

## Drake student named runner-up in Miss Black Iowa USA

Mark Micheli

When entering into a competition, a person goes in with the mindset that they must win; a "go big or go home" mentality pervades. But when it came to the Miss Black Iowa USA competition, Drake's own Deidre Howard (J3) approached the competition as a great opportunity with victory coming down to a matter of destiny.

Howard was one of nearly 20 Iowans who applied to compete for the title of Miss Black Iowa USA. A panel of judges had been narrowing the field since October and brought it down to five finalists who competed on Nov. 26 at the Holiday Inn in downtown Des Moines for the official crown.

Howard, who has competed in several other pageants since 2004, holding titles from Oklahoma all the way to Iowa, said she loves performing in them.

"I have the opportunity to show myself with like minded women with similar goals, and I'm given a chance to better myself," she said.

For Howard, the Miss Black Iowa USA competition was different from any of the others.

The winner of this competition has the opportunity to go to Gambia in West Africa to compete with winners from other states.

The application process required Howard to submit her GPA and her extracurricular involvement, as well as other activities that she is a part of.

"From there, you choose a talent, and you go to the competition," Howard said.

At the actual competition, Howard was judged in a variety of different categories including her poise during an evening gown competition, her talent, how articulate she was and how fast she could think on her feet during her interviews, as well as other criteria.

"I did well in all of them, I think," Howard said. "At the end of the competition, it ended up being a tie. They chose the individual that had scored the most in their talent."

Reciting a poem entitled "I Stand" for her talent, Howard was first runner-up in the competition.

Winning the title of Miss Black Iowa USA was 24-year-old Ventra Boykin who won with her performance of the monologue "Why I am Black."

Although Boykin squeaked ahead of Howard in the competition, Howard still could substitute for Boykin at the national competition if necessary.

Despite coming in second, Howard viewed the competition as an opportunity to better herself and see where her weaknesses are, all the while being of value to the community.

"They were all wonderful ladies," Howard said. "(The competition) gives you the chance to see where others are coming from, and it gives a young woman the opportunity to do something that other black women are doing.

"It gives children and youth an opportunity to look up to somebody and see themselves in somebody else's shoes. That is what the pageant is supposed to embody: being a role model and an example in your community."

From this competition Howard has become a believer in destiny. A friend at the competition told her how she does not believe in winners.

"All she believed in was destiny," Howard said. "Whoever won, it was their destiny to win. So I'll say what she said: I believe in destiny."