



**Dr. John Wesley Carlos** was born on June 5th 1945 in Harlem, New York. He is of Cuban descent and can understand Spanish. [John Carlos](#) ' father, Earl Carlos Sr., was a businessman and World War I Veteran. He was a man proud of his appearance in all circumstances and carried himself in a dignified way. He had to work hard from an early age (like most African-American children of his era, especially in the South of the country) and his parents were born as slaves. When he participated in World War I, he got wounded and received the Medal of Citation Award for his stoicism on the battlefield. When he returned back home, he had to face racial hatred, economic discrimination, the Roaring Twenties, the Stock Market Crash in 1929, the Dust Bowl in the mid-thirties and World War II. Despite the difficulties, he never became bitter. He met his future wife, Vioris Lawrence, in 1941, who was later John Carlos' mother.

John Carlos' childhood dream was to become an Olympic swimmer, but because of racism, he was prevented from practicing in NYC area pools. However, he didn't let this shatter his dream of being an Olympian. Carlos therefore turned out to be a track and field athlete and professional football player. He won the Bronze-medal in the 200 meters at the 1968 Summer Olympics, on October 16. After the race, he and Gold medalist, Tommie Smith, raised their fists in a Black Power salute on the podium, while wearing Olympic Project for Human Right (OPHR) badges which provoked one of the largest political controversies in the history of the Olympic

Games. His Black Power salute on the podium with Tommie Smith who won the Gold medal (at the time) provoked tremendous political controversy, one of the biggest in the Olympics' history. Silver medalist, Peter Norman from Australia also wore an OPHR badge to show his support for the two Americans. The athletes chose an international platform to protest and make sure that their grievances would not be ignored. It became a cause célèbre. Around the time of this Olympics in Mexico City, there were student protests, riots, and shootings in the capital.

Prior to the podium event, Carlos became a founding member of the OPHR (led by sprinters Tommie Smith, Lee Evans and professor Harry Edwards) and originally advocated a boycott of the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games if a minimum of four conditions were not met: the withdrawal of South Africa (that was later readmitted to the Olympics in February 1968) and Rhodesia from the games, the restitution of Muhammad Ali's world heavyweight boxing title, the removal of Avery Brundage as president of the IOC (International Olympic Committee), and the hiring of more African-American assistant coaches. However, it became difficult to convince many athletes to stay home—even if several prominent [Black athletes](#) supported the boycott, including Bill Russell, Jim Brown, Lew Alcindor (later known as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar who didn't go to the 1968 Olympic Games), Jackie Robinson and Arthur Ashe. In addition, some nations (such as Nigeria, the United Arab Republic, Uganda, Mali, Ghana, Tanzania and so on) wanted to join the boycott effort by not participating in the 1968 Olympics. At the time, there was also a fear about the relationship between the Soviet Union and the emerging independent African nations intensified in the Cold War era, with a direct Soviet attempt to spread its control both politically and economically on Africa as part of a wider tactic to lessen Western power. The boycott failed to gain popularity after the IOC withdrew invitations for South Africa (on April 21st 1968) and Rhodesia, Carlos decided, together with Smith, to participate but to stage a protest in case he received a medal.

After their remonstrance, Smith and Carlos were kicked out of the Olympic village and were extensively condemned. They lost friends and job opportunities, but they were greeted for their social conscience at San Jose State, where then-president Robert Clark qualified them "honorable young men." Noteworthy, Carlos and Smith were not alone in Mexico City, on the podium or off it. The US Olympic team backed them, including the all-White Harvard crew team, and released a serious denunciation of racism in America in defense of their action.

IOC president, Avery Brundage considered the silent gesture as a domestic political statement unfit for the apolitical, international forum of the Olympic Games which he had based on his beliefs. He immediately responded to their actions by instructing the suspension of Smith and Carlos from the U.S. team and their debarring from the Olympic Village. When the US Olympic Committee refused, Brundage threatened to ban the entire US track team. This warning led to the two athletes being ousted from the Games. The men's statement had lingering consequences for all three athletes.

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

Peter Norman was chastised by his country's Olympic authorities and shut out by the Australian media. He was not picked for the 1972 Summer Olympics, despite having qualified more than 13 times over. Back home, Smith and Carlos were subject to psychological assaults. In addition, they received death threats (though these occurred even before the silent gesture). This concerned also their family members.

Athletes like John Carlos, Tommie Smith, and Muhammad Ali paved the way for current Black athletes. These sportsmen were athletically superior and conscious of international politics. They were socially and economically casted out for decades after they took a stand. It traumatized their families, especially Dr. Carlos' first wife who killed herself nine years after the Olympic protest, which led John Carlos to a period of depression and abyss.

For a long time, it was very difficult for Carlos to find a decent job. As soon as his employers found out who he was and what he did in 1968, he was fired instantly, as if he had a criminal record. In other words, he became a persona non grata for many potential and actual employers. On May 10th 1999, Dr. Carlos became an ISS (In School Suspension Supervisor) at Palm Springs High School. In addition, he worked as a coach for track and field.

Noteworthy, 1968 was a tumultuous year, featuring political assassinations, urban riots and underground battles. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were killed. Riots emerged in dozens of American cities following the assassinations.

In 1968, the Kerner Commission gave the authoritative direction to investigate the 1967 riots and surmised that America was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal". This national report on the civil unrest was commissioned by then President Lyndon B. Johnson. The creation of jobs, the construction of new housing, and the hiring of more Blacks in mainstream media were among the social prescriptions of the report. Black capitalists such as Russell Goings expected Wall Street to have a key role in leveling the playing field, as much as any government faction.

It is important to note that since his teenage years, activism was important to Carlos. He was fearless and courageous at a very young age. Readers can discover to what extent in his autobiography entitled *The John Carlos Story*. His early experiences moulded and equipped Carlos for the biggest possible stage, the 1968 Olympic Games. Thus, Carlos hasn't been afraid

## Exclusive Interview with the Olympian athlete: Dr. John Carlos Ph.D.

Written by Patricia Turnier

Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

to stand up for his beliefs even since his childhood. When he became a Black Robin Hood, a detective who suspected his illegal activities took the time to speak to him and his companions. This investigator made Carlos realise that he had a gift for running and should seriously consider a career in track and field instead of getting into troubles with the law. Carlos' story makes me think of Louis Armstrong who developed his musical gift when he ended up in a home for delinquents or James Brown who crafted his skills as an entertainer when he was in prison during his formative years.

After the Olympics, Dr. Carlos went on to tie the world record in the 100 yard dash in 9.1s at Fresno in 1969, and beat the 200 meters world record (although the latter accomplishment was never ratified). He won the AAU 220-yard run and led San Jose State to its first NCAA championship with triumphs in the 100 and 220 and also as a member of the 4x110-yard relay. After his track career, he played briefly in the 1970 National Football League Draft and Canadian Football League where he played one season for the Montreal Alouettes and the Toronto Argonauts. He had to retire due to injury. Later, he worked for Puma. After, he became involved with the United States Olympic Committee and collaborated with the 1984 Summer Olympics. In 1985, Carlos started to work as a counselor and in-school suspension supervisor, as well as a track and field coach, at Palm Springs High School (as mentioned) in California, where he still lives today.

In terms of education, Dr. Carlos studied at East Texas State University on a track-and-field scholarship that he earned as a gifted athlete. Later, he went to San Jose State University where he was trained by future National Track & Field Hall of Fame coach, Lloyd Winter.

People have acclaimed Carlos in different ways. The best-selling 1974 album *Livet är en fest* by Swedish prog band Nationalteatern includes a song titled "Mr. John Carlos", which narrates the events at the 1968 medal award ceremony and the subsequent hardships of Dr. Carlos. The latter was introduced into the USA Track & Field Hall of Fame in 2003. In Australia, an airbrushed mural of the three Olympic sprinters on the podium was painted in 2000 in the inner-city suburb of Newtown in Sydney. Silvio Offria, who allowed an artist known only as "Donald" to paint the mural on his house in Leamington Lane, said that Peter Norman came to see the fresco before he passed away in 2006. He added: "He came and had his photo taken, he was very happy." The monochrome tribute, inscribed "THREE PROUD PEOPLE MEXICO 68," is now listed as an item of important heritage.

The Olympians John Carlos and Tommie Smith obtained honorary Ph.D.'s CSU in 2008 and San Jose State University in 2012, both in Humanity. Together, they received the 2008 (on July 16th) Arthur Ashe Courage Award for their silent gesture. A statue that depicted the 1968 silent

Written by Patricia Turnier

Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

gesture was built at San Jose State University and was designed by an innovative multimedia artist named Rigo 23. The monument possesses a fiberglass body and steel structure covered by bronze, standing on a concrete facsimile of the Mexico City medal podium. The facial likenesses of the athletes were captured by three-dimensional scanning technology. Their gloved fists and socks were painted black. Dr. Carlos also appeared momentarily in The Simpsons episode My Mother the Carjacker on the podium wearing a black glove. The cover art for the song "HiiiPoWeR" by American rapper Kendrick Lamar showcases a cropped photo of the salute. A 90 minute Australian documentary was-produced with the title "Salute".

The 2008 Sydney Film Festival presented a documentary concerning the protest entitled Salute. The film was written, directed and produced by Matt Norman, a nephew of Peter Norman. On 9 July 2008, BBC Four showcased a documentary, Black Power Salute, by Geoff Small, regarding the protest.

Dr. Carlos pursued his activism. On October 10, 2011, he spoke and raised his fist at Occupy Wall Street. He said "Today I am here for you. Why? Because I am you. We're here forty-three years later because there's a fight still to be won. This day is not for us but for our children to come." The following day he was invited to MSNBC and Current TV's Countdown with Keith Olbermann.

Dr. Carlos and sportswriter Dave Zirin are the authors of the page turner memoir The John Carlos Story: The Sports Moment That Changed the World, published in 2011 by Haymarket Books. It received a nomination in 2012 for the NAACP IMAGE AWARDS as an Outstanding Literary Work—Biography/Autobiography. Readers will find an excellent foreword to the book written by the renowned scholar Dr. Cornel West Ph.D., and a great preface to it by Dave Zirin. The John Carlos Story gives insight to one of the greatest moments in sports history, which is still being studied in classes.

Dr. Carlos' autobiography is about happiness, pain, trepidation, aspiration, uncertainty, hope, anger and love among other themes. John Carlos does not present himself in his books as a high-pitched clean and picture perfect person from the cradle until adulthood. Celebrities such as filmmaker Michael Moore and the Reverend Jesse Jackson praised Carlos' memoir.

Dr. Carlos also collaborated with CD Jackson Jr. on the compelling authorized biography entitled Why? published in 2000 by both men. The book delves into the childhood events that steered Carlos to the silent gesture that garnered the world's-wide attention—and the grave

aftermath which ensued. It is an authentic story of victory, determination, and principle and is valuable for any individual who has a thirst for knowledge about world history, sports and human rights. In *Why?* readers learn valuable information regarding historical events, such as the fact that 116, 000 African-American soldiers perished in World War I. The biography provides a great perspective of how sport, history and politics are intertwined with social ramifications.

*Why?* is a special and unique book featuring the thoughts of several members of John Carlos' family including his children. So, *Why?* is not only about John Carlos' story but also gives his loved ones an opportunity to voice their opinion. This is very important especially because of the impact Carlos' path had on his family. In his memoir and *Why?*, Dr. Carlos doesn't talk about the loss of his son, Trayvon who was murdered, perhaps because it was too painful.

Hence, the experiences that shaped John Carlos are intensely described by CD Jackson's authorized biography. The book brings to life the inner and external battles that Carlos experienced since his childhood, later as a young athlete who had to combat both racism and a learning disorder, [dyslexia](#). The fortitude of his personality and strong beliefs in equality and justice predominated over his wish for personal success. His grit was invaluable to him throughout his life, when personal tragedy hit him repetitively. Thus, John Carlos is without any doubt a resilient and courageous man. He went through a lot, both before and after the Mexico City event. As mentioned, his first wife Kim killed herself in 1977 circa ten years after the 1968 Olympic. The social/economic consequences (death threats, ostracism, unemployment, etc.) had taken a toll on her. He managed to raise his three children despite all the difficulties that occurred. The authorized biography exposes all of these events.

As stated, at an early age, John Carlos started to act as an activist in school and other social spheres, such as housing. He took bold, upright stands against bigotry and inequity. It is important to mention that his [dyslexic](#) diagnosis was given to Dr. Carlos during the segregation era. It would be very interesting to know if the same conclusion regarding a [learning disability](#) would occur if tests adapted to the reality of African-Americans had been administered, such as the tools developed by Dr. Robert Williams Ph.D., a founding member of the Association of Black Psychologists and creator of the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH).

In summary, Dr. Carlos' books narrate stories of major athletic victories, as well as smaller, but no less important, triumphs against daily injustices. Readers also learn (among other events)

Written by Patricia Turnier

Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

about his conversations with Malcolm X and the meetings at his mosque for five years. This is a poignant sentence Carlos shares about Malcolm X: "He challenged the legitimacy and seriousness of either of the two dominant political parties to take the realities of racism seriously." In addition, Carlos deeply regrets not having been present at the Audubon Ballroom the day Malcolm was shot. Dr. Carlos' books should be translated into several languages: French, Spanish, etc. We included them in our [top 20 books](#) for this fall.

Overall, Dr. Carlos was the Gold medalist for the 200 meters with 20s5 at the 1967 Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. As abovementioned, he won the Bronze medal at the 1968 Olympics for the 200 meters. The 1968 event became the most silent protest in the history of the Olympics. The three athletes decided to make a powerful silent gesture on the international stage. The famous picture of the Olympic 1968 event was taken by photographer John Dominis. The image and the symbolism of the picture speak volumes and say much more than any words ever could.

In 1982, Carlos was employed by the Organizing Committee for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles to market the games and operate as the liaison with the city's Black community. In 1985, he started to work as a track and field coach at Palm Springs High School. Since 2012, Carlos functions a counselor at the school. It is important to note that in every October since 1968, during times of both sunshine and rain, Dr. Carlos always gets a smile on his face. October marks the anniversary of his emancipation. Dr. Carlos' mantra is: "Stand up for what you believe in, even if it means standing alone".

Dr. Carlos plans to retire but he wants to remain involved in issues of social justice for the rest of his life. Dr. John Carlos is happily married to Charlene Carlos and lives with her in California. Dr. Carlos has sixteen grandchildren.

*I believe that one of the sexiest things is seeing a man running fast, especially at the Olympics. I have felt this way since childhood. My first kiss was when I was 10. It happened with an Afro-Canadian who could have become the Canadian Usain Bolt if he had pursued a career in athletics. He ran like a motorcycle. Instead he became a successful lawyer. I was fascinated with [the bionic man](#) during my childhood because he was another male who ran fast. In this regard, it is an honor for Mega Diversities to feature Dr. John Carlos, classified as one of the fastest men on the planet.*

*During fall 2013, the RFO Foundation ([www.fondationfro.com](http://www.fondationfro.com)) organised a web conference in*

## Exclusive Interview with the Olympian athlete: Dr. John Carlos Ph.D.

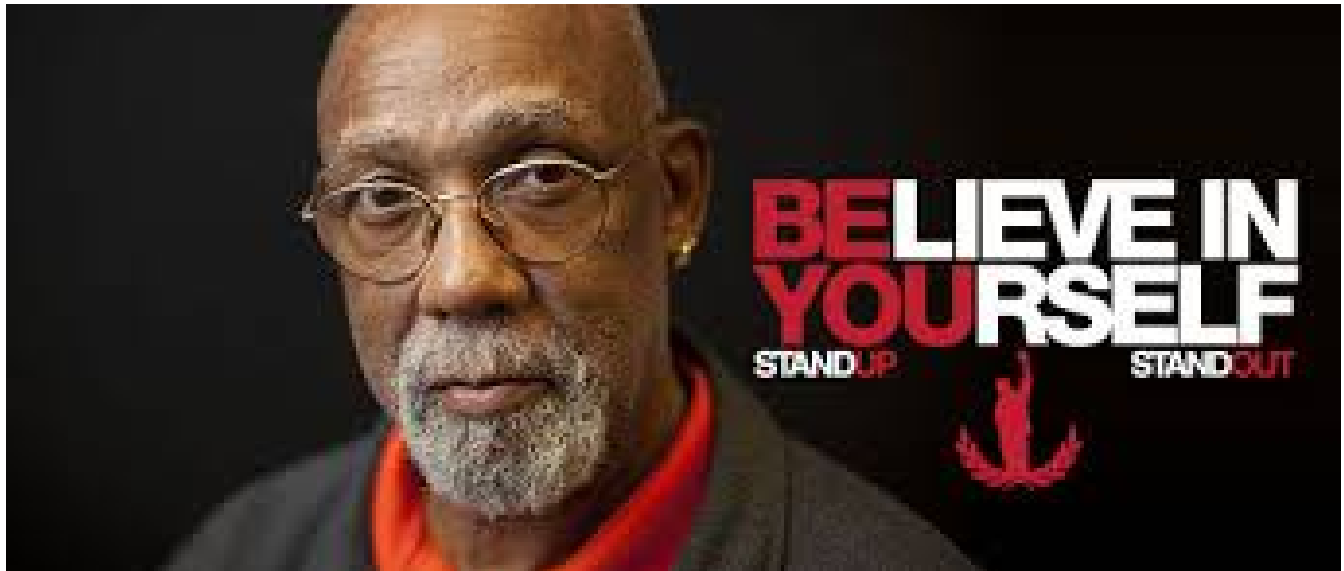
Written by Patricia Turnier

Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

*Montreal in honor of the 45th anniversary of the Black Power Salute. Dr. Tommie Smith was interviewed. We could see how moved he was to be welcomed by Canadians and it was amazing to witness how a young Afro-Canadian felt to have the opportunity to ask questions to Dr. Smith. We could see the light in this young man's eyes. I am convinced that this following interview with Dr. Carlos will inspire many other young people*

*In the subsequent discussion, Dr. Carlos shares mainly his professional life, including the 1968 Olympics events along with its aftermaths and gives advice to aspiring athletes. People have their own opinion as to what the silent gesture meant. We asked in the following interview what it meant to Dr. Carlos. It is important to mention that it was easy to reach out to him, he had no entourage. He has never forgotten where he came from. This is his first in-depth web interview from Canada which occurred on May 27th 2014.*



### PATRICIA TURNIER, LL.M TALKS TO DR. JOHN CARLOS Ph.D.:

**P.T.** In your book, you wrote that you love Montreal, my hometown. By the way, my city helped [Jackie Robinson](#) to break the glass ceiling in baseball with the Montreal Royals. You were part of the Canadian Football League where you played for the Montreal Alouettes. Can you talk about this experience and tell us what you cherish the most from Montreal?



**Dr. C.** I thought the people were beautiful; both inside and out. I enjoyed the lifestyle and their independent mindset compared to the Americans in that particular moment in history. Working with the Alouettes gave me the opportunity to bond with interesting individuals. I made some friends in the city and stayed in contact with them throughout the years. In addition, I thought that the Canadian Football League was an interesting concept. They had their unique playing style. It was a great prospect for me, but also very challenging. I was recovering from a leg injury in California when the general manager J.I. Albrecht of the Montreal Alouettes called me. He told me about the opportunity to come and play in Quebec. I thought it could be a great experience for my first wife and children.

For me, Montreal is like a Europe near the United States. In many ways, I observed similarities with the Old continent in terms of fashion and different languages. There people from all over the world who keep their cultures of their home country. I liked its European architecture. I also loved the history of the city. It has a special cachet.

I have to add that Canada has a special place in my heart, because it was in Winnipeg where I won the Gold for the Pan American Games in 1967 for the 200 metres. I also enjoyed the fact that in Canada, health was and still is accessible to everybody. I didn't have to worry about my medical bills for my family. Moreover, education is affordable. I think it would have been a great thing for my entire family if I had stayed.

**P.T. Why was it important for you to have the foreword of your memoir written by Dr. West?**

**Dr. C.** I believe that Dr. West is very well-read and brilliant. I felt that his words fitted well to my journey and would deliver its essence. I thought his prose would speak to many people, as well as to myself. I knew that no one else would do a better job for me and fortunately I was right. I adhere to many things he expressed and wrote throughout the years. In addition, he grasped my life struggles, my deeds and what I am all about.

**P.T. Tell us what thoughts you had before and after you raised your fist in 1968 (was it premeditated and so on), during this historical event. Also, please talk to us about the symbolism of this silent gesture in Mexico City.**

**Dr. C.** My first thought was to thank God that we had been successful in the qualifying process. I had first to run the 200-meter race to qualify for the Olympics in Tahoe. After, we had 30 days to prepare for the Olympics. We were able to meet the requirements for the finals and make it

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

among the top athletes. I believe that Mr. Smith and I were glad we accomplished our mission on the track to step into the rails of humanity. We needed to make a statement for human rights. We wanted to send a strong message to assess where we were and to reanalyze the condition of the human race. I also thought at that moment about my meeting with Dr. King (ten days before he was killed) in NY. He had wanted to go to Memphis to stand for people who could not advocate for themselves, using his non-violent philosophy. In addition, Dr. King was in favor of an Olympic boycott. It was discussed in the meeting. In this regards, we knew that our victory and struggles were bigger than us and we could not remain silent. We had to take a stand, in a non-violent way, to galvanize attention for the less fortunate in society.

Dr. King supported in a small way the Olympic boycott and after Memphis he was ready to help us on a universal basis. However, as we all know, he didn't make it from Memphis on April 4th 1968. I strongly believe that he was there with us in spirit on the victory stand.

Our silent gesture exemplified unification. Mr. Smith and I wore black socks and no shoes on the podium to represent and denounce African-American poverty in the United States. Tommie Smith had a black scarf around his neck for Black pride. Meanwhile, I wore a necklace of beads to signify the ongoing and chronic lynching of Blacks in the South of the U.S. and of those thrown-off the side of the slave ships in the Middle-passage for whom no one said a prayer. My tracksuit top was unzipped for solidarity with all the blue collar workers in America. In support, Peter Norman, the Silver medalist who was a White athlete from Australia, participated in the protest by wearing an OPHR badge.

**P.T. These are powerful statements.**

**J.C.** [Silence]. I can elaborate more about the symbolism.

**P.T. Yes, but before this, can you tell us if your gesture was premeditated?**

**J.C.** Not really. We just thought about making a statement that felt right. The only premeditated strategy that we thought about the collective boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games, which didn't materialise. We assessed many scenarios and thought about educating people regarding the importance of conducting a boycott.

We thought about making a statement of some sort. We were more interested in making a collective avowal via a boycott that would resonate for generations to come. It was difficult to accomplish for many reasons, such as the fact that many athletes had worked practically their entire lives to get to that level, and were not willing to jeopardise their long time goals. Others felt that they owed it to their people (church, family, etc.) to win medals. We didn't have the right to impose our beliefs. A vote was done and a decision was made. I realised that I didn't want to stay home and see someone else on the victory stand misrepresenting what I didn't believe in. So, I was willing to go and make the statement that I felt right to deliver.

About the symbolism, during the semi-finals I had a conversation with Mr. Smith about the avowal and the form it would take. We discussed the artefacts we could bring. He told me he had gloves with a black scarf, I said I could put on a black shirt and beads. We decided we would both wear our black socks. We made the choice to not wear our shoes to emphasize who we were representing. The black gloves became the most powerful and recognisable symbols we chose. They were not about Black Power.

It was great to see the black gloves on TV because it was the first colored Olympic televised historically. The color of the gloves represented the Black race worldwide. We were proud to show our race in a good light; it was a response to all the negativity that has been spread for centuries.

**P.T. Until now.**

**J.C.** Exactly! It is a continual phenomenon. About the fist, if you open it you will find five fingers that could represent five people with different ethnic backgrounds. We all need each other; our hands cannot function properly without all its fingers. There is only one race, the human race. We have to come together as one, unification is everything. We cannot operate individually. More specifically, in the context of the victory stand we conveyed a unique message by unifying ourselves with one statement. This represented the significance of the black fist. In addition, our fist to the sky showcased that we managed to raise ourselves and be up there in spite of all the hurdles.

Again, the scarf of Smith represented the symbol of all Blacks who were lynched in the South. The beads symbolised lynching and Blacks who perished in the Ocean (through sharks and so

on) during the transatlantic commerce. It was our way to say that our souls and heart stood with them. We wanted to express our loyalty this way toward them. Our black socks reminded people that the nation which presents itself as the greatest in the world and has the money to send men on the moon still has children who do not eat three times a day and have to walk miles daily with no shoes to go to school. We wanted to illustrate that we were greatly concerned for humanity. Overall, the silent gesture meant to me a quest for justice, freedom, equality, unity, and respect of our humanity for the Black world.

**P.T.** What really moved me was to learn in Tommie Smith's autobiography that he didn't have three meals a day as an athlete. He wasn't probably the only one and perhaps yourself experienced similar things. In addition, in your day there was no steroid use by athletes. It shows a lot of resilience, courage and fortitude to be among the top three in the world. This accomplishment was herculean and surreal because it happened under duress.

**J.C.** [Silence]. You have got that right!

**P.T.** Hats off to you guys!

**J.C.** Thank you! The credit has to go to my parents who made sure that my head stayed on my shoulders. They gave me their spirituality and wisdom. I believe that all my strength comes from them. I was just happy that I was able to represent them well in a dignified way. I don't believe our silent gesture was disrespectful, even if some people dislike it.

**P.T.** Can you deconstruct the myths surrounding the 1968 famous gesture of protest such as being a member of the Black Panthers Party, having your medal taken back by the Olympic Committee, etc.?

**Dr. C.** The only association that I have been part of all my life was the Catholic Church. I didn't need to join the Black Panther Party or any other organisation to distinguish right from wrong, or

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

to deal with my life issues. We were kicked out from the Olympic village but we stayed in a Mexican hotel. We never gave back our medals. We earned them and it is a legacy for our children. They are their medals. We met the standards and all the requirements so the medals are ours. It wasn't like people came to our doors and simply gave the medals to us. We worked very hard to get them and again we earned them by the grace of God. No favors were bestowed to us. We didn't cheat, take any drugs or do something out of line. They backed away, but to intimidate the future youth they told the world since then (for almost 46 years) that they retook the medals. They operate with blinders and we don't. We were and still are worried about equity in education, health care, housing and so on.

**P.T. You have been an activist since you were very young, growing up in Harlem. Readers discover this thoroughly in your autobiography. Where does your fearlessness come from? How has the youth reacted so far to your book and how does it speak to them regarding their current struggles?**

**Dr. C.** Again, as I said earlier, my parents were my rock in life. I took all my strength from them, my faith in God and myself. I think it is important to stick to your principals and tenets as long as it is the right thing to do. I strongly believe that my parents were instrumental in my growth for this part of my life. It is interesting that you are asking me about the perception of the youth, because the victory stand event happened almost 46 years ago. People have grown individually since then. Today's young people hadn't even been born at that point.

**P.T. I hadn't been born yet. [Laughs].**

**Dr. C.** [Chuckles].

**P.T. But the victory stand event resonated so strongly that future generations will continue to talk about it.**

**Dr. C.** Sure! This event speaks emotionally to people whatever their age and became a beacon. The issues we were defending are still current today. As I mentioned, we are still aiming for equity in health care, education, housing, etc.

**P.T. Do the teenagers and young adults tell you about what your journey means to them?**

**Dr. C.** Definitely! I received mails all the time. Some people who write to me are in high schools, others in colleges. They go through similar struggles: gangs and violence, high education costs, etc. Others had to read the books for their class and were inspired by my journey. They shared with me what they learned about strength and dedication, in other words about what it takes to achieve any goal and how they can apply these values to their own lives. Others were content to learn about the history of the time and about what was going on abroad within the context where the 1968 Olympics took place. The main reason I penned the book is because so many things have been written about me and I thought it was time to share my version of my story. Unlike you, most people haven't taken the time to call me to talk about the autobiography. However, many will write a lot of things about my persona without consulting me. Several people put things together (that they found on TV, the newspaper or elsewhere) and created fabricated stories as if they knew me. They don't have a clue of who I am and how I think.

**P.T. All my interviews are done with the participation of the interviewees.**

**Dr. C.** That's really professional and this approach makes you great in journalism!

**P.T. Thank you! I really take it as a compliment because I know you have dealt with multiple reporters during the decades.**

**P.T. Your latest book is relevant on many levels. For instance, when you talk about that during the segregation era at your school cafeteria you were served rotten food, it made me more deeply understand what happens to young students from inner cities. It is a subtle way to make children feel that they are second class citizens. Many get discouraged and drop out of school. Unfortunately, several schools in poor districts in the U.S. do not have the same facilities and so on compared to wealthier areas. The children know that.**

**J.C.** You are absolutely right and it is important to stand up against that! I hope that my book sends the message to the kids of today that it is possible to advocate in their own way with what is available today.

**P.T.** I spoke last winter in Central America to a former bank robber, an Afro-Latino (in his late fifties) deported from the U.S. who had become a new-born Christian. I discovered that he was practically illiterate. To be a former bank robber you have to be very smart. Your book made me understand more what he probably went through during the segregation era and why he didn't put much emphasis into education. So, he gave up on himself.

**J.C.** Someone can be poorly educated but it doesn't mean that the person is not intelligent. It is a question of equality, accessibility and having the opportunity to get a qualified education. Often we had to deal with people who made us feel dumb. You also have to take into account that he is a little younger than me. In his time, drugs invaded the streets more. People got into sex prematurely and had children with toxic substances in their system. Everything becomes a vicious circle.

**P.T.** Exactly! Without seeing the man, you understood his past right away. You grasp thoroughly what is really going on, because this Afro-Latino started to have children very early in his life.

**J.C.** I also believe that few teachers really seize the reality of the children that they are in contact with. Some are just disciplinarian (e.g. sending the kids to the principal's office) like the police or are just worried about assignments. There are even children under ten now who are being handcuffed at school. There is no bonding in these situations. Many do not live in the same neighborhoods as the children so they are oblivious of the struggles that the kids have to go through on a regular basis. It is like some policemen or policewomen in ghettos who won't communicate with citizens. A bond has to be established. The same applies in classrooms with children.

**P.T.** There are not a lot of Black role models such as scientists in books (encyclopedias, etc.) that show their contribution to society. Black history is neglected and this means that African-American children do not see people who look like them, it makes them lose confidence that they can strive.

**J.C.** Definitely! Our history has been buried and has only been discovered since the last decades. When kids do not see people who look like them as astronauts, physicists,

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

entrepreneurs and so on, it becomes hard for them to aspire to these professions and believe that it is possible to achieve these goals. Many grow up without seeing someone from their community who owns a hotel, etc. In addition, if you do not have access to teachers who understand your plight, it will be very difficult. Minorities have to go through a lot just to survive or exist.

There is hardly an acknowledgement in text books about the activist John Brown. There is a lot of miseducation going on and this is how prejudice remains, with a lack of understanding in terms of race relations that would help all of us evolve. There is little constructive criticism, and many people are just followers and go with the flow.

**P.T.** I think there are also unfounded fears for some to share the real history. For instance, the film *Roots*, recognized as the biggest series in the history of American history, met worries that riots would occur in your nation before it was broadcasted in 1977. These concerns were narrated by one of the directors in the DVD. In reality, only one fight happened in the entire country. There are people who even think that this show helped to break down some barriers because it touched many individuals from all walks of life. In addition, it was translated into several languages. It shows that worldwide, people need to be educated. In America, *Roots* became a teaching tool from kindergarten up until college. By the way, in the DVD celebrating the 30th anniversary of *Roots*, your 1968 protests among others are mentioned.

**J.C.** That is an interesting. Schools should definitely provide a more balanced view of American history.

**P.T.** What does it represent to you now to have an Olympic Salute monument of 23 feet at San Jose State University? Moreover, what does it mean to you to receive honorary degrees from CSU (in 2008) & San Jose State University (in 2012), both in Humanity?

**Dr. C.** First of all, about the statue, it is a great honor to have a replica of yourself especially as an alumnus of San Jose. I also think it is awesome to have it in a learning institution where students can see it because it is part of history. It is good to know that tourists all over the world can come to San Jose and take pictures of the statue. It wasn't easy to build the monument at the university. It was the initiative of the student body that raised the money required. To me, what is truly special is not the statue, but how it came about. Students on campus and some faculty members organized a movement that made the statue happen by raising funds over two



years. There is a love-hate relationship going on with the monument. On one hand, a lot of publicity was made, and on the other hand, the statue has already been vandalized three or four times (even in Australia, an airbrush mural of our trio on the podium painted in 2000, was under threat of demolition in 2010 to create space for a rail tunnel). It is important to mention that the monument has a blank 2nd place podium (where Norman would have stood). The reason for the absence of Norman's likeness from the monument was because he entreated that his space should be left empty so visitors could stand in his place and experience what he felt.

I would like to add that Grotz is the former student who initiated the student government resolution that led to the monument. He said these moving words about us: "They did something on the world stage that mattered so deeply". "You can be young and make a difference. That's what everybody can draw from it. It will spark something in your mind." So, I am touched to see that our silent gesture is still speaking to new generations and has meaning to them. I hope it will inspire others to combat ongoing iniquities regarding human issues.

Again, as an alumnus it is great that I received an honorary degree at San Jose and I am moved that I got another one from CSU. It represents a testament that my professional contribution and the 1968 event are recognized as an integral part of the American history, and as an important statement to protest against inequality regarding human rights issues. Finally, I have to say that the 'Dr.' in front of my name is important to me because I was diagnosed dyslexic during my youth. I often spend my days talking to kids about education and I wanted them to know it could be done. This achievement has the power to give them courage.

**P.T. You mentioned to the media that you now spend your days talking to children about education. Despite the struggles of athletes like yourself, Black ancestors and women like [Malala Yousafzai](#) , there are still many people worldwide (whatever their origins) who do not value education. What message do you have for them, and especially for the youth?**

**Dr. C.** I tell kids there are two types of food, not just to survive but also to set a precedent and/or a foundation for those coming after you. The first is obviously food you can eat, and the second one is education, in other words, food for the mind. Education is not limited to one field. It is about a wide range of knowledge and it has to be a lifelong process. It becomes a handicap for someone to think that he is through with learning. That person will stop evolving and growing while he will depend on others and maybe will be exploited or taken advantage of. This concerns everybody, whatever their social class. It is known that often the third generation of the wealthiest families lose their fortune because the skills and expertise were not taught and transmitted.

**P.T. I know that Malcolm X was very dear to you and you knew him. Last May 19th would have been his birthday if he was still with us. What do you think his assessment would be about Black America's situation (regarding racial, social, and economic equality) if he was alive?**

**Dr. C.** I think he would say the same thing than Harry Belafonte and I shared in the last few years. We came a long way in some aspects, but at the same time we did not improve enough. Malcolm X talked in his days about issues that are still relevant today: militarism, disparities in housing, discrimination in job hiring, high unemployment and underemployment rates, etc. The Civil Rights Act of 1957 and 1964, the 1954 Brown case, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, affirmative action are yet in jeopardy because there are still people out there who threaten to abolish these social gains or these people create cosmetic strategies (such as tokenism) or tactics (by backing up their arguments with biased studies, statistics or other forms of questionable data) to make the public think that discrepancies in terms of race relations are a thing of the past.

**P.T. My birthday is tomorrow (May 28th) and I share it with Malcolm X's late wife, Betty Shabazz but not the same year, of course! [Laughs out loud]! Did you have the opportunity to meet her?**

**Dr. C.** First of all, Happy Birthday to you!

**P.T. Thank you and I consider this interview like a birthday gift!**

**Dr. C.** My birthday is next week.

**P.T. So, we are both Gemini and happy birthday in advance!**

**Dr. C.** Thanks! I have to tell you something. Did you know that all the men on the victory stand were Gemini?

**P.T. [Laughs out loud] No!**

**Dr. C.** Peter Norman's birthday was June 15th, Mr. Smith's is on June 6th and mine is June 5th.

**P.T. That's special!**

**Dr. C.** Yes, and my birthday is so close to Mr. Smith. To answer your question, I met Betty Shabazz early in life. I thought that she was very supportive of her family. I saw the sparkles she had in her eyes when she looked at her husband. Shabazz was concerned with his safety. I detected that early.

**P.T. In your book, you expose the struggles you had after the Mexico event, and as already mentioned, I read Tommie Smith's autobiography which talks about similar issues. What is your assessment about the opportunities current athletes have after their sport career is over compared to what was available during your era? In addition, do you think that it is a myth or a reality that many Black athletes are encouraged in American colleges to focus on sports (while several institutions make millions of dollars off them) rather than on their education?**

**Dr. C.** When we went to Mexico City, there were good vibes, the sun was shining and people had nice colors on them. As soon as we did our silent protest, the sun left, a stormy hurricane erupted and the same individuals that I just described suddenly looked mean and bad. Their nice colors turned into mud. It stayed like this long after the event was over, in terms of what happened mainly with sponsorships and government. In addition, people were cold to us and turned their backs on us for various reasons. We were isolated. Big corporations were mad at us because they felt that what we did was anti-American and a betrayal. The government felt we disgraced the American flag. Other people (associates and friends) ran away from us for fears of reprisals. At times, it did hurt because certain people with whom I grew up with shied away. It raised questions because it was difficult to understand. The situation was also difficult for our children, who had to deal with kids who found out (by informers) in schools who their parents were. Moreover, our children had to deal with the animosity of some teachers who discovered information about their relatives. Families were broken, my first wife killed herself so and my children lost their mother. If it was difficult to deal with these issues as adults, imagine what it must have been like for the kids. We experienced underemployment and unemployment.

Written by Patricia Turnier  
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

When you have to support a family, it can take a toll on you given that in these circumstances, it becomes very difficult to take care of responsibilities such as paying the mortgage and so on. Often, I would be in a new job and the contract would not be renewed because again of informers.

**P.T. It makes me think of the popular quote in Black America “The last hired and first fired”. You were also treated like if you had a criminal record.**

**J.C.** You are absolutely right!

**P.T. Between the 1930s and the 1960s the economic situation could be very hard for a Black athlete, even after winning a medal Olympic. For instance, the financial situation became really difficult for [Jesse Owens](#) (after 1936) even though if he didn't protest overtly like you and Tommie Smith**

**J.C.** Jesse Owens had tremendous obstacles and they continued until our time. However, after our protest, he was used by the Olympic Committee to try to dissuade us with a written script... The scenario was the same. Jesse Owens was old school but we had to fight against the same kind of oppression that prevailed. Before he passed away, he shared with me that we were both fighting for the same thing. He had tears in his eyes. He had to run against horses to feed his family.

**P.T. I read about that. Do you think Black athletes have more opportunities now?**

**J.C.** It is a catch 22 situation with its intricacies. In certain areas, some have more opportunities. But as a whole, I think it still can be difficult. There are Black athletes who go bankrupt when their careers are over because of a lack of knowledge in investment which led to mismanagement.

Just because we had a George Jefferson on TV and a Dr. Bill Cosby/Dr. Huxtable it does not mean that everybody is living well. Most people appear to live large on TV. It is a fantasy. The same thing applies with basketball, football, baseball and so on. Some athletes are visible right

now, it is partially based on my history and other athletes from my era such as Muhammad Ali, who helped carve a path. We also now have colored commentators. But we cannot forget that an enormous amount of money is being made, and who get the biggest pieces of the pie? Today, several get multimillion dollars contracts. However, the most important thing is how well they will manage their money for the long-term, especially when they retire. How well do they apply the knowledge in financial literacy in terms of investment and so on? As mentioned, many became broke later regardless of the huge sums of money they were getting when they were playing. They do not have the luxury to think short term. There are risks as athletes. At any time, they can get injuries.

When I think of Michael Jordan, he made a lot of money by buying the Charlotte Hornets in 2010. So, there are things to learn from him. Michael Jordan has a strong foundation and didn't limit himself in sport. He has a college degree. He understood that he had to acquire an education. He completed his degree after he was already a multimillionaire. [Editor's note: After this interview, since June 2014, Michael Jordan was the first African-American athlete to become a billionaire after he increased his stake in the Charlotte Hornets].

**P.T. And what about education? I reiterate my question: do you think that it is a myth or a reality that many Black athletes are encouraged in American colleges to focus on sports (while several institutions make millions of dollars off them) rather than on their education?**

**J.C.** There are athletes who are academically equipped and disciplined. They will manage to get their degrees with their scholarships. However, many others won't be able to handle it because they didn't have the educational foundation. There are kids who end up in the 12th grade and can't read and/or understand data properly. There were unprofessional people who gave them improper grades since kindergarten. So, it is obvious that for these young individuals, the focus was on sport more than anything else. They end up in college stadiums with 140,000 people coming to watch them. The money that these kids are getting for their scholarships is crumbs compared to what the sports team owners make from ticket sales. In addition, a lot of money is being made with the hot dogs, liquor, the parking and so on. I am trying to illustrate that just with the first game; a tremendous amount of money is already generated. The institutions can make six million dollars with just one televised game, and they only provide a so-called \$200,000 of scholarships to the athletes who represent less than 5 percent of the universities' Black enrollment.

**P.T. So far, two documentary films were made about the 1968 Olympics Black Power salute. If one day, a movie is produced about it, who would you like to portray yourself,**

**and why?**

**Dr. C.** I would like [Common](#) to portray me because I believe he knows the social aspects of who I am with the political facets. I think [he](#) represents himself in a similar way as I also do. I believe he has a great presence and charisma on screen. I am totally confident that he would do a great job and that he would be able to capture my persona.

**P. T.** Well, I am sure that Common would be very pleased to hear that.

**Dr. C.** [Chuckles].

**P.T.** How is your relationship between you and Tommie Smith? Moreover, what about Peter Norman, before he passed away?

**Dr. C.** The Australian Peter Norman was my eternal brother. Smith and I were pallbearers at his funeral in 2006. He will be my brother for the rest of time. He proved himself to me 100%. After winning the Silver medal, he showed his solidarity at the ceremony by wearing an OPHR button on the podium. For this act of team spirit, he also paid a heavy price. He was: treated as a pariah upon his return to his country. He was subsequently completely shut out of the Australian track world.

About Mr. Smith, we are doing a lot better compared to the past. I would like to think that our relationship healed, mended and is becoming strong. I don't think that we had a real problem before not as much as people tried to make out. There are people who like to push the competitive edge in sports.

**P.T.** You have been fascinated with sport since you were very young. Can you name a few Olympians of all time that you admire the most and let us know why?

**Dr. C.** Wow, that's a good question. I would name first Jim Thorpe, the Native who won the

Olympics in 1912 for the decathlon. He was brilliant athletically. He could also play baseball and football. He was a great athlete in the Stockholm Olympics of that time. I admire the fact that as an American Indian he was able to get that far in spite of the historic trials and tribulations of his community. He managed to excel while having the hurdles on his shoulders that his people had to face. Next, I want to say Muhammad Ali as a boxer. I admire the fact that he was lucid to see what was happening around him. His travels allowed him to observe what was going on in different parts of the world and gave him a global perspective. He assessed all of that including the condition of Blacks in America. His path is amazing. He threw his medals into the river after 1960 and we were moved to see him decades later lighting the Olympic Flame at the Atlantic Olympics. He used his status to represent humanity. He did it with courage, stoicism and dignity. Ali discovered that he was revered worldwide not as a Black man but as a man. He is highly esteemed as a talented athlete, a gift from God. Ali was a leading heavyweight boxer of the 60s and 70s. He won an Olympic gold medal, defended his title 19 times and exuded his Black pride with dignity while defending human rights.

The third person would be Wyomia Tyus. She was the first woman to win the 100 meters in 1964 in Tokyo. She was only 19 at the time. She came back in 1968 and won again. She was a trailblazer in track and field. In fact, she was the first person of either gender to achieve these accomplishments. I even think she could have offered more beyond track and field but she wasn't pushed enough. I believe she raised the bar of what we could hope to achieve. It was marvellous! The 100 meters is the main event in the Olympic Games.

I would like to add a fourth athlete and certainly not the least: the Olympic champion, Wilma Rudolph. She was respected as the fastest woman in the world in the sixties and contested in two Olympic Games, in 1956 and in 1960. In the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome, she became the first American lady to win three gold medals in track and field in the course of a single Olympic Games. She rose up women's track to a major presence in America. As a member of the Black community, she is also considered as a civil rights and women's rights trailblazer. In consort with other 1960 Olympic athletes like Ali, Rudolph turned out to be an international star as a result of the first international television exposure of the Olympics that year.

**P.T. Here is my final question: for young people who want to follow into your footsteps, what does it take to become an excellent athlete?**

**Dr. C.** Firstly, they have to get in touch with the man in the mirror. They need to find out who they truly are and discover their natural gifts. Afterwards, their responsibility will be to develop their talents by working on them. They need to be willing to make sacrifices, nothing worth having comes easily. I do not believe in shortcuts in life. This is what Michael Jordan did in

basketball, and the same thing with Paul Robeson, Jackie Robinson or indeed anyone of us who believed in our potentials. We didn't allow naysayers to derail us. We perfected our crafts. It is important to surround yourself as much as possible with positive people who will support you to achieve your dreams and goals. You can also try to reach out to individuals who succeeded in the field of your choice to get as much good advice as possible. Personally, I work a lot with young people and I enjoy sharing my experiences with them.

I also believe your gift is not only for you but you have the duty to help other people develop their talent. It is important to share and by doing that you learn. It goes both ways. I know that God gave a gift to everybody and we have to be generous to partake it.

*[Editor's note: At the end of the interview, readers will find an excerpt of the book Why? where they can get a thorough response of Carlos' social prescription for the youth].*

**P.T.** I think it is also important to hear what other people have to say about our gifts and pay attention to it. Since I was 10, people used to tell me that I was a gifted writer but I didn't take this seriously. It took years before I woke up to it. I also like to give the example of [Madonna](#) that makes people laugh. She always dreamed of becoming a superstar as an actress, but people mostly like to see her performing as a singer.

**Dr. C.** Right! It is important to realise what your inner talents are and to work with what God gave you. It is never effective when you choose the wrong road in life. Many people take their gifts for granted and do nothing with it.

I also believe that whatever the path someone wants to embrace, education is the foundation of everything. Money comes and goes, but nobody can take your knowledge away from you. Education is hugely important.

More specifically for aspiring athletes, determination, perseverance, discipline and practice are highly important. You must always have a plan B because being an athlete can become very demanding on the body. It is possible to get hurt anytime. It happened to me. I got injured and had to retire and find a way to reinvent myself. Make sure that you are never in a position where you have nothing to fall back on.



## Exclusive Interview with the Olympian athlete: Dr. John Carlos Ph.D.

Written by Patricia Turnier

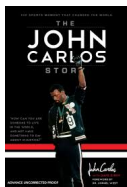
Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---

**P.T.** It was superb to speak to you and young people will be happy to hear from you.

**Dr. C.** I think that you are doing an excellent job! You are asking different questions comparatively to other reporters. Yours are deep.

**P.T.** Thanks! As mentioned, I know that you have encountered many journalists in your career, and English is not my first language, but I love challenges.

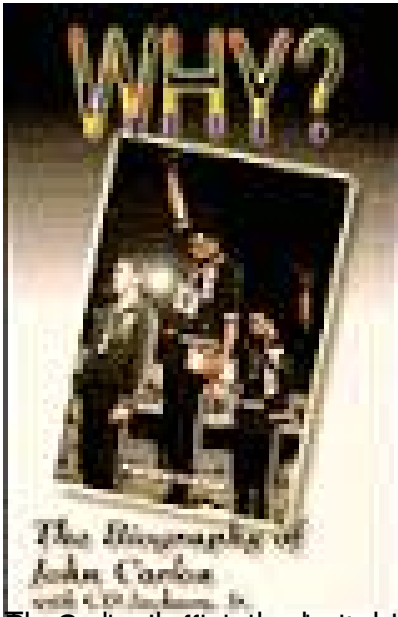


## Exclusive Interview with the Olympian athlete: Dr. John Carlos Ph.D.

Written by Patricia Turner

Monday, 29 September 2014 21:26

---



Since book offers the best information <http://www.why.com>, <http://www.why.co.uk> and <http://www.harnessednoble.com>  
<http://www.denardis.com/bar/en/news/1159/exclusive-interview-with-the-first-athlete-of-the>