

One on One with the talented actor: Stephan James

Written by Kam Williams

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[Stephan James](#) , a Canadian actor with Jamaican origins, was named a Rising Star at the 2015 Toronto Film Festival on the strength of his impressive performance in the TV mini-series

[The Book of Negroes](#)

as well as his portrayal of John Lewis in the civil rights saga,

[Selma](#)

. Mr. Lewis, the son of sharecroppers and an activist with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), later became a U.S. Congressman.

Here, James talks about his latest outing in *Race* as another African-American icon, namely, Jesse Owens, who won **four gold medals** at the 1936 Olympics staged in Berlin.

[*Mega Diversities* is the first Canadian media to post this interview].

Kam Williams: Hi Stephan [James], thanks for the interview.

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Stephan James: Of course, Kam [Williams]. Thank you.

KW: I really enjoyed the film. I learned so much that I hadn't known about Jesse Owens, and I even cried at the end.

SJ: Really? Wow! I'm glad that you learned so much and that it touched you. That's what we'd hope to accomplish with this.

KW: How did you prepare to play Jesse? Did you have to adopt an exercise regimen and do a lot of research to play a real-life character?

SJ: Of course. It's a big story about an iconic figure, so I knew I was going to have my work cut out for me. There were only but so many Youtube videos I could find of Jesse running and being interviewed, but I got a sense of how he carried himself and of some of his mannerisms. Besides that, having his daughters around really helped me understand the kind of man he was. They were able to teach me the father he was, the husband he was, and the humanitarian he was. There were so many things I learned about him which intrigued me that I really wanted to bring to the role so I could impart what type of person he is, even more so than the type of athlete he is.

KW: You've played a number of real-life characters like John Lewis in *Selma*, T.K. Kelly in *When the Game Stands Tall*, and Gabby Douglas' brother, John. Do you feel more pressure to get the role down correctly in those situations than when you're playing a fictional character, like in *The Book of Negroes* or *Lost after Dark*.

SJ: Of course, not that you pay less attention to detail with a fictional character. But there is certainly a different degree of responsibility when you realize this is a real person, a person who was looked up to and was so highly regarded in the world. Jesse was a legend who had been adored. So, I knew I really had to do my homework to make certain I was being accurate in my depiction to ensure that people would believe my portrayal of such a beloved figure.

