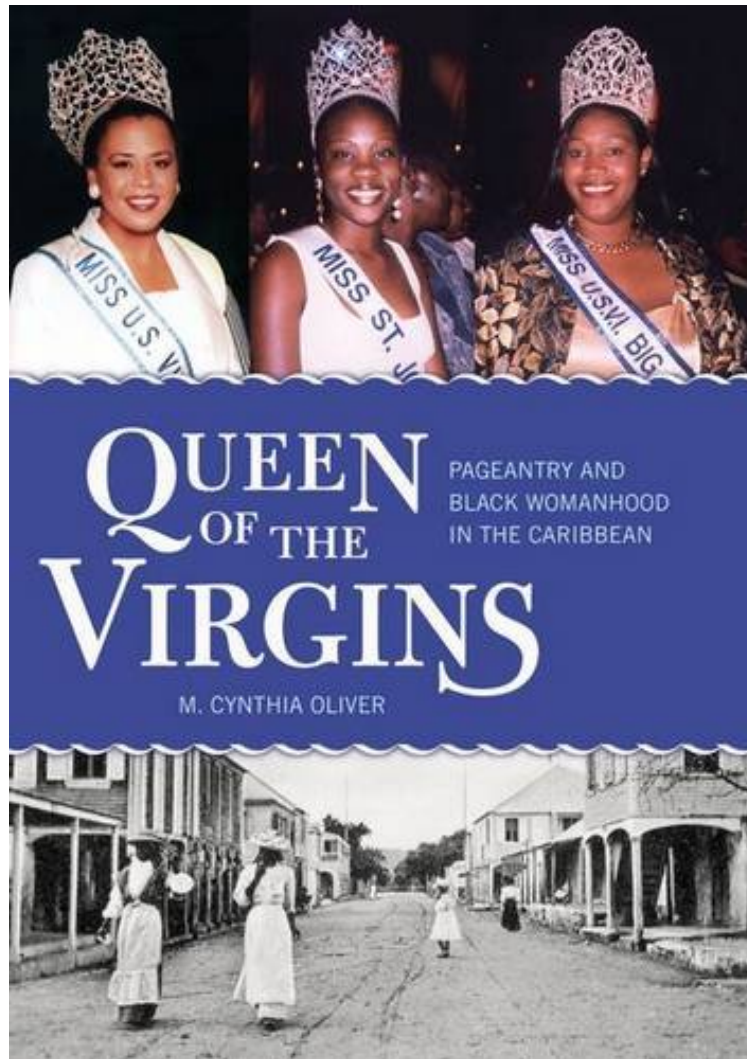


Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean (Caribbean Studies Series)

M. Cynthia Oliver

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M. Cynthia Oliver : Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean (Caribbean Studies Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean (Caribbean Studies Series):

Beauty pageants are wildly popular in the U.S. Virgin Islands, outnumbering any other single performance event and capturing the attention of the local people from toddlers to seniors. Local beauty contests provide women opportunities

to demonstrate talent, style, the values of black womanhood, and the territory's social mores. *Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean* is a comprehensive look at the centuries-old tradition of these expressions in the Virgin Islands. M. Cynthia Oliver maps the trajectory of pageantry from its colonial precursors at tea meetings, dance dramas, and street festival parades to its current incarnation as the beauty pageant or "queen show." For the author, pageantry becomes a lens through which to view the region's understanding of gender, race, sexuality, class, and colonial power. Focusing on the queen show, Oliver reveals its twin roots in slave celebrations that parodied white colonial behavior and created creole royal rituals and celebrations heavily influenced by Africanist aesthetics. Using the U.S. Virgin Islands as an intriguing case study, Oliver shows how the pageant continues to reflect, reinforce, and challenge Caribbean cultural values concerning femininity. *Queen of the Virgins* examines the journey of the black woman from degraded body to vaunted queen and how this progression is marked by social unrest, growing middle-class sensibilities, and contemporary sexual and gender politics.

From the Inside Flap
A comprehensive analysis of four centuries of protest, pride, and pomp in the beauty contests of the U.S. Virgin Islands
About the Author
M. Cynthia Oliver is an associate professor of dance at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is also an award-winning choreographer whose dances focus on women, Caribbean culture, and mythology. Her work has appeared in *Women and Performance*, *Movement Research Journal*, and other periodicals.