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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OYINKANSOLA OLUSEUN “INKY” AJANAKU
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Oyinkansola Oluseun “Inky” Ajanaku calls Tulsa, Oklahoma her hometown. She would be the first one tell you that as a high school freshman that she ‘wasn’t that great at volleyball. She was just tall.’ Her high school coach, Jerri Berna would counter that with this, “She has all the physical abilities, but more than that she wanted to be great. So she did the work that she needed to do to be great.” In Inky’s four years at Bishop Kelley High School in Tulsa, the Comets added to their rich girl’s volleyball history by winning four state championships. Three of those championships came at the 5A level and one to cap off her high school career as the 2011 OSSAA 6A champions with a 32-3 record. She would earn her second consecutive tournament MVP award after receiving the award in the 5A classification in 2010. Inky would wrap up her scholastic career by being named an AVCA 1st Team Girls High School All-American, Oklahoma Gatorade High School Volleyball Athlete of the Year, and the Tulsa World’s All-Metro Volleyball Player of the Year. In addition to her exploits on the volleyball court, Inky would letter twice in track & field, and once in basketball at BK. As the #2 ranked girl’s volleyball recruit in her class, the recruiting ‘got a little overwhelming’, but with the guidance and support of family, she ultimately committed to take her talents to women’s volleyball powerhouse Stanford University. Graduating in 2012 from Bishop Kelley with a 4.17 GPA, Stanford with its high academic standing, beautiful Palo Alto campus, and the opportunity to get better and win championships made the decision less stressful. Stanford was ideal for a student-athlete like Inky who was a champion in the gym and in the classroom.

Arriving in the Bay Area in the fall of 2012, Inky got to work and was quick to solidify her standing as a young college volleyball phenom with 24 starts at middle blocker for the Cardinal. Playing in 116 sets, she would rank third in the Pac-12 and 28th nationally with a .374 hitting percentage. Ajanaku would be named AVCA All-America honorable mention as well as garnering All-Pac-12 Conference and All-Pac-12 Freshman Team recognition. The team would lose to Michigan in the Berkeley Region final to end the season with an overall record of 30-4 and a 1st place finish in the conference standings with a 19-1 record.

Inky would continue to work. In her second season on The Farm, Inky would take her game to new heights with top-three finishes in the Pac-12 Conference for both hitting percentage (.438) and blocks per set (1.38). Named AVCA All-America first team, the Cardinal finished 2nd in the Pac-12 with a 17-3 record and another trip to the NCAA Tournament. Once again, the team would be denied a trip to the ‘final four’, this time at the hands of mighty Penn State in a tight five-setter in the Lexington Regional.

Back to work. With two years in the program, Inky was emboldened more than ever to get over the proverbial hump and end the longest drought in program history by getting back to the NCAA national semifinals for the first time since 2008. Inky and the team would start the season ‘Cardinal red hot’ winning their first 28 matches before a late conference loss in five sets at Washington. It may have been a blessing in disguise as the team would regroup with a win at Cal to close out the conference season before heading into the NCAA tournament. With Inky being named the Ames (IA) Regional Most Outstanding Player, Stanford would not be denied any longer as they swept Florida to secure a trip to the national semifinals in Oklahoma City. Their recent nemesis Penn State was waiting, taking them down in four on the way to their 7th title.

Playing for the U.S. National Team at the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto, Inky would suffer a knee injury that would cost her the 2015 collegiate season. Using a redshirt season, Inky knew she was built to overcome this setback and boy did she...The team would open the season with a 3-2 record, a loss to San Diego, but a sweep of rival Penn State. Slightly inconsistent throughout the season, they would finish the conference slate with a somewhat un-Stanford like 15-5 record. However, the team would close out the season with 10 wins in a row, a trip to the NCAA national semifinals in Columbus, Ohio, and wins over Minnesota and Texas to claim Stanford’s 7th national title and send legendary Stanford coach John Dunning into retirement as a champion for the fifth time. Named AVCA 1st Team All-America for the third time in 2016, Inky would be named the NCAA tournament’s Most Outstanding Player. Her storybook volleyball career at Stanford would end with her being awarded the Honda Sports Award as the top collegiate women’s volleyball player in the country.

Earning a degree in human biology and a master’s degree in biology, she is considering a career as an orthopedic surgeon.

One thing for sure, Inky Ajanaku is going to put in the work! That is what you have to do to be GREAT!
AVCA DDT HISTORY COMMISSION

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