

# The world says goodbye to The Greatest

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LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Louisville and the rest of the world said goodbye to The Greatest on Friday, showering affection on Muhammad Ali during a fist-pumping funeral procession through the streets of his hometown, followed by a star-studded memorial service where he was eulogized as a wildly charismatic breaker of racial barriers.

“He was a tremendous bolt of lightning, created by Mother Nature out of thin air, a fantastic combination of power and beauty,” comedian Billy Crystal said in an address that had the crowd of about 15,000 laughing at nearly every turn.

The more than three-hour memorial capped nearly a full day of mourning in Louisville for Ali, the boxing great who died last week at 74 after a long battle with Parkinson’s disease.

Earlier in the day, an estimated 100,000 people holding signs and chanting, “Ali! Ali!” lined the streets as a hearse carrying his cherry-red casket made its way past his childhood home to Louisville’s Cave Hill Cemetery, where a private burial service was held for the three-time heavyweight champion of the world.

“He stood up for himself and for us, even when it wasn’t popular,” said Ashia Powell, waiting at a railing for the funeral procession to pass by on an interstate highway below.

The public memorial at the KFC Yum! Center was packed with celebrities, athletes and politicians, including former President Bill Clinton, Sen. Orrin Hatch, director Spike Lee, former NFL great Jim Brown, Arnold Schwarzenegger, soccer star David Beckham, Whoopi Goldberg and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Speaker after speaker paid tribute to Ali as a brash, self-confident and fearless man of principle, someone who went from being one of the most polarizing figures of the 20th century to one of the most beloved.

“I can just hear Muhammad say now, ‘Well, I thought I should be eulogized by at least one president,’” Clinton told the crowd.

Crystal cracked everyone up with his career-making impersonation of a boastful, fast-talking Ali — and his imitation of Ali’s foil, sportscaster Howard Cosell — and rhapsodized about Ali’s charisma, outspokenness and talent in a way that brought the crowd to its feet.

“We’ve seen still photographs of lightning at the moment of impact, ferocious in its strength, magnificent in its elegance. And at the moment of impact it lights up everything around it so you can see everything clearly,” Crystal said. “Muhammad Ali struck us in the middle of America’s darkest night.”

He added: “Ali forced us to take a look at ourselves. This brash young man thrilled us, angered us, confused us, challenged us, ultimately became a silent messenger of peace and taught us that life is best when you build bridges between people and not walls.”

Kevin Cosby, pastor of a Louisville church, told the crowd that Ali “dared to affirm the power and capacity of African-Americans” and infused them with a “sense of somebodiness.” He likened Ali to such racial trailblazers as Jesse Owens, Rosa Parks and Jackie Robinson.



The hearse carrying Muhammad Ali arrives as spectators watch his funeral procession enter Cave Hill Cemetery, Friday in Louisville, Ky. AP Photo/John Minchillo



Muhammad Ali’s daughter Rasheda Ali-Walsh walks off the stage after speaking during his memorial service Friday in Louisville, Ky. AP Photo/David Goldman

“Before James Brown said, ‘I’m black and I’m proud,’ Muhammad Ali said, ‘I’m black and I’m pretty,’” Cosby said. “Blacks and pretty were an oxymoron.”

Rabbi Michael Lerner, a political activist and editor of the Jewish magazine Tikkun, brought the crowd to its feet four times with a fiery speech in which he referred to Ali’s refusal to be drafted during the Vietnam War — a stand that cost him his boxing title.

“Ali stood up to immoral war, risked fame to speak truth to power. The way to honor him is to be like

him today,” Lerner said, railing against anti-Muslim bigotry, drone attacks, the gap between rich and poor, and racist policing.

Earlier in the day, Ali’s casket, draped with an Islamic tapestry, was loaded into a hearse outside a funeral home. The pallbearers included former boxers Mike Tyson and Lennox Lewis and actor Will Smith, who played Ali in the movies. Ali’s nine children, his widow, two of his ex-wives and other family members accompanied the body to the cemetery.

The 19-mile drive took Ali’s body

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— President Barack Obama

past the little pink house where he grew up and the museum that bears his name. At one point, the procession traveled along Muhammad Ali Boulevard.

As the long line of black limousines rolled past, fans chanted like spectators at one of his fights, pumped their fists, stood on cars, held up cellphones and signs, ran alongside the hearse and reached out to touch it. They tossed so many flowers onto the windshield that the driver had to push some of them aside to see the road.

Others fell silent and looked on reverently as the champ went by.

“I’ve been crying all week,” said Mike Stallings, of Louisville, who brought his two young sons to bid farewell to the sports legend who grew up as Cassius Clay. “As big as he was he never looked down on people. He always mingled among the crowds.”

Ali chose the cemetery as his final resting place a decade ago. Its 130,000 graves represent a who’s who of Kentucky, including Kentucky Fried Chicken founder Colonel Harland Sanders. Family spokesman Bob Gunnell said he will have a simple headstone, inscribed only “Ali,” in keeping with Islamic tradition.

Ali himself decided years ago that his funeral would be open to ordinary fans, not just VIPs. As a result, thousands of free tickets to the memorial were made available and were snatched up within an hour.

President Barack Obama was

unable to make the trip because of his daughter Malia’s high school graduation. But White House adviser Valerie Jarrett read a letter from the president at the service in which Obama said Ali helped give him the audacity to think he could one day be president.

“Muhammad Ali was America. Brash. Defiant. Pioneering. Never tired. Always game to test the odds. He was our most basic freedoms: religion, speech, spirit,” Obama said.

Ali’s widow, Lonnie, in her first public remarks since his death, took the stage in an oversized hat that shielded her eyes.

“Muhammad indicated that when the end came for him, he wanted to use his life and his death as a teaching moment. He wanted to remind people who are suffering that he had seen the face of injustice,” she said. “He never became bitter enough to quit or engage in violence.”

People gathered early in the day outside Ali’s boyhood home, which was decorated with balloons, flags, flowers and posters. Fans took photos of themselves in front of the house. Some people staked out their places nearby with lawn chairs.

A sightseeing company offered tours of Ali’s path through the city. Businesses printed his quotes across their billboards. City buses flashed “Ali — The Greatest” in orange lights. And a downtown bridge will be illuminated the rest of the week in red and gold: red for his boxing gloves, gold for his 1960 Olympic medal.

## BRIEFLY

### Gawker files for bankruptcy, to sell itself to Ziff Davis

NEW YORK (AP) — Gawker Media is filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection and putting itself up for sale, strained by a jury’s verdict that that it must pay \$140 million to pro wrestler Hulk Hogan in an invasion-of-privacy lawsuit. The filing by the 14-year-old website follows the revelation in May that Silicon Valley billionaire Peter Thiel bankrolled Hogan’s lawsuit as what he called a “deterrent” to Gawker’s no-holds-barred and sometimes gonzo style of journalism.

Thiel’s secret role sparked anxiety over the possibility that more wealthy individuals might cow publications by covertly funding lawsuits against them.

Gawker says it plans to sell itself to publishing company Ziff Davis, although other bidders could emerge during the bankruptcy court auction. The sale will help it fund its appeal against the Hogan judgment in a Florida state court.

“We have been forced by this litigation to give up our

longstanding independence,” Gawker founder Nick Denton said in a statement. “With stronger backing and disentangled from litigation, (Gawker writers) can perform their vital work on more platforms and in different forms.”

The move also allows Gawker’s web sites to keep operating normally, the company says.

Gawker filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection about three months after Hogan won a lawsuit against the online gossip and news publisher.

The New York publisher said in the filing that it has as much as \$500 million in debt and up to \$100 million in assets.

### Western-backed forces encircle key town in Syria

BEIRUT (AP) — Kurdish-led fighters completed their encirclement Friday of a key town held by the Islamic State group in northern Syria, part of a Western-backed offensive that could see a major strategic victory over the militants.

The advance on Manbij, near the Turkish border, coincided with a Syrian

army offensive supported by Russian airstrikes that brought troops closer to the city of Raqqa, the IS extremists’ de facto capital.

Two years after their blitz across the Euphrates River valley, the IS militants are coming under increasing pressure on territory they control in Syria and Iraq, as well as on a stronghold in chaotic Libya.

In another battleground of Syria’s civil war, minimal food deliveries finally reached the Damascus suburb of Daraya, which has been besieged and blockaded by government forces for nearly four years,

but opposition activists said heavy bombardment held up the aid’s distribution.

The surrounding of Manbij by the Syria Democratic Forces followed the capture of dozens of nearby villages and farms near the Turkish border by the predominantly Kurdish group.

The coalition, backed by the U.S. and France, has been pressing an offensive since late May to try to capture the Islamic State stronghold, one of its largest in Aleppo province. Manbij is a waypoint on an IS supply line between Raqqa and the Turkish frontier.

### Fujimori concedes defeat in Peru presidential vote

LIMA, Peru (AP) — The daughter of imprisoned ex-President Alberto Fujimori conceded defeat to conservative economist Pedro Pablo Kuczynski on Friday, ending five days of suspense over Peru’s closest presidential election in decades.

In a short statement, Keiko Fujimori wished Kuczynski good luck and vowed to lead a responsible opposition to his government in congress, where her party controls 73 of 130 seats.

But in a not-so subtle jab at Kuczynski, a former Wall Street banker, she accused politicians, business leaders and members of the media of orchestrating a “hate-filled” campaign.

### Elgin Stampede Train Robbery!

Saturday, June 18  
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### Agritourism Workshop

Have you considered adding a farm stand, farm tour or lodging to your farm or ranch? Get inspired and discover how to plan your project, navigate the regulations and permitting, and gain the most from your marketing dollars at the Agritourism Workshop, June 21 & 22. The FREE workshop will be useful for people just starting and for established agritourism businesses. Registration is required! Go to: [Industry.traveloregon.com/ruggedcountryATS](http://Industry.traveloregon.com/ruggedcountryATS)  
**Tuesday, June 21 | 1-5**  
**Wednesday, June 22 | 8-4:30**  
**Boardman and Hermiston**  
For more information and an agenda, contact Janet Dodson, 541-786-8006 or [janetd@eoni.com](mailto:janetd@eoni.com)

