



40TH NAACP IMAGE AWARDS

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MUHAMMAD ALI TO RECEIVE PRESIDENT'S AWARD AT '40th NAACP IMAGE AWARDS'

***Presentation to Legendary Boxer, Activist, Artist, Humanitarian and Leader
To be made During Live Broadcast Feb. 12 on FOX***

LOS ANGELES, CA, FEB. 3, 2009 -- The legendary Muhammad Ali will receive the NAACP's 2009 President's Award at the 40TH NAACP IMAGE AWARDS, broadcast live from 8-10 p.m. ET (PT tape-delayed) Feb. 12 on FOX, NAACP President-CEO Ben Jealous announced today.

"The Greatest" will be presented with the prestigious award, which is given in recognition of special achievement and distinguished public service.

"Muhammad Ali inspired a generation," Jealous said. "We are honored to recognize the accomplishments of one of the most respected and admired men of all time, who earned a special place in our hearts and minds not only for his success inside the boxing ring but for his role as an outspoken, charming and witty leader, activist, humanitarian and artist. He is truly 'The Greatest of All Time' and incredibly worthy of this award."

Academy Award-winner Halle Berry and acclaimed screenwriter/actor Tyler Perry, both recipients of an NAACP Image Award, will host the 40TH NAACP IMAGE AWARDS, broadcast live from Los Angeles' historic Shrine Auditorium. This star-studded event, which coincides with the NAACP's 100th anniversary, will kick off the organization's year-long centennial celebration.

Previously announced honorees include Former Vice President Al Gore and Dr. Wangari Maathai, who will both receive the Chairman's Award, and Russell Simmons who will receive the Vanguard Award.

As a boxer, Ali brought unprecedented speed and grace to his sport, while his charm and wit forever changed what the public expected of a champion. His accomplishments in the ring are the stuff of legend as he became the first three-time world heavyweight champion.

There was always far more to the man than what took place within the confines of the ring. Ali's life and career have been played out as much on the front pages of newspapers as on the inside of sports pages.

His early relationship with the Nation of Islam and his insistence on being called Muhammad Ali instead of his "slave name," Cassius Clay, heralded a new era in black pride. His refusal to be inducted into the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era foreshadowed the growing antiwar movement of the 1960s. He became an influential figure in the civil rights movement, inspiring millions of Americans toward political change, with his outspoken but ultimately widely-respected statements and actions. His willingness to stage well publicized fights in such far-flung locales as Kinshasa, Manila and Kuala Lumpur signaled a shift from superpower dominance to a growing awareness of the developing world.

Daring to go against the political establishment to help people in need, Ali has made goodwill missions to Afghanistan and North Korea; delivered sorely-needed medical supplies to an embargoed Cuba; traveled to Iraq to secure the release of 15 American hostages during the first Gulf War; and journeyed to South Africa to meet with Nelson Mandela upon his release from prison. In the last two decades, Ali has been instrumental in providing more than 232 million meals to the world's hungry. Traveling across continents, he has hand-delivered food and medical supplies to children in Cote D'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mexico and Morocco, among other countries.

In addition to his international efforts, Ali is equally devoted to helping causes at home. He holds an annual fundraiser, Fight Night, to raise millions of dollars for Parkinson's disease research and treatment. He testified before the United States Senate advocating for more federal funds to find a cure for the disease. He is also an advocate and the namesake of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, a federal law that regulates professional boxing to protect athletes from unscrupulous promoters, as well as poor health and bout conditions. He has appeared before committees of the U.S. Senate several times regarding boxing reform.

The Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky—an international center and interactive museum devoted to promoting the driving principles of Ali's life—is the realization of his dream to help spread the message of peace, understanding and tolerance around the world. The center opened in 2005 just days after Muhammad Ali received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian honor.

Previous President's Award recipients include Susan Taylor, Ella Fitzgerald, Jesse Jackson, Ryan White, Kent & Carmen Amos, Bryant Gumbel, Alexis Herman, Lauryn Hill, Tavis Smiley, Tom Joyner, Condoleezza Rice, President Bill Clinton, T.D. Jakes and Venus and Serena Williams.

Event sponsors for the 40th NAACP Image Awards include Chrysler, FedEx, American Airlines, Bank of America, Blockbuster, Ford Motor Company, Sprint and Southwest Airlines.

Founded on Feb. 12, 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its more than half-million members and supporters throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, and monitor equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. For more information on the NAACP IMAGE AWARDS, please visit naacpimageawards.net.

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