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### Lucinda Williams Adams

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## **Lucinda Williams Adams**

Known as “Lady Dancer” for her elegant running style, Lucinda Williams Adams was born in Bloomindale, Georgia, on August 10, 1937 to Willie Mae Williams and David Williams.

Competitive at heart, Adams enhanced her talent for speed and gained athletic notice from Joe Turner, a junior high school boys track coach. By the time she graduated from high school, Adams had earned the twin titles of state track champion and outstanding senior athlete. She then caught the eye of Edward Temple, the women’s head track coach at Tennessee State University (TSU), and was awarded a scholarship to attend TSU. She enrolled in 1954 and joined the women’s track and field team known as the Tigerbelles. She began breaking records for the 100-meter relay and clocked times that qualified her for the United States Olympic trials. Adams made her first Olympics appearance at the 1956 Summer Games in Melbourne, Australia.

Unfortunately, she failed to make the final cut during the 100-meter heats.

Despite her loss, Adams had an even more devastating challenge to endure: racial segregation.

Adams and her African American teammates may have been recognized for their athletic talents, but that was not enough for them to be considered equals. As a result, she often had to sleep in cars and use outside bathroom breaks because she did not have the privilege of using many of the public facilities during her competition travels. In an interview with Dayton Daily News, Adams remembered, “I was always taught as a youngster that there were certain things you could do and certain things you could not do; certain places you could go and certain places you could not go,” she said. “We knew that and my Mom always said, ‘Do not worry about those things because one day you will be able to help make a change.’” Such change did, indeed, transpire.

With segregation as a driving force and a strive for endurance, Williams became a member of the United States team, which competed in the first U.S. vs. USSR Track and Field Meet held in Moscow in 1958. At the Moscow meet, Adams won two gold medals, one each in the 200 meter dash and the 400 meter relay. She would also win Amateur Athletic Union's track events between 1957 and 1959, which demonstrated her top rated athleticism and earned her a spot on the AAU Women's All- American Track-and-Field team. In 1959, Adams seized three gold medals and set the American record for the women's 220-yard dash at the Pan-American Games in Chicago. Her outstanding performance would once again qualify her for the 1960 Olympic trials in Rome, Italy. Although she did not make the individual 200-meter race, she would, as the second leg of the Tigerbelles relay team, win gold in the 4x100-meter relay with a total time of 44.72 seconds.

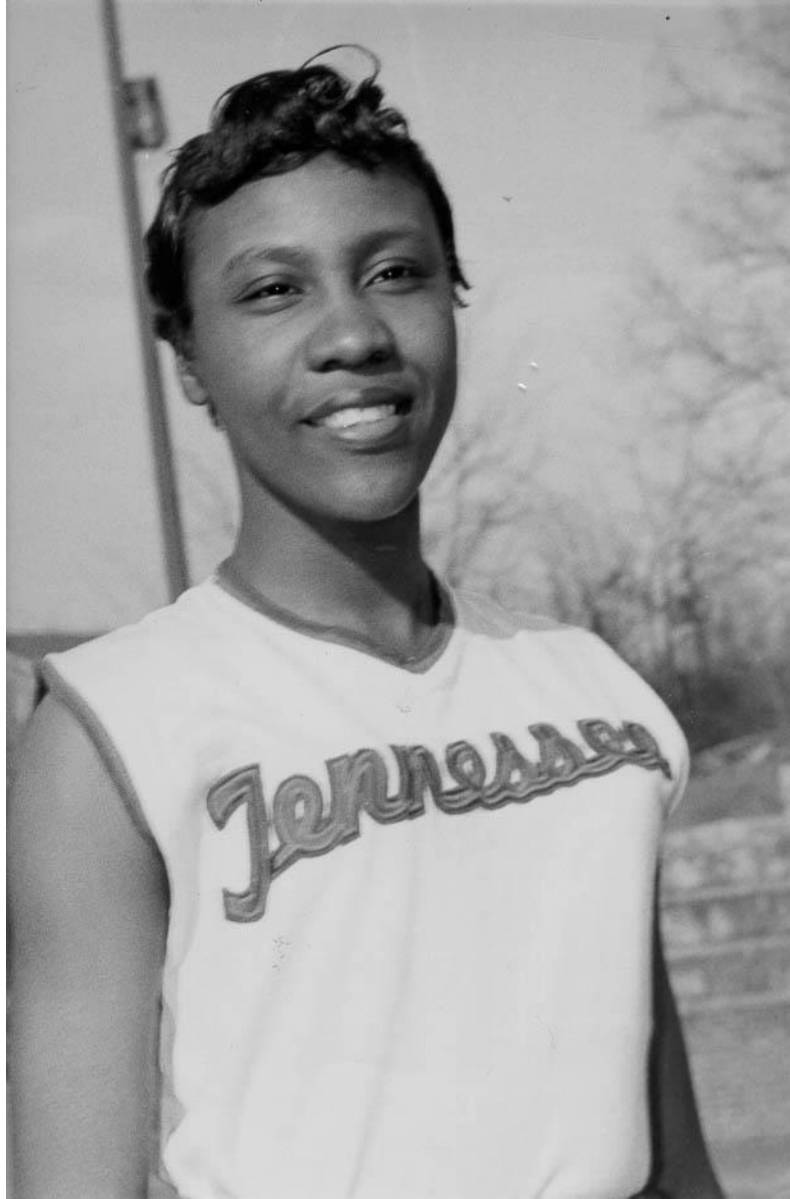
After her Olympic victory, Adams would return to Tennessee State University, earning a master's degree in physical education in 1961. She would serve as a chaperon for the U.S. Olympic track-and-field team during their European tour in 1963. She was inducted to the Savannah Athletic Hall of Fame in 1968, Tennessee State University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1983, and the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 1994.

She married Floyd Adams in 1959 and moved to Dayton, Ohio where he worked at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Adams would teach girls' health and physical education for 36 years at the Dayton Public School Systems, serving as a role model and aspiring young athletics. In 1994 Adams was elected president of the National Association for Sports and Physical Education, and she held distinct honors for the Special Olympics Board of Directors and in the U.S. Olympian Society. Also, she was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Ohio Professional

and Amateur Athletics Committee and the Presidential Award from the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

In 2016 Adams returned to her alma mater to honor the memory of Coach Ed Temple. She recalled, "He taught us how to have pride and dignity and to be able to lift each other up. Do not dwell on not having, but dwell on what you are going to have." Such a statement obviously had an impact on her life since she had many successes that she gained as an athlete, educator, director, and most importantly, motivator.





### Further Reading

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