

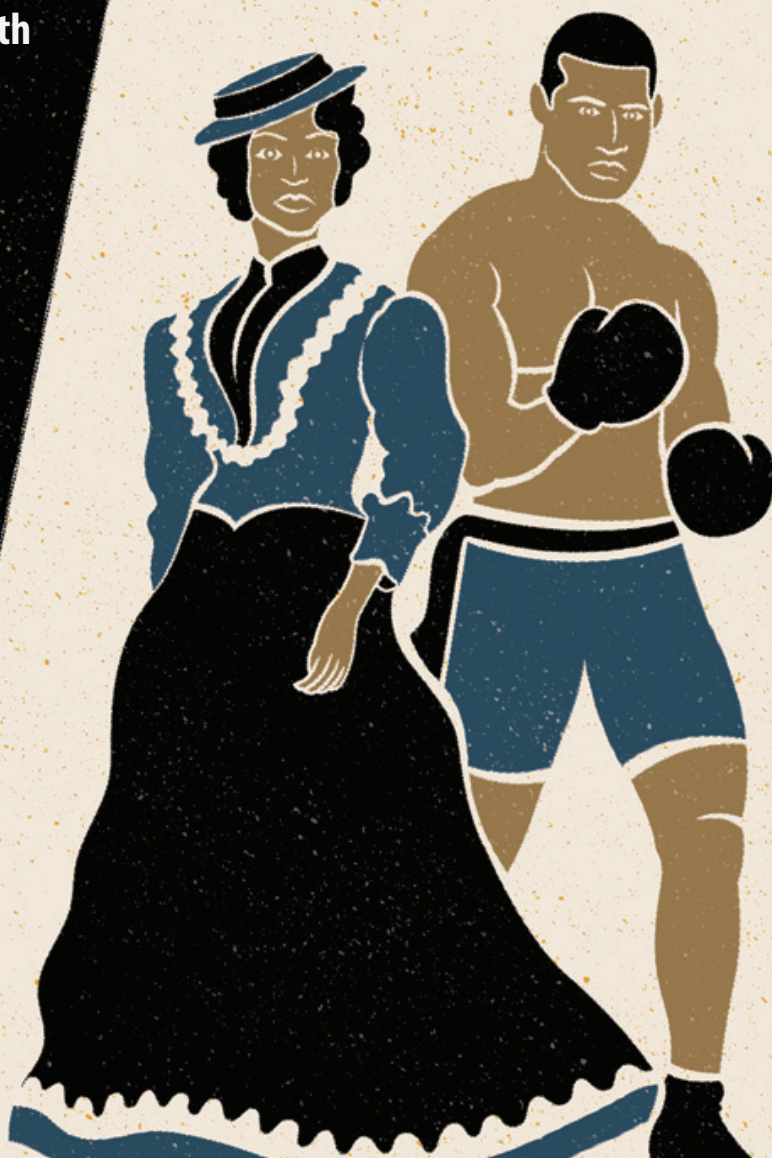
SEPTEMBER 28 - NOVEMBER 6, 2016 | STIEMKE STUDIO

THE ROYALE

THE STIEMKE STUDIO
SEASON IS SPONSORED BY

**Ed Seaberg &
Patrick Smith**

Play
Guide



THE ROYALE

Play
Guide

Written by **Marco Ramirez** | Directed by **Kevin Ramsey**

THE STIEMKE STUDIO SEASON IS SPONSORED BY **Ed Seaberg & Patrick Smith**
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Table of Contents

Synopsis	3
Marco Ramirez: Playwright of <i>The Royale</i>	3
Production Background	3
Our Cast/Production	4
Boxing: Betting, History, Terms & Rules	4-5
Boxing & Storytelling	6
Fight Promotion	6
Jack Johnson vs. Jay Johnson	7
Negro Heavyweight Champion	8-9
Racial Punches: Jim Crow, Lynching & Riots	8-9
Jack Johnson	10
Jack Johnson vs. Jim Jeffries	11
Boxers after Jack Johnson	12
Bibliography	13
Visiting The Rep	14

SYNOPSIS

Jay “The Sport” Jackson wants nothing more in life than to prove he’s the best boxer in the world, but in the Jim Crow era, his chances are as good as knocked out. His dream remains on the ropes until a crooked boxing promoter hatches a plan for “The Fight of the Century,” landing The Sport a place in the ring—and Civil Rights history—as he faces the reigning white heavyweight champion. Set in six rounds of a boxing ring and inspired by the true story of Jack Johnson—the boxer who broke the color barrier in professional sports—*The Royale* packs a historical punch that will leave audiences breathless till the final round.

PRODUCTION BACKGROUND

The Royale, first published on March 13, 2015, is based on the true story of boxer Jack Johnson. Set entirely in a boxing ring, this play depicts the sparring racial tensions in the early 1900s United States. In 2015, Marco Ramirez and Stephanie Paul were nominated for Joseph Jefferson Equity Award for Artistic Specialization for Rhythm and Percussion at the American Theater Company in Chicago. The March 2016 production at the Lincoln Center won two Obie Awards, An Outer Critics Circle Award and a Drama Desk Award.

MARCO RAMIREZ: PLAYWRIGHT OF *THE ROYALE*

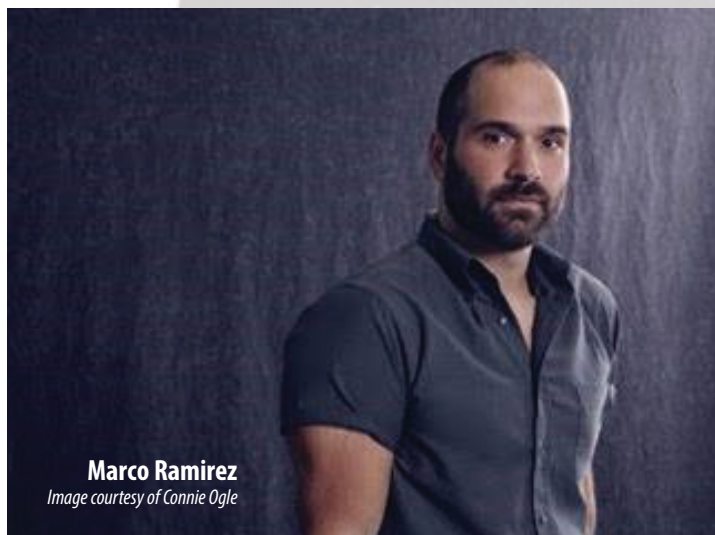
“One of the things I wanted to make sure of — and this may sound wonky — was not so much getting the story of his life right but getting the adversity he faced right. Making sure the struggles and the threats he faced were right, that was what important to me, not creating a Wikipedia version of his life.”

-- MARCO RAMIREZ IN AN INTERVIEW WITH
CONNIE OGLE OF THE MIAMI HERALD

Trained in playwriting at The Julliard School and NYU, Marco Ramirez’s playwright credits include *The Old Globe*, The Kennedy Center, The Julliard School, The Arsht Center, and Actors Theatre of Louisville’s Humana Festival of New American Plays. His work with the Actors Theatre of Louisville’s Humana Festival earned him two Heideman Awards. As a TV writer, Ramirez’s credits include FX’s critically acclaimed *Sons of Anarchy* as well as Netflix’s *Daredevil* and *Orange is the New Black*.

In an interview by Connie Ogle at the Miami Herald, Marco Ramirez compares his writing across different mediums to cross training for different muscle groups. He knows which medium works best to tell each story and describes it as “a real luxury to be able to bounce between these worlds.”

Marco Ramirez credits his style of writing to his inspirations, August Wilson and Tarell Alvin. He explained to Ms. Ogle, “Had I not read every August Wilson play ever, I might not have written *The Royale*. His voice is such an important part of what made me a writer....And Tarell, he’s influenced my work tremendously. His language is gorgeous, but he never forgets the medium or the bodies on stage. He never forgets the physical elements of theater.”



Marco Ramirez
Image courtesy of Connie Ogle

WHO'S WHO IN *THE ROYALE*

CAST



Xavier Scott Evans
Fish



John Gregorio
Max



Sade' Moore
Nina



David St. Louis
Jay "The Sport" Jackson



Cedric Turner
Wynton

CREATIVE TEAM



Kevin Ramsey
Director, Movement Director

Scott Davis, *Scenic Designer*

Alison Siple, *Costume Designer*

Thomas Weaver, *Lighting Designer*

Josh Schmidt, *Sound Designer*

JC Clementz, *Casting Director*

Daniella Wheelock, *Assistant Director*

Richelle Harrington Calin, *Stage Manager*

Marguerite Frey, *Stage Management Fellow*

BOXING HISTORY

Evidence indicates that boxing existed in North Africa in 4000 B.C. Greeks and Romans also participated in the sport.

In ancient Rome, most of the boxers were prisoners or slaves who fought to achieve freedom and independence. There were no official rules and the fight ended when one of the opponents died or got seriously injured.

In 1681, the first boxing match was recorded. In Britain, the Duke of Albemarle held a boxing match between his butler and his butcher.

In 1743, Jack Boughton, known as the "father of boxing," created the first set of boxing rules. It is believed that Boughton published the rules after one of his opponents died during their match.

In 1866, the Marquess of Queensberry forged a new set of boxing rules, limiting each round to three minutes, banning wrestling, and making gloves a requirement.

In 1902, London dentist Jack Marles invented a mouth guard for boxers.

In 1927, the National Boxing Association was established to ensure order and sanction in boxing.



BOXING RULES

A **round** lasts for **3 minutes** followed by 1 minute of rest.

World titles are **12 ROUNDS**.
Regional titles are **10 ROUNDS**.

Winners of rounds are determined by **counting punches that strike and miss the opponent's head or front side of the body**. Judges may also consider aggression, control of the boxing ring, and damage done to the opponent.

Points are awarded to boxers each round based on a **10-point system**. The winner typically receives 10 points and the loser 9 points. If one boxer dominates the round, the score may be 10 to 8. If judges cannot decide the winner of a round, each boxer will receive 10 points.

A fight ends in a **knockout (KO)** when a boxer cannot get up by the count of **10 SECONDS**.

A **technical knockout (TKO)** results if the referee determines the fighter is unable to defend his or herself properly, when the fighter has received a serious injury, or when the boxer or the boxer's trainers decide the fighter should not continue.

Boxing Terms

PURSE: the money a boxer is guaranteed to leave with after the fight (negotiated between the boxer's manager and the fight promotor).

TITLE FIGHT: a boxing match that marks the winner as the champion.

PINSPOT: a spotlight that produces a narrow beam of light illuminating a very small part of a stage, used to focus attention on a detail.

SPARRING: to box with someone as a form of training or practice.

JABS: to strike a person with a short straight blow.

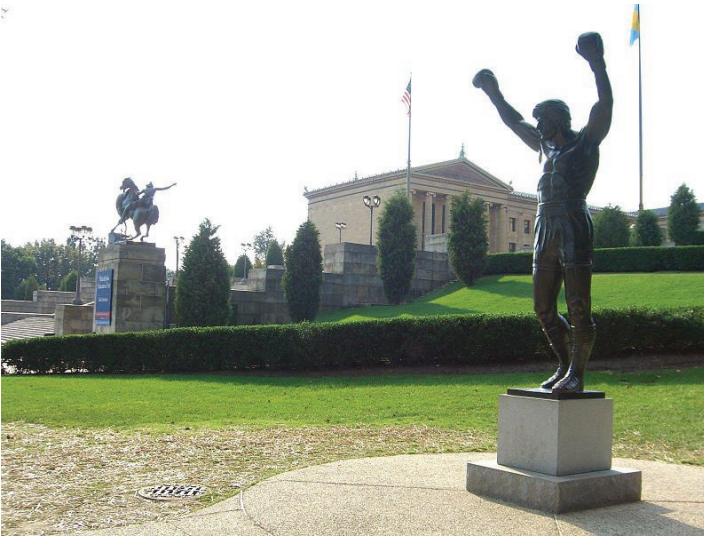
HOOKS: a horizontal punch coming from the side of the body.

Betting

MONEY LINE BETTING: A bet can be placed on the predicted winner or result of the fight.

ROUND BETTING: Bet on amount of rounds fight will last.

VICTORY BETTING: Bet on the way in which a boxer will win the match.



Rocky statue, image courtesy of Luigi Novi

Boxing is one of the most frequently portrayed sports in movies, TV shows, and plays. From the renowned *Rocky* films to *Million Dollar Baby*, to *The Royale*, boxing innately lends itself as a strong framework for stories. Very rarely does a “boxing movie” focus on boxing as the main plot point, but instead utilizes the sport as a vehicle to portray other internal and external struggles the characters face.

“It’s a sport that’s so brutal, but like jazz, it’s improvised. It distills the human struggle.”

- RAMIREZ TO OGLE, MIAMI HERALD

The original *Rocky*, written and acted by Sylvester Stallone, tells the story of an unknown boxer by the name of Rocky who receives the opportunity to fight boxing champion Apollo Creed. This legendary story is not built off of Rocky Balboa’s boxing methods or styles, but the message of rising up when the occasion demands, inside and outside the ring.

In *Million Dollar Baby*, Clint Eastwood’s character Frankie initially refuses to train Hilary Swank’s character, Maggie, due to her gender. Upon seeing her determination Frankie changes his mind and the two develop an unlikely friendship. Through the lens of boxing, *Million Dollar Baby* tells the story of people who use their rough pasts to fuel their future successes.

Marco Ramirez, in an interview for the Miami Herald, astutely interprets the reasons for why boxing fits so well into storytelling. “It’s a sport that’s so brutal, but like jazz, it’s improvised. It distills the human struggle.” Ramirez goes on to explain that sports in general are a

good metaphor, but not all sports are as easily understood. “Boxing is very clear: two elements, and one is going to win. That struggle is human, and it’s such a simple skeletal framework to hang meat on.” (Ogle, *Miami Herald*) Ramirez uses *The Royale*, a story about a boxer, to depict the racial struggles Johnson faced in 1905 as an African-American Man.

FIGHT PROMOTION

A boxing promoter yields great power in the boxing industry. The boxing promoter pays for and sets up everything for the boxing match. Financial risk, potential gain, and legal liabilities associated with the boxing event fall on the boxing promoter.

Both the boxer and boxing promoter benefit from a well-publicized fight. The boxer will receive recognition and the fight promoter will increase their financial gain.

In order to be successful, boxing promoters must know the market and know how to advertise the fight to a wide variety of people. The most successful boxers have honest managers who will work with the boxing promoters to make sure their boxer has a high payout at the end of the fight.

IN *THE ROYALE*, MAX, THE BOXING PROMOTER, ARRANGES FOR JAY TO FIGHT BIXBY AND PROMOTES THE FIGHT IN THE PROCESS. WHEN PROMOTING THE FIGHT, MAX HAS REPORTERS COME IN TO ASK JAY QUESTIONS:

“I’ll repeat out loud, so everyone in the back can hear. Don’t want any o’ you missing out on a single tidbit. This is one for the ages, boys. David and Goliath got nothing on us.”

JACK JOHNSON VS. **JAY JOHNSON**

JACK JOHNSON

- Real boxer
- Born on March 21, 1878 in Galveston, Texas
- Nicknamed "The Galveston Giant"
- Challenges Jim Jeffries to title fight
- Heavyweight champions prior to Jim Jeffries fought Jack Johnson
- Jeffries fought for whites to regain World Heavyweight title
- Purse was 60/40
- Outcome of fight was race riots throughout country

BOTH

- Negro Heavyweight Champions
- Faced issues of racism/segregation
 - Fear of race riots
- Crowd important in fights
- Jeffries/Bixby come out of retirement for fight
 - Lack support from white audience
- Have expensive taste in Jim Crow era

JAY JOHNSON

- Based on real boxer, Jack Johnson
- Would not tell media where he was from, was from Creek County
- Nicknamed "The Sport"
- Challenged Heavyweight Champion, Bixby
- No prior Heavyweight Champion fought any African American prior to Johnson/Bixby fight
- Bixby was told if he fought Johnson it would "disgrace his legacy"
- Purse was 90/10
- Fear of race riots as a result of the fight

Negro Heavyweight Champions and Leagues

In 18th century England, boxing became popular because it was seen as a way for a man to defend his ego while simultaneously entertaining the wealthy through betting. Former black slaves Bill Richmond and Tom Molyneux were well known in the English boxing world.

In the 19th and 20th century, African-American participation in sports was very limited. Sports were connected to colleges and workplace, where African-American admittance was typically refused, which further limited their involvement with athletics. African-Americans were denied access to professional baseball and jockeying, two popular sports of the era. Boxing was the only sport in which African-Americans could participate.

Many African-Americans held valued titles in boxing: Joe Walcott (Welterweight Champion 1901-1904), Joe Gans (Lightweight Champion 1902-1904, 1906-1908), and George Dixon (Featherweight Champion 1890-1897, 1898-1900). The title of Heavyweight Champion was not permitted to African-Americans. Many professional sports leagues such as the National Football League, the Basketball Association of America, and Major League Baseball denied participation to African-Americans. In response, African-Americans created Negro leagues, and the title of Negro Heavyweight Champion.



History of Jim Crow

The name “Jim Crow” originated from a song written by Thomas Dartmouth Rice. In 1828, Rice, a white man, came on stage in blackface makeup as Jim Crow, an exaggerated black character. He is one of the first people to use blackface while performing. Rice’s song and dance routine was monetarily successful and his portrayal of blacks left a lasting impression on the audience. He portrayed blacks as being lazy, stupid, and less than human.

By 1838, Jim Crow became a common slang term to describe a black man and by the early 1900s, laws that were established to segregate African-Americans were called “Jim Crow Laws.” The laws existed primarily in the southern United States until the mid-1960s.

EXAMPLES OF JIM CROW LAWS:

- A black male could not shake hands with a white male, because it implied being socially equal.
- A black man could not shake hands with a white woman for risk of being accused of rape.
- Blacks and whites could not eat together.
- Blacks were not allowed to show affection toward one another in public.

In *The Royale*, Jay, the Negro Heavyweight Champion, explains his desire to fight Bixby: “Ain’t about bein’ no Heavyweight Champion of the White World. It’s about bein’ Champion, period.”



IN *THE ROYALE*, JAY’S SISTER NINA TELLS JAY OF WHAT HAPPENED TO TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN THAT GOT INTO A FIGHT WITH TWO WHITE MEN ABOUT JAY BEING A BETTER BOXER THAN BIXBY:

“All four of ‘em, white ones and the black ones. They walked outta that brawl with broken wrists – broken ribs – Ask me they got what they deserved. Fightin’ over a fight, fightin’ over you. But this morning, they found two of ‘em, hands cut off, strung up to a streetlight. I need to tell you which two?”

Lynching History

Much like the fear of starting a race riot, the fear of Jay being lynched for being a black man boxing a white man looms throughout *The Royale*. Lynching also remains a fear for the other African-American characters in the play.

Lynching is a form of vigilante “justice” which punished people, without due justice, for alleged crimes.

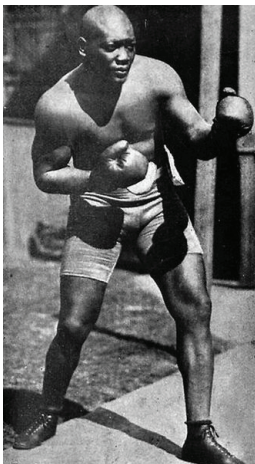
During the 1800s in the United States, lynching became common for slaves who would escape or try to escape their masters. After the Civil War and up until the 1930s, lynching became even more common and widespread in the southern United States. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan (pictured below) promoted violence against African Americans and gained many followers who wished for white supremacy.

Between 1880 and 1930, it is estimated that 2,400 black men, women, and children were lynched in the United States.



In the early 1900’s, race riots were common in the U.S. *The Royale* depicts the fear of a race riot caused by Jay fighting a white male. Jay’s sister, Nina, tries to persuade Jay not to fight Bixby: “I don’t want you to lose, I’m just afraid of what happens when you win.”

>> JACK JOHNSON >>



Johnson vs. Tommy Burns

MARCH 21, 1878—Johnson is born in Galveston, Texas.

1895—First fight against a dockworker, Johnson wins \$1.50.

1894—Fight lasts four rounds against professional boxer Bob Thompson, Johnson wins \$25.

MAY 1, 1900—First fight against a white man, Australian Jim Scanlon, Johnson wins.

JANUARY 1901—Set to have rematch with Scanlon in Memphis, TN; police cancel the event.

FEBRUARY 25, 1901—Fights Joe Choynski and gets knocked out. Both boxers get arrested for engaging in an illegal contest and spend 23 days in jail.

MAY 16, 1902—Fights Jack Jeffries, younger brother of the heavyweight champion, Jim Jeffries, and wins the fight.

FEBRUARY 3, 1903—Fights "Denver" Ed Martin, wins and becomes Negro Heavyweight Champion.

MAY 2, 1905—Announces retirement, stating no opponents left to fight.

MARCH 28, 1905—Fights Marvin Hart, current World Heavyweight Champion, and loses fight.

DECEMBER 26, 1908—Fights Tommy Burns, World Heavyweight Champion, for 14 rounds until police step in and end it; Johnson is declared the winner.

JULY 4, 1910—Fights Jim Jeffries, former World Heavyweight Champion, wins, and is named World Heavyweight Champion.

1912—Convicted of violating the Mann Act for bringing his white girlfriend across state lines before their marriage. Johnson is sentenced to prison but fled to Europe, where he lives for seven years.

1920—Returns to the United States and serves his prison sentence.

JUNE 10, 1946—Dies from an automobile accident.

JACK JOHNSON VS. JIM JEFFRIES



Political cartoon in the Los Angeles Times on July 7, 1910, that depicts Jack Johnson as being the explosion that set off race riots in many parts of the United States.

On July 4, 1910 in Reno, Nevada, Jack Johnson fought Jim Jeffries in "The Fight of the Century." Many factors impacted the fame of this fight, but the primary factor was that Jack Johnson was African-American and Jim Jeffries was a white man.

Named the Negro Heavyweight Champion of the World in 1903, Jack Johnson turned his focus to the title of World Heavyweight Champion belonging to Jim Jeffries. Jeffries refused the fight, stating that Jack Johnson had "no name" in boxing.

In 1904, the undefeated Jim Jeffries retired.

On December 26, 1908, Jack Johnson fought current World Heavyweight Champion, Australian Tommy Burns and won the fight, making Jack Johnson the World Heavyweight Champion.

Jack Johnson brought back the World Heavyweight Champion boxing title to the United States where the white American public viewed him as unworthy of the title. During the time of Jim Crow laws, Johnson lived an extravagant lifestyle. He drove nice cars and dated white women, all unheard of and viewed unfavorably by society at the time.

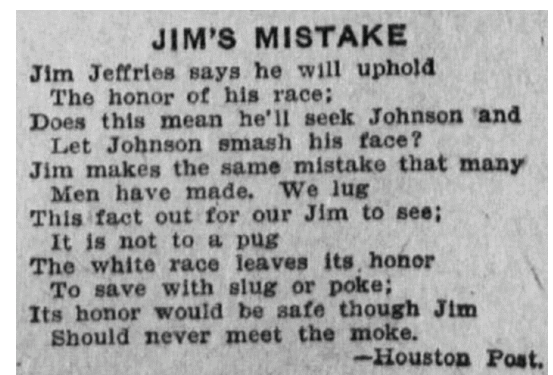
Jack Johnson defended his World Heavyweight Champion title many times and remained undefeated.

Eventually, Jim Jeffries was persuaded to be the "white hope" that could beat Jack Johnson. Whites wished for Jeffries to win the title and put whites above African-Americans in the athletic hierarchy. The purse was \$101,000 (Winner receiving 60%). Jeffries was predicted to be the winner.

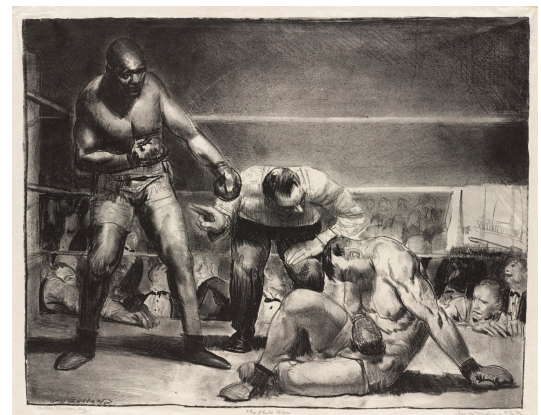
Before the fight, the white press positively promoted the life of Jim Jeffries and portrayed Jack Johnson in a negative way. Promoters did not allow alcohol at the fight and firearms had to be checked at the gate for fear of racial violence in the event of a Jack Johnson win.

After 15 Rounds, Jeffries' corner decided to stop the fight to prevent further damage. Later, Jeffries stated, "I could never have whipped Johnson at my best. I couldn't have hit him. No, I couldn't have reached him in a thousand years."

The fight ignited race riots throughout the country, leaving many African-Americans injured and killed.



A poem about Jim Jeffries published around March 16, 1909 (Image courtesy of Los Angeles Herald)



"The White Hope" by George Bellows.

BOXERS AFTER JOHNSON

Jack Johnson is known as being the first African American Heavy Weight Boxing Champion. Since then, many African American boxers have followed in his footsteps. Examples of well-known African American boxers include: **JOE LOUIS**, **MOHAMMAD ALI**, and **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**.



JOE LOUIS

Joe Louis, known as the “Brown Bomber”, was born on May 13, 1914 in Lafayette, Alabama.

Louis started boxing in 1934 and won his first 27 fights, 23 of which ended in knockouts.

Joe Louis held the title of World Heavyweight Boxing Champion longer than anyone else in history: from June 22, 1937 to March 1, 1949.

He retired on March 1, 1949. After boxing, Louis struggled with money and prior to his death he worked at Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas as a greeter. Joe Louis passed away on April 12, 1981.



MUHAMMAD ALI

Muhammad Ali, known as “The Greatest”, was born as Cassius Clay on January 17, 1942 in Louisville, Kentucky.

At 12 years old, after his bike was stolen, he told police officer Joe Martin that he wanted to beat up the thief that stole his bike. In response, Martin stated that “he better learn how to fight before he starts challenging people.” Joe Martin also trained boxers at a local gym, which is where Muhammad Ali started training.

In 1954, Ali won his first amateur match and continued to win his boxing matches. Ali went on to win the Olympic light heavyweight gold medal in the 1960 Olympics. Ali boasts his boxing skills in his most famous quote: “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.”

After his retirement, Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Throughout his life, Ali remained an important and valued philanthropic figure.



FLOYD MAYWEATHER

Floyd Mayweather, known as “Pretty Boy”, was born on February 24, 1977 in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

In 1993, 1994, and 1996, Mayweather won the national Golden Gloves. In 1996, Mayweather competed in the Olympic games in Atlanta, Georgia and lost to Serafim Todorov of Bulgaria, but he earned a bronze medal in the featherweight division.

In 2007, Floyd Mayweather gained widespread recognition after defeating well-known boxer Oscar De La Hoya.

Recently, on May 2, 2015, Mayweather challenged and beat Manny Pacquiao.

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CREATIVE COMMONS IMAGES

Page 4-5: "spiral bound writing pad" obtained from Flickr user "Creativity103" with a Creative Commons 2.0 license.

VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Stiemke Studio is on the main level behind the large rotunda staircase.



THE REP VALUES YOUR SUPPORT



Financial support enables The Rep to:

- ★ Advance the art of theater with productions that inspire individuals and create community dialogue;
- ★ Provide a richer theater experience by hosting Rep In Depth, Talkbacks, and creating Play Guides to better inform our audiences about our productions;
- ★ Educate over 20,000 students at 200+ schools in the greater Milwaukee area with Rep Immersion Day experiences, student matinees, workshops, tours and by making connections with their school curriculum through classroom teaching programs such as Reading Residencies and Scriptworks;
- ★ Maintain our commitment to audiences with special needs through our Access Services that include American Sign Language interpreted productions, captioned theater, infrared listening systems and script synopses to ensure that theater at The Rep is accessible to all;
- ★ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our Artistic Intern Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

We value our supporters and partnerships and hope that you will help us to expand the ways Milwaukee Rep has a positive impact on theater and on our Milwaukee community.

Donations can be made on our website at www.MilwaukeeRep.com or at 414-224-9490.

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