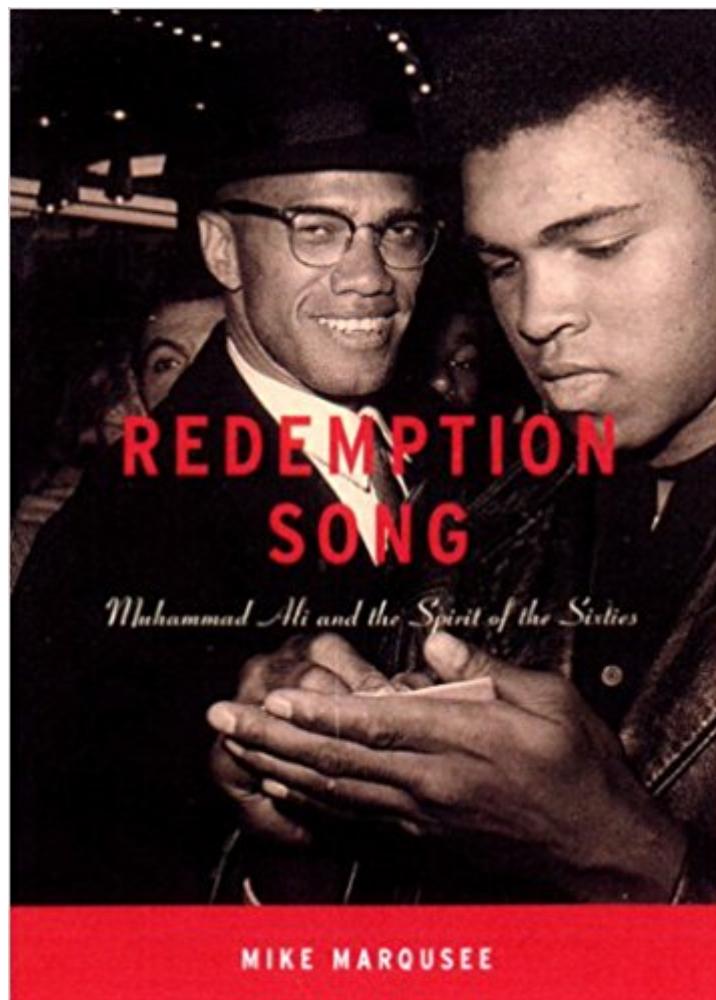


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# Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali And The Spirit Of The Sixties



## Synopsis

Shortlisted for the 1999 William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award and voted one of the twenty-five "Books to Remember 2000" by the New York Public Library. In this timely antidote to the apolitical celebration of Muhammad Ali as "a great American," Mike Marqusee puts the boxer back in his true historical context to explore a crucial moment at the crossroads of popular culture and mass resistance. And, in a new afterword for this second edition, he reflects on Ali's legacy in the era of the "war on terror."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It is an enthralling historical look at Muhammad Ali. It's not the usual biographical fare but a hearty feast of Ali in relationship to This book reveals much about racism in boxing and in general society. Ali's refusal to fight was not what scared the establishment but his being his own man and his choice of spiritual beliefs. Even if you're not a boxing fan this is a book you must read. If you read nothing else make sure it's *Redemption Song*. It is a true commentary on race relations in the US. Before Ali, no boxer since Jack Johnson had so terrified society. Johnson had been considered a brute and it was his perceived animalistic nature that scared people. Ali, on the other hand was more refined and this created and even greater fear. His smoothness, so-called glibness and the ability to promote himself so well was terrifying. Here was a man who rather than being the humble servant of the boxing world declared, "I am the greatest." This declaration of independence scared the hell out of white america. Here was a man who was not going to conform to the mold layed out

for Black athletes. Redemption Song shows not only boxing's hypocrisy but all of America's. Ali defined himself rather than allow others to do so. He was his own person and because he didn't fit into society's idea of a Black American athlete -being grateful for crumbs- he scared many. Not since Joe Louis had one "negro" fighter had been on the minds of white america. Whereas, Louis permitted society to give him the burden to carry his race upon his shoulders, Ali had it thrust upon him. Louis wouldn't even eat watermelon, something he really loved, in public because of stereotyping. Joe Louis emergence in the thirties had his handlers so concerned that he "..."

I'm not a boxing fan, but after seeing the recent "Ali" movie, I was inspired to take Mike Marqusee's "Redemption Song" off my bookshelf and read it. I got the book because I heard Marqusee last year in a radio interview about Ali and the Black Power movement of the sixties and I was very interested in the culture and politics that both shaped Ali and was influenced by him. I found "Redemption Song" a powerful and well written book that gives so much more depth than the new movie. The depth of Marqusee's research and analysis made me realize that the Ali movie would have needed to be a trilogy in order to do justice the champ's life. Ali's defiance of racist draft policies could have been an entire movie in and of itself. While "Ali" movie focuses on Ali's defiance, Marqusee's book provides the context for Ali's anti-war stance. His description and analysis makes the movie's focus a mere footnote to this part of Ali's history. When Ali argued, "Man, I ain't got not quarrel with them Vietcong," he was taking a religious and political stance on a personal, cultural/racial, and class level. He was not only echoing the developing anti-war movement, but giving voice to it, even though he never sought to be a leader within the movement. He was in sync with civil rights activists like John Lewis who complained, "I don't see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam...to the Congo...to Africa and can't send troops to Selma, Alabama," [where the civil rights of Black people were systemically and violently denied civil rights on a daily basis.] He was in line with Martin L. King who boldly declared and preached that the war "morally and politically unjust.

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