

**The original documents are located in Box 37, “8/5/76 - Remarks to Members of the U.S. Olympic Team and Presentation of the Medal of Freedom to Mr. Jesse Owens” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  
OLYMPIC DELEGATION

DISTINGUISHED ATHLETES AND GUESTS

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON OLYMPIC SPORTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

-1-

*To the White House*

I AM PROUD TO WELCOME YOU, ~~DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AND~~

~~MEMBERS OF THE 1976 UNITED STATES OLYMPIC TEAM,~~ ~~PLEASE~~ TO THE

WHITE HOUSE.

LESS THAN A MONTH AGO, IN PLATTSBURGH,

I CONGRATULATED YOU ON MAKING THE OLYMPIC TEAM.

I WISHED YOU GOOD LUCK BEFORE YOU LEFT FOR MONTREAL.

NOW I AM HAPPY TO WELCOME YOU BACK AND TO CONGRATULATE

YOU ONCE AGAIN - THIS TIME FOR HAVING DONE A MAGNIFICENT

JOB.

-1b-

I HOPE <sup>the</sup> ~~YOU~~ ATHLETES HAVE HAD <sup>good</sup> A CHANCE TO REST UP

IN THE LAST FEW DAYS. LET ME SAY YOU WERE NOT ALONE

IN YOUR FEATS OF STRENGTH AND STAMINA.

MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE NOW RECOVERING FROM MARATHON  
SESSIONS WITH THEIR TV SETS.

~~HERE AT HOME~~ WE WATCHED YOU AND YOUR TEAMMATES  
RACK UP 94 MEDALS, A TRULY OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE.

~~SOME~~ OF YOU WON GOLD, SILVER OR BRONZE -- SOME OF YOU  
SET RECORDS -- BUT ~~YOU~~ ALL GAVE YOUR UTMOST EFFORT, AND ON  
BEHALF OF ALL AMERICANS ~~I WANT TO SAY~~ WE ARE VERY, VERY  
PROUD OF YOU.

YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS ARE ALL THE MORE IMPRESSIVE FOR THE  
FACT THAT YOU WERE UP AGAINST SOME ATHLETES WHOSE TRAINING  
IS SUBSIDIZED IN VARIOUS WAYS BY THEIR GOVERNMENTS•

IN THIS COUNTRY, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN UP TO THOSE WITH TALENT  
TO MAKE THEIR OWN WAY IN TRAINING AND PREPARING FOR THE  
HIGHEST LEVEL OF COMPETITION•

OUR BELIEF IN THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE ATHLETE, AND THE  
IMPORTANCE OF THE AMATEUR TRADITION, HAS HELD US BACK  
FROM ALL-OUT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT. ~~WE DO NOT WANT~~  
~~FEDERALLY FINANCED "MUSCLE FACTORIES."~~

AS ONE OF YOUR TEAMMATES SAID SO WELL --  
"I WOULDN'T TRADE MY PERSONAL FREEDOM FOR ALL THE RECORDS  
IN THE WORLD."

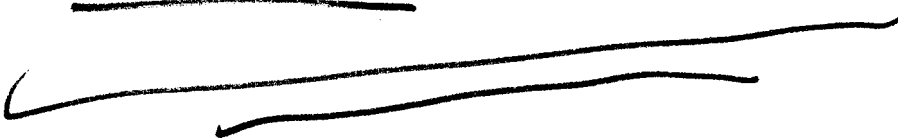
AT THE SAME TIME, I BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT  
CAN DO MORE TO HELP ATHLETICALLY TALENTED YOUNG AMERICANS  
ACHIEVE THEIR VERY BEST AT THE OLYMPICS.

EARLIER THIS YEAR I PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO  
PROVIDE FUNDING FOR PERMANENT WINTER SPORTS FACILITIES  
AT LAKE PLACID, TO BE USED FOR THE 1980 WINTER OLYMPICS,  
AND THEREAFTER TO TRAIN FUTURE AMERICAN CHAMPIONS.

I ~~THINK~~ WE CAN DO MORE THAN THAT, ~~HOWEVER.~~  
IN THE LONG RUN. THEREFORE I AM ASKING THE CONGRESS TO  
EXTEND THE LIFE OF MY COMMISSION ON OLYMPIC SPORTS UNTIL  
JANUARY OF NEXT YEAR.

IN THAT TIME I ASK THE COMMISSION NOT ONLY TO ADDRESS THE  
PROBLEM OF SPORTS ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES,  
BUT ALSO TO RECOMMEND AN EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR FUNDING  
THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR OLYMPIC ~~CLASS~~  
ATHLETES.

OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE FOUND CREATIVE IDEAS OTHER  
THAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING. I AM CONFIDENT WE WILL FIND WAYS  
IN WHICH AMERICAN ATHLETES CAN BE PROVIDED THE MEANS FOR  
OLYMPIC TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT, WHILE PRESERVING THEIR  
AMATEUR STANDING.





THIS YEAR'S OLYMPIC GAMES HAD THEIR SHARE OF  
CONTROVERSY. INTERNATIONAL POLITICS SOMETIMES THREATENED  
TO OVERSHADOW ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENT.

IN THE LAST WEEK OR TWO WE HAVE EVEN HEARD SOME  
PEOPLE CALLING FOR THE OLYMPIC FLAME TO BE EXTINGUISHED  
PERMANENTLY. I STRONGLY DISAGREE.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE OLYMPIC GAMES CAN BE  
FREED FROM WORLD POLITICS IN THE FUTURE, REVIVING THE  
SPIRIT OF SACRED ARMISTICE WHICH PREVAILED AT THE ORIGINAL  
GAMES ~~MANY~~ HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT IN THE LONG RUN THE LARGER  
VIEW WILL PREVAIL -- THAT A GREAT ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE IS A  
PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT BEFORE IT IS A NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.  
WHATEVER THEIR NATIONALITY, ALL ATHLETES ARE WORKING AGAINST  
THE SAME PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONSTRAINTS OF THE HUMAN  
BODY -- OF GRAVITY AND OF TIME.

~~AND~~ THE CHALLENGES ALL ATHLETES FACE IN COMMON ARE MORE  
IMPORTANT THAN THE BOUNDARIES WHICH DIVIDE THEM.

THAT IS THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES. IT IS IN

THAT SPIRIT THAT I PLEDGE OUR EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT IN THE 1980

OLYMPICS, WHICH WE WILL BE HOSTING AT LAKE PLACID -- POLITICS

WILL BE KEPT OUT OF THE ARENA. WE WILL WELCOME EVERY TEAM

RECOGNIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE.

ATTEMPTS TO USE THE OLYMPIC GAMES FOR

INTERNATIONAL POWER POLITICS WILL ULTIMATELY BACKFIRE.

OUR FRIEND JESSE OWENS, HERE WITH US TODAY, PROVED THAT.

IN 1936 WHEN ADOLF HITLER WAS TRYING TO TURN  
THE GAMES INTO A SPECTACLE THAT WOULD GLORIFY THE RACIST  
DOGMAS OF HIS NAZI STATE, THERE WAS A STRONG MOVEMENT IN  
THIS COUNTRY AGAINST OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE GAMES.

AS IT TURNED OUT, U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THOSE OLYMPICS  
PROVIDED A SHARP REBUKE OF HITLER'S RACIST RUBBISH.  
FIVE BLACK AMERICAN ATHLETES WON EIGHT GOLD MEDALS IN TRACK  
AND FIELD.

ONE AMERICAN ATHLETE IN PARTICULAR PROVED THAT

EXCELLENCE KNOWS NO RACIAL OR POLITICAL LIMITS. THAT MAN

IS JESSE OWENS.

I DON'T HAVE TO TELL YOU ABOUT HIS PHENOMENAL

ATHLETIC CAREER.

~~HE SET HIS FIRST TRACK RECORD IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.~~

I WAS A STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN WHEN

JESSE OWENS WAS A STUDENT AT OHIO STATE.

I SAW JESSE AT A BIG TEN TRACK MEET IN ANN ARBOR, ON A SINGLE  
DAY IN MAY, BREAK THREE WORLD RECORDS AND TIE A FOURTH.

HIS PERFORMANCE THAT DAY IN THE ~~RUNNING~~ BROAD JUMP -- 26 FEET,

8-1/4 INCHES -- WAS NOT EQUALLED FOR 25 YEARS.

IT WAS A TRIUMPH I'LL NEVER FORGET.

IN THE 1936 OLYMPICS, JESSE OWENS WON ~~NO LESS THAN~~  
FOUR GOLD MEDALS -- ~~RUNNING IN~~ THE 100 METERS, THE 200 METERS,  
THE 400 METER RELAY AND THE BROAD JUMP.

HE PERSONALLY ACHIEVED WHAT NO STATESMAN, ~~OR~~  
JOURNALIST OR GENERAL ACHIEVED AT THAT TIME -- HE FORCED  
ADOLF HITLER TO LEAVE THE STADIUM, RATHER THAN ACKNOWLEDGE  
THE SUPERB VICTORIES OF A BLACK AMERICAN.

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER, REVISITING THAT SAME STADIUM,  
JESSE OWENS RECEIVED A STANDING OVATION WHEN HE URGED HIS  
AUDIENCE TO "STAND FAST WITH US FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY."

GIANTS LIKE JESSE OWENS SHOW US WHY POLITICS WILL  
NEVER DEFEAT THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT.

*His*  
~~JESSE OWENS~~' CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE

CONTINUED TO INSPIRE AMERICANS AS THEY DID THE WORLD

IN 1936. HE BROUGHT HIS OWN TALENTS INTO THE SERVICE

OF OTHERS.

AS A SPEAKER, AN AUTHOR AND A COACH, HE HAS INSPIRED

MANY YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN TO ACHIEVE THEIR VERY BEST --

FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR AMERICA.



AS AN AMERICAN WHO ROSE FROM POVERTY TO A POSITION  
OF LEADERSHIP, HE HAS MOTIVATED OTHERS TO MAKE THE MOST  
OF WHAT AMERICA HAS TO OFFER.

JESSE OWENS IS A MODEST MAN. HE MAY WONDER WHY  
I AM SINGING HIS PRAISES TODAY. ~~JESSE, COULD I ASK YOU TO~~  
~~STEP UP HERE, PLEASE.~~

JESSE, WOULD YOU PLEASE COME UP AND JOIN ME FOR A MOMENT.  
THIS AFTERNOON, JESSE, IT IS MY GREAT PRIVILEGE TO PRESENT  
YOU WITH THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM -- THE HIGHEST CIVILIAN  
HONOR YOUR COUNTRY CAN BESTOW.

I PRESENT YOU WITH THIS MEDAL ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE  
OF THE UNITED STATES.

FOR THEM

-- AND IN PARTICULAR FOR ATHLETES LIKE THOSE

HERE TODAY

-- YOUR CHARACTER AND YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS WILL

ALWAYS BE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS: "TO JESSE OWENS:

ATHLETE AND HUMANITARIAN, SPEAKER AND AUTHOR.

A MASTER OF THE SPIRIT AS WELL AS THE MECHANICS OF SPORT,

HE IS A WINNER WHO KNOWS THAT WINNING IS NOT EVERYTHING.

HE HAS SHARED WITH OTHERS HIS COURAGE AND HIS DEDICATION

TO THE HIGHEST IDEALS OF SPORTSMANSHIP.

HIS ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE SHOWN US ALL THE PROMISE OF AMERICA,  
AND HIS FAITH IN AMERICA HAS INSPIRED COUNTLESS OTHERS  
TO DO THEIR BEST FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THEIR COUNTRY."

END OF TEXT