco, Dr. Nardiello of the New York State Athletic Commission gave proof that Ali’s kidneys were falling apart. When he sent word to Ali, his wife, Herbert Muhammad, and Wallace Muhammad, none responded, forcing Pacheco to take a stand. Plus, Ali’s “defensive cocooning” during the Shavers fight proved that barely surviving each match and risking permanent body damage suited the now thirty-five year old champ as long as the checks were signed and the cameras snapped. There were also speculations that Pacheco and Herbert Muhammad had been quarreling for some time over Ali’s medicines and lifestyle. In essence, Pacheco had watched the Nation of Islam exploit the champ without care and did not want to be part of it anymore. Pacheco left the champ’s corner for good at the end of 1977, but he continues to call Ali a best friend to this day. “Ali was a gold mine playing out, a well running dry,” said Pacheco. “The Muslims refused to see it; I did not.”
By the beginning of 1978, the clock began slowing down dramatically. Ali had stopped training and ballooned to 242 pounds. The press took every opportunity to belittle the nonchalant champ, especially the *New York Daily News* publishing a cartoon of Ali lugging his belly around in a wheelbarrow. What resulted was a fitful beating by heavyweight newcomer and Olympic gold medalist Leon Spinks on February 15, 1978. In addition, more reports of kidney damage and now possible brain damage were swirling around him. The clock was ready to stop, but Ali’s power and wealth consumed the corruptors around him. He would easily win the rematch against Spinks, but critics were unimpressed. It was obvious that Spinks lacked the necessary skill to be a serious heavyweight contender, so Ali’s victory in the rematch was mediocre at best. True, he became the first three-time heavyweight champion in boxing history, but at unforeseen costs. It was finally time for the Lip to call it a career, and he almost did it. His most endearing characteristic and Achilles heel brought him back to the sport that had given him the masculinity he had sought so long.

Ali’s true passion in the masculinity that he controlled derived from his love of helping others. His generosity would simultaneously expand his legacy as a global icon and damage his masculinity in the process. As a quintessential servant leader, he effortlessly tended to the needs and wants of nearly everyone he encountered. In the buildup to the George Chuvalo fight, Ali was making over one thousand dollars per day in advertising for the fight. Each day, he would set up races between kids based on age and size with both the winners and losers getting a cash prize until Ali had no more.

Gene Kilroy, who was a close friend of Ali since the 1960 Olympics, recalls the extreme generosity and care of the Lip:
"He just never stopped giving of himself. I can’t tell you how many times Muhammad went to hospitals without fanfare, without TV cameras. Day after day, he’d go into hospitals because he knew how happy it made people...Ali went to a nursing home, and there was an old man with no teeth in bed. He was wrapped in a diaper. Muhammad went into the man’s room with me. One of the nurses went over to the man and asked, ‘Do you know who this is? The man looked up and said, ‘Oh, my God; its Joe Louis. All my life, I’ve wanted to meet you, Joe’...Then he [Ali] looked back at the man and said, ‘That’s right, I’m Joe Louis.’ And he hugged the man and said, ‘God bless you.’ Afterward, he told me, ‘All his life, that man has wanted to meet Joe Louis. Who knows how much longer he’s gonna live. But now he can die happy, knowing that he’s met his hero.’"

Ralph Thornton, another member of Ali’s entourage family, recalls another example of the champ’s love of others:

“He [Ali] loved everyone...the time that showed it best was once when they brought some children up to the camp, children who can’t control themselves. they slobbered at the mouth; cerebral palsy, I think it was. Ali stopped training, got out of the ring, grabbed each one of those kids. And you know, if they tried to kiss me I’d probably have pulled away, but he kissed each one of them dead on the mouth, slobber all over him. The kids were laughing, waiting to be kissed by this man, and you could see how much they loved him.”

Howard Bingham, whom to this day Ali calls his true best friend, recollects another instance that Ali showed not only his caring side, but his desire to remain to express his internal raceless affection:

“A couple of weeks after he beat Joe Frazier in Manila, we were in New York for a reception at the United Nations. Ali was watching the news on television, and a story came on about a Jewish community center that was closing because it didn’t have enough money. It was a place for old people. They were handicapped, and a lot of them had been persecuted by the Nazis in Germany. The next morning, [December 2, 1975], we went up to the building where the center was. Ali looked around, talked to some of the people, and gave them a check for a hundred thousand dollars. That’s just the way he is. And when someone asked why he did it, all he said was he had a soft spot in his heart for old people.”

To Ali, the money was a conduit to both his masculinity and the happiness of others.

Giving individuals some form of happiness through monetary compensation was a
constant element of middle class masculinity that Ali witnessed throughout his hometown of Louisville. In certainty, he controlled not only their mentality, but also their livelihood and future. This type of authority, which Jack Johnson would wield purposely to demonstrate his superiority other males attempting to achieve masculinity, still exists with Ali today; however, it is met with extreme limits due to the exploitation of his unremitting attempts to continue his time by his so-called “family.”

The family began as the champ’s immediate entourage. It consisted of Angelo Dundee, Freddie Pacheco, Gene Kilroy, Howard Bingham, Pat Patterson, Luis Sarria, Bundini, Rahaman, Lana Shabazz, and Ali’s wife and kids. By the end of the 1960s, the family ballooned to include the numerous sparring partners, Ralph Thornton, Wally Youngblood, and various others that Ali wanted around. By 1975, the entourage had swelled to over sixty people. Some would prove that their only purpose was to hustle the champ for his money. Ali’s Director of Publicity, John Condon, witnessed numerous incidents of abuse by the entourage on Ali:

Life around Ali was a constant hustle. Al lot of people in the entourage were only there to serve their own needs, and too often Ali’s interests took a backseat. I Don’t want think about how many times these guys picked up money on the side By bringing someone into camp or up to Ali’s hotel room to meet the champ… And these guys, the way they spent Ali’s money. For years, they billed Everything to him. Travel, phone bills, meals, you name it. It must have been Like having a dozen kids in college and paying off for all of them at the same Time.”

Mostly, Ali refused to acknowledge the abuse of his money. After all, it made his family happy, so it was not an immediate issue. There was one incident in Germany where Ali tried to display anger over a ridiculously large hotel bill at the Bayerischer Hof, one of the most exclusive hotels in Europe. According to longtime Ali trainer, Bobby Goodman, Ali’s theatrical anger at Bundini and others over food and phone charges
quickly faded. It was not Ali’s mentality to display anger over money. He understood that the entourage was taking advantage of him, but as long as they worshipped him, appeasement was more suitable than confrontation. The champ’s ex-wife, Belinda Ali, noted that his passive behavior was evident by certain family members, thus leading to outright larceny and fraud of large sums of money.83

In terms of his earning power, Ali made close to a hundred million dollars in his boxing career. Thomas Hauser notes that Ali’s total earning surpass the combined earnings of every heavyweight champion who had come before him.84 By 1979, almost all of the money was gone, due to mismanagement by Ali and Herbert Muhammad, bad investments, and grand larceny by the “family.” According to most of the “family,” the blame for Ali’s debt rests with Herbert Muhammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad who was put in charge of the champ’s finances when Ali joined the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad had to make sure that Ali’s wealth and power was exploited exponentially for the organization. Herbert’s job was to negotiate the fight contracts, business ventures, and commercial endorsements. Ironically, the disgust and disownment of sports and amusement in Fardian Islam ideology played second fiddle to the lucrative investments by the Nation of Islam in every aspect of sports and commercialism.

It was more than obvious that everything that happened to Ali’s money was with Herbert’s knowledge. In essence, Ali allowing Herbert to manage both his finances and livelihood correlates with the champ’s desire for an interdependent relationship with what author Wilfred Sheed called a surrogate “father.” According to Sheed, for Ali, “there is a dependent strain beneath the self-assertion, an insatiable need for daddies.”85 Herbert offered Ali simplistic structure with his finances, in similar fashion to the Louisville
Sponsor Group; however, Herbert was black, disciplined, and the son of Elijah, so Ali believed he had reason to rely on Herbert for the interdependent relationship.

The Herbert-Ali relationship remains complexly debatable, but mostly criticized. Belinda Ali described Herbert as “Jabba the Hut” from *Star Wars* because of his ability to manipulate Ali into believing devious lies. Harold Conrad shares Belinda’s theory in that Herbert made more money for himself than Ali in negotiating business. Some sympathized with the amateurish practices of Herbert. Jeremiah Shabazz believes Herbert’s misuse of Ali’s finances derived from ignorance and not maliciousness. “Ali had the chance to be the richest black man in America,” Shabazz said. “but Herbert didn’t steer him right, and he wouldn’t let anybody else steer him either.” Gene Dribble agrees that Herbert did not know business well enough to juggle the finance of the champ. “When you put everything he [Herbert] did together, really, you had a terrible mess,” Dribble told Hauser. The main mess that Herbert was responsible for was expanding the Ali entourage to include numerous exploiters.

The entourage found various ways to outright steal from the champ. Gene Dibble, one of Ali’s investment advisors, recalled that the family members would get reimbursed twice for the same grocery receipt, auction all of Ali’s trophies, medals, and rings, and cut side deals in business ventures. Whenever Dibble or Howard Bingham alerted the champ to the thievery, Ali would brush it off with aggravated indifference, mostly due to the fact that neither Dibble nor Bingham was a Muslim. Ali’s interdependency to the Nation of Islam was well into its second decade and he felt closer to them than anyone else.
Venturing back into the ideas of middle class masculinity, a major component consists of exhibiting entrepreneurial power. Ali sought numerous commercial prospects to display his power of controlling not only sports and his entourage, but also the conglomerate world that sought to control him. Unfortunately, Ali’s mediocre formal intelligence, lack of commercial knowledge, and passive kindness led to business failures that crippled his livelihood to the present day. Because he was a close NOI friend, Jeremiah Shabazz convinced Ali to trust Spiros Anthony, a tax lawyer whose job was to hold a part of Ali’s money in the emergency that the Internal Revenue Service came after him in the future. Before Ali knew it, Anthony had disappeared with over 3.5 million dollars of his money.\(^8\) Another individual, Arthur Morrison, was given permission by Ali to use his name for merchandising. Morrison has made millions since the 1980s from Ali merchandise with the champ seeing no money. The most infamous incident involved Harold Smith (whose real name was Ross Fields), who embezzled over 21 million dollars of Ali’s money in a banking scandal.\(^9\)

By early 1980, Ali had no choice but to return to the ring. With the obvious changes in his speech and muscle movements, kidney damage, and ballooned weight, he defied logic to regain that wealth and power that had been abused for so long. Surprisingly, his first challenge was longtime friend and sparring partner, Larry Holmes, who had become a dominating force in boxing at the end of the 1970s. Watching him train and spar, it was more than evident that Ali had no chance against a younger, skilled slugger like Holmes. In addition, he was incorrectly prescribed thyroid medication by Herbert Muhammad’s physician that caused him to suffer extreme fatigue and lose a dangerous amount of weight. The Lip had nothing to offer and on October 2, 1980, he
was slaughtered by Holmes. Some sportswriters like *Washington Post*'s Dave Kindred called it the worst sports event they had ever covered:

“And it was awful... Ali had that great fighter’s heart, boundless courage, all that pride. And he got his brains beat out by Holmes. It was like watching an automobile accident that kills someone you love. Round after round, he kept going out. And if they let him, he would have gone out for more.”90

It did not hurt so much as a boxer overwhelmingly losing a match. This was a global icon unsuccessfully attempting to claw his way back to the top of the sporting world. This was a heroic representation of iconic triumph against the odds sacrificing his well-being in view of the world that cherishes him. Because Ali had epitomized so much for so long that the very idea of his time running out sent thunderous shudders throughout the world.

It became a more somber scene two days after the fight when Ali visited the UCLA Medical Center. It was discovered that the drugs prescribed by Charles Williams along with the Holmes fight almost killed the champ that night.91 Ferdie Pacheco said it best when he stated that “getting ready for Holmes, Ali was like a vain actress who’s forty and wants to look twenty again...” In truth, Herbert Muhammad knew how bad Ali looked prior to the fight and speculation rose that because he received one-third of the purse, Herbert willingly allowed Ali to endanger his life.

On December 11, 1981, the most celebrated, raceless, iconic prizefighter in history fought and lost his last bout against rising heavyweight Trevor Brebick. The following morning, Ali alerted the press that his grandfather clock had effectively stopped for good:

“Father Time caught up with me. I’m finished. I’ve got to face the facts. For the first time, I feel that I’m forty years old. I know it’s the end. I’m not crazy. After Holmes, I had excuses. I was too light, didn’t breathe right. No excuses
this time, but at least I didn’t go down. No pictures of me on the floor, no pictures of me falling through the ropes, no broken teeth, no blood. I’m happy I’m still pretty. I came out all right for an old man. We all lose sometimes. We all grow old.”

Over the next decade, drastic changes transpired that forever altered Muhammad Ali’s iconic legacy. Firstly, his conversion to Sunni Islam in 1975 was highlighted once more in 1981 when former Nation of Islam minister Louis Farrakhan reclaimed the Lost-Found Nation of Islam name from Elijah Muhammad’s son, Wallace Muhammad. After the death of Elijah on February 25, 1975, Wallace rejected his father’s racist claims and initiated broad reforms of the organization to move the beliefs closer to that of traditional Islam, including tolerance for all races and religions, the abandonment of advocating death to all whites, the denouncement of Wallace Fard as God (Allah), and the bridging of all mainstream Muslim communities. At the same time, Farrakhan condemned the changes to the NOI, effectively creating a rebellious sect that embraced traditional Fardian Islam. Ali, being a raceless, caring individual at heart, chose to follow Wallace and was able to publicly admit his true feelings while respecting the memory of Elijah:

“I don’t hate whites. That was history, but its coming to an end. We’re in a new phase, a resurrection. Elijah taught us to be independent, to clean ourselves up, to be proud and healthy. He stressed the bad things the white man did to us so we could get free and strong. Now, his son Wallace is showing us there are good and bad regardless of color, that the devil is in the mind and heart, not the skin. We Muslims hate injustice and evil, but we don’t have time to hate people. White people wouldn’t be here if God didn’t mean them to be.”

Those that knew Ali had no use for this speech because it was always evident. Ali never truly embraced the ideals of Fardian Islam. Like Jack Johnson, he was a raceless man who committed adultery with prostitutes. He cherished all people he encountered and truly never had a hateful bone in his body. As stated before, Ali was attracted to the structure and discipline of the Nation of Islam, but he flatly refused to practice Fardian
Islam. Now that the controlling factor had passed away, he was free to not only publicly embrace his raceless feelings, but also to align with another structured, traditional, more progressive sect of Islam.

As the years wore on, his health continued to deteriorate. In 1984, the champ was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, which was attributed to his severe head trauma during his celebrated boxing career. It was not long after that his wife, Veronica, filed for divorce, leaving the champ alone, sick, and vulnerable. His time as the dominant masculine force in society had ended, so the hassle of associating herself with him in his current state was not worth the trouble for Veronica. Almost immediately, Ali was feeling the effects of a motionless clock.

Ali’s actions over the course of the next five years brought into question the possible potential to flex some type of masculine muscle, although it upset his core fan base. In the 1984 presidential election, Ali announced his support for Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan, and also George H.W. Bush in 1988. Members of the black leadership at the time, like Julian Bond and Andrew Young, criticized Ali’s decisions, stating that the Republican initiatives have damaged African-American progress. Allegedly, his lawyer, Richard Hirschfield, manipulated him into endorsing the Republicans, but evidence of this is minimal at the moment.

In similar fashion to Jack Johnson’s advocacy of World War II at the end of his life, Muhammad Ali resurrected his nationalistic views by representing the United States in a sit down with Iraq President Saddam Hussein to negotiate the release of American hostages during the Gulf War. This was the second time in the 1980s that Ali had
represented America in an overseas' role thus proving that Ali wished to remain active as a public figure. For the Lip, boxing was over, but celebrity was forever.

In 1996, Dick Ebersol, then president of NBC Sports, sent a taped presentation to the Atlanta Olympic Committee advocating Muhammad Ali as his choice for the role of torch bearer for the Olympic Games in Atlanta that summer. Most dismissed the outrageous claim, especially considering how debilitating Parkinson’s disease had been on the champ. For the past decade, the champ’s motor skill function had been inconsistent and uncontrollable. In addition, haunting visions of Ali’s divisive, segregationist, and anti-American past had made the Olympic Committee feel uncomfortable. On July 18, during the practice session for the Opening Ceremony, the naysayers’ beliefs were affirmed when Ali was not in attendance to rehearse. In his current condition, physically suffering and financially weary, the clock had long stopped for Ali. The masculinity that he was forced to give up was in the hands of a new era of iconic, unconscious race heroes, like Michael Jordan, Evander Holyfield, Ken Griffey Jr., and Shaquille O’Neal. There was not any way that Ali could represent America, or the black race, at such a grandiose stage again.

However, the following day, eyes watered, jaws dropped, and cries deafened as Muhammad Ali, the Louisville Lip that controlled middle class masculinity and the hearts of all Americans for decades, energetically jogged out to the field to take the Olympic torch and light the flame that signaled the start to the centuries-old games. Considered by many critics as one of the most defining moments in sports history, Ali’s surprise appearance at the Olympic Games reaffirmed not only his iconic legacy as one of the most transcending sporting figures in world history, but also as an African American
whose sixth finger never disappeared and clock truly never stopped. Masculinity defined
the life of Ali while he defined masculinity in twentieth century society. The power to
hypnotize the world at all phases of life, regardless of whom he was aligned with at any
time, defined the power of Ali.

Wilt Chamberlain, who was good friends with Ali during the 1960s and 1970s
and almost fought the champ in another ill-advised publicity stunt, said of the champ:

“...When he was held up as spokesman for black people, I thought that was
ludicrous because Muhammad could hardly speak for himself. I applauded some
of the stands he took; for example, his refusal to go into the war. A great many
people wouldn’t have had the courage to do that...but to hold up one person to
represent any group of people, that person has to be pretty far-reaching, and
Muhammad wasn’t an appropriate spokesman for me. He was a guy writing
lightweight poetry who happened to be a tremendous athlete, who was not
educated in areas where somebody who speaks for a group of people should be.
And to be honest, I don’t think Muhammad really saw himself as a spokesman
for black America. That might have been the role some of those around him and
and the white media saw for him. But if somebody like Muhammad was
speaking for black America, then black America was in bad shape.”

While this statement resonates loudly, thousands of pages are filled with the
voices of African Americans who argue differently concerning the legacy of Muhammad
Ali. For the black community, Ali was the quintessential spokesman and representation
of black pride, success, and leadership in not only sports, but in culture. He is considered
a race hero because he repeatedly destroyed the walls of persecution, prohibition, and
traditional views on racial hierarchies. Indeed, he, like Jack Johnson, conquered
everything that was meant to hinder their progress as African Americans.

The African-American community deserves these two self-determinant,
environmentally conscious, talent exhibitive, and record shattering examples of
achievement. In the American and global perspective, race consciousness became a
defining factor for two individuals who utilized every action of themselves to be defined
as raceless men. For Jack Johnson, his early twentieth century atmosphere of extralegal violence, and racial intolerance bred the excitement for a defiant black male that struck fear into the hearts of other races both inside and outside the ring. For Muhammad Ali, his ever-changing, heterogeneous atmosphere of integration, agency, and consciousness bred the anticipation for the reincarnation of middle class masculinity controlled by the black male body in sports and the challenging of traditional American ideals of nationalism and sectionalism. In essence, for both fighters, race consciousness was not big enough. They wanted global consciousness in power, wealth, or masculinity: a sixth finger. In the end, they sacrificed everything they could to watch the clock tick. For both, in the hearts and minds of the majority, that clock continues to tick.
NOTES


2 See Henry Clay Work, Complete Songs and Choruses, ed. Benjamin Robert Tubb (Philadelphia: Kallisti Music Press, 2002). Because of his usage of slave dialect in his music, Henry Work’s music was often used during minstrel shows, especially the famous Christi’s Minstrel Show. As of today, the majority of Work’s music has lost value because of its usage in negative stereotypes of blacks.

3 This song was the basis for an episode of the classic television series, The Twilight Zone, called “Ninety Years Without Slumbering.” For more information, see Marc Scott Zicree, The Twilight Zone Companion (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1992).

4 The Agent’s name was John Hawkes. The entire story was found in the “DeWoody Report,” where Hawkes outlined the entire European trip for Charles DeWoody. See Randy Roberts, Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes (New York, USA.: Free Press, 1985), 180-181.

5 In Johnson’s autobiography, Jack Johnson is A Dandy, he claims that he disguised himself as a member of Rube Foster’s baseball team since he claimed that “one of the players resembled me in stature and features...” Most historians consider it to be another myth. See Dick Schapp, Jack Johnson Is a Dandy (New York: Chelsea House, 1969), 60-61.


7 Roberts, Papa Jack, 183.

8 Chicago Examiner, 19 January 1914.

9 Although a grand jury probe was opened, it was lackadaisical and lazy with no convictions. Mostly, the grand jury believed that since it was Johnson’s word against the Bureau, it was not credible enough to warrant a full investigation. The only time it was brought up again was when Lewinsohn was arrested in 1917 and confirmed the bribe stories. See The Chicago Examiner, 22 January 1917.


11 The Chicago Defender, 28 June 1913.


13 The French vacated the title for two reasons. The French Boxing Federation accused Johnson of avoiding prominent fighters, especially Sam Langford. Secondly, Johnson’s conviction in America did not sit well with the global sporting world.

14 The London Times, 20 December 1913.


17 The Chicago Defender, 4 July 1914.


22 *Ibid*.


28 *Ibid*. Bielaski never revealed his decision to Johnson, so most believe that Johnson fought honestly.

29 In 1931, Johnson claimed that it was the longing to see his mother and his homesickness that contributed to his decision to approach the federal government with the offer. See Jack Curley, “Memoirs of a Promoter,” *The Ring*, May 1930-April 1932.


34 *The Chicago Defender*, 19 June 1915.

35 *Ibid*.

36 *Ibid*, 381.


41 Allegedly, Johnson had become upset at du Maurier when his stage show flopped in Preston. Johnson fired the manager and refused to pay him the money owed. When he approached Johnson about the money, Johnson punched him square in the eye, damaging his vision. du Maurier sued Johnson in court for damages to his eye and back pay. Johnson was forced to pay over 107 pounds to du Maurier. Roberts, Papa Jack, 205.

42 Ibid, 206.

43 Craven had obtained the majority of his purse before the match so he could fund a trip to New York. Because of this, he did not even attempt to fight Johnson and spent the entire match running from the former champ and covering his body from blows. It almost resembled a play. The fight lasted exactly one minute and Craven collapsed after one weak punch to the ear. Ibid.

44 Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 389.

45 Roberts, Papa Jack, 207-209.


47 Roberts, Papa Jack, 212.

48 Ibid.


50 In the 1930s, Johnson became an avid Franklin Roosevelt supporter. He was quoted as saying that “Franklin D. Roosevelt is champion now and wearing the belt.” See Papa Jack, 224.

51 Ward, Unforgivable Blackness, 383-384.

52 As decades wore on, many famous battles were dubbed the “fight of the century.” The first such instance was the Great White Hope fight, between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries in 1912. The second instance was the 1923 battle between Jack Dempsey and Louis Firpo, which is still considered one of the greatest comeback bouts in history. Dempsey was knocked out of the ring in the first round, but immediately after returning, he knocked out Firpo in the second round to win the match.


64 *Ibid*


66 Dundee, *My View from the Corner*, 158.


77 Hauser, *His Life and Times*, 148-149.


According to Ferdie Pacheco, he first knew of Charles Williams' incompetency when he claimed that Ali was suffering from Hypoglycemia in Zaire. Ali was never tested for hypoglycemia while in Africa, so that was an incorrect diagnosis. It is dangerous to give anyone who is suffering from hypoglycemia sugar because it causes more insulin in the pancreas to be produced, which could induce an insulin coma. Before the Foreman fight, Williams told Ali to eat peach cobbler and ice cream to fix his hypoglycemia. Then, before the Holmes fight, there was no diagnosis of a thyroid issue when Ali went to the Mayo Clinic to be cleared to fight. Thyrolar, which is the drug that Williams prescribed to Ali, causes the heart rate to accelerate, which could kill a boxer in the ring. It causes body to stop sweating and lose water. Ali could have had a heart attack or a stroke at any moment.


96 Hauser, *His Life and Times*, 435.

97 Hauser, *His Life and Times*, 235-236.
By the beginning of April 2007, National Football League quarterback Michael Vick had absorbed his share of triumphs and tribulations. Since being drafted as the number one overall pick in the 2001 NFL draft, expectations had far exceeded his production on the field, yet the Atlanta Falcons staked their entire franchise on Vick’s first rate speed, exceptional throwing power, and superhuman ability to fill every seat on every Sunday at the Georgia Dome. Because of these facets, Arthur Blank, owner of the Falcons, awarded Vick with the largest financial contract in NFL history at ten years for 135 million dollars. Considered one of the most ludicrous contracts in sports history, it promoted a figurative understanding of mediocrity between Vick and the Falcons organization. As long as he was there, the commercial investments would succeed, so personal accountability would be second nature. The fans and endorsing businesses requested a display of talent, regardless of the team’s and player’s success, and Vick satisfied both by becoming the first quarterback in NFL history to rush for over one thousands yards in a season and lead the Falcons to the NFC Championship game.

While the fans continued to support and the businesses continued to pay, problems surfaced in the star quarterback’s mentality and environment. On the field, the wins were far and few between, the statistics began gradually declining, and Vick continued to make excuses. By the time Vick had completed his tenure with the Falcons, he had only won fifty percent of his games and completed only fifty four percent of his passes with no serious playoff runs. Rumors of arrogance, indifference, and lack of
maturity surrounded the quarterback. This was more than apparent on November 26, 2006, when the quarterback displayed derogatory gestures to fans after a loss to the New Orleans Saints.\(^1\) Off the field, his personality issues ballooned heavily. In 2004, two of Vick's closest friends were arrested for distribution of drugs in Virginia while driving the quarterback’s SUV.\(^2\) The following year, a woman sued Vick claiming that he knowingly transmitted genital herpes to her.\(^3\) Then, on April 25, 2007, Virginia police were serving a search warrant on Surrey County property owned by Vick when they discovered evidence that brought them to another property in Newport News where a large, sophisticated dog fighting enterprise was being administered. In the ensuing days, local, state, and federal authorities descended upon the land, confiscating over seventy injured and beaten dogs, animal weight machines, and other miscellaneous evidence. When questioned, Vick vehemently denied any knowledge of the operation, stating that he is “never at the house” and that he “doesn’t know what’s going on,” but the persons living in the house “weren’t doing the right thing.”\(^4\) Despite these incidents, black support reigned heavily for the quarterback, as he continued to demonstrate forms of black success in sports.

On July 17, 2007, a federal grand jury issued multiple indictments on Vick and three of his friends, stating that the accused had been “knowingly sponsoring and exhibiting in an animal fighting venture” for over six years.\(^5\) In addition, it was revealed that Vick and two of the conspirators, Quanis Phillips and Tony Taylor, began “Bad Newz Kennels” dogfighting operation as early as January 2001, inviting nationwide competition to train and illegally fight pit bull terriers in Virginia. The most disturbing
aspects of the venture involved the brutal means of executing the dogs that lost, which included drowning, electrocuting, and shooting.

With history repeating itself, an African American, who is lucrative, talented, yet controversial in the sporting world, had unintentionally become a symbol of disorder and upset the "Children of Panic" in a way reminiscent of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali. Vick’s foray into interstate dogfighting not only disrespected federal law, but it also significantly endangered the morality of the middle class and insulted the commercialization of the white business elites of America. As was the case when prostitution began expanding in popularity and practice in the late nineteenth century, immoral activity based on fraternal connections began to rise significantly in the early twenty first century. Between the years 2002 and 2009, urban centers experienced a significant rise in gang activity and criminal enterprises. In fact, the government’s National Gang Center reports that the majority of areas with high levels of gang activity experienced a twenty percent increase within the seven year study. In addition, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks resurrected traditional American passions for nationalism, security, and superiority. Fear of mismanagement and vulnerability to crime and terrorist ideology was sweeping the United States. The nation had experienced significant challenges to its masculinity by so-called “inferior” classes and ethnicities, in effect prompting the “Children of Panic” to target all significant examples of “deviant” behavior. Michael Vick, who represented that same powerful athlete that controlled masculinity and exhibited indifference to American ideals of nationalism and humility, became the perfect target for the federal government to display its power to structure, maintain, and control the behavior in society.
In similar fashion to Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali, the black voice roared tremendously in support for Michael Vick, despite his controversial personality and actions. Regardless of the negative headlines that painted Vick as an arrogant, malicious, self-absorbed jerk, blacks expressed utter devotion to the quarterback and his talents. To most blacks, the dog lovers, football fans, and PETA supporting football fans’ staunch opposition of Vick was solely because of his success as a polarizing, commercially viable black quarterback, playing a position in football that had been predominantly white since its inception.\(^7\) The quarterback on the football team not only acts as the quintessential leader on the field, but also is the marketing brand and face of the franchise off the field. In essence, the quarterback consolidates the majority of the power on a team. In effect, African Americans felt the “powers that be” were utilizing their questionable laws to hinder the progress of a black quarterback that had led other blacks and whites to success against predominantly white quarterbacks for other franchises in the league. To the blacks’ happiness, Vick proclaimed his innocence as long as possible, thus feeding their hypotheses of racial hatred and the revenge of white supremacy.

On August 20, 2007, the controversy surrounding black support for Vick reached a new phase when the quarterback confirmed the criminal allegations by entering a guilty plea. Vick admitted to participating and funding the dogfighting enterprise and executing multiple dogs, but maintained that he collected no prize money from gambling.\(^8\) This revelation came right after the other three accused agreed to testify against Vick and enter guilty pleas. Because of the so-called “betrayal” of the co-defendants against Vick, his supporters were given fuel for their fire against a conspiracy to destroy black masculinity in football in the same way that Jack Johnson was persecuted using a past acquaintance.
The dog executions especially, which became the symbols of the case for its utter cruelty, did not resonate with blacks. According to David Wright, the images of shot and electrocuted pit bulls were overwhelmingly overshadowed by the constant, exhaustive images of the white “mob” protesting outside the Falcons’ training facility and throughout Atlanta with chants and signs exclaiming, “NEUTER VICK!” These haunting reminders of a Georgia environment engulfed in extralegal violence against blacks by vengeful, redemptionist, white mobs unintentionally collectivized the black community in support for their unconscious hero, regardless of his actions. Indeed, his admission of guilt challenged the morality of many individuals, but African Americans’ memories of Jack Johnson, Muhammad Ali, and more recently, Darryl Strawberry and O.J. Simpson being allegedly targeted by whites because of their elite stature in sports forced many blacks to side with Vick. The very notion of “neutering” Vick revived the imagery of black castration and the destruction of middle class masculinity that dominated the Jim Crow era in the twentieth century.

In the sporting world, black support was massive for Vick in similar fashion to Muhammad Ali and his draft dodging federal trial. For black athletes, Vick was simply a victim being metaphorically “lynched” for a preposterous reason. NBA point guard Stephon Marbury claimed that dogfighting was a “sport” and compared it to hunting, which is a predominantly white sport where live animals are killed for sport. Boxing legend Roy Jones Jr. explained that a “dogfight could happen in anyone’s backyard” and that “it happened in my backyard, two of my dogs fought and one died.” Both Clinton Portis and Deion Sanders, former NFL stars, expressed disdain for the law for attacking a man who damaged nothing but his own private property.”
In the end, Vick received twenty three months in federal prison in exchange for a guilty plea and cooperation in assisting the federal government in stopping dogfighting rings, but the schism in support for Vick based on race still persists today. Blacks in the Atlanta community especially still believe that Vick was a victim of racial injustice and that his skin color ultimately led to his exit ticket out of Atlanta. Ignoring the personality and behavioral issues of the quarterback, black fans refuse to abandon support for Vick because of his repeated successes in dominating masculinity at a predominantly white position in football. More recently, Vick has become a classic redemption story, exiting prison humbly and working extremely hard to reestablish himself as a model citizen, positive role model, and dominant figure in the National Football League. However, between the years of 2006 and 2010, Michael Vick represented the unconscious race hero that both Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali embodied at their dominance. Like both boxers, Vick’s background in Virginia and Georgia, along with his natural ability in sports created a race hero that challenged traditional ideas of masculinity, success, and black pride. His ignorance of his status as the savior for blacks as quarterbacks in football and his dedicated persistence of monetarily caring for all around him points directly to his mentality as a self-righteous, masculine sporting icon that reveled in his position at the top of the sporting world. Although many examples exist throughout sports, Michael Vick remains one of the greatest examples of an unconscious race hero that consolidated support from his race when confronted with incarceration or exile due to becoming a symbol of disorder. As a quarterback in football, his position was similar to that of a boxer because of his individual recognition and perception as leader and decider of his own fate. The Michael Vick example proves that the unconscious race
hero in sports has persisted throughout history and will continue to garner controversial attention. From boxers like Floyd Mayweather to NFL rising quarterback stars Cam Newton and Robert Griffin III to NBA powerhouses like Lebron James and Kobe Bryant, black icons of sports are representations of black success and natural talent set against the backdrop of white dominance and competition for middle class masculinity. They will continue to possess the “sixth finger” as we embrace their entertainment, commercialism, and iconic nature for ourselves and our future generations. Regardless of the negative aspects of some of their personalities and actions, our perspective of their esteemed “greatness” in sports and personification of black success provide the black community with examples of hope, defiance, success, self-determination, and most importantly, masculinity.
NOTES


4 “Vick claims no Knowledge of situation on his Property.” WAVY-TV, 28 March 2007.


7 Hub Arkush, “Why does the NFL still have few black QBs?” Pro Football Weekly, 27 February 2012. At the end of the 2011 NFL season, over 70% of the players in the league were black, but of the 97 quarterbacks on the 32 teams, only 20 total were black.


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