

Miss World 1970: How I Entered a Pageant and Wound Up Making History

Jennifer Hosten

Sutherland House (May 12, 2020)

Hardcover \$22.95 (200pp)

978-1-989555-23-1

Jennifer Hosten, the first black woman to be crowned Miss World, shares her inspiring story of winning the pageant, and what happened afterward, in her memoir *Miss World 1970*.

Born and raised in Grenada, Hosten dabbled in modeling as a teenager. She had little pageant experience when she was asked to be the first woman to represent her country in the Miss World competition. The then twenty-three-year-old was working as a flight attendant, and her public relations skills, emotional maturity, and keen eye for fashion led to her success in the competition. The book acknowledges Hosten's privileged upbringing while celebrating her important win.

Hosten performed and behaved with grace and humility amid women's liberation activists, racism, and the controversy surrounding claims that the contest was rigged. Activists protested Miss World, and South Africa's apartheid led to their being two contestants from the country, one black and one white, further adding to the tension at the event.

The book interweaves factual details of the competition with Hosten's thoughts and emotions, resulting in an involving picture of the drama surrounding Miss World. The exhaustion and loneliness of Hosten's world tour with Bob Hope is palpable, as is Hosten's frustration with the politics of the event. Her later work as the Canadian high commissioner for Grenada, and as a diplomat in Bangladesh, is also covered.

The notable incidents in Hosten's life after her time as Miss World are just as engaging as the spectacle of the pageant. Grenada's political revolution in the 1970s and 1980s is handled with tact, and the book wraps up with a thoughtful evaluation of feminism's relationship with beauty pageants.

Asserting that pageants celebrate women and are opportunities to launch their careers and help them become their best selves, *Miss World 1970* is the lively memoir of a world-traveled feminist trailblazer.

AIMÉE JODOIN (May / June 2020)

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