

The Virgin Islands Consortium

In Upset, Khalifa Antoine Wins Miss St. Croix 2015-16

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Update: 12:28 p.m. -- The Consortium spoke briefly with Isabella Sylvester about a paragraph in this article that described her as holding her head down in disappointment briefly, after results revealed that she had secured the first runner-up position. Ms. Sylvester, in a telephone conversation with the publication today, explained that her head was not lowered because of the results, and that she remains confident in her performance. She said last night's contest was not the first she had participated in, and each time she placed first runner-up, her attitude has remained consistent: grateful for the opportunity to be a representation of a strong St. Croix woman.

Ms. Sylvester did, however, tell The Consortium that she was "shocked" at the outcome; adding that she has no problem with the truth, "once it is the truth." Her surprise comes

as many who attended the show thought she would have won the event after winning some of the segments that secured the most points. In all, Ms. Sylvester won best intellect, best talent, best cultural dress and miss congeniality. She also revealed that contestants were only judged on last night's show; as there were no pre-show interviews where they could have secured extra points.

Earlier: ST. CROIX -- "The judges' decisions are final," said co-host of the 63rd Annual Miss St. Croix Rashidi Clenace, as the placements for the three contestants were about to be announced. It was a fitting disclaimer for the upset that was just ahead. Above, a collage of this year's winner, Khalifa Antoine.

At the Island Center for the Performing Arts here on Sunday evening, residents came out in decent numbers -- filling the covered section of the facility -- to show support to the three beautiful Crucian women who participated in this year's competition. Keosha Quinn, contestant number 1, who placed 2nd runner-up, performed a play that highlighted the importance of culture. Contestant number 2, Isabella Sylvester, serenaded the audience with a song titled [Pretty Hurts by Beyonce](#), and Khalifa Antoine, the third participant, performed a play that highlighted the strength of black women. Ms. Antoine expressed the exceptional qualities of black women in various cultures -- from African, to American and brought it home to St. Croix with a perfect Crucian dialect -- in a stunning performance that captivated the audience. She did not, however, win best talent; that award went to contestant number 2, Ms. Sylvester.

Ms. Sylvester also won best intellect, fluently answering the judges' questions relative to advice she would give when starting a business, and what she would have liked her legacy to be, had she won last night's show. Ms. Quinn, contestant number 1, struggled to gain footing when queried about her passion for building self esteem, and Ms. Khalifa, whose platform was based on gaining a footing on mental illness in the territory, grappled with her first question that sought an answer on the importance of addressing the issue in the territory. However, on her second question, which sought an answer on how she would bring awareness to mental health problems if she won the crown, Ms. Khalifa, although giving a longer than necessary overview of her passion, gave a solid answer.

That segment, too, went to Ms. Sylvester, however. She also won best cultural dress and miss congeniality.

But there was a certain grace and consistency that followed contestant number 3 throughout the event. She won miss popularity and best evening wear. It was not announced who won the swimsuit competition, but she seemed to have outdone her competitors there as well. Also, because Ms. Antoine's talent was very solid; her results there might have been close to that of Ms. Sylvester. And her evening wear -- and the grace in which she wore it -- was also exceptional. Ms. Antoine's confidence beamed even when she struggled. She was the only contestant, before answering questions, to greet the audience. And her physique spelled perfection, which was made even more apparent in the swimsuit competition, embodied by her poise and confidence.

In the end, with more trophies standing at the feet of Ms. Sylvester, the audience thought the crown would have been awarded to contestant number 2. But when Ms. Sylvester was awarded first runner-up, it was clear the judges had chosen Ms. Antoine as St.

Croix's 63rd queen.

A stunned Antoine, realizing her victory, rushed to the front of the stage to hug a loved one. Her supporters erupted with cheers, bolted to the stage and began dancing. Ms. Sylvester, a 24-year-old entrepreneur who spoke of holding her head up high when difficulties and setbacks arose, congratulated Ms. Antoine on her big win.

"I feel extremely proud. I went through so much to get to this night. There were times when I looked at my coach, Christopher Rivera, and I told him, 'I don't know. I really don't see this happening.' And Chris had the faith in me and if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here. I feel proud to stand around my friends and family who stood around me and congratulated me. And I'm genuinely happy for [Khalifa Antoine]," Ms. Sylvester said.

Ms. Antoine was ecstatic. She had worked hard and gave the competition her best effort.

"I'm very excited," she proclaimed. "I'm very appreciative of this opportunity to promote my platform even further, to make a better and healthier Virgin Islands." Asked if she expected to win, Ms. Antoine's answer was direct: "I didn't," she said, "but I did come out to win. I came out to put on a performance in order to become successful."

Correction: December 21, 2015

A previous version of this story incorrectly stated that Isabella Sylvester is 25-years-old. Her correct age is 24. The story has been updated to reflect the correction information.