

**NATIONAL WINNER
HISTORY OF SPORT**



ASHWIN RAMANATHAN

CHRIST CHURCH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

PETER NORMAN: A DEFINING MOMENT

A defining moment in history is an act that stands out as a significant event in the shaping of our world. A single moment that will change the lives of future generations forever. One that is remembered for the lasting effects that it brought upon us. Effects that are embedded into our memories. What Peter Norman did and stood for as a person deserves to be treated as defining, yet in his own country, this is little acknowledged. Even at the time many of his fellow countrymen were not aware of the significance of the moment for the world and for Norman. Eric Pearce, the Australian flag bearer at the Closing Ceremony and member of the hockey team commented, "The black power salute caused a ripple with the Australian athletes in the village but was soon forgotten. It was only regarded very briefly by myself and other competitors." (Pearce, 2011) He became a part of a historical force that revolutionized the lives of millions of men, women and children but this came at a great personal cost. His actions on the 16th October 1968 were not only a part of a defining historical moment when politics, sport and race converged, but were also set to define his future: a future that was characterized by rejection and personal, physical and mental decline.

On 16th October 1968 at the XIX Summer Olympic Games in Mexico, Tommie Smith won the gold medal, and John Carlos the bronze, in the 200m final. The two African American athletes accepted their medals at the ceremony shoeless, but wearing black socks to represent the poverty faced by blacks in the USA. Smith wore a black scarf around his neck to represent black pride, and a beaded necklace, which he said was for all those who had been lynched or killed. Carlos wore his tracksuit top unzipped to show solidarity with blue collar workers. Text books have it that (Mason, 2007) Smith wore a single black glove on his right hand to symbolize black power, and Carlos on his left to symbolize black unity. As the Star Spangled Banner echoed around the stadium at Mexico, Carlos and Smith each raised a solitary arm, Smith his right, and Carlos his left, and bowed their heads in a salute that would burn an indelible image in the history of sport, and all those who witnessed it. An image that would be declared by LIFE magazine and Le Monde to be one of the 20 most influential images of the 20th century. (Flanagan, 2006)

There were however, three men on the podium that famous day. The silver medalist, a white Australian, Peter Norman, was, and still largely is, a forgotten hero. He was to die not knowing what it feels like to return to his home country with Olympic silver medal in hand, to a cheering and proud Australian crowd and country. He would never feel the glory of standing on that podium and having the stadium applaud and praise him. His only Olympic podium appearance would end in a large part of the audience booing as he left that stadium for the last time. But Peter Norman made this considerable sacrifice for what he believed in, and what he believed was right. And to the day that he died, he always maintained he was proud to have been a part of it. (Derriman & Johnson, 2006)

Making their way up to the podium all three men had feared for their lives. They had been warned previously that gunmen would be waiting in the crowd to shoot down anyone who decided to make a stand in any form at these games. (Norman, 2008) But Norman was not to be deterred. Black athletes had formed the Olympic Project for Human Rights and had vowed to use success on the track and field to spread their message to the world. Norman, who came from a Salvation Army background, saw this as an opportunity to aid the cause, promptly got a hold of an OPHR badge and displayed it on his tracksuit for the world to witness his support in the episode that would follow. It was also Norman who suggested that Smith and Carlos each wear a single glove, as they only had one pair of gloves between them after Carlos had left his pair back at the village. (Wikipedia, 2011)

Norman was not a black American, unlike Carlos and Smith. He had no moral obligation to 'his people' to do what he did. But Norman said that he felt he had to show his support alongside these two men in unison. It wasn't about black versus white; it was about fairness and respect for his fellow men. (Norman, 2008) John Carlos recounted on the moment when Norman came to him and told him that he wanted to stand with them. "We knew that what we were going to do was far greater than any athletic feat. He said, 'I'll stand with you'." Carlos said he expected to see fear in Norman's eyes. He didn't. "I saw love." Carlos also stated in a press announcement following the incident that, "Not every young white individual would have the gumption, the nerve, the backbone, to stand there." (Flanagan, 2006) Norman was one of, perhaps, few who would be prepared to do so, and because he expressed this, he made a statement that defined the way people were viewed and treated by others in that period of intolerance for differences.

It was a defining moment in the Civil Rights Movement that caused many to question the views that they held. Peter Norman carried out this act of defiance in the period of the American Civil Rights Movement. A time when speaking out against race prejudice, and standing up for fellow human beings, was seen as outrageous, and even in some US states, punishable. Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee at the time warned all competitors that if there were any demonstrations by anyone in the Games, the participants would be swiftly sent home. He stated that "There is no place for those things." (Small, 2008) Even some Australian athletes viewed Norman's actions as wrong and believed that it was not the right place. Eric Pearce shared that view, "Personal beliefs should not be aired in the arena of competition at the Olympics." (Pearce, 2011) The effect that this simple gesture had on the hearts and minds of all people, both black and white, was astounding. Just six months prior to the Games, America had witnessed the assassination of Martin Luther King, a leader and freedom fighter for the black Americans. Following his death, many blacks wondered how soon they would achieve their freedom and equality. For those African Americans, who lived their lives in constant fear, pushed aside by their own country, and spat on by their own neighbour, this gave them a pulse of hope. It reached out to them and touched their hearts in a time when they needed it most.

This was such a defining moment for the Civil Rights Movement. It was a non-violent, silent protest, made in the universal surrounding of a sporting arena that drew the eyes of millions.

This would have enabled much of the world to witness a white man standing proud and strong alongside two African Americans, standing up for what they believed in. This was never so graphically and widely seen before. Kwame Kwei-Armah, a British actor and singer describes the salute as “One of the most definitive expressions of manhood, of service.” (Norman, 2008) This was also one of the very few occasions where a white man had shown such open recognition and support for the African American Civil Rights Movement on the world stage. It was such a drastic step in the direction of equality for all men. Norman also opened up the possibilities for further objection to occur. He paved the way for many other stands to take place in opposition of the white supremacist belief held at that time in many southern US states. It gave countless others the courage to stand up and speak out. As John Carlos said, “Peter Norman’s legacy is a rock. Stand on that rock.” (Flanagan, 2006)

But this was also a defining moment in the life of a very special individual. Because of what Peter Norman decided to do and take part in, his entire future and way of life were shaped. Norman sacrificed his own personal glory for the cause of equal rights for all men and women. So large has the salute impacted Olympic history, that it has overshadowed Norman’s own greatness and ability. Smith and Carlos were immediately expelled from the Olympic village and suspended by the US Olympic Committee for their decision to use the Olympic podium to make a political statement. Their actions were widely condemned by most Americans, and they both received numerous death threats following their return home. Norman also faced punishment for his participation in the event. Although he wasn’t expelled from Mexico, he would find that his sprinting career was over.

In just a split second, Peter Norman went from Australian sporting hero, to a disappointment and a blemish on the face of Australia and its people. Instead of being welcomed home as a great sportsman and celebrated for his achievements and success, he was shunned by many Australians. He was reprimanded by the Australian Olympic authorities and he was ostracized by the media. In contrast, when Michael Johnson, the 1996 Olympics 200m gold medalist, met Norman, he embraced him and said to Norman, “You are my hero.” Norman, who was taken aback by this, responded “I didn’t know anyone cared that much.” (Norman, 2008) This emphasizes the lack of support and appreciation that was given to Norman. He felt as though no one understood or cared about his actions and what it brought about.

Norman did continue to run after returning home, but despite qualifying five times for the 100m and thirteen times for the 200m distances, the Australian Olympic track team refused to send him to the 1972 Olympics. This became the first Olympics where Australia was not represented in the sprints. Norman is the last Australian male sprinter to win an Olympic medal, and his time still remains the Australian record. These feats were sadly overshadowed by his decision to stand alongside the two African Americans. His life also became troubled from then on. He tore his Achilles tendon while running for a charity race, and contracted gangrene as a result. This nearly led to Norman’s leg being amputated. Following this he was beset with depression and this evolved into heavy drinking and an addiction to pain killers. His problems further escalated when his wife divorced from him.

One would naturally expect that as times changed and views evolved, Peter Norman would finally be celebrated for the great man that he was. But this was never the case. Norman remained as the forgotten and shunned hero, so much so that appallingly the Australian organizing authorities overlooked Norman for any involvement at the 2000 Olympics held in Sydney. Norman was the only Australian athlete to be excluded from making a lap of honour at the 2000 games, despite being renowned as Australia's greatest sprinter. During this time a reporter from 'The Washington Post' was amazed to find only one reference to Peter Norman in the whole of Sydney; an image on the wall of a house in unfashionable Redfern. (Flanagan, 2008) This was just eleven short years ago, in an era where all men and women are treated equally, and not characterised by their colour. Yet still, Australia does not forgive Norman for the involvement he had in 1968. He was, however, eventually included at the event, but not by his home country, but by the country who appreciated the significance of what he had done and achieved for their people. The US track and field committee would not ignore Norman's repudiation by his home country, and invited him to stay with the US team throughout the event as one of their own.

In 2004 in San Jose State University, a statue was erected to honour Tommie Smith and John Carlos and to commemorate the historic and powerful salute that they gave on the podium that day in 1968. The 23 foot statue is a replica of the iconic image that was seen at the Mexico Olympics in 1968. Carlos and Smith stand tall, arms raised and heads bowed in their places. The second place position where Peter Norman stood is left empty for tourists to stand and take their pictures of them taking part in sporting history. Peter Norman is made to represent the "everyman" and what we all should aspire to be like. (Frost, 2008) As you stand in his place, you feel a sense of pride knowing what the man who stood there forty years ago believed in and courageously expressed these beliefs. Unfortunately for him, being the conscience of the world and part of a defining moment in history was also to define for him a future of tragic neglect. He had sacrificed his personal prospects for his brave principles and it seems overdue that this should now be nationally recognised by Australia, his country.

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Pearce, E. (2011, August 21). (A. Ramanathan, Interviewer). Eric Pearce participated in the 1968 Olympic Games in 1968, was also in the stadium watching as the salute unfolded. Great primary source of information as he could reveal to me the reactions of the stadium and the way in which Norman was treated in the aftermath by the athletes village and his country.

Secondary Sources: Books

Mason, K. J. (2007). *Experience Of Nationhood*. Sydney: The McGraw-Hill Companies. Insightful into how a school textbook portrays the events surround the salute and Norman's involvement with it.

Secondary Sources: Films

Norman, M. (Director). (2008). *Salute The Movie* [Motion Picture]. Useful to my research as the film was focused on the life of Peter Norman, his contribution and the effects it had on his future life. It brought together all three men, Smith, Carlos, and Norman, and shared their views on the event.

Small, G. (Director). (2008). *Black Power Salute* [Motion Picture]. Reveals the organisations behind the protests at the Games as well as the opposition that they faced from people such as Avery Brundage.

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Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (2006, October 10). *Fellow athletes pay tribute to Peter Norman*. Retrieved August 2, 2011, from The 7.30 Report: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1760175.htm> TV program transcript, in which sporting figures comment on the life and actions of Norman.

Derriman, P., & Johnson, L. (2006, October 4). *He didnt raise a fist - but he did lend a hand*. Retrieved August 12, 2011, from Sydney Morning Herald: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/10/03/1159641325056.html> An article written following the death of Norman. It looks into his contribution and the action taken against him.

Flanagan, M. (2006, October 10). *Tell your kids about Peter Norman*. Retrieved August 13, 2011, from The Age: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/tell-your-kids-about-peter-norman/2006/10/09/1160246071527.html> A report written after Peter Norman's death that highlights his involvement. It include many quotes from Carlos and Smith, presented at his funeral.

Frost, C. (2008, October 17). *The other man on the podium*. Retrieved August 12, 2011, from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7674157.stm> Relevant to my research as it explores the ways in which Norman was celebrated and recognised years after the event, such as the Sydney Olympics, and the erection of the replica statues.

Wikipedia. (2011, August 24). *1968 Olympics Black Power Salute*. Retrieved August 12, 2011, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968_Olympics_Black_Power_salute. Outlines the protest, the response from the Olympic Committee and the aftermath that followed.

Wikipedia. (2011, July 22). *Peter Norman*. Retrieved August 2, 2011, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Norman. Briefly highlights the events surrounding Norman, as well as his personal life.

Black Power Salute (TV 2008) Documentary; Directed by Geoff Small

Tells the story of the men as well as the organisations behind the protest such as OPHR. It also describes other protests that appeared in the 1968 Games. It focuses also on the opposition that the men faced going into the protest by people such as Avery Brundage, the President of the International Olympic Committee. This documentary has interviews with many different people who had some sort of participation in the 1968 Games, or directly with the protests. These include: Ed Moses the 400m hurdles Olympic gold medallist in 1976 and 1984; Lee Evans 4 x 400m relay gold medal in 1968; Jesse Owens 4 gold medals in the 1936 Games; Harry Edwards the founder of the Olympic Project for Human Rights; as well as Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

Salute The Movie (2008) Documentary Film; Directed and Produced by Matt Norman

This film was produced by Matt Norman, the Nephew of Peter Norman. He aims to tell the untold story of how the salute affected and changed the life of Peter Norman by bringing together all three men. Through this we hear their personal feelings and views on the whole affair and the events surrounding it. We learn the role that Norman played and the impacts it had. The emphasis of the film is on Peter Norman, rather than Tommie Smith and John Carlos, which is particularly relevant to my research. I was able to take from it the way in which Peter himself viewed his participation and how he felt about it as well as how others, including Smith, Carlos, America and Australia reacted to Norman's contribution.

Eric Pearce; Participated in the 1968 Olympics as part of the Australian Hockey team. He also carried the flag at the closing ceremony.

Eric Pearce is regarded as one of Australia's greatest hockey players. He participated in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico and was therefore part of the same Australian Olympic team as Peter Norman. Mr Pearce was in the stadium watching the presentation of medals as the three men gave their famous salute. He witnessed the whole event first hand, and also experienced the aftermath in the Olympic Village. His recount of the event is therefore primary evidence. I had the opportunity to speak directly with Mr Eric Pearce about his experience and response to the salute as it unfolded and he shared with me, the reactions of the stadium, other athletes and the Australians back at home. He was directly involved with the events that followed Norman's salute and is hence very relevant to my research. This primary source of information was where I got many of the quotes that I have used in the essay.

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1760175.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Norman

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/10/03/1159641325056.html>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7674157.stm>

<http://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=1136>

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/tell-your-kids-about-peter-norman/2006/10/09/1160246071527.html>

and whose principles and quiet support won the respect and friendship of those Americans

America had six months prior witnessed the assassination of Martin Luther King and the black unrest that triggered.

Black athletes had formed the Olympic Project for Human Rights and vowed to use success on the track and field to spread their message.

What happened next would burn an indelible image in the history of sport.

Retribution was swift. Smith and Carlos were stripped of their medals and expelled from the Olympic village. Though he was allowed to stay, Peter Norman would find his Olympic career was finished.

Peter made a sacrifice because of his beliefs. Peter's idea of equality was Peter's belief, and not Tommie Smith and John Carlos's, though we believed in the same thing. **Three of us believed in the same and we supported what we believed in** and by doing so, it brought us together.

So large has the Black Power display loomed in Olympic history that **it has overshadowed Norman's own greatness.**

Peter George Norman (June 15, 1942 – October 3, 2006) was an [Australian track athlete](#) best known for winning the [silver medal](#) in the [200 metres](#) at the [1968 Summer Olympics](#) in [Mexico City](#). **His time of 20.06 seconds still stands as the Australian 200m record.**^[1] He was a five-time Australian 200m champion.^[1] He is also known for his support of [John Carlos](#) and [Tommie Smith](#) when they made their [famous gesture at the 1968 Olympics medal ceremony](#).

It was a moment when politics, sport and race converged.

Norman often told the story of how it was he who suggested that with only one pair of black gloves available, the two sprinters should share them. It was why Smith had his right arm raised and Carlos his left.

Norman is the last Australian male sprinter to win an Olympic medal. He was a 200m specialist, a strongly built runner famed for a powerful finish.

Smith's time, 19.83 seconds, was a world record. Norman clocked 20.06 and Carlos 20.10. **Thirty-eight years later, remarkably, Norman's time is still the Australian 200m record.**

Smith and Carlos were made to pay for their protest: they were expelled from the Olympic village and suspended by the US Olympic Committee. Their use of an Olympic podium to make a political statement was widely condemned in the US, not least because many Americans believed they had given a Black Panther salute. Both also received death threats.

Norman was reprimanded for his role, minor though it may have been. He was cautioned by the Australian Olympic official, Judy Patching, but, unlike Smith and Carlos, he did not have to leave Mexico City. **He always maintained he was proud to have been part of it all.**

Norman kept in touch with the two Americans until the end, most recently by email.

Before the 1968 Olympics Norman was a trainer for West Brunswick Football Club as a way of keeping fit over winter during the athletic circuit's off season. After 1968 he played 67 games for West Brunswick between 1972 and 1977 before coaching an under 19 team in 1978.

Norman kept running, but contracted [gangrene](#) in 1985 after tearing his [Achilles Tendon](#) during a charity race, which nearly led to his leg being amputated. Depression, heavy drinking and pain killer addiction followed.^[3]

Australian organising authorities overlooked Norman as being involved in any way with the [2000 Summer Olympics](#) held in [Sydney](#); he was however eventually part of the event after being invited by the [Americans](#) when they heard that his own country had failed to do so^[4].

On October 17, 2003 [San Jose State University](#) unveiled a statue commemorating the 1968 Olympic protest; Norman was not included as part of the statue itself—his empty podium spot intended for others viewing the statue to "take a stand"—but was invited to deliver a speech at the ceremony^[2].

After the race, Carlos and Smith told Norman what they were planning to do during the ceremony. As Flanagan wrote: "They asked Norman if he believed in human rights. He said he did. They asked him if he believed in God. Norman, who came from a Salvation Army background, said he believed strongly in God. "We knew that what we were going to do was far greater than any athletic feat. He said, 'I'll stand with you'." Carlos said he expected to see fear in Norman's eyes. He didn't. "I saw love."^[5] On the way out to the medal ceremony, Norman saw the badge being worn by [Paul Hoffman](#), a white member of the US Rowing Team, and asked him if he could wear it.^[6] It was also Norman who suggested that Smith and Carlos share the black gloves used in their salute, after Carlos left his gloves in the Olympic Village.^[7] This is the reason for Tommie Smith raising his right fist, while John Carlos raised his left. Asked about his support of Smith and Carlos' cause by the world's press, Norman said he opposed his country's government's [White Australia policy](#), which although revoked by 1968 still meant that aboriginal Australians were not included in the national census, and suffering both legal and socio-economic disadvantage compared to most other Australians.^[8]

Australia's Olympic authorities reprimanded him and the Australian media ostracised him. Despite Norman running qualifying times for the 100m five times, and 200m 13 times during 1971/72 the [Australian Olympic track team](#) did not send him, or any other male sprinters, to the [1972 Summer Olympics](#) in [Munich](#), the first ever modern Olympics where no Australian sprinters participated.^[9]

Norman died of a [heart attack](#) on October 3, 2006 in [Melbourne](#) at the age of 64.^[10] [US Track and Field Federation](#) proclaimed October 9, 2006, the date of his funeral, as Peter Norman Day. Thirty-eight years after the three made history, both Smith and Carlos gave [eulogies](#) and were [pallbearers](#) at Norman's funeral.^[2]

Yesterday, Smith described Norman as "a man who believed right could never be wrong" and told Norman's family: "Peter Norman's legacy is a rock. Stand on that rock." Smith concluded: "Peter shall always be my friend. The spirit shall prevail."

Carlos spoke of the hatred they knew would be directed at them. "Not every young white individual would have the gumption, the nerve, the backbone, to stand there."

Peter never flinched (on the dais). He never turned his eyes, he never turned his head. He never said so much as 'ouch'. You guys have lost a great soldier." Carlos said that Norman deserved to be as well-known as Steve Irwin. "Go and tell your kids the story of Peter Norman," he said.

During the Sydney Olympics, a reporter from *The Washington Post* was amazed to find only one reference to Norman — an image on the side of a house in Redfern.

He told reporters: "Every man is born equal and should be treated that way." Advised of calls that Norman should be disciplined for his action, the Australian chef de mission, Julius "Judy" Patching, a very wise man, told him: "Consider yourself reprimanded. Now, how many tickets do you want for the hockey?"

So large has the Black Power display loomed in Olympic history that it has overshadowed Norman's own greatness. Few people recognise that his run that day in Mexico City gave him a better Olympic record than any other male Australian sprinter in history (Hec Hogan, 1956, and Stan Rowley, 1900, both won bronze). The time he ran in the final, 20.06 seconds, remains the Australian 200m record today. That time would have won the 200 gold medal at subsequent Olympics in Montreal (1976), Moscow (1980) and Sydney (2000).

SALUTE THE MOVIE

Peter Norman's father was not wealthy by any means and it was tough for him growing up. He was sent to work as an apprentice butcher at the earlier age of 13 just to earn money so their family could live. Money was always scarce but it didn't stop him running, even though his father couldn't even afford a pair of running spikes, and was forced to borrow a pair from a close friend.

Norman first joined an athletics club as a high jumper but then one day found himself in the relay team when they were a man down. He went on to win that race, running the final leg starting considerably behind the leader. He was then taken off from the jumps and placed in the sprints.

Making their way to the podium, all three men feared for their lives. There were numerous death threats floating around and it was said that there would be gunmen in the crowd waiting to shoot down anyone that made a stand. Norman was banned from participating in the Olympics for life because of what he did. The 1972 Olympic games in Munich was the first and only time Australia was not represented in the sprints. When Norman was not selected although he qualified 13 times for the 100m and 5 times for the 200m and was ranked 5th in the world, he retired from athletics.

Norman felt he had to show his support alongside these two men in unison. It wasn't about black versus white, it was about fairness and respect for his fellow man. As Carlos said, "Peter didn't have to take that button, Peter wasn't from the United States, Peter was not a black man, Peter didn't have to feel what I felt, but he was a man." By the actions that all three men took, they sacrificed their personal glory to the good of the cause. Norman could have just stood by as the other two men made their stand as blacks, and then gone home with an Olympic silver medal, cheered by his whole country, but he chose not to. He chose to give all his own glory away to stand up for what he believed was right.

In the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, Norman was not invited to attend in any official capacity even though he is regarded as Australia's greatest sprinter ever. His time would have won gold in Sydney and still stand today as the Australian record.

When Norman met Michael Jordan at a birthday celebration he embraced him and Michael says "you're my hero." Norman responded "I didn't know anyone cared that much."

"I have a love of all men."

Norman never said a bad word toward the Australian government and its views.

In 2004 Smith and Carlos were honoured with a 23 foot statue to mark the momentous time in history. When Norman was asked why he was not represented stand their on the podium, he replied "I was merely a rock cast into deep (still/steel) waters and the reverberations of the ripples that went from the centre of that pond are still travelling. It's a very big pond. It's the entire world."

Today there are still problems regarding black and white Americans and if there has been a change it hasn't been a complete change. This all takes time and 40 years on its still taking more time, and there's still a long way to go.

On October 3rd 2006 at 64 years old a man with such a heart died when that heart gave in. The United States of America Track and Field Federation officially proclaimed October the 9th 2006 'Peter Norman Day' in America in recognition and remembrance of a great man.

“Although he didn’t raise a fist, he did lend a hand.”

Divorce and ill health all weighed down on him over the next few years. He suffered depression, drank heavily and grew addicted to painkillers after a lengthy hospital stay. During that time, he used his silver medal as a door-stop.

One of the things that kept him going was the hope that he would be welcomed and recognised at the Sydney Olympics. As his nephew puts it: "Then his life would have come full circle."

He was to be disappointed. In 2000, Peter Norman found himself the only Australian Olympian to be excluded from making a VIP lap of honour at the Games, despite his status as one of the best sprinters in the home country's history.

But the US athletics team were not going to ignore this omission. They invited Norman to stay at their own lodgings during the games, and welcomed him as one of their own. In an extraordinary turn of events, it was hurdling legend Ed Moses who greeted him at the door, and that year's 200m champion Michael Johnson who hugged him, saying: "You are my hero."

In 2004, a 23ft statue honouring Smith and Carlos was erected in San Jose State University. This huge replica shows each of them with their fists in the air, just as they stood four decades ago in Mexico.

The place for the silver medallist is empty. It is where students and tourists stand to have their picture taken, when they want to take their place in sporting history.

In the film now being shown all over Australia, the absent athlete reflects on his legacy. "I'm a firm believer that in a victory ceremony for the Olympics, there's three guys that stand up there, each one's been given about a square metre of God's earth to stand on, and what any one of the three choose to do with his little square metre at that stage is entirely up to him.

"If it hadn't been for that demonstration on that day, it would have just been another silver medal that Australia picked up along the line. No one would ever have heard of Peter Norman."

VIDEO

Jesse Owens
Harry Edwards
Brundage
Lee Evans

Carlos and Smith suspended by the United States Olympic committee and given 48 hours to leave Mexico.

Brundage had said that if there were any demonstrations by anyone in the Olympic games the participants would be sent home. "There is no place for those things," he said.

When Carlos, Smith and Evans returned to uni they were celebrated by blacks but attacked by whites.

Carlos's dog was slaughtered and sliced up and left in a box on his doorstep. His wife committed suicide.

In just 4 years Tommie Smith, the fastest man in the world, was thrown out of the US athletics team, his marriage has been broken up, he has been spat at in the streets, and has received more than 50 threats on his life. He ended up as a coach in the northern industrial town of Wakefield travelling just to be able to pay his rent and feed himself.

<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1760175.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Norman

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2006/10/03/1159641325056.html>

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This film was produced by Matt Norman, the Nephew of Peter Norman. He aims to tell the untold story of how the salute affected and changed the life of Peter Norman by bringing together all three men. Through this we hear their personal feelings and views on the whole affair and the events surrounding it. We learn the role that Norman played and the impacts it had. The emphasis of the film is on Peter Norman, rather than Tommie Smith and John Carlos, which is particularly relevant to my research. I was able to take from it the way in which Peter himself viewed his participation and how he felt about it as well as how others, including Smith, Carlos, America and Australia reacted to Norman's contribution.

Eric Pearce; Participated in the 1968 Olympics as part of the Australian Hockey team. He also carried the flag at the closing ceremony.

Eric Pearce is regarded as one of Australia's greatest hockey players. He participated in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico and was therefore part of the same Australian Olympic team as Peter Norman. Mr Pearce was in the stadium watching the presentation of medals as the three men gave their famous salute. He witnessed the whole event first hand, and also experienced the aftermath in the Olympic Village. His recount of the event is therefore primary evidence. I had the opportunity to speak directly with Mr Eric Pearce about his experience and response to the salute as it unfolded and he shared with me, the reactions of the stadium, other athletes and the Australians back at home. He was directly involved with the events that followed Norman's salute and is hence very relevant to my research.