Culture Race And Heroes Essay, Research Paper

Culture Race and Heroes:

The Case of Muhammad AliSociety, in most instances, refers to heroes as those who display grace, poise and celebrated prestige under tremendous pressure and watchful eyes of the public. Sports heroes often say that their sport is a business and that they treat the game as a job. Many however, do not realize that their jobs continue to exist within their personal lives. There are so many gifted athletes whose achievements within their respective sports are truly amazing, yet when the game is over; they conduct themselves in a disgracefully selfish manner. Growing up my heroes were of course Wayne Gretzky, Micky Mantle, Brett Favre, and Micheal Jordan. These are all respected athletes with major endorsements and charities (which serve as terrific tax write-offs) who believe they do their part to help the less fortunate. However, could they ever be considered heroes in the same capacity as Muhammad Ali is considered a hero?

The article argues that Jordan is the first new-aged athlete and that Ali could have been, except that he competed in the sport of boxing, which was considered far too violent for a younger generation. His political views were also a major factor. (Oriard p. 6) It also suggests that a hero should be measured by the extent of his fame. (Oriard p.7) When Ali shouted, I am the greatest! It changed the manner in which professional athletes presented themselves. It opened the door for end zone and post goal celebrations, as well as all of the trash talk that occurs in virtually every sport played today. True sportsmanship had been tainted and changed forever. Eventhough the sports were still team oriented, players began to care more about their own individual situations and less about the teams situation. Ali s case however was drastically different. Although he was involved in a violent sport, away from the gym and the ring he was very much a gentle giant. Ali was the prettiest and the greatest; he was a fighter and a dancer, loudmouth and poet, exuberant child and heavyweight champ of the world. (Oriard p. 11) When Cassius Clay left boxing, to be jailed for his beliefs, his almost, three-year absence was to become the biggest story in sports history. Cassius Clay returned to the ring a new man; Muhammad Ali, a converted Muslim and a spokesperson for the black separatist movement. With the new beginning, Ali started on anew highway of success in his boxing career, eventually leading to his dominance of the sport. Being seen as the greatest boxer of all-time. Sport in general and perhaps Muhammad Ali in particular can teach us how the media reaches their diverse audiences through multiple narratives. (Oriard p.14) Ali was always completely unpredictable. He was a child and adult that did not stand just for one religion or race because in the end he is recognized all over the world. It seemed Ali matured physically but might have lost his will to kill. (Oriard p.16) The world says Ali was one who was not afraid to speak his mind and that he could not back it up. Until he defeated knocked out George Foreman, a champion who was thought to be too big and too tough for Ali.

The last part of the article compared Jordan to Ali; however, there are two main differences between the two. First, Ali always stayed in control with the media; what he said went. Second, the kind of hero Ali turned out to be. With his different ways of not just standing up for what he believed, but for what his people believed. Bringing us to the end: heroism is more than being a celebrity, the hero is someone who embodies qualities we admire and wish to emulate, who ultimately represents his people in their highest aspirations. (Oriard p. 20)

Ali is the greatest hero sport has produced. Today s professional athletes do not integrate with the public very often unless it has some financial benefit or is a team obligation. There are those who do try to do their best, however they are hand-cuffed by their popularity and would succumb to public pressures, eventually leading to a mental breakdown. Ali was extraordinary with the media and his fans, in a way that is impossible with today s media. Ali was not given his full credit until long after his retirement, and if today s athlete should take anything from him, it should be Ali s social conscience and the unselfish unpredictability of his character. All to often however today s sports heroes seem to think it was Ali s conceited showmanship that made him the greatest of all time, rather than the strength of his convictions.