
“Battle Blind”: Atlanta’s Taste for Black Boxing in the Early Twentieth Century

Andrew M. Kaye[†]

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Blindfolded, I could no longer control my motions. I had no dignity. I stumbled about like a baby or a drunken man. The smoke had become thicker and with each new blow it seemed to sear and further restrict my lungs. My saliva became like hot bitter glue. A glove connected with my head, filling my mouth with warm blood. It was everywhere. I could not tell if the moisture I felt upon my body was sweat or blood. A blow landed hard against the nape of my neck. I felt myself going over, my head hitting the floor. Streaks of blue light filled the black world behind the blindfold. I lay prone, pretending that I was knocked out, but felt myself seized by hands and yanked to my feet. “Get going, black boy! Mix it up!”¹

In the memorable opening chapter of *Invisible Man* (1952), Ralph Ellison’s central character becomes unwittingly embroiled in a battle royal. Hoping to give a speech on racial amity, he is instead thrust into the fray at a Southern town smoker. Just before the show, the boys are taunted by a naked white female, whose sinuous dancing reminds them of the unambiguous limits to their racial existence. Then, the narrator and the other blindfolded “little shines” are instructed to strike each other in the belly, the area in which African Americans were long thought to be most susceptible. Through the band of white cloth covering his eyes, the eponymous hero can just make out “the sweat-washed forms” of his

[†]The author thanks Steve Goodson for originally pointing him in the direction of useful sources on boxing in early twentieth-century Atlanta.

schoolmates “weaving in the smoky-blue atmosphere like drunken dancers weaving to the rapid drum-like thud of blows.” Finally, the watching grandees—doctors, bankers, merchants, and even the local pastor—fling their pennies onto an electrified carpet, from which the participants are expected to snatch a reward. This ghastly series of incidents renders the purpose of the narrator’s presence at the smoker hollow. As he attempts to orate through a bloody mouth the accommodationist sentiments of Booker T. Washington, his ordeal just minutes before suggests the impotence of the rhetoric.²

Ellison’s depiction of a battle royal, first published separately as a short story, remains the most famous in American literature, though it is not the only one. In *The Learning Tree*, Gordon Parks describes a “free-for-all” eliminator involving ten black and “Mexican boys” at a circus in 1920s Kansas. Another classic episode, where blacks fight for white pleasure, takes place in the barn of Thomas Sutpen in William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). In this antebellum setting, Faulkner imagines “a hollow square of faces in the lantern light, the white faces on three sides, the black ones on the fourth, and in the center two of his wild negroes fighting, naked, fighting not like white men fight, with rules and weapons, but like negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad.” For the white men watching the entertainment put on by the despotic Sutpen, the spectacle holds the same fascination as watching “game cocks,” but the intemperate slave owner transgresses the normative conduct for these matches:

It seems that on certain occasions ... as a grand finale or perhaps as a matter of sheer deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination, he would enter the ring with one of the negroes himself. Yes. That is what Ellen saw: her husband and the father of her children standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the negro just fallen evidently, lying at his feet and bloody too save that on the negro it merely looked like grease or sweat.³

However, the scenarios invented by these authors diverge in only minor ways from the reality of battle royals, and only to amplify the barely hidden purpose of such “entertainment.” As Ellison himself remarked in an interview:

This is a vital part of the behavior pattern in the South, which both Negroes and whites thoughtlessly accept. It is a ritual in preservation of caste lines, a keeping of taboo to appease the gods and ward off bad luck. It is also the initiation ritual to which all greenhorns are subjected. This passage which states what Negroes will see I did not have to invent; the patterns were already there in society, so that all I had to do was present them in a broader context of meaning.⁴

Indeed, prizefighting pervades *Invisible Man* as a metaphor for the cruelty and unfairness of both the white and black worlds.

The battle royal was a highly popular form of pugilistic fare, and the more ferocious and ludicrous the action, the better. Predominantly but not exclusively a Southern phenomenon, it tended to be the opening event on a boxing card and never involved whites. Anything up to a dozen competitors were involved, usually adolescents, who would all try to be the last one standing at the end of a short, frenetic scrap. The winner received a small purse, or else the contestants would scabble on their hands and knees for coins thrown into the ring by the appreciative audience. Beyond the requirement that the white audience enjoyed itself, the drama was intended to rub off on its actors, destroying the dignity of the participants, and introducing them to the code of white supremacy.

Black viewers reacted differently to the sight of several youths wildly pummeling each other without apparent skill or guile. In spite of the mayhem before them, they did not necessarily take to heart the deeper messages which whites thought were being transmitted—those of discord, ridicule, and worthlessness. Black onlookers chose to interpret what they saw independently of white values, just as they did at movie theaters and in other public spaces. Certainly some fighters, meanwhile, refused to damage their self-esteem by participating in what were often confused scrums. Yet, others shrewdly calculated the profits to be made from entering the ring under such conditions.

This essay seeks to place battle royals in a surer context by considering the ways in which they were organized and received in and around Atlanta. First, it describes the attitudes of Atlanta's white and black sports fans, as well as that of the municipal authorities, to prize fighting. Next, it analyzes the furor in the city created by the remote yet provocative career of Jack Johnson, and the efforts of local black middleweight, Tiger Flowers, to counter the damage caused by his explosive predecessor. Finally, in light of values shaped by professional boxing and Southern race relations, the article attempts to divine the contested meanings which emerged from battle royals, these spectacles which offered such strange, though compelling, theater.



True to Gunnar Myrdal's observation that blacks could perform for Southern whites so long as there was no suggestion of racial equality, Atlanta's leaders never countenanced the meeting of blacks and whites in the ring during the Jim Crow era. All the same, combinations of same-race boxers were a frequent attraction at city venues, and news of mixed bouts in the North were digested via the press. By the 1880s, boxing had a steady and discerning following in Atlanta. John L. Sullivan came to town in April 1884 to give a "scientific sparring exhibition," offering \$1000 to any local fighter able to survive four rounds with him. The *Atlanta Journal* called it rather a "tame affair" and gave some comfort to those citizens opposed to such performances, by insisting that such "demoralizing" spectacles should not be tolerated. A reformist lobby, led by a cohort of local churchmen, objected to boxing on moral grounds and because of its threat to law and order, while remaining privately dismayed at its predominantly lower-class appeal. Following another Sullivan appearance in Atlanta during 1893, an excited, "top heavy" audience (made up of people occupying the cheapest gallery seats) allowed its enthusiasm to spill over after the fight. Having left the arena, a crowd gathered in a vacant lot near the Broad Street bridge, where they goaded two black youths into a scrap for money. The police broke up the incident, but this is an early suggestion of how alluring such confrontations could be.⁵

Georgia had no anti-boxing legislation of its own, and Governor W. J. Northen was forced to mobilize the Georgia Volunteers in early 1894, personally directing a patrol of Southern rail routes to prevent the Jim Corbett-Charlie Mitchell fight from taking place near Waycross. State legislators rejected an 1897 bill, meanwhile, authored by "Uncle Joe" Mansfield, who sought "to legalize glove contests and provide for the regulation of the same." Mansfield claimed that his real interest was in sanctioning the healthy practice of sparring rather than prizefighting, but with no success. Instead, like most states, Georgia dealt with prizefighting under such offenses as breach of the peace or affray. It relied on

English common law precedents until the 1980s, when a state boxing commission was finally established. Thus, decisions regarding the legality of contests fell to the Atlanta city council, which, like many other U.S. cities, seldom faced any great dilemmas until the hullabaloo surrounding the heavyweight Johnson blew up in the early twentieth century.⁶

There were other rumblings regarding the sport, however, including the attendance of women and children at the showing of fight films. In 1906, the reels of the Britt-Nelson debacle were replaced with a more appropriate screening. The occasion was a benefit matinee for the Old Ladies' Home, but with the viewers overwhelmingly made up of school pupils, "the management decided to supplant the fight pictures with snapshots more pleasing to ladies and children." Yet, in spite of the risk of offending delicate sensibilities, the city newspapers published extra editions when major encounters occurred and began to include regular columns by some of the biggest names in the fight game.⁷

When it came to live entertainment, a series of promoters such as George Monroe tried (and usually failed) to establish weekly boxing nights in Atlanta. Monroe's could accommodate over one thousand spectators to watch the likes of Mike "Knockemoffski" Saul. Whites only fights usually passed off without censure, and adverse comment, if any, usually concerned the commitment of the boxers to give an honest performance. Clearly, some white citizens construed boxing as a shameful and an ill-advised activity, with the potential to foment racial tension if not properly controlled. But supporters of the sport certainly existed and normally outflanked the reformers.⁸

Black Atlantans were also sports lovers, both as spectators and participants, even though Jim Crow weighed as heavily on these activities as on other aspects of their lives. In the city, access to playing fields and recreational areas had been steadily denied to blacks since the 1880s. In 1903, they were banned from playing football in Brisbane Park, and almost thirty years later, the authorities passed a law preventing amateur baseball teams of different races from playing within two city blocks of each other. Similarly, curfew restrictions could deny them freedom to practice any forms of recreation outside.⁹

However, in some respects, Atlanta's black inhabitants could consider themselves fortunate with the facilities that were available to them. Unlike most Southern towns, wealthier blacks could belong to the select Piney Wood Country Club which had its own golf course. Before the Butler Street YMCA and gym was completed in 1920, another at the First Congregational Church provided at least one place for poorer blacks to exercise. Once or twice a year, African Americans were also given the run of the Lakewood and Sunset amusement parks, where sports were often part of the festivities. Yet considering the provisions afforded to whites, the disparity in the city's arrangements was stark. In the early 1930s, when Atlanta's 90,000 blacks comprised one-third of the population, they were allocated five out of thirty-five municipal playgrounds; one out of the six swimming pools; three of the sixty-three tennis courts; and only one of the twelve baseball diamonds.¹⁰

Thus for the most part, the black community relied on its own initiatives. Baseball teams played in vacant lots across Atlanta all year round, improvising to overcome the lack of equipment. One participant remembers chopping down trees to transform cow pastures into makeshift playing fields. Even in the coldest months, he and his teammates would "build fires and burn automobile tires and play ball anyway." Intense rivalries developed between neighborhood clubs and their supporters, and local businesses took to

sponsoring these sandlot outfits. At the same time, the main city team, the Atlanta Black Crackers, established a loyal following at Ponce de Leon Park in the Thirties, though still reliant on occasional cast-offs from the white Crackers. The fortunes of the black college football teams were a source of even greater interest than the Crackers. All the sides received enthusiastic support, with huge crowds coming to watch the Clark University Panthers and the Morris Brown Wolverines.¹¹

On a different level, social work groups organized sports for children. The all-women's Neighborhood Union, with assistance from the Atlanta School for Social Work, ran athletic clubs for boys, and the YMCA held junior boxing tournaments at Booker T. Washington High School. A study of the city's west side, performed by Atlanta University, revealed that boxing and baseball were two of the favorite pursuits among black youths. Together, these collective efforts went some way to remedy the inequitable distribution of funds and kept sports at the center of the black experience in the city.¹² They also demonstrate that prize fighting was popular among African Americans, who were keen to watch and participate in boxing in a number of contexts. In the rural South, impromptu matches took place. Charles S. Johnson once observed some young boys who willingly fought in front of their local community: "They do considerable clowning, at which the crowd laughs. They enjoy this as much as the actual fighting." In his memoir, Raymond Andrews, who grew up in rural Georgia during the 1930s, remembers that Joe Louis made boxing the major sport among black children. He received a pair of gloves from a uncle and would referee bouts between his friends.¹³

In cities too, as Henry Armstrong recalled from his youth spent in St. Louis, "Fighting was the main form of recreation, self-expression, and also of social contact with children who were 'outsiders.'" Above all, for African Americans, the trials and triumphs of black sporting heroes carried great significance, in that these challenges often took place under the same Jim Crow conditions with which they grappled on a daily basis. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that when Myrdal visited a school near Atlanta, he found that "no-one had ever heard about Walter White, John Hope, Du Bois or Robert Moton. No-one had heard of the NAACP," he complained, though "several could identify Joe Louis, Ella Fitzgerald, and Henry Armstrong." W. E. B. Du Bois, like several black intellectuals, had qualms about sportsmen being the most prominent figures in the race but conceded that play was an undervalued element among the leaders of his people.¹⁴



The Atlanta press, including the black *Independent*, initially made little fuss when Jack Johnson beat Tommy Burns in 1908 to become world heavyweight champion. Hysteria took hold with the announcement of Jim Jeffries' comeback fight against Johnson in July of 1910. The *Atlanta Constitution* and other local newspapers arranged to relay reports by megaphone as their offices received them. Similar facilities were made available at the ball park and the Grand Opera House, which had set aside the entire gallery for black enthusiasts. Other entrepreneurs sought to attract black patrons. The Johnson Club arranged a special wire service on Decatur Street. Advertisements highlighted its advantage over mixed venues in that it permitted the audience to "rejoice at a victory" for Johnson in safety, perhaps anticipating the events that were soon to occur. The Club faced competi-

tion from the People's Tabernacle, which was holding an all-day barbecue, and where Henry McNeal Turner had installed the wires in the church itself. Around the city, money rapidly changed hands as blacks rushed to back their hero, sporting Johnson buttons on their clothing.¹⁵

On the appointed day, blacks mingled around the newspaper bulletin boards on Yonge Street, while the *Journal* claimed a throng of 10,000 outside its premises. Yet the restless crowds that gathered after the result was known were far less buoyant. Word spread that a Negro had assaulted a white man, and, by the end of the evening, over 150 arrests were recorded. The police at Uvaldia, Georgia, had less success in containing unrest. At this railroad town, racial tension had long been simmering between black and white workers, and three Negroes were killed after a shoot-out at their tie-camp. Macon and Jesup also witnessed angry scenes. Atlanta and the rest of the state shared in the whole country's experience, and in the sobering aftermath, its reaction was similarly swift. The city council promptly banned the fight films, supported by other city-wide bodies.¹⁶

Benjamin Davis, the forthright editor of the *Atlanta Independent*, requested that whites "be liberal enough to allow the blacks to exult a little," adding that "the Negroes ought to have sense enough not to tantalize our white neighbors over the defeat of Jeffries." His pragmatic assessment was that "Negroes have gained nothing substantial in the victory of Jack Johnson." Yet his calculated disinterest belied the advertisements printed in his own paper. Pictures of Johnson's birthplace and his "big automobile" were on offer, and the company concerned was seeking to hire agents in the city. A couple of years later, merchandise included a bust of the pugilist, "the best loved colored man in the world." The figurine featured "all the wonderful muscles of his chest and shoulders, his genial smile, and even the far-famed gold-filled teeth."¹⁷

On the other hand, the *Atlanta Journal* somehow managed to disguise the fact that Johnson had won until page nineteen, even though the paper's content was overwhelmingly devoted to the event. Meanwhile, the chairman of the police commission made it clear that the fight failed to prove Johnson was a better boxer than Jeffries, adding in an aside that the victorious Negro was forever unwelcome in Atlanta. Yet the imposing presence of Johnson had to be faced for several more years, and the Southern press had to tackle the difficult subject of black boxers without offending or selling short its readers.¹⁸

For the most part Johnson was either derided or ignored. Cartoons of the champion portrayed him as barely human, with a shapeless black blob for a head and a range of banal expressions. The *Journal* printed some drawings of Johnson in various poses—"eating cold asparagus," "drinking a pint of rhubarb," "thinking about something to think about"—with a grotesquely exaggerated mouth set fast in all of them. Elsewhere reports told of Johnson at home with his mother in Chicago, who was happily plying her son with his favorite fried chicken and watermelon. All aspects of the Sambo stereotype were regularly invoked—the wide grins and crudely reproduced dialect were small compensations for the championship that Johnson still held as his own.¹⁹

When Johnson became embroiled in the Mann Act controversy, it became front page news, even though the actual trial was overshadowed in Atlanta by the Leo Frank case during the spring of 1913. Two of Georgia's leading politicians lent their weight against Johnson. In Washington, Representative Seaborn A. Roddenbery, with the help of the

distinguished Augustus O. Bacon in the Senate, had steered through a law banning the interstate transportation of fight films in 1912. Later that year Roddenbery also led the charge in demanding federal legislation against intermarriage. In an impassioned speech to the House, he declared that “no brutality, infamy or degradation in all the days of southern slavery possessed such villainous characteristics and atrocious qualities as the permission for that marriage [of Johnson’s] by the laws of this country.”²⁰

In April of 1915, when Johnson tamely surrendered his crown to Jess Willard in Cuba, the newspapers gladly increased their coverage of the heavyweight division once more, the *Atlanta Georgian* immediately serializing the newcomer’s life story. Grantland Rice expressed relief that the “Big Shadow over the fight game has been lifted at last” and called Willard’s victory “the most popular affair in the annals of the ring.” The new champion was mobbed when his boat landed at Savannah. Rather unconvincingly, Clark Howell, editor of the *Constitution*, stated his hope that the conspicuous days of prizefighting and its most infamous practitioner since Sullivan were consigned to the past.²¹

For those blacks involved in boxing professionally in the South, the situation post-Johnson was bleak. In 1912, when Arthur Worthy, a.k.a. the “Battling Boy from Borneo,” engaged his own wife as a sparring partner before an upcoming fight, the *Constitution* promptly reported his arrest and charge for battery. Caution prevailed in any racially mixed circumstances, as was evidenced by the outcry from whites in the region when Jack Dempsey engaged a black sparring partner in 1919; even interracial contact in training presented an unnecessary risk in its implication of vague equality. In Atlanta, a boxing commission was created in 1923. The new five-man body was empowered to “refuse or revoke the permit” of any contest considered “detrimental to the interest of boxing and good order of the city.” This clause guaranteed that no bouts between blacks and whites would be allowed.²²

White Atlanta turned its attention to other sports. As home to the Imperial Palace of the Ku Klux Klan, the organization’s baseball team, winner of the Dixie League in 1924, was a natural success. Meanwhile, for the white business elite who promoted the Gate City as the harmonious and productive capital of the South, its idol was unquestionably the golfer Bobby Jones. As the *City Builder* saluted him: “This thing of par will never bar where trails our Bobby’s beagle, for when he soars for golfing scores, a birdie or an eagle will often fly along the sky in transit with his firing, to lop some more from off his score when less than par desiring.” It took the impeccable demeanor of Theodore “Tiger” Flowers to undo the suspicions generated by Johnson and to challenge Jones—in some way—for the limelight in Georgia. Given this boxer’s extraordinary character, as portrayed in the newspapers, whites were given the opportunity to support a nationally known black fighter. Their admiration for him reveals much about white tastes.²³

Flowers, “the Fighting Deacon,” was billed as “the whitest black man in the ring.” He was the first black boxer to capture the world middleweight championship in 1926 and the first black after Johnson to earn a shot at a world title. The “Deacon” moniker derived from the fact that Flowers was a steward of the Butler Street Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Atlanta and was said to pray before each fight. Generous towards his church and Atlanta’s black colleges, he taught boxing to the boys in his neighborhood and attended junior softball games in the local park. His membership in the Masons, Elks and the Knights of Pythias was indicative of his close links with the black community. Despite

the visibility of his wealth—notably a 14-room brick and stucco home on Simpson Road nicknamed “Tiger’s Villa”—his success provoked little ill-will among white Atlantans.²⁴

Tolerance of Flowers was entirely due to his public deportment, which protected him from accusations of being “uppity.” “He is not a Jack Johnson” the *Pittsburgh Courier* pronounced, “and that alone commends him to decent Americans.” The *Atlanta Georgian* remarked with enthusiasm upon his estimable social pedigree: “Flowers is no ante-bellum darkey, for he is well educated, he has the manners of the proud old house servant of slavery days. He always uncovers in the presence of white people. He never sits in the presence of white folks unless he is invited. He is punctiliously polite in his conversation.” Flowers’ apparent obedience towards his white manager, Walk Miller, and his stated preference for remaining a black Southerner in an era of wide-scale migration to the North (where he mostly fought), also recommended him to whites. Revered among blacks—the *Georgian* noted that “Stygian gloom” could settle over the segregated gallery if Flowers was trailing in a fight—Tiger was that rare figure who managed to garner interracial support a full decade before Joe Louis.²⁵

Flowers might well have been less saintly than he appeared. Nevertheless, black writers were equally drawn to him, imagining a cultivated figure—a good sport, aesthete and family man—who did not deserve the biased decisions which blighted his career. When Flowers died in November of 1927, following a simple operation meant to remove scar tissue from around his eyes, all Atlantans were profoundly shocked. Clark Howell wrote that “no greater and more impressive obsequies for a colored citizen have ever been witnessed in the south.” Estimates put the number of mourners who filed past the coffin at up to seventy-five thousand, and perhaps another ten thousand crammed the City Auditorium to take part in a lavish memorial service. All told, the city was not to demonstrate its grief again on anything approaching this scale until the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April of 1968.²⁶

Besides the qualified pride white audiences could feel regarding the exploits of Tiger Flowers, they arguably derived more pleasure from watching blacks fight each other, especially those eking out a living in the lower reaches of the boxing ranks. For, though Flowers did much to expunge the legacy of Papa Jack, his positive example could only achieve so much. Free from the ramifications of interracial conflict, black-on-black fights, engineered in different ways, served to bolster the racial hierarchy. Whites in particular found solace in battle royals, where the action, as they perceived it, posed no threat to white supremacy. Formulaic and madcap, an unpredictable victory of black over white could not enter the equation. In Atlanta, the provision of separate entrances and ticket offices at the City Auditorium—as well as comparable arrangements at other sporting venues—insulated whites as far as possible from black spectators and thus allowed them to survey the proceedings in comfort.²⁷



Battle royals, arranged as warm-up bouts for the main event, were a huge success in Atlanta over several decades. The notices before a boxing night would always mention the battle royal if one was being staged. In 1910 Harry Staten’s club guaranteed some “nifty preliminaries. In the opener a couple of excellent samples of black ivory—135 pounds—

will battle for eight rounds. This is no near-eight-round affair. This pair goes eight rounds at a good clip or no bacon money for them." In 1918, Jack Dempsey shared the bill with "eleven descendants of Ham" who were prepared for a "battle of the Marne." The review the following day was effusive. Although only nine boys turned out, one Oscar Bridges collected the "post-bellum offering of silver coins" in what was deemed "the greatest battle royal ever staged in Atlanta, if not in the south, according to veteran fans." Years later, fight goers were still enthralled by the "flock of Senegambians" featured on the Dundee-Hood card. The *Constitution's* journalist particularly delighted in the contribution of the "colored referee counting: one-two-five-seven-nine; 'git up from here, nigga" to the participants.²⁸

Another description from the *Constitution* illustrates one common format for these crowd pleasers: "Who's next? It looks like a race riot. Some places call it a battle royal, but down here it's a battle blind." An added frisson to the proceedings could be achieved by other means than blindfolding the contestants: by tying one arm of each participant behind his back; by recruiting disabled or disfigured boys; making them jump around in sacks to increase the mayhem; or by selecting particularly young children. In 1893, a touring theater manager went one better than his Northern rivals during the interval of a play in Atlanta: "Not satisfied with his New York friends introducing the boxing kangaroos, 'Hub' Matthews, presented a couple of diminutive negroes in a regular à la Corbett-Mitchell encounter, between the acts last week. The winner received forty cents, while the loser was compelled to console his injured feelings on a package of cigarettes." Meanwhile, Jack Johnson, who took part in battle royals in his youth, appeared on a card offering two one-legged black boys as a foretaste to the headline draw.²⁹

During World War I, battle royals were part of the entertainment enjoyed by troops in Southern army training bases, such as Camp Gordon outside Atlanta. While boxing gained respectability as a method to improve the fitness and courage of soldiers-sparring moves were considered ideal preparation for the handling of bayonets-morale was maintained with a less edifying version of the sport. One visitor to a Southern camp witnessed "wild applause" as two African American boys performed for the servicemen, someone behind him uttering, "If the little one butts the other in the stummick with his head—O boy!" The laughter also rang out when "another negro, acting in the capacity of trainer to both the fighters, fanned them vigorously with an army overcoat." The overall verdict was that it had been a "large evening." In some respects these events were little different from the occasion when a badger was set against a pack of bulldogs at the Auditorium Armory, drawing a crowd of around six hundred. This was bloodthirsty fun after all, nor was it far removed from the action in Sutpen's barn. Deviations from the tried and tested routine tended to founder, as when boxing impresario Cleve Roby introduced Lightning Howard, a slapstick entertainer into his show; Howard's "clowning efforts failed to click," according to the *Journal*.³⁰

The newspapers had an important role in the putative message that this amusement was supposedly imparting to blacks. The language in the sports pages constantly belittled black fighters, never failing to mention their color—"dinge" and "darky" were among the favored terms. If these pejorative labels won no awards for subtlety, the overall purpose was no more elegant, as this example from the *Hearst Sunday American* shows: "The opening

number was a battle royal among nine chocolate-colored brethren, who behaved in a manner distinctly unfraternal. Round 1 was an African Armageddon." Manufactured disunity among blacks was the plot, redolent of the old days on the plantation.³¹

When fights were organized for private consumption, motives were even more blatant. The novelist Richard Wright relates his experience in Memphis, when the white employees of rival optical firms colluded to incite hostilities among their black office boys. Wright and his opponent were unable to escape the insidious rumors of an ambush by the other, which were fueled by the staff; they finally acquiesced to an arranged confrontation and accepted some money to carry out their ghastly obligation. The punch-up took place in the basement of a building, where the assembled whites could scarcely contain their excitement. The thrill for the spectators did not only consist of gambling on the outcome but also in witnessing the degradation of two black youths. No doubt such incidents, like battle royals, supplied sensual or erotic gratification as well. But for Wright and his unintended foe, "The shame and anger we felt for having allowed ourselves to be duped crept into our blows and blood ran into our eyes, half blinding us. The hate we felt for the men whom we had tried to cheat went into the blows we threw at each other."³²

Not surprisingly, several fighters, who later went on to achieve fame, refused to take part in these scenarios. Henry Armstrong—the only man to hold three world titles consecutively in different weight divisions—refused to sign up for battle royals in St. Louis, where they wrapped black towels around the contestants' heads. "I wouldn't go for that," he once remarked. "I was really too proud." Another professional boxer who objected was Collis Phillips, a middleweight from Houston and a colored champion of the South in the late thirties. He also "valued himself too highly" to get involved. Yet the issue was not always straightforward. As in *Invisible Man*, the fighters often hatched a plan among themselves (which the narrator unwittingly ruins) to fake the contest and share the prize money at the end. During the Depression, the noted crooner Bobby Short remembers that his brothers staged battle royals with their friends to earn extra cash in Danville, Illinois. Joe Gans (1874-1910), the Baltimore lightweight, got himself recognized through this style of boxing, as did Beau Jack, a lightweight champion in the 1940s. Jack would avoid injury by waiting for his opponents in a corner of the ring. His skill caught the attention of Bobby Jones and other members of the Augusta National Club, where Jack worked as a shoeshine boy. Jones was among a group at the Club who financed Beau's early career in boxing.³³

If some fighters avoided the psychologically damaging effects of these events, either by steering clear of them or by exploiting the system, it was also true that black audiences could enjoy battle royals as much as whites. Indeed there was no reason why they should not have shared contemporary sensibilities and found such diversions entertaining. Another literary example, from Jean Toomer's *Cane*, has black spectators reveling in the performance of two boxing dwarfs, even though the main character finds it repulsive. In Atlanta, the white promoter Cleve Roby normally staged all-black cards, which appealed to fight fans from both races. To the *Constitution*, Roby's considerable acumen was reflected in his presentations of Negroes fighting with wild abandon—precisely what whites wanted to see. Yet blacks enjoyed these same affairs held at the Atlanta Theatre, where their female partners entered for free, or in front of the bleachers erected on Cain Street.³⁴

However, in an interesting twist, it becomes unclear where the real black preference lay. The black *Atlanta Daily World* betrayed an attitude similar to the *Constitution's* regard-

ing Roby's shows but with the emphasis reversed: "The colored patrons seem to like [black fighters] more than they do the white chaps despite the fact that the latter breed are always a better bet to ... bang each other into a study of blood and pain." Black folk, it seems, mostly liked to watch their own kind fighting but had no aversion to watching the other race knocking lumps out of each other. The differing response to one boxer in particular, illustrates the independent—and entirely natural—perception of blacks. Whites loved the tomfoolery of the white performer Battling Bozo, yet blacks took great delight in seeing this "boil infested" pugilist being beaten.³⁵

As much as the white press reported these wind-ups, black papers also regaled their readers with the details of good battle royals. The *Daily World* was impressed by "two very small and very young infants, wearing overalls and scowls and willing to mix" who "ran out and slammed into each other ... at the end of the engagement the fans were so elated that they hurled nickels and dimes and quarters into the ring." On another occasion, the *Independent* favorably covered a bout between two newsboys. Moreover, battle royals were not only arranged when white folk were in attendance; they were also included at black-only evenings at the Colored Elks Rest. Equally, blacks looked forward to annual outings at the Lakewood and Sunset amusement parks, where fights were staged and young boys were given instruction by local black boxers. The *Daily World* requested the cooperation of white employers in allowing their black maids time off for these occasions. Such activity, especially when beyond the purview of whites, generated its own logic and sense of satisfaction.³⁶

On the other hand, black reporters normally avoided the verbal excesses of whites. In the late 1930s, the white manager of the Atlanta Black Crackers baseball team requested that white journalists tone down their epithets—they were in the habit of referring to the "Senegambian section" or the "Republican bleachers"—since they angered black fans. As is often true, prejudicial language is only acceptable when members of a group use it themselves. In Charles S. Johnson's experience, blacks used "coon" and "nigger" when encouraging their favorite fighters. Nevertheless, black readers on occasion resorted to boycotting the white Atlantan newspapers when they found their coverage offensive. Reverend A. D. Williams of the Ebenezer Baptist Church led a campaign against the race-baiting coverage of the *Georgian*, which precipitated its collapse.³⁷

Even in the most humiliating circumstances, where segregated audiences witnessed the most racist drama, blacks derived their own pleasure from attending. When blacks were allowed at an Atlanta production of Thomas Dixon's *Clansman* in 1905, the "whoops and yells with which they greeted every appearance of a 'colored part' on the stage," reflected their enjoyment in spite of the content. This was no naive reaction, rather an ability to bypass the intentions of the playwright and attach different meanings to the play. The case of battle royals was similar, blacks being able to disassociate the contests from their resonances with slavery and from the impressions that whites took away with them. Divested of these overtones, the slapstick and tomfoolery of typical battle royals was rendered more harmless.³⁸

Little can be recovered of other forms of boxing in the South such as smokers, because they rarely made the newspapers. One location where they apparently occurred in Atlanta was beneath the Royal Cigar Company store, where black boxers, including (reputedly)

Tiger Flowers, performed for white gamblers. Collis Phillips remembered being watched by interested whites, who allowed blacks to train at their country club in Houston so that they could assess the boxers' form before upcoming bouts at the Odd Fellows temple. All these manifestations of black fighting were part of the fabric of life in the racially divided South. As historian Edward Ayers has suggested, certain male-dominated environments like bars, race tracks and boxing venues were often only barely segregated and attractive for this very reason.³⁹



Boxing lost none of its symbolic power long after Jack Johnson first entered the consciousness of Southerners as the archetypal "bad nigger." Having had his boxing license revoked because of his stance on Vietnam, Muhammad Ali made his first comeback fight in Atlanta in November of 1970. In his autobiography, Ali recalls his concern lest the city invoked its old ordinances to prevent his match against the Irishman Jerry Quarry, but blacks now enjoyed enough political clout in Atlanta to steer the fight application past the authorities. Mayor Sam Massell gave the interracial encounter the go-ahead, calling it a "demonstration of democracy." Yet this did not prevent Governor Lester Maddox—who did not feel quite so magnanimous towards Ali—from proclaiming a day of mourning in Georgia. Meanwhile, stronger expressions of displeasure came Ali's way. Prior to his arrival in Atlanta, he received a box containing the severed head and body of a black chihuahua. The enclosed message warned: "We know how to handle black draft-dodging dogs in Georgia. Stay out of Atlanta!" During his final preparations in the city, shots were fired near Ali's training camp, followed by a telephone call: "Nigger, if you don't leave Atlanta tomorrow, you gonna die. You Viet Cong bastard! ... We won't miss you next time!"⁴⁰

But for blacks, Ali's easy victory over Quarry crowned a glittering occasion. Although not all of the nation's blacks appreciated his position on the Vietnam War, many leading figures from the worlds of politics and show business were in town for the grand event. Whitney Young, Julian Bond, Coretta Scott King and Jesse Jackson were all at ringside to watch Ali's return. Bill Cosby, Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte also attended, while Diana Ross looked "supreme in a see-through blouse and a swept-wing hairdo she called the 'liberated look.'" Even a robbery at a post-fight party failed to dampen celebrations. The most potent icon of black America had finally removed the obstacles placed in the way of his career—the Supreme Court ruled that his suspension from competition was illegal—and reasserted his invincibility. After his triumph, Ali himself boasted about the mental strength that had kept him going throughout his exile, particularly the thought of entering the ring while onlookers gasped, "Why it's a miracle! He looks sooo beautiful."⁴¹

While Ali achieved a token peace with Atlanta when he lit the torch to begin the Olympic Games in 1996, Flowers' place in the city's collective memory remains contested. There is now a Tiger Flowers Drive, though his former mansion was torn down to make way for the city's first black fire station in 1962. The Georgia Sports Hall of Fame inducted him into its ranks in February of 1976. Yet later that same year, the Deacon's old church printed a pamphlet depicting Flowers as a victim of racial injustice and demanding the building of a "Theodore Flowers Center for Justice and Freedom." Its attitude reflected a different evaluation of the boxer's life from that of his contemporaries, as new generations of boxers redefined the image of sports celebrities.⁴²

As for battle royals, while the smoker and the promotional techniques of Cleve Roby are now a thing of the past, an extant market for these shenanigans can still be imagined. After all, many of the same ingredients can be found in the regular provision of ugly spats on television talk shows and the latest vogue for uncensored “reality” programming. Humiliation and the grotesque have lost none of their power.

-
1. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, The Modern Library (New York: Random House, 1952, 1992), 22. The battle royal scene was first published separately as “The Invisible Man,” *Horizon* 93-94 (1947): 104-118.
 2. Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 17-33. For interpretations of the battle royal scene, see especially Ronald Gottesman, ed., *The Merrill Studies in Invisible Man* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1971), 67, 81-82, 93; Robert O’Meally, ed., *New Essays on Invisible Man* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 29, 62-64.
 3. Gordon Parks, *The Learning Tree* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), 156-164; William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, corrected text (1936; New York: Vintage International, 1990), 20-21.
 4. Ellison, “The Art of Fiction: An Interview” in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964; reprint, New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1994), 174.
 5. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 9th ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), 654 note c; *Atlanta Journal*, 21 April 1884, p. 1 (1ST QUOTATION); *ibid.*, 24 April 1884, p. 4 (2ND QUOTATION); *ibid.*, 18 April 1884, p. 4 (3RD QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 12 September 1892, p. 3; *ibid.*, 15 January 1894, p.7; *Atlanta Journal*, 22 March 1893, p. 3 (4TH QUOTATION).
 6. *Atlanta Constitution*, 26 January 26 1894, p. 1-2; Joseph Kitchens, “The ‘Waycross War’: Pugilism and Politics in the Gay Nineties,” *The Atlanta Historical Journal* 25 (1981): 40-48; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Georgia at the Regular Session of the General Assembly* (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Co., 1897), 379-380 (QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 November 10 1897, p. 5; *Atlanta Journal*, 11 December 1897, p. 3; *ibid.*, 2 December 1897, p. 8; Elmer M. Million, “The Enforceability of Prize Fight Statutes,” *Kentucky Law Journal* 27 (1938-1939): 152-168; Jeffrey T. Sammons, *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 4-12, 20-21; Jesse Frederick Steiner, *Americans at Play: Recent Trends in Recreation and Leisure Time Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1933), 95.
 7. *Atlanta Journal*, 24 February 24 1906, p. 14 (QUOTATION); *Atlanta Journal*, 16 March 1897; “Corbett’s Gossip of the Fight Game,” *ibid.*, 24 February 1906, p. 14.
 8. *Atlanta Constitution*, 6 January 6 1910, p. 11; *ibid.*, 17 January 1910, p. 7. The delicate sensibilities of female viewers were not always protected, however. On one occasion, women were encouraged to take up sparring themselves, as a good means to keep in shape (*Atlanta Constitution*, 10 February 1895, p. 6). By the early 1900s men were actively encouraged to bring women along to boxing nights.
 9. Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 147; John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 20; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 117; Charles S. Johnson, *Patterns of Negro Segregation* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1943), 33, 43.
 10. Forrester B. Washington, “Recreational Facilities for the Negro,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 140 (1928): 272-282; Michael Leroy Porter, “Black Atlanta: An Interdisciplinary Study of Blacks on the East Side of Atlanta, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1974), 84-85, 269; Henry Hugh Proctor, *Between Black and White: Autobi-*

- graphical Sketches* (1925; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 107; Jessie C. Smith and Carrell P. Horton, eds., *Historical Statistics of Black America*, 2 vols. (New York: Gale Research Inc., 1995), 2: 1506; James Tapley Wardlaw, "Leisure Time Activities of Negro Boys in the First Ward of Atlanta, Georgia" (Master's thesis, Atlanta University, 1934), 7.
11. Clifford M. Kuhn et al., *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 263-273 (QUOTATION); Allen Edward Joyce, "The Atlanta Black Crackers" (Master's thesis, Emory University, 1975), 111; Herman 'Skip' Mason, Jr., ed., *Going Against the Wind, A Pictorial History of African-American in Atlanta* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992), 90.
 12. Wardlaw, "Leisure Time Activities," 19-23, 65. Seventy-two out of one hundred boys questioned said that they liked boxing or already took part in it.
 13. Charles S. Johnson, *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1941), 173-175; Raymond Andrews, *The Last Radio Baby: A Memoir by Raymond Andrews* (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd., 1990), 34-37, 106-108.
 14. Henry Armstrong, *Gloves, Glory and God: An Autobiography* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1956), 30; Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 903n; W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Problem of Amusement" in *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community*, ed. Dan S. Green and Edwin D. Driver (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 226-237. See also E. Franklin Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States* (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1940), 178-191.
 15. *Atlanta Constitution*, 2 July 2 1910, p. 8; *Atlanta Independent*, 2 July 1910, p. 8; *ibid.*, 25 June 1910, p. 1 (QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 July 1910, p. 3B; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 69; *Savannah Tribune*, 25 June 1910, p. 8.
 16. *Atlanta Journal*, 5 July 1910, p. 1; *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1910, p. 1; *Atlanta Georgian*, 5 July 1910, p. 1; *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1910, p. 5; *Minutes of Council, City of Atlanta*, July 6, 1910, vol. 22, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia; *City of Atlanta Ordinance Book*, no. 11, p. 18, Atlanta History Center; Evangelical Ministers' Association, Minutes, July 4, 1910, Christian Council of Atlanta, MSS 686, box 3, folder 8, Atlanta History Center; Minutes and Reports, July 6, 1910, Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta.
 17. *Atlanta Independent*, 9 July 9 1910, p. 4; *ibid.*, 23 July 23 1910, p. 5; *ibid.*, 2 November 1912, p. 8.
 18. *Atlanta Journal*, 5 July 1910, p. 19; *Atlanta Georgian*, 6 July 1910, p. 1.
 19. *Atlanta Journal*, 1 July 1910, p. 17 (see also *ibid.*, 4 July 1912, p. 13, printed before the Johnson-Flynn fight); *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 July 1910, p. 10. See also William H. Wiggins, Jr., "Boxing's Sambo Twins: Racial Stereotypes in Jack Johnson and Joe Louis Newspaper Cartoons, 1908-38," *Journal of Sport History* 15 (1988): 242-254.
 20. *Atlanta Constitution*, 12 November 1912, p. 1 (QUOTATION); Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger! The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), 89-90, 108.
 21. *Atlanta Journal*, 8 April 1915, p. 14 (QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 April 1915, p. 6. For an interpretation of Johnson's performance in his fight with Willard, see Gilmore, "Towards an Understanding of the Jack Johnson Confession," *Negro History Bulletin* 36 (1973): 108-109.
 22. *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 December 1912, p. 4; Randy Roberts, *Jack Dempsey: The Manassa Mauler* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 70; Minutes of Council, City of Atlanta, July 23, 1923, November 19, 1923, and December 3, 1923, vol. 28, Atlanta History Center; *City of Atlanta Ordinance Book*, no. 22, p. 359, 402-404, Atlanta History Center; *The Charter and Ordinances of the City of Atlanta: Code of 1924* (Atlanta: Byrd Printing Company, 1924), 181-183.
 23. Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 33-94; "City Builder-Bobby Jones," *The City Builder*, July 1927, p. 19; "Bobby Jones—the Greatest Golfer: Cordial Words of Appreciation of Bobby's Achievement by Prominent Atlantans," *The City Builder*, August 1927, pp. 3-5, 40.
 24. Sterling A. Brown, "The Negro in American Culture" *Carnegie-Myrdal Study, The Negro in America* (1940), Section 1, Sports, reel 1, p. 65. Original located at the Schomburg Center, New York Public Library.

25. *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 March 1926, p. 16; *Atlanta Georgian*, 27 February 1926, p. 13; *ibid.*, 30 April 1924, p. 17.
26. *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 November 1927, p. 6 (QUOTATION); *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 November 1927, p. 1; *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 November 1927, p. 1. On Flowers, see Andrew M. Kaye, “The Canonization of Tiger Flowers: A Black Hero for the 1920s,” *Borderlines: Studies in American Culture* 5 (1998): 142-159.
27. *Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1923, p. 10; *Atlanta Journal*, 21 September 1928, p. 35. In New Orleans, black and white fighters were billed separately on different nights of the week so that audiences could choose their preferred viewing. See Rudolph Bates, *Rings; On the Life and Family of a Southern Fighter* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1992), 166.
28. *Atlanta Constitution*, 6 June 1910, p. 7 (1ST QUOTATION); *Atlanta Journal*, 6 July 1918, p. 8 (2ND QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 July 1918, p. 3B (3RD QUOTATION); *Atlanta Journal*, 20 August 1936, p. 22 (4TH QUOTATION); *Atlanta Constitution*, 21 August 1936, p. 18 (5TH QUOTATION).
29. *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 February 1929, p. 19 (1ST QUOTATION); *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 2 September 1893, p. 9 (2ND QUOTATION) (for an example of a “mirth-provoking battle royal in sacks” see *Atlanta Journal*, 20 November 1929, p. 29); Roberts, *Papa Jack*, 7. Roberts has also discovered other examples of these competitions which included blacks fighting naked.
30. Edward Frank Allen, *Keeping Our Fighters Fit: For War and After* (New York: The Century Company, 1918), 26-31, 48-57; “Tobacco and Pugilism in the Army” *Literary Digest*, 10 August 1918, p. 32; *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 November 1912, p. 2; *Atlanta Journal*, 12 December 1928, p. 37 (QUOTATION). See also Guy Lewis, “World War I and the Emergence of Sport for the Masses,” *The Maryland Historian* 4 (1973): 117-118. Camp Gordon, near Atlanta, was the scene of racial tension among the troops. See Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 194-195.
31. *Hearst Sunday American*, 7 July 1918, p. 1C. See also Sammons, “Boxing as a Reflection of Society: The Southern Reaction to Joe Louis,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 16 (1983): 24, on ways black athletes were regularly jeered at in the white press.
32. Richard Wright, *Black Boy (American Hunger): A Record of Childhood and Youth*, restored text (New York: Harper Collins, [1945], 1993), 277-287.
33. Peter Heller, *“In This Corner...!”: Forty World Champions Tell Their Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 198, 259 (1ST QUOTATION); Bates, *Rings*, 145 (2ND QUOTATION); Bobby Short, *Black and White Baby* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1971), 26; Nat Fleischer, *Black Dynamite: The Stay of the Negro in the Prize Ring from 1782 to 1938*, 5 vols (New York: C. J. O’Brien, Inc., 1938), 3: 128. Fleischer also mentions the Chicago fighter Bob Armstrong, the “Battle Royal King” in *ibid.*, 5: 21-22.
34. Jean Toomer, *Cane*, Norton Critical ed. (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923; New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1988), 59-69; *Atlanta Constitution*, 22 September 1928, p. 9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 19 June 1932, p. 5; *ibid.*, 9 October 1932, p. 7. Roby also ran a music store in the black neighborhood, suggesting his close ties with the community around Decatur Street. See *Atlanta City Directory 1925-1928*, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.
35. *Atlanta Daily World*, 7 August 1932, p. 5 (1ST QUOTATION); *ibid.*, 29 December 1932, p. 5; *ibid.*, 11 October 1932, p. 5 (2ND QUOTATION).
36. *Atlanta Daily World*, 13 September 1932, p. 5; *Atlanta Independent*, 29 November 1923, p. 7; *ibid.*, 5 July 1918, p. 7; *ibid.*, 14 June 1928, p. 1; *ibid.*, 9 June 1927, p. 8; *Atlanta Daily World*, 13 June 1932, p. 5.
37. Joyce, “Atlanta Black Crackers,” 181; Martin Luther King, Sr., *Daddy King: An Autobiography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980), 86; Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White* (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), 37.
38. Howard Steven Goodson, “South of the North, North of the South: Public Entertainment in Atlanta, 1880-1930” (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1995), 300; Dittmer, *Black Georgia*, 66.

39. *Atlanta Journal/Constitution*, 7 November 1991, p. E4; Bates, *Rings*, 146-147; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). 140.
40. "Return of the Ringmaster," *Time*, 9 November 1970, p. 35 (1ST QUOTATION); Muhammad Ali, *The Greatest, My Own Story* with Richard Durham (New York: Random House, 1975), 311-312; Thomas R. Hietela, "Muhammad Ali and the Age of Bare-Knuckle Politics" in *Muhammad Ali: The People's Champ*, ed. Elliott J. Gorn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 146 (2ND and 3RD QUOTATIONS).
41. Gilda Cobb Hunter, "Muhammad Ah as a Folk Hero" (Master's thesis, Florida State University, 1978), 70; *Time*, 9 November 1970, p. 35.
42. *Atlanta Journal*, 19 February 1976, p. 9D; Herman 'Skip' Mason, Jr., "If I Should Die Before I Wake ..." *The Atlanta Metro*, February 1996, p. 28; "The Late 'Theodore Tiger Flowers': A Victim of the Evils of Racial Segregation, Discrimination and Injustice," Butler Street Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta, 28 May 1976 (pamphlet in possession of the author). See also Gerald Early's fine essay, "Hot Spicks Versus Cool Spades: Three Notes Toward A Cultural Definition of Prizefighting," *The Hudson Review* 34 (1981): 39-56.