

Meditation at the United Nations

United Nations:



the Heart-Home
of the World-Body

Monthly Bulletin of
Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations

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**MEDITATION
AT THE
UNITED NATIONS**

**MONTHLY BULLETIN OF
SRI CHINMOY MEDITATION
AT THE UNITED NATIONS**

Since January, 1973, Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations has published the monthly bulletin, *Meditation at the United Nations*. This publication offers a basic introduction to meditation techniques and spirituality through questions and answers and lectures, and also reviews the Group's activities. Profits from the sale of this bulletin are donated to UNICEF.

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SRI CHINMOY MEDITATION
AT THE UNITED NATIONS

United Nations:



the Heart-Home
of the World-Body

WE BELIEVE and we hold that each man has the potentiality of reaching the Ultimate Truth. We also believe that man cannot and will not remain imperfect forever. Each man is an instrument of God. When the hour strikes, each individual soul listens to the inner dictates of God. When man listens to God, his imperfections are turned into perfections, his ignorance into knowledge, his searching mind into revealing light and his uncertain reality into all-fulfilling Divinity.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations is an association of U.N. delegates, staff, NGO representatives and accredited press correspondents, who believe that inner reflection and meditation can bring us in touch with the founding spirit of the United Nations and inspire renewed dedication to its ideals.

The main focus of our activities, both in New York and in Geneva, is our twice-weekly meditations, which provide an opportunity for quiet, spiritual renewal in an atmosphere reflective of the highest purposes of the world organisation. In addition, through an ongoing series of conferences and symposia, we provide forums where ambassadors, Secretariat officials and staff, religious leaders and other world-minded individuals can share and reinforce their spiritual vision for the United Nations.

The Meditation Group was founded in 1970, when interested staff members invited the distinguished spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy to conduct non-denominational meditations at New York Headquarters. Since then, the Group's membership has grown considerably and its expanded activities have been warmly received by the U.N. community.

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JESSE OWENS HONOURED AT THE UNITED NATIONS

On 22 April 1980 Ambassadors from four countries, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin and Olympic medalist Herb Douglas met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to honour the spirit and accomplishments of the late Olympic and human rights champion Jesse Owens. The commemorative tribute was convened by Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations, with Mr. Jeff Kamen, WPIX-TV U.N. Correspondent, serving as Master of Ceremonies. Following are excerpts from the programme, as well as five songs dedicated to the immortal Jesse Owens by Sri Chinmoy and performed at the ceremony by the Meditation Group Choir.

*

At the back of the magazine are excerpts from a conversation between Jesse Owens and Sri Chinmoy that took place during a private meeting in New York City on 4 November 1972. The full text appears in a booklet entitled, *Sri Chinmoy With His Athlete-Idol: Jesse Owens*.

“THE JESSE OWENS SPIRIT:
A CALL TO GREATNESS”

A tribute to the late
Olympic and human rights champion

TUESDAY 1P.M. 22 APRIL 1980

United Nations
Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium

Guest speakers include:

H.E. Mr. William J. vanden Heuvel
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the United States to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Yehuda Blum
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Zenon Rossides
Permanent Mission of Cyprus
to the United Nations

H.E. Baron Rudiger von Wechmar
Permanent Representative of the Federal
Republic of Germany to the United Nations

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Interreligious Director
American Jewish Committee

Mr. Bayard Rustin
President, A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund

Representing the Owens Family:
Mr. Herb Douglas
1948 Olympian
and personal friend of the Owens Family

Host:
Mr. Jeff Kamen
WPIX-TV United Nations Correspondent

Sponsored by
Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations



Mr. Jeff Kamen, WPIX-TV United Nations Correspondent: Welcome to this United Nations tribute to Jesse Owens. All of us are here to celebrate his magnificent spirit of courage, dedication, dignity and humility which continue to be a genuine call to greatness. I am Jeff Kamen, United Nations correspondent for WPIX-TV, New York. It is a real honour to serve as master of ceremonies for this event. With us today, as you will see and hear, are distinguished diplomats, religious leaders, a great pioneer in the American Civil Rights Movement and a representative of Jesse Owens' family, himself a great Olympian. To begin our programme, I would like to ask all of our honoured guests to come on the stage for a brief moment of silence, to lead us all in a universal moment of silence to honour the spirit of Jesse Owens. Would you all join us for a moment, please.

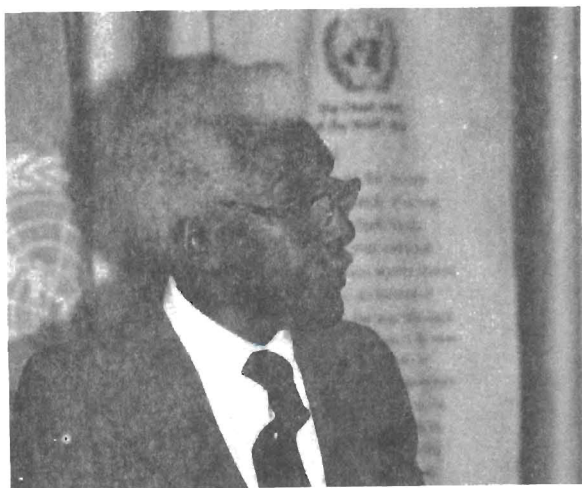
(A brief meditation follows.)

Thank you all. At three points in the programme we will have songs written especially for this event—written about Jesse Owens, his life, his spirit—by the man who asked me to invite you all here today, Sri Chinmoy. Sri Chinmoy has been offering to the United Nations inspirational programmes, such as this one, for almost a decade now. Before our first speaker, I would like to invite the Meditation Group Singers to come to the stage and offer us the first song, entitled “Jesse Owens.”

(Song)

The concentration and dedication that it took Jesse Owens to accomplish what he accomplished is just incredible. When I first met Jesse, it was 1965. The place was Chicago, and the American Civil Rights Movement was making its move into the North for

the first time. Jesse was deeply worried about the possibility of bloodshed, but at the same time he told me he felt there was a real opportunity for change, the best kind of change for a better life. The amazing thing was that even at that critical juncture for American people, American black people especially, Jesse had a wider view, a global view. He said, "I feel somehow, Jeff, that the years to come hold enormous promise if we have the courage to persist." Our first speaker is a man who has devoted his life to the persistent struggle for human dignity in his own nation and in the world. Please welcome Mr. Bayard Rustin, President of the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund.



Mr. Bayard Rustin, President, A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund: In 1936 the world was challenged by a racist doctrine, the doctrine of the Nazis, the pseudoscientific doctrine that gained

acceptance in many parts of the world. As the growth of the German economic and military strength increased, many people became confused. I am not only talking about people in Germany who became confused. We in the United States became confused, and our confusion led to an increasing indifference.

Now God or Providence, if you will, inevitably manifests itself in an individual who brings truth from the mountaintop to the valley where we live. Jesse Owens, a black man, was thus one chosen by God to shake all of us into seeing a clear picture of what Nazism was. This was one of our own whom we all loved, who received such unfortunate treatment in Germany. Jesse Owens disproved all racism and religious prejudice with his talent, genius and his warm personality.

His performance in the Olympic Games was without a doubt a spiritual setback for bigotry and an inspiration to all people who believed that all men and women are equal. He, as a solitary man, had the strength and dignity of a giant chosen for such a task. Although perhaps not even conscious of that task, he did it well, for God only commands that whatever duty he puts before us, we carry out. Jesse won after many years of practice and turmoil and poverty. He knew that he was winning races; I doubt that he knew what in fact he was doing for all mankind.

One can be chosen by God to carry out a specific task and it can end there. Not so with Jesse. His vast contribution at the Olympics may have been for him unconscious. But there were also the everlasting conscious acts for God which he performed. I must have telephoned Jesse Owens many times to join committees for this, committees for that:

committees for Indian independence, persecution of Jews in Russia, the Cambodians who were starving, and so forth. To the glory of that great man, never did he argue with me except once. He was not quite sure about joining the committee for the Cambodians. After all, there was fantastic unemployment amongst people here. For example, in our ghettos it was sometimes 60 percent. At first he said he didn't think he wanted to sign, and I said, "Well, come along, let us have lunch." He was too busy for lunch; we had coffee, and he didn't even drink the coffee. At the end of our talk he said, "You know, Bayard, I'm confused with all these figures before me." I said, "Jesse, what do black mothers say to their children when they are confused?" He smiled and said, "Well, Mama said that if you're confused, do the right thing and you are not responsible for the consequences." He did join the committee for the Cambodians.

In challenging our indifference to the Jews, Jesse was challenging our indifference to all humanity. He was challenging the assumptions of the colonialists. He was challenging the bigotry in our own country. For Jesse knew that to be indifferent is thrice a sin. First, it creates a greater tragedy in the lives of those to whom we are indifferent. Second, it is a judgment upon ourselves for soon our own indifference will lead us to be insensitive to other people. Third, it is a judgment upon us because as surely as we give no heed to the least of those who are in trouble, sooner or later that very trouble will envelop us. Most of all, Jesse knew that indifference is a punishment to our very selves. As surely as we do not conceive of ourselves, we draw a line. We automatically say if they are not humans like us, ultimately there is nothing we cannot do

unto them. As Jesse knew, our own indifference is a punishment because it destroys the values we ourselves hold most dearly.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: The Germany which rose from the ashes of World War II is a new nation, filled with a new consciousness of international cooperation and dedication to peace for all mankind. It is a great joy to introduce the Ambassador to the United Nations from the Federal Republic of Germany, Rudiger von Wechmar.



His Excellency Baron Rudiger von Wechmar, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations: Jesse Owens is very well known to my country not only as the winner of four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin but also for his many efforts towards promoting friendly relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United

Nations. We all remember his outstanding contribution to international understanding. For many years he has contributed by public statements in the United States and in Germany to a more objective judgement of my country and its people. It was not only his personality as a sportsman but also his convincing fellowship as a human being for which he was known to all of us. I am pleased to say that the many honours conferred on him within the past twenty years included also the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

He will remain for us "a floating wonder, just like somebody who had wings," a man who was always aware of his dignity both in the athletic field and in everyday life. He has come to be a "symbol of human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry," as President Carter put it recently. His own perception of life may be best described by quoting the following words from him: "We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline and effort You learn not only the sport but things like respect of others, ethics in life, how you are going to live, how you treat your fellow man, how you live with your fellow man." Jesse Owens set an example of how to live up to these ideals.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: When I looked at the photograph of Jesse Owens on the podium, I was reminded again about the incredible one-pointedness, that tight focussing capacity, that Jesse Owens had to have to do what he did, not only at that spectacular Olympic meet, but for the rest of his life. His entire life was an uninterrupted song of

determination, energy and dedication. I'd like to introduce the Ambassador from Israel, my friend, Yehuda Blum.



His Excellency Dr. Yehuda Z. Blum, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations: We are gathered here today not merely to pay tribute to an outstanding athlete. For Jesse Owens, extraordinary athlete and sportsman as he was, embodied in his being a very special symbol of human dignity. When he competed in Berlin in 1936 he was not competing on behalf of the United States alone; he was running in the name of all decent, upright and free men. He was not bearing just the Olympic torch; he carried aloft a torch for all mankind.

It was my lot to have been born in Czechoslovakia in the early 1930's. I was not even of school age when Jesse Owens competed at Berlin, and so I have no personal memories of his outstanding ac-

accomplishments there. But later, when the whole of Eastern Europe fell under Nazi domination and when some of us went through the horrors of concentration camps, I remember vividly being told how Jesse Owens' victories so incensed Hitler that he refused to attend the continuation of the games. It is easy to understand Hitler's wrath, because Jesse Owens' extraordinary athletic accomplishments before the eyes of the whole world made nonsense of the Nazis' racist theories and shattered the very foundations on which they were based. The mere knowledge of what Jesse Owens had done helped give encouragement and hope to us all in those dreadful times.

Because of what he did in Berlin in 1936, we the Jewish people, the prime target of Nazi racism, have always held Jesse Owens in special esteem. In his very being he was the quintessence of the unity and brotherhood of man, ideals that were proclaimed to the world by the Jewish people, through the Hebrew Prophets in Jerusalem. Throughout our long history we have fought and suffered for them, not only on our own behalf but on behalf of other minority groups everywhere.

Today we uphold these ideals and principles and abide by them in our State, the State of Israel, where it is not just Jews and Arabs who live side by side in equality and dignity. Anyone who has visited Israel has noticed that even among Jewish Israelis there is a vast cross-section of ethnic backgrounds, ranging from tall blond Jews of Scandinavian origin to shorter, darker Jews from places like India, Yemen and Iraq, and finally black Jews from Ethiopia. It is the tradition which both we and Jesse Owens share that these Jews from the four corners of the earth have been moulded together to

form one people once again, after centuries of dispersion and it is the message of Jesse Owens which we hold aloft. Let us never lose sight of it. And let us be thankful for a life that has become the symbol of human decency and human dignity.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: In my twenty-one years as a reporter in this country, I have been amazed at the shift in the posture of my own nation. In the past I would have had a hard time arguing with some of my foreign colleagues that America was taking too arrogant a position worldwide. But I feel so much better about being a member of the population of the United States these days because there has been an evolution of humility and no loss of dignity, and that's a wonderful combination. I feel that the gentleman I am about to present to you is a manifestation of those qualities, Ambassador William vanden Heuvel of the United States.



H.E. Mr. William J. vanden Heuvel, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations: As we gather here today, there

are some who knew Jesse Owens and many of us who did not. And yet all of us now know him very well. We look at the extraordinary picture on the stage here, and we see all of the qualities of greatness the speakers before me have described. There is very little that I could add to what Bayard Rustin said or what Ambassador von Wechmar and Ambassador Blum have said, because I do believe that in their own beautiful and eloquent words they have captured the essence of a very significant person.

In times of difficulty for the world or for a country or for a person, there does seem to be an illuminating spirit that comes to us and in that illumination we find a new direction. Jesse Owens was that illuminating spirit. He was that spirit for the world in 1936; he was that spirit for his country for all the remaining years of his life. He ran an extraordinary race, not only in Berlin, but in all the years of his life. I often wonder what he himself thought when he challenged Hitler. He was a young boy from the Midwest of the United States, totally new to horizons and dimensions of important international challenge. Did he truly understand what he was going to represent to the peoples of the world on that day? And in the disgust, anger and brutal whim of Hitler as he walked away without awarding the medals to Jesse Owens, did this young boy understand what a hero he had become for all of us?

His name is a legend and an inspiration for all of us. His words, echoing through the years, have done such wonders for us. There is nothing we can add to the four medals that he won on that day, except to say that now, as we look back, we realize that he continued running and really won a much

greater race. He lived a noble and true life, not only for those to whom he spoke in 1936, but also for those in his own country. As a black man, he came back to us not only speaking about the prejudice against the Jews, but also reminding us that the qualities that he had as a human being deserved the honour and respect of all of us. He reminded us how correct the Declaration of Independence truly is, and in that he was the greatest of Americans. I am privileged and honoured to come today to share these moments of silence, meditation and music, to listen to these beautiful words, and to speak for Americans in saying we are very, very proud of Jesse Owens and the memory he leaves us. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: I now have the honour to present a dear friend and constant teacher about the reality of international life, His Excellency Ambassador Zenon Rossides of Cyprus.



His Excellency Mr. Zenon Rossides, Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations: We are here today to pay homage to the memory

of Jesse Owens. He was a great man who excelled in his athletic record as a rare Olympic star, and at the same time, he excelled in his philanthropic spirit. He had a harmonious blend of the two. This happy blend characterized the ancient Greeks with whom the Olympics started. For them, there was no divorce between the achievements of the mind and the achievements of the muscle. Each was a necessary part of the qualities or virtues which are characteristic of the perfect man. Jesse Owens had both these great qualities. He was an excellent example of a man so self-denying, so loving his fellow man, and at the same time excelling in sports as no one else could have done. This is the spirit of ancient Greece, which was imbued in Jesse Owens.

The Olympic Games, as you probably know, were of paramount religious and political significance to the ancient Greeks. The entire poetic work of Pindar was dedicated alone to songs in celebration of the Olympic contests, as the most important of the achievements in life. The whole Olympics were closely associated with the spirit of peace and the brotherhood of man. So it was an event shaking the whole political world. There would be a genuine truce in all wars between the Greeks. As you know, there were terrible wars between the Greeks, but everything was calm and full of peace and love during the whole of that period. They went to these games in a spirit of brotherhood, although a little while before they had been quarreling and fighting.

Jesse Owens is a flash of light in the darkness of our material world. Jesse Owens is a thought of love that is eternal. Jesse Owens is the world that should be, and is not. Jesse Owens stands as an example for all of us, for the whole world, because he was at

the same time the victor and the victim: the victor of dignity, love and achievement in the Olympics and the victim, the very great victim, of discrimination. By his example and his life, he defeated in the best way discrimination and he encouraged man to better himself.

In trying to pay tribute, we feel his greatness. We feel his greatness as impressing upon the whole world the necessity of change in this age where change is needed more than ever, not merely for a better world, not merely for a better life, but for the very survival of mankind. We have reached the time when the nuclear weapon is holding the big stick, telling us that either we change or we perish. The choice should be to change, but we see so little desire for change in the world. We see that bigotry has increased. We see dedication to the worst kinds of antagonism, war and hatred at a time when the punishment is near: a nuclear catastrophe is approaching.

I spoke about the true spirit of the Olympics. The survival of that spirit should animate the Olympic Games of our time to make them as important as they were in the old days of Greece. This Olympic spirit was there in the case of Jesse Owens, in the fulness of his heart, expressed in his many, many manifestations of love for his fellow man. Jesse's legacy is that the concept of peace should prevail, not only during the Olympic Games, but at all times in our advanced technological world.

The spirit now lying dormant in man should be awakened, above all in the United Nations, where it is direly needed. The spiritual side of man is direly needed to guide him towards what he should do for his own salvation. It is direly needed because

of the approaching threat of nuclear war. In this sense I wish to express appreciation for what this Meditation Group is trying to do in the United Nations. It is related to the deeper significance of the principles and purposes of the the United Nations, which can be attained only if the spirit of man is awakened, at this time when the intellect of man, through the development of technology, has become bankrupt. So, in the spirit of Jesse Owens, may we take this occasion to pray and meditate that there should be a lasting change for the better in this world.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: Where else but at the United Nations, where else but in the City of New York, could we be treated to this incredible array of poetry from around the world. Our next speaker is a clergyman with a universal touch, because his devotion almost transcends what would be the definition of his own faith. It goes to all humanity, and that's why he has often been invited to join us. It gives me special pleasure to present Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, President of the American Jewish Committee.



Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Inter-religious Director, American Jewish Committee:

Jesse Owens was an athlete and, in an age of professionalism, one would conventionally think that that exhausted his meaning. But perhaps in ways that he himself had not been altogether aware of, he became a metaphor for a meaning infinitely greater than athletic prowess itself. If I were to fall back on the definition written by my late blessed teacher Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Jesse Owens was in fact a prophet who lived his life conforming to the great moral and ethical principles of the prophets of Israel. My teacher defined a prophet as one who by his very life stood against indifference to evil and the evil of indifference.

Quite appropriately, we are here to honour Jesse Owens' remarkable human achievement as one of the great imperishable stars of track and field who won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany. He achieved, as others have said, almost in ways which were unconscious, the extraordinary moral achievement of stripping naked the Nazi myth of Aryan racial superiority. Standing in the presence of Adolf Hitler and the entire power and weight of the Nazi military machine, standing above all in the face of the Nazi demonology that sought to divide the world between Aryans and the inferior races, this one man alone humiliated Adolf Hitler and that ideological and pathological Nazi racial doctrine. It should not go unremarked that Hitler's contempt for Jesse Owens and the black people and the inferior races of the world was preceded by three years of systematic, mounting contempt for Jews, and for Jews as athletes. For between 1933 and 1936, Adolf Hitler and his entire system that gave him ultimate veneration, that made him in fact a saviour, forcibly removed

40,000 Jews from the 250 athletic clubs of Germany, saying that they, like Jesse Owens, had no moral, human right to compete with their superiors in the Olympics.

We will not pay genuine homage to Jesse Owens if we think of his achievement as a past event. In fact, for me, there is great meaning in coming here today and wanting to take part in what he represented. We must understand that the race that he ran against Hitler and the Nazi doctrine of racial superiority is not simply a past event. It is in fact a moral obligation, a moral claim on every single one of us in this room and on every human being in the world today, as we continue to face that dark legacy of racial, religious and ethnic bigotry and hatred which is the engine that fuels the epidemic of dehumanization in the world today.

Jesse Owens is a metaphor for our time. He calls us to our senses. He calls us to mobilize our conscience, our moral will; to join our hands and our hearts and to stand against the evil of trying to assert superiority by proclaiming the inferiority of another. That is the ultimate idolatry of our life. It stands against everything that is essential in the Biblical tradition, in Judaism and Christianity, in Islam, in Buddhism and Hinduism, in the very ethos of democracy itself. And so let us honour Jesse Owens not only for what happened in 1936, but for the summons that he lays on our conscience today in this place, in every place. Let us know that our survival depends on affirming the sacred tradition that every human being is created in the sacred image of God; that every human life is of infinite worth and infinite preciousness. It is in our hands and in the way in which we uphold one

another and are responsible for the fate of the destiny of one another, that the very key to human survival itself lies.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: Now I have the honour of introducing a 1940 Olympian and a personal friend of the Owens family, Mr. Herb Douglas. Herb, will you join us please? It is a privilege to be here with you.

Mr. Herb Douglas: Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: Now Sri Chinmoy, Director of the Meditation Group, would like to make a presentation to Mr. Douglas.



Sri Chinmoy: On behalf of the Meditation Group, I would like to offer you this plaque. About eight years ago I was extremely fortunate to meet the immortal of immortals, Jesse Owens. And at that time I presented him with another plaque,

with the message that is inscribed in this book. (Sri Chinmoy reads the following inscription from his book, *Sri Chinmoy with His Athlete-Idol: Jesse Owens.*)

“To the Immortal Jesse Owens:
The desiring world loved you
for your outer speed.
The aspiring world loves you
for your inner speed.
I love you because in you
I see the teeming sufferings
of Mother-Earth and the illumining
Blessings of Father-Heaven.”

I would now like to read out the eulogy to Jesse Owens that I gave on 9 April 1980 after a public meditation at Columbia University.

“Spirituality means speed: speed in the inner world, speed in the outer world. In the inner world, speed is founded mostly upon aspiration. In the outer world, speed is founded mostly upon inspiration.

“There are some individuals who have speed in the inner world, while there are others who have speed in the outer world. There are few, very few, who have speed both in the inner world and in the outer world. Jesse Owens, the champion of champions, the immortal of immortals, has this rare speed both in the inner world and in the outer world. He is the colossal pride not only of his race, the black people, but also of the entire America. Finally, he is, indeed, a universal treasure. As the outer world treasures his fastest speed, even so the inner world

cherishes his bravest dedication that fought against poverty, darkness and ignorance in human life.

“Here we are all seekers. As seekers, we are offering our soulful homage to a seeker who has contributed abundant speed and light to the entire world.”

Mr. Herb Douglas: Thank you, Sri Chinmoy. I am very happy to be representing Mrs. Ruth Owens. She sent a letter to you, which I will read.

Dear Sri Chinmoy,

Although I am not there in person,
my heart and soul are with you.

I'm standing by all the time,
It matters not the hour or clime.
I cannot falter, cannot fail,
His love forever will prevail.
I'll not complain, my lot bemoan,
I'll never again think I am alone.
Jesse stands at hand to cheer,
And has me know he is near.

Ruth Owens

Distinguished members of the clergy, members of the diplomatic corps, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to digress a little to perhaps why I am here: because Jesse Owens played an important part in my life. If I could take just a few brief moments, I would like to go back to the time when I was a spindly kid of thirteen years old. Jesse became my guiding light. He

had broken four world records: 100, 220, 220 low hurdles, 220 high hurdles, and the next year he won four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games. I revered him so much that I had his picture up on my bed along with Joe Louis and Abraham Lincoln. For a young black youth during that time those three were very significant. And it so happened that I chose to follow the path of Mr. Owens. I had even incorporated into my prayers that I would one day become an Olympian like Jesse Owens.

Needless to say, there was not an Olympic Games until 1948 when I was 26 years old. But at 13 years old I had the great opportunity of meeting Jesse Owens. I recall my mother standing near as I met him. Within a matter of a few seconds I said, "Mr. Owens, I run 100 in 10.4, I long jump 20 feet and I high jump 6 feet, and I am 13." He said, "You keep running. You do better than I did at your age." Then he said, "But by all means get an education." As I said, he was my guiding light. I became an Olympic medalist and received a doctorate degree. I was only one of the millions of black youth, one of the millions of people throughout the world whom he inspired. Perhaps in winning an Olympic medal during the late Forties, in 1948, we were just carrying on what Jesse had only started. I was never able to actually repay him but our friendship over the past twenty years became closer and closer.

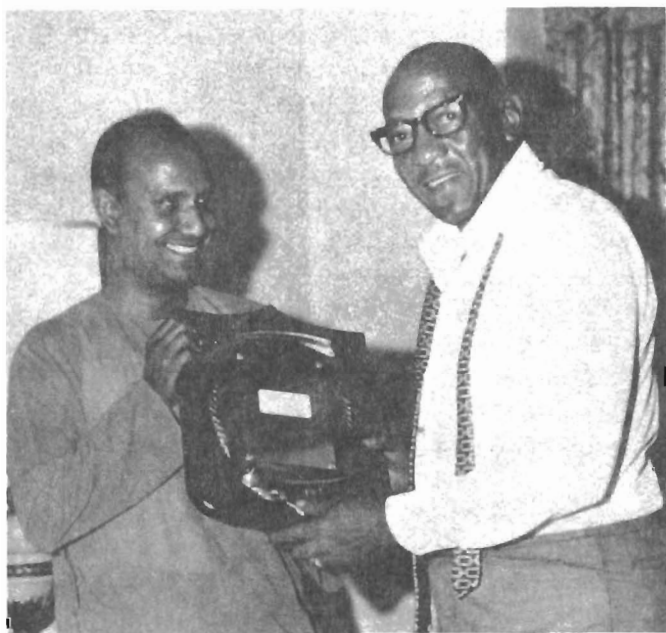
A few weeks before he was informed by the doctor that he had three months to live he did a commercial for American Express. That was his first real national commercial. Needless to say the commercial reads, "Do you know me?" Well, all of us, I think, know Jesse Owens and what he stood for. Jesse Owens carried the Olympic torch his entire life. He was and is a shining light for millions of youth throughout the

world. He was a winner. He made it and so can they. He was a true Olympian—he won without malice, without hate. He was a man who loved his fellow man. His spirit, as does the Olympic spirit, transcended political, racial, religious and national boundaries. He is a hero for those who love freedom, for those who strive to overcome all that impinges on the human spirit. The spirit of Jesse Owens will continue to live and it will burn bright. He carried the Olympic torch his entire life and now he has passed it on to us. It is our responsibility to ensure that the Olympic spirit remains free and healthy. I thank you on behalf of Jesse Owens.

Mr. Jeff Kamen: I want to thank you all. And to close our programme I would like to invite the Meditation Group singers to give us their last offering. As they come up let me just acknowledge with gratitude the presence of Deputy Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, Mr. Peter Bartlett.

EXCERPTS FROM A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESSE OWENS AND SRI CHINMOY

On 4 November 1972, Sri Chinmoy met with former Olympic champion Jesse Owens, whom he has admired since his youth. Their interview took place in the Park Lane Hotel in New York City. Excerpts from their conversation follow. The full text of their meeting appears in the booklet *Sri Chinmoy with His Athlete Idol: Jesse Owens*.



Jesse Owens: I think that mankind itself causes an awful lot of changes in people. I don't believe in violence; I just don't think that that works. I think that if we would just remember that we're all here through the Grace of a Being, and that we all have a job to do, we would be all right. You would think that if a man works and devotes his time to his community and to his home, and to the people with whom he comes into contact, then there should be some kind of love for him. But there are so many people in the world who, no matter what happens, have an underlying and deep-seated dislike for people. They don't just dislike the blacks; it can be any minority group. They've listened to bad stories for years and years, and they believe them. So they act accordingly. It sort of makes you want to change your mind about the whole picture because of these few bad people.

I read your biography, and I believe very much in what you do. I think that if one has love and feeling, then everything can come about. It doesn't take a special breed of man to understand it. But it takes a lot of dedication to be able to live it. I may be wrong about that.

Sri Chinmoy: You are absolutely right. My philosophy and your philosophy are totally one. We have to love. Love is the only fulfilment. There is no other way to fulfil either God or oneself except through love. The world may misunderstand and we may feel sorry at times. But we have to continue loving.

You are trying to encourage your black brothers and sisters. Right from your childhood, you have been trying to inspire them and elevate their consciousness. In your book *Blackthink*, you have

shown simple sincerity. There you are the embodiment of sincerity, dynamism, faith and hope. Anybody who is sincere can derive benefit from your experiences. In your second book, again sincerity comes, but in a different form—in a dynamic, bold form. In the first one, your sincerity is simple; you absolutely say that truth is the naked truth. But in the second book there is a bold dynamism: “This is the truth. Either you accept it or you reject it. But I can’t sell the truth just because you cannot accept it.” It is like that.

We sometimes speak of the soul and the body. Just for the sake of the body’s pleasures, we cannot sell the soul. Here your inner faith you have brought to the fore: “This is what I know, and I am sure of it. Others may reject it. Others may not accept me, but I know the truth and I will live for this truth all my life.” This is your philosophy. So in your second book, *I Have Changed*, you have realised the truth; now it is up to the world to accept it or reject it. You are not going to change your faith, your conviction in the truth. In this second book, your own conviction you have conveyed to the world. Now it is up to the world. If the world listens to you, then the world gets the benefit. And if the world wants to wallow in the pleasures of ignorance, at least you have done your part.

You have done so much for the world—for your own brothers and for the world at large. Yet you are all gratitude to the ones who have helped you—your coaches—although they were whites. You say what they did for you. You have shown in your writings and in your life that the whites have done quite a few good things. If we aspire for those things, then naturally we shall also get them. You

have never mentioned in your writings that the whites are perfect. Only you have said that they have some good qualities, and that these same qualities black people can also have. These good qualities are not the monopoly of the whites. No. "We have not worked for them, so we don't have them. But the moment we work, we get them." This is what you say.

With your love, with your dedication, with your aspiration you have gone far beyond your people. You have strived for something and you have won it in this lifetime. Again, you have gone beyond it to make a synthesis between the best qualities of the whites and the best qualities of the blacks. You are not ignoring the best qualities of your race. No! As a child of God, as a chosen instrument of God, you are saying what the blacks have to offer and what the whites have to offer. "Let us make them one and make a Kingdom of God here on earth." This is your message.

Some people make themselves feel that they are inferior. They have not come from an inferior race. Far from it. God has not made anybody inferior. But sometimes we feel that we are inferior and we do not want to mix with others. Again, others feel that they are superior. But there is nothing to this. It all depends on how much faith we can have in our own existence. If we can claim that God is ours, then everybody is ours. Here, in your case, you have proved that you are with both sides. It is not the colour; it is the quality in both races that you are appreciating. But they don't understand it. In your books, you say how you are criticised. Is this not the zenith of folly and ingratitude? When people don't understand something, the best thing is for them to remain silent, to wait and learn.

When a child is studying in kindergarten, he does not know what is happening in the university.

Jesse Owens: No, he doesn't.

Sri Chinmoy: He does not, so he should remain silent. For a child to talk about things which he himself is not even acquainted with is absurd. Here, too, let your critics come up to a certain standard, and then let them see. But they don't wait. You have given so much to the world; so much you have offered. But you have been misunderstood.

Jesse Owens: I was in Santa Ana, California, Thursday night. There's a fellow who is director of the Mental Health Association of Orange County. His wife is a school teacher. She had taught many years in college, and then she resigned her college professorship. She wanted to go back into the community. Before she was dealing with adults, but now she wanted to deal with children. Now she's got the kindergarten: youngsters that come from very poor families—the Mexico-American, the black and some very few whites. These children have no prejudice; they have no crystallised thoughts. These things are only going to come from one source, and that's the home.

This fellow's wife has taken the kids to what they call "lion country." It's a wildlife preserve, and they've got all kinds of animals and birds there. When she takes these children, it's the first time they've ever been there. She takes them out to the airport and she gets permission for them to walk through an airplane. They've never seen an airplane before. They've never been downtown. A

lot of people never get out of their community. But they have no prejudices. If a youngster is growing up in a home with a feeling of belonging, a feeling of being loved and needed, then that child has a healthier mind and a very cleansed heart. But if he comes from a home where there's constant bickering between the parents, and if he sees no love shown between the parents, then he grows up with a lot of fear and resentment. He doesn't know what it is, but it's there.

Then there are people who feel that the only way they can get security in the world is by feeling superior to everybody else. And then we get the person who is not strong, but weak. He gets an inferiority complex; he's always moving back. He never stands his ground; he never makes a stand. So he excuses himself by saying, "I'm poor," or "I'm black; nobody gives me an opportunity." But he hasn't done anything to prepare himself. He doesn't realise that he can match wits with anyone, and that he is as qualified as the next individual. He just hasn't prepared himself.

I think that we have to go back to one thing: religion. I believe in going to church. I believe in my God. I try to understand what my God intended for me to do. But I must be able to manifest what I believe in dealing with my fellow man day after day. You're going to get rebuffed. You get it day by day. Sometimes both cheeks are bloody, but we constantly believe. I may not have as much as the fellow up there at the top, but I am happier with what I have because it's more permanent. It's permanent because I have something inside of me, whereas he lives up there in uncertainty. And you never know when the whole mountain is going to be dug under and fall.

Sri Chinmoy: Even if it does not fall all at once, there is tremendous insecurity in him.

Jesse Owens: Yes.

Sri Chinmoy: He feels that the ones whom he regards as his so-called inferiors at any moment can surpass him. He is all the time worried that the so-called inferior ones will surpass him, so he is always on guard. But the others who are not working—if only they try—can easily go forward. I totally identify with your race. I have got some black students—the chosen family, I call them. They are most devoted students of mine. But sometimes I see that they, and others also, are cherishing consciously and deliberately what you call poverty or ignorance. Blacks, whites, many people do this. They say they didn't get the chance. But opportunity is right there, knocking at their door. Only they don't avail themselves of it, and then they criticise their fate. How many millions of ways you have tried to elevate the consciousness of your people! Opportunity is right in front of them, but they misunderstand you. You go and give them wealth and they throw it aside. Then they say, "I have nothing. Nobody is there to look after me. I am inferior." This is the problem.

I am so happy to hear you say that those who feel they are so-called superiors are not superior at all. There is a barren desert inside them. They may be rich outwardly, but they know that there is nobody who will really care for them. If they really cared for others, then only we would also care for them. But they care only for themselves. But still we are trying to care for them, as well as for everyone else. We are trying to care for the whole world. So if we

are successful, if you are successful, then the world at large will be successful.

It is the very nature of human beings to be ungrateful. No matter what you do, they don't understand. They will not work. They will not have faith in themselves. In your case, you're finding difficulty in dealing with your people because they do not have faith in themselves. This is the trouble. If they could have recognised their own inner faith, then your work would have been much easier. But they do not have that faith. If they do not offer their own personal effort, then no matter how much God gives them or does for them, it will not be manifested. This is what they are unfortunately not realising. When it is a matter of capacity, they have tremendous capacity, enormous capacity. But if they don't bring it to the fore, it is as good as not having the capacity.

Jesse Owens: That's right. I was at a college in Bay City, Michigan, about two or three weeks ago. It's a junior college with about six thousand students—some day-time and a lot of night students. The larger majority, about five thousand, are day-time students. They have about six hundred black students, and they're all on some kind of grant. There isn't one there who is paying his own way. So I was there to lecture that night, and it started to snow. About eleven hundred people showed up, and of eleven hundred people, there was only one black. They have six hundred blacks on the campus, but only one black showed up.

Then I got a letter from some of the parents in the local communities and other areas there asking me to come back and speak to the black students.

They wanted me to come back. Why couldn't they have come when I was there? There was ample room; the auditorium seated fifteen hundred. Why didn't they come? Well, they said that I was old, and I didn't know where it was all at; I didn't know what was happening. And they were disappointed that I didn't stand up and blast white America. And as I looked at these black youngsters in the daytime, while I was walking through the campus, I saw they weren't studying. They were playing cards. They wore these sloppy hats and their hair to me was unkempt, which is all right. This dress is fine. But I was wondering what they were doing in school? What were they looking for? And I wrote a letter to the parents stating that I would not come. I am not going to walk the streets of this nation and try, by special means, to help the blacks. Yes, I've got to have something special for the blacks. He is a child of God. True, there are a lot of injustices, but those injustices can be corrected if he will make some effort to go and see and become informed—instead of just living in his little world and believing what he believes and not listening to other thoughts on the matter. These kids are not going to be able to adopt the doctrine of your faith if they're just going to come and meditate and then go nowhere else. They have got to see the other things. And to see the good in things means you have to have love in your heart and your thoughts. This is the only way. You're not going to get disciples unless you help people to see. This is why I think that it's important to see two sides of a coin.

Sri Chinmoy: Obverse and reverse you have to see.

Jesse Owens: That's right. You've got to see the other side, then make up your mind which is best for you. You have to ask, "How am I going to live within myself?" You see people talk about Heaven. I don't know anybody who has been to Heaven and come back and told me about Heaven. But I want to live, as they say, what Heaven is right here on this earth.

Sri Chinmoy: Absolutely true! Heaven is a state of consciousness. Every day we are living either in Heaven or in hell. Every second we can live either in Heaven or in hell. When we have a good thought, a feeling of love, at that time we are living in Heaven; when we have hatred and jealousy, then we are living in hell. It is the mind that takes us to Heaven or hell. If we have a good thought, an elevating thought, then we are in Heaven. But if we have a bad thought, a discouraging thought, then we are in hell. So every second we can live either in Heaven or in hell; it is up to us where we live.

Jesse Owens: My father was a deacon in the church. He was a very deeply religious man. He feared his God; he feared to the point of being able to please his God. In pleasing his God, he'd walk that extra mile to help his neighbour, because this is living in a godly way. I can remember when there was a horn of plenty, and I can remember when there was nothing—when the horn was empty. When I became a young adult, I was fortunate enough to be able to go away to school. And being so favoured by God with the ability that I had, I felt, "Look, let's give a little bit of it back." If it hadn't been for other people, I wouldn't be

sitting here and talking to you. It is because of their knowledge, and the interest that they took in me as an individual. Putting together their knowledge of athletics and experience with the ability that I had, projected me into a different kind of life. But I know that I couldn't have had this kind of life if someone hadn't helped me.

So what I want to do, first of all, is please my God. Then I want to please the people that helped me. In order for me to be able to please them, I must go back to where I had come from and give of myself as others gave of themselves to make it possible for me to give today. People today don't realise that everything comes from a very humble beginning. Everything comes from One. You come into this world and the only thing that you have is the breath that God gave you. And when you leave this world, I don't care how much you've accumulated, you're not going to take it with you.

As I said before, if I get slapped on the side of the face, I may bleed; so I turn the other cheek. When they can't knock you down, then they wonder what to do next. "I've delivered my two Sunday punches and he's still on his feet." So you begin to win. Many of them go to church on Sunday but I wonder just how much they live that part during the course of the week. Everybody is struggling. Everybody is struggling to get on top of the mountain. It's fine, beautiful, if you can make the top of the mountain. But you have got to remember one thing when you reach the top: you've got to come back to the valley to keep in contact with what's going on down in the valley.

Sri Chinmoy: That's right. We have to climb up the tree and pluck the mangoes, and then come down and distribute them to those who do not know how to climb, to those who are sitting at the foot of the tree.

Jesse Owens: Right!

Sri Chinmoy: Your philosophy and my philosophy are totally one. Our philosophy is based on love. When we really love, we dedicate ourselves and devote ourselves. You love the world; that is why you are devoting yourself. The next step we say is surrender. First we offer our dedicated service to God. We try our best to love mankind with the capacity and willingness that God has given us. The next thing we do is surrender to His Will. "Let Thy Will be done" is what we learned from the son of God, from Jesus Christ. "Let Thy Will be done." But before that, he also taught us to love, to serve. So first we love, then we serve, then the result we offer at the Feet of God.



SONGS DEDICATED TO JESSE OWENS

JESSE OWENS

Words and music
by Sri Chirimoj

(♩ = 80)

Fast

The musical score is written on ten staves of music. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and a common time signature. The tempo is marked 'Fast' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score includes repeat signs and a 'fine' marking at the end of the second line.

Jes - se O - wens, Jes - se O - wens. *fine*

Jes - - - se _____ O - - - wens!

O death - less jump, O breath - less speed.

E - ter - nal - ly ath - lete's world you _ will _ feed.

Die - ta - tor Hit - ler's A - ry - an su - pre - ma - cy

Sur - ren - dered to _ your Hi - ma - le - yan ec - sta - sy .

Cham - pi - on of cham - pi - ons,

He - ro of he - - - roes!

In your ser - vice - heart

A - me - ri - ca glows.

In Ber - lin four gold

me - dals - win - - - - - ner,

E - ter - ni - ty's di - a - mond - heart

own - - - - - er.

*Sing once with repeats,
once without repeats,
then D.C. al fine.*

JESSE OWENS

Jesse Owens, Jesse Owens, Jesse Owens!
 O deathless jump, O breathless speed,
 Eternally athlete's world you will feed.
 Dictator Hitler's Aryan supremacy
 Surrendered to your Himalayan ecstasy.
 Champion of champions,
 Hero of heroes!
 In your service-heart America glows.
 In Berlin four gold medals-winner,
 Eternity's diamond-heart owner.

THE GREAT REFEREE

Words by Jesse Owens
Music by Sri Chinmoy

(♩ = 69) Moderate-Fast



Two un - match - a - ble team - - - mates:



My wife of al - most fif - ty years,



Ruth, _____ And the Na - zi Who _____



fought _____ 3 Hit - ler with _____ me,



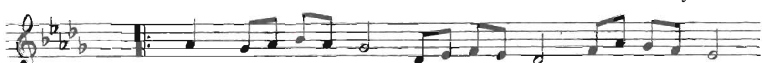
Luz Long; _____



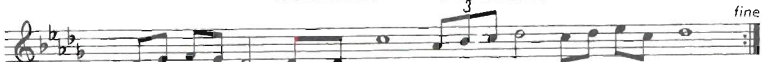
Three u - nique lead - - ers: My fa - ther,



My mo - ther. And Charles Ri - - ley.



But, most, _____ and _____ most _____



hum - - bly, To The Great Re - - fe - - ree.

*Sing once with repeats,
once without repeats.*

(40)

Two unmatchable teammates:
My wife of almost fifty years, Ruth,
And the Nazi
Who fought Hitler with me,
Luz Long;

Three unique leaders:
My father,
My mother,
And Charles Riley.

But, most, and most humbly,
To The Great Referee.

—*Jesse Owens*
(Dedication to his book,
Jesse: The Man Who Outran Hitler)

I HAVE FOUND GOD

Words by Jesse Owens
Music by Sri Chinmoy

(♩ = 76) Moderate-Fast *fine*

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The tempo is marked 'Moderate-Fast' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The melody consists of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are placed below the staff, with blank lines for vocalists to fill in. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign, with the word 'fine' written above the final measure.

I have found _____ God, _____
that does not mean _____ I can - not
lose _____ Him.

*Sing once with repeats,
once without repeats,
then D.C. al fine.*

I have found God, but that does not mean I cannot lose Him.

—Jesse Owens

I NEVER TRIED TO CHEAT ANYONE

Words by Jesse Owens

Music by Sri Chinmoy

(♩ = 76) Moderate-Fast

The musical score is written on four staves in a single system. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Moderate-Fast' with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The melody is written in a soprano clef. The lyrics are: 'I ne - ver tried to cheat ____ a - ny - one in my life, _____ your Ho - - nour - ex - cept pos - si - bly Jes - se O - wens - so help me God.____'. There are double bar lines with repeat dots at the end of the first and second lines of music. A 'line' marking is placed above the final note of the fourth line of music.

I ne - ver tried to cheat ____ a - ny - one
in my life, _____ your Ho - - nour -
ex - cept pos - si - bly Jes - se O - wens -
so help me God.____

I never tried to cheat anyone in my life, Your Honour—except possibly Jesse Owens—so help me God.

—Jesse Owens

NO ATHLETE BETTER SYMBOLIZED THE HUMAN STRUGGLE

Words by President Carter
Music by Sri Chinmoy

(♩ = 90) Moderate-Fast

The musical score is written on four staves in a single system. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Moderate-Fast' with a quarter note equal to 90 beats per minute. The lyrics are: 'No athlete better symbolized the human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry.' The final line of the score includes a first ending (marked '1.') and a second ending (marked '2. fine').

No ath - lete bet - - ter sym - bo - lized
the hu - man strug - - - - gle
a - gainst ty - ran - ny, po - ver - ty and
ra - cial _____ bi - go - - - - try. -try.

*Sing once with repeats,
once without repeats.*

No athlete better symbolized the human struggle against tyranny, poverty and racial bigotry.

— President Carter