

nam was right. And those people, if they went to war, acted just as brave as I did. There were people who tried to put me in jail. Some of them were hypocrites, but others did what they thought was proper and I can't condemn them for following their conscience either. People say I made a sacrifice, risking jail and my whole career. But God told Abraham to kill his son and Abraham was willing to do it, so why shouldn't I follow what I believed? Standing up for my religion made me happy; it wasn't a sacrifice. When people got drafted and sent to Vietnam and didn't understand what the killing was about and came home with one leg and couldn't get jobs, that was a sacrifice. But I believed in what I was doing, so no matter what the government did to me, it wasn't a loss.

"Some people thought I was a hero. Some people said that what I did was wrong. But everything I did was according to my conscience. I wasn't trying to be a leader. I just wanted to be free. And I made a stand all people, not just black people, should have thought about making, because it wasn't just black people being drafted. The government had a system where the rich man's son went to college, and the poor man's son went to war. Then, after the rich man's son got out of college, he did other things to keep him out of the Army until he was too old to be drafted. So what I did was for me, but it was the kind of decision everyone has to make. Freedom means being able to follow your religion, but it also means carrying the responsibility to choose between right and wrong. So when the time came for me to make up my mind about going in the Army, I knew people were dying in Vietnam for nothing and I should live by what I thought was right. I wanted America to be America. And now the whole world knows that, so far as my own beliefs are concerned, I did what was right for me."

Time and again on college campuses, Ali sounded themes important to him:

On the war in Vietnam: "I'm expected to go overseas to help free people in South Vietnam, and at the same time my people here are being brutalized and mistreated, and this is really the same thing that's happening over in Vietnam. So I'm going to fight it legally, and if I lose, I'm just going to jail. Whatever the punishment, whatever the persecution is for standing up for my beliefs, even if it means facing machine-gun fire that day, I'll face it before denouncing Elijah Muhammad and the religion of Islam."

On being stripped of his title and denied the right to fight: "The power structure seems to want to starve me out. The punishment, five years in jail, ten-thousand-dollar fine, ain't enough. They want to stop me from working, not only in this country but out of it. Not even a license to fight an exhibition for charity, and that's in this twentieth century. You read about these things in the dictatorship countries, where a man don't go along with this or that and he is completely not allowed to work or to earn a decent living."

On the financial hardship he was enduring: "What do I need money for? I don't spend no money. Don't drink, don't smoke, don't go nowhere, don't go running with women. I take my wife out and we eat ice cream. . . ."

On lack of black pride: "We've been brainwashed. Everything good is supposed to be white. We look at Jesus, and we see a white with blond hair and blue eyes. We look at all the angels; we see white with blond hair and blue eyes. Now, I'm sure there's a heaven in the sky and colored folks die and go to heaven. Where are the colored angels? They must be in the kitchen preparing milk and honey. We

look at Miss America, we see white. We look at Miss World, we see white. We look at Miss Universe, we see white. Even Tarzan, the king of the jungle in black Africa, he's white. White Owl Cigars. White Swan soap, White Cloud tissue paper, White Rain hair rinse, White Tornado floor wax. All the good cowboys ride the white horses and wear white hats. Angel food cake is the white cake, but the devils food cake is chocolate. When are we going to wake up as a people and end the lie that white is better than black?"

On hate: "I don't hate nobody and I ain't lynched nobody. We Muslims don't hate the white man. It's like we don't hate a tiger; but we know that a tiger's nature is not compatible with people's nature since tigers love to eat people. So we don't want to live with tigers. It's the same with the white man. The white race attacks black people. They don't ask what's our religion, what's our belief? They just start whupping heads. They don't ask you, are you Catholic, are you a Baptist, are you a Black Muslim, are you a Martin Luther King follower, are you with Whitney Young? They just go whop, whop, whop! So we don't want to live with the white man; that's all."

Harry Edwards Reviews the Making of the Black Athletic Revolt, 1967

... Early rumblings of revolt revolved around the issues of segregation and social discrimination. For instance, in the late fifties and middle sixties, there were numerous cases where black athletes refused to participate due to discrimination in spectator seating at athletic events or because of discriminatory practices encountered by the athletes themselves. A firm indication that a revolt was brewing appeared in 1965 when the black athletes chosen to play in the American Football League's East-West All-Star game banned together and refused to play in New Orleans, Louisiana, because several of the Afro-American stars had been refused entrance to some of the city's social clubs. As a result of the athletes' threat to boycott the event, Joe Foss, then commissioner of the league, had the game moved to another city. This incident marked the first time in modern athletic history that a sporting event had actually been changed to another site because of discrimination against Afro-American participants. And the threat succeeded largely because of the unity among the black athletes involved, a unity forged from their firm conviction that they were men and that they in fact were going to be treated as such. . . .

After the 1964 games, black athletes got together and talked about the possibility of a black boycott of the 1968 Olympics to be held in Mexico. They discussed the justifications for the move and also the possible ramifications.

Then in the fall of 1967, two events occurred that brought all the talk and discussion to a head. First, Tommie Smith, in Tokyo for the University Games, casually commented that some black athletes would perhaps boycott the 1968

Olympics. . . . A Japanese that there is talk in America may boycott the 1968 Olympics is true. Some black athletes the games to protest racial services and most of the that Tommie Smith had some black athletes favoring a boycott injustice. . . .

The second event was at College in California, . . . the other "world-class" athletes that sixty of the seventy-two enrollment of 24,000) had to collegiate athletics as a level at an educational institution. . . . discussion between me and K like most of the black males American males on San Jose longer had any college athletic suddenly dawned on us that tion that had dogged our football campus—racism in the frat out-and-out mistreatment in problems of Afro-American

Our first move was to a to the Dean of Students, St clear that, where the interest necessities of black student had no alternative but to commence at noon on the opening the elimination of racism at and administration officials.

We outlined a list of demands if our demands were not met opening football game of the Most observers felt that this stop the football game? Why equality?

Our strategy was basic thing that perhaps the cast racist as any of the other athletes lize a power lever that would the administration of the colleges often, the spectacle of black nizations, and institutions We therefore decided to use

From Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 40-47.