

Muhammad Ali Jr. Detained by Immigration Officials at Florida Airport



Louisville, February 25 (RHC)-- The son of legendary boxer Muhammad Ali was detained for hours by immigration officials earlier this month at a Florida airport, according to a family friend.

Muhammad Ali Jr., 44, and his mother, Khalilah Camacho-Ali, the first wife of Muhammad Ali, were arriving at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on February 7th after returning from speaking at a Black History Month event in Montego Bay, Jamaica. They were pulled aside while going through customs because of their Arabic-sounding names, according to family friend and lawyer Chris Mancini.

Immigration officials let Camacho-Ali go after she showed them a photo of herself with her ex-husband, but her son did not have such a photo and wasn't as lucky. Mancini said officials held and questioned Ali Jr. for nearly two hours, repeatedly asking him: "Where did you get your name from?" and "Are you Muslim?"

When Ali Jr. responded that yes, he is a Muslim, the officers kept questioning him about his religion and where he was born. Ali Jr. was born in Philadelphia in 1972 and holds a U.S. passport.

Reached for comment via e-mail Friday, a spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection wrote: "Due to the restrictions of the Privacy Act, U.S. Customs and Border Protection cannot discuss individual travelers; however, all international travelers arriving in the U.S. are subject to CBP inspection."

Muhammad Ali, Jr's attorney said: "To the Ali family, it's crystal clear that this is directly linked to Mr. Trump's efforts to ban Muslims from the United States."

The line of questioning is indicative of profiling and designed to produce answers that corroborate what officials want to hear, Mancini said. Neither Camacho-Ali nor Ali Jr. have ever been subjected to detainment before, despite extensive global travel experience.

Officials at the Fort Lauderdale airport did not immediately respond to requests for comment Friday. Camacho-Ali and Ali Jr. live in Deerfield Beach, Florida, a 20-minute drive from the airport. While Ali Jr. was detained, Camacho-Ali ran around the airport asking: "Where's my son?" and begging for help, according to Mancini. Because incidents involving customs officials are considered to be on federal soil, local police had no jurisdiction to help her. Ali Jr. was eventually released two hours later, and the family contacted Mancini the following day.

Mancini said he and the Ali family are contemplating filing a federal lawsuit and are currently trying to find out how many other people have been subjected to the same treatment as Ali Jr.

"Imagine walking into an airport and being asked about your religion," he said. "This is classic customs profiling."

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