

College beauty queen keeps with tradition: A tiara over her hajib

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROANOKE, Va. — Excited and jittery, Anisah Rasheed of Roanoke pondered a fashion dilemma that few beauty queens have faced before: Matching her coronation gown with her hajib, a headscarf worn by Muslim women.

Rasheed, 20, was crowned Miss A&T for 2005-06 on Thursday night in a sparkling fishtail gown — with a tiara glittering over her golden hajib — during homecoming ceremonies at North Carolina A&T State University.

University officials say Rasheed is the first Muslim selected as campus queen by the 11,000-student school. She'll be featured, along with

others from black colleges and universities, in an upcoming issue of Ebony magazine.

Rasheed was elected at a forum in April, competing against eight women in the categories of talent, formal-wear, speech and debate. She said no one has made an issue of her faith or covering her body with traditional garb.

"Once you learn to accept yourself, it washes away everyone's opinions about you and lets you do what you will in life," she said. "I'm glad I'm a role model for Muslims, but it is for everyone who faces challenges. It is about being confident."

Worldwide, there are just a handful of Muslim women who've won beauty pageants. Some conservative Muslims

say the contests defy Islam's edict requiring public modesty in women. Other Muslims frown on men or women flaunting their sexuality and say exposing the body is degrading. Still others oppose pageants on feminist grounds, considering the contests as throwbacks that objectify women.

In September, a Muslim leader in Liverpool, England, urged an Iraqi woman to withdraw from the Miss England competition. In the past few years, there has been friction over Muslim contestants in beauty pageants in Pakistan, Canada and elsewhere. In 2002, Nigerian crowds rioted after an English newspaper made a disparaging remark about Islam's prophet

during the Miss World competition.

But Leila Ahmed, a Harvard University professor of women's studies in religion, said she doesn't see anything controversial.

"On the face of it, I don't know why her faith should interfere with her. There is nothing she is doing that is degrading. Why do women who wear the hajib also put on makeup and tight jeans?" she said. "It is true that Muslim requires modesty and you shouldn't be flaunting yourself sexually. But isn't that also true for people who are of Christian and Jewish faiths?"

Rasheed is at peace with her decision. Occasionally, Rasheed said she felt like "an outcast" as a Muslim and at times didn't wear her hajib because of "peer pressure" at her junior and senior high schools.

Catholic integrated church

Continued from page 6B

ny's will," Donahue said. Evans, 70, is understanding about the reluctance of some of the parishioners to accept her and other members of St. Anthony's, but she believes some of the resistance was to change in general, not specifically to integration.

"When I go to church on Easter or Christmas and someone is sitting in my seat, I want to say 'Now, this is where I sit every week,'" she said. "I think that was how some of them felt."

Some parishioners opened their hearts to the black families, welcoming them to their new home. Some left. Others begrudgingly stayed.

"They stayed because they couldn't afford to move out east, but some of them withheld money from collection," Donahue said. "Monsignor just kept right on, as if he didn't notice all this. But you know he did, and you know it made it tough for him."

Although changing churches — and going into an all-white church — was tough for the families coming from St. Anthony's, there were many good people coming together to make it work.

Ethel Dukes, 74, who was one of the first children to be baptized at the church and has attended her entire life, never considered leaving.

"As far as I was concerned, I'd just as soon go to church with black people as with white people," she said.

Leppert insisted that all church groups be integrated, including the women's group that had been meeting during the week.

Thrive for women

Continued from page 8B

"Employment Search Training Boot Camp" from 9am - 2pm at the church facilities. Topics to be covered include: Job Search Strategies, Resume/Cover Letter Writing, Dress for Success, and Interview Strategies. A continental breakfast and lunch will be served. For more information and to RSVP, please call (704) 392-4253.

November 12

University Park Baptist Church, 6029 Beatties Ford Road, will host "Thrive" women's conference that is designed to help women maximize their potential for influence. The church is hosting a simulcast from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$35 before Nov. 1 and \$40 afterward. For more information, contact Valerie Williams at (704) 369-7736.

November 13

The Anointed Voices will perform at 4 p.m. at Marable Memorial AME Zion Church in Kannapolis. The church is located at 400 Huron St. For information, call (704) 932-2863.

"Well, all the black women were working then," Donahue said. "And to tell the truth, I was kind of glad I was, so I wouldn't have to go. But when Monsignor found out it was on a weekday morning, he changed it to Saturday so

we could come." The women alternated homes for their meetings, and soon it was Donahue's turn to be the hostess.

She was a little nervous, but then Hough called and offered help.

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10:30am
Pastor Spencer Wright
Agape Worship Center
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Tuesday, October 25, 2005
Bishop Donagrain McCluney
Bethel Church
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Wednesday, October 26, 2005
Pastor Kelvin Shouse
Calvary Covenant Fellowship
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Thursday, October 27, 2005
Apostle Theron Feemster
Miracle Tabernacle
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