

World Mourns Legendary Fighter for Peace Muhammad Ali



Hanoi, June 6 (RHC)-- Tributes rolled in from around the world of sports, entertainment and politics following the death of the legendary boxer and fighter for peace and justice, Muhammad Ali. People from around the world -- especially in Vietnam where he refused to be drafted for the U.S. war of aggression -- are mourning the death of Ali, who passed away at the age of 74 over the weekend.

Muhammad Ali had been suffering from a respiratory illness, a condition that was complicated by Parkinson's disease.

In Hanoi, Vietnamese boxing coach Nguyen Van Hieu said: "I think millions of boxing lovers around the world would feel empty losing a legend like him. There will be a very long time until there will be another legend such as Muhammad Ali, a legend that embraced peace."

Muhammad Ali defied the military draft at the height of the U.S. war against Vietnam and lost three and a half years from the prime of his career when he was punished for his anti-imperialist stance.

A spokesman for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Ali was "far more than a legendary boxer; he was a world champion for equality and peace. With an incomparable combination of principle, charm, wit and grace, he fought for a better world and used his platform to help lift up humanity."

In a statement from South Africa, the head of the Nelson Mandela Foundation said the Nobel Peace Prize winner and former South African president regarded Ali as his boxing hero. Sello Hatang, the Foundation's CEO said: "Nelson Mandela, a boxing enthusiast most of his life, acknowledged Ali as his boxing hero. Madiba had great respect for his legacy and spoke with admiration of Ali's achievements."

U.S. President Barack Obama said Muhammad Ali "shook up the world and the world is better for it." Obama likened Ali to other civil rights leaders of his era, and said the boxer stood with Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela in fighting for what was right.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton described Ali's talent as "a blend of beauty and grace, speed and strength that may never be matched again."

Brazilian football legend Pele also paid tribute to the boxing titan on Tweeter, saying, "The sporting universe has just suffered a big loss. Muhammad Ali was my friend, my idol, my hero."

Ali was born in Louisville as Cassius Clay in January 1942. He began boxing when he was 12 years old and became heavyweight champion in 1964, the year he converted to Islam and changed his name from Cassius Clay. He proceeded to win the heavyweight title twice more before retiring from boxing in 1981.

Generally referred to as one of the greatest boxing heavyweights of all time, Ali was known for his highly unusual fighting style which involved dazzling speed, lightning-fast reflexes and constant movement around his opponents.

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