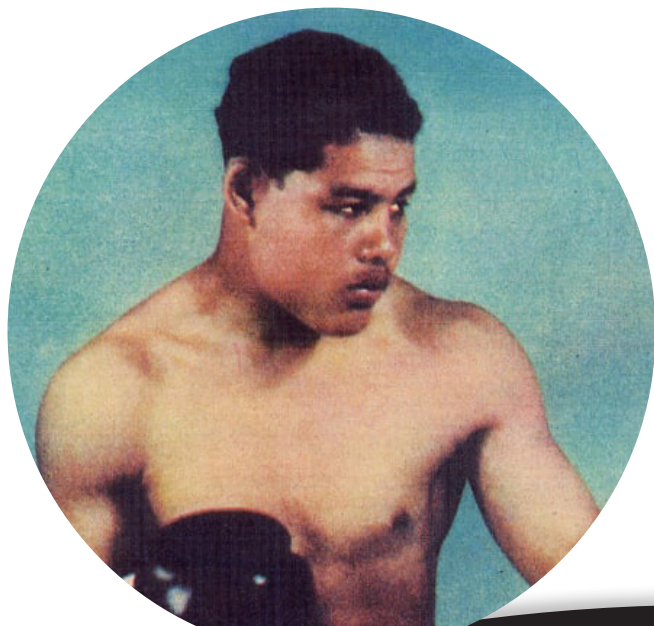


Joe Louis

Joe Louis Barrow was born in 1914 in Lafayette, Alabama. He was the 7th of 8 children born to parents who were sharecroppers and he was the grandson of enslaved people. When he was two years old, his father was committed to an asylum.



Joe received a very limited education and relied on his physical ability to advance in life. After his father left, his mother remarried and moved them to Detroit, Michigan, where Joe started boxing. In 1934, he won the Amateur Athletic Union Championship in the 175 pound category. He was also a Golden Gloves title holder as an amateur with a record of 50 wins and 4 losses.



Joe was the second Black man allowed to compete for the championship belt. That ended a 19 year span where no Black people could compete. Jack Johnson had been the first.

Black History



Joe's biggest fight was called "The Battle Between Naziism and Democracy" where he represented the United States and knocked out Max Schmeling, a German boxer. It was the most listened to fight of the century.

From December 1940 through June 1941, Joe defended his belt 7 times and won all 7. He later enlisted in the army and served in a segregated branch alongside Jackie Robinson.

Joe earned nearly \$5 million dollars and gave most of this money away, handing cash to those around him and to those in need. He had to return to boxing in order to pay \$1 million in taxes for the money he had given away to the needy.

Joe Louis Barrow has had a lasting legacy. To this day he is regarded as one of the greatest heavyweight boxers of all time. His victory over Max Schmeling made it easier for Jackie Robinson to break the color barrier in baseball. His reputation also helped to open the doors for civil rights activists who came to prominence in the 1960s.

He was a hero to Black people and eventually to the entire USA.