

*IT IS FINISHED!*  
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TO PRESIDENT KASSING, HONOREES TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS, THE FAMILIES OF OUR HONOREES, THE SJSU ASSOCIATED STUDENTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - I AM OVERWHELMED AND HUMBLED THAT YOU CHOSE ME TO BE A SPEAKER AT THIS EVENT, THIS MEMORABLE EVENT.

WE COME TODAY TO RECOGNIZE NOT ONLY TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS, BUT THE COUNTLESS MEN AND WOMEN OF DIVERSE RACES, ETHNICITIES, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION WHO HAVE TAKEN UP THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD. MOST ARE NAMELESS AND FACELESS, BUT THEY ARE IMPORTANT TO BRINGING THIS MOMENT TO FRUITION.

I HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL TODAY THAT I DON'T CROSS THE LINE THAT SEPARATES THE SECULAR FROM THE SACRED, THE STATE FROM RELIGION. THEREFORE, MANY OF MY COMMENTS ARE PREFERENCED WITH, "HISTORIANS WRITE". AS A RESEARCHER, I SOMEHOW BELIEVE THOSE WORDS IMPLY A MEASURE OF TRUTH AND AUTHENTICITY.

HISTORIANS WRITE THAT OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO A MAN NAMED JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, AND THE LAST WORDS HE SPOKE WERE: "IT IS FINISHED." HISTORIANS WRITE, THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT REMOVED THE BODY FROM A CROSS AND ENCASED IT IN A TOMB AND COVERED THE TOMB WITH A LARGE STONE.

HISTORIANS WRITE THAT JESUS' IMMEDIATE COMMUNITY ASSUMED HIS ACTIVITIES AND TEACHINGS DIED WITH HIM IN THE TOMB. HISTORIANS ALSO WRITE THAT SHORTLY AFTER JESUS' BURIAL, WORD SPREAD THAT HE WAS NO LONGER IN THE TOMB. THIS NEWS ENCOURAGED THOUSANDS TO RISK PERSECUTION AND DEATH TO CONTINUE HIS TEACHINGS. NOW REMEMBER, THIS IS NOT A RELIGIOUS SPEECH!

TODAY WE COME TO MEMORIALIZE 2 HEROES IN STONE. THEIR LIKENESS IS FOREVER CAPTURED IN THIS BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURE, AND ALL WHO EVER VISIT THIS SITE WITH ITS IMPECABLE LANDSCAPING AND DIVINE COLORS WILL KNOW TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS WERE ON THIS EARTH.

WE ARE ALL APPRECIATIVE TO SAN JOSE STATE FOR OFFICIALLY PRESENTING A CONCRETE MONUMENT TO 2 OF ITS OWN. THE UNIVERSITY CAN PROUDLY SAY, "IT IS FINISHED". THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANY MORE CEREMONIES; THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANY MORE DEDICATIONS; THERE IS NO NEED FOR ANY MORE TRIBUTES. "IT IS FINISHED."

THE MONUMENT CAPTURES 2 MEN IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIVES - NOT THE 2 WHO SIT HERE TODAY. THE 2005 MODELS OF JOHN CARLOS AND TOMMIE SMITH CAN'T RUN AS FAST AS THEY DID IN 1968; THEIR HAIR IS SLIGHTLY GRAYER OR NON-EXISTANT; THEIR MEMORY IS SLIGHTLY LESS EFFECTIVE THAN 37 YEARS AGO; AND THEY, LIKE MOST OF US FROM THEIR GENERATION, KNOW THAT FEWER YEARS EXIST FOR THEM IN THE FUTURE THAN WHEN THEY BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY AT SAN JOSE STATE. AS THE OLD FOLK SAY, "WE DIDN'T COME HERE FOR TO STAY; I'M JUST PASSING THROUGH."

THE QUESTION TODAY IS WHAT WILL THIS SCULPTURE MEAN TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WILL SMITH AND CARLOS ONLY BE STONE FACES AMIST A BEAUTIFUL PLAZA? WILL VISITORS SIT OR STAND AS THEY DISCUSS THEIR PERSONAL LIVES AND PROBLEMS? IF SO, THEN CARLOS AND SMITH ARE FOREVER ENCASED IN THE TOMB.

IN ORDER FOR THEM TO BECOME IMMORTAL, THE LIVING MUST TAKE UP THEIR ACTIVISM AND GO BEYOND THEIR WORKS. TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS WERE NOT JUST STUDENT ATHLETES. THEY CERTAINLY COULD HAVE RUN IN THE MEXICO OLYMPICS, WON THEIR MEDALS, STOOD UPRIGHT ON THE WINNERS BLOCKS, AND TRADITIONALLY ACKNOWLEDTGED THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO AMERCA. IN 1968, THESE MEN DARED TO RAISE THEIR ARMS, MAKE A FIST, WEAR NO SHOES, AND BOW THEIR HEADS. THEY SUFFERED GREATLY FOR THESE ACTIONS, AND THEIR COUNTRY "CRUCIFIED" THEM AND BRANDED THEM TRAITORS. WE ATTEMPT TO RESURRECT THEM TODAY IN THE FORM OF A STATUE.

HOWEVER, IF THEY STAY IN THE STONE, THEY ARE FOREVER DEAD. TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS ARE ONLY MEN AND WILL CERTAINLY PASS AWAY. THE ACTIONS THEY SYMBOLIZED ON THAT DAY 37 YEARS AGO SHOULD LIVE FOREVER. WHEREVER THERE IS DISCRIMINATION AND INJUSTICE, SOMEONE MUST RAISE A FIST, FOR MARTIN SAID, "INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE".

WHEREVER THERE IS INDIGNITY AND HATRED, SOMEONE MUST STAND UP STRAIGHT; FOR ON ANOTHER OCCASION MARTIN SAID, "WHEN EVIL MEN SHOUT UGLY WORDS OF HATRED, GOOD MEN MUST COMMIT THEMSELVES TO THE STORIES OF LOVE".

WHEREVER THERE IS POVERTY AND ILL-TREATMENT, SOMEONE MUST GO WITHOUT SHOES, FOR THE OLD ANCESTORS SANG, "I GOT SHOES, YOU GOT SHOES, ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT SHOES." WHEREVER THERE IS CRUELTY AND SUFFERING, SOMEONE MUST BOW THEIR HEAD; CORETTA SCOTT KING REMINDS US, "THIS IS THE CROSS THAT WE MUST BEAR FOR THE REDEMPTION OF OUR PEOPLE." THIS IS NOT A RELIGIOUS SPEECH!

37 YEARS AGO, CARLOS AND SMITH DID NOT HAVE TO LEAVE SAN JOSE TO REALIZE THE BARRIERS TO EQUALITY FACED BY PEOPLE OF COLOR. THEY CERTAINLY SAW FEW AFRICAN AMERICAN ADMINISTRATORS, FACULTY MEMBERS, AND STAFF; FOR THE MOST PART, THEY WERE THE ONLY BLACKS IN MOST OF THEIR CLASSROOMS, AND DISCRIMINATION FACED THEM IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AS WELL AS ON CAMPUS.

IF THE WORLD SEEMED DARK AND DISCOURAGING FOR THESE MEN, THEY ONLY HAD TO LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF THE ANCESTORS TO REMEMBER THAT STRUGGLE WAS NOTHING NEW TO AFRICAN AMERICANS. BUT THEY COULD ALSO HEAR THE WORDS OF THEIR ANCESTOR RINGING OUT WITH HOPE. THEY COULD HEAR THE ENSLAVED SING. "AINT' GONNA LET NOBODY TURN ME AROUND"; THEY COULD HEAR MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE PROCLAIM, "OUR AIM MUST BE TO CREATE A WORLD OF FELLOWSHIP AND JUSTICE WHERE NO MAN'S SKIN COLOR OR RELIGION IS HELD AGAINST HIM."

THEY COULD HEAR LANGSTON HUGHES' MOTHER DECLARE: "WELL, SON, I'LL TELL YOU: LIFE FOR ME AIN'T BEEN NO CRYSTAL STAIR. IT'S HAD TACKS IN IT, AND SPLINTERS, AND BOARDS TORN UP, AND PLACES WITH NO CARPET ON THE FLOOR--BARE. BUT ALL THE TIME I'S BEEN A-CLIMB' ON, AND REACHIN ' LANDIN'S, AND TURNIN' CORNERS, AND SOMETIMES GOIN' IN THE DARK WHERE THERE AIN'T BEEN NO LIGHT. SO BOY, DON'T YOU TURN BACK. DON'T YOU SET DOWN ON THE STEPS 'CAUSE YOU FINDS IT'S KINDA HARD. DON'T YOU FALL NOW-- FOR I'SE STILL GOIN', HONEY, I'SE STILL CLIMBIN', AND LIFE FOR ME AIN'T BEEN NO CRYSTAL STAIR."

OR MAYBE THEY HEARD ZORA NEALE HURST PROCLAIM, "I AM NOT TRAGICALLY COLORED. THERE IS NO GREAT SORROW DAMNED UP IN MY SOUL NOR LURKING BEHIND MY EYES. I DO NOT MIND AT ALL. I DO NOT BELONG TO THE SOBBING SCHOOL OF NEGROHOOD WHO HOLD THAT NATURE SOMEHOW HAS GIVEN THEM A LOWDOWN DIRTY DEAL AND WHOSE FEELINGS ARE ALL HURT ABOUT IT....NO, I DO NOT WEEP AT THE WORLD--I AM TOO BUSY SHARPENING MY OYSTER KNIFE."

DID THEY HEAR MALCOLM X DEFIANTLY SAY, "IF IT COST ME MY LIFE IN THE MORNING, I WILL TELL YOU TONIGHT THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE BLACK MAN TO DIE FIGHTING."

OR MAYBE THEY READ MARGARET WALKER'S HOPEFUL MESSAGE TO, "LET A NEW EARTH RISE, LET ANOTHER WORLD BE BORN. LET A BLOODY PEACE BE WRITTEN IN THE SKY. LET A SECOND GENERATION FULL OF COURAGE ISSUE FORTH. LET A PEOPLE LOVING FREEDOM COME TO GROWTH...LET A RACE OF MEN NOW RISE AND TAKE CONTROL."

PERHAPS SMITH AND CARLOS WERE REMINDED OF LEROI JONES' WORDS, "HOPE IS DELICATE SUFFERING."

MAYBE IT WAS THE WORDS OF THE DAPPER DON OF ABYSINNIAN BAPTIST CHURCH, ADAM CLAYTON POWELL JR. WHO WROTE, "THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING I COULD DO - HAMMER RELENTLESSLY, CONTINUALLY, CRYING ALOUD EVEN IF IN THE WILDERNESS, AND FORCE OPEN EVERY CLOSED DOOR. KEEP THE FAITH, BABY!"

I'M SURE THEY HEARD FANNIE LOU HAMMER SAY, "I'M SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED."

I'D LIKE TO THINK THE WORDS OF BENJAMIN ELISHA MAYS RING OUT FROM MOREHOUSE COLLEGE: "I HAVE ONLY JUST A MINUTE. ONLY 60 SECONDS IN IT. FORCED UPON ME - CAN'T REFUSE IT. DIDN'T SEEK IT, DIDN'T CHOOSE IT. BUT IT'S UP TO ME TO USE IT. I MUST SUFFER IF I LOSE IT. GIVE ACCOUNT IF I ABUSE IT, JUST A TINY MINUTE. BUT ETERNITY IS IN IT."

OR JUST MAYBE SHIRLEY CHISOLM'S REMINDER OF OUR MISSION HERE ENCOURAGED THEM: "SERVICE IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR ROOM ON THIS EARTH."

SOMEWHERE IN THE POPULAR CULTURE OF THE TIME, I HOPE THEY HEARD THE GREAT PLAYWRIGHT LORRAINE HANSBERRY SAY, "...THOUGH IT BE A THRILLING AND MARVELOUS THING TO BE MERELY YOUNG AND GIFTED IN SUCH TIMES, IT IS DOUBLY SO--DOUBLY DYNAMIC-- TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK. LOOK AT THE WORK THAT AWAITS YOU...YOU HAVE SOMETHING GLORIOUS TO DRAW ON BEGGING FOR ATTENTION. DON'T PASS IT UP. USE IT. THIS NATION NEEDS YOUR GIFTS. "

I KNOW THEY HEARD THEIR MENTOR AND LEADER HARRY EDWARDS REMIND THEM, "I AM NOT JUST AN ATHELETE, I AM A MAN."

MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY COULD HEAR THEIR OWN SOULS CRYING OUT TO LET THE WORLD KNOW "'FEEDOM IS COMING - IF NOT TODAY, THEN TOMORROW."

FOR THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN THE AUDIENCE, YOU SHOULD NEVER PASS THIS MONUMENT WITHOUT ASKING, "WHAT MUST I DO TO MAKE THE WORLD BETTER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS?" YOU SHOULD NEVER SIT BEFORE THE FEET OF TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS WITHOUT ASKING, "'HOW CAN I LIFT A FUTURE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT ON MY SHOULDERS?"

YOU CAN NEVER, NEVER LOOK AT THE FACES OF THESE MEN WITHOUT REALIZING YOU MUST TAKE RISKS AND BE DARING IN ORDER TO BE MEMORABLE. AS AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS, YOU DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF JUST BEING SPECTATORS, YOU MUST BE PLAYERS IN THE GAME. I ALWAYS TELL MY STUDENTS, "TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN, MUCH IS REQUIRED." REMEMBER, THIS IS NOT A RELIGIOUS SPEECH.

TODAY DOES NOT BELONG TO JUST JOHN CARLOS AND TOMMIE SMITH. IT IS THEIRS ALONE IF WE KEEP THEM IN THE TOMB. IT IS OUR DAY IF WE ROLL THE STONE AWAY AND CARRY THEIR ACTIONS AND WORDS TO A

WORLD CRUSHED UNDER HOPELESSNESS. THERE'S A SONG THAT IS SUNG TRADITIONALLY AT FUNERALS IN MOST BLACK BAPTIST CHURCHES:

"IF I CAN HELP SOMEBODY AS I PASS ALONG,  
IF I CAN CHEER SOMEBODY WITH A WORD OR SONG,  
IF I CAN SHOW SOMEBODY THAT HE'S TRAVELING WRONG;  
THEN MY LIVING SHALL NOT BE IN VAIN.  
IF I CAN DO MY DUTY AS A CHRISTIAN OUGHT,  
IF I CAN BRING SALVATION TO A WORLD ONCE WROUGHT;  
IF I CAN SPREAD THE MESSAGE AS THE MASTER TAUGHT,  
THEN MY LIVING SHALL NOT BE IN VAIN."

JOHN AND TOMMIE, YOU HAVE NOT LIVED YOUR LIFE IN VAIN. BUT, THIS IS NOT A RELIGIOUS SPEECH.

THE HISTORIANS WRITE THAT THE EARLY CHRISTIAN SECT TALKED OF HOPE FOR ANOTHER WORLD. TOMMIE SMITH AND JOHN CARLOS BROUGHT HOPE TO *THIS* WORLD. UNTIL ALL LIVE WITH THE REALIZATION OF THAT HOPE, IT IS NOT FINISHED!