



A Race to Remember: The Peter Norman Story

Damian Johnstone

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On 16 October 1968, the image of two black American athletes, heads bowed, black gloved fists, raised into the night sky in the so-called 'Black Power' salute, shook not only the many thousands watching the event unfold live in Mexico City's Estadio Olimpico. It also sent shockwaves throughout the world. In the intervening 40 years, the event has become an iconic image, not only of the Olympic Games, but of the 20th Century.

While most focus their attention on the two Americans, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, it should never be forgotten that there was a third individual on the 200 metres Victory dais that night. A white Australian athlete stood tall, proudly wearing - alongside his silver medal - a civil rights badge in support of the silent protest made by Smith and Carlos against racial discrimination.

This is the biography of this Australian, Melbourne born track and field athlete Peter Norman who won a Silver medal in the 200 metres. The Gold medal winner was Tommie Smith who broke the world record to win the race. Norman equalled Smith's previous world record time in finishing second. John Carlos won the Bronze medal. Aside from the highly political nature of the iconic event, Norman's achievement in splitting the seemingly unsplitable Smith and Carlos is recognised as the best performance by an Australian male sprinter in Olympic history.

So, what was the real story behind Australian track star Peter Norman's controversial involvement in the famous 'Black Power Salute' at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games? Co-authors Damian Johnstone and Matt Norman explore the previously untold story behind the life of Peter Norman. With unprecedented access to interviews, transcripts and audiotapes, the authors capture Norman's early life from growing up in Melbourne as part of a devout Salvation Army family, to winning the silver medal in the 200 metres at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games.

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