

## THE 20TH CENTURY

# *I Remember the Los Angeles Olympics*

By CHARLES L. CHATMON

As we edge closer to the dawn of a new century, there is one memorable moment I can recall that I enjoyed as a youngster while growing up in South Los Angeles.

It was a moment that lasted for two weeks, involved 140 nationalities, one major television network and a ton of souvenirs.

Before divisive politics and secession movements were in vogue, there was a brief period in time when the city was one. The Olympic Games of 1984 held in this racially diverse city was a perfect time for unity.

Spearheaded by the late great Mayor Tom Bradley, the Olympics returned to our city for the first time in 52 years. Angelenos and our guests from around the world witnessed Carl Lewis capture four gold medals, equaling the record set by Jesse Owens in 1936 in Berlin.

Spectators are got to see six-time NBA champion Michael Jordan and

one of the greatest NBA stars ever, go for and attain gold as Team USA, aka "The Dream Team" captured the gold medal.

The Los Angeles Olympic Games showed the city at its best. Exposition Park was abuzz with the kind of activity usually reserved for Sunday football crowds. One could buy a piece of history such as a pin, or a hat. It was also a great opportunity to see that a world existed outside of our own community.

One could shake hands with a person from a different part of the world, or someone from a different ethnic group, and share a life experience with that person — something that had been lost due to all of the ethnic strife that had paralyzed the city for so long.

During those 16 days of summer in 1984, Los Angeles was unified. The city was truly one. I can only wonder if we will ever capture that feeling again.

For a brief time, L.A. was the place.