

## DC WAVE PARENT PAUSE JANUARY 20, 2011

### **Black History in the World of Swimming**

A couple of years back I decided to take my daughter to Ft. Lauderdale for Spring Break. A trip that was supposed to be all fun and sun actually proved to be one where we both learned a lot about the history of Americans of African descent in the world of swimming.

Ft. Lauderdale is the home of the International Swimming Hall of Fame (ISHOF). I honestly did not know that prior to going to Ft. Lauderdale but one afternoon while on a sightseeing boat ride we passed by the Ft. Lauderdale Aquatic complex.



(ISHOF)

The ISHOF is a part of the Ft. Lauderdale Aquatic Complex and on this particular day they were hosting the YMCA National Short Course Championships. *Oh goody! A swim meet – during spring break!* By the time the sightseeing boat ride ended the meet was ending so we missed the excitement. But being the history buff that I am – and to add a little “education” to Spring Break - we went over to the International Swimming Hall of Fame to see what we could find. After paying a small admission fee (\$8 for adults, \$4 for students) we entered the Museum. Clearly underappreciated we were the only visitors there (I have to admit it was about 87 degrees and very sunny outside – everyone else was enjoying the beach!). At the time there were many exhibits housed at the museum but the one that caught Kai's attention contained the history of Olympic swimsuits and swim attire from around the world. As we walked around and viewed the exhibit there was a video running that caught my attention about the history of African Americans and Swimming. Bruce Wigo, CEO of the ISHOF, was there that day and took the time to walk us through the exhibit and he patiently entertained all of my questions about how we can get the historical information about African Americans and Swimming out to the masses.

As I thought about what to write for the first Parent Pause of 2011 I ventured back to the ISHOF website and was pleasantly pleased to find a plethora of information has been added to their website. So much so I figured I'd point out some. As your swimmer does

research during Black History Month (as most schools have them do), consider peaking their interest in some of the historical black figures in the World of Swimming. I think as parents we can learn a lot too! Enjoy!

[Celebrate Black Swimming History](#) – this ISHOF webpage contains links to History, Videos, and Trailblazers in Black Swimming

[ISHOF Celebrates African American History in Swimming](#) – Nice video moderated by Bruce Wigo (ISHOF CEO) and Lee Pitts (the first and only African American to produce and teach an award winning swim lesson video primarily featuring minority children demonstrating the lessons- *Waters: Beginners Swim Lesson for Adults and Children with Lee Pitts*)

[Black Splash: The History of African- American Swimmers](#) – Great document By Lee Pitts produced for the ISHOF in 2007.

[Black Splash 1451 - present](#) - this documents the chronology of blacks in swimming from 1451 – present

[Mamout Yarrow](#) – Reprint of a 2006 Washington Post Article gives the history of Georgetown resident Mamout Yarrow who was documented in DC history as the “best swimmer ever to swim in the Potomac River.”

[The Lincoln Pool for Negroes - Harlem, NY](#) – Did you know that in the early 1930's there existed a pool build especially for use by Negroes in Harlem, NY?

**See You at the Pool!**

*Rhonda Waller*