CIVICS LESSON

Jesse Owens/Luz Long

World War II

World War II, also known as the Second World War, began in Europe in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. World War II in Asia had started over two years earlier in July 1937 when a local clash between Japanese and Chinese troops near Beijing soon erupted into a full-scale war between China and Japan. The military hostilities in these two regions raged until 1945 the Allies defeated Axis powers.

Luz Long was one of more than more than 100 million military personnel from more than 30 countries. He was also one of the fatalities, estimated at 70 to 85 million, which made World War II the deadliest war in history.

The majority of the people killed in the war were civilians through such atrocities as starvation, massacres and genocide, including the Holocaust: 6 million Jews murdered in Nazi concentration camps.

Because the instability created in Europe by World War I (1914-18) was regarded as a major cause of World War II, the aftermath of the latter gave rise to war crimes tribunals that were conducted against German and Japanese leaders. Another consequence was the founding in October 1945 of the United Nations, whose enduring purpose is to establish international peace and security as well to cultivate friendly relations among nations.

The Jesse Owens/Luz Long friendship is a microcosm of the civility and unity at the heart of the United Nations.