

## The Miss Black Hayward Pageant, 1974-1980

Written by HAHS Staff

In the 1970s, Hayward High School was changing. The new East Avenue campus was only about 10 years old, replacing the old Hayward Union High campus that dominated Foothill Boulevard with its neoclassical grandeur. The “new” Hayward High, as it was called, was representative of a changing city. But it wasn’t just the buildings that were changing. The student body was changing too, becoming much more diverse. Sure, the new Hayward High still had cheerleaders, a chess club and a jazz band. But other student organizations were forming that represented the school’s changing identity. La Raza Aztlán Club, for example, organized programs focusing on the history and culture of Latino students.

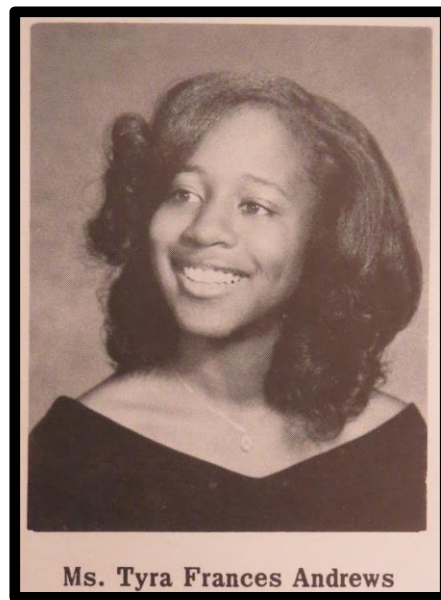
Another student organization rising in popularity at this time was the Black Student Alliance (the BSA). The BSA quickly became one of the most popular clubs on campus. The club organized, fundraised, and put on a wide variety of programming for Black History Month. In January of 1974, the BSA launched a new initiative, the Miss Black Hayward Pageant.



*The original announcement for the Miss Black Hayward Pageant as it appeared in the Haypress newspaper. Tyra Andrews (left) would be crowned the winner.*

The original Miss Black Hayward Pageant was the brainchild of Hayward High Student and BSA member Lois Jones. It was inspired by and reflective of the larger “Black is Beautiful” movement that had started in the 1960s. The competition took place in the school’s cafetorium, charging a dollar for admission. The contestants came not only from Hayward High, but Mt. Eden and Tennyson High Schools as well.

The competition featured many of the components of a typical pageant. Contestants introduced themselves with a brief biography and demonstrated a talent. Lastly, each contestant modeled two outfits. The judges were made up of the district superintendent and several administrators and teachers. When all the votes were tallied, Hayward High Senior Tyra Andrews was crowned the first ever Miss Black Hayward.



***The first Miss Black Hayward as she appeared in the 1974 Hayward High School yearbook.***

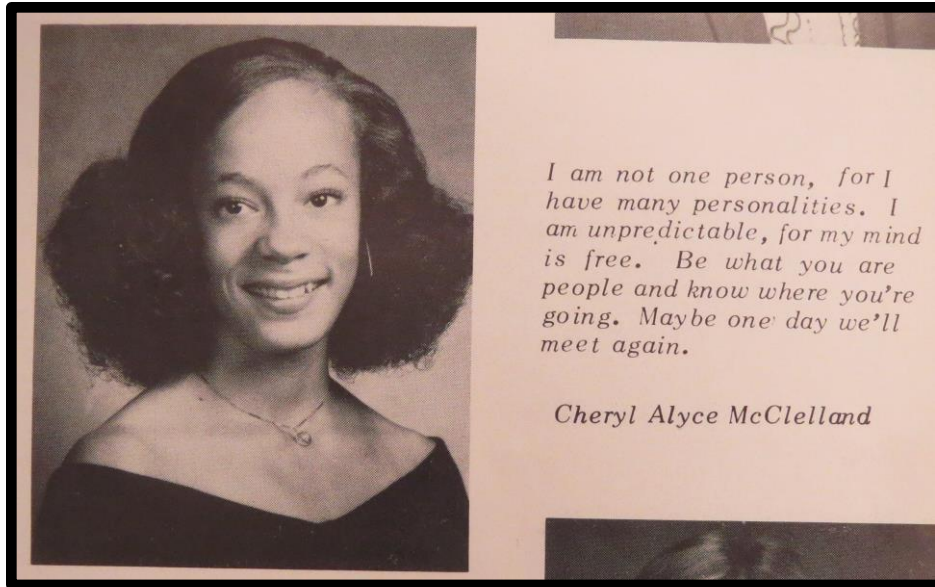
Fresh off the success of the first-ever competition, the Hayward High BSA began planning another Miss Black Hayward Pageant for the 1975 school year. That year's competition featured some new elements. In addition to talent and fashion components, contestants also participated in “on-the-spot” interviews in which the judges could ask contestants about the issues of the day. Talent performances included a solo flute recital, and the reading of original poetry.

It was ultimately the gymnastic routine of Pattie Bunton that won the day. In honor of her victory, Pattie received a \$100 scholarship and the right to represent Hayward High School at numerous local events and ceremonies for that year. The success of the event drew the attention of the local newspaper, helping the BSA to continue generating interest in the annual event.



***Yearbook portrait of 1975 Miss Black Hayward winner and Hayward High student  
Pattie Ann Bunton.***

1976 was another successful year for the Miss Black Hayward Pageant. Held in the Hayward High School cafetorium once again, the event drew a large crowd. Hayward High senior Cheryl McClelland won-out with a reading of her original poem "What's the Difference?". As the winner, Cheryl would have a busy schedule representing Hayward High students at local events. 1976 marked the 100th anniversary of Hayward's incorporation as a city, which meant many appearances at local celebrations. The 3rd annual competition also marked the end of an era. The 1976 Miss Black Hayward Pageant would be the final year the event was held in the humble Hayward High school cafetorium. It would also be the last time that the BSA would be the event's primary sponsor and organizer. Big changes were coming.



**1976 Miss Black Hayward Cheryl McClelland's senior portrait.**

In 1977, the Miss Black Hayward Pageant got a boost from a local Black women's group called "The Fabulous Few Social and Civic Club". The group, founded by future school board member Gloria Wilson, worked to raise scholarship funds for Black students in the Hayward Unified School District. Other key members of the group included Helen McClelland, Addie Jackson, and Joann Green. With the Fabulous Few organizing the event, the Miss Black Hayward Pageant would become even more prominent.



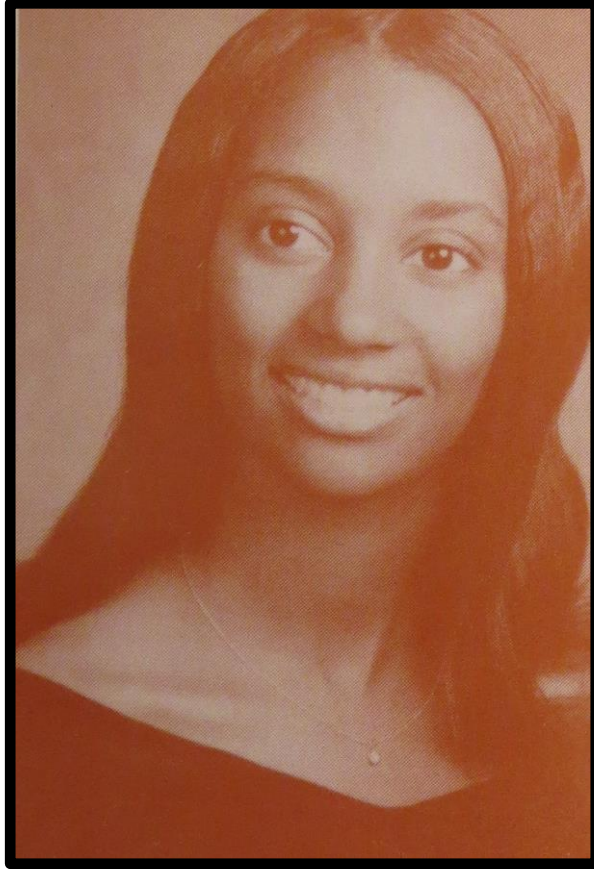
***Gloria Wilson, one of the founders of the “Fabulous Few”. This image appeared in the Daily Review newspaper in 1985. Gloria was the first Black representative to sit on the Hayward Unified School Board.***

Perhaps the most obvious change to the event was its new location, Hayward’s Centennial Hall. The large event center dwarfed Hayward High’s cafetorium where it had previously taken place. Another important change to the event was a renewed focus on empowerment. For Gloria Wilson, and the other members of the Fabulous Few, it was important to make sure that Miss Black Hayward did not exploit its contestants. Under the Fabulous Few, the competition would have no swimsuit competition like those found in other beauty pageants. Instead, the focus would be on the contestants’ extemporaneous speaking abilities.



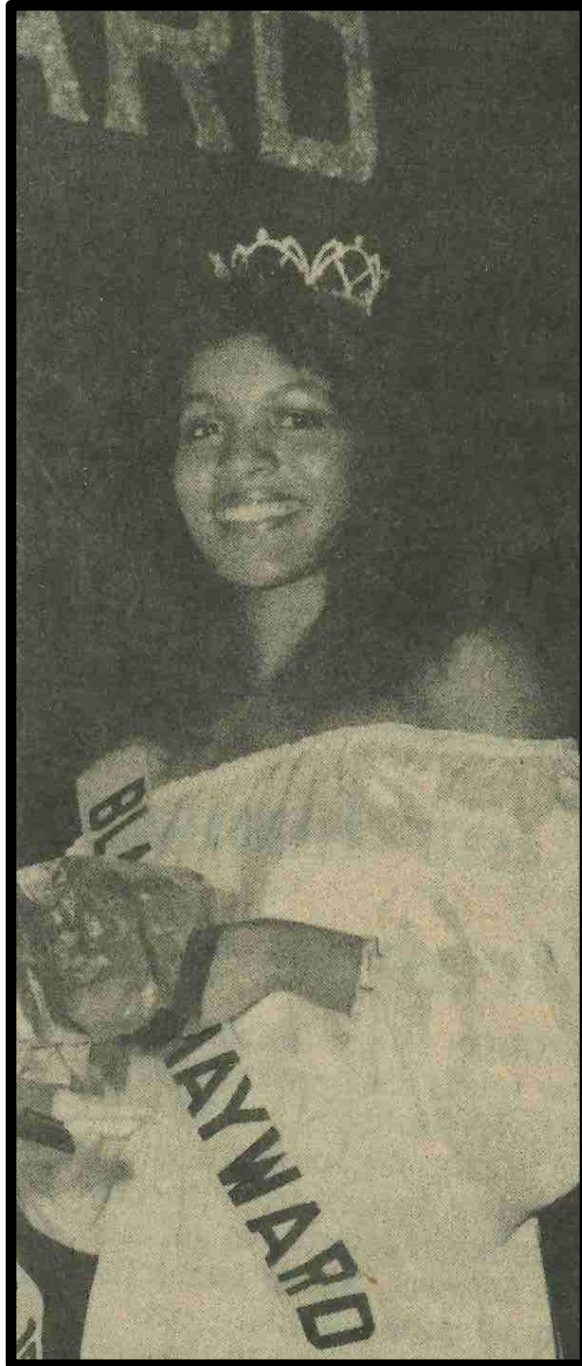
***Miss Black Hayward was moved to Hayward's Centennial Hall in 1977 under the direction of the Fabulous Few Social and Civic Club.***

The 1977 event was well attended. The panel of five judges selected Hayward High School senior Cynthia Walker as the winner of reimagined Miss Black Hayward Pageant. As the winner, Cynthia received a \$1000 scholarship that she would use to attend Mills College in Oakland after graduation.



***1977 Miss Black Hayward, Cynthia Walker. Cynthia was the first Miss Black Hayward to be crowned at Centennial Hall.***

The following year, the pageant was won by Olivia Johns. Olivia's 1978 win marked the first time the winning contestant was not a Hayward High School student. Olivia, a Hayward resident, attended Presentation High School in Berkeley. The five judges awarded Olivia another \$1000 scholarship for her accomplishments. Olivia would spend the remainder of the year representing the Miss Black Hayward title as various events, including the dedication of a new plaza on B Street.



***Olivia Johns, 1978 Miss Black Hayward, as she appeared in the Daily Review Newspaper.***

1979 was the most widely publicized Miss Black Hayward competition in its short history. Driven once again by the Fabulous Few, the 6th annual event was won by Hayward High senior Venus Carter. Venus was the first Miss Black Hayward winner interviewed by the local newspaper. In the interview, Venus stated that "Black women need to be identified and recognized more than they are now" and that the pageant was one way to do that. Venus also added her hope for the pageant's future, saying "I enjoy the recognition. People are always

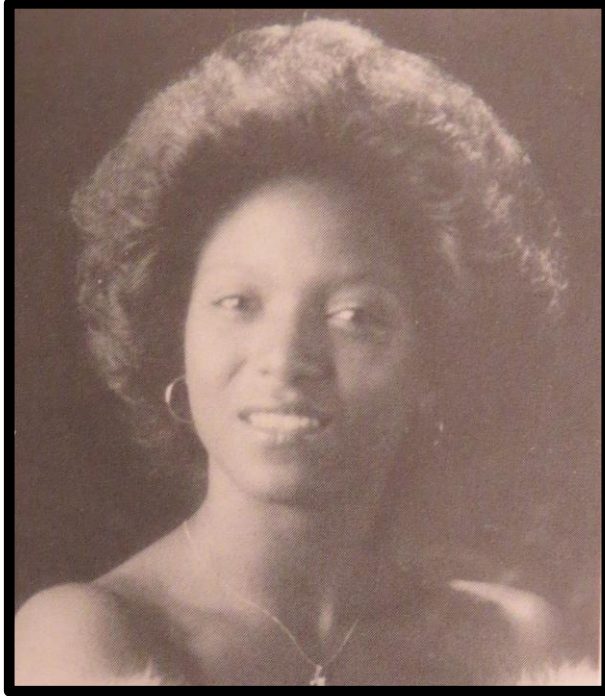


congratulating you. But I think I'm going to enjoy giving the crown to the next Miss Black Hayward most. I'm just going to enjoy seeing how happy she is." Venus used her \$1000 scholarship to attend Cal State Hayward (now Cal State East Bay).



***1979 Miss Black Hayward Venus Carter in the 1979 Hayward High yearbook.***

1980 marked the final Miss Black Hayward competition. For the second year in a row, the competition was won by a Hayward High student. Lucinda Stocks was declared the winner of the final event. What started as a humble student-led talent competition seven years earlier, had transformed into a full-fledged pageant. The pageant's transition from being hosted by the Black Student Alliance to the Fabulous Few helped the event take on a new level of importance. The thousands of dollars in scholarships no doubt helped many former contestants get started on their goals. For those who won, it is an experience they are unlikely to forget.



*Lucinda Stocks, the final Miss Black Hayward crowned in 1980.*



*Tyra Andrews, the first Miss Black Hayward posing on the Hayward High Campus.*