

AWESOME KIDS

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THE WHITE MAN IN THAT PHOTO

Sometimes photographs deceive. Take this one, for example. It represents John Carlos and Tommie Smith's rebellious gesture the day they won medals for the 200 meters at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City.

The photo is a powerful image of two barefoot black men, with their heads bowed, their black-gloved fists in the air while the US National Anthem played. It was a strong symbolic gesture – taking a stand for African American civil rights in a year of tragedies that included the death of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy.

People never really paid attention to the other man, motionless on the second step of the medal podium. He was considered a random presence, a kind of intruder.

But the truth is that white man in the photo is, perhaps, the biggest hero of that night in 1968. His name was Peter Norman, he was an Australian sprinter who arrived in the 200 meters finals after having ran an amazing 20.22 in the semi finals.

In the finals, he ran the race of a lifetime, improving on his time yet again. His record still stands today, 47 years later. It was a great race but it will never be as memorable as what followed at the awards ceremony.

It didn't take long to realize that something big, unprecedented, was about to take place on the medal podium. Smith and Carlos decided they wanted to show the entire world what their fight for human rights looked like, and word spread among the athletes.

Norman was a white man from Australia, a



country that had strict apartheid laws, almost as strict as South Africa. There was tension and protests in the streets following heavy restrictions on non-white immigration and discriminatory laws against aboriginal people.

Smith and Carlos had decided to get up on the stadium wearing the Olympic Project for Human Rights badge, a movement of athletes in support of the battle for equality.

They would receive their medals barefoot, representing the poverty facing people of colour. They would wear the famous black gloves, a symbol of the Black Panthers' cause. But before going up on the podium they

realized they only had one pair of black gloves. "Take one each", Norman suggested. Smith and Carlos took his advice.

But then Norman did something else. "I believe in what you believe. Do you have another one of those for me?", he asked, pointing to the **Olympic Project for Human Rights badge** on the others' chests. "That way I can show my support for your cause."

The three went out on the field and got up on the podium: the rest is history, preserved in the power of the photo.

But these athletes would pay the price their entire lives for that gesture. Smith and Carlos were immediately suspended from the American Olympic Team and expelled from the Olympic Village. Once home the two fastest men in the world faced heavy repercussions and death threats.

But time, in the end, proved that they had been right and they became champions in the fight for human rights.

Peter Norman is a hero that no one ever noticed. A forgotten athlete, deleted from history, even in Australia, his own country.

Four years later at the 1972 Summer Olympics that took place in Munich, Germany, Norman wasn't part of the Australian sprinters team, despite having run qualifying times for the 200 meters thirteen times and the 100 meters five times.

Norman left competitive athletics behind after this disappointment, continuing to run at the amateur level. He was treated like an outsider, his family outcast, and work impossible to find. He was facing an entire country and suffering alone.

Peter Norman was the greatest Australian sprinter in history and the holder of the 200 meter record, yet he wasn't even invited to the Olympics in Sydney.

He died suddenly from a heart attack in 2006, without his country ever having apologized for their treatment of him. Only in 2012 did the Australian Parliament approve a motion to formally apologize to Peter Norman and rewrite him into history.

However, perhaps, the words that remind us best of him are simply his own words when describing the reasons for his gesture, in the documentary film *Salute*:

"I couldn't see why a black man couldn't drink the same water from a water fountain, take the same bus or go to the same school as a white man. There was a social injustice that I couldn't do anything about from where I was, but I certainly hated it. It has been said that sharing my silver medal with that incident on the victory dais detracted from my performance. On the contrary. I have to confess, I was rather proud to be part of it".

Source: <http://griotmag.com/en/white-man-in-that-photo/>

WORDSEARCH

Athletics	Games	Sport
Badge	Olympic	Sprinter
Champions	Podium	Team

S F M I B S R X H F U B I W S
 L S E Y K B M W X V T W Z O S
 A T H L E T I C S V A C K W Q
 I X G D B S C M C N C S C R M
 J X B D C S N V G U W Z I C L
 X V A O C V U O M U I D O P Q
 F U Z W J C Z E I O H P I M R
 X B Q P L V J I O P Q Q G T D
 A P V I L R U V U Y M A F I K
 K M E W V X N C M G M A S C B
 G D Z G G I Z K D E I C H I P
 F N Z I D B T T S M I I F C Z
 M P W A L A T U L A R P E B C
 Z A M E B W B S L P S M H U V
 J F G S A S T W R S L Y E U N
 W Q P S K T D R R Z S L L P G
 I P K G I Y E K D X N O W L L
 V R G M O T V T E D Q G N W G
 B J W V N W J V N L C J T H S
 W K E I W C W E V U S H O P I
 B P R D K P D J L M K Z O B X
 X P J P H W B W X A E R X E L
 S G X U B E E J R E T T K T K
 E P E K M U N X R T H W J X C
 L C V L N Y J S W J U S J R S

Name: _____ Number: _____ Class: _____ Mark: _____

A. Complete the crossword puzzle.

- In 1968, the Summer Olympics were held in this city. (14→)
- The athletes took a stand for these. (9↓)
- The white man in the podium finished the race in this position. (15→)
- Peter Norman's nationality. (7↓)
- Worth of being remembered or noted; remarkable. (2→)
- The place where something unprecedented took place. (16→)
- Official policy of racial segregation formerly practised in Australia. (11↓)
- The indigenous peoples of Australia. (10→)
- The Olympic Project for Human Rights supported the battle for this. (4→)
- A symbol of the Black Panthers' cause. (6↓)
- The two fastest men in the world faced these once home. (1↓)
- In 1972, the Summer Olympics were held in this city. (12↓)
- Norman continued to run at this level. (3↓)
- One who is isolated from the activities of his own community. (13→)
- Only in 2012 was Peter Norman rewritten into it. (5↓)
- How Peter Norman felt about his gesture. (8→)

