

Comments on Messenger's Dismissal of Cassius Clay from "Islam Nation" Ranks

By Abdul Bassit Naeem

The news of Mr. Muhammad Ali's temporary expulsion (for a period of one year) from the U.S. "NATION OF ISLAM" first reached me as I was perusing an exceedingly interesting and quite favorable story on the "unconquerable Muslim champ" and his family in the April 1969 issue of EBONY magazine.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, the word of his disbarment from the august Muslim movement headed by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad left me at once bewildered and distressed. I even cried out aloud, "I hope it isn't true!" Presently, however the newest number of MUHAMMAD SPEAKS arrived and promptly convinced me that what my ears had heard was indeed no idle gossip or a "devil's fabrication."

"Brother Muhammad Ali had the makings of a worthy son of Islam, He was such an enthusiastic proponent of our righteous ideology (Islam)," I remember saying to myself then, reviewing once more the EBONY feature mentioned above.

"It's a shame he couldn't be satisfied with the numerous blessings ALLAH had bestowed upon him: a Muslim minister's rank; a beautiful Muslim-born wife; a recently-arrived bundle of joy (infant daughter Maryum); true and sincere appreciation in the hearts of millions of Muslims throughout Asia and Africa; steady, modest income from several sources independent of ring-side performances..."

(RELEVANT TO THE last-named item, I would like to quote here a few brief excerpts from the EBONY essay, authored by Mr. Hans J. Massaquoi:

"...Ali may yet wind up a multi-millionaire without laying another glove on an opponent's jaw..."

"Ali, who received six percent of the million-dollar Chamburger Corporation's stock (later sold publicly at \$5 a share) for lending his well-known, if somewhat controversial 'name and image' to the venture, will receive royalties of one per cent of the firm's annual net sales..."

"WHILE ALI is waiting for his Chamburger 'eggs' to hatch, the bulk of his income derives from his lectures before Black, white and integrated students groups. Last year, for an average of \$1,000 honorarium, 'Prof.' Ali lectured on 30 campuses, including Princeton, Rutgers, MIT, Howard, UCLA and Notre Dame..."

"Another source of revenue for Ali are public appearances on a variety of major TV shows (Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin, etc.) and exclusive interviews with representatives of foreign press. Recently he picked up a quick \$10,000 for participating in the filming of a staged bout with retired champion Rocky Marciano in which a computer is to determine the winner after the film has been edited..."")

I also realized, of course, that the NATION OF ISLAM chief's (i.e., Honorable Elijah Muhammad's) decision in the matter was final and irrevocable: "...Muhammad Ali has stepped down off the spiritual platform of Islam...(He) intends to return to the boxing ring...(This) puts us out of the corner of Mr. Muhammad



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Ali... We, the Muslims are not with Mr. Muhammad Ali in his desire to work in the sports world for the sake of a "Lettle' money..."

THE DECREE AND subsequent clarifications printed in MUHAMMAD SPEAKS, dated April 11, have been criticized in certain circles as being reflective of the Muslim leader's "personal displeasure" with the Champ's "recent public utterances."

In my estimation, however, the Messenger's pronouncements and actions in regard to Mr. Muhammad Ali's temporary removal from the NATION'S roster of bona fide members are based on DIVINE and essentially righteous (ISLAMIC) doctrine and the genuine humanitarianism which distinguishes the Honorable Elijah Muhammad from other Black American leaders.

After all, who esle but the Messenger would use such words of care and compassion in reference to just one of his followers: "...People are being killed in the (boxing) ring. How would Mr. Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay) feel if he should (accidentally) kill his own brother (i.e., a Black opponent) for the sake of a 'lette' money?..."

IN VIEW OF above, I think it should be crystal clear to everyone concerned why the Champ must now forfeit his Muslim name as well as certain privileges hitherto enjoyed by him as a trusted "laborer" and minister in the U.S. Muslim movement. We must understand and acknowledge that the laws of Islam are "final" and take precedence over all man-made rules and regulations and that, therefore, on ordinary mortal may challenge or defy an executor of those laws (i.e., Messenger Muhammad) appointed and duly authorized as such by the Supreme Being (ALLAH) Himself.

What's even clearer, at least to me, is that, should Mr. Clay actually go ahead with his plans to resume his career as a prize fighter -- that is to say, in outright and overt defiance of Messenger Muhammad's wishes and counsel - he won't be able to "make it" to the top.

The Champ should know, and I think he does, that his previous ringside triumphs did not result from his personal prowess or professional skill alone; they were instead the natural, inevitable outcome of BLESSINGS conferred upon Mr. Muhammad Ali by his spiritual leader and teacher (HONORABLE ELIJAH MUHAMMAD) and, to a much lesser degree, the heartfelt prayers of millions of fellow-Muslims around the world. Deprived and devoid of that spiritual "charisma," Mr. Clay cannot now be expected to maintain the confidence and self-reliance prevalent during his 1965-67 bouts.

THE SAME HOLDS for the Champ's material wherewithal: Regardless of the size of his future earnings - we are aware that even as a loser he is likely to be awarded heavy purses - he won't be able to keep his spoils forever. Allah has a way of taking away "every comfort and riches" from all whom He deems undeserving of same.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, if Mr. Cassius Clay is earnest in his oft-expressed "undying faith" in Messenger Muhammad and his belief in Islam (even as recorded in the EBONY write-up), I hope and pray that he will weigh his every future move as carefully as possible and do nothing that might further offend his erst-while spiritual leader and mentor, and will accept the punishment decreed in his case as a MAN.

Furthermore, a year out of the "NATION OF ISLAM," however unbearably long though it might seem, isn't exactly eternity and may well make the Champ a bit wiser - which, come to think of it, my former brother-in-Islam should **really** strive to be anyway (and which, I dare add, wouldn't harm him in the least) -if not richer.



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