

President Ford helped us heal from Vietnam, I remember meeting him at the White House with my father. He was a smart guy.

**JC:** What do you think of the Iranian President Ahmadinejad? He seems to be looking for a fight with the West.

**Ali:** I never met him, so I can't offer an opinion that would be helpful. I don't know if he is looking for a fight with the West but I hope we are not looking for one in Iran either.

**JC:** What did you feel when you lit the torch at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics? Redemption? Solidarity? Or something else?

**Ali:** Pride and humility.

**JC:** When I first met you in San Diego in 1992, you performed magic tricks for me. What intrigues you about magic?

**Ali:** That people can be so easily deceived by slight of hand. I always show how a trick is done because it's wrong to deceive people. I just want to show how easy it is, though—so people don't put their faith into something that isn't real.

**JC:** Can you bust out a poem for me? And I mean a good one!

**Ali:** I will give you a short one. You will be an ordinary writer, but I will do down in history as the greatest fighter.

**JC:** Ouch, I see you still have your mean jab.

**JC:** If God told you to never again say – “I'm so pretty” would you, could you abide?

**Ali:** Of course I would and of course I could. But do you think God has a direct line to me?

**JC:** Do you think God will judge each individual based on their actions completely independent of race or color?

**Ali:** I would never try to anticipate God's decisions, but I believe that God created us so why would race and color matter to Him?

**JC:** Are you color blind?

**Ali:** It depends on what you mean by that. I am not a racist, but it is clear that race is still a big issue in America today. I think it's sort of sad that people make assumptions and discriminate since there is absolutely nothing a person can do about their skin color. The color of a person is really God given – so if you don't like someone's color, then what you have is a problem with God's decisions. Frankly, I'm not that bold.

**JC:** Do you still carry a box of matches with you?

**Ali:** No.

**JC:** In 1975, at the age of 33, in your interview with Playboy you said: “The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.” How do you feel your thinking was different at age 50 than it was when you gave that interview, and how do you think today on your 65th birthday?

**Ali:** When I was 30 I was at the height of my boxing career. At 50, I'd been out of the ring for about ten years. My last professional bout was 25 years ago. My thinking has changed a lot, as everyone's does over a lifespan. If you're thinking doesn't change then you haven't learned anything on your journey. I think I'm more patient now, more content. I'm definitely wiser.

**JC:** In 1975, you said that you were trying to make the United States your home, but due to the state of civil liberties, it wasn't. How do you feel now and are you happy with the progress that has been made?

**Ali:** I think we have made progress in many areas, but I think there are many more areas that need improvement. We ought to be taking care of all of our people, especially poor people. Everyone should be able to go to the doctor when they're sick, have the surgeries they need, and not worry about going bankrupt. And they shouldn't have to decide whether to buy their medication for the month or buy food.

I think it is a disgrace that many of our elderly are making these kinds of decisions every day. Given how much we are able to spend on wars, no one in this country should ever go to bed hungry, and every child who wants a college education should have one.

**JC:** What advice would you give to a young person to succeed in their career and in life?

**Ali:** You have to preserve and believe in yourself—I always tell that to people. But that's not enough. You have to train and prepare for what ever it is you're working on—a career, a hobby, or a relationship. Just showing up and wanting it isn't enough; you've got to do the hard work first.

**JC:** What is the single greatest thing you want to be remembered for?

**Ali:** In the end, that's not really up to me to decide. I have lived my life in such a way, and had so many experiences, that there will be many different ways that people remember me. I don't think about it a lot but I am sure it won't just be a “single” thing – I'm sure it will be many things.

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## Awards

### Athletic Achievements

AAU Title Light Heavyweight 1959

National Golden Gloves Title, Middleweight 1960

Olympic Gold Medal for Light Heavyweight division, Rome, Italy, 1960

### Heavyweight Championship Title

February 25, 1964 defeated Sonny Liston

October 30, 1974 defeated George Foreman

September 15, 1978 defeated Leon Spinks

Sports Illustrated “Sportsman of the Century” December 3, 1999

BBC “Sportsman of the Century” London, England December 12, 1999

International Boxing Hall of Fame, Canastota, NY 1990

### Humanitarian Awards

Amnesty International's Lifetime Achievement Award, 1992

United Nations Messenger of Peace, New York, 1998

International Ambassador of Jubilee 2000

Presidential Citizens Medal awarded by President Clinton  
January 8, 2001 Washington DC

United Cerebral Palsy Humanitarian Award, March 14, 2001 New York

Highest honor presented by Ntnl. Assoc. of Broadcasters Education Foundation for lifelong commitment to world peace, tolerance & human rights. June 2001

Kahlil Gibran Award for efforts to combat poverty and hunger throughout the world. Washington DC, May 4, 2004

Otto-Hahn Peace Medal for involvement in U.S. civil rights and peace efforts - Berlin, Germany 2005

Presidential Medal of Freedom, America's highest civil award.

Awarded by President George W. Bush Nov. 9th 2005 Washington DC

Legends in our Time Award April 2007 San Diego

### Other Accomplishments

Muhammad Ali Boulevard, Louisville, KY - 1978

GQ's “Men of Year” Courage Award - October 21, 1998

Honorary Law degree from Columbia University - 1999

Muhammad Ali Center, Louisville, KY - 2002

Star on Hollywood Walk of Fame - 2002

Mayor Hahn of Los Angeles proclaims January 17 Muhammad Ali Day - Jan. 02