



Contestants in the Miss Black USA Scholarship Pageant enjoyed their time in The Gambia, West Africa. For the first time in its 20-year history, the pageant was held outside America.

Miss Black America contestants enjoy Africa

By **Noluthando Crockett-Ntonga**
Special to Sentinel-Voice
BANJUL, The GAMBIA, WEST AFRICA (NNPA) - Ever since Africans were snatched from their homes and forced into slavery in the United States, there has always been among many of their descendants, a yearning

for their motherland, a desire for connection to the home of their ancestors. The Miss Black USA Scholarship Pageant celebrating its 20th year, took its 36 contestants and more than 100 others on "A Royal Journey Back to Our Roots" this month. For the first time, the pageant was held outside the

U.S. in The Gambia, West Africa. Both, the Gambians and the Americans benefited powerfully. "We want to seize the opportunity to penetrate the American market and not just depend on the Europeans for tourism," said Secretary of State for Tourism and Culture, Angela B. Colley.

"Last year we traveled to the U.S. and met a number of African-Americans. This is your motherland, we invite you back home, you are children of Africa," she said. Gambia's President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh has created an environment where African-Americans are warmly welcomed. This

is part of a trade and investment strategy. "Gambian hospitality is off the chain," said Miss Black Virginia Takiyah Nur Amin. "Most of the people are not affluent but they always have a spirit of openness and helpfulness," she said.

"The economic disparities took me by surprise," said Ayesha Faines, Miss Black Connecticut. "I was saddened, humbled and inspired to exert influence and give more of myself. There is a need for more African-Americans to connect with Africans on an economic level. We should do as the Jews do for Israel."

Tome dissects Clarence Thomas

'Supreme Discomfort: The Divided Soul of Clarence Thomas'
By Kevin Merida and Michael A. Fletcher; Doubleday; Hardcover; \$26.95; 448 pages. ISBN: 0-385-51080-6

Review by **Kam Williams**
Sentinel-Voice
"[Clarence] Thomas once said he would never accept a race-based job, and yet he spent an entire federal career in such positions... The irony is that the career path that led him to the most prestigious tenured position in America is one he discourages other Blacks from taking... Even as Thomas goes about his work, it's his racial identity that most defines him. Would he even be on the court if he were not Black?"

ing legal battles to dismantle the Jim Crow system of segregation all across the South, winning the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, before later ascending to the Supreme Court as an elder statesman. About all that Clarence had going for him on his spotty résumé was the fact that he was a well connected, right-wing bureaucrat who was willing to be promoted or wheeled out for a photo op whenever Republicans needed a Negro yes man. It didn't help his image any that during his appointment hearings, Anita Hill, a former protégé, would make a very credible witness testifying about the sexual harassment she experienced at his hands during the period she was employed by him. But the Senate being the hily-white, male boys club that it was, his nomination was approved, thereby enabling the possibly-perverted jurist to sit on the country's highest court for life.

Woodward and Bernstein, co-authors Kevin Merida and Michael A. Fletcher, both reporters for the *Washington Post*, left no stone unturned in search of the truth about this enigmatic political figure. Much of what we learn here is not much of a surprise, like the fact that Anita Hill was telling the truth after all, and that Thomas is an intellectual lightweight who never voices his own opinion in open court, but rather simply takes his cues from his arch-conservative colleague Antonin Scalia. Apparently, he does have his positives, witnessed in private, such as his serving as a surrogate father to the son of a nephew serving 30 years in prison. But that barely makes up for his willingness to

(See Book Review, Page 11)

"There are so many in-

involved, not just tokens, but really taking ownership and governing. We can learn a lot from them." "Gambia is a small country with a huge heart," said Karen Arrington, founder of the Miss Black USA Scholarship Pageant. Gambia is well known as the home of Kunte Kinte, the ancestor of the late African-American author, Alex Haley who wrote the ground-breaking book "Roots," which also became a television series. The contestants were accompanied by pen pals on the Roots tour to James Island. "James Island was an important location during the early slave trade," said Momodou C. Joof, executive director of Gambia's National Council for Arts and Culture. "The Portuguese landed (See Contestants, Page 13)



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"Race remains an inescapable factor in most Black lives, no matter how successful or disappointing they have turned out to be. "Even in his cloistered, rarefied world as a member of the most important judicial body in existence, Thomas will always be Black, and he knows it. Not just Black, but Black before everything else." Even if Clarence Thomas weren't a self-hating Uncle Tom, he would have had a hard time trying to fill the shoes of Justice Thurgood Marshall, a Black man who had risked his life by mount-

Like a Black version of