

# 5 Minutes with... Fatmata Savage

Miss Black New Jersey USA 2015



Photo Courtesy of Fatmata Savage

**How does a woman born in Sierra Leone and raised in North Brunswick get to be Miss Black New Jersey USA 2015?**

As a child, I often thought about entering beauty pageants, but I wasn't confident enough. A friend encouraged me and I decided to give it a go. My mother, who has been my most powerful role model, taught me lessons about balance, remaining calm and staying positive—all good advice that helped me earn the title.

**What are the challenges of the pageant circuit?**

It takes a lot of grit and personal strength. I needed to keep myself healthy. I made sure I ate right and I ran to stay physically fit. And you've got to have drive and determination to overcome obstacles. At times I felt I could no longer continue, but it was very important for me to complete what I had started, no matter what I faced.

**Has the title given you an opportunity to impact others?**

Yes. It's important for me to represent other minority women who are smart, hardworking and beautiful. I'm suddenly in a position to help change the negative images of minority women that are often found in the media today. I want young women to know that education is the key that will help them be whatever they want to be in life.

**How about Fatmata's 9-to-5 role and life beyond the pageant circuit?**

My education has led me to a career in social work. At

Trinitas, I work in crisis intervention as part of the team that serves developmentally disabled adults who also have mental health and behavioral disorders. It's demanding work that requires total commitment. Because of that, I had to keep the pageant related activities on nights and weekends in perspective. It was a balancing act.

**With the tiara comes responsibility.**

It does. I've volunteered with non-profits in Somerset, Hoboken, and Newark. Since I'm a runner, it's fun for me to take part in events like the American Heart Association's Essex County Heart Walk. I've attended many events where I've met local leaders and legislators. Those were exciting, but just as exciting was the chance to read to the children of the Lightbridge Academy as a special guest during Scholastic Week. And I was asked to introduce keynote speakers at the Miss Sierra Leone Pageant in Pennsylvania, which was a very proud moment for me.

**What's your take-away from this experience?**

With all the pageant demands—the long hours, the need to be “on” constantly—I learned to have fun and to live in the moment. I met some amazing people. It's an experience I'll never forget. **EDGE**

**Editor's Note:** Fatmata Savage holds a Master's degree in Social Work from Kean University. She works as a clinician at the Statewide Clinical Consultation & Training Program (SCCAT) at Trinitas Regional Medical Center.