

As the world watches, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise their fists above their heads, standing up for civil rights. Today we see them as heroes, but after their protest, their lives changed. After the National Anthem, fans started shouting out racist insults. When Carlos, Smith, and Norman got home, they were hated by lots of people. They and their families even received death threats!

Their actions challenged the status quo because they showed the whole world how unequal America was. When this happened, Smith and Carlos thought that if the Americans were rooting for them, when they won the bronze and gold medals, they could also be rewarded with a peaceful protest. This all happened just months after Martin Luther King Jr was shot and killed because he was fighting for civil rights. They were carrying on his legacy by calling attention to poverty, oppression, and lynchings of African Americans.

Because Carlos, Smith, and Norman took a stand, discrimination has improved. They risked their lives because they had enough of the status quo for African Americans. They showed us that we can keep moving forward. Today we see NFL players taking a knee during the pledge of allegiance. NFL players make a difference because they also have the ability to be seen by lots of people.

Smith, Carlos, and Norman inspired me that I can also make a difference. I'm African American, and I'm a soccer player. Now I know that I don't have to be scared if I ever protest during a one of my games. Even though I'm just an ordinary kid, the smallest thing can make a big difference. I could volunteer in my community, donate to charity, maybe even stand up for someone that can't stand up for themselves.

Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Peter Norman's protest at the 1968 Olympics is a call to action. They showed us that whatever your circumstance, whoever you are, wherever you come from you can still make a change. We are all responsible for making a difference in the world.