

Elegy for Peter Norman

I don't like whiteness. And as a white person looking for some heroes, it's lonely out here. The museum's empty.

- Macon Detournay from *Angry Black White Boy* by Adam Mansbach

two fists
attacked the atmosphere
of Olympic Stadium
Mexico City, 1968

Tommie Smith and John Carlos
took gold and bronze
then took Black Power
center stage

that image
tacked on my bedroom wall
centered on the two men
about to receive more hate mail
than Hank Aaron and Muhammad Ali combined

you, Pete,
i barely noticed

every now and then
looked over at the silver stand and wondered
Who's the white dude?

there you stood
hands relaxed at your sides
back standing solid
eyes straight ahead
like you knew the real prize
wasn't hanging around your neck

i look closer
see it now:
a small patch on your chest

right before the pedestal
Tommie and John told you what to expect
you asked how you could help
and they gave you the patch:
Olympic Project for Human Rights

shit, Pete!

you had their back

two black men
fighting white
Nixon, white
CoIntelPro, white
South Africa
and you, white
dude, supported black
self-determination

only to be black-
listed back home
in Australia, blacked
out of record books
and our civil rights stories

you were not the focus
of the event, or the photo,
nor should you be
but your name deserves tribute

John Brown
Schwerner and Goodman
a short list of white folks
who gave more
than moral support
and a check in the mail

after you died last week
a new picture showed
Tommie and John
arms raised high again
carrying your coffin
mourning a fallen comrade

it was more
than just the patch

over and over again, Pete,
you threw your white fist at the sky
giving black hands a chance to rest
if only for a moment