

## *The Legacy-* **1968 Summer Olympic Games, Mexico City**

During the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, United States track athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos were awarded medals for their athletic efforts. However, the great athletic feat would soon be shadowed by one of the most memorable moments in the American Civil Rights Movement. Tommie Smith and John Carlos would protest the poor treatment of African-American people in the United States and stood to empower the African American community. This is a great symbol for the community of San Jose State University. Tommie Smith and John Carlos were both students at this prestigious university and showed San Jose State University students of the present and the future that students can make a difference on the global stage.



*Tommie Smith* **1968 Olympic Gold Medalist, 200 Meter Race**

Born on June 6, 1944 in Clarksville, Texas, as an infant Tommie Smith barely survived a serious bout with pneumonia. But survive he did, to become a distinguished chapter of African American history. His college career at San Jose State University was highlighted with many achievements. He started breaking world records in track as a sophomore and did not stop until he tied or broken thirteen.

With talent and encouragement to excel, Tommie Smith was propelled into human rights spokespersonship long before it became a popular cause. With his concern for the plight of African-Americans and others at home and abroad, Tommie made a commitment to dedicate his life to champion the cause of African-Americans.

Having become a member of the National Track & Field Hall of Fame in 1978, and serving on the coaching staff of the 1995 World Indoor Championship team Barcelona, Spain he continues to expand his horizons of accomplishments.

The silent gesture made by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the victory stand in Mexico City at the Summer Olympic Games was heard around the world and was featured in a documentary by HBO TV titled "The Fist of Freedom".

Tommie is currently a faculty member at Santa Monica College and the Head Men's Cross-Country and Track & Field Coach. He also holds a degree in Sociology and Physical Education.



*John Carlos 1968* **Olympic Bronze Medalist, 200 Meter Race**  
**1969 NCAA Track & Field Champion**

John Carlos was born in Harlem, New York in 1945. After graduating from Machine Trade and Metal High School, he was awarded a full track and field scholarship to East Texas State University (ETSU). He attended ETSU for one year, single-handedly winning the schools first and only track and field Lone Star Conference Championship. After ETSU, he matriculated to San Jose State University.

During his stay at San Jose State University, he participated in the 1968 Mexico Olympics and won the bronze medal in the 200 meters. During the victory ceremony, John and Tommy Smith raised a black gloved fist in protest against racism and economic depression for all oppressed peoples. This "Silent Protest" was voted as the sixth most memorable event of the century.

Following the Mexico Olympics, John Carlos continued his education and athletic feats at San Jose State University where he single handily won the NCAA Track & Field National Championship in 1969. During his stay, he broke the world record in the hundred-yard dash. Concluding an illustrious career in track and field, John Carlos was drafted by the NFL. After a short career in the NFL, he entered the public sector, working for PUMA, the Olympics, and the City of Los Angeles.

Presently, John Carlos is working as the Track & Field Coach, and an In-school Suspension Supervisor for Palm Springs High School in Palm Springs, California.

October 16, 1968

Tommie Smith's raised black gloved fist presented black power, the knotted black scarf around his neck represented pride and the box in his left hand contained an olive tree sapling which stood as an emblem of peace.

John Carlos's raised left black gloved fist represented unity in black America, and the beads around his neck signified lynching suffered by blacks.

Both men wore black socks but were shoeless during the ceremony to represent the black poverty in Racist America. Together they formed an arch of unity and power.

