

## SALUTE: A Resource for Depth Study 4: Rights and Freedoms

Kate Cameron

*The Rights and Freedoms Depth Study deals with activism in various forms. The film Salute, deals with a famous example of activism and its consequences. It should appeal to Stage 5 students.*

*Salute\** focuses on the athletes who won gold, silver and bronze in the 200 metre final at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. At the award ceremony these athletes made a silent protest about racism and inequality. The African-American athletes who had won gold and bronze, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gave a gloved fist salute. The Australian who had won silver, Peter Norman, expressed his solidarity with them by wearing a badge that read ‘Olympic Project for Human Rights’. These men had run the fastest 200 metres in history, but they were severely punished for their ‘political’ action. This film provides the wider context for these events and allows the men to tell their own story.

### Discussion points

(0-30 mins)

- Consider the childhood of the three athletes, Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman. What similarities and differences were there in their backgrounds – and their attitude to running?
- What forms of discrimination were evident in the USA and Australia during the 1960s?
- Why did many African American plan to boycott the 1968 Olympics? What were the arguments for and against the boycott?
- What happened in Mexico in the months leading up to the opening of the 1968 Olympics? Why were Mexican students protesting about the Olympics being held there?

(30-60 mins)

- What forms of protest did African-American athletes decide to take? In what ways did other athletes support them? What threats were made against athletes who protested in any way?
- How well did African-American athletes perform at the 1968 Mexico Olympics?

(60-90 mins)

- Why do you think there was such a strong reaction to the gloved fist salute at the medal award ceremony? Did the athletes have a chance to explain their position?
- What happened to Tommie Smith and John Carlos after the ceremony and how did this affect their families and future careers as athletes?
- What happened to Peter Norman and how was his career as an athlete affected? What does this suggest about Australian society at the time?
- How did Tommie Smith, John Carlos and other African American athletes pay tribute to Peter Norman?

### Extension

- What is meant by the statement that Smith, Norman and Carlos ‘sacrificed personal glory for the good of the cause’? Do you think their action was justified? Why/why not?
- What other examples are there where ‘politics’ has been evident at the Olympics?
- Why would activists choose to ‘make their point’ at the Olympics?

\*Documentary directed by Matt Norman, distributed by Paramount Pictures Australia, 90 minutes