



FOR THE RECORD

SALUTE

THE TRUE STORY OF AN UNSUNG AUSTRALIAN HERO

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY ROBERT LEWIS

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Overview

The picture of the three men on the winner's podium after the Men's 200m final at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics is still considered one of the most powerful images of modern history. Almost forgotten in the ensuing years is the seemingly quiet and composed man in the left of the picture, the Australian silver medallist Peter Norman.

Why is he considered a household name throughout the United States even today?

And why do the other medallists Tommie Smith and John Carlos consider him a brother?

Salute (Matt Norman, 2008) is the ninety-minute story of the quiet man, the forgotten man and a salute to him.

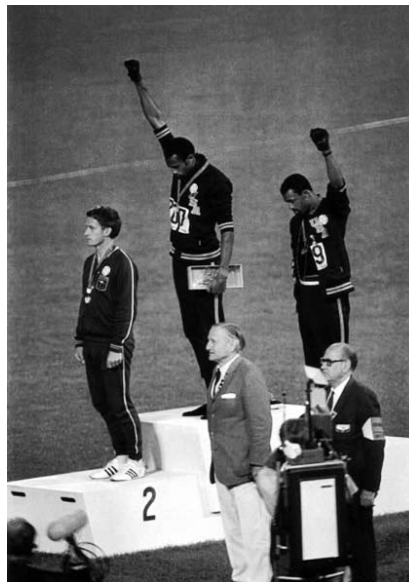
Curriculum Applicability

Salute is suitable for senior students in:

- American History
- Society and Environment
- Values Education
- Politics
- English.

Before watching the film

Look at the images above and answer these questions. You should discuss your answers in class.



<http://africanhistorymonth.ligali.org/gallery.php?ht=3>



<http://schol.wordpress.com/2008/02/25/1968-black-power-salute/>

- 1 Describe what is happening.
- 2 Identify who is involved.
- 3 At what event is it happening?
- 4 The photographs are of a protest. What do you think is being protested for or against?
- 5 What aspects of or symbols in the images lead you to believe this?
- 6 This is a very famous image. Why do you think it would be famous?
- 7 What do you think is the message of the photograph?

Now show the photographs to people who are older than

about 55. Ask them questions 1-7 above to see if they know what the photograph shows, and what they say is the meaning.

Discuss your findings in class.

You are about to find out about the events in this photograph. You will see that there are several symbolic elements in the photograph.

- 8 Look closely and decide what these might be.
- 9 Now look at the box on page 3 to see what the participants saw as the key symbolic elements.

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The key symbolic elements in the photograph are:

- The clenched fists
- The black gloves
- The black silk scarf around the man on step numbered 1
- The two black athletes are not wearing shoes
- They are both wearing black socks
- The two black athletes have each bowed his head
- The two black athletes are each wearing a badge
- The athlete on step 2 is also wearing a similar badge
- The athlete on step 2 has not bowed his head.

Now decide what each of these elements symbolizes.

Does any of this change what you see as the key message or meaning of the photograph?

You will be able to come back to these symbols after watching the film.

Background

Salute is a journey back to the 1960s to examine what has now become one of the most famous Olympic moments in history.

During this era the world was just three years away from the Cuban missile crisis and the threat of nuclear war, the horror of Vietnam, the assassinations of John F. and Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Frightened and desperate people were rioting in the streets of Europe, and throughout the U.S. where there was an urgent push for civil rights. Black nations were



threatening to boycott the Olympics in protest and black athletes within the United States team were being urged to boycott the Games.

Into this atmosphere walked Peter Norman, whose performance had taken the US team by surprise. Who was this unknown sprinter from Australia? He wasn't a typical sprinter – he was quietly spoken, short-legged and white.

In the 200-metres final, he ran the race of his life and split Tommie Smith and John Carlos, winning silver. As they waited for the presentation ceremony, Smith and Carlos told Peter of their plans. One had left behind his pair of black gloves, and at Peter's suggestion, they wore one each.

Despite it not being a situation that affected him directly, Peter asked the Americans if he could join their protest. He felt there was a moral imperative on him

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to stand up against something he felt was wrong. Like Tommie and John, Peter wore an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge in support of their silent protest.

The image of the three of them on the dais, heads bowed, the Americans delivering the 'Black Salute', is regarded as one of the most powerful images of the twentieth Century.

Lasting repercussions followed. Smith and Carlos were dropped from the relays and the team. They were kicked out of the Olympics and banned for life. Their lives were ruined, with Carlos's wife later committing suicide.

The punishment of Peter was less dramatic but ultimately as destructive. Coming from a conservative family in a country that still had a white only immigration policy, Norman's stance caused a storm. He was hated in parts of the Australian establishment and the media turned on him.

His chance to win gold at the 1972 Munich Olympics was stolen from him. Despite being the favourite to win gold, qualifying thirteen times for the 200m and five times for the 100m, the powers that be refused to take him to Munich. For the first time Australia was not represented in the sprint events at an Olympics.



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At the Sydney 2000 Olympics in Australia, Peter Norman was not invited to attend in any official capacity. Australia's best sprinter ever, whose 200m Mexico games time of twenty seconds flat would have won the gold medal at Sydney and whose Australian record still stands nearly forty years later, wasn't even invited to the 200m final by the Australian Olympic authorities. He was, however, invited by the U.S. team who flew him to Sydney and he was treated as an American guest.

Due to his unique connection with the story, Peter Norman's nephew, Matt Norman, has been able to get an extraordinary level of access to the three medallists and, for the first time, film all three of them together, talking about the event and the impact it had on their lives.

Tragically Peter Norman died in October 2006, soon after seeing a rough cut of the film. Both Smith and Carlos were pallbearers at Norman's funeral.

One of Peter's last wishes was that his story be told.



Exploring Themes and Ideas

The 1968 Olympics were held during a period of protest in the United States about the lack of rights and inequality of black people in American society.

- 1 Describe the image of injustice that is presented in the film.
- 2 The black athletes of the 1968 team were originally going to boycott the Games. Why did they decide not to do this?
- 3 A silent, peaceful protest might seem like an easy thing to do. Why was it in fact not easy? What pressures existed on the athletes not to protest?
- 4 When John Carlos and Tommie Smith decided to protest, what was Peter Norman's reaction? Why did he have this attitude?
- 5 What qualities did the three men show in carrying out their protest?
- 6 In the film Carlos and Smith speak about the fact that Norman took on an issue that need not have been his to take on, and that while they had each other for support, Norman was alone after the event to deal with its consequences. Why did Peter Norman choose to become part of the protest? Consider both his personal values, and the civil rights position of Indigenous Australians at this time.

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- 7 The film describes the symbolic elements of the protest:

'The symbolism went something along these lines: that the heads were obviously bowed in [acknowledgement of] brothers and sisters who had made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of African American Unity.'

'The raised arm and the clenched hand are a symbol of unity with the fingers coming together in a symbol of strength.'

'It was never meant as a threatening gesture.'

'The black socks that they wore throughout the competition, and [lack of] shoes, [were] a sign of African American poverty.'

'The fact that they couldn't get jobs. They weren't respected in jobs, they couldn't get decent jobs.'

'They couldn't get a decent education.'

'And all of this symbolism went ... virtually by the board because they didn't get a chance to explain it.'



'The press didn't want to hear about that, all they wanted to hear about were these militant young black athletes that had despoiled the Olympic dais.'

Why were the symbols not clear to people at the time?

- 8 Look back at the photograph exercise. Do you think these symbols are there or not? Discuss your reasons.
- 9 One element of the 1960s in America which is not explored in the film is the threat of violent action and radical social change that existed in some parts of the black power movement. Some, though not all, Black Power adherents believed in racial separation, black nationalism, and the necessity to use violence as a means of achieving their aims. Such positions were for the most part in direct conflict with those of the leaders of the mainstream civil rights movement. One group in particular, the Black Panthers, were identified with the will and ability to use violence. Other elements, such as the followers of Malcolm X, the Muslim Brotherhood, challenged and threatened the idea of one America – they saw themselves as African and Muslim rather than American and Christian. How might the existence of such radical and even revolutionary elements in the black power movement have influenced people's interpretation of the black power salute in Mexico in 1968?

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- 10 Any viewer of the film today will be shocked by the treatment of the athletes after the protest. Why do you think both countries' Olympic officials turned against the men? How might they justify their actions? Do you think it was justified?
- 11 The creators of the memorial to the event in San Jose State University, California, included only two of the three figures involved in the 1968 Mexico City protest.

You can see a photograph of the statue at <http://www.danvk.org/wp/category/sports/>. Prepare an argument either that the statue should be left as it is, or that Peter Norman should be added to that statue. You should read the full article on the danvk.org website, and the associated article on the statue at <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/1020-28.htm>.



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Thinking about today

Salute is a film about an international event in 1968. It has relevance for international events today, as well as for individual reflection.

2008: Is Beijing the place for protest?

There have been protests at many Olympic Games:

1908	Irish athletes boycott the London Games in protest about Britain's refusal to grant Ireland independence.
1932	An Italian winner gave a fascist salute from the podium in Los Angeles.
1936	Many Jewish athletes refused to attend the Berlin Olympics in protest against German racially discriminatory laws.
1956	Czechoslovakian and Russian water polo athletes fought in the pool – Russia had recently invaded Czechoslovakia to impose a friendly government.
1964	South Africa was banned from the Tokyo Games because of its racial laws.
1968	A protest by Mexican students against the cost of the Games while social relief was needed led to the deaths of an estimated 200-300 people. American athletes Tommy Smith and John Carlos make the black power salute from the podium.
1972	Palestinian Black September terrorists kill eleven Israeli athletes.
1976	Twenty-six African and Caribbean countries boycott the Montreal Games in protest against New Zealand, which had played rugby in racially segregated South Africa, being allowed to compete.
1980	Many countries, including the United States, and many individual athletes, boycotted the Moscow Games in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
1984	Soviet countries boycotted the Los Angeles Games.
2008	There are calls for athletes and nations to protest against China's presence in and claims to Tibet. Protests at the Games? (You complete this box after August 2008.)

The Olympic Games offer one time when the world is focused on one place and one nation. Modern Olympic Games are occasions for the host nation to present itself to the world in the most favourable light – they are vehicles for official propaganda, for the host nation to create a positive and favourable image of itself for the rest of the world.

Each nation, however, has aspects of its society or politics that are less than perfect, and there are always some people who believe passionately in causes that are critical of the host nation.

In 2008 there has been much protest against China's claim to sovereignty of Tibet, and its policies that may be leading to the destruction of Tibetan culture. Legitimate and peaceful protests that are part of a free society are not allowed in China. Some athletes believe that China's policies are a violation of human rights.

Is it legitimate and appropriate for individuals to protest at an Olympic Games – for example by wearing particular symbols, or by carrying placards, or by behaving in a particular way at a medals ceremony?

- 1 Read the information in the box to the right about the Australian position, consider the arguments for and against such a right to protest, discuss them in class, and make your own decision.

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Australian Olympic chief Coates says podium protests possible in Beijing

Australian Olympic chief John Coates said Saturday he believes there is a good chance some athletes will launch protests on the medal podium at the Beijing Olympics.

'It is a real possibility,' Coates said following the Australian Olympic Committee's annual general meeting.

'The IOC doesn't want the competition to be prejudiced in any way by any demonstrations. They may happen and they'll have to be dealt with depending on how serious they are.'

China has been heavily criticized by world leaders for their human rights record and for their recent crackdown in Tibet. The Olympic torch's journey around the world was marred by protesters ahead of the Aug. 8-24 Games.

Coates said there could be podium demonstrations in Beijing similar to the black power protest on the medal podium by American track athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

Smith and Carlos raised their black-gloved fists and bowed their heads during the playing of 'The Star-Spangled Banner'. Both were expelled from the games.

Coates' comments came as the AOC loosened its protest guidelines for Australian athletes at the Beijing Games. The new guidelines, announced at the annual general meeting, expand on protest rules issued during the week by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The AOC says athletes must respect the dignity of the host nation China, their fellow athletes and the Olympic charter.

But it said athletes were free to express their opinions on Tibet, human rights and other such issues in media interviews and online blogs, but cannot place protest signs or propaganda on clothing or equipment.

It said any breach of the Olympic charter would result in disqualification from the Games.

'We don't want banners and T-shirts and things in the village which is meant to be a place where 10,500 athletes get together,' Coates said.

You can imagine that if the Iraqi team turned up with T-shirts telling us and Britain and the U.S. to get out of Iraq, there could be some unpleasant things happen in the village. And similarly I think we have to respect the athletes of all countries, including China, in the village.

12 May 2008

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/12/sports/oly12.php>

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Personal protest action

Most of us share a basic set of values such as the importance of honesty, the right to have a 'fair go', the need to obey laws, access to a democratic system of government, and the right to live in a free society.

However, there are some values on which we disagree, and some policies and laws that we think may not be appropriate.

We all have the right to try to bring about change to these laws and policies through peaceful means.

Trying to achieve change in our society is one aspect of active citizenship.

We talk about active citizenship – but what can an active citizen do? The table on page 11 lists some possibilities.

- 2 In a small group, look at three or four of each of the possible ways of responding as a citizen to an issue. Make sure that between all groups you cover all the actions listed.
- 3 Report on the main strengths and weaknesses of each possible action

in bringing about change. In your report you should consider how different circumstances can influence the strengths and weaknesses of possible actions. For example, a petition signed by three people might have less influence than one signed by three million people! Or there might be circumstances in which a petition was more effective than a protest.

You may also want to add some more possible actions to this list.



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Actions	Strengths	Weaknesses
Vote in an election		
Join a political party		
Write letters to newspapers		
Petition parliament		
Do something to get media attention to the issue		
Protest publicly		
See your local MP		
Write to your local MP		
Write to the Minister		
Write to the PM		
Stand for parliament		
Boycott a product or event		
Strike		
Speak to others		
Lobby politicians		
Join a pressure group		
Do nothing		
Hand out leaflets		
Use passive resistance		
Use violence to draw attention to a cause		

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4 Now decide as a class which ones (say the top 3 or 4) are likely to be

- the most effective
- the least effective.

The table on page 13 lists some situations that you might want to change.

5 Decide on the scale of each – local, regional, national or global.

6 Then write in what you think would be the best approach to take in regard to each situation for a citizen who wanted to act.

7 Then indicate realistically what *you* are most likely to do in such a situation.



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Situation	Scale	Best approach	Realistic?
You have noisy neighbours whose dogs bark all night and disturb your sleep.			
You oppose a local development that will create traffic congestion.			
Public transport needs improvement in your area.			
You oppose Australian involvement in a war.			
You support Australian involvement in a war.			
Hospital waiting lists are too long.			
You want the government to reduce climate change by reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.			
You have a problem with a public servant who will not reply to you on an immigration matter.			
You believe there should be a change to a law about abortion.			
You think Parliament should change the voting age to sixteen.			
You think Australia should be a republic.			
You think Australia should maintain its current flag.			
You believe that some groups in society do not have equal civil rights.			
You believe that some groups in society are abusing others' civil rights.			

- 8 Discuss your results – what determines if you will be an active citizen or not?
- 9 These examples are only about protest or responding to situations – are there other ways that you can be a good and active citizen in your community?
- 10 What is happening in your community? You may want to research an issue further. Choose an issue that interests or affects you – it might be global warming, or the development of a pulp mill that you support or oppose, or a campaign for better sporting facilities. Investigate how different people are responding to it, and why. Decide which approach is likely to be most successful and why.

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Further information

Salute website:

<http://www.salutethemovie.com>

Wikipedia entries for Black Power, Black Power Salute, Black Panthers, Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Civil Rights Movement, Angela Davis, Freedom Rides (Australia and United States), White Australia Policy.

Spartacus educational website entry for Peter Norman:

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/CRnormanP.htm>



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