

PARTING THE WATERS

IN THE TRADITION OF *HOOP DREAMS*, A NEW DOCUMENTARY FOLLOWS THE LIVES OF YOUNG ATHLETES WITH BIG ASPIRATIONS.

Talk about making a splash: In a sport where less than 1 percent of competitors are African-American or Latino, the Flaherty Dolphins stand out. Based in Roslindale, Massachusetts, the team is a Northeast powerhouse comprising children of endlessly varied ethnic backgrounds — including Asians, African-Americans, Eastern Europeans and Hispanics with roots across Central America. As their Bronx-born Dominican coach, Richard Mojica, told *The Boston Globe* in January 2006: “You name it, I’ve got it.”

That article, along with the prompting of an old friend and Dolphins parent, led producer Jenny Levison to the Flaherty Dolphins’ pool deck, where she found a team that is a striking exception to a troubling reality that persists some 50 years after the onset of the modern civil-rights movement. “It’s rare to see an activity where so few members of a given population feel comfortable,” says Levison. “We’re dealing with one of the last areas of segregation in our society.”

Joined by Academy Award-nominated director Joshua Waletzky, Levison set out to tell the stories of swimmers who are literally changing the face of

their sport. *Parting the Waters* traces the journey of five such athletes — ranging from established stars Maritza Correia and Cullen Jones, the African-American swimming power couple, to three young Boston swimmers who all got their start with the Flaherty Dolphins: 11-year-old Julimar Avila, the talented daughter of Honduran immigrants, and 17-year-old best friends Davidson Peguero and Elgernon Jesionek. The film unfolds alongside the lives of these swimmers, and not every lane leads to a gold-medal ending.

“I tell them, ‘You write the script and we film it,’” says Waletzky. “We wanted to know what makes these five people buck the social norm. And beyond that, what is the social norm?” Levison and Waletzky discovered those slow-changing norms had roots in slavery and generations of myths that reinforced a dangerous fear of the water for so many minorities. But they also discovered a rich aquatic history among African-Americans, the promise of which is finally being fulfilled by a new generation of poolside pioneers. **For more information on *Parting the Waters*, visit www.DoTellProductions.com.**



Aspiring Olympic champion Cullen Jones. Photo: Josh Waletzky