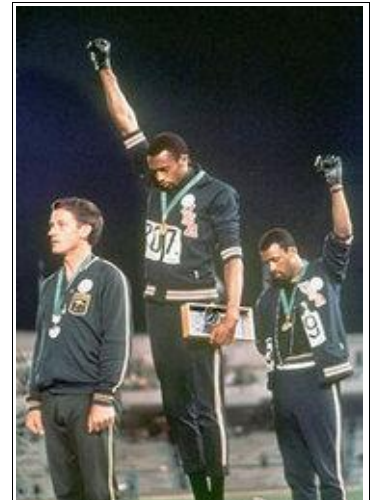


# The 1968 Olympics

One of the most important stories in United States history happened in Mexico. In 1968, the Summer Olympics were in Mexico City. Black Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos were in the 200 meter run. Carlos won the gold medal, and Smith won the bronze. Peter Norman, from Australia, won the silver.

It was the year Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed. Most African Americans still lived in *poverty* and couldn't vote. John Carlos and Tommie Smith wanted to change this. They had an idea for how to teach the world about these problems.



*Tommie Smith and John Carlos*

The athletes were all waiting inside to get their medals. Just before they went outside to get them, John Carlos told Peter Norman their idea. When he and Tommie Smith went outside, they were not going to wear shoes. This *represented* black poverty. They were each going to make a fist to show that black people were strong, and working together.

Peter Norman was excited. He agreed with them, and wanted to help. Before the Olympics, John Carlos started an organization for human rights. The group made *badges* to wear at the Olympics. Norman asked for a badge to wear. Carlos didn't have one, but when they went out to get their medals, he got a badge from a friend. Norman took the badge and put it on his jacket, over his heart.

When Tommie Smith and John Carlos walked out to get their medals, it was a big surprise for everyone. The leader of the US Olympic Team was very angry. For a short time, he took away their medals and kicked them off the team. They were two of the fastest people in the world, but they could never run in the Olympics again.

Many newspapers in the US said they made a mistake. Time Magazine said they were “angry” and “ugly.” Other Olympic athletes disagreed. The US boating team was all white men who went to Harvard University. They said they supported Tommie Smith and John Carlos. So did the leader of the US women's swimming team. Millions in the US and around the world also understood. They saw that Tommie Smith and John Carlos wanted human rights for everybody.

## Vocabulary

1. *poverty* – noun – Extremely poor. “Child poverty is a problem in most big cities.”
2. *represent* – verb – Stand for. “The 50 stars on the American flag represent the 50 states.”
3. *badge* – noun – A piece of cloth or metal you wear to show you are a part of a group.

# Questions

1. What do athletes represent in the Olympics?
2. How do athletes usually look when they win the Olympics?
3. Why did Tommie Smith and John Carlos look down when they get their medals?
4. Why was the leader of the US Olympic Team so angry?
5. What kind of people own and write for Time Magazine? What kind of people were on the Olympic boat team?