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Statement of Kimberly Phillips

On Tuesday August 21, 2018, the contestants for Mrs. America were given a party within the Elvis suite at the Westgate Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The suite consists of several open rooms conjoined to an open area for refreshments. During this event, I was sitting with another Mrs. America state winner in one of the side open rooms. Across the same room, Mrs. Ohio was sitting down directly facing us. The other state winner and I were talking about the weekly events when David Marmel sat down across from us on a large coffee table. He began by asking us if we were enjoying our time at Mrs. America. We quickly replied that we were having an amazing time and thanked him for all that the organization had done for us throughout the week. It was at that time Mrs. Missouri and Mrs. New Jersey were walking by. Mr. Marmel motioned and asked for them to come over and join us. Mrs. Missouri gladly came over and sat down next to him on the table. Mrs. New Jersey came into the room but sat down further away from us.

At that point, Mr. Marmel asked if he could be frank with us. We all stated yes and he began talking about a man he knew who grew up in the projects with 2 siblings to raise. He stated that the man considered whether he should sell drugs or be in a gang. Instead he decided to go to West Point and is now his attorney. He then said that “it is not the 1960’s anymore and black people can’t rely on the government for assistance.” He also stated that all black women need to stop having babies with 4 baby daddies, and all black men are in jail because they need to stop selling drugs and killing each other.

He then stopped and asked Mrs. New Jersey to come sit closer to us. I heard her say that she had “already heard this” before but all 3 of the other women also asked Mrs. New Jersey to come closer again and so she got up and sat closer to everyone.

Mr. Marmel began to ask us if we knew who had created the African American achievement awards. The other state winner with whom I had spoken stated that it was him and

he asked us how we knew. She stated that she had done her research (although he had already told all 52 ladies at dinner during orientation night). We all thanked him for what he had done. He then began to talk about how he started thinking of creating the awards because he would travel often when he played baseball and would pick up the Ebony magazine and see the top 100 influential black people. He said that he thought to himself that neither black nor white kids knew them so he decided to create the awards show. He said that he knew the owners of Ebony magazine and that they were the most racist people he ever met because they all used the term “nigger” freely with each other. He then placed his arm next to Mrs. Missouri and said that it was OK because they call him brother, so we were all family. He went on to say that he was used to this because while playing baseball he would see signs that said “no niggers, no Jews”.

After this, he started talking about how he had already had plenty of Mrs. Americas who were black to which we all replied in unison “one”. He also stated that he had plenty of runner ups and we said two. He was going to say something else but the other state winner with whom I had been speaking cut him off and said “well cheers to number 2.” It was at that point that all of the ladies toasted their glasses to one another. He then said “Well, I don’t give a fuck who wins. You all should just be grateful for the experience.” It was at that point we all looked silently at each other. There may have been small talk for another minute but then he ended up leaving the conversation by saying that was all he had to say.

Mrs. Ohio then came over from across the small room and stated that she could not believe what had just happened. She stated that she was so upset for all of us and said that we each deserved to win because of the classy and respectful manner in which we handled the situation when we were clearly being disrespected. As we were discussing what had occurred, the Mrs. America photographer came over and asked to take a picture of us all. After she took the picture and left, we all agreed that this was a memory we would never forget.

I spoke to my roommate, her mother, my husband, and my director that very night about what happened, as well as speaking about this to three other state winners directly afterwards. I was upset but more so saddened. After spending two years and thousands of dollars on this system, I felt as if I did not have a chance simply because of the color of my skin. Although I

felt my chances of winning were now nonexistent, I still continued on because I have never been a quitter. I did not want to let my family, friends, students and most importantly my state down.

We all decided to push this to the side and not say anything. However, I was informed the week after the pageant that we were being accused of lying simply because we did not win or place within the competition.

Originally we weren't going to say anything because again we all thought who would believe us, if we came forward after the pageant. People would think we were just upset about either not winning or placing the way we wanted.

As Mrs. Delaware America, I plan to continue representing my state for the remainder of my 2018 title. As a local and state titleholder within the Mrs. Delaware America system, I have enjoyed competing and representing my city and state for the past two years.

I am hoping that by sharing my story, changes will occur within the Mrs. America system. The ladies who stand with me today are incredibly strong and resilient. We will never be defined or limited by our age, height, weight or ethnicity. We are strong. We are beautiful. And we will never be silenced by anything or anyone.

Kimberly Phillips
Mrs. Delaware America 2018
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