

The Virgin Islands Consortium

A New Queen Reigns: La' Monee Morris Captures St. Thomas Ambassadorial Carnival Crown

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Amanie Mathurin **April 16, 2023**



St. Thomas Ambassadorial Carnival Queen 2023, 20-year-old La' Monee Morris. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

A new Carnival Queen has been crowned following Saturday's staging of the St. Thomas Ambassadorial Carnival Queen Pageant 2023. Twenty-year-old La' Monee Morris emerged victorious following the contest which saw three young women competing for the highly coveted title.

Morris was also awarded best evening wear, best talent and miss intellect. The sophomore student is currently majoring in psychology and minoring in dance at the

University of the Virgin Islands. Morris also works with the V.I Dept. of Tourism as a mocko jumbie ambassador and is the founder and coach of the university baton twirling group- Buccaneer Twirlettes. The aspiring psychologist greeted Saturday's audience by emphasizing the pride she takes in highlighting carnival, a significant aspect of the territory's culture.

First Runner-Up Tyel Gifft received the awards for best cultural dress, best ambassadorial presentation, miss congeniality, miss photogenic and Viya People's Choice Award. The seventeen-year-old high school senior has competed in several pageants in the past. In her introductory speech, she impressed upon the audience the responsibility of all Virgin Islanders to defend, protect and promote their home as cultural ambassadors. According to Gifft, while she has long been described as shy, through her appearance on stage she has dared to go where shy girls don't. Gifft also affirmed that winning the prestigious title would have presented a chance to become a symbol of culture, embracing every opportunity to positively represent the territory.

Also competing was Chanise Madir, an eighteen-year-old student of Charlotte Amalie High School heavily involved in various extracurricular activities. Madir is an aspiring neurosurgeon whose competition platform centered on youth mental health awareness.

Throughout the competition, the audience was kept engaged as the three beauties displayed their poise and creativity during the various segments. For months the trio have worked diligently to polish their skills in public speaking, stage presentation and modeling. Their hard work was evident as they hit the stage with sexy strides in swimwear and gracefully presented themselves in elegant gowns for the evening wear segment.

During the interview portion of the competition, the girls were questioned about topics and issues relating to their varied interests. These included solutions to mental health issues plaguing youth as well as means and opportunities to market the territory's culture and tourism offerings. This segment, along with the ambassadorial presentation tested their eloquence, and language skills. In the ambassadorial presentation, the contestants appeared in costumes which incorporated traditional elements as they shared their ideas for marketing the territory as a tourism destination.

Madir took the audience through an idea for a 360 virtual reality experience which would showcase the USVI's historic architecture, national parks, beaches, cuisine and music. Meanwhile, Gifft discussed the possibility of advertising during parades on the mainland which present a marketing tool to share messaging and branding with millions of viewers through displays on floats. Morris focused on the opportunity to highlight the territory's talent by implementing the Cultural Delegate Division to showcase talent at international festivals. Morris, who was eventually crowned as the winner received cash prizes totaling \$15,000 as well as various gift items and opportunities to serve as an ambassador for the territory.