

The New Orleans Athletic Club (Young Men's Gymnastic Club): A Crescent City Tradition

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In 1872 fourteen young men founded the Independent Gymnastic Club in New Orleans. Within two years the membership had grown to fifty, activities were transferred from the backyard of the president's home to an old stable in the French Quarter, and they became the Young Men's Gymnastic Club (YMGC). In the 1890s they built a large gymnasium and other athletic facilities, and in 1929 the club completed construction of its present building on Rampart Street and adopted the name New Orleans Athletic Club (NOAC).

Soon after its inception the YMGC began to provide a varied program of athletic and social activities for its members. It built its own track for bicycle racing and gave cycling classes. Boxing was especially popular in New Orleans in the late 1800s and John L. Sullivan trained at the YMGC for his bouts with Jake Kilrain and Jim Corbett. In 1893 the YMGC, along with New Orleans'

Southern AC and American AC, founded the Southern Amateur Athletic Union, which still exists as a divisional member of the AAU. At the close of the 19th century the YMGC had around 2,000 members.

Through much of the present century, the YMGC/NOAC provided class instruction, practice, and competition for members in gymnastics, fencing, boxing, wrestling, badminton, handball, weight-lifting, bowling, shooting, and swimming (in their marble-lined salt water pool), and team sports such as basketball, volleyball, and indoor baseball. In addition, members were offered a variety of social activities, and the club sponsored many sporting events for community and regional participation. Instruction was offered for sons of members and other young boys, adult fitness was promoted through noon businessmen's exercise classes and the "100 mile club," and elite athletes were prepared for competition in AAU events and against college opponents. NOAC members travelled to other cities for athletic competition, and the club hosted regional events such as Southern AAU championships in several sports. Hundreds of members attended the monthly "stags," wives and girl friends were brought to formal parties and Sunday afternoon tea dances, and business deals were struck over lunch in the club's dining room and at the bar. Outstanding Louisiana athletes have been supported by the club in order to enable them to compete in national events, and for many years the NOAC gave an annual award to the best New Orleans area athlete. Prominent business, professional, and political figures, including New Orleans mayors and Louisiana governors, have been members, and visiting celebrities often used the club's facilities.

The NOAC had over 2,500 members as recently as 1972. However, the question of racial discrimination by the club led to adverse publicity, law suits, and greatly diminished membership from the mid 1970s until the last few years. The club opened membership to blacks in 1986 and to women in 1989, and with the acquisition of modern exercise equipment and new emphasis on fitness activities, the NOAC is being revitalized.

The club's prominence through so many years was due to its appeal to a membership of a wide range of age and social status, the variety of sport and social activities available to members, its magnificent facilities on the edge of the French Quarter and within walking distance of the downtown business district, and, especially, the promotional activities of club leaders. Although some of the club's many functions were available in school and college sport programs, the YMCA and YMHA, country clubs, and business and social clubs, these institutions did not provide the full range of activities available at the NOAC, nor could they match the fraternal feelings engendered at the club. The permanence of the NOAC when all other early athletic clubs of the city and region have

disappeared and the city's residential areas for professional and business classes have moved ever farther from downtown, reflects the power of its tradition.

It's Never Black and White: Differences in Newspaper Coverage of Tommie Smith-John Carlos' 1968 Olympic Black Power Salute

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This paper analyzes the coverage Black and White newspapers provided of the Tommie Smith-John Carlos victory stand gesture at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. It focuses on Black and White newspapers from five major American cities: the *New York Times* and *Amsterdam News*; *Washington Post* and *Washington Afro-American*; *Los Angeles Times* and *Los Angeles Sentinel*; *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Defender*; and *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Oakland Post*. The study examines what general differences existed between how the Black and White press covered the event, and whether there were degrees of variations between the two newspapers in each urban locale. The paper further investigates whether and how Black writers supported the efforts of Smith and Carlos in a bond of racial solidarity and conversely did White reporters condemn the actions of these two athletes.

Neither the Black nor White press, including the columnists, were monolithic in thought. Nor did race dichotomize their responses. While some Black reporters and editors defended the actions of Carlos and Smith, others did not and were often more critical of the two trackmen than their White counterparts. However, the Black press was more in agreement that the punishment exceeded the crime. White columnists generally opposed the gestures made by Smith and Carlos and few even seemed to understand, and certainly not appreciate its symbolic meaning. However, within the White liberal press, the Olympians had their supporters, most notably Shirley Povich of the *Washington Post*.

The paper frames the actions of Smith and Carlos as a profound and powerful gesture to define themselves, and needs to be understood as an expression of what DuBois termed double-consciousness. This same double-consciousness is also exhibited in the mixed responses of the Black press to the incident. The event had meanings well beyond the boundaries of the sporting world, and its ongoing significance and the indelible image that it has left emanates from its linkages to the broader societal and cultural rebellions and