

# Muhammad ali: a biography



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Hard work and persistence are the magical words that lead to success and fame. A very good example is “Mohamed Ali Clay.” His name was “Cassius” before being a Muslim. Muhammad Ali built himself by himself until he became the most famous and richest boxer in the entire world.

In 1940s, in Louisville, African Americans were separated from Whites. Black people were only permitted to sit in back rows of movie theatres and buses. Moreover, black children were separated from white children and they could not go to school together. Moreover, some of the restaurants would not allow blacks in. This system was called “segregation.” Louisville had two African American neighborhoods, east end (the California area), and west end (where the Clays lived). The Clays were very poor. Their car was ten years old, their house always needed painting, the porch sagged, and whenever it rained, water entered the house from the roof. Cassius Marcellus, who was born on the 17th of January 1942, and Rudy his brother, were sharing the same pants and the same shirts. After a while, the Clays gave them a new shirt and new pants. Odessa Clay their mother, used to work at houses when her sons were young, and earned four dollars a day. She was very religious. Every Sunday she attended with her two sons Mount Zion Baptist church, where Cassius used to sing in the choir. Odessa taught Cassius to treat people kindly (Muhammed Ali, by Arlene Schhulmain, published 2005).

In 1954, when Cassius was twelve, his father bought him a new bicycle for Christmas. A new bicycle was an enormous thing for them, because they were a poor family. One day, Cassius went to a show with his friend on his new bicycle. After the show was over, Cassius could not find his bike and he went to a police officer, who tried to help him but could not. Later on,

Cassius found the thief and he hit him and then went to the officer and told him that he found the thief and he had beaten him up. That day was the birth of the champion! The police officer took him to a place for boxing, where he could learn boxing and told him “ If you want to learn how to hit, learn boxing.” Joe Martin, who was a boxing coach, helped him to join his club ((Muhammed Ali, by Arlene Schhulmain, published 2005). One day Cassius saw his coach on a television show called “ Tomorrow’s Champions”. When Cassius saw this show, he went to Joe’s gym and started to learn boxing. Cassius was very thin and weighed only eighty nine pounds. He did not have muscles, however he learned quickly because he had fast punches and fast feet and this was considered very good for a beginner. After six months of training at Martin’s gym, Martin finally told him that he would appear on the television show and he would fight a boy for a round for two minutes. When Cassius went, he won the match and it was the first success for him. Cassius was now on the way to becoming a champion. When he went home, he would hit the bullies who picked on him and his family, until they ran home with bloody noses. The people in the neighborhood called him the “ king.” In 1955, Cassius was going to Duvalle High School to travel for competitions and learn more boxing. By 1960, he won six Kentucky Golden Gloves championships and two National Amateur Athletic Union (AAL) titles. At the time when Cassius was eighteen, he earned one hundred out of one hundred and eight Amateur Championships (The Greatest Muhammed Ali, by Walter Dean Myers, published 1996).

Cassius then started to think about making a name for himself. He was thinking of becoming a pro player, but Martin convinced him to continue and

attend the Olympics in order to become a pro player. In 1960, he won his first Olympics. This was in Rome and all people would shake hands with him. He felt very happy signing autographs for his fans. When Cassius went to Louisville, people were waiting for him and cheered for him, but in the United States he still didn't have all his rights. Cassius decided to turn pro and he went to find a sponsor. He chose the Louisville group, which was trying to find him a coach to teach him how to box like a professional. Cassius' goals were to buy a new house for his parents and buy a new Cadillac for himself. He found a coach called Dundee, who trained him very well. After that, Cassius moved to Miami, Florida where Dundee trained his fighters. He lived in a small room with dirty windows and unpainted walls. In 1960, he had the first pro match with Tunney Hunsaker. Everyone knew that Clay would win the match, and he really did win and received two thousand dollars (The Greatest Muhammed Ali, by Walter Dean Myers, published 1996).

Cassius was the first one to enter the gym and the last one to leave. Many reporters and newspapers liked him for his funny jokes and his interesting quotes. In 1962, Clay faced a big challenge. There was a popular pro player, whose name was Archie Moore and who was forty nine years old. Clay was only twenty years old then. They played a match that ended for Clay's victory. He became more popular and all pro fighters were curious to fight him. In 1963, Clay was to fight Doug Jones, and that match ended also for Clay's victory but he won it in ten rounds! Clay had the biggest match of all held on 1964. He fought a champion who was 220 pounds of muscles! His name was Sonny Liston. Before entering the match, Clay was scared to death and doctors expected him to give up in the match. When he entered,

he performed very well in that he cut Liston, and it was the first time for Liston to be cut in a match. Liston had to take a medication to continue the match and the medication ended up on his gloves, so when Liston punched Clay in the face, Clay couldn't see because it was hurting him so much. He washed his face with water and then continued the match and won. This made Clay more famous ([www. answers. com/topic/muhammad\\_ali\\_boxer](http://www.answers.com/topic/muhammad_ali_boxer)) and (The greatest Muhammed Ali, by Arlene Schulman, published 2005).

At that time, Clay was attending the Nation of Islam group meetings secretly. He didn't want anyone to know because he could be sent out of boxing. After the match with Liston, he announced that he is a Muslim and he changed his name to " Muhammed Ali." After that, he began to address the members of the Islam group and gave speeches for them.

In 1964, Ali married Sonj Roi , who refused to wear Muslim dress, smoked cigarettes and went to nightclubs. He soon divorced her, and then married in 1967 a Muslim woman called Belinda. Ten years later " Maryum Ali" was born. In 1972, Ali opened a training camp at Deer Lake. Later in 1978, he went to the great fight with Leon Spinks, who won against Ali. After that, Ali demanded a re-match, trained for it and won. In 1979, Ali had two more girls named " Laila and Hana." Ali was very proud of them ([www. novaonline. nvc. edu/eli/evans/his135/events/ali98. htm](http://www.novaonline.nvc.edu/eli/evans/his135/events/ali98.htm)).

One day, Ali decided to retire, but this did not last long because he loved boxing. He came back to the ring stronger than ever. Unfortunately, after some time, he was beaten up by Larry Holmes, who erased Ali's hopes of coming back to boxing. From that day, he insisted on retiring and became a

very good coach, who trained children. You hear a lot now about his daughter, Laila Ali, who is following in her father's footsteps ([www.novaonline.nvc.edu/eli/evans/his135/events/ali98.htm](http://www.novaonline.nvc.edu/eli/evans/his135/events/ali98.htm)).

Obviously, Muhammed Ali Clay's life story is very inspirational. It shows how ambition and hard work would take one to new worlds; worlds of success, wealth, achievement and fame. His strength, tolerance and persistence will always be a guide for many.