

Arthur Ashe Essay

“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.” (Arthur Ashe)

Some say that winning the 1968 US Open as the first African American male was Arthur Ashe’s greatest accomplishment, and I believe this statement is correct. By winning the US Open, not only did he accomplish what no other African American achieved before, but he also broke the wall that existed within the game of tennis. This wall that had existed for so many years hindered many African Americans from pursuing their love for the game of tennis, but as many viewed the historic victories of Arthur Ashe, they began to obtain a sense of hope. Although we can consider Arthur Ashe to be a champion, I believe his role as an active civil rights supporter entitles him to be called a true hero.

On top of winning three grand slam titles, Ashe actively supported civil rights for African Americans and even got arrested a couple of times for protesting in Washington D.C. In response to the Black Power Salute given at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City by Olympic athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, Ashe stated the following: *“I respected the way they stood tall against the sky and insisted on being heard in matters other than Track and Field – on matters of Civil Rights and social responsibility. I couldn’t help but admire them.”* Although it may have seemed like Arthur Ashe put tennis as his first priority, I believe he used tennis as a way to convey his message concerning civil rights, because according to Ashe, a true hero does not long to surpass all at whatever cost, but desires to serve others at whatever cost, and I believe Ashe did so.

Although winning titles and grand slams create a sense of pride within oneself, gaining the respect of others and giving others hope to achieve success is the primary goal for any human being. With this goal in mind, Ashe used tennis as a way to gain the respect of millions in order to try to urge a change within the status of African Americans in society. *“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.”* Arthur Ashe

2010 Arthur Ashe Essay Contest

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“SOME SAY THAT WINNING THE 1968 US OPEN AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE WAS ARTHUR ASHE’S GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT, WHAT DO YOU THINK?”

backed up his words with his actions, and by winning the U.S. Open as the first African American in history, Ashe was able to distinguish himself as a hero and role model for many, including myself.