

Miss Fresno County 1980, Sheila Anthony, Seeks Resolution After Historical, California Event

We shook things up and I am not sure they were ready for that. - Sheila Anthony-Shaw

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES, February 18, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sheila Anthony was the first African American to win the Miss Fresno County Pageant, in California. Although she was crowned immediately after the March, 1980 decision, her story remains more complicated than it should be, her publicist said today.

Instead of representation and celebration, the then 21-year-old, Fresno State journalism major and cheerleader received disproportionate and differential treatment that previous Miss Fresno County pageant queens never experienced. Unlike previous pageant winners, Sheila Anthony did not receive a calendar for her public service and community events. She says she was notified of only one appearance during her entire reign.

Today the former queen is married and known as, [Sheila Anthony-Shaw](#). She's an energetic, 60-year-old who still has the same spark, infectious smile, and wisdom responsible for her being crowned almost 40 years ago.

As one of three African American college young ladies who entered the pageant, she recently recalled the experience.

"During the four months of rehearsals for the pageant, I was told several times by participants and organizers that a black girl would never be crowned, Ms. Fresno County," she stated. "Still, it was a fun and exciting time of my life. I have no bitter feelings even though we entered a world where we were not wanted."

Despite the passive-aggressive taunting, Anthony-Shaw never entertained the thought of dropping out and eventually impressed the judges enough to be crowned Miss Fresno County, 1980. Adding to the unprecedented event was Victoria H. Jones and Jacqueline K. Smith, two African Americans from Fresno State, who were crowned second runner up, and third runner up, respectively.

"We shook things up and I am not sure they were ready for that," said Anthony-Shaw.

Seemingly, she was correct. What followed was a reign of oppression for her.

Sheila Anthony-Shaw said that her picture was not hung at Fresno, California, City Hall along with



Sheila Anthony, Miss Fresno County, 1980

previous winners until three years after she was crowned. Then, it was removed and returned to her a short time, later. She stated that she was also denied recognition, exposure, and dates to perform the duties that were part of the Miss Fresno County title contract.

Anthony-Shaw spoke of her only public representation as Miss Fresno County, 1980, "Pepsi was the title sponsor of my float appearances for my reigning year. Miss Fresno County attends several over her reign, but I was only scheduled for one. It was a tree logger's event in a remote area of Fresno county."

Not only was the traditional year of public service by Ms. Fresno County shortened by three months, Sheila Anthony-Shaw says she was not invited to the traditional relinquishing of her Miss Fresno County title. That meant, she was not given the opportunity to crown her replacement the following year. A pageant representative crowned the 1981, Miss Fresno County.

"Sheila was denied a multitude of opportunities and responsibilities assigned to previous and post, pageant winners," stated [Fran Briggs](#), Publicist to Sheila Shaw. "Given the events of her shortened, 9-month reign, it's hard to deny that systemic decisions made during that time were actually discriminatory practices."

"After being crowned in 1980, I wasn't acknowledged by the pageant committee again until 1984," explained the former pageant winner. "That was when the then, Miss America, [Vanessa Williams](#), visited the pageant as part of her own title obligations. I was invited to have dinner with her."

Since 1980, pageant organizers for Miss Fresno County have not fully addressed the former title holder's concerns or questions. Sheila Anthony-Shaw says that she has chosen Black History Month, 2019, as well as her forthcoming book, to shed light and seek resolution on the historical event. For additional information and media inquiries, please e-mail FranBriggs@aol.com, or call 928-275-1642.

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