

Beat: Sports

Kareem ABDUL-JABBAR, Jim BROWN and Bill RUSSELL to Be Honored

During Sportsperson of the Year Ceremony

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USPA NEWS - Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Jim Brown and Bill Russell will receive the Sports Illustrated Muhammad Ali Legacy Award, it was announced on November 30, by Time Inc.'s SI. The three icons have been chosen by the SI editors to receive the honor for their incomparable athletic careers and decades of leadership

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Abdul-Jabbar, Brown and Russell are beacons of thoughtful discourse on racial and social inequality and their impact has been felt worldwide. In one profound example, the three came together nearly five decades ago in what became known as the 'Ali Summit.' The 1967 meeting, organized by Brown, was attended by many top athletes of that era to support Muhammad Ali's fight against induction into the U.S. Army as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. It was a time of civil and social unrest in the U.S., and the public display of unity was a transformational moment in the fight for civil rights and for the notion that athletes' voices should be heard beyond the field of play.

On receiving this award Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said, 'Muhammad Ali was both a friend and a personal inspiration to me as an athlete and as an activist. To receive an award in his name is especially moving because it means I am honoring his legacy as a man who defied conventions and courageously risked life and career to making America a land of freedom, equal opportunity and social justice.'

Said Brown, 'I am deeply touched to be honored for a lifetime spent working to establish common ground and mutual respect for all perspectives and backgrounds. I hope that this tribute serves as a symbol of inspiration for all Americans to be champions of social justice. This is a proud moment for me, and I am thrilled to be recognized alongside two other transformative athletes with whom I share a long history of activism and friendship, and for whom I have great respect.'

Added Bill Russell, 'To be a true influence of positive change in the world often means that you have to stand up against injustice and fight through adversity. I am honored to be recognized alongside some of the great cultural icons of our time who have used their platforms to fight for civil rights and social justice, regardless of the risk, including my good friend Muhammad Ali to whom the award is dedicated. Our work has just begun.'

The Sports Illustrated Legacy Award was born in 2008, when Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founder and driving force behind the Special Olympics, was the inaugural honoree. In 2014, Earvin (Magic) Johnson was honored for his two decades as an entrepreneur, philanthropist, social and political activist. Last year SI renamed the award in honor of Ali in recognition of his decades as a boxing legend, humanitarian, civil rights activist and icon. Jack Nicklaus was the first to receive the rededicated award, during the 2015 Sportsperson of the Year ceremony.

The three Legacy Award recipients will be honored alongside the 2016 SI Sportsperson of the Year winner, the SI Kids SportsKids of the Year and other top names and moments from the year in sports at SI's special Sportsperson of the Year celebration taking place at Barclays Center on December 12. The star-studded affair, which will also be attended by Lonnie Ali, will include a special awards dinner and ceremony with tributes to some of the world's most legendary athletes, live musical performances and a VIP red carpet entrance featuring celebrities of sports and entertainment.

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