

# Jesse Owens

## Introduction

As an African American track and field athlete, Jesse Owens had to overcome barriers. He wanted to go to the Olympics because he was one of the country's best sprinters. Jesse Owens was an excellent track and field athlete. He shattered world records, even when he was young. He competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and won many gold medals. He had to compete in front of Germany's racist dictator: Adolf Hitler. He proved overnight that he was an incredible athlete and broke the color barrier.

## Background

-Jesse Owens was born in Alabama in 1913 on September 12. His parents were Emma Alexander Owens and Henry Alexander Owens.

-Jesse Owens real name is James Cleveland, but he went by J.C. When he introduced himself to his teacher when he was nine years old, his teacher mistook J.C. for Jesse, and it stuck.

-Jesse Owens started running when he was only 13 years old

-He started his athletic career in high school in 1928 and was like a machine. He set multiple world records in track and field in high school and ran perfectly.

-He died on March 31 1980 due to complications with his lung cancer.

## Goals

-Jesse Owens was a fantastic track and field athlete and competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. He did it because he wanted to prove he wasn't scared of the racist people

-He was the first person in the history of the Olympics to win 4 gold medals in 1 time.

-Jesse Owens wanted to go to the Olympics because he knew he could win, and he wanted to prove that no race was superior.

## Barriers

-Jesse Owens performed in the Olympics in front of Adolf Hitler, who was convinced that the USA team was relying on an inferior race, because many of their olympians were colored.

-Jesse Owens broke the color barrier, and proved the world wrong.

## **Barriers challenged**

-Overall Germany won the Olympics, but one sport that America excelled in was track and field, thanks- in great part- to Jesse Owens.

-He didn't hesitate to compete in front of Adolf Hitler, who was loudly proclaiming to the world the superiority of the Aryan race.

-During a time of segregation and also the rise of Nazi Germany, Jesse Owens rebuked Hitler's race theory.

## **Impact and Significance**

-Jesse Owens proved no matter what race you are you can be the best.

-He proved Hitler wrong by becoming an instant hero.

- A direct quote from Jesse Owens transcript written by the Historian Margaret MacMillan, "Well of course, Jesse Owens was not meant to win anything. The Olympics were to be a sort of symbol of German racial superiority, which to Hitler was so important, and also a symbol of how successful the Nazis were."

-Jesse Owens showed the way for millions of athletes and the world at large.

-Perhaps no athlete better symbolized the human struggle of tyranny, poverty, and racial bigotry.

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