

JOHN CARLOS, from page 1

didn't deserve to be kicked out of the Olympic Village. What was it like being the focus of so much attention, both positive and negative?

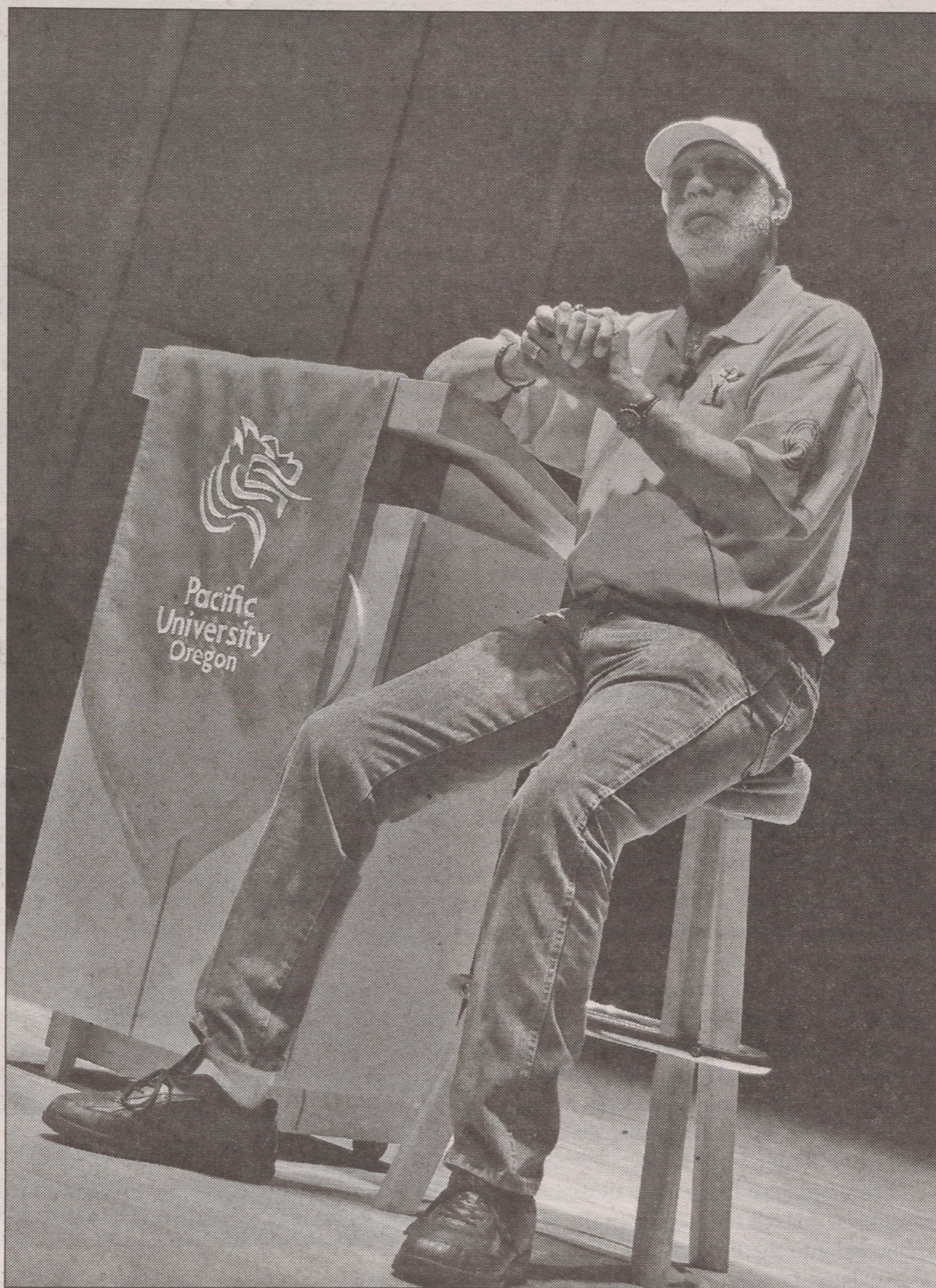
J.C.: When all the negatives came in, that was something you endured prior to the Olympic Games. It wasn't anything that I hadn't heard or experienced before or that people of color hadn't experienced before. They were just venting their feelings because we denounced them and stood against them and made a worldwide spectacle of them in terms of their approach to life. So, I wasn't concerned about that. The positive things that came about were to see the fact that what we did united the people. It united the people of color and then at the same time it brought an openness to society, period.

J.B.: *Who are some modern-day athlete-activists you appreciate and why? And can the Olympics be a forum for political dissent today?*

J.C.: There are many athletes today who make strong statements. There's Steve Nash in the NBA who stood up for immigrant workers and Hispanic people in Arizona (when the Phoenix Suns wore "Los Suns" jerseys in 2010). He was just as strong as I was, it's just he didn't get the national and international exposure since the Olympic Games are televised on a universal basis. So, he's standing up. In the NFL Michael Strahan of the New York Giants stood up for sexual preference. Many athletes are fighting for various causes. They just don't get the exposure. Now whether they should step up at the Super Bowl and make a statement there, well, like I say, you got to have basketballs to step up in that arena and do it. But God will send some people down the line who will step up in the Super Bowl and make a statement.

The Olympics is a universal forum. It's just about how intimidated you are. See, because what they do now in the Olympics Games is they make athletes sign a statement promising they will not step out of the circle. You'd have to choose to say, "Man, I refuse to sign that. I didn't have to sign no statement to come represent America, but now you're telling me I have to sign a statement that I can't have a concern for social justice and so forth, so I refuse to sign that because I don't know what I'm going to do when I'm on the victory stand." But to do that, you've got to have strong individuals who step up to the plate and make that statement. Like for instance Damien Hooper, the boxer from Australia, who at the London Olympics wore a T-shirt that represented him being aboriginal. They told him, "Ah, you have no right to wear that T-shirt, you know, you're an Olympic champion, you shouldn't be wearing that T-shirt, it's ridiculous." But he did it anyway.

People are stepping up and doing various things, and I support that. It's just hard to match what Tommie Smith, John Carlos and Peter Norman did. That's what some people



John Carlos speaking at Pacific University Nov. 8. "If I sat back and looked at every letter I had that stated they were going kill me and be concerned about that, I probably wouldn't have done nothing," Carlos says. "But my concern wasn't about life, it was about what I was going to do with the life"

were saying in Mexico in 1968 and it's the same situation now. But it comes down to who has the courage to step up at the right time to make the right statements. And the difference is we studied everything, we looked at everything from top to bottom, about what the repercussions would be, how they would come against us, how they would try and stop us, how we could try to enlighten other people who were indecisive as to which way to go, how to encourage people to have more audacity to say, "I am somebody and I have a concern and I'm not concerned by what you think you may be able to do to me." If I sat back and looked at every letter I had that stated they were going kill me and be concerned about that, I probably wouldn't have done nothing. But my concern wasn't about life, it was about what I was going to do with the life. So, that's where it stands with me. You have to learn to adjust the volume. There are

certain instances in life where you have to turn the volume up on people.

I think anybody should want to do the right thing. It's just a matter of safeguarding individuals while you're doing what you're doing. You have to safeguard to make sure that you're right in what you're doing and have a clear understanding of why you're doing what you're doing. People might not appreciate you because they don't understand you. But in time they may turn around and say, "Now I have a clarity as to what he did and why he did it." And then they'll sit back and say, "It took some guts for them to do it because there wasn't nobody starting there with him." And that's what it's about, man, standing up for what's right. Because the more they see that you're weak, the more they're going to roll over you.

J.B.: *You've managed to overcome a great*

deal of adversity in your life. What would you say to people who find themselves in trying situations?

J.C.: I think that they first of all need to rekindle the love that they have in them. If they haven't experienced love in their lives they need to find out what that's all about and try to set a fire of love within themselves. If you love yourself and someone is coming at you in a negative sense, you can withstand anything if you have love within yourself and love around you. I think my greatest asset was my family, the love of my family. My mom, my dad, my brothers, my sisters, my wife and my children. If you got the love around you, you can withstand anything.

J.B.: *President Obama said about your medal-stand action, "I think that was a breakthrough moment in an overall push to move this country towards a more equal and more just society." He added, "I think that what they did was in the best tradition of American protest." How do you feel about all the mainstream praise and accolades you're receiving some forty years after your courageous act?*

J.C.: I don't really get into accolades from the perspective of John Carlos receiving accolades. I think I just do what God has planned for me to do to deal with these issues in my life and time. But I think accolades come to bring the smiles and the joy and the wonder to my wife (Charlene Norwood) and my kids and my mom and my brothers and sisters because they feel like I was a great athlete and I've done a lot of good things for society. And for me to be acknowledged for those things today, I think it brings joy and admiration and appreciation to them when they see their little brother or their son or their dad or their husband getting positive attention. And that lights my heart up to see them smiling about what they see happening today.

In terms of the president, I love his statement about the demonstration because I think he really read into the statement that what we did was a humane statement, it was an honorable statement, it was a non-violent statement, and a statement that was powerful in a non-intimidating way. If you look at it — three individuals stepping up to the plate and notifying society that we have some issues that we need to deal with — we didn't set anything on fire. We didn't blow up any buildings. We didn't brandish any guns to try to wake up the conscience of society. I just love the fact that the president took time to acknowledge what he felt was a great movement in society.

Jules Boykoff is an associate professor and department chair at Pacific University. He is also published author and a contributor to Street Roots. For more information about John Carlos, see www.johncarlos68.com/

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