



City of Chicago



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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

RAHM EMANUEL
MAYOR

June 22, 2016

TO THE HONORABLE, THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I transmit herewith a resolution honoring the life and memory of Muhammad Ali.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Mayor



R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, The Members of this Chamber were deeply saddened to learn of the death, on June 3, 2016, at age 74, of Muhammad Ali, the world-famous boxer and humanitarian activist; and

WHEREAS, Born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. in Louisville, Kentucky on January 17, 1942 to Cassius Marcellus Clay, Sr. and Odessa Grady Clay, Muhammad Ali grew up the older of two sons in a Baptist home; and

WHEREAS, Cassius Clay began learning to box at age 12, after boasting to a police officer about how the young Mr. Clay would beat up the thief of his new red Schwinn bicycle. The police officer, Joe Martin, also a trainer at a local boxing gym, introduced Mr. Clay to the sport; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clay became an amateur boxing champion, winning 100 amateur bouts out of 108 fought. Mr. Clay qualified to box for the United States in the 1960 Rome Olympics and subsequently won the gold medal in the light-heavyweight division there; and

WHEREAS, Upon his return from Rome, Mr. Clay turned pro. Mr. Clay's professional boxing record was 19 wins and zero losses when he was set to fight the reigning champion Sonny Liston, a match in which Mr. Clay was viewed as the underdog; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clay taunted Mr. Liston in the lead-up to the fight, including a chant of "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, rumble, young man, rumble." Mr. Clay had become known for his talking down of his opponents, often in the form of rhyme. He defeated Liston, taking the title of heavyweight champion and declaring, "I am the greatest!"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Clay, keenly aware of racist treatment of African-Americans in that era, joined the Nation of Islam, a black separatist Islamic movement, in Chicago and changed his name to Muhammad Ali; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ali continued to fight and win each match he boxed until he refused to be drafted to fight in the Vietnam War in 1967. Not immediately granted status as a conscientious objector, Mr. Ali was stripped of his title and barred from boxing as he appealed a guilty verdict on draft evasion; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ali lost three years of boxing eligibility during his athletic prime until the Supreme Court overturned his draft evasion verdict. During those three years, he toured on the college lecture circuit, refining his political views and speaking out against the Vietnam War and racism, and on behalf of his religion; and

WHEREAS, Returning to the ring in 1970, Mr. Ali won his first match against Jerry Quarry before losing a fight after fifteen rounds to his archrival Joe Frazier, whom he would beat

in each of two later matches. Mr. Ali then defended his title 10 times over the next three years, proving that he was still on top of his game; and

WHEREAS, Continuing to box until 1981, Mr. Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1984, but refused to let the disease diminish his spirit; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ali spent his post-boxing career as a humanitarian, sponsoring a series of lectures about Islam, delivering food and medical supplies to children in need around the world, and acting as a beacon of peace on trips to Africa and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ali was rightfully honored with lighting the torch in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games and being presented with the Medal of Freedom in 2005 by President George W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ali briefly called Chicago home in the 1970s, living in a number of places on the South Side; and

WHEREAS, With the passing of Muhammad Ali, the world has lost a great soul, a legendary athlete, a powerful presence imbued with joy and wit, and an inspiration to millions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this twenty-second day of June, 2016, do hereby mourn the passing of Muhammad Ali, and extend our most heartfelt condolences to his family and friends; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be presented to the family of Muhammad Ali as a sign of our sympathy and respect.