

## Kaci Fennell makes finals of Miss Universe, finishes fifth

Reigning Miss Universe Jamaica, Kaci Fennell can travel home with her head held high after finishing in the Top Five at the Miss Universe 2014 pageant Sunday night.

The pageant, held at Florida International University in Doral, Florida was pushed back to January of this year after organizers struggled to settle on a host. Fennell, 22, had been in Florida over the last two weeks where she competed in several pre-pageant activities and competitions, including Wednesday night's preliminary competition, where the Kingston-native finished second overall following evening gown and swimsuit segments.

Sunday night's pageant saw the 88 contestants in the pageant widdled down to the Top 15, which Fennell comfortably made. From there, the final 15 participated in the swimsuit segment, in which she stunned with her confidence and looks. Not only did she advance to the Top 10 as a result of this display, she was the first name called when the semifinalists were announced. The Top 10, which also included Colombia, Netherlands, Argentina, Ukraine, Spain, Venezuela, Philippines, Australia, and the USA saw the beauties rock evening gowns. With a sparkly red dress, Fennell maintained composure and elegance as tried to convince judges she was a sure finalist. That she did, joining Colombia, Netherlands, Ukraine and the USA in the final five as her march toward the Miss Universe crown appeared very realistic. The final round, a double Q&A session saw Fennell answer a question from judges before answering a Facebook question selected by organizers. The first set of questions appeared to somewhat stumble each of the finalists given their requests to repeat, with Fennell being asked, "One of three women in the world will experience violence, what can be done to reduce it?" She responded by saying, "Crime is a global phenomenon, it does not affect just one nation and we as people of the world should work together to prevent it now. Thank you."

Minutes later, Fennell was given the Facebook question about the one thing that makes her country standout. She responded by saying that Usain Bolt and Bob Marley were Jamaica's biggest contributions considering how they have transformed track and music respectively. When the final five were announced, Fennell's name was the first called, finishing as the fourth runner-up; accompanied by a chorus of boos by the crowd, who felt she should have placed higher. In the end, it was Miss Colombia who dethroned last year's Miss Universe winner, Gabriella Isler as Miss Universe 2014, meaning the crown will remain in South America. Miss USA placed second, Miss Ukraine third and Miss Netherlands fourth. Despite the disappointment at the end, Fennell became the first Jamaican woman since Yendi Philipps in 2010 to finish in the top five of Miss Universe and was largely lauded on social media for her efforts.