

# Contestants

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there in 1455 in search of gold, but when one of their sailors got sick and died there, they abandoned the island. At the height of the slave trade, a couple of hundred years later, the French and the British were competing militarily for the island due to its strategic location."

Joof says that while it is true that Africans enslaved each other before the arrival of the Europeans, it was not the brutal slavery that came to be known in America during the Middle Passage. Some Africans, due to greed, aided and abetted the Europeans by selling their fellow Africans into slavery. James Island is now a World Heritage Site because of its outstanding universal value to humanity.

The winner of Miss Black USA 2007, Kalilah Allen-Harris, Miss Black Tennessee, says she grew up with all the negative images of Africa in school and in society, but, at home, mother gave her another view. As a result of taking an African studies class at college she realized the importance of educating herself on Africa.

"I was outraged when I



Sentinel-Voice photo by Reuben Abib

**Wearing a green dress, Kalilah Allen-Harris, Miss Black USA 2007, is crowned by previous queen, Celi Marie Dean.**

first learned about colonization. I've been so moved by my experience here in The Gambia. I have grieved for my forefathers and felt my ancestors watching over me."

Sculptor Donald Wood is a 43-year-old British citizen of African descent who was

born and raised in England. He is on a mission to build a "Monument to Slavery" in The Gambia. While at James Island, each contestant took a piece of clay and mixed it with the soil of the island. "The resulting lump of clay will begin the heart of the

sculpture", said Wood. He wants others who share his vision of a "Monument to Slavery" to become involved. He explains more at [www.dbart.org](http://www.dbart.org).

Friends and family who traveled with the pageant were also awed by the hospitality.

Twelve-year old Erika, the daughter of Meri Robinson, of Prince George's County, Md., said, "I didn't expect everyone to be so friendly, calling us brothers and sisters. It is wonderful. People in the States should come and see for themselves."

Her grandmother, Annette Townes, says she believes that African-Americans should become involved in doing what they can to help in Africa.

"The Lord showed me that the harvest is ripe, we need to help." Her daughter Meri has agreed to sponsor a child for \$120 a year, which will pay for tuition.

"This entire experience has helped me to grow intellectually and spiritually," said Annette. "It is good to see where I come from. It makes me appreciate being who I am."

# Center

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the sex education and gang awareness programs will be really helpful to the teenagers. And we hope that we are effective in helping the younger students to read better." While the couple has managed to complete the project mostly on their own, they have received help from the Community Food Bank, which will help to provide meals for the students, and another donor set up and donated many of the center's computers.

"We expect many people to show up to the grand opening of the center. But, unfortunately, we can only accept 20 students. I wish we could accept more, but I don't think we can afford to take in more," said Latoya Anderson. "We will have snow cones for the kids, hotdogs, snacks, drinks, and two jumpers. A presentation will be given, then we will allow students and their parents to fill out entry applications. The selected students will be chosen primarily through their academic need."

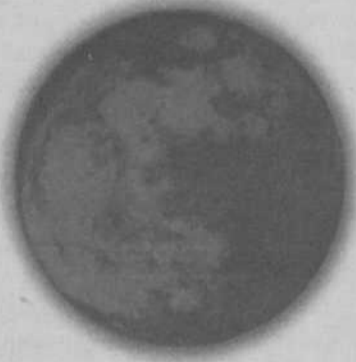
The Andersons anticipate that some may think that the program is not sustainable dependent chiefly upon the Anderson's income, but they believe strongly to the contrary.

"God revealed this to us. So we know that this is a project that we were supposed to take on. We don't believe that He would bring us this far simply to desert us. He'll make a way for this to work out. He'll allow us to bring in more income, help us to receive more donations, help us receive funding. It'll all work itself out. We're sure of that."

They are also confident that they'll help the students in their program become exactly what the S.E.T. acronym stands for: Strong, Educated and Talented.

"Those who know what they're good at — and even those who have yet to find their talents — will become all that our center stands for," said Latoya Anderson.

"Our mission is to give them no other choice but to emerge strong, educated and talented. Success is the only option."



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