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2006 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad

**“Patriotism and the Podium:
Examining Race, Sports and Civil Rights
in the
1968 and 2000 Olympic Games”**

Mary Ellen Lennon
Bard High School Early College
History
New York City, New York

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Introduction to project:

During the fall of 2006, I am offering a course at Bard High School Early College in New York City entitled, “Comparative Cultural History: Australia and the United States.” In this elective class for juniors and seniors we are conducting an interdisciplinary, thematic exploration of the connections between these two nations through the lens of culture and the unique contributions made by people outside the top echelons of governmental power: artists, authors, explorers, indigenous peoples, families, prisoners, workers.

This course is not a comprehensive historical survey. Nor is it a civics class, although discussions of governmental institutions and political arrangements are investigated. Instead, students explore a series of topics in a comparative conversation with Australian and American sources. The six topics studied this semester are: “Jail and Justice,” “Sport and Politics,” “Outlaws and Citizens,” “Rights and Duties,” “War and Memory” and “Art and Access.” Through the exploration of each topic and the interrogation of primary sources, students ask larger questions about the political ideals that form the foundation of national identity. The goal of the class is not to create two columns labeled “Similarities” and “Differences” in which the United States takes the center and Australia is reduced to an interesting point of comparison. Instead, by putting the two nations in conversation with each other it focuses and deepens our attention on the many conflicts between principle and practice in multicultural representative democracies.

The value of comparative history is the opportunity to find distance from familiar practices and to push ourselves to contextualize what we find “normal” or “correct.” A level of abstraction allows a more thoughtful and critical analysis of ideas. But why should New York City public school students study Australia? A land of crocodiles and poisonous snakes, Australia exists for many Americans as an exotic island continent somewhere on the other side of the world. Yet, upon closer inspection, Australia and the United States share several elements that make a comparative conversation very rewarding: both democratic nations began as English colonies in a “wild” unknown land peopled by ancient indigenous cultures; both nations celebrate “equality” as a founding core cultural value yet have long histories of minority struggles for inclusion in the body politic; both nations have an obsessive relationship with the place of sport in their national psyches; both nations have hosted intense national debates on the role of nuclear power; both nations can claim an environmental exceptionalism that continues to inform its development and identity.

The value of cultural history is the opportunity to rethink our understanding of what constitutes the political beyond Washington or Canberra. Culture, argues the British theorist

Raymond Williams, “is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” and as he elaborated in his 1956 book, *Culture and Society*, essentially political. As Stephen Dencombe explains, culture is both a “thing” and a “process”: “Both the culture we enjoy and the culture in which we live provide us with ideas of how things are and how they should be, frameworks through which to interpret reality and possibility. They help us account for the past, make sense of the present and dream of the future.” In other words, culture is how we interact with the world, make sense of the world and change the world. *Culture matters*.

For most of us, however, this is not how we are used to thinking about what constitutes the political. Casting a ballot is accepted as political action with meaningful consequences (well, if counted of course) while singing at the top of one’s lungs to the radio is usually discounted as simply leisure activity. Significantly, then, cultural historians advocate paying attention to popular music as much as national anthems. But for those who worry that a Madonna or Kylie Minogue pop song is now claimed to be more “important” than a decision by the Supreme or High Court, it is important to remember that the devil lies in the details. Culture is contradictory; it is malleable in a way that casting a vote is not. The consumer economy is very effective in marketing yesterday’s rebellion. (The tied-dyed T-shirts dancing at Woodstock “meant” youthful rejection of corporate capitalism in a way that the \$150 dollar designer ones sold at Bloomingdale’s today cannot.) The interesting question isn’t about intrinsic or self-evident meaning, but rather: *what are the political uses of culture in a particular historical context?* In this way, we can study how a song can be an agent of social control or a vehicle for political resistance (and yes, that includes popular songs too!)

Most importantly, taking culture seriously redefines our understanding of political action. In the U.S. context, this is essential for the historian who wants to understand “Americans” beyond voting populations. The fact is that for most of United States history the majority of people remained disenfranchised. Yet while groups such as women, immigrants and African Americans were legally denied the right to vote, they still acted in political ways. Expanding this scope of what constitutes the political is what the 1970s U.S. Feminist Movement meant by the rallying cry, “The personal is the political!” And while it is uncertain whether Ned Kelly really proclaimed “Such is life” from the gallows, tracing the *uses* of Ned Kelly and these famous words by continuing generations of Australians provides a unique entry point into Australian understandings of democracy and nationhood.

Thus, this course asks students to critically examine the words, art, music, movies, and marches of “ordinary” Australians and Americans hell-bent on expressing their multiple understandings of what it *means* to be Australian or American.ⁱ

Curriculum Sample from
“Comparative Cultural History: Australia and the United States”
Unit Two: “Sports and Politics”
Lesson: “Patriotism and the Podium:
Examining Race, Sports and Civil Rights in the 1968 and 2000 Olympic Games”

Rationale for Educators:

Below is a 3-week unit I completed with my junior and senior students enrolled in “Comparative Cultural History: Australia and the United States.” I began creating this unit with two goals in mind:

1. students would think critically about the Olympic Games as a *politicized* space
2. students would investigate the tensions between individual, group and national identities in multicultural democracies

The idea for this curriculum unit came to me this past summer in Australia as most fairly interesting ideas tend to do: in conversation with fascinating colleagues. My Australian hosts were remembering aloud the 2000 Sydney Olympics and I listened intently as they discussed a moment-by-moment account of Cathy Freeman’s victory in the 400m final. Their collective recollection ended with a vivid description of the two flags—Australian and Aboriginal—she wrapped around herself as she walked the track for her victory lap. Prompted by curious American teachers, our hosts briefly explained the public controversy over the Aboriginal flag. As I wrote notes (even casual lunch conversations warranted an open notebook on this trip!) my mind immediately jumped to a poster that hangs in my high school classroom. It is a black and white photo of the 1968 Olympic protest salute by African American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos. I thought about these two important and symbolic moments in sport separated by over 30 years. I wondered about the *meaning* of the Olympics. I questioned how national identity is constructed and what it means for a minority group in a democracy to claim a separate and unique identity. How can that identity be expressed? How does it challenge the mainstream national culture? How can the idea of citizenship incorporate such hyphenated identities? I knew I wanted to invite my students to explore these questions with me this semester in my comparative cultural history course.

While this curriculum unit as well as this course assumes that students have already taken American History at some point in their academic lives, it does not assume in-depth knowledge of African-American history. It certainly presumes that students are unfamiliar with Australian history. In writing this curriculum, the puzzle I faced was how to introduce students to the

complicated histories of race relations in the United States and Australia without remaining simply superficial.

Thus, I tried to keep our class discussion focused and specific by revolving the three-week unit around two unforgettable images. By supplementing the images with primary texts—mostly newspaper articles from Australia and the United States—I was able to keep lecturing at a minimum and instead allow the students to interrogate the meanings of the photographs themselves by reading articles and speeches from contemporary and historical sources. I gave essential background information when necessary and have included this for teachers in the “educator’s information” section. If teachers are interested in learning more about any part of this curriculum, I have included all the bibliographic sources I consulted this summer on my Australian Fulbright trip as well as the additional ones I found in my library as I wrote this curriculum upon return.

The student activities for each section are activities I have tried and found successful in motivating my students’ critical thinking. By using primary sources students are encouraged to ground their thoughts and opinions in reference to actual texts. They are forced to be more attentive to detail and much more rigorous in their arguments. I have included disparate opinions that should stimulate debate. As a teacher I am an adherent of John Dewey’s political philosophy that describes democracy as “social inquiry.” Democratic decision-making rests on discussion, consultation, persuasion and debate. Discussion deepens the knowledge base of the participants and leads to the answers necessary to solve social problems. The material covered in this curriculum unit is messy stuff; there are no easy answers. But I want to complicate the students’ preconceived notions of race and nation-building in a multicultural democracy and that can only come from contemplative study and energetic discussion.

I believe this curriculum may be adapted to many different classroom circumstances in grades 9-12 and early college. What I have tried to put together is a collection of materials that will facilitate a conversation about race, sport and national identity. While perhaps some teachers will try my script in its entirety, I anticipate that smaller pieces of it will prove useful to teachers intent on adapting the resources to their own ends.

Unit Lesson:
Patriotism and the Podium:
Examining Race, Sports and Civil Rights in the 1968 and 2000 Olympic Games



Two indelible images mark our memories of the 1968 and the 2000 Olympics: the protest salute of American sprinters Smith and Carlos in Mexico City and the smile of Cathy Freeman draped in both the Australian and Aboriginal flags in Sydney. These are multi-layered, symbolic images that draw the viewer into a deeper examination of the relationship of race and nationhood in both Australia and the United States. In this three-week unit of study students examine the multiple, significant and often contradictory “meanings” of these two photographs.

On the first day of the unit, students are invited to view the photographs and asked to free-write on what they “see” and what they “know.” Then, after three weeks of examination of primary and secondary sources investigating the histories of sport, civil rights and national identity politics in Australia and the United States, students are prompted once again to contemplate the photographs. Students completing this unit have described this second attempt at describing the photographs as “both easier and harder.”

It's easier because they have so much more to say, but harder, too, because the photos aren't so simple anymore. In general, on this last day students' earlier complaints of "It's just a running race!" or "Why does everything always have to *mean* something?" were replaced by the sound of intent pens scratching papers as students grappled with complicated national histories of racial injustice and struggle. At its heart, the unit challenges students to read images *critically* by placing a popular culture event—the Olympics—into deeper historical context and conversation.

PART ONE: The 1968 Olympics in Mexico City

I.

Educator's Background Material on the 1968 Olympics

The 1968 Photograph

The photograph is a powerful image of nonviolent protest. In this black and white image of the 200 meter-dash victory stand in the 1968 Summer Olympics, three men interrupt the traditional Olympic celebration of national pride and athletic skill with a nonverbal but resounding critique of racial discrimination. Two were African American sprinters from San Jose State College in California. One was a white Australian teacher from Australia.

Less than an hour before the photograph was taken, San Jose State athlete Tommie Smith had won the race in a new record of 19.8 seconds. Australian sprinter Peter Norman had taken the silver, narrowly but brilliantly beating out Smith's San Jose college teammate, John Carlos. It had been a heart-pounding demonstration of athletic heart, drive and skill.

When the three men emerged from the dressing rooms and crossed the stadium to the medal podium, no one paid attention to what they were wearing. Nothing in their solemn procession across the field suggested that this ceremony would deviate from the dozens already performed in Mexico City. The symbolism of the Olympic medal ceremony works to honor both the individual athlete and their home country. While the individual receives the medal on a ribbon hung around their neck to honor their superior performance, they do this wearing a national uniform. All of the athletes stand in respectful silence as the national anthem of the gold medalist is played and the national flag is raised. This traditional ceremony reinforces the category of "nationhood" as a foundational basis for the Olympics. In other words, athletes perform and win as "French" or "German" or "Mexican." When Smith, Norman and Carlos mounted the podium, they, too, wore their American and Australian team uniforms.

But the men had made significant changes to what they wore. Around their necks, Smith wore a black scarf and Carlos a string of African beads. Both Americans carried their sneakers to the medal platform and stood only in black stockings. All three men wore a button with the words, "Olympic Project for Human Rights" on their uniform jackets.

The Americans interrupted the traditional protocol of the medal podium as well. After the distribution of the medals, with the "Star Spangled Banner" as their cue, Smith

and Carlos raised their gloved fists in the air and bowed their heads to the ground. Norman gravely stared ahead. Newspapers broadcast the image across the globe. The photograph had entered history.

Later, Smith would explain the podium protest this way:

“My raised right hand stood for the power in black America. Carlos’s raised left hand stood for the unity of black America. Together they formed an arch of unity and power. The black scarf around my neck stood for black pride. The black socks with no shoes stood for black poverty in racist America. The totality of our effort was the regaining of black dignity.”ⁱⁱ

Additionally, the “Olympic Project for Human Rights” button worn by all three referred to was an organization begun by a former student-athlete and sociology professor at San Jose State, Harry Edwards, to protest the condition of the black athlete in America on the eve of the 1968 Olympics.

After the ceremony, the International Olympic Committee called for the expulsion of the two American sprinters. 24-year old Smith and 23-year old Carlos were pulled from the relays and banned from the Olympics for life. Smith was discharged from army service for “un-American activities” and both men struggled to find jobs in the States. For his act of solidarity with the Americans, Peter Norman suffered the criticism of his teammates and the Australian press.

Overwhelmingly, this act received critical treatment by the contemporary American press. Most famously, Brent Musburger of the *Chicago American* called the pair “dark-skinned storm-troopers” and berated their lack of appreciation for the opportunity to compete in the Olympics for the United States. In the last twenty years, however, popular opinion has reevaluated the event more positively as an important event in the African American struggle for equality. Several survey history textbooks include the photograph in their section on the 1960s and poster-sized copies adorn high school classrooms and college dormitory rooms. In October 2005, San Jose State University unveiled a statue immortalizing the two Americans. In October 2006, US Track and Field official Steve Simmons declared October 9 to be “Peter Norman Day” in America to commemorate the athlete’s death.ⁱⁱⁱ

Student Activity #1: Reading Pictures

1. Have students complete a 3-5 minute freewrite on the photograph. What do they see? What does it make them feel? Do they know anything about this photograph? If they don’t, what do they imagine is taking place?
2. After introducing students to the basic history of the protest on the podium, ask students to generate a list of questions that they have that the photograph and the basic introduction have raised for them. These questions can be listed and

recorded in the classroom as a tangible reminder of what the class hopes to learn in the next 2-3 weeks.

(My students originally raised the following questions. The questions were listed in the classroom and continually referenced. I never edited their questions, but wrote them down verbatim. However, many were “rewritten” by the students themselves as they read and learned more information. At any time, additional questions were added to the list.

Why did they do this?

What does “black power” mean?

Why would the Australian runner care?

What was the Olympic Project for Human Rights?

Did Smith and Carlos hate the national anthem? Did they hate America?

Did all black athletes protest at the Olympics?

Why were the Olympic officials so angry?

How could athletes at the Olympics claim they suffered discrimination in America?)

II.

Educator’s Background Material on the Historical Context of the 1968 Protest

The Modern Civil Rights Movement: from Nonviolence to Black Power

Understanding the image begins with a discussion of the African American struggle for civil rights in the United States. Despite the abolishment of slavery in the American Civil War, the nation resisted equality for African Americans. In particular, Southern states erected a powerful system of control and oppression called “Jim Crow” that ensured the legal, political and economic inequality of African Americans. The Supreme Court accepted the legality of state and local laws that required the segregation of the two races on public transportation and in public schools.

As they did before the Civil War, African Americans continued to protest the denial of their full citizenship rights. They created political organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to address legal inequality. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, these groups put continuous pressure on the federal government to implement civil rights legislation. They used the courts to confront the legal basis of segregation. This strategy of arguing the constitution took a significant and victorious turn with 1954’s *Brown v. Board of Education*. Up to 1954, the courts had long accepted segregated schools (as well as housing and transportation) to be both constitutional and “equal.” In the momentous *Brown* decision, the Supreme Court declared segregation in education unconstitutional:

"We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does...We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."^{iv}

Brown reinvigorated the protest effort against inequality and signaled the emergence of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Black and white Americans engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience to directly attack discrimination. The legalistic approach of groups like the NAACP remained important but they were dwarfed by the tremendous energy and moral imperative of the direct confrontations. Sit-ins, boycotts, freedom rides and marches captured the nation's attention. Such actions laid bare the depth of racial discrimination and illuminated the tragic gap between rhetoric and reality in the American promise.

Martin Luther King, a gifted Baptist preacher and founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), defined the movement's strategy by articulating a philosophy of nonviolent resistance even in the face of direct attack:

“(N)onviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time - - the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”^v

As the struggle continued in the face of seemingly intractable resistance on the part of so many white communities and a disappointingly slow or “cautious” response by the federal government, other black leaders questioned Martin Luther King's dedication to nonviolence and faith in the power of the United States government. Disillusioned by the slow implementation of the goals and ideals supposedly achieved by the civil rights movement, a growing number of African Americans turned to the philosophy of “Black Power.” New groups such as the Black Panthers, the Black Liberation Front and the Black Liberation Army advocated a radical restructuring of American society to achieve true economic, political and social justice. They rejected the nonviolent, integrationist, coalition-building approach of traditional civil rights groups. Instead they advocated black control of organizations: self-determination and self-management. Black Power adherents argued that Martin Luther King's dream of interracial solidarity remained as far away as ever and dismissed it as irrelevant to the future agenda of the black community.^{vi}

Student Activity #2: “Separate is Not Equal”

1. After reading the *Brown* decision <http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>, have students outline the Supreme Court's conclusion that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” How does the Court explain its decision? According to the Court what does segregation *do*?

2. Ask students to read Martin Luther King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech: http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance.html and discuss King's understanding of the power of nonviolent resistance.
3. Ask students to read Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech: www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm. For King, what does equality look like? For King, what does integration mean?

III.

Educator's Background Material on the Black Power Movement in the United States

Black Power and the Ideology of Separatism

The political slogan of "Black Power" gained national attention in June 16, 1966 during a protest march in Mississippi known as the "Meredith March" or the "March Against Fear." James Meredith, the first black student to successfully enroll in the University of Mississippi, had embarked on a 220 mile walk from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi on June 5th in hopes of demonstrating to the black community of Mississippi that they could walk to the voting booths without fear of violence. Tragically, 28 miles outside of Memphis a white man shot Meredith with a shotgun and put him in the hospital. Civil rights leaders and Americans from around the country hurried to complete Meredith's walk. A crowd 15,000 strong marched down Highway 61 led by Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 25-year old national chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Stokely Carmichael. Here, in Mississippi Carmichael would articulate his dissatisfaction with the principles and strategy of the mainstream civil rights movement led by King.

SNCC was an interracial protest organization formed by black college students in 1960 to facilitate young people's activism against racial discrimination across the South. SNCC had emerged from the courageous action of four black college freshman who sat down at an "all-white" lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Despite King's desire to fold the group within the confines of SCLC, SNCC had remained fiercely independent from the "parent" civil rights organizations. By the time he took his place next to King in the Meredith, Carmichael had seen his share of violence and the insides of jails in his efforts to register black voters and desegregate public facilities in the South. In one confrontation with the national guard, he had ingested an almost-lethal amount of tear gas. SNCC, like SCLC, advocated nonviolent resistance as the core of its protest strategy.

Yet tension over the strategy and ideology of nonviolence grew as white gangs attached the marchers along the smaller roads of Mississippi. At the beginning of the march, Martin Luther King had reminded the marchers of their dedication to nonviolence: "We have a power. And it isn't gone. And it isn't bricks. Anybody throwin bricks against state troopers and national guardsmen and people with machine guns is not only violent, they're foolish. This is not our salvation."^{vii} Yet along the road, many of the marchers began to return the punches they received. But it would be Stokely Carmichael who would fully articulate an ideological stance in opposition to King's. In

Greenwood Mississippi after Carmichael was arrested, jailed and then released hours later, he announced to the crowd:

“This is the 27th time I have been arrested—I ain’t going to jail no more. I ain’t going to jail no more. Every courthouse in Mississippi ought to be burned down to get rid of the dirt....The days of the free head-whipping are over, Black people should and must fight back....The only way we gonna stop the white men from whuppin’ us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain’t got nothin’. What we got to start saying now is ‘Black Power!’”

In response, a 600 person crowd shouted back “Black power!” A fellow SNCC member asked the crowd, “What do you want?” and the crowd yelled back, “Black Power! Black Power Black Power!”

This new slogan challenged SCLC’s established call of “freedom now!” and signaled a new consciousness in opposition to the mainstream civil rights program. Instantly the black power slogan caused a national fervor, mainly because fearful whites sensed the anger behind the words. For the media and most white Americans, Black Power meant “hatred of whites.” Most established civil rights groups were upset with the phrase and its message too. But for a younger generation the slogan captured what they were feeling and what they wanted.

What is the difference between the new slogan “Black Power” and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s cry for “Freedom Now”? They are compatible: both argued for the ideal of equality of opportunity. But they differed in both method and scope. How would this equality be achieved? And what would it look like? Black Power adherents (never a cohesive group) looked beyond the established goals of integration and legal equality as articulated by the mainstream civil rights movement. For traditional civil rights organizations, the vote was viewed as the key to power and equality for African Americans. Black Power adherents did not share the same optimism in the democratic system. Instead they argued for the idea of “self-determination” or “community control.” Believing that no white group or leader would ever allow African Americans significant decision-making power within white American institutions, Black Power argued that black empowerment had to come from black institutions.

Is this separatism? Yes. Black power rejected MLK’s vision of a harmonious, interracial community as articulated in his “I have a Dream” speech, rejecting the vision as first improbable and then ultimately irrelevant to the black community. (“I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood.”) It drew instead on an important and significant strand in African American intellectual thought--black nationalism and self-determination--as well as on the words of black leaders outside of the mainstream civil rights organizations like Malcolm X. Black Power activists saw little hope in integration as a means to achieving true and meaningful equality.^{viii}

Student Activity #3: Self-Determination

1. Ask students to read Malcolm X's speech "The Ballot or the Bullet" <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/malcolmxballotorbullet.htm>. Why is Malcolm X dismissive of the voting ballot as a tool for the African American community? What does he think "black nationalism" is the answer? What is the role of violence in his vision of black nationalism?
2. Ask students to read Stokely Carmichael's speech, "Black Power" <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/stokelycarmichaelblackpower.html>. What does Carmichael mean by the phrase "thalidomide drug of integration"? Why does he argue that black separatism is the answer?
3. Ask students to write an essay comparing King's message to that of Malcolm X or Carmichael. What does freedom look like for each leader? Compare their ideas concerning integration and separatism.

IV.

Educator's Background Material on Race and Sport in America

Black power and the Black Athlete

During the Black Power era, activists turned their attention to the sports arena. Activists' calls for the "empowerment" of black athletes clashed with the majority opinion of Americans who believed that the interracial sports teams of the 1960s categorically proved the *equal opportunity* available to African Americans. The mainstream press argued that interracial teams illustrated America's commitment to racial equality. While the Southern road to the voting booth might be bumpy, then at least the collegiate and professional playfield was smooth and even and racially-neutral. Yet here the ideological differences between the diverging strands of the civil rights movement were further illuminated. For Black power activists, equality wasn't simply a question of access, but of condition and experience. Despite the celebration of African American heroes such as Jesse Owens and Jackie Robinson and the deeply abiding faith in the promise and potential of sport to construct a racially harmonious future, black athletes and leaders criticized the sports-entertainment industry. They claimed professional and collegiate sports profited from black athletes' bodies; they claimed black athletes were limited to participation without power.

Yes, the statistics looked good: one third of professional football players, one quarter of professional baseball players and over one half of professional basketball players were African Americans in 1968. But, critics argued, coaches and managers were white. Black student athletes faced discrimination on their college campuses beyond the football field and few graduated within four years. Furthermore, more militant athletes questioned the usefulness of athletic contests and personal records when the larger black community—domestic as well as global—continued to suffer. Activists refused to see the sports arena as a non-political space.^{ix}

In the fall of 1967 a newly formed San Jose State student group, United Black Students for Action (UBSA) forced the cancellation of the first home football game against Texas-El Paso. The students, including future gold Olympian Tommie Smith, had threatened to picket the game if their demands for changes to campus policies regarding housing, admissions and athletics were not met. Despite a black population of 75 in a student body of 23,000, UBSA painted a vivid picture of 1000 protestors taking the football field in front of national cameras. The President of the University canceled the game despite the furious intent of California governor Ronald Reagan to use the California National Guard to prevent any assembly. Such direct protests spread across the country beyond the collegiate level. Black players refused to play in the 1967 American Football all-star game in protest of game city New Orleans' whites-only social clubs.

The football protest at San Jose was led a black sociology professor and former San Jose athlete named Harry Edwards. Inspired by the success of UBSA, Edwards founded the Olympic Project for Human Rights to organize a boycott of the 1968 Olympics believing that the Olympics could provide a global forum to dramatize the poverty and inequality of the international black situation. The general public overwhelmingly criticized OPHR and the boycott believing the Olympics to be an inappropriate forum for political protest. The commentary ranged from sympathetic bafflement to angry, racist diatribes. The boycott plan divided the black athletic community as well. Edwards and the Olympic Project compromised, suggesting that all black Olympians should protest in any way they believed was right. Tommie Smith and John Carlos' protest centered on the medal podium.^x

Student Activity #4: The African American Athlete

For students to fully investigate the meaning of the podium protest, starting with HBO's recent documentary paves the way for a closer look. Depending on the time constraints and the student's reading levels, teachers may choose from a large quantity of sources to encourage students' critical analysis of the "meaning" of the moment. Available secondary sources on the protest are excellent. Contemporary articles from Time, Newsweek and Sports Illustrated give students a richer understanding of the debates raging around the Olympics and the role of the African American athlete and the political space of the Olympics in constructing national identity. Tommie Smith's autobiography is due out in Spring of 2007!

1. Have students compare the following two sources and identify competing “meanings” of Smith and Carlos’ action in 1968:

SOURCE 1:

**STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 18, 1968**

“...Two United States athletes deliberately violated the universally accepted principle by using the occasion to advertise domestic politics....such incidents by other members of the United States team can only be considered a willful disregard of Olympic principles that would warrant the severest penalties at the disposal of the United States Olympic Committee.”

SOURCE 2:

**“Bitter Price of Olympics’ Iconic Image”
*Los Angeles Times, Oct 17, 2003***

It is 35 years since the Olympic protest of Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Both later paid for it, writes Steve Dilbeck in Los Angeles. Evening is still coming as Tommie Smith sits on a wooden bench and looks over the Santa Monica College track, his young charges heading off for the day while the football team continues to work out. He gives them all a long look, smiles a peaceful smile.

"None of these kids know who I am," Smith said. "They don't have the slightest idea. To them I'm just 'coach'."

In the late afternoon, John Carlos is trying to talk on the phone from Palm Springs High, but he has to keep barking out instructions to students. Carlos, too, found few knew who he was when he arrived on campus.

"When I came here 17 years ago, they didn't particularly know," Carlos said. "A few years later a textbook came out and they happened to see my picture and name in the history book."

The defining moment that elevated Smith and Carlos beyond American sports figures and into history books happened 35 years ago yesterday in Mexico City. It was during the 200 metres victory ceremony at the 1968 Olympics. Smith had won in world-record time; Carlos had captured the bronze. As they stood on the victory platform and the US anthem began, they bowed their heads, and, each wearing a black glove, raised a clenched fist in a black power salute. Australia's Peter Norman, who won silver, wore an Olympic Project for Human Rights badge in support of the pair. It remains one of the most vivid Olympic images - a picture once seen, never forgotten. It was a courageous, non-violent protest, benign but impassioned dissent. They meant to bring further attention to civil rights issues, to give pride to African-Americans, and they succeeded. But the reaction was as swift as it was negative. In the US there was outrage from many white Americans. People saw heads bowed as disrespectful towards the American flag. They mistakenly saw the clenched fists as supportive of the Black Panthers. The Associated Press report described them "in a Nazi-like salute". Chicago columnist Brent Musburger called them "black-skinned storm troopers". The outspoken Carlos made the kind of comments that only inflamed the establishment. After the ceremony he said:

"We're sort of show horses out there for the white people. They give us peanuts, pat us on the back and say, 'Boy, you did fine.' "

The International Olympic Committee demanded the US Olympic Committee ban them from the Games, but it refused. The next day the IOC said if the sprinters were not banned, the entire US track and

field team would be barred from further competition. The USOC caved in. Smith and Carlos were withdrawn from the relays and expelled from the Olympic Village. When they returned home, Smith and Carlos were ostracised. Jobs became scarce. They received death threats and their homes were attacked.

"One rock came through our front window into our living room, where we had the crib," Smith said. "It seemed like everybody hated me. I had no food. My baby was hungry. My wife had no dresses."

Even today, there are those who remain angry and full of hatred.

"There are still threats," Carlos said. "I was never concerned about those punks. I just let them know it will be remembered, that life doesn't stop when you leave this planet."

After graduating, Smith was given an honourable discharge from army service for "un-American activities" That probably did him a huge favour, since the Vietnam war was raging and the body count growing.

"I was going to 'Nam," Smith said. "I could see myself in rice paddies. I believe there's a God. Sixty-eight had its downfall, but it had its protection for me. I might not be alive."

Carlos had two brothers serving, but after his protest both were immediately discharged. Smith borrowed money to complete his education and get his teaching qualification. He tried gridiron for a few years with the Cincinnati Bengals, then finally got a job as a track coach in Ohio. In 1978 he moved to Santa Monica College, where he has been a social science and health teacher, and coaches track and field. Carlos had an even more trying time, working as a security guard and bouncer, among other jobs.

"I'd get minimum wage and then go to Vegas and roll the dice to get it up to something to feed my family," he said. "We had to chop up furniture, the kids' beds, to stay warm."

Looking back, the first thing that comes to him is basic.

"That I survived," he said. "That I still have any sanity. "My first wife is deceased as a result. She took her life because she couldn't deal with the pressure from the results of Mexico."

Smith, one of 12 children, was born in 1944 in Clarksville, Texas, where his father was a "dirt farmer". After the family moved to California, Smith would help in the fields for up to 10 hours a day, even as he began to excel athletically in high school. His talent won him a scholarship at San Jose State and he was soon a world-class sprinter. When he returned from Mexico, he went to visit his father, still working the fields. His father could not read but had heard people were angry at his son.

"He kind of looked at me, looked up and down, and said in his southern drawl: 'You know, I've been hearing a lot of things about you. Everybody been telling me you did something wrong. You stuck a hand up or hit somebody or something.' "I said that's not truthful. He said: 'Well, you're telling me that and I'm going to believe you. You're my son.' First time I shook hands with him in my life."

Carlos is from Harlem, where his father was a cobbler and his mother a nurses' aide.

"My mom and dad never saw me run a single race," Carlos said. "They were always working every weekend. They were just trying to raise us."

One of five children, Carlos lived with his family in an apartment behind his father's shoe store and across from the Savoy Ballroom, where the best big bands and jazz groups of the day played. Carlos and his friends would help people out of cabs or sing and dance outside the club. "We were out there hustling," he said. Then he would retreat to his apartment, where he could hear Duke Ellington lead his band or Frank Sinatra sing. Like Smith, Carlos was a multisport star, who ultimately wound up at San Jose State. People often assume the pair were great friends but, in truth, they were never close. They never competed at the same time at San Jose State. They never forged some great plan should they both make the podium. At best, they are cordial to each other.

"I don't think John Carlos likes me, even now," Smith said. "I don't think Carlos likes very many people. That's just his demeanour. I'm more of a human person. I will not sit and talk to him. I talk to him on the phone."

Smith lives near Los Angeles, Carlos in Palm Springs, but they have never been to each other's home. And to this day, they disagree on exactly what happened in Mexico, whose idea the protest was. Harry Edwards, another former San Jose State athlete, had formed the Olympic Project for Human Rights and wanted black athletes to boycott the Games. Before the team flew to Mexico, OPHR members decided to compete and protest individually. In the 200m, Carlos who had beaten Smith in world-record time at the trials led early before Smith closed to win in 19.83, still a world-class time. But a stunned Smith said he heard Carlos claim he allowed him to win because the gold was more important to him. Smith said his wife later confronted Carlos and he said it was true. Carlos said: "Tommie can say whatever he wants. All I can say is, I respect Tommie Smith as one of the greatest sprinters in Olympic history." The two also disagree on whose idea the podium protest was. After the race, the two and Norman had to wait two hours in a

tunnel before the ceremony. Smith said he had the gloves and was trying to determine exactly what to do with them.

"The thought process was of power or strength, and I didn't know how to do it except just hold my hands up like in church," Smith said. "I've been religious all my life. Praise God with your hands up in church, with your head bowed. I thought this would be a good thing for me to do. "So I told John: 'This is what I'm going to do. I have another glove if you want it. You are welcomed to do, and you do what you think is necessary.' I said if you want to do it, just watch me and follow my lead."

Carlos tells it differently: "He had the gloves, I had the idea." While Smith said his head was bowed in prayer, Carlos said his was in reflection. "I reflected on my father, who had fought in the the First World War. I reflected on when I was seven or eight and my mother would be working a lot of nights and away from her family. I reflected on the ignorant-ass teachers sent into the urban parts of the city who had no business being there. There was much to reflect upon."

What both agree on is, despite everything, they have no regrets. These two supposed radicals, combative outsiders, have spent their lives teaching the young. Both remain very religious.

"They wanted to build us to be arrogant, militant, unruly African-Americans," Carlos said. "Anything but individuals serious about life, serious about their country, and its responsibilities to its citizens. "People looked at us like we were subversive. We were like birds busting out of a cage."

Smith said: "I was always an advocate of equal rights. Not that I wanted to whup the white man, or get whupped by the white man, because I saw that happened to my father. I wanted to be equal to the man doing the whupping. Give me equality."

Yesterday both were due at San Jose State, where a ceremony was planned to honour their protest. The school hopes to raise funds to erect a statue next year.

"What's so surprising about it is, on a positive note, it's the brainchild of a 23-year-old white student," Smith said.

Thirty-five years have passed since two sprinters made a stand, made a difference, made history.

"We still have a way to go," Carlos said, "but we can see some distance for where we were."

2. Have students watch *Fists of Freedom: the Story of the '68 Olympics* (HBO Films, 1999, 60 minutes) and add questions to the class list.
3. Have students read the following 1998 interview with Harry Edwards www.colorlines.com/article.php?ID=118&limit=0&limit2=1000&page=1 and identify his understanding of the specific condition of the black athlete in America in 1968.
4. Advanced students may read selections of *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (1969) by Harry Edwards.
5. Advanced students may read chapter 3 of Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph But the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete* (2002) or a chapter from Douglas Hartmann's *Race, Culture and the Revolt of the Black Athlete* (2003).
6. Have students read Kenny Moore, "A Courageous Stand." *Sports Illustrated*, 5 August 1991 and the article's second installment, "The Eye of the Storm." *Sports Illustrated*, 5 August 1991. Put it in conversation with the two sources available above. What do the students think the Olympic ideal is? What should it be?

7. Have students read sources from the contemporary debate. I have only included a few that have proven interesting to my students. Bass and Hartmann's bibliographies are a rich resource for additional primary documents.
 - “Should Negroes Boycott the Olympics?” *Ebony* 23 (March 1968).
 - Jeremy Larner and David Wolf, “Amid Gold Medals, Raised Black Fists,” *Life*, 1 November 1968.
 - Tommie Smith “Why Negroes Should Boycott the Olympics,” *Sport*, March 1968.
 - Brett Musburger, *Chicago American*, 19 October 1968.

V.

Educator's Background Material on the Silver Medalist

The Question of Peter Norman

Peter Norman's role in the protest is an interesting one that allows students to investigate the meaning of solidarity and the international basis of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. While OPHR, Edwards and Smith argued for the link between African American athletes and black people everywhere, Norman's request for an OPHR button demonstrated his belief that their struggle was his as well. In February 2007, filmmaker Matt Norman (Peter Norman's nephew) will release his documentary, “Salute-the Peter Norman Story” <http://www.salutethemovie.com/>.

Peter Norman was a 26-year old teacher and member of the Salvation Army when he competed in the 1968 Olympics. In subsequent interviews he humbly downplayed his role in the protest but always stressed his solidarity with the fight for worldwide racial equality. In the following decades, he kept in touch with Tommie Smith and John Carlos and attended commemorative events in the States. Smith and Carlos attended Norman's funeral where they heralded his courage. U.S. sprinter Michael Johnson wrote a letter to be read at the funeral calling Norman's action in 1968 “the most courageous and selfless moment in sport.”^{xi} Representatives of USA Track and Field declared October 9th to be “Peter Norman Day” in America. His Australian record still stands today.

Student Activity #5: Peter Norman Day

1. Have students read the following two newspaper articles and then discuss their ideas concerning Peter Norman's motivation.

SOURCE 1:

“Human Rights and Gamesmanship from Peter Norman,” John Coomber, *The Australian*, October 3, 2006

If he hadn't been born with swift legs, Peter Norman, who has died at the age of 64, would never have had the opportunity of doing his bit for American civil rights.

As a 26-year-old, Norman found himself on a three-man stage in Mexico City in 1968 with the eyes of the world on him.

He was on the victory dais after the 200 metres final, in which the Australian had won a surprise silver medal.

Beside him were Olympic champion Tommie Smith and his fellow black American John Carlos, who had won the bronze medal.

As the strains of The Star-Spangled Banner rang out over the stadium, the two Americans bowed their heads and raised gloved fists in protest at the treatment of blacks in the United States.

Norman did not join them in the Black Power salute which so outraged authorities in the US. But he was with them in spirit.

The young Australian knew what they were going to do and offered them his support. On the dais he wore a badge of the Olympic Project for Human Rights, and it was at his suggestion that they each wore one of Smith's black gloves.

The image of the three of them on the dais is one of the most enduring and dramatic in Olympic history.

The world was a very different place in October 1968. Martin Luther King had been in his grave only six months and it was just a year since Australians had supported a referendum to give Aborigines the right to vote.

Norman admired the courage of the Americans, who knew they would be expelled from the team and sent home in disgrace.

"They knew what would happen to them, yet they never deviated," Norman said later.

"To me, that made them martyrs."

Carlos also saw Norman as a hero.

"To wear the badge as a white individual, it made the statement even more powerful," he said in an interview with the New York Times in 2000.

"Peter became my brother at that moment."

There is another side to the story which is not so well known.

Although he was a member of the Salvation Army, Norman was not above using a little gamesmanship to help him win the silver medal.

"They were on the blocks and Carlos was very immersed in the start when a phone rang somewhere nearby," Australian Olympic historian Harry Gordon recalled today.

Norman turned to Carlos and said: "That'll be for you, John. You'd better answer it."

The incident broke the American's concentration and may have contributed to his finishing behind Norman, whom he had blown past in the semi-final.

"Peter was a highly principled man," Gordon said.

"But he knew they were better sprinters than him, and he delighted in breaking their concentration."

SOURCE 2:

“Track Soulmates Honour 'The Man'” Ron Reed, *Herald Sun*, October 10, 2006

PETER NORMAN
1942 - 2006

Speaking on tape at his own funeral yesterday, Peter Norman hoped his epitaph might feature the word respect.

Never has a dying wish been more sincerely honoured -- or deserved.

Norman's soul brothers from the drama that immortalised his name in Olympic history 38 years ago, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, made the long trip from the US to Williamstown town hall to say how much they admired, loved and, yes, respected him.

They were accompanied by a senior official from USA Track and Field, Steve Simmons, who read a written proclamation declaring yesterday's date, October 9, to be Peter Norman Day in America.

"In the 170-year history of American athletics, we have never done this before," Simmons told nearly 1000 mourners.

And the greatest track athlete of an era way past Norman's own, Michael Johnson, sent a message. Norman was 64 when he died of a heart attack at his home last week.

The farewell was always going to attract a who's who of local track and field and Olympic circles, but the presence of the Americans added a powerful extra dimension.

Smith and Carlos are household names because of their Black Power protest on the victory dais after the 200m at Mexico City in 1968.

Smith, the winner, and Carlos, the third placegetter, demonstrated against racial discrimination in their country by bowing their heads and raising one black-gloved fist each.

Norman, then a young Melbourne schoolteacher and Salvation Army officer given to wearing slogans such as "God is love" and "Jesus saves" on his tracksuit, supported them silently by wearing a borrowed civil rights badge.

Simmons said the photo of the incident had been listed as the seventh most famous image of all time -- up there with the moon landing.

Smith and Carlos were sent home in disgrace and vilified for years and Norman copped flak in Australia, but the depth of the friendship that emerged from the ordeal was there for all to see and hear yesterday.

This was not just the brotherhood of sport writ large -- it was about much, much more.

Smith has always been known as an introvert, and so he kept his eulogy brief, focusing on his friend's integrity. "He believed right can never be wrong," he said.

Carlos's heartfelt tribute, with its strong and religious theme, was a masterpiece -- one of the most stirring funeral orations most had heard. He spoke of how he and Smith -- "two black individuals, disenchanted with life" -- had received death threats in the ugly aftermath of the protest.

"The average young white individual would never have had the nerve, the gumption or the backbone to stand there with us," he said.

"But not Mr. Norman. He said 'I stand with you, not behind you'."

"When the anger and that viciousness came, I could share it with Tommie Smith and he with me. But who could Peter Norman share it with?"

"He was a lone soldier and many in Australia did not understand how this young white man could stand there with these black individuals.

"He didn't stand with his fist in the air, he stood to attention -- he stood for Australia."

Carlos said he hoped everyone would "go and tell their kids the story and the courage he showed. Remember Peter Norman the man, and make sure you use that phrase -- the MAN."

2. Ask students to review their written essays comparing the words of Martin Luther King with Malcolm X or Stokely Carmichael. How does Peter Norman's participation and his relationship with Tommie Smith and John Carlos complicate our understanding of Black Power and black nationalism?

3. Ask student to discuss the significance of a "Peter Norman Day" in the United States. Is it a meaningful gesture? Why or why not?

Final Check:

At this half-way mark in the curriculum unit students should feel comfortable discussing:

1. the divergent ideological spectrum of African American activism in the 1960s
2. the meaning of "self-determination," "nationalism" and "separatism" as advocated by Black Power activists
3. the critique of "integration" and "assimilation" by Black Power activists
4. the relationship of Tommie Smith and John Carlos' protest on the podium to the larger context of the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s
5. the public outcry over Smith, Carlos and Norman's actions on the podium
6. the demands articulated by Smith and Carlos' protest

PART TWO: The 2000 Olympics in Sydney

I.

Educator's Background Material on the 2000 Olympics

<http://www.gamesinfo.com.au/>

Two Flags

On September 15, 2000 Aboriginal Australian sprinter Cathy Freeman lit the cauldron in the Olympic Games opening ceremony. Ten days later she took the gold in the 400m in a blistering 49.11 seconds. With her “cos I’m free” tattoo hidden beneath her green and white spandex uniform, Freeman walked her victory lap with both an Australian and an Aboriginal flag wrapped around her shoulders. She smiled broadly and waved continuously as the crowd of over 112,000 cheered back. Then she unlaced her red, yellow and black Nike spikes and walked in her socks off the track and into history.

This was not the first time Freeman adorned herself in the two flags. In the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Canada, she had waved both flags as she celebrated her victory laps after the 400 m and the 200m. Afterwards, she was severely chastised by the Australian Commonwealth Games chief Arthur Tunstall for displaying a non-national flag. Freeman was warned that doing so in the Atlanta Games would bring her into direct conflict with Olympic rules and put her in danger of losing her medals. Despite a verbal exemption by the Australian Olympic Committee, Freeman carried only the Australian national flag after winning the silver in Atlanta. This decision elicited the anger of Aboriginal leader and 1960s Freedom Rider Charles Perkins who accused her of “symbolically” turning her back on the Aboriginal people: "Is she going to be a black white person and pretend she's somebody else?"^{xii}

In 1995, the Commonwealth Government recognized the Aboriginal flag as a “flag of Australia” under the Flags Act of 1953. “It’s not a non-Australian flag, it’s an indigenous Australian flag and people have been familiar with it since the ‘70s,” Freeman explained. In July 2000 right before the Games, Freeman gave an interview criticizing the Howard Government’s Aboriginal policies.^{xiii} Freeman did not receive any official criticism from the Government or Olympic Committee for wearing the two flags in Sydney. The popular press, however, debated her victory walk *after* the race as much if not more than it contemplated her golden run.

Student Exercise #1: The idea of a flag

1. Have students write a free-write on some variation of the following questions: what is a flag? What is its purpose? What does it do? Does a flag have meaning? Then ask students to consider why the flag is a political object. Ask them if they consider it a cultural object as well. Is there a difference?
2. After introducing students to the basic history of the Freeman’s flag-draped victory walk, ask students to generate a list of questions that they have that the photograph and the basic introduction have raised for them. These questions can

be listed and recorded in the classroom as a tangible reminder of what the class hopes to learn in the next 2-3 weeks.

(My students originally raised the following questions. The questions were listed in the classroom and continually referenced. I never edited their questions, but wrote them down verbatim. However, many were “rewritten” by the students themselves as they read and learned more information. At any time, additional questions were added to the list.

Is she proud of both flags?

Is she angry at Australia?

Did anyone boo her from the stands?

What was it like to grow up Aborigine in Australia?

How can a country have two flags?

Who cares what she wears—and why is it in the Olympic rules?)

II

Educator’s Background Information on the Aboriginal Flag

Symbolizing a Nation

An Aboriginal flag debuted at an Aboriginal Day street parade in Adelaide in 1971. The designer, Luritja artist Harold Thomas, created the flag for very practical purposes: "In the marches of the late 1960s and early 1970s, we were outnumbered by non-Aborigines with their own placards and banners. I decided we needed to be more visible and so the flag came up. It made us a distinct group." The colors of this flag are vibrant and full of meaning: black represents the Aboriginal people and their past, present and future, red represents the red desert earth and the Aboriginal connection to the land as well as the blood spilled in the fight for freedom and yellow represents the source of life, the sun.^{xiv}

The marches that inspired Thomas to create the flag were important demonstrations in the indigenous people’s campaign for land rights. In the late 1950s and early 1970s new activist groups, such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) and Australian Black Power engaged in nonviolent direct action to raise awareness of the Indigenous struggle for land rights and against unequal wages, impoverished living conditions, startling incarceration rates, and nonexistent educational opportunities. The Aboriginal flag gained nation-wide and international attention during the Aboriginal Tent Embassy protest in January 1972.

In 1971 the Aboriginal Advancement League petitioned the United Nations to recognize its claim for land rights and compensation against the Liberal Government of William McMahon. By appealing to the international organization, protestors presented themselves as a distinct nation stripped of its land by the Australian Commonwealth. McMahon denied the claim and dismissed the notion of Aboriginal “land rights.” Instead the Liberal Government presented a policy of land leasing. On January 26th, activists set up tents on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra to illuminate the poverty and substandard housing of their community. Drawing a parallel between their makeshift embassy and the numerous foreign diplomatic missions in Australia’s capital, the Tent Embassy symbolically suggested the Indigenous peoples’ status as “foreigners in their

own land.” The Tent and the flag symbolically linked the diverse groups into a united community of Aboriginal Australians and asserted their distinct “nationhood” from the Commonwealth. (“One mob: Represents Aboriginal people of Australia and a call to stand united as one.”)^{xv}

Student Exercise #2: What’s in a flag?

1. Have students imagine an additional flag that they would wear in addition to their national flag while walking their victory lap in the Olympics. What would this second flag represent? Students may write or draw but they need to articulate the part of their identity that they see reflected in this imaginary or authentic second flag.
2. Have students examine the “Aboriginal Flag” section on the AusFlag website: <http://www.ausflag.com.au/flags/ab.html>. Advanced students might explore the connections between the claim for an Aboriginal flag in 1972 and AusFlag’s contemporary fight to create a new national flag (without the British Ensign.) What does a flag mean to AusFlag protestors?
3. Have students read the following first hand account of the Tent Embassy Protest:

SOURCE 1:

“Embassy in a Tent”

Chica Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*, May 20, 1997

ON January 25, 1972, the Liberal Party came out with its policy on land rights.

A small group of Aborigines were down in Macquarie St. The legislation meant Aborigines could lease their own land. We disagreed -so that night we had a meeting with the "Black Caucus". We met at Burton St, just off Taylor Square, Darlinghurst, and decided to take political action.

I wanted to take over Pinchgut Island in the centre of Sydney Harbour because the Indians had taken over Alcatraz. I think I was outvoted by one vote. I was a waterside worker at the time.

At the meeting, four young Aborigines decided to go to Canberra in protest.

The next morning, on Monday, January 26, Canberra woke to a large blue beach umbrella with four young Aborigines -Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, Bertie Williams and Michael Anderson -shivering under it. Rain was pouring down.

I joined them on the Friday and by that time a lady in Canberra had become sorry for them and given them a big blue tent.

When I arrived in Canberra I asked the local member Kep Enderby: "Why haven't they moved us?"

He said: "You found a breach in federal law, there is no legislation to remove any people camping here."

We HAD found a gap in their law so we put up eight tents and, of course, once we had declared ourselves an embassy we had to have a flag. That's how the (Aboriginal) flag was born.

Eight Aborigines were in residence permanently.

Being a wharfie I got leave of absence every weekend and I'd leave Sydney every Friday afternoon on the bus and protest for the weekend. I also managed to get the union to arrange for me to be on day work so I could raise finance through the week to help feed the troops in permanent residence.

On July 20, they introduced federal legislation to remove any person who happened to camp on the lawns of Parliament House.

The legislation was pushed through in the early hours of the morning so the police came and removed the tent embassy, arresting about six of 16 people.

On July 23, the tent embassy was erected again and I'd say there were more than 200 people there, black and white.

It was one of the most violent demonstrations I had ever seen in my life, they came and surrounded us. They bashed blacks and arrested people and we had it all on film. A French film crew filmed the whole bit.

On July 30, the situation became even more violent. These were the worst demonstrations I had ever been in and I've been in a few.

More than 1000 white supporters and Aborigines were there and we put the blue tent up again then we decided to take it down.

We had had a moral victory. We were getting letters from around the world.

We wanted to put our plight into the international scene and that was accomplished.

CHICKA DIXON is a liaison officer with the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

4. How does Dixon describe the process of nation-building? What was the police reaction? What was the significance of placing the Tent on the lawns of Parliament?

5. Have students examine "Frog and Toad's Indigenous Australia" website and read the sections on the Tent Embassy. How does Mum Shirl and Kevin Gilbert describe the meaning of the Tent Embassy?
<http://indigenoustralia.frogandtoad.com.au/embassy.html>. A recent source for the Tent Embassy: <http://www.aboriginaltentembassy.net/>

III.

Educator's Background Information on Land Rights

From Terra Nullius to Native Title

In arguing nationhood, the Indigenous peoples of Australia asserted land rights or "Native Title." Their posters, signs and speeches argued that their land had been "stolen" by a colonial power. The Tent Embassy had protested the Government's intent to retain control of land leases and to open more land to mining companies. The Government's contrary position was based on the belief that Australia had been *terra nullius* ("land belonging to no one") when Captain James Cook claimed the east coast of the continent for Britain in 1770.

Spurred by the Aboriginal efforts, the Whitlam Government was more receptive to the Aboriginal peoples' demands and began to investigate land rights. In 1973, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Land Rights was created to investigate "appropriate means to recognize and establish the traditional rights of Aborigines in relation to the land." While restricted to land rights in federal territories only, it was an important precedent. The 1974 report argued that Aborigines should be recognized as lawful owners of their own land with the right to refuse mining efforts. Furthermore it recommended that the Crown lands were indeed open to land claims by the Aborigines.

Uneven progress followed the report. Malcolm Fraser's coalition government passed the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976 recognizing the title of the Gurindji to land. In 1985, the Governor General returned Uluru (Ayers Rock) to its traditional owners. After formally recognizing Aboriginal land rights in 1981, the South Australian Government returned almost 10 percent of the State's land to the Pitjantjatjara and Maralinga peoples. New South Wales followed suit with significantly more resistance from Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Mining companies and sheep and cattle owners vocalized the strongest opposition to these claims. In 1980, Western Australia supported the efforts of Ammex, an American company searching for oil reserves to buy rights at Noonkanbah over the opposition of the traditional owners. Once again, the Aboriginal peoples presented their case for traditional ownership and rights to the United Nations.

A significant legal victory for land rights occurred in June 1992 when the High Court ruled that a native title to land existed in 1788 when the British landed and that this title may continue to exist under specific conditions. The *Mabo* judgement rejected the concept of terra nullius. In response to the ruling, the Keating Government passed the Native Title Act 1993 which legally acknowledged Native Title and provided funding for land claims to Crown land.

Questions about native title remained however. The High Court's narrow decision in the *Wik* Case of 1996 decided native title could exist on leased land as well. The leader of the new Liberal-National Coalition government, John Howard, vehemently objected to the decision and worried aloud about the sheep and cattle ranchers. He released a "Ten Point Plan" that would amend the Native Title Act of 1993 and protect

the pastoral leases. Despite vigorous objections by critics who called the plan “racist,” the Ten Point Plan was incorporated into the Native Title Amendment Bill 1998. For most Indigenous peoples, the “high hopes” encouraged by the *Mabo* decision have remained unfulfilled.^{xvi}

Student Exercise 3: Who’s land?

1. Have students examine the Howard Government’s 10 Point Plan <http://www.australianpolitics.com/issues/aborigines/amended-10-point-plan.shtml>. Discuss how it undermined the *Wik* decision. Consider the significance of the Native Title Amendment Bill in terms of the balance of power between the branches of the Australian government.
2. The Australian high school textbook, *Retroactive 2: Australian History* has an excellent chapter on Native Title. Read Chapter 7.8 and then examine the Native Title Tribunal weblink: <http://www.nntt.gov.au/>
3. For advanced students, read the Federal Court’s *Bennell v. State of Western Australia* decision upholding the claim of Western Australia’s Noongar people in September 2006. <http://www.nntt.gov.au/>
4. Have students watch the satiric 1988 film *Babakiueria* about the white settlement of Australia. How does the film address the assumptions of terra nullius?

IV.

Educator’s Background Information on “Australian Culture”

Who’s Australian?

When the British colonies formed a federation in 1901 the nation of Australia was created. The word “Australian” took meaning. Who was Australian? And what would Australian mean? The new Constitution did not recognize the citizenship of Aborigines until amended in 1967. The overwhelming majority of the early Australians were Anglo-Celtic and laws and customs severely restricted non-white immigration into the country.

Particularly, Chinese and Pacific Islander immigrants suffered unequal wages and racial violence in the late 19th century. All the candidates in the first national elections of 1901 advocated the idea of a “White Australia” and promised to protect this racist ideal. The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was the first of many pieces of legislation that discriminated on grounds of race. Australia remained ethnically and culturally homogenous until the end of World War Two when more than 70 percent of the population traced its heritage to the United Kingdom. It wouldn’t be until 1972 that the White Australia policy was finally repealed and “multiculturalism” gained currency. Today, the Australian population today is ethnically diverse. In the 21st century 40

percent of Australia's population trace their heritage to post-1946 migrants from countries beyond the United Kingdom.^{xvii}

For Aborigines, "Australian culture" referred to this British heritage. From the 1930s to the 1970s, the Government followed a policy of "assimilation." Assimilation means the absorption of one culture into another. Most Australians believed that all Australians should be "the same" in attitude and customs and these customs were European-derived. There was only one "superior" Australian culture. Government policies towards the indigenous populations of Australia reflected the belief that life conditions would only improve for the Aborigines if their traditional culture was abandoned.

Assimilationist policies throughout the 20th century controlled almost every aspect of Aboriginal lives: where they lived, where they worked, who they married. The most tragic government policy involved separating children from their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and placing them in government or mission institutions. This was highly effective in breaking cultural bonds and destroyed thousands of families. The schools taught children to "act white," train to be servants and reject their traditional cultural heritage as inferior. Between 1910 and 1970 over 100,000 indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families. In the 1980s the organization of Link Up began attempting to reunite families. The separated children are called the "Stolen Generations."^{xviii}

In 1997 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released a report called *Bringing Them Home* documenting the forcible removal policy and its tragic repercussions. It suggested the establishment of a compensation fund and a National Sorry Day to recognize the past injustices of the Government towards indigenous peoples. While most state parliaments did formally apologize, Prime Minister John Howard refused what he called "a black armband of history." In 1999 he expressed "regret" but this concept of national guilt continues to divide Australians.

The protest groups of the 1960s and 1970s celebrated a distinctive and powerful Australian Indigenous Culture. They advocated self-determination. As Roberta Sykes stated turned the Tent Embassy Protest, "The Embassy was a black affair; it wasn't blacks being guided by whites...it was the first national announcement that the pushing back was going to stop."^{xix} Through language, art, literature and the performing arts Australian Indigenous peoples have expressed a sense of cultural nationalism that values a way of life often in opposition to mainstream (read: white) Australian culture.

Tension remains over the meaning of "Australian culture." In 1997 the anti-immigration One Nation Party under the leadership of Pauline Hanson railed against "non-White" immigration and unassimilated Aborigines. John Howard's coalition party was criticized for recommending One Nation over Labor in the 1998 Queensland elections. When a "leaked" report in the Spring of 2000 suggested that the Howard government planned to contest the findings of *Bringing Them Home*, Aboriginal groups threatened to disrupt the Summer Olympics with extensive protests. Yet "Reconciliation" remains a forceful theme in Australian life. In May 2000, 250,000 Australians joined in a "Walk of Reconciliation" across the Sydney Harbor Bridge in memory of the Stolen Generations.

The Sydney Olympic Arts Festival kicked off the 2000 Olympics (<http://goaustralia.about.com/od/eventsarchive/a/olympicartsfest.htm>).^{xx} Rhoda Roberts,

a member of the Bundjalung people, served as artistic director of *The Festival of the Dreaming* at the start of the Olympiad. Roberts argued for the *political work* of this cultural event: “The Festival had overt political references and with its diverse programming challenged myths about ‘Aboriginality’ entertained by many non-Indigenous Australians. The Festival had an educational role, which is essential to advance Indigenous reconciliation.”^{xxi} The Cultural Program presented new works of theater, music, art and dance by young and established Aboriginal artists.

The relationship of art and politics in the Aboriginal struggle for freedom and equality was clearly demonstrated by the play *Bidenjarreb Pinjarra: A Play about the Pinjarra Massacre*. Using humor, the play presented an alternative history to what West Australian children regularly read in their textbooks (which describe the premeditated surprise attack by Governor James Stirling in 1834 as a “battle” not a massacre.) Like the flag, Indigenous art is often intimately tied to a purposeful role of communication between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, then, as Aboriginal Australians asserted a distinctive, empowering culture of black creativity in the *Festival of the Dreaming*, the Sydney Olympics declared to the world the centrality of Indigenous culture(s) to Australian culture. Aboriginal culture featured prominently in Australia’s presentation of itself to the world. Aboriginal Australian Nova Peris received the torch at Uluru and Cathy Freeman lit the cauldron. The “Awakening” segment of the Opening Ceremony featured traditional performers from several distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The closing ceremony featured the politically conscious rock group Midnight Oil undressing on stage to reveal hidden clothing printed with the simple word, “Sorry.” This action took on particularly pointed meaning due to John Howard’s presence in the audience.

Cathy Freeman’s glorious win cemented her identity as national heroine. But her two flags continued to raise debate over the meaning of Australian nationhood.

Student Exercise 4: The purpose of culture

1. Introducing students to Aboriginal artists is an exciting, but overwhelming enterprise. Indigenous art, especially the traditional dot paintings, will be new to most students. But for high school students, playing songs from the 2001 album, “All You Mob!” is an excellent teaching tool for exploring the vibrancy and adaptability of Australian Indigenous culture. On the album, Aboriginal teenagers blend hip hop and traditional culture (the beatbox and didgeridoo find common ground.) The song “Down River” won the 2003 Deadly Awards Single of the Year! http://deadlys.vibe.com.au/deadlys_new/index.asp. <http://www.abc.net.au/message/blackarts/music/s749651.htm>. An excellent introduction to Australian Indigenous Culture is <http://www.dreamtime.net.au/>.
2. Have students read any of the testimonials from *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*. Watch and discuss *Rabbit Proof Fence*. Discuss the concept of

- paternalism and contrast A.O. Neville's belief in the inability of Aboriginal peoples to "take care of themselves" with the June 1988 Barunga Statement <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/docrec/policy/brief/attach.htm>.
3. Have students read about John Howard's criticism of the "black armband of history." Dr. Mark McKenna's Parliamentary Research paper is an excellent introduction for advanced students: <http://www.aph.gov.au/LIBRARY/pubs/rp/1997-98/98rp05.htm>. For other students, the following short article will raise questions about how "historical facts" are used in public debate: <http://news.independent.co.uk/world/australasia/article279686.ece>. (It also deals with the threats made by Aboriginal leaders to disrupt the Sydney Olympics in protest of the Howard Government's policies.)
 4. Have students read Pauline Hanson's first speech in Parliament and discuss her understanding of "reverse racism:" http://www.paulinehanson.com.au/Maiden_Speech.htm
 5. Students should split into groups and examine the following ten letters to the editor. Teachers can examine each letter individually or have students put various ones in conversation with each other. The purpose, I would suggest, is to ask "What does Cathy Freeman mean to Australia?" It is a loaded question indeed. But here, at the end of this unit students should have the vocabulary and historical understanding in order to appreciate how *meaningful* her action of wearing two flags was. Hopefully they will be anxious to figure it out together. Let the debate begin!

Letters to the Daily Telegraph (Sydney) Editor

Source 1:

I would like to wish Cathy Freeman all the best. She is an outstanding athlete. Australia paid her the ultimate compliment by giving her the honour of lighting the official 2000 Olympics cauldron. Unfortunately, she does not seem to realize the significance of the gift. There is only one flag that has the right to be carried by champions. That is the flag that all Australians, indigenous and others, were born under, the flag that Australians fought under and the flag to which all migrant Australians swear allegiance.

Roseanne Barnhoorn, Dharruk

Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), September 27, 2000, p. 38.

Source 2:

The lighting of the Olympic cauldron by Cathy Freeman was in my view more a move of political correctness—to silence racial unrest—than a reflection of superb sporting achievements. It has hardly been a national secret that Aborigines made predictions of rioting and mayhem to draw international attention to their cause; this could not only damage the spirit of the Olympics, but also put a very unfavorable spotlight on our nation. Therefore, Cathy Freeman has been a very obvious choice.

Anneke Drese, Rockdale

Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), September 20, 2000, p. 34.

Source 3:

The decisive victory by Cathy Freeman in the 400m on Monday night did more for race relations in Australia than any amount of treaties, land-rights concessions, deliberations of high courts, apologies or grandstanding by politicians with their own agenda could possibly achieve. She has got to where she is without handouts, without special considerations, but has simply taken on the world as an equal and won by her perseverance and ability. The way Australia got behind her as a nation also put to rest forever the lie that this is a racist country or a country that wants to be divided. Cathy Freeman has proved Australia is one country where anyone can make it, no matter what the colour of their skin, if they are prepared to have a go and work hard enough at it.

Ben Vinnicombe, Sefton

Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), September 27, 2000, p. 38.

Source 4:

The type of promotion and time given to Aborigines in the Opening Ceremony for all the world to see should be regarded as the ultimate offer of reconciliation given by white Australia. If the Aboriginal industry is fair dinkum in wanting reconciliation, it must accept the offer and work with fellow Australians, not against them. It must forget about its own flag and trying to turn back history and creating a State within a State by land rights. It must stop carping and whining about more money all the time with ploys like the stolen children, it must stop wasting money on tent embassies, trips overseas and futile court cases. The industry must direct the vast wealth that it gets to the betterment of its people and nothing else. That means the bulk of it should be spent on education, housing, health and finding employment. Unless most of the above is implemented, the future of reconciliation is non-existent.

Harry Jervis, Caringbah

Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), September 20, 2000, p. 34.

Source 5:

A note to the narrow-minded: Cathy Freeman has already honoured Australia by making it to the Olympics in a country filled with such hopeless subconscious racism. I admire all the women who carried the torch with such pride, but I still believe Cathy Freeman was the right choice to light the cauldron. Her Aboriginality was a fantastic display towards the long road of reconciliation, but try not to let that cloud the real reason, her amazing athletic ability. So to all the indigenous Australians I am sorry and an extra apology to Cathy Freeman for all those naive Australians.

Romina Hamilton, Surry Hills

Source: *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), September 20, 2000 p. 34.

Source 6:

One Olympic commentator took it upon himself to say Cathy Freeman was a role model for every Australian. Well, I have news for him and others like him: she is definitely not a role model for me or my family, any of my friends and many in the wider community. Why are SOCOG, the police and governments continually bending over backwards to appease these people? I am fed up with it. Treat Aborigines the same as anyone else would be treated in similar circumstances. They are not special, although I used to think they were. They won equality in 1967 and I was in favour of that, not the special treatment they now claim they deserve.

Glenn Caban, Edgeworth

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia) September 20, 2000, p. 34.

Source 7:

The overwhelming public favourite to light the cauldron, Dawn Fraser, was shafted by the Olympic Committee because she is not Aboriginal. This is the single most racist act in our entire history.

Edward Beresford, St Ives

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia) September 19, 2000, p. 22.

Source 8:

The selection of Cathy Freeman to light the Olympic cauldron was a stroke of pure brilliance. The older and proven women champions passing the flame to someone younger, the hope of our future, was in itself an emotional step. That Cathy was chosen was even more symbolic of the Australia that we are working to become, where everyone is judged not by colour and not by sex, but by skill and personality. Cathy Freeman has excelled in her field, representing our country every time she has run. She has achieved all this in a country where it is still difficult to succeed as an Aborigine. This in itself is a remarkable accomplishment. We hope that she will be able to win a gold medal at the 2000 Olympics, but Cathy Freeman has already done every Australian proud. Having her light the cauldron was a political statement, but it was also a vision of the Australia we are striving to become -- a country that embraces all our people. I wish Cathy and all our Olympians the best of luck over the next two weeks. May they enjoy their sport, strive to their best ability and most of all have fun. In my eyes, they are already winners. In this millennium year we are yet another step closer to reconciliation.
Tara Stevenson, Toolangi, Victoria

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia) September 19, 2000, p. 22.

Source 9:

Like Cathy Freeman, I did not know my grandmother -- or grandfather for that matter. That's because I was born in Australia and they lived in Scotland. I am wondering if I should seek counseling or should I just get on with life as I have for the past 50-odd years?

James Gardiner, Charlestown

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia) September 19, 2000, p. 22.

Source 10:

Subsequent to Cathy Freeman's statement, I would like to invite your readership to join our RIDOSG group. That is Rednecks In Denial Of Stolen Generations. We sit naked around campfires splitting hairs and burning issues such as "does the term 'stolen generations' necessarily need to imply that every single member of certain generations was stolen?" Come and join us please. We are a threatened species. Or at least we should be.

Les Hutchinson, South Strathfield

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), July 20, 2000, p. 24.

6. Students can also cut the letters to the editors “out” and then attempt to create categories for the letters. Which ones go together? Which are ideological opposites? Students generally have very animated and creative conversations with this exercise. It forces them to look very carefully at opinions and ideological positions that are different from their own rather than simply dismissing it as “stupid.” At the end of the day the student might remain committed to this original conclusion, but the act of rigorous analysis is fundamental to their growth as critical readers. At the very least the teenager can articulate *why* he or she thinks it is stupid...!

7. FINAL ESSAY: For a take-home exam students are given the following two newspaper articles. In the first article, Gibson is responding to Freeman’s remarks on the “Stolen Generations: and in the second the Editors of the *Daily Telegraph* respond to her Olympic win.

Direct students to compose an essay comparing each author’s analysis of the significance of Cathy Freeman and the Olympics to Australian nationalism.

Source 1:

“So Sick and Sorry”

Mike Gibson, *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), July 19, 2000, p. 73.

I'm sorry. I really am. I'm sorry that the Olympic Games here in Sydney are already being used for political pointscoring.

I'm sorry that Cathy Freeman has suddenly chosen -- virtually on the eve of the Games -- to come out and attack the Howard Government for what she describes as its "insensitive" attitude to the allegedly "stolen generation".

Why, if Cathy feels so strongly, has she waited until two months before the Olympics to unburden herself on an issue that she now tells us has tormented her for years?

Surely, if you are as angry as Cathy purports to be, surely if something like this was tearing away at your gut, you would have spoken out long before this?

Surely you wouldn't have allowed yourself to be used by Nike in their "sorry" commercial?

Surely you would have told Nike to get nicked -- even if they were your major sponsor?

Surely you would have stood up here, in your own country, and told us how painful were your wounds and how deep your scars, rather than give a pre-arranged interview to a British Sunday newspaper over dinner in an Italian restaurant in London?

I'm sorry. I really am.

I'm sorry that the Sydney Olympics will be used by Aboriginal activists to try to paint a picture of this country that we love, as some sort of redneck outpost in the South Pacific, where racism and intolerance are part of the Australian way.

Anthony Mundine, accepting an Aborigine of the Year award the other night, got up and told the audience that white Australians were "killing" our indigenous people.

Killing?

When it comes to killings, Anthony certainly made one -- out of mainly white Australians, I might add, who reportedly made him \$100,000 richer by paying to watch that farcical first "fight" in his professional boxing career.

Our treatment of Aborigines could be better.

But comments like those of Anthony Mundine do nothing to hasten the healing process, to assist the cause of reconciliation.

I'm sorry. I really am.

I'm sorry that the Olympic Games here in Sydney will be used as a vehicle by those who will seize upon the greatest event this country has ever hosted, to tell the world what a wicked lot we are.

In the United States, the treatment of blacks has been appalling. Countless thousands were dragged to the country in chains.

Their lives were pitiful. They were used as slaves. In some parts of the south, discrimination is still rife.

The native Americans also suffered enormously, as white settlers systematically slaughtered the original inhabitants.

In Atlanta, black churches are still sadly burned to the ground.

But when I covered the Olympics in that city four years ago, I didn't see any black or American Indian activists out on Peachtree St, telling the world what a rotten place their country is.

Quite the contrary.

I witnessed what I've seen every time I've visited the United States for a major occasion. A national outpouring of pride that is so intensely fierce, you almost feel like joining in

and sharing Americans' passion and joy when they put their hands to their chests and sing the national anthem.

I'm sorry. I really am.

I'm sorry that we can't get on with last-minute preparations for the Sydney Olympics, without continuing threats that the Games will be used against us.

That, because of a practice for which only a miniscule few Australians still living today might feel in any way responsible, the nation as a whole will be pilloried around the world.

I love the Olympics.

Maybe I'm old-fashioned.

Despite the drug-taking problems among the athletes, the rampant commercialism that has changed the face of the Games, the constant spectre of terrorism, and the way in which IOC members feed shamelessly at the trough, the Olympics have endured and prospered.

Such is the remarkable strength and appeal of the Games, they make those who compete and those who go out to cheer them on, feel better for having been part of sport's most enriching experience.

It is the democratic right of all of us to protest against those things which we believe to be wrong. To stand up and have our say.

But to use the Olympic Games as an international loud-hailer, to hitch a free ride on the Olympic tradition forged by all those champions over all those years, demeans what you have to say.

The Olympic Games are to be savoured and enjoyed for those unforgettable moments they bring to us all, rather than be used by an angry few as an international soapbox to air their alleged injustices.

Source 2:

“Capturing the Essence of a Nation”
Editorial, *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), Sept 27, 2000, p. 36.

Cathy Freeman's triumph in Monday night's 400m final at the Olympic Stadium was, some might say, a cardinal point in Australia's cultural development, a moment of social coalition when all of us wanted -- and were given -- the one thing.

What we wanted was for Cathy to win, and when she did, we celebrated with her in a moment of unprecedented unity -- a moment when being Australian was the best thing in the world.

For had our girl not taken on the best in the world, had she not shown them the stuff we are made of, had she not thrashed all comers over one of the most testing of Olympic events?

How proud she made us feel at that moment, when we cheered ourselves hoarse, no matter where we were at the time. In the stadium when the race was won and lost, as Cathy sat stunned on the track for more than a minute, struggling to internalise the storm of emotion she felt, they clapped for a full 10 minutes, crying their own tears, they knew not what for. And how they loved her at that moment.

But are these fitting emotions? How is it that a foot race -- won, admittedly in style by an athlete who seemed so much a mere slip of a girl -- could generate such a tidal wave of emotion? Is it not an Olympian precept that taking part, rather than winning, is the essence of the event?

Well, indeed. But there is something about Cathy Freeman, and about the scale of her athletic success which seems to reverberate sympathetically with the themes we like to think of as Australian. Something which makes her victory especially piquant.

She is enormously modest, even self-effacing. She is open, honest and apparently uncomplicated in her approach to her sport and her life. After her victory there was no fist-shaking shouts of defiance, no bellowed announcement of her dominance.

In fact, in triumph, she seemed almost a child in need of comfort. And like our country, she seems small in comparison with her competitors.

She is also Aboriginal -- Aboriginal and Australian, and which comes first, it did not matter. Cathy said on Monday night how proud she was to be Australian, an indigenous Australian, and how pleased she was that she had made so many people happy. In her own joyous reception of the golden moment, there was no note of separateness nor division.

Premier Bob Carr put the matter succinctly yesterday, describing Cathy Freeman as "a young woman, a great athlete, proud to be an Australian and proud to be an Aboriginal Australian".

On the matter of Cathy's decision to carry both the Australian and the Aboriginal flag on her lap of honour, Mr. Carr said: "I think people would be warmly supportive of her. I think that is a message of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians pulling together." Well said, Mr Carr.

Then there is Cathy's warm and infectious smile -- not forced nor affected nor false.

She embodies reconciliation -- of all Australians to one another, no matter their background, their creed or colour.

And that is why her success moved us so deeply.

Final Check:

With the completion of the second half of the curriculum unit, students should feel comfortable discussing:

1. the relationship between politics and culture
2. the relationship between land and national identity
3. land rights and law in Australia
4. the placement of Cathy Freeman's choice of flags within the larger context of the Aboriginal struggle both historical and contemporary
5. how *diverse* Australian feelings range on the issue of Freeman's flags

Conclusion:

In both the United States and Australia, the history of legalized racial discrimination coexists with a strong tradition of liberty. Studying the histories of African Americans and Aboriginal Australians throws into relief the significant gap between revered principles of liberty, equality and democracy and actual government practice. At the conclusion of this curriculum unit, students will have received a substantial introduction to the African American and Aboriginal Australian struggle for political and social equality.

It might bear reflecting further on why this curriculum was constructed around the Olympic moment. And not just any Olympic moment, mind you, but the moment of gold. Why the Olympics? As a cultural event (sports) the Olympics is usually disregarded simply as a non-political leisure activity: "fun and games." But the Olympics should be viewed as an international event with far-reaching political and racial implications. Each athlete who competes does so in a nexus of competing identities: national, individual, global. And each viewer who cheers (and walks backwards to the fridge lest he miss a moment) does so motivated by an *idea* of nation. The spectacle of the Olympics allows us to see the mechanics of nation-building.

But it is easy to get distracted by the fireworks and nail-biting feats of athletic skill. Nations are assumed to be cohesive entities best represented by cheerful cartoon creatures like Izzy (Atlanta 1996) or Syd, Olly and Millie (Sydney 2000). This is why Tommie Smith, John Carlos, Peter Norman and Cathy Freeman are so significant. They disrupt the simple patriotic narrative and reveal the complexities of multiculturalism. All engaged in symbolic action that communicated a political message about freedom and equality. The fists and bright flag spoke silent volumes to those who watched.

At the end of the curriculum, students will hopefully appreciate the creative inspiration that comparative history engenders. There are significant differences between

the activism and goals of the Black Power Movement in the United States and the Land Rights struggle in Australia. But both movements challenge a monolithic notion of national culture, both articulate an idea of race-based nationalism that critiqued the ideal of assimilation and to some extent racial integration, both articulate a vision of equality and justice that requires direct action against discriminatory practices and both celebrate a vibrant, empowering cultural tradition at odds with the mainstream.

There are no true final conclusions to reach. The goal of this curriculum is for students to gain a glimpse into the historical struggle for equality in both nations. But beyond that, the hope is that students come away from this unit better (more critical) readers. Sharpened by the experience of reading competing sources and building knowledge with their classmates, they will never again think a good match on the television is cause to “shut off the brain.” Going to the game is a chance to analyze the meaningful role sport plays in the cultural and political life of a nation. As if meat pies weren’t enough of a reason....

ⁱ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1956/ 1983; Stephen Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance Reader*, New York: Verso, 2002.

ⁱⁱ Douglass Hartman, *Race, Culture and the Revolt of the Black Athlete*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p.6. For a full account of the protest see also Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002; Harry Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*, New York: Free Press, 1969.

ⁱⁱⁱ Brent Musburger, Chicago American, October 19, 1968; Michael Davis, “Final Salute to a Courageous Athlete of Olympian Values,” *The Australian*, October 10, 2006;

^{iv} <http://www.nationalcenter.org/brown.html>

^v http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-acceptance.html

^{vi} William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992

^{vii} <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/pdfs/660607-002.pdf>

^{viii} http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/about_king/, Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*; Clayborn Carson, *In Struggle*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

^{ix} William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon*.

^x Read Douglass Hartmann and Amy Bass. The 1999 HBO documentary film *Fists of Freedom* provides an excellent overview.

^{xi} Michael Davis, “Final Salute to a Courageous Athlete of Olympian Values,” *The Australian*, October 10, 2006

^{xii} Peter Jenkins, “Cathy Warned of Flag Risks,” *Daily Telegraph*, August 2, 1996.

^{xiii} Evie Gelastopoulos and Bruce McDougall, “Cathy’s Pain,” *Daily Telegraph*, July 17, 2000.

^{xiv} <http://www.ausflag.com.au/debate/nma/smh940903.html>

^{xv} Maureen Anderson, et al., *Retroactive 2*, Queensland: John Wiley and Sons, Australia, 2005; Henry Reynolds and Bruce Dennett, *The Aborigines*, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2004; Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker, *Aboriginal Australians*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2002.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Maureen Anderson, *Retroactive 2*, chapters 1.7 and 1.8., T. Buggy, *Race Relations in Colonial Australia*, Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

^{xviii} <http://www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/family.cfm>, Carmel Bird (ed.), *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*, NSW: Random House, 1998; Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Victoria: Viking, 2005.

^{xix} Stephen Muecke, *Aboriginal Australians*, Chapter 4.

^{xx} For a complete program of *The Festival of the Dreaming* see the appendix in Michelle Hanna, *Reconciliation in Olympism*.

^{xxi} Rhoda Roberts, "Foreword," in Michelle Hanna, *Reconciliation in Olympism*, NSW: Walla Walla Press, 1999.