



Youth Development Foundation, Inc.
Promoting Culture & Education Through the Performing Arts

Trini Wins International Crown



L to R - Natorii Illedge - Miss St. Maarten, Music Meier - Miss Florida, Taylor Penn - Miss Maryland, Raquel Winchester - Miss HJTTI 2006, Hal Jackson, Quiana Haynes - Miss NY, Dinetia Dean - Miss Bahamas, Kelley Young - Miss Georgia



Raquel Winchester & Hal Jackson



Talented Teens with Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor of NYC and Hal Jackson on steps of City Hall

New York, NY (BlackNews.com) - Sixteen-year-old Raquel Winchester was recently crowned Miss Talented Teen International at the 36th annual Hal Jackson's Talented Teens International Scholarship Program. A standing room only crowd at Symphony Space in New York City was mesmerized by the youthful opera singer who represented her country, marking the second time in two years that Trinidad & Tobago had a winning contestant.

"I was shocked when they called my name," Winchester admitted, amid posing for photos with her loving cup and wearing a sparkling crown. "It was a hard week, but I did it!"

Winchester a resident of Marabella, Trinidad in the West Indies attends Naparima Girls' High School in San Fernando where she is a member of the Piano Club, the Junior Choir the Drama Club, and had a leading role in the play *Jestina's Calypso* which won her Best Overall Production at the Secondary School's Drama Festival in 2004. She has been President and Vice President of her class.

The queen's reigning court consists of other Talented Teens who ranged in age from 13 to 17 years of age. They include First Runner Up, Music Meier, 14, Florida, pianist; and Quiana Haynes, 16, New York; Kelly Young, 13, Georgia and Natoria Illidge, 15, all dancers.

The competition, which featured the theme, *Phenomenal Women*, featured two dance production numbers spotlighting the 2005 winner, Esonica Veira, a 17-year-old dancer from St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. Veira reprised her winning choreographed number set to music of Michael Jackson hits.

As the winner, Winchester will receive a \$5,000.00 scholarship to be used at the college or university of her choice, along with a diamond ring, trips to England with air sponsored by Apel International Travel, the British Virgin Islands sponsored by the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board, St. Croix, and the US Virgin Islands sponsored by Claire Roker of Talent Unlimited, in addition to various media appearances in the United States and abroad.

During the competition, a number of other scholarships were given to several of the contestants, including a \$1,000 scholarship to Music Meier who was awarded the Miss Talent Scholarship. Meier received another \$1,000.00 as the contestant with the highest Grade Point Average. Taylor Penn, Miss Florida was awarded a \$500 scholarship as Miss Photogenic. Three \$250 scholarships were awarded to Miss Personality - Quiana Haynes, Miss New York; Miss Creativity - Dinetia Dean, Miss Bahamas; and Miss Congeniality - Taylor Penn, Miss Maryland.

Hal Jackson, legendary broadcast personality whose career spans 67 years, and CEO and founder of the Youth Development Foundation, Inc., congratulated the winner and contestants in the following statement: "We hope that you will look upon this experience as a great start in your life because this has been an enjoyable, educational and intercultural week in New York City that you will take back to your respective locations around the world."

During the competition, the audience listened to hit musical selections by R&B artists Freddie Jackson, Urban Mystic and Chapter 4. Hosts for the evening were former Hal Jackson's Talented Teens International winner Kimberly Brooks, an actress on Showtime's *Huff*, and WBLS radio personality Doctor Bob Lee. Earlier in the week, the Talented Teens visited Mayor Michael Bloomberg's office at City Hall, explored New York City sites, toured WBLS and WLIB FM stations of which Hal Jackson is the Group Chairman, and spent hours rehearsing for the ensuing competition. At a Shooting Star Awards banquet held midweek at Tavern on the Green, contestants met teen heartthrobs Pretty Ricky as well as the competition's performers, Urban Mystic and Chapter 4. During the Shooting Star Awards ceremony hosted by Debi Jackson, executive producer of the competition, and Dr. Bob Lee of WBLS, awards were given to Maurice Hines, choreographer of Hot Feet as well as many other productions, former Talented Teen winner Tiffany Walker who represented New York State and won the swimsuit competition in the Miss America contest and Jewell Jackson McCabe, motivational speaker and founder of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. Other special guests during the week were BET's *Rap City* Host Mad Linx and critically acclaimed Canadian R&B singer Carl Henry.

Hal Jackson's Talented Teens International Scholarship Program is sponsored annually by the Youth Development Foundation Inc. and presented by ICBC Broadcast Holdings, Inc. While promoting culture and education through the performing artists, the Youth Development Foundation has awarded over two million dollars in scholarships annually. For more information, visit the website, www.talentedteens.org or contact Debi Jackson at 212-592-0413. For media inquiries, contact Cynthia Horner at cynthiamhorner@gmail.com.

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