

# FLASH POINTS

# *STAND UP!*



## Protest at the 1968 Olympics

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# PROTEST AT THE 1968 OLYMPICS

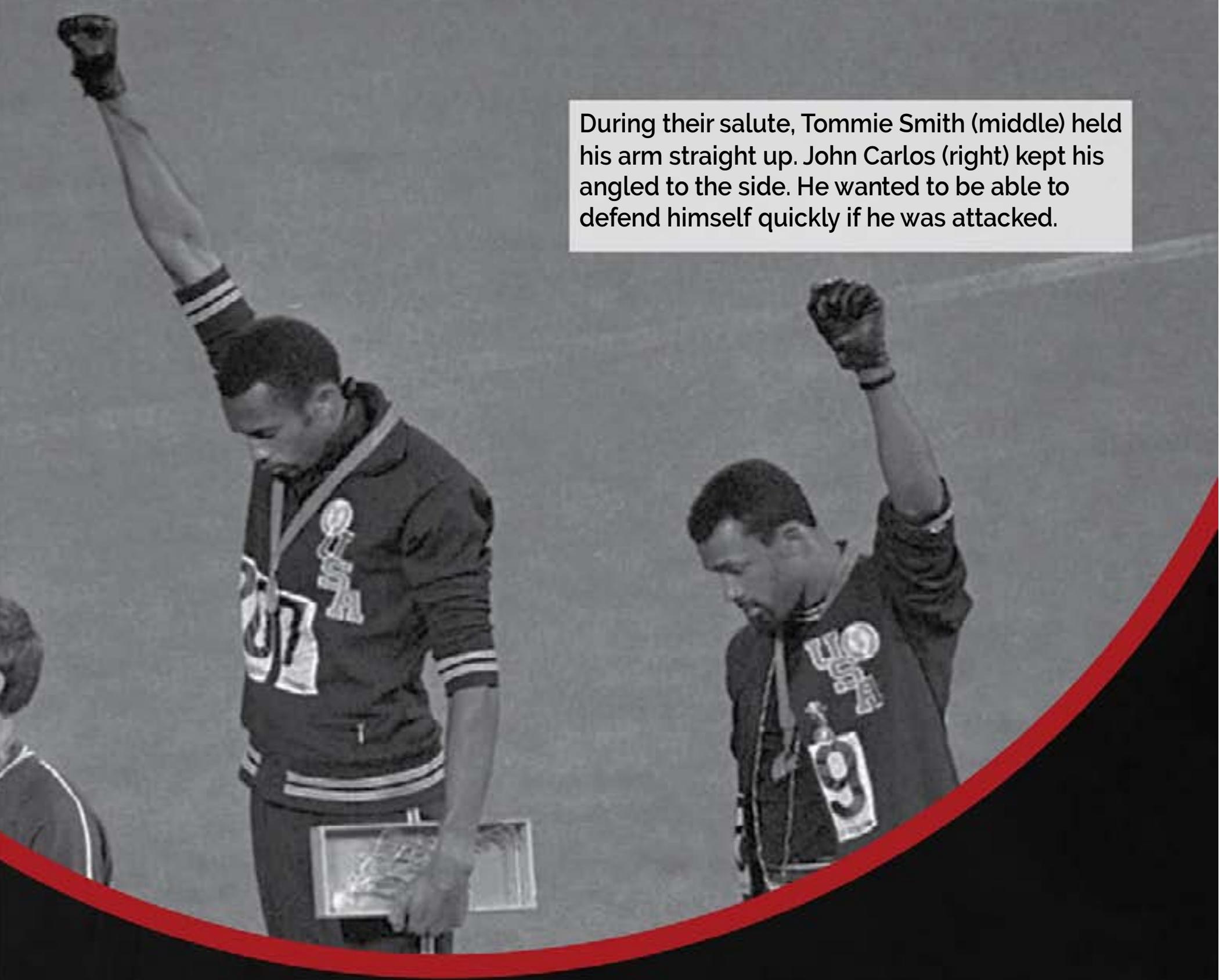
## October 16, 1968

It is the middle of the Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. The 200 meter run has just ended. The athletes are going to receive their medals. One, Peter Norman, is Australian. The other two are African American. Their names are Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

The United States' **national anthem** begins to play. But Smith and Carlos don't stand tall or sing. They bow their heads and raise one fist. They are both wearing one black glove. They are wearing no shoes and black socks.

The crowd goes completely silent. Nobody expected this. Smith and Carlos are making a statement about equality and civil rights. But many people think they are being disrespectful. The crowd begins to boo and shout insults. They don't believe that the Olympics is a place for political protests. Smith and Carlos brace themselves for violence. They wonder if they will be attacked. Even if they are hurt, they think that it is worth the sacrifice. They are standing up for what they believe.

**national anthem:** a song that is accepted as a particular country's official song



During their salute, Tommie Smith (middle) held his arm straight up. John Carlos (right) kept his angled to the side. He wanted to be able to defend himself quickly if he was attacked.



***DID YOU KNOW?***

Tommie Smith won gold and John Carlos won bronze in the 200 meter sprint.

# How and Why

Historical events rarely have only one simple cause. Many different things—such as certain events or changing ways of thinking—work together to shape the future. Take a look at some of the things that led to Smith and Carlos’s memorable protest at the 1968 Olympics.

## Changing Viewpoints

In the 1950s and '60s, many new laws had been passed that helped the Civil Rights Movement. However, people were still not being treated equally. African Americans lived in poverty. White Americans mistreated them. They had trouble finding jobs and places to live.



## Assassinations

The year 1968 had been filled with tragedy. Senator Robert F. Kennedy had been assassinated earlier that year. He was a politician from New York. Kennedy was a strong supporter of civil rights. Soon after, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. He had been a leader of the Civil Rights Movement.





## A Call for Peace

The Vietnam War had been going on for almost 10 years. Thousands of American soldiers had been sent to Vietnam and many died in combat. A lot of young people didn't like the war. They were also realizing that the laws promising equal rights were not being followed. The Civil Rights Movement and the anti-war movement began to work together and fight for peace and equality.



## Olympic Boycott

African American athletes had been encouraged to boycott the 1968 Olympics. Not going to the games would send a message to the world. People wanted to make a statement about civil rights and inequality. But the boycott failed. Smith and Carlos went to the games. They decided to make their own statement there.

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