

# Ellison Crowned Miss BSM 1992-93

By Stormie Forte  
Ink Staff Writer

On Saturday, September 26, the Black Student Movement rekindled an event that had, in the past, been a traditional event for the organization. *Ebony and Elegance* was the theme of the coronation ball for Miss BSM. Michelle Thomas, BSM president, said the event was revived for several different reasons, among which included celebrating the organization's twenty-fifth anniversary. According to Thomas, the last Miss BSM coronation ball was held in the fall of 1989, and she felt the time had come to return to some of the organization's traditions.

Sheba Lowe served as BSM coordinator and committee chair for the event. Lowe wanted to plan an activity that was different from Great Hall parties—she wanted people of African descent to have a semi-formal affair to celebrate their culture. "My goal was food, folks and fun for all those who attended," Lowe said.

Organizers for the event wanted to use as many African-American businesses as possible. Dillard's Catering and World of Flowers, both of Durham, provided food and decorations. D. J. Special K and Soul Expression provided music by switching off and performing alternate sets.

The BSM held meetings for all those interested in competing for the Miss BSM crown. The criteria for the contestants was: senior year status, a 2.5 GPA, an election of BSM members, and completion of an interview by the selection committee which was made up of two faculty members and five student members. The vote of the BSM general body was the determining factor for the selection of Miss BSM. The general election counted two-thirds and the application/interview counted one third of the final decision.

There were five contestants in the final round of the pageant: Carol Brown of Winston-Salem, NC; Cassandra Caldwell of Fayetteville, NC; Tywanda Ellison of Red

Springs, NC; Annice Hood of Weldon, NC and Christa Ray of Roswell, GA.

Contestants and BSM officials had mixed emotions about the en-



tire selection process for the pageant. Michelle Thomas said the process that the Carolina Athletic Association used to select the Homecoming Queen was emulated, due in part to the problems various organizations had with the selection of contestants last year. "Having an interview, BSM general body vote, application and using the same weights as CAA was a process that insured all candidates were equally able to represent the BSM in Homecoming using CAA criteria," Thomas said.

Several candidates, as well as Ms. Thomas, felt the process was fair. Annice Hood said, "It was a good selection process because the interview, application, and vote helped to create a balance and eliminated the chance for a popularity contest." Cassandra Caldwell said, "The fact that there were several opportunities for the BSM to join the selection committees, the BSM general body vote counted two-thirds for the selection which cuts down on the biases that could be a factor in the interview section."

Caldwell also felt the pre-election forum was helpful. "Each candidate could address the BSM general body and the general body could ask questions which helped them make their decisions," she said.

Christa Ray believed the process was more representative of the entire BSM general body. "The vote was the most important part of the selection that was even reflected in the weight of each category," Ray said.

Although there were some positive views regarding the selections process, some contestants thought there were a few problems. Carol Brown felt the overall format was fair because of the three selections criteria. Brown said Miss BSM was the "physical representative of premises upon which the BSM was founded." She went to Wilson Library prior to entering the contest to do research and found that the first and third presidents of the BSM stated, "The Black Student Movement was formed to give the black students a voice on campus."

Brown said, "The third BSM president said the BSM was formed for two reasons which were to form a refuge, community, and cultural link for black students and to give black students a powerful voice." The research she did, as well as the theme of the twenty-fifth anniversary for the BSM, "Giving Black to the Community," were a few of the motivating factors in her decision to run for Miss BSM. Brown stated, "I felt I gave Black to every organization I am in and to the campus as a whole."

Tywanda Ellison felt the process should be changed, but was not sure how to change it. Sheba Lowe felt the lack of coverage by the Black Ink hindered voter turnout. "Pre-coverage of contestants in the Black Ink would have helped more people make their decisions because many voters did not know anything about the contestants," she said.

The make-up of the selection committee was questionable for some students and faculty. Lowe said, "The committee was not hand-picked. Committee members were volunteers, and because she expressed a need for help at general body meetings, anyone could have been on the committee."

Tywanda Ellison was crowned Miss BSM and will represent the organization in the Homecoming

process. As well as maintaining the challenging position of Miss BSM for 1992-1993, Ellison is the social chairperson for her sorority, Theta Pi chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., coordinator of the Tarheel Target program, Black Greek Council representative, and has worked with Summer Bridge and Project Uplift for a number of years. Beyond Homecoming, Ellison would like to use her role as Miss BSM to do more community service projects in the local community. She feels the BSM has the potential to do a lot in the community, and she would like to do more service-oriented projects. One idea Ellison has is to start a recycling program with local minority youth. The title of the program would be "K.E.E.P. America Beautiful: Kids Engaged in Environmental Preservation." Through volunteers from a variety of campus groups, local youth would begin to recycle and hopefully get their parents in on the act.

Ellison says she identifies with those who are less fortunate than a lot of people. "I had a very hard childhood, but I'm here. So obviously that proves that we can make it," she said. The psychology major believes Miss BSM should be a person who is service-oriented, possessing endurance.

Ellison, who is a member of the Chancellor's Board on Racial Issues, says she would use the posi-

tion to help race relations. "I feel it's a way of bridging the gap [between the black and white communities]" she said.

Tricia Henry, BSM coordinator said, "It's nice for younger students to experience past BSM traditions, and it is also good for African-Americans to have functions to show how elegant they are." First runner-up, Cassandra Caldwell was very happy for Ellison because they share a close friendship. Christa Ray, second runner-up, said, "I had fun, it was a good experience, and I'm glad the tradition was continued. This is something [Black students] can call our own, because it [the coronation ball] represents our culture, and I would like to see it continue."

Mr. BSM 1992-1993, Chris Miller, reminisced over the history of the coronation ball. "Every ball used to be held in Great Hall and all Black Greeks used to attend each others' balls for support. People were tight and displayed unity. BAC (Black Awareness Council), this event [coronation ball], the entire year has been unifying. This is a time to put differences aside and be unified. When I first came to Carolina there was no unity; this is a good way to go out."

*Editor's Note: Tiffany Draughn and Rynita Younger also contributed to this article.*

**The Theta Pi Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and The Mu Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. cordially invite you to a**

**Black Freshman/Faculty Mixer**

**Tuesday, October 13, 1992**

**5:00 pm - 6:30pm**

**Carolina Union Room 209  
Refreshments will be served.**