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Statement of Gloria Allred

Recently, I was shocked to hear that certain African American pageant winners who participated in the Mrs. America Pageant in August 2018, alleged that they had been subjected to racially insensitive comments during their participation in the Mrs. America Pageant in Las Vegas, Nevada.

These comments were very hurtful to them because they allege they were made by David Marmel who is the Executive Director and cofounder of the Mrs. America pageant. They alleged that during a conversation with Mr. Marmel, he subjected them to listening to racial stereotypes about African American women and African American men.

Those comments although allegedly used in a conversation with some of these African American contestants were also overheard by a Caucasian state pageant winner who happened to be seated behind Mr. Marmel.

After the conversation ended, many of those who had been a part of the conversation with Mr. Marmel called their family members and others to express their shock and pain regarding what they stated that they heard.

Today they have decided that it would be wrong to stay silent about this matter.

They feel that it is their duty to share what they allege was their experience, because they do not want next year's contestants to be subjected to what they consider to be racially offensive and demeaning comments which have hurt them and caused them so much pain.

I commend all of the Mrs. America state pageant winners who are here today and who have found the courage to speak.

For them, participating in the Mrs. America pageant was a prestigious opportunity for which they had paid thousands of dollars in order to compete.

They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, rather than being subjected to what they felt was humiliating treatment by the cofounder and owner of the Mrs. America pageant.

We ask Mr. Marmel not to provide excuses or rationalizations for what these Mrs. America state pageant winners allege that he said in front of them on that day in August, 2018, a day that they will never forget.

Instead, we ask him to acknowledge what they allege that he said, take responsibility for it and apologize to them.

We also ask that he develop a plan of action, which would include sensitivity training focused on the issue of racial bias and racial stereotypes, so that what they allege they were subjected to never happens again.

My clients have no plans to file a claim or a lawsuit or to seek damages.

They simply want the Mrs. America pageant to be a place where everyone is respected, is treated equally, and feels safe.

We look forward to Mr. Marmel's response.

Gloria Allred
Attorney at Law
Representing Mrs. Delaware America 2018,
Mrs. Missouri America 2018, Mrs. New Jersey America 2018
& Mrs. Ohio America 2018
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