



Jesse Owens: A Biography (Greenwood Biographies)

Jacqueline Edmondson Ph.D.

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In an era far removed from the African American celebrity athletes of today, Olympic great Jesse Owens achieved fame by running faster and jumping farther than anyone in the world. Author Jacqueline Edmondson explores Owens' struggles and hard-earned accomplishments, as well as how he paved the way for future generations of athletes, including color-line shatterer Jackie Robinson.

It is difficult to imagine a time when African Americans were not part of professional sports in the United States. So many admired and beloved African-American athletes are national heroes today: Michael Jordan, Venus and Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, Florence Griffin-Joyner, Shaquille O'Neal, Muhammad Ali, to name a few. No such celebrity athletes appeared on magazine covers when Jesse Owens was a boy in the 1920s, no African American stars for him to hope to emulate. As the first American in track and field to win four gold medals in a single Olympic Games, Owens' athletic accomplishments were achieved despite seemingly insurmountable odds. This insightful biography tells the life story of a boy who grew up in poverty in the Deep South, won Olympic gold in Hitler's Germany by running faster and jumping farther than anyone in the world, and achieved fame and sometimes fortune in the midst of the Great Depression and a nation deeply divided by race.

Yet while Owens broke world records in track and gained attention from the general public, few athletes could understand his experiences, including the overt racial discrimination he faced—even fewer who understood the complexities his fame brought. Author Jacqueline Edmondson explores Owens' struggles and hard-earned accomplishments, as well as how he paved the way for future generations of athletes, including color line shatterer, Jackie Robinson. A timeline, photos, and extensive bibliography of print and electronic sources supplement this biography of one of the greatest Olympic athletes in American history.

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