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## FORMER MISS MICHIGAN RETURNS TO DETROIT BOOK FEST TO NORMALIZE WOMEN OF COLOR LEADING SCI-FI FANTASY ADVENTURES

*Author and former pageant queen promotes stories with Black women in the leading role*

**DETROIT, July 15, 2019** – Octavia Reese, Detroit-native and Miss Michigan 2005, will return to Detroit Book Fest on July 21 with the next two installments in her sci-fi fantasy series, *The Hibouleans*. Last year, Octavia’s first two volumes aimed to inspire young women to fearlessly delve into STEM-related subjects through her epic adventure treasure-hunt story. This year, Octavia wants to remind fans about the importance of normalizing women of color in the protagonist role for any genre of adventures, especially sci-fi and fantasy.

“When Disney announced Halle Bailey will take the lead as Ariel in the new *Little Mermaid*, I was thrilled,” Octavia said. “But not everyone was.”

Octavia was referring to critics from various social media platforms that were upset to learn Ariel would be played by a Black actress.

“If people can get upset about the skin color of a half-fish-half-human fictional character, it only proves we still have a long way to go when it comes to accepting women of color in leading roles,” she said.

In her young adult series, *The Hibouleans*, Octavia created a world where leading teens, Taryn and Priya, are STEM fanatics and must use their math and science knowledge to solve clues as they embark on a life-or-death treasure hunt against terrifying shape-shifting Hibouleans. She said she wrote the series for all the brown girls out there that love problem-solving, strength-building, lab experiments and dream of having super powers and being the hero in epic adventures.

“It’s incredibly important, not just for young Black and brown girls to refuse to believe their skin color is limiting, but it’s just as necessary for everyone else to begin to envision women of color as main characters, too, not just restricted to foreign supporting roles,” she said. “We need an entire cultural shift – we have as much a right and a capacity to lead as anyone else.”

Octavia, who now resides in Chicago, represented the state of Michigan in the 2006 Miss America pageant, and is also a cellist and composer. She wrote *The Hibouleans* book score, too – the musical theme that accompanies her characters’ adventures in the series.

“As a musician, I also hope to show my audience that Black women can do anything – we can be queens, scientists, authors, physicians, Hibouleans, cellists and even mermaids.”

Find Octavia, her cello and *The Hibouleans* Volumes 1 – 4 this **Sunday, July 21 from 10am – 4pm at Detroit Book Fest**. For more information, visit [www.detroitbookfest.com](http://www.detroitbookfest.com) and [www.octaviareese.com](http://www.octaviareese.com).