



**ANNOUNCEMENT OF Muhammad Ali Center's First-Ever  
MUHAMMAD ALI GLOBAL PEACE LAUREATE  
On SEPTEMBER 21, 2020, the United Nation's International Day of Peace**

**OVERVIEW**

**WHY NOW?**

- NOW is the opportune time to carry forward and underscore Ali's unifying vision for humanity. Our country is deeply divided; we are in the midst of a global pandemic; the world is experiencing an awakening of racial and social inequalities that have consequently fueled renewed energy and conviction to protest; and our world is seeing an increase in hate and extremism and other invisible but dangerous actions that are occurring as a result of ***Us versus Them*** ideologies.
- Muhammad Ali was a United Nations Messenger of Peace. He used his athletic accomplishments as a platform for social justice and social change. **Muhammad Ali was a fighter and a uniter.** Throughout his life, Ali embodied six core principles that guided him, enlightened him, and gave him courage, and character: Confidence, Conviction, Dedication, Respect, Giving, and Spirituality.
- Timing meets opportunity: Farah Pandith has the experience, passion, and courage to also carry forward these principles in ways that will activate positive social change and focus on what unites us. It is rare to find a person of this stature and prominence who is so perfectly in sync with Ali's values and who also has the commitment to tackle the critical issues that are so central to all of us today.
- Inspired after reading her book *How We Win: How Cutting-Edge Entrepreneurs, Political Visionaries, Enlightened Business Leaders, and Social Media Mavens Can Defeat the Extremist Threat*, Lonnie Ali, Muhammad Ali's wife, wanted to work closely with Farah to find ways to promote peace, mutual respect, and understanding in America and internationally. And since the 2020 pandemic and civil unrest, the Ali Center decided the time was now.
- In late 2019, the Muhammad Ali Center became associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications. This affiliation constitutes the Ali Center's commitment to raise public awareness of issues of global concern. In particular, the Ali

Center is committed to helping address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals so that, in the future, no one will be left behind – and peace and justice will exist for all.

- Muhammad Ali's social impact was appreciated across the political aisles. In 2005, Muhammad was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by former U.S. President George W. Bush, who called him "a man of peace."
- While we no longer have Muhammad Ali with us, his voice is not stilled; his message of peace, respect, and mutual understanding are amplified through the Muhammad Ali Center and will be magnified on a larger stage through Ms. Pandith's efforts in this Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate role.

### **WHO IS FARAH PANDITH?**

- Farah Pandith has served with distinction for three American presidents (George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Barack Obama) on the National Security Council, at the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. Department of State.
- She is the former first-ever Special Representative to Muslim Communities and traveled on behalf of the United States to nearly 100 countries meeting with youth and building first of their kind networks of like-minded thinkers.
- Farah's global scope and understanding, in addition to her proven track record of and commitment to promoting diversity, cohesion and respect are all fitting attributes for the Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate role.
- Farah was born in Kashmir, India and grew up in Massachusetts.
- Her career in public service began when she gave a speech about diversity while at Smith College and First Lady Barbara Bush began quoting it.
- She is a senior fellow at the Future of Diplomacy Project at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.
- She is an adjunct senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.
- She is the author of *How We Win: How Cutting-Edge Entrepreneurs, Political Visionaries, Enlightened Business Leaders, and Social Media Mavens Can Defeat The Extremist Threat*.
- Farah is a non-partisan, highly accomplished leader and has been recognized with numerous prestigious awards.

### **WHAT IS THIS ROLE?**

- The Ali Center has established this new role to use the power of Ali's message and history to help create new awareness and opportunities for America and the world.

- As the Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate, Farah will seed new initiatives and generate change to disrupt hate, build stronger communities, and open new opportunities for social change through community engagement and deeper awareness of one another's common threads of humanity regardless of personal background.
- In the context of a deeply divided America, the Ali Center wants to open as many channels as possible to work together for humanity, and with empathy, compassion, and mutual understanding. This role is a reflection of the mission and work of the Ali Center. The Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate will have a special emphasis on the power of youth.

### **IMMEDIATE DELIVERABLES**

The Muhammad Ali Center will soon be formally announcing two exciting new initiatives:

1. An unprecedented and exciting podcast co-produced by the Ali Center and American Abroad Media, and with the partnership of National Public Radio (NPR), will explore how Muhammad Ali's faith guided him through a tumultuous half century for African Americans and how his spiritual journey enabled him to become an icon for Americans and global citizens. The podcast will open up Ali's faith journey through new stories, insights and historic data-points. The series will be released during Black History Month in February 2021 for U.S. audiences on public radio and will also be distributed internationally.

This podcast ties into the Global Peace Laureate role because the Ali Center hopes that in sharing this new personal narrative of Muhammad Ali and his internal reflections on spirituality and common humanity, it may inspire listeners to better understand their own journey in new ways and bring communities together for the greater good.

2. The launch of a bi-partisan *Commission on Civility and Compassion* that will create a road map for America and other actions that can take place at the local, state and federal levels to help heal our country. This bold undertaking will provide some immediate solutions to making American communities stronger, more compassionate, and more clearly focused on our shared humanity.

Ms. Pandith will also identify and foster new national and global relationships that mirror both the Muhammad Ali Center's mission and Mr. Ali's message of peace; respect and understanding; and that provide potential funding or partnership opportunities.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ***Background and Context***

The United States — and nations around the world — are seeing an increase in the deadly virus of hate and extremism. While horrific acts of violence and brutality are front and center, other invisible dangerous actions are taking place as a result of ***Us versus Them*** ideologies: Racism. Bigotry. Discrimination. Systemic inequalities.

Communities are demanding change. They are seeking a new era of humanity. Citizens in the United States and elsewhere are asking to be heard. Protests demanding an end to systematic racism are surging worldwide resulting in positive actions from athletes, academic and cultural institutions, and the corporate sector. “Regular people” are demanding positive, immediate, and sustainable change from their elected officials, social media platforms, and law enforcement.

The culmination of hundreds of years of social injustice is resulting in global youth – millennials, Gen Z and Gen Alpha – using all their power to, as the late U.S. Representative John Lewis said, “make good trouble,” in new ways, both online and offline. Older generations have seen much of this before as many of these themes are not new. This is not the first time in America’s history its citizens have protested and demanded change. It is not the first time athletes have been a critical part of the national conversation about equality and social justice. Muhammad Ali once said that, “Black people aren’t free unless they’re all free from racial oppression.” This time in our history, a re-awakening of longstanding inequities around the globe have unleashed a tidal wave of courageous demonstration that demands a better, more civil, and more peaceful world.

### ***Muhammad Ali***

Sixty years ago, 18-year old Cassius Clay from Louisville, Kentucky, burst upon the scene as a Gold medal winner at the 1960 Olympics, in Rome. Since then, Muhammad Ali has remained a magical figure, known and loved throughout the world.

As a boxer, Muhammad brought unprecedented speed and grace to his sport, while his charm and wit changed forever what the public expected a champion to be. His accomplishments in the ring were the stuff of legend. But there was always far more to Muhammad than what took place in a boxing ring.

Muhammad Ali decisively chose to use his athletic career as a platform to fight for humanitarian causes.

***“Boxing was just to introduce me to the world. Now my life is startin’. Fighting injustice, fighting racism, fighting poverty, using this face that the world knows and fame, and goin’ out and representing truth and helping certain causes.”*** –Muhammad Ali

Muhammad's life and career played out as much on the front pages of national and international newspapers as on the inside sports pages. His early embrace of the Nation of Islam and his insistence on being called Muhammad Ali instead of his "slave name," Cassius Clay, heralded a new era in Black pride. His refusal to be inducted into the United States Army anticipated the growing antiwar movement of the 1960's.

Traveling across continents, he hand-delivered food and medical supplies to such needy sites as the Harapan Kita Hospital for Children in Jakarta, Indonesia; the street children of Morocco; and Sister Beltran's orphanage for Liberian refugees on the Ivory Coast, to name just a few.

At home, he visited countless numbers of soup kitchens and hospitals. He helped such organizations as the Chicago-based adoption agency, The Cradle; the Make-A-Wish-Foundation; the Special Olympics' organization Best Buddies; Herbert E. Birch Services, an organization that runs a school for handicapped children and young adults, and a summer camp for children infected with AIDS; and "Fight Night" which generates funds for the Muhammad Ali Parkinson Research Center at Barrow Neurological Institute, in Phoenix, Arizona. At the State Capitol in Michigan, he advocated new laws protecting children. In schools across America, he taught children the virtues of tolerance and understanding through his book *HEALING*. Muhammad perhaps raised more money for American charities than any other living person.

Muhammad was the recipient of countless awards. In addition to being honored by Amnesty International with their "Lifetime Achievement Award," the Secretary-General of the United Nations bestowed him with a citation as "United Nations Messenger of Peace." He was also named the "International Ambassador of Jubilee 2000," a global organization dedicated to relieving debt in developing nations. Former President Jimmy Carter has called Muhammad "Mr. International Friendship" and, in 2005, Muhammad was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush.

Muhammad Ali passed away on June 3, 2016, at the age of 74. He is buried at Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery.

### ***Power of Action Today***

There has been a tremendous amount of energy released in recent years. While some of it threatens to erupt into violence and destruction, we must find ways to help channel it into building a more just and equitable and inclusive world/society. A world where change for the better is accelerated and a more compassionate, caring and humanitarian world — as civil and human rights leaders have dreamed of and called for over generations — finally comes to fruition. Today, the Muhammad Ali Center recommits itself to inspire, elevate and create new possibilities for changing lives and making communities the centerpiece of a new era.

Using people-to-people connections, and the power of its multi-sectoral, multi-generational networks, the Ali Center has brought together diverse communities and highlighted narratives of people making a difference for the past fifteen years. Now, beginning in the autumn of 2020, the Ali Center will, through the extension of its Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate, help grow and amplify these narratives even more and help transform them into life-changing

measures that show the power of action today. The late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of being confronted with “the urgency of now.” The Muhammad Ali Center feels this urgency and has decidedly chosen to announce the appointment of Farah Pandith as its first-ever Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate.

**On September 21, 2020, the United Nations Day of International Peace**, the Ali Center will open a new chapter designed to create more networks, ideas and global collaboration around building peaceful and compassionate communities using the power of Muhammad Ali's life and legacy as inspiration. Farah Pandith will advance and amplify the vision of its namesake, Muhammad Ali, and build on Ali's commitment to social justice and civility. The objectives will occur in stages: first by storytelling, then building and connecting local and global networks for change; and finally by seeding new projects to create actionable initiatives that generate positive and sustainable change.

***“Peace cannot exist where justice is not served.”***

–Civil Rights Leader, Representative John Lewis

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### ***Global Peace Laureate***

Charged with advancing “sustainable civility” and increasing opportunities for communities to work together to be the best of humanity, the inaugural Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate is awarded to a woman who has spent her life working to engage with others, seek common ground, and listen to voices that are not always heard. A former student leader, a forceful advocate for diversity and equity, a Muslim woman who has demanded that we can do better to build bridges of respect, understanding and collaboration, and a former U.S. government senior official who served three presidents with distinction, Farah Pandith is a trailblazer and pioneer in fighting the ideology of hate and extremism. She will hold a three-year appointed position as the Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate. Farah's role will include engaging with civil society, non-government organizations (NGOs), corporations, philanthropists, and government.

To begin these efforts, she will spearhead two immediate initiatives in early 2021:

#### **1. Ali Center Commission on Civility and Compassion**

First, the Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate will be a commissioner and advisor on the Ali Center *Commission on Civility and Compassion*. The Ali Center Commission on Civility and Compassion aims to chart a bold vision for the future of U.S. leadership in civility and compassion at home (and abroad). Recent events demonstrate the exposure of deep national divides, increased racism and hate and dramatic weaknesses in our societies with regard to civility and compassion. The Ali Center sees a need for a stronger, more powerful and cohesive approach to strengthening these divides. The bi-partisan Commission offers the opportunity to build a sensible, youth-oriented, approach to creating a civil, respectful and compassionate America.

## **2. Muhammad Ali's Spiritual Journey Podcast**

Second, the Ali Center and American Abroad Media will launch a special podcast and NPR series on Muhammad Ali's spiritual journey.- The series will be recorded this fall and released nationally (and internationally) during Black History Month in February 2021.

The narrative is a story of the power of faith — which was so central to Muhammad's life — and how that faith defined one of the most famous Americans of all time. The series will explore how Muhammad Ali's faith guided him through a tumultuous half century for African Americans and Muslims, and how his spiritual journey enabled him to become an icon for Americans, for more than a billion Muslims around the world and other global citizens.

### ***The Muhammad Ali Center***

The Muhammad Ali Center, a 501(c)3 corporation, was co-founded by Muhammad Ali and his wife Lonnie in their hometown of Louisville, Kentucky in 2005. The international cultural center promotes the Six Core Principles of Muhammad Ali (*Confidence, Conviction, Dedication, Giving, Respect, and Spirituality*) in ways that inspire personal and global greatness and provides programming and events around the focus areas of education, gender equity, and global citizenship. The Center's headquarters also contains an award-winning museum experience. The Ali Center is formally associated with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and, in 2020 became one of the newest stops on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. For more information, please visit [www.alicenter.org](http://www.alicenter.org).

The relevance of Muhammad Ali's life is more important now than ever. The need for what Muhammad offered the world has never been more pronounced, and it will always endure. The Center uses the inspiration of Muhammad and his Six Core Principles as a catalyst for personal transformation. Inspiration was Muhammad's gift and his true legacy, a legacy that has the power to live on, beyond the man, and beyond the walls of the Ali Center. Helping to provide the means for a new generation, those now coming of age as activists whose intentions are creating better lives, a better nation, a better world, Muhammad's message and impact are not *just* relevant today, they are vital. The time has come to unleash Muhammad's inspiration through new channels, new platforms, new initiatives, and new partners for change.

When social, civic, and humanitarian demands of the day present themselves before us, the Ali Center believes we must act; we must more fully devote ourselves to the fight for justice, equality, peace, and respect. Muhammad Ali courageously confronted and acted upon causes that left people behind; that diminished mutual respect and civility; and that caused flames of hope to flicker for disadvantaged populations. The Muhammad Ali Center is committed to preserving and sharing Muhammad Ali's legacy in ways that strengthen and empower others through the same core principles that fueled Muhammad Ali throughout his life.

Having a Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate in Farah Pandith, will augment the Ali Center's goals and mission in the following ways:

- Increase its impact into social justice issues that are sweeping the world right now;

- Expand the size of its geographic footprint;
- Fulfill its mission of promoting respect, hope, and understanding;
- And to preserve and share the legacy and ideals of Muhammad Ali.

***“I’ll tell you how I’d like to be remembered: as a Black man who won the heavyweight title and who was humorous and who treated everyone right. As a man who never looked down on those who looked up to him and who helped as many of his people as he could—financially and also in their fight for freedom, justice and equality.” –Muhammad Ali***