The AVCA History Commission was formed as a subgroup to the AVCA Diversity Development Team on December 1, 2020. The History Commission’s purpose is to recognize, amplify, and celebrate the rich and diverse history of the sport of volleyball. The first phase of the Commission’s work will explore the contributions of Black Americans to the sport of volleyball. Phase 1 is timed to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

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HALEIGH WASHINGTON
Haleigh Meridian Washington was born in Denver, Colorado with her early years spent in Idaho Springs, Colorado. Idaho Springs or Clear Creek County is a part of the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood metropolitan area located about 35 miles west of downtown Denver. She attended Carlson Elementary and Clear Creek Middle School. She showed a lot of promise as a youth basketball player, but volleyball became her passion as a member of the seventh-grade volleyball team at Clear Creek Middle. What stood out to Washington was not only the success of the team that season, but the closeness she felt with her teammates. By her freshman year at Clear Creek High School, Washington had clearly set herself apart as the most consistent player on the team. Even at that stage in her volleyball journey, she was already garnering interest from college recruiters. As a sophomore, Haleigh was named to the Colorado 3A All-State volleyball team despite the struggles of her team. As she entered her junior year, her family relocated to Colorado Springs where she attended Doherty High School for her junior and senior years.

In two years at Doherty, Haleigh earned consecutive Colorado Volleyball Player of the Year honors in 2012 and 2013 with her team capturing the state championship in 2012. In 2013, she was selected to the AVCA High School All-American first team and the Volleyball Magazine's National Player of the Year and was regarded as the top recruit in her class. Graduating from Doherty in 2014, Washington would take her talents to State College, Pennsylvania and play for Penn State University and legendary coach Russ Rose.

An elite talent, Washington got out of the gate fast being named the Big Ten Conference Freshman of the Year after hitting a blistering .463 for the season. The Nittany Lions would be the last team standing taking down the BYU Cougars in a sweep to claim the 2014 Di Women’s Volleyball National Championship trophy finishing with a stellar 36-3 record. Over the next three seasons, Haleigh would be named a first-team AVCA All-American in each of those seasons. In addition to her on-court success, Washington would also garner recognition for her performance in the classroom as an Academic All-Big Ten and CoSIDA Academic All-American honoree. Haleigh would close out her career as one of the most decorated volleyball student-athletes in the illustrious history of Penn State women’s volleyball by leading the program to the 2017 national semifinals in Kansas City losing to eventual national champion Nebraska in a tight five-setter. In Haleigh’s four years, the volleyball program won an amazing 121 matches against only 21 losses for an amazing .852 winning percentage.

Haleigh continues to stoke her passion for volleyball after graduating from Penn State with her degree in Philosophy. In addition to her playing professionally in Italy, she carved out a spot on the U.S. Senior Women’s national team in 2018. She made her national team debut at the 2018 Pan American Cup in the Dominican Republic, helping the team win a gold medal. Since her debut, Haleigh has been a huge part of the national team program’s success as the back-to-back FIVB Nations League gold-medal winning team in 2019 and 2021. On June 7, 2021, national team coach Karch Kiraly announced she would be part of the 12-player Olympic roster bound for Tokyo, Japan for the 2020 Summer Games (postponed due to COVID-19). Washington is quick to credit her college coach, 2007 AVCA Hall of Fame inductee Russ Rose for “acclimating her to the grueling demands and expectations of competing on the international stage”.

Meet Haleigh Washington…CLASSIC! 1:55 (Chili’s will have to wait…)

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