Wade in the Water: 
How African Americans Got Back Into the Pool

S. Abigail Giroux

Senior Division
Individual Documentary Film

Words: 490
Wade in the Water: How African Americans Got Back Into the Pool

Topic/Theme: For this year’s theme, Frontiers in History, I wanted to discuss a frontier in my own backyard, a frontier I could reach out and touch. Baltimore City, my hometown, has an ugly history of racial segregation that continues to impact where we live, work, and attend school, and how we travel from place to place. My topic, segregated swimming, illustrates this problem. From the 1920s, African Americans were pushed from pools, beaches, lakes, and rivers so completely that swimming became a social and legal frontier. African Americans eventually secured the right to equal swimming access, but the legacy of segregated swimming continues to haunt American society today.

Research: Before writing my script, I read books such as Contested Waters, Landscapes of Exclusion and Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters, and Black Faces, White Spaces, as well as historic articles from databases like Chronicling America and ProQuest, and various government documents. I received research guidance from the AFRO American newspaper. The Library of Congress, Smithsonian, Civil Rights Library of St. Augustine, and several municipal libraries, were important archives for research and visuals used in my film. Finally, I interviewed Eva Scott, a retired lifeguard at Baltimore’s Pool No. 1 and physical education teacher.

Process: I make documentaries because photographs, video and oral histories become so impactful. From typed notes I write a script—usually 6,000 words cut down to 1,400 words. The cutting down is the hardest part of the project. I also conduct an original interview, and from that interview, I select a few seconds for the final film. I then cut my films together with Final Cut Pro. I used the most current (9th) edition of the MLA Handbook for my annotated bibliography.

Argument: Books and articles discuss segregated pools, segregation at public parks and beaches, or nonviolent direct action in southern states. Yet these issues should be considered together. In my film, I explain that swimming exclusion was not just regional but national with swimming in the north as segregated as the south. This exclusion impacted public pools, beaches, lakes, rivers, most parks, and private accommodations like motels, resorts, and clubs. Combining these strands into one narrative highlights the dividing line that kept African Americans at arm’s length from swimming. Decades of organized resistance and litigation, combined with changed post-war attitudes nationally helped African Americans conquer the frontier of recreational swimming.

Significance: The battle against segregation was long and frequently violent, and of all the barriers to fall, segregated recreation was among the very last. Recreation brings Americans together intimately, and there are few recreational spaces more intimate than the pool. When we recall the Civil Rights Movement, we think of the sit-ins that followed the Greensboro lunch counter protests. However, tactics included swim-ins and wade-ins, which were essential to desegregating swimming. Today, the nation is investing once again in public swimming access, education, and safety—an effort to heal itself from the wounds inflicted by swimming exclusion.

S. Abigail Giroux
National History Day 2023
Senior Division Individual Documentary
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Resources


Women swam on the sidelines in the early days of publicly funded swimming because swimming was a form of bathing and many swimmers, particularly men and boys, swam nude. Adams explains how women were joining men in the pool and participating in competitive swimming, but in 1935 when this article was written, “everybody” was certainly not accessing swimming facilities equally. I read this article to understand white American attitudes concerning swimming in the 1930s.


This historic footage shows African American children using the new Depression-era recreational facilities in New York City in 1937. I use a clip of this film when I discuss the unequal allocation of swimming facilities and that African American tax dollars were being spent on improvements they could not use.


This historic footage shows a man diving at a pool in Miami Beach, Florida in 1949. I use this clip as part of the title sequence in my own film.


The Archive Photos Collection includes historic photographs from a wide variety of sources. In my film I used a 1950 photograph of Druid Hill Park Pool No. 2 from Baltimore’s AFRO American (Ed. No. 506678245), two images from the Chicago History Museum documenting the 1919 Chicago Riot (Ed. Nos. 529345801 and 138146547), and one H. Armstrong Roberts/ClassicStock image depicting backyard swimming in 1955 (Ed. No. 563936615).

Associated Press. “‘Separate But Equal’ Facilities for Maryland Pools Upheld.” Evening Star
I read this article by the Associated Press as part of my research into the swimming-related court battles of the 1940s and 1950s. Maryland swimming cases were important to the eventual integration of public swimming facilities. I learned that integrating education and housing were easier to do than integrating recreation such as swimming.


WWL-TV reports on community and local government interest in restoring Lincoln Beach, a segregation-era beach reserved for African American use. The news segment includes historic footage as well as footage showing area residents enjoying the beach today. I used a small clip from this news report in my own film when I discuss renewed interest in these historic swimming amenities.


I use this piece by Audiomachine in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.


This article discusses Baltimore’s publicly funded swimming amenities including the large swimming pool at Patterson Park. Baltimore City was one of many large cities to embrace bathing amenities for hygiene and then for recreation. This was one of many articles I read to learn about the early waves of government spending on swimming facilities.


This color postcard shows the swimming pool of the Dubsdread Country Club in Orlando, Florida. Many white Americans retreated to private clubs rather than continue to swim at newly integrated public pools. I use this image in my own film when I discuss the switch to private swimming.

The Bettman Collection, begun by Otto Bettman in 1936, includes more than 11 million images and is one of the most important photographic collections documenting American life. I studied images documenting swimming exclusion from this collection during the research phase of my project. I also incorporated two images from a June 1964 beach wade-in (Ed. Nos. 1367552037 and 1367551418) into the title sequence of my film and used a photograph of David Isom integrating a swimming pool in 1958 (Ed. No. 514907186) and an image showing conflict at Monson Motor Lodge in 1964 (Ed. No. 514694086).


The AP Archive holds the film and video archives of the independent news agency The Associated Press. The collection includes this footage of the swim-in at the Monson Motor Lodge in St. Augustine, Florida. I used a clip from this footage in my own film when I discuss the swim-in.


Blair reports on the events at the Fairgrounds Park Pool in St. Louis. The city had decided to integrate its municipal recreational facilities including the pool, but on the first day of integrated swimming, white segregationists attacked the African American visitors, so city leaders returned to segregated swimming. I read about the Fairgrounds Park Pool riot to understand how officials nationally delayed or retreated from integrated public swimming out of fears of public unrest and violence.


This historic footage shows white bathers enjoying the beach and swimming at Brighton Baths in Brooklyn, New York, in 1914. I use a small clip of this footage to show swimming in the 1910s.


I use this piece by Paul Cardall in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.

This Jackson, Mississippi, newspaper reports on the violent conflict at Chicago’s Rainbow Beach. Protestors, who called themselves Freedom Waders, attempted to swim in interracial groups at the beach and many thousands of white segregationists gathered and had to be disbursed by the police. I read articles on both northern and southern beach wade-ins to understand how swim-ins and beach wade-ins were used as nonviolent direct-action tactics to integrate swimming recreation nationally.


This historic footage shows African American young people enjoying public swimming facilities. I used a clip from this film for the credit sequence in my own film.


An unknown photographer for the Los Angeles Times captured this image of children playing at a Washington Carver Pool in 1967. The historic photographic archive collection for that newspaper is now housed at the UCLA Library and much of the collection has been digitized. I used this image in my film when I discuss the types of public pools being constructed in the 1960s and 1970s.


The National Library of Medicine holdings include many historical primary sources for issues having to do with the history of disease and medicine in the United States. This specific resource is a report printed in 1867 concerning cholera in Boston in the previous year. I reviewed this document in the research phase of my project to better understand the concerns of large American cities in the northeast regarding outbreaks of diseases like cholera.


The Corbis Historical Collection contains many early photographs documenting American swimming. I used one photograph in my film showing a chauffeur circa 1915 (Ed. No. 526607770) when I discuss the discrimination African Americans faced as they left the South for economic opportunity. The second photograph I used in my film was that of female swimmers with an American flag in 1932 (Ed. No. 587496558).

I use this piece by Jon Cotton and Ben Niblett in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.


As part of the research phase of my project, I examined primary sources concerning the spread of diseases like cholera in large northeastern American cities. Boston examined the spread of cholera several times in the mid to late 1800s, and Boston was also the first city to construct public swimming facilities as a hygienic measure. I use this map as the first visual in my film when I discuss these concerns.


This article reports on a court ruling that permitted cities to close public swimming amenities instead of integrating them. My research showed that some city and state governments especially in the South closed parks and pools and beaches to everyone instead of integrating them. I used sources like this one to understand the different paths city and state governments took following the original 1956 ruling.


This short article discusses eleven new public baths in New York City, five of which had already opened. The earliest publicly funded swimming pools were often built directly into rivers, and this article discusses how the new pools will be in the East and North Rivers. I read about these early pools to understand how pools began as inclusive spaces to promote hygiene and then became exclusive spaces intended for recreation.


This newspaper article reports on the beach wade-in activity in St. Augustine, Florida, the summer of 1964. Segregationists attacked the protestors with fists but also with clubs at the wade-ins and even attacked a woman kneeling on the sand in prayer. I discuss the nonviolent direct-action efforts in St. Augustine and the responses of segregationists in my film.
This footage shows the June 1964 swim-in at the Monson Motor Lodge swimming pool in St. Augustine, Florida. I discuss this historical event in my film and show a small clip of this footage where acid is poured into the water to disburse the activists swimming in the pool.


Fominykh reports on the work that Olympic gold medalist Cullen Jones was doing as part of the national “Make a Splash Tour” to promote swimming safety. Jones, who was visiting Baltimore City as part of this program, discusses the higher incidence of drowning for African American children. I used the photograph of Jones teaching swimming to children in Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park pool as a visual toward the end of my film.

Vox Media is an American media company that distributes news and opinion through its website, YouTube channel, podcasts, and other outlets. This video discussing the use of the wade-in as a nonviolent direct-action tactic is one of many videos examining historical events on the Vox YouTube channel. I used a couple of clips from this video in my film including in the opening title sequence, but I was also inspired by this video to place swim-ins and wade-ins in the large context of Civil Rights Movement tactics.

An unknown photographer captured Mary and Imogene Myers wading in the water at Lake Elsinore in Riverside County, California. This image is now part of the Los Angeles Public Library’s online collection. I used the image in my own film when I discussed swimming access in the 1920s.

Good discusses the life and work of her father Paul Joseph Good Jr., who reported on Civil Rights Movement. She discusses Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the events in St.
Augustine, Florida. I read this article for more information on that event, and I used the Associated Press photograph of King in St. Augustine June 12, 1964, in my own film.


The Civil Rights Library of St. Augustine in collaboration with Flagler College collects, preserves, digitizes, and shares primary source material concerning the American Civil Rights Movement. The materials include several government documents relevant to my project. I included an image of The Civil Rights Act of 1964 into my own film.


The Geographia Map Co. produced a series of detailed color street maps for major American cities in the 1950s. This map shows Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park and its two pools—Pool No. 1 for white patrons and the much smaller Pool No. 2 for African American patrons. I use a detail from this map showing the two pools in my film.


Harris documented a 1949 protest of segregated swimming at Pittsburgh’s Highland Park Pool. African American men carry signs linking their service during the Second World War with swimming equality. I used this image (Ed. No. 529044609) in my film when I discuss the beginning of the movement to integrate American recreational spaces.


Herbers reports on a news conference held the previous day by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. who spoke about the disregard that the city of St. Augustine had for the law. King had selected St. Augustine as the target of a summer campaign for this reason, hoping to bring relief to the frightened African American residents of that city and provide support to local civil rights workers who were being targeted by white supremacist groups. I discuss the campaign in my film and include this article as a visual.

This newspaper article describes the dangers posed by drowning and discusses the swimming training that college women received as a requirement for graduation. Swimming education increasingly became part of life for young white Americans as the danger posed by recreational swimming was better understood. This was one of the articles I read to understand the discrepancy between swimming access and education for young white people and their African American peers.


During the research phase of my project, I explored the rise of Jim Crow and the Great Migration of African Americans from southern states. I looked at several primary sources including this poem by the author Langston Hughes. “One-Way Ticket” refers to Jim Crow and the ticket that many African Americans would have purchased on the new railways to take them to big cities in states in the North and West.


The magazine reports on the continued fight to integrate American life including the arrest of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery, Alabama, where he was arrested and then assaulted by the arresting officers. The article includes a photograph of King in custody, and I used that image in my film.


This newspaper article reports on the pool protest in Cairo, Illinois, where the only pool open for public use barred African Americans who were forced to swim in drainage ditches. African Americans held a pool sit-in, and seventeen young protesters arrested at the protest then waged a jailhouse hunger strike which attracted national attention. I read articles on the Cairo pool sit-in to understand the swimming-related nonviolent direct-action tactics used to achieve pool integration.


This footage from the 1930s shows some of the federal governments works projects. I use a small clip from this footage when I discuss the publicly funded campaign to create parks and build swimming amenities like pools and beaches.


This illustration from 1870 depicts people of different genders, ages and ethnicities enjoying publicly funded bathing facilities. Large northeastern American cities were
concerned about contagious diseases like cholera and encouraged everyone to bathe regularly in these public pools. I used this illustration in my film to show how early public swimming facilities in northern states did not discriminate against African American bathers.


I use a small clip of this historic footage of children swimming in my opening sequence. I do not show the children themselves swimming, but I use the bodies moving through water to extend the opening title sequence.


This footage shows President Lyndon Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in front of a large audience. He touches his pen to the paper and then hands pens to those observing to have as keepsakes. I use the clip where Johnson hands a pen to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. who stands next to him.


Lissner describes the new government reinvestment into public pools and sprinklers in New York City following the riot in Chicago earlier in the summer that began with conflict over an open fire hydrant. President Johnson wanted to provide the funding quickly to prevent further conflicts in large cities. I discuss the Chicago riot of 1966 in my film and the urban pool building campaign that followed that event in my film.


Lussier photographed children swimming at the Magazine Beach Pool in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1973. The public pools of the 1960s and 1970s were smaller and had fewer amenities and often lacked even changing rooms. I used this photograph in my own film to show the difference between the public pools constructed in the 1970s and those from the 1920s and 1930s.


The Wolfson archival collection housed at Miami Dade College’s Wolfson campus contains more than 35,000 hours of historical footage documenting the history of the
State of Florida. This collection contains footage from the integration campaign waged in St. Augustine, Florida in 1964. I used a small clip from “Martin Luther King Jr. in Saint Augustine” from June of 1964 in my own film when I discuss those events.

“Mamie Livingston in Baltimore, Maryland.” 1952. AFRO American Newspaper Collection, AFRO American Newspaper Archives.

Mamie Livingston, shown standing on the right of the group looking in at a public pool reserved for white residents, lived in Baltimore, Maryland. She was denied entrance at a whites-only pool and reached out by letter to the newspaper asking for swimming equality. I use this image in my own film when I discuss the court victories of the 1950s that would eventually integrate publicly funded swimming recreation.


This historic footage records Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speaking on October 29, 1961. King discusses what it was like to grow up and not be able to access public pools and parks. I used a portion of this footage in my own film.


Mason provides a first-hand account of his efforts to combat segregation generally and segregated beaches specifically in his community of Biloxi, Mississippi. The Biloxi wade-ins to integrate Biloxi’s public beaches were important events in the fight against segregated swimming in the United States. This book was the only significant source I could find where a major organizer of wade-ins discusses events he personally experienced.


McDaniels reports on the work that Meritza McClendon was doing to promote diversity in swimming nationally. McClendon, the first African American to make the U.S. Olympic swimming team, was participating in a swim clinic organized by the African American sorority Sigma Gamma Rho. I used this article and the accompanying photograph as a visual toward the end of my film when I discuss the legacy of pool segregation.

I use this piece by Jorge Méndez in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.


I use this piece by Jon Cotton and Ben Niblett in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.


I use this piece by Jorge Méndez in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.

Möller, A. W. “No. 44, Weighing Cotton.” Circa 1895. National Museum of African American History and Culture Collection, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. *Smithsonian*, https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:nmaahc_2013.117.2?q=guid%3A%22ark%3A%2F65665%2Ffd5f00f37e5971d49608fcf2473cd04ef76%22&record=1&hlterm=guid%3A%26quot%3Bark%3A%2F65665%2Ffd5f00f37e5971d49608fcf2473cd04ef76%26quot%3B&inline=true.

The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture contains *Views of Thomasville and Vicinity*, a portfolio of historic photographic images from Thomas County, Georgia. I used this image of a man weighing baskets of cotton in my own film to illustrate the limited options available to African Americans in the South following emancipation.


This color postcard shows the Elmira public pool, a pool built in 1926 as part of a nationwide trend in publicly funded swimming recreation. I use this image in my film when I discuss the increase in public pool construction and the many attractive amenities offered by the new swimming facilities.


This illustration depicts the continued oppression of emancipated African Americans following the American Civil War. I use this image in my film when I explain the reason why African Americans began to move in large numbers to states in the North and West.


Thomas’ illustration shows area oil refineries polluting the environment and giving off fumes that were damaging to public health. At this time, people still believed that illness
was the result of bad odors. I use this illustration early in my own film to show the health concerns that influenced public pool building at this time in large northeastern cities.


This article discusses the need to desegregate privately owned pools and skating rinks following the integration of public facilities. Many white residents abandoned the public swimming amenities after court-mandated integration in 1956, and they fled to privately owned pools which were almost entirely segregated. I read Naver’s article to understand the challenges posed by white retreat to private swimming amenities.


This newspaper article explains violent conflict in Colonial Beach, Virginia, concerning beach access. Officials denied that beaches discriminated, but when African Americans tried to use the beach, they were chased away by segregationist whites. I learned during the research phase of my project that Jim Crow laws were only one tool used to keep swimming segregated, and that white violence against African Americans was also used to maintain the social order.


This illustration from *Leslie’s Monthly Magazine* shows women bathing in one of New York City’s early public pools. These early pools were built directly into rivers and were provided free of charge to residents who did not have regular access to bathing amenities. I use this image in my own film when I discuss the origins of publicly funded swimming.


I use this piece by Peter John Nickalls in my film as part of the music accompanying the narration.

This historic footage from the 1950s shows scenes from the community pool reserved for the residents of Levittown, Pennsylvania. I use a clip in my own film when I discuss the retreat of white Americans to private swimming amenities following the court ruling integrating public swimming facilities.


Park’s article reports on an event to recognize the African American lifeguards who staffed Baltimore’s Druid Hill Pool No. 2 in the 1940s and 1950s. The article explains that white residents could access several large swimming pools, but until 1956 African American residents could only use Pool No. 2, which was so small, they swam shifts. Maryland court cases played an important role in the end of segregated public swimming, so I read several articles discussing segregated swimming in Baltimore City.

*Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058242/1919-08-01/ed-1/seq-7/#date1=1919&index=7&rows=20&words=CHICAGO+Chicago+riot+RIOTS&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1919&proxtext=chicago+riot+y=15&x=21&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1.

This newspaper reports on the 1919 Chicago Race Riot that began with conflict at the city’s lakeside public beach. The article discusses how the authorities were finally able to restore order to Chicago’s South Side. I read this article to understand the conclusion of this historical event.

Photographs & Images Collection, Civil Rights Library of St. Augustine. 

The Civil Rights Library of St. Augustine, in collaboration with Flagler College collects, preserves, digitizes, and shares primary source material concerning the American Civil Rights Movement. I used this collection heavily, especially concerning the nonviolent direct-action campaign that took place in St. Augustine. I examined photographs and correspondence pertaining to the 1964 Monson Motor Lodge integration campaign and beach wade-in.

This footage shows the events in Chicago the summer of 1966 when three days of riots were triggered by conflict over a fire hydrant being used by young people to cool themselves on a hot summer day. I used a clip of this footage in my own film.

“Police Unable to Handle Bloody Race Riots in Chicago.” *The Lake County Times* (Hammond, Ind.) 1 Aug. 1919, p. 7.

*Chronicling America*, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86058242/1919-08-01/ed-1/seq-7/#date1=1919&index=7&rows=20&words=CHICAGO+Chicago+riot+RIOTS&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1919&protext=chicago+riot+&y=15&x=21&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1.

This newspaper reports on the 1919 Chicago Race Riot, which was sparked by racial conflict at the lakeside public beach. The article documents the degree of the unrest and the difficulty authorities experienced restoring order to Chicago’s South Side. I read this article to understand the shifting attitudes of northerners toward African Americans at this time.


I read several articles concerning the 1956 integration of Baltimore’s public pools before my interview with Eva Scott, the first African American female lifeguard at Baltimore’s Druid Hill Pool No. 1, formerly reserved for white swimmers. This article explains the precautions the city’s Department of Recreation and Parks was taking to prevent racial conflict at the city’s pools. I found it interesting to see how extensive the preparations were ahead of the first season of integrated swimming in Baltimore’s public pools.


This extensive article discusses the concerns about recreational swimming and drowning. By the 1910s white Americans in larger cities especially in the Northeast were swimming in large numbers at pools and beaches. This article shows how swimming safety, swimming education, and lifesaving techniques, were already a major concern even before the large increase in pool building during the 1920s.

This article discusses Boston’s public bathing facilities and the expansion of those facilities under Mayor Josiah Quiney. Boston was the first large city to fund public bathing and built an early pool directly into the Charles River. I read this article to learn about Boston’s investment in public swimming and how the mayor at the time actively promoted pool building in other large American cities.


This article provides a detailed overview of the creation and funding of Baltimore City’s early municipal baths. The nation’s first public swimming pools were intended to provide bathing facilities for those who had no access to private tubs and showers. This article was one of several sources that I read to understand the origins of publicly funded swimming in the United States.


The magazine article reports on the Fairgrounds Park Pool riot that occurred on the first day of integrated swimming that summer. African American swimmers showed up to enjoy the pool but were attacked by a white mob that continued to grow in number. I read about this event to understand the challenges faced by municipalities trying to integrate recreational swimming, and I included the article as an image in my film.


This article describes how protesters planning on a march decided to hold a swim-in due to the summertime heat. Most books and articles on swim-ins and wade-ins discuss these tactics without placing them in the larger context of nonviolent direct action. Articles like this one helped me understand that swim-ins and wade-ins were often used in larger campaigns that included sit-ins and pray-ins.


The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History YouTube channel offers this short video documenting the 1960 Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins. The video incorporates historic photographs and footage. I did not use this footage in my own film, but I did watch it during the research phase of my project to understand what these sit-ins were like.

This was one of several newspaper articles that I read to understand how the nation began to recognize and react to the legacy of unequal access to swimming amenities. The article reports that the Centers for Disease Control had determined that African American children drowned at a rate that was 2.6 times that of their white peers. I used this article as a visual in my film toward the end of my film.


The San Francisco Public Library’s digital archive contains many high-quality historic images of public and private swimming amenities. I used two images of the Fleischhacker Swimming Pool—a photograph from 1925 showing the opening of the facility (AAK-1355) and a photograph from 1981 showing the pool abandoned (AAF-1028). I used these images in my own film to illustrate the decline of public pool funding in the 1980s.


This historic footage combines a variety of images showing the fast past of American life in the 1920s. I use a small clip in my own film when I discuss the end of the 1920s and the start of the Great Depression.


The article discusses the concerns one minister has regarding the clothing worn by women to public beaches. As swimming transitioned from a hygienic activity to recreational activity, women joined men at beaches and pools and their swimming outfits were monitored closely. I considered the evolution of women’s swimsuits during the research phase of my project.


I interviewed Eva Scott, a retired physical education teacher living in Baltimore City, Maryland, who was also the first African American female lifeguard to work at the newly
integrated Druid Hill Park Pool No. 1. Scott spoke about her experiences lifeguarding at that time and her concerns for young people today who lack access to athletic facilities. I use a clip of this recorded interview in my film.


As African Americans began to migrate in large numbers from the South to large cities in the North and West, they found themselves limited to low wage work as low-skilled laborers or working as domestic servants. This advertisement from 1919 shows a seated white woman attended by an African American servant holding a meal on a tray. I used this advertisement in my film when I discuss the Great Migration and changing northern attitudes.


This footage shows the 1960 campaign to integrate Woolworths lunch counters. I mention this campaign in my film and explain how the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins sparked similar nonviolent direct-action campaigns across the country including swim-ins and wade-ins.


The summer of 1919, called Red Summer, was a particularly bloody summer as the nation experienced several violent events in major cities where white residents attacked African Americans residents and destroyed property including businesses and homes. These events included the 1919 Chicago Race Riot discussed in my own film—a riot sparked by conflict over swimming at a public beach. This article, typical of many written at that time, suggests African Americans were to blame for the racial conflict and claims they were being organized by those with communist sympathies—an argument that made African Americans seem responsible for their own misery.


This was one of many newspaper sources I used to learn about the 1919 Chicago Race Riot sparked by racial conflict at the segregated public lakeside Twenty-Ninth Street Beach. Large numbers of African Americans migrated from the Jim Crow South to big cities in northern and western states during the Great Migration, where they encountered
discrimination and occasional incidents of mass white violence against African Americans. I discuss this swimming-related riot in my film.


The Sherman Grinberg Library holds approximately 20 million feet of archival footage primarily from 1895 through 1957 and includes both Paramount and American Pathé newsreels. I explored this resource heavily during the research phase of my project. I used clips in my own film from American Pathé newsreel footage from July 1919 showing guardsmen responding to the Chicago riot (Ed. No. 1283081515) and footage from July 1924 showing children cooling off in a portable pool in New York City (Ed. No. 1130757680).


This NBC Sports news footage shows Simone Manuel winning a gold medal at the Rio Olympics in the 100 meter-freestyle. The sports commentator reports on this historic nature of the victory due to the legacy of swimming inequality in American sports. I use a clip of Manuel at the podium toward the end of my film.


The State Library and Archives of Florida contains several photographs and this footage documenting the 1964 St. Augustine beach wade-in. The footage includes several clips including the arrival of activists at the beach and the attacks by white supremacists who did not want to integrate the public beach. I use a portion of this footage in my own film when I discuss the beach wade-in.


This footage shows the events in Chicago the summer of 1966 when three days of riots were triggered by conflict over a fire hydrant being used by young people to cool themselves on a hot summer day. I used a clip of this footage in my own film.


I use a portion of this footage from 1948 when I discuss the growing inequality not only in access to swimming recreation but also swimming education. The footage shows young white swimmers receiving swimming instruction.

This WPA Art Project Department of Parks poster designed by John Wagner promotes swimming education for all ages. Both African American and white swimmers are shown, but they stand separated from one another. I use this image in my film when I discuss the unequal access to swimming recreation and education following the 1930s era funding push for pools and beaches.


Post documented African American children swimming in a public fountain near Union Station in Washington D.C. The nation’s capital did not provide equal swimming access to African Americans at this time, and children had few places to cool themselves off during hot summers. I use this image in my own film when I discuss limited access to federally funded swimming recreation during the 1930s.


This historic footage shows WPA construction work in 1937. I use a clip of this footage in my own film when I discuss the investment of federal money into swimming recreation projects.

*Secondary Resources*


Blakemore discusses the decline of public pools and the more recent reinvestment in public swimming. The article includes a *New York Times* photograph of the reopened McCarren Pool in Brooklyn, New York, taken August 27, 2018. Originally opened in 1936, the McCarren Pool closed in 1984, and I use this photograph in my own film when I discuss current trends in public pool funding.

This article revisits the integration of Baltimore City’s public pools in 1956. The article includes a photograph of an interracial group of children plunging into Druid Hill Pool No. 1 in June of 1956. I used this photograph as a visual in my film when I discuss the integration of this pool.


Finney discusses how African Americans were often deprived of access to state and federal parks and the legacy of the unequal access today. I was particularly interested in the discussion of historic African American spaces and how to consider these spaces today. I also relied on this source to understand how African Americans today are often excluded as a group from media representation concerning outdoor recreation.


Gates discusses the immediate aftermath of the end of the American Civil War and how southern whites attempted to keep African Americans in a subservient and economically dependent position. I used this resource to understand the origins of Jim Crow and the reasons for the Great Migration to northern and western states. I also found the historical overview of white violence against African Americans as an intimidation factor relevant to pool exclusion.


Kahrl discusses the history of African American displacement from coastal areas in the American South. This book was one of the resources I used to understand how African Americans gradually lost access to swimming amenities such as coastal beaches and resorts. The author explains how coastal areas were claimed as exclusively white space, especially after the 1930s, when the federal government invested large amounts of money in coastal stabilization and beautification projects.


McKenzie’s book explores the history of segregated housing in the United States and its legacy of homeowner association-controlled communities. The author explains several strategies used to keep African Americans confined to specific non-white residential areas. The rise of homeowner association communities occurred simultaneously with the rise of private social clubs and private swimming access.

O’Brien’s book discussing Jim Crow at southern state parks was the best source I found concerning park exclusion. This book described and provided photographs that showed separate entrances and unequal facilities for the few southern state parks that permitted African American visitors. This book explained that African Americans were not only excluded from swimming amenities like municipal pools but also lakes, rivers, and beaches at state parks.


Packard discusses Jim Crow from its beginning to the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1965. This book was one of several sources I read to understand the origins of and battle against Jim Crow. The book also discusses the riot in the summer of 1919 that took place in Chicago following racial conflict at a public beach.


I read Terry’s book to understand the history of Jim Crow in my hometown of Baltimore City. Baltimore City was highly segregated with housing, education, transportation, and recreation all divided along color lines with segregated swimming in place until 1956. I also read this book to understand the sit-ins by Morgan students that predated the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins.


The organization Re-Imagining Migration provides free educational materials and curriculum to support immigrant-origin youth. One of these resources is material on W.E.B. Dubois and his work studying the Great Migration. The website includes a map depicting the Great Migration visually reproduced from the June 1917 issues of the NAACP magazine *The Crisis*, and I use this map in my own film.


For the Center for Health Journalism, a news outlet affiliated with USC Annenberg, White reports on the book *The Long Shadow*. This book discusses a study that followed 800 Baltimore children from first grade into adulthood and found that an impoverished childhood with few opportunities and resources generally resulted in an impoverished adulthood. I used the article’s photograph by Seth Sayers in my own film when I discuss Ms. Eva Scott’s concerns about reduced access to recreational sports.

The author provides an historical overview of segregated swimming specifically at pools in the United States. Wiltse shows how African Americans nationally lost access to recreational swimming over time and how Jim Crow and the threat of violence kept African Americans out of pools nationally. The author did not discuss swimming exclusion more generally and did not discuss swim-ins and wade-ins as tactics to combat segregation.


The author discusses the history of segregated recreational spaces in the United States. Although this book focused on skating rinks and amusement parks more than swimming amenities, I read this book to understand how segregated swimming was part of general exclusion from recreational space. This book also discussed the riot that took place in the summer of 1919 in Chicago sparked by racial conflict at the 29th Street Beach.


Wormser provides an historic overview of Jim Crow from the end of the American Civil War through the court battles in 1954. I used this source for context on Jim Crow, the court battles against segregation and racial violence.