

## WINNER TOOK OBSTACLES IN STRIDE - MISS BLACK - Columbus Dispatch, The (OH) - July 23, 1991 - page 03C

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Sharmell Sullivan didn't let a few obstacles get in the way of her crowning as Miss **Black** America.

Not even a chair or a stubborn piece of carpet.

Sullivan, a biomedical engineering student, won the title Sunday night in Indianapolis. Sullivan, 20, of Gary, Ind., is the daughter of Marsha Sullivan of Columbus and Ronald Sullivan of Connecticut.

She was selected from among 23 contestants in the 23rd annual pageant.

After the preliminary contest, Sullivan wasn't certain of her chances of winning. The preliminary narrows the field to 10 contestants.

"I had to perform a dance routine on a carpeted floor. . . . That's not the best surface for dancing," Sullivan said, laughing, in a telephone interview yesterday.

"I also used a chair during the routine, and it wasn't the proper kind of chair.

"While I was performing, I went to jump on the chair and ended up falling on the floor, and then later I slipped on the carpet.

"But I got up and kept going."

Sullivan said she hopes to become a role model for **black** youth.

"Some of us are going in the wrong direction," she said. "I would like to get everyone interested in getting an education, not making a fast buck.

"I'm hoping that I will be able to encourage many of the kids I will be meeting this year."

Sullivan's mother grew up in Columbus, returning three years ago after spending 26 years in Gary, Ind., where her daughter was born.

"I'm really excited and happy for her," said Mrs. Sullivan. "I think she will make a good positive role model for young **black** women."

Sullivan, who has spent several summers in Columbus, was Miss **Ohio Black Expo** in 1989 and Miss **Indiana Black Expo** in 1988.

A student at Spelman College in Atlanta, Sullivan was the valedictorian at Gary Roosevelt High

School in Gary, Ind., in 1988. She will be a senior at the college this fall.

Sullivan also was named Miss Photogenic by the media covering the contest. Her prizes include a \$3,000 scholarship, a mink coat and two vacations.

The contestants were judged on talent, swimsuit appearance and projection.

Tonya T raylor, 29, of Miami was named first runner-up.

#### **CITATION (AGLC STYLE)**

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