

ALI & AARON
UNITED IN THE FIGHT™



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Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory Honors Legacies of Muhammad Ali and Hank Aaron as Civil Rights Heroes

Powerful Mural Debuts Tuesday, June 27

Louisville, KY – June 26th, 2017 - Muhammad Ali once called Hank Aaron, “The only man I idolize more than myself.” These two titans of the American sports scene have much in common as heroes who endured racism and faced down challenges with conviction. An original art installation at [Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory](#) entitled, *Ali & Aaron: United in The Fight*, explores the historic role both athletes played in the fight for civil rights, and inspires guests to examine their own convictions and beliefs.

The stirring mural places Ali and Aaron in the context of the Civil Rights movement, starting in the 1950s and continuing to current day. Other figures and events depicted in the mural include protest marches and sit-ins, victims of the 1963 Alabama church bombing, slain NAACP leader Medgar Evers, Louisville activist Anne Braden, and U.S. Representative John Lewis. The monumental piece is 10-foot tall and 30-foot wide, and was painted by Louisville artist, Victor Sweatt. It will be on display through October 8.

The exhibition is an interactive experience for guests, who are encouraged to affirm their own convictions by answering the questions, “What beliefs do you go to bat for?” and “What freedoms do you fight for?” Guests can share their written answers by posting them on a wall in the gallery, which becomes an ever-changing part of the exhibition.

“I’ve always felt a responsibility to use my baseball fame to better the lives of all people. I’m honored to be depicted in this compelling civil rights mural alongside Muhammad Ali and others involved in the struggle, which continues today,” said Hank Aaron. “I hope this work of art will help people understand why I’ve always felt so strongly about these issues, and inspires all who see it to take action for positive change,” he added.

The installation is part of the *I Am Ali Festival*, a community-wide celebration of the life and legacy of Louisville native, Muhammad Ali, who died last June. The festival spotlights Ali’s “Six Core Principles” of Confidence, Conviction, Dedication, Giving, Respect, and Spirituality. *Ali & Aaron: United in The Fight* focuses on Ali’s core principle of Conviction, which both men demonstrated in their careers and personal lives.

Hank Aaron

Hank Aaron was born February 5, 1934 in Mobile, Alabama. He started his baseball career as a teenager in the Negro leagues and made his major league debut with the Milwaukee Braves in 1954. Aaron was regularly separated from his team due to racial segregation in the 1950s. A 25-time All-Star, Aaron had 755 career home runs, a .305 batting average, and 3,771 hits. By the time he broke Babe Ruth's home run record with his 715th home run in 1974, he had endured months of death threats and racist taunts. Aaron retired in 1976 and was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982. He founded the "Chasing the Dream Foundation" which provides scholarships to youth, and was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 2002. In 2009 he was honored with the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory Living Legend Award. Aaron is currently an executive with the Atlanta Braves.

Muhammad Ali

Born "Cassius Clay" in Louisville, Kentucky, on January 17, 1942, Ali was an Olympic Gold Medalist in 1960, and a three-time WBA Heavyweight Champ. He changed his name to Muhammad Ali after converting to Islam in 1964. Ali resisted the 1966 Vietnam War draft as a conscientious objector, and was convicted of draft evasion. He was stripped of his titles and banned from boxing for three years. The Supreme Court overturned the conviction in 1971. Ali dominated his sport and pop culture with his personality, poetry, and activism until his 1981 retirement. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 1984 but continued his humanitarian efforts. Ali lit the Olympic Torch cauldron in Atlanta for the 1996 games. He was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 2005. Ali died of septic shock on June 3, 2016, at the age of 74. He is buried in Louisville's Cave Hill Cemetery.

"We wanted to create something extra special to celebrate these two remarkable athletes and the lasting impact of their deeply held beliefs about justice and human rights," said Anne Jewell, VP and Executive Director of Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory. "Given the legacies of Ali and Aaron, and how baseball's own history has often intersected with American history and culture, we felt this poignant piece was a fitting tribute for our museum to share with our guests."

About Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory:

Experience history-in-the-making as you stroll through the factory where world-famous Louisville Slugger bats are created. Award-winning factory tour, newly renovated galleries with interactive exhibits, historic memorabilia, and more. Create a Louisville Slugger bat with your very own name on it, just like the pros. Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, 800 West Main Street, is open Monday – Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sundays 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., with extended summer hours. Admission is \$14 for adults, \$13 for seniors (60+), \$8 children (6-12), and free for children 5 and under. For more information, including holiday hours and extended summer hours, visit sluggermuseum.com or call 502-588-7228, or find us on Facebook (@[sluggermuseum](https://www.facebook.com/sluggermuseum)), Twitter (@[sluggermuseum](https://twitter.com/sluggermuseum)), and Instagram (@[slugger_museum](https://www.instagram.com/slugger_museum)).

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