

# Miss District of Columbia crowned as

# MISS USA

The District of Columbia has won back-to-back Miss USA titles. Kara McCullough, a 25-year-old scientist working for the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, was crowned Sunday at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center on the Las Vegas Strip. She will go on to compete on the Miss Universe contest. "I'm extremely thankful for this opportunity," she said after the event. "I just want to encourage so many women nationwide to find their passion in any subject possible and understand that nothing is difficult if you really, truly put the work in for it."



Miss District of Columbia USA Kara McCullough reacts after she was crowned the new Miss USA during the Miss USA contest in Las Vegas. — AP photos

Fifty-one women representing each state and the nation's capital participated in the decades-old competition. The runner-up of the night was Miss New Jersey Chhavi Verg, a marketing and Spanish student at Rutgers University, while the second runner-up was Miss Minnesota Meridith Gould, who is studying apparel retail merchandising at the University of Minnesota. McCullough was born in Naples, Italy, and raised in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She said she wants to inspire children to pursue careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Last year, District of Columbia resident Deshauna Barber became the first-ever military member to win Miss USA.

The top five finalists were asked different questions that touched on the pros and cons of social media, women's rights and issues affecting teenagers. McCullough was asked whether she thinks that affordable health care for all US citizens is a right or a privilege. McCullough said it is a privilege. "As a government employee, I'm granted health care and I see firsthand that for one to have health care, you need to have jobs." McCullough's office at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission focuses on emergency preparedness. She said she will be discussing with her work supervisor whether she will take a leave of absence. Later in the competition, McCullough, Verg and Gould were asked to explain what they consider feminism to be and whether they consider themselves feminists. Miss District of Columbia replied she likes to "transpose" the word feminism to "equalism." After the pageant, McCullough expanded on her views on feminism.

#### Offending Hispanics

"I believe we've come a long way and there is more work to be done," McCullough, who graduated with a chemistry degree from South Carolina State University. "I think domestically we are making progress and I do believe that we

will become equal one day." The beauty pageant this year included five women who immigrated to the US at a young age and now as citizens hoped to represent the nation on a global stage. Verg and the women representing Florida, North Dakota, Hawaii, Connecticut and New Jersey told The Associated Press this week they have faced challenges and opportunities as immigrants.

Verg told The Associated Press days ahead of the competition that she and her parents immigrated from India to the US with only \$500 in their pockets when she was 4 years old. Her first winter she did not have a winter coat and the family struggled to adjust. "I want to show Americans that the definition of what it means to be American is changing," the 20-year-old said. "It's not just one face. There are many different people who are Americans, and I feel like Asian-Americans often times are left out of the conversation."



Miss District of Columbia USA 2016 Kara McCullough competes in the evening gown competition.

The contestants' remarks stand in stark contrast to the scandal that enveloped the pageant in 2015, when then-part owner and now US President Donald Trump offended Hispanics when he made anti-immigrant remarks in announcing his bid for the White House. Trump co-owned The Miss Universe Organization with NBCUniversal, but the network and the Spanish-language broadcaster Univision quickly cut ties with him, refusing to air the show. Trump sued both networks, eventually settling and selling the pageant to talent management company WME/IMG. The show kicked off with a performance from a Cirque du Soleil show - a Las Vegas staple - based on Michael Jackson songs. The contestants took the stage as Jackson's "Black or White" played and acrobats performed.

CMA Award-winner Brett Eldredge performed his new single "The Long Way" as the women modeled their evening gowns. They modeled their final looks of the night during a performance of Pitbull's "Options" featuring Stephen Marley, Julianne Hough, Ashley Graham and Terrence J. hosted the show. Now that her preparation toward the pageant is over, McCullough said she is looking forward to eating a Texas cheesesteak at Waffle House. "All you need is mayonnaise," she said. — AP



Miss District of Columbia USA 2016 Kara McCullough (center) is surrounded by fellow contestants after she was crowned Miss USA 2017.



(From left) Recording artist Stephen Marley sings while escorting Miss District of Columbia USA 2016 Kara McCullough onstage as rapper Pitbull performs on stage.



Co-host Terrence J (left) high-fives Miss New York USA 2017 Hannah Lopa after she was named a top 10 finalist.



Miss Minnesota USA Meridith Gould reacts after she won second runner up.



Miss District of Columbia USA 2017 Kara McCullough smiles after being named a top 10 finalist.



Photo provided by her mother, Anupama Poliyedath, show Ananya Vinay, 12, of Clovis, Calif, with her awards after winning the California State Elementary Spelling Bee for the third year in a row in Stockton, Calif. — AP

## 12-year-old wins 3rd straight California State Spelling Bee

Dipsomaniac was the winning word for a 12-year-old girl from Central California who won the State Spelling Bee for the third year in a row. Ananya Vinay, who attends Fugman Elementary in Clovis, told the Fresno Bee she's no longer as nervous on stage as she used to be because she's improved so much over the years. Vinay clinched the victory Saturday at the competition in Stockton. She describes the experience as

a 'journey' and now looks forward to the Scripps National Spelling Bee near Washington, DC. She first competed there last year after qualifying out of a Fresno County competition. Ananya said she wants to do well in the Scripps competition, aiming for the top 10 and eventually a championship. For the record, Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the noun dipsomania as an uncontrollable craving for alcoholic liquors. — AP

## Japan's 'Superhuman' athletes mix legends with high tech

When it comes to culture and entertainment, Japan has a rich history spanning ancient legends and sport to popular comics and video games. Now a new generation of inventors is drawing on this culture to create sports with a 21st-century twist—helping players feel "superhuman" through technology or other special equipment. The Superhuman Sports Society, a Tokyo-based group of researchers and game designers, has certified 12 new sports since its launch in 2015, including "HADO", or "wave motion" in English.

In "HADO", players in head-mounted augmented-reality displays and armband sensors dodge waves of light as they fire energy balls at each other in a virtual arena. The game is similar to the action seen in the "Dragon Ball" manga-animation franchise and "Street Fighter" video games. Some games are low tech such as "Rock Hand Battle", in which each player wears an oversized arm and tries to knock off small rocks attached to an opponent's "rock hand".

Noriya Kazami, 25, a cartoonist and an inventor of "Rock Hand Battle" (above), said she took inspiration from the legend of Mitsuishi (Three Rocks) and the Demon's Handprint. She also created a comic book series based on the legend, in which a devil was tied to rocks and made to stop harassing the local people. The devil left a handprint on one of the rocks, making

a "rock hand". We asked other players for their thoughts on playing "Superhuman Sports".

#### Bubble-wrapped sumo

Ryoichi Ando, 27, a virtual-reality researcher and an inventor of "Bubble Jumper", said he felt as if he were wearing the kind of augmented body suit found in science-fiction movies that boosts the wearer's strength. In "Bubble Jumper", players walking on stilts and wearing inflatable bubble protectors crash into each other like sumo wrestlers.

#### Tokyo drift

"Technology can improve and supplement human ability," said Isao Uebayashi, 38, a sports science researcher and an inventor of "Slide Lift". "Anyone can do 'drift racing' with this wheelchair," he said. Equipped with special wheels, the motor-assisted wheelchair can be moved by "Slide Lift" racers in any direction, including in racing car-like drifts.

#### In another world

Tomohiro Hamamura, 25, who works in IT sales and is a "HADO Kart" player, said: "When I play this sport, I don't need to think seriously. I just feel the existence of another world which is different from my real world."

#### Internet idol

Piyohina, an Internet idol and singer of animation songs, said: "When I play HADO, I always simulate in my head the best way to fire an energy ball."

#### Energy sensation

Junpei Sasaki, a singer and "HADO" player, said: "Sometimes I can feel the sensation of the energy ball leaving my hand when I play HADO. It makes playing the sport really exciting."

#### Up in the air

Hirohiko Hayakawa, 26, a Ph.D. student in media design and an inventor of "ToriTori", said: "The drone in the air is a part of the player's body and this sport integrating human and machine makes me experience the feeling of flying." Hayakawa said he was inspired by the bird catchers ("tori tori" in Japanese) in Kenji Miyazawa's classic 1934 fantasy novel "Night on the Galactic Railroad".

#### Taking the reins

Kosuke Sato, 25, a Ph.D. student in human informatics and an inventor of "Carry Otto", said he wanted to create a sport anyone could enjoy regardless of age, gender or disability. Carry Otto is a motorized wheel device with reins that pull a rider seated on a dolly. Riders race each other. — Reuters