



It was one of the 20th century's most powerful and controversial moments in sports, and a watershed event in the civil rights movement. After failing to convince their fellow black athletes to boycott the Mexico City 1968 Olympics, **Tommie Smith** and **John Carlos** succeeded in winning the gold and bronze medals in the 200 meters track & field event. Determined to use the grand stage of the Olympic games as a platform for protest, Smith and Carlos accepted their medals in bare feet (to bring attention to the poverty of the African-American community), wearing beads (in honor of the countless blacks murdered as victims of slavery or racism), and holding black-gloved fists in the air (the "Black Power" salute).

A storm of outrage hit Smith and Carlos immediately. For disrespecting the "Star Spangled Banner" and the Olympic games, the IOC forced the U.S. Olympic Committee to withdraw them from the relays, banish them from the Olympic Village, and expel them from the U.S. Olympic team. Most of white America was also outraged at their actions, and both men experienced a heavy backlash upon their return home. Nonetheless, their legend has grown, and this classic black-and-white image has become a symbol of the struggle for equality for black athletes in America.