

Jesse Owens

A true story
In simple English
The Stories First Foundation

Jesse Owens

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The true story of a champion
Based on a work by Ed Hunter
Adapted by Claire Walter

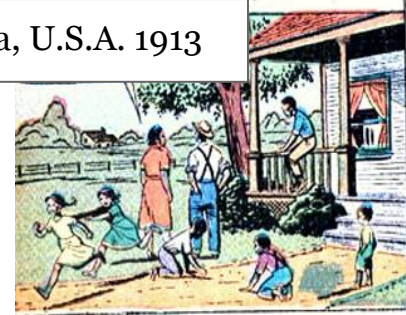


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Based on a true story created by Ed Hunter
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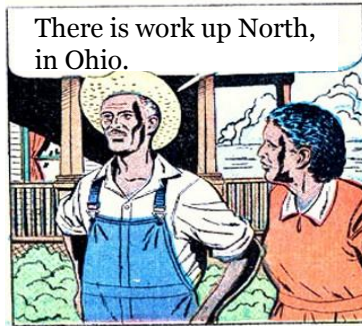
Alabama, U.S.A. 1913



It is 1913. James Cleveland Owens is born in Oakville, Alabama, U.S.A. His parents are Henry and Mary Emma Owens. They love their 12 children.

But the Owens family has many problems. They are an African American family. Life in Alabama is difficult for African Americans. There is a lot of discrimination.

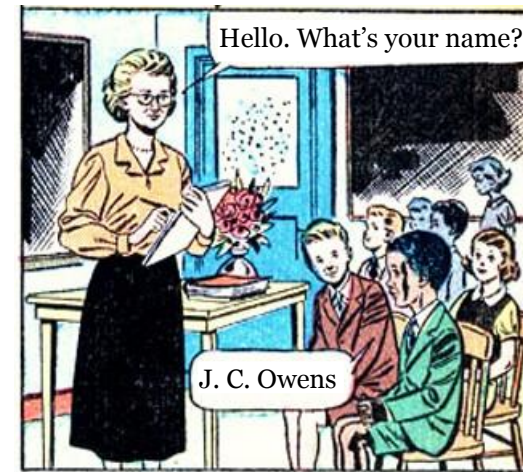
In 1929, the Great Depression arrives. It is a financial disaster for America. The Owens have financial problems. Mr. Owens wants to find work.



Mr. and Mrs. Owens make a difficult decision. They decide to leave Alabama. They want to find work. Also, Alabama has so much discrimination.

In 1933, the Owens family went to Ohio. The family is excited to go North. But J.C. is nervous. "J.C., you will love Ohio," said Mr. Owens. "J.C" is for James Cleveland.

"You will love school in Ohio. Say hello and tell them your name," said Ms. Owens.



In Ohio, J.C. Owens goes to Bolton Elementary School. The teacher says, "Hello, what's your name?"

J.C. says, "My name is J.C. Owens" But J.C. is from the South. He has a different accent. The teacher hears "Jesse" not "J.C."

"Class, say hello to Jesse," says the teacher. Jesse does not tell his teacher. He likes his new name, Jesse.

The Owens family is happy in Ohio. There is discrimination in Ohio. But it is not as bad as Alabama. Mr. Owens finds work in Ohio. Jesse has new friends. He loves his new school. He studies a lot.

Autumn, 1926



Jesse Owens goes to Fairmont Junior High School in Cleveland, Ohio. He respects his teachers and he loves his school.

But Jesse has a special talent: he is very athletic. Jesse runs and jumps. He is very fast.

A teacher at his school, Mr. Riley, sees Jesse. Mr. Riley is surprised by Jesse's talent. He says, "Jesse is a great runner!"

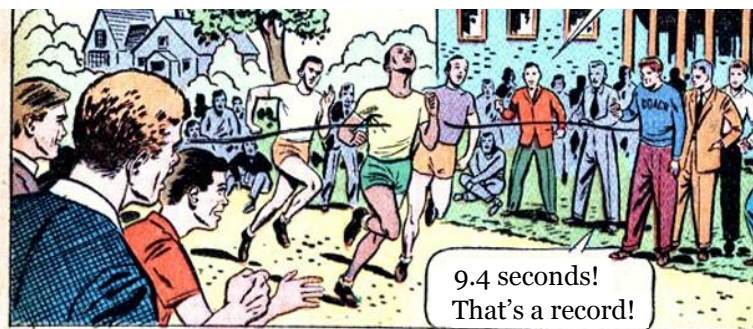


Mr. Riley coaches Jesse. He encourages Jesse to practice. "You have a natural talent. But it's important to practice," says Mr. Riley.

Jesse loves his coach. He practices a lot. Jesse represents Fairmont in big competitions.

In 1928, Jesse leaves junior high school. He goes to East Technical High School. Mr. Riley continues to encourage and coach Jesse.

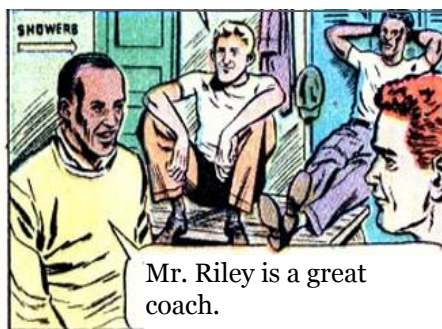
Jesse goes to a big competition in Chicago. It is the national tournament. Jesse goes to the tournament but he is very nervous. Mr. Riley says, "It's okay, Jesse. You practiced a lot. You can win this."



On May 25, 1935, Jesse participates in the national tournament. It's a very important competition. Jesse prepares mentally. 3-2-1! Then Jesse runs and runs. Jesse is so fast, he finishes in first place.

There is an announcement: "Jesse Owens wins in 9.4 seconds! It's a record!"

Jesse is very happy. He wins the national tournament, and he sets a record. Fans celebrate Jesse's victory. His friends are very happy too.

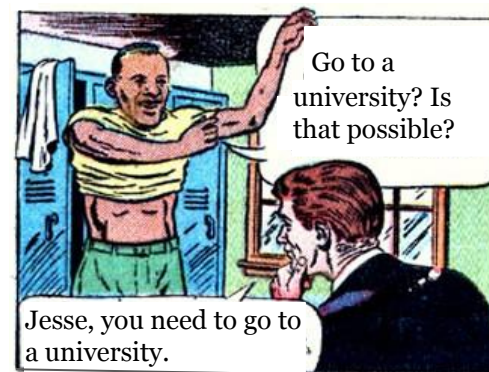


Jesse's friends say, "Jesse, you are a great runner!" Jesse is modest. He says, "But I have a great coach."

Then, Mr. Riley arrives. He says congratulations to Jesse. Then Mr. Riley says, "I'm just a regular coach. You are a great runner. You need to go to a university! They have great coaches. They can coach you more."

Jesse is very surprised, "Run for a university? Is that possible?" Universities accept African Americans, but it is rare. There is a lot of discrimination.

Mr. Riley encourages Jesse to study at a university. Jesse wants a university degree, and he wants continue to run.





At the national tournament, there are recruiters. They are looking for talent for universities. They are shocked by Jesse's talent. One recruiter says, "Jesse Owens is a star!"

"But he's African American," says another recruiter.

"It does not matter. The important thing is that Jesse Owens runs for the University of Ohio!"

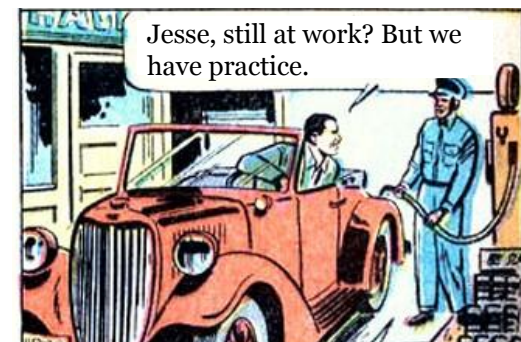
The University of Ohio invites Jesse. Jesse is happy to study and run in Ohio. But there is a problem: Jesse does not get financial assistance. The university will not give financial assistance to African Americans. Jesse is mad at this discrimination! Now he can not pay for his studies.

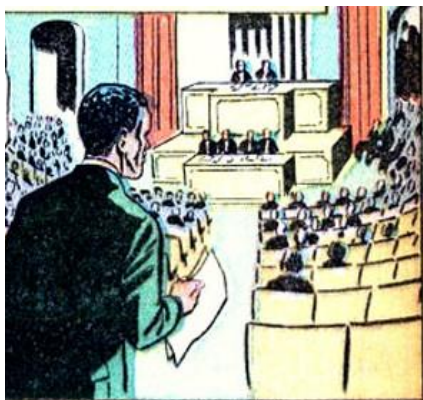


He has a difficult conversation with the coach, Coach Snyder. "Coach Snyder, I like the University of Ohio, but it's \$ 1,000!" said Jesse.

Coach Snyder can not help Jesse. The university will not make an exception for Jesse.

In the end, Jesse works to pay for his studies. Jesse works a lot. He studies a lot. He practices a lot. It's very difficult.





Jesse works at the Ohio Congress. He assists the representatives. Jesse notices there are no African American representatives. "One day, there will be African American representatives," thinks Jesse.

In the future, Jesse is destined to represent the United States in his sport. For now, Jesse continues practicing. He practices a lot with Coach Snyder.

Jesse studies running techniques. He prepares for a big competition in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It is the national tournament.

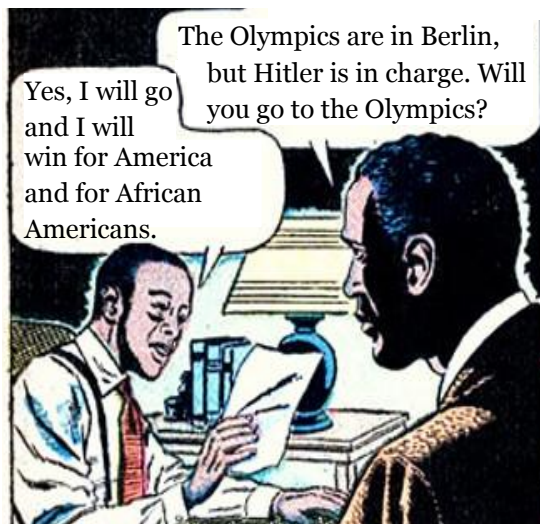
On May 25, 1935, Jesse arrives at the national tournament. Jesse runs in the 100 meters. He wins in 9.4 seconds.



Jesse also runs in the 200 meters. There are many runners, but Jesse is the fastest. He wins the 200 meters in 20.3 seconds. Jesse sets a world record!

Jesse is a great runner, but he also jumps. Jesse jumps 8.13 meters and wins the long jump. He sets another record! Jesse wins two other competitions in the tournament. In total, Jesse sets 4 records.

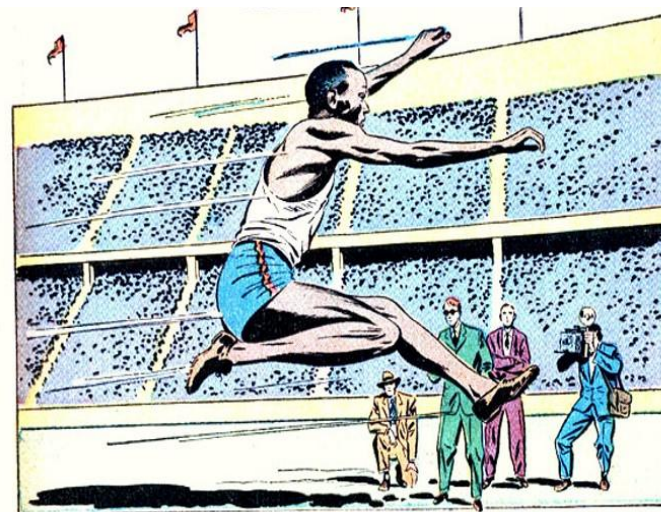




In 1936, the world prepares for the Olympic Games. Jesse is the fastest runner in the world. He is invited to participate in the Olympic Games. Jesse is very happy to represent America.

But there is a problem: the Olympic Games are in Berlin. Adolf Hitler controls Berlin. Hitler considers African Americans inferior. He is lying to his people to win control of Berlin.

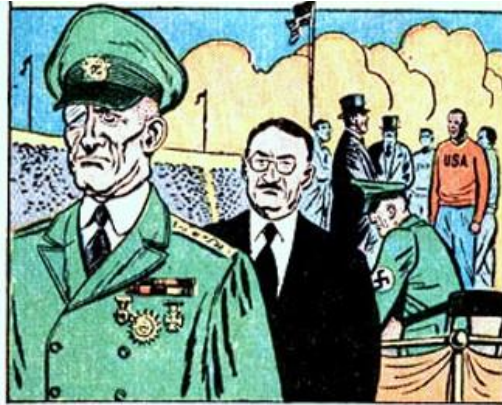
American are very mad. Some runners refuse to go to the Olympics, but not Jesse. Jesse decides to go to Berlin.



“I will win the victory for the United States. I will win for African-Americans!” says Jesse.

Jesse wants to win, so he practices and practices. Finally, Jesse arrives in Berlin. Jesse prepares for a difficult competition: the 100 meters. Jesse is very nervous, but he is prepared.

On August 3, 1936, Jesse runs the 100 meters. He runs it in 10.4 seconds. Jesse wins 1st place! Ralph Metcalfe, another African American, runs the 100 meters in 10.5 seconds. Jesse and Ralph win first and second place!



The people of Berlin are very surprised. The 1st and 2nd place winners are African-Americans! They see Hitler was lying: there is no "superior" race.

Jesse wins an olympic medal! He arrives at the ceremony and he gets his medal. Then, he tells the fans, "Berlin is beautiful. Thank you for this honor."

The people of Berlin are in love with Jesse. His fans cheer his name, "JESSE! JESSE!" But Hitler is very mad.

Adolf Hitler is supposed to say "congratulations" to the first place winner. But Hitler hates African Americans like Jesse Owens. He refuses to congratulate Jesse.

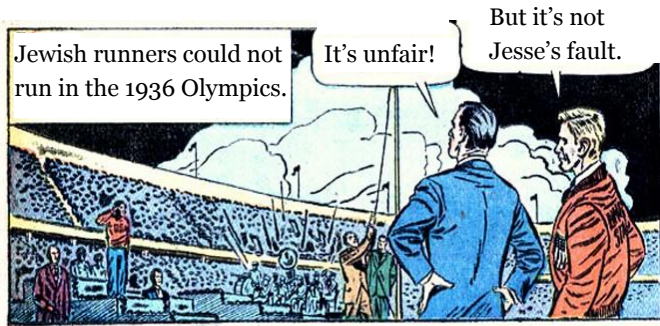


Then Jesse runs in another competition. He runs in the 200 meters. Again, Jesse wins first place. He wins in just 20.7 seconds. He sets another world record.

Jesse runs in more competitions. Again and again, Jesse is in first place.

In total, Jesse wins 4 Olympic medals. He sets 3 records. Jesse Owens is the star of the 1936 Olympics.





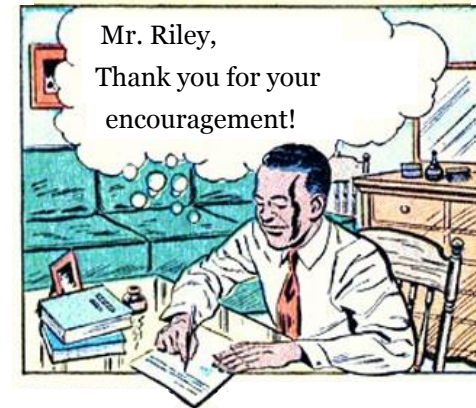
Adolf Hitler hates African Americans, but he hates Jewish people more. Hitler contacts the American coaches. Hitler says he does not want Jewish runners to run in the Olympics. There were two Jewish-American runners: Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller. Tragically, the American team does not let Marty Glickman and Sam Stroller run in the Olympics.

The American coach says, "Marty will not run. Jesse will run in his place."

Jesse is very mad. "No, Marty should run," Jesse says "It is not fair."

"Quiet!" says the director. "You will run if I say so."

Jesse says sorry to Marty. But Marty sees it is not Jesse's fault.



Jesse runs for Marty. He wants to make Hitler mad. Jesse runs very fast and he wins a final Olympic medal. Jesse had 4 medals in total. It was a record!

After the Olympics, Jesse was a star. All of the United States was happy for Jesse. But he was humble. He said "thank you" to his coaches.

Jesse kept in touch with his ex-trainer, Mr. Riley. He said, "Thank you, my friend. Your encouragement helped me a lot."

Jesse continues to communicate with his friends: Marty, Sam, and others. They are good friends. The runners of the Berlin Olympics like Jesse a lot. "Jesse is a great runner and a great man," says Marty.



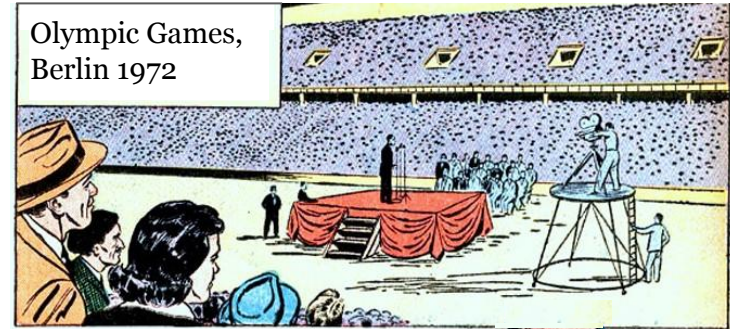
In September 1939, war arrived; it was World War II.

Jesse is contacted by the United States Office of Civil Defense. He is appointed director of a special program. It's a national program to encourage athletics.

During WWII, Jesse goes to many parts of the United States. Jesse runs sports clinics. He encourages people to prepare physically for WWII.

Jesse encourages people to take a stand against Hitler. The American people love Jesse.

On September 2, 1945, World War II ends and the United States wins.

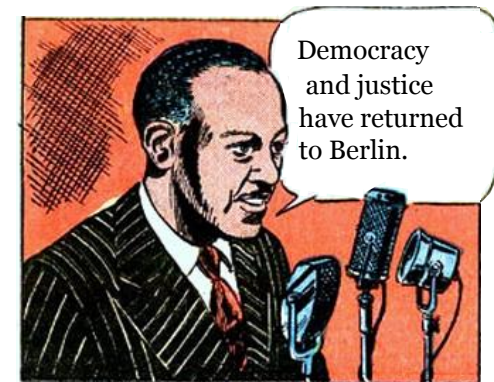


Olympic Games,
Berlin 1972

In 1972, the Olympic games return to Berlin. But at this Olympics, Hitler was no more.

Now the people of Berlin want to honor Jesse Owens. There is a special ceremony in Jesse's honor.

Jesse is happy to return to Berlin. He arrives at the ceremony. He addresses the fans and says, "Democracy and justice have returned to Berlin." Again, Jesse encourages the people of Berlin.





Jesse returns to the United States. He becomes a volunteer with young runners. Jesse is a guide and coach.

In 1976, the President of the United States gives Jesse the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

On March 31, 1980, James Cleveland Owens died. Jesse Owens is remembered as one of the greatest runners in history. Jesse Owens's story encourages people to stand against discrimination.

