John Carlos was born in Harlem, New York, in 1945. After High School he was awarded a full track and field scholarship to East Texas State University (ETSU) where he single-handedly won the school’s first and only track and field Lone Star Conference Championship. After ETSU, he matriculated to San José State University.

During his stay at San José State University, he participated in the 1968 Mexico Olympics and won the bronze medal in the 200 meters. During the victory ceremony, John Carlos 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 José State University where he won the NCAA Track & Field National Championship in 1969. During his stay, he broke the world record in the hundred-yard dash.

Presently, John Carlos is working for Palm Springs High School in Palm Springs, California.
The Legacy

During the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, United States track athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos were awarded medals for their athletic achievements. However, these great athletic feats would soon be overshadowed by one of the most memorable moments in the American Civil Rights Movement.

Tommie Smith and John Carlos protested the poor treatment of African-American people in the United States and stood to empower the African-American community. This great symbol was not only one of the defining moments in Olympic and civil rights history, but a great symbol for the community of San José State University.

Tommie Smith and John Carlos were both students at this prestigious university and showed San José State University students of the present and the future that students can make a difference on the global stage.

The Stand

October 16, 1968

Tommie Smith’s raised right black-gloved fist represented 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 lynchings suffered by blacks.

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

The Mission

San José State University Associated Students is asking for your support of the Tommie Smith – John Carlos Project. The Project will spread awareness of their symbolic stand for human rights at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City and inspire members of our community to advocate for all human condition issues. It will also create a sculpture to be erected on the main campus of San José State University.

You can support this great cause through the “Take a Stand” membership program. All contributions are welcome, no matter how great or small. Please read more about the program inside and do your part. We aim to inspire youth and young adults to become socially conscious and involved in the issues that fuel their passions in their local communities, and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Vision

The Tommie Smith – John Carlos Project teaches students that they can become active today and should not wait until they reach a certain age to address the issues that are important to them.

The Project is more than the erection of a monument; it is the recognition of the sacrifices made by many students during the torrid civil rights era.

The initial fund raising effort will support the design and construction of a sculpture depicting John Carlos and Tommie Smith’s protest at the 1968 Olympics of the poor treatment of African-Americans in the United States.

The remaining funds will support the ongoing Project initiatives that include developing and delivering social awareness education for students; supporting student activists’ initiatives; and supporting those students who choose to get involved in the issues they believe in.

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Membership Levels

Supporter

• $10 - $25 monthly or $100 - $300 single payment
• Take a Stand lapel pin
• Take a Stand newsletter
• Take a Stand member events
• Member certificate
• Tax-deductible

Patron

• $26 - $100 monthly or $301 - $1,200 single payment
• All “Supporter” benefits
• “Take a Stand” activist cap
• Recognition on Project web site
• Recognition in appropriate printed materials such as the AS newsletter and Washington Square magazine

Medalist

• $101 + monthly or $1,201 or greater single payment
• “Supporter” and “Patron” benefits plus:
  • Take a Stand golf (or other special) shirt
  • Autographed and framed commemorative poster
  • Name on permanent contributor wall

First 250 members receive charter member status.