

# THE Skanner

Challenging People to Shape  
a Better Future Now

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# Opinion

## Remembering Muhammed Ali's Courage and Grace

**W**ith the passing of the larger than life sports personality, Muhammad Ali, the world has lost more than a great boxing champion. We have lost a remarkable human being whose life was laced with courage, dignity and grace. While his athletic talents had long since passed, his face was recognized on every continent in the world, from the largest cities to the smallest villages. He was more than a citizen of a single country. He was, in fact, a citizen of the world.

The meaning and dimensions of his life have helped to shape the very mosaic of the 21st century. His inner

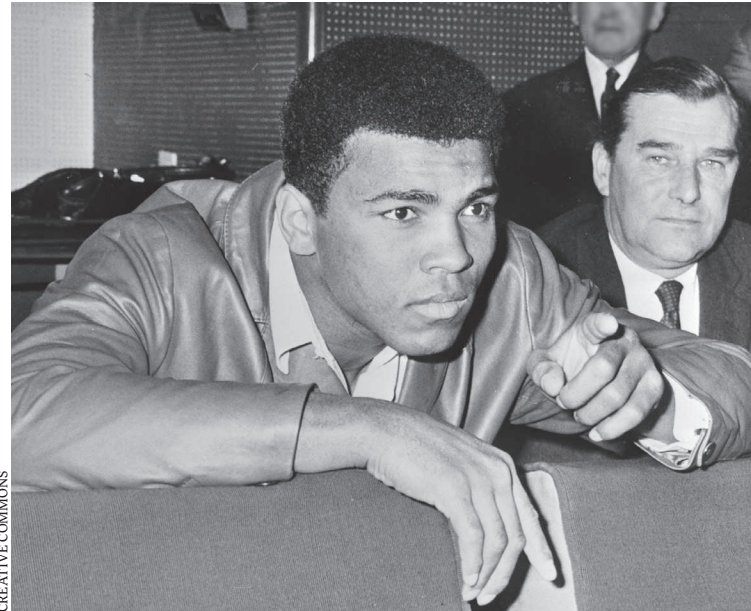


Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson

U.S. Rep.,  
Texas

He was a wise and purposeful man, a son of the South, who rose to the pinnacle of a sport that brought him fame and wealth. Despite his success it appeared that he was in pursuit of something else, something far more valuable than money, fame, regular mention in the headlines of newspapers or a gallery of friends.

He often said that those who are not "courageous enough



Congresswoman Johnson said that Muhammad Ali was a wise and purposeful man, a son of the South, who rose to the pinnacle of a sport that brought him fame and wealth.

**“**The meaning and dimensions of his life have helped to shape the very mosaic of the 21st century

light illuminated the hearts, the minds, and the souls of men, women and children the world over. He lived a transformational life with vision at its core.

Muhammad Ali once said that a person who views the world at 50-years of age the same as they did at 20-years of age has wasted 30 years of life.

to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.” The risks that he took inside and out of the boxing ring were numerous, from refusing to enter the draft for the Vietnam War which caused him to be stripped of his title and banned from boxing while in his prime, to exposing his

body to more than 20,000 punches from his opponents throughout his historic career.

During the course of his life, Muhammad Ali struggled with the direction of his nation, and some of its citizens struggled with him.

Yet, as time passed and his compassion for others and his battle for social and economic justice emerged, he became a national and international hero.

We may never see the likes

of Muhammad Ali again. Yet we must never forget all that he stood for, and the manner in which he engaged with us and the world.

I am grateful that he chose to live and work amongst us as he did. We are a better people, a better nation, and a better world because of the life and influence of Muhammad Ali.

Congresswoman Johnson represents the 30th Congressional District of Texas.

## No, Muhammed Ali Did Not 'Transcend Race'

**M**uhammad Ali was, among other things, a proud Black man.

He embraced his Blackness, and often referred to it. He is often quoted for saying he had no quarrel with the Vietcong, but less frequently quoted for saying, in the very next sentence, “the Vietcong never called me a n\*\*r.” Muhammad Ali was unapologetically Black.

Why, in death, are White folks claiming that he “transcended” race?

White people must think it some kind of compliment to say someone “transcended” race. I consider it an insult. Race is nothing that someone has to overcome, or “rise above.” Race is not an impediment. It is simply a fact.

Muhammad Ali is “The Greatest,” he’s amazing, he’s an outstanding boxer, he’s a humanist and he is a Black man. Nothing to transcend. Something just to be.

I have never heard anyone say that a White person transcended race because, perhaps, Whiteness is not perceived as a hindrance, as something to rise above. Whiteness is perceived as the norm, and everything else is perceived as at least somewhat deficient.

This manner of thinking



Julianne Malveaux

NNPA  
Columnist

is what allows the likes of Donald Trump to disrespect a judge because his parents were born in Mexico. It is the kind of thinking that allows a judge to sentence a teen-

**“**White people must think it some kind of compliment to say someone “transcended” race. I consider it an insult

aged White Stanford rapist to six months in jail because he would be damaged by jail time. It is the kind of thinking, indeed, that compelled tens of thousands of people to call for the parents of a Black child who fell into a gorilla pen in Cincinnati to be investigated by Child Protective Services. It is plain and simple White privilege that allows a White person to speak of an African American icon as having “transcended race.”

Why not say that Muhammad Ali has “universal appeal”? Why not speak to his

humanism and his kindness? Why is it necessary to implicitly put his Blackness down, to compliment the man while going negative on his race? He never went negative. He was essentially, and centrally, a Black man.

After all, he converted to the Nation of Islam when he was in his early twenties and had adhered to that faith for the rest of his life. His friendship with Malcolm X was likely the foundation of his unwill-

ingness to be drafted to fight in Vietnam. Many African Americans decried his conversion, but he was so firm in it that he fought all the way to the Supreme Court to protest his elimination from professional boxing.

Through it all, Ali was outspoken and defiant. He proclaimed, “I am America. I am the part you won’t recognize. But get used to me. Black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own; get used to me.”

White folks kind of got used to him, but they attributed

their acquiescence to the fact that Ali had “transcended race.” What he actually did was elude them: he took no tea for their fever.

There is so much of Muhammad Ali’s life that is inspirational. Yes, he was an amazing boxer, and he was also an amazing human being. He stood for what he believed in, regardless of the cost, losing his prime years of boxing, because of his religious beliefs. He did, as he said, “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.”

He stung with his fist and with his words. He made us smile, he made us laugh, and he made us inhale with his awesome athleticism. And when he succumbed to Parkinson’s disease, he made us marvel at his grace and dignity.

Whatever we have to say about Muhammad Ali, let’s not say that he “transcended race.” He was a Black man. A courageous man. An unapologetically arrogant man. Yes, he had universal appeal. But according to him, he was always Black.

Julianne Malveaux is an author and economist. Her latest book “Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy” is available at julianne-malveaux.com and Amazon.com.