

Its the beauty pageants media essay



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By definition, the beauty pageant is a competition in which young women are judged by physical appearance alone. As the old saying goes, “ beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Beauty, as determined by a panel of judges (the beholders), means that someone who is considered attractive to one person may not necessarily appeal to another, and it allows judges to set the standard of what is beautiful or not. If this was a perfect world, maybe everyone would follow the wise words of this old saying and admit that evaluating beauty is only a matter of personal taste and contemporary standards and trends. However, society often turns every aspect of a person’s life into a competition. The beauty pageant is perhaps one competition society could do without.

Beauty pageants are an unnecessary entertainment of society because they set unrealistic beauty standards for an audience of easily influenced young women, they encourage judging a person’s worth based on appearance only, rather than on a person’s character, and they objectify young women. In the world of beauty pageants, there is only one kind of beauty. This one kind of beauty is “ Barbie”: tall, long-legged, tiny waist, straight white teeth, long thick hair. These beauty pageants can be misleading and harmful, not only to women without this body type, but to society as a whole. The standard that beauty pageants strive for is not an all-encompassing idea of beauty, but one that is shallow and looks only at a woman’s physical appearance. Beauty pageant organizers have striven for years to ensure that contestants have an opportunity to show their skills before they are crowned a “ beauty queen”, but the reality is that a woman not fitting the physical standards of beauty competition would never be considered to enter a competition.

Beauty pageants promote the idea that looks are superior to a person's abilities, feelings and heart. These young women are judged only on the basis of physical appearance. The talent component of competition just does not have much weight simply because an "ugly" person (a person who does not have a body fitting with the accepted standards of the time) could never win a competition, and often would not compete at all. Judging young women primarily on their looks takes important character developments out of focus because other qualities, such as intelligence, are not seen as part of ideal femininity and therefore not as things to which women should aspire.

Miss USA 2002 went to a tall, blonde Texas woman who won the crowd when she stated that education was important and that you can tell if someone has an education by looking at them (Cornforth, 1). Perhaps her intent was to promote the value of education, but the statement instead implied that important character traits and intelligence can be summed up by a glance. ("Don't judge a book by its cover," to use another familiar saying.)

Young women are judged mainly on their physical appearance, while their personal qualities and talents are not judged. Beauty pageants include quizzes in which the contestants show "their intelligence" by answering questions that are really just demonstrations of adhering to the social norms of the time. These questions are always very simple, broad questions involving current issues such as health care, gay marriage, and abortion. The contestants are discouraged from answering in a way that demonstrates their own personal opinions; if a girl is on a stage being evaluated by a panel of liberal judges in front of a liberal audience, she would never speak against gay marriage or abortion, but would give the answer that would most likely

please the crowd. In this way, she is only learning to give the “ popular” answer and not analyze what her own beliefs are, and then learn to defend those beliefs.

Beauty pageants are misleading to young women. Very few women are born with a body that fits the current standard of beauty. A majority of young women don't have a body which adheres to the current social standard of the time. These young women tend to be viewed as “ plain” but they can clean up and look beautiful but they cannot stand the pressure. After watching beauty pageants, “ plain” young women often lower their self esteem (these young women don't do this on purpose) and some young women then try to make themselves look more attractive. Besides, for beauty pageants winners, their “ success” often gives them the need to do after ward is to keep up and improve their physical beauty (physical body), and as a result many no longer live up to further education or other ways of professional development.

Beauty pageants strongly promote the negative aspect that young women are seen as objects of sexual interest. These contests fail to challenge harmful political attitudes to young women. They do nothing to aid the liberation of young women. By promoting looks as the most important feminine quality, they harm young women's liberation in general. On the 17th of February the Campus National Organization for Women protested the Miss MAO Beauty Pageant (Gats, 1). They handed out four-hundred protest flyers which stated their disgust with Florida Blue Key and the University of Florida for holding a sexist pageant where women must be “ checked out” in swimsuits and parade themselves in skin-tight evening gowns in order to be

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awarded scholarship money. (Gats, 1) In this way, beauty pageants encourage young women to see and promote themselves as an object (like a car) to be judged by men. Beauty pageants hurt young women by treating them as objects held up to a strict standard of “ beauty,” a standard that is painful, time consuming, and expensive for young women to try to achieve.

Beauty pageants can be misleading by having young women lower their personal standards of sexuality. At what age is it appropriate for a young woman to be called “ sexy”? Young women have a huge role model role in a little girl. Little girls look up to these young women because they are beautiful, if these young women are wearing immodest clothes to be sexy, then these little girls will want to do the same. These little girls should not be worried about trying to be sexy, they should enjoy a healthy childhood as girls who are developing talents and interests and whose worth is evaluated by their poise, intelligence, hard work, kindness, and grace.

Beauty pageants are well promoted by the media with television and images, which influence young women’s opinions on appearance. The participants of these pageants are poor role models for these young women as they set a standard for an almost unhealthy body weight, unrealistic breast size, and flawless complexion standards. Only a small minority of women can realistically achieve this “ ideal” female body. The media pressures all young women to conform which can encourage unhealthy dieting and eating disorders, tanning, cosmetic surgery, and simply to keep working to achieve unrealistic, temporary goals that often have irreversible damages. An article, titled “ Thoughts about Miss Teen USA,” out of a local American magazine was written by a young women teen in 2005, who had just watched ‘ Miss

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Teen' on NBC. Her wrap up of the beauty pageant was; " White teeth. White teeth. Prom-style dress. Blonde. White teeth. Blonde. Chandelier earrings. Tan. Blonde. Tan. Strapless gown." followed by, " That's all you need to know" (Callow, 1). The statement made by this young women teen is not one that is from a minority. She is one of thousands that view this as the " norm" for a woman of beauty. It is not healthy or realistic for a young woman to think there is one type of beauty or one type of accepted body. It is harmful and could lead to both physical and emotional damage. The media has so many affects of young women; they wish to be as perfect as the beauty queen on television, magazines, and internet. These young women will do anything it takes to become the next beauty queen, even it causes them to go on diets or get plastic surgery.

In a high percentage of Hollywood films, even those in which the young woman should be portrayed as a strong willed, independent heroine, usually feature young women being played off as sex objects. Though there is nothing wrong with a woman being classified as " sexy," it should not be the main focus. One made of uniqueness, intelligence and charm is what should be promoted. Movies such as Lara Croft: Tomb Raider and Charlies Angels send the same message to young woman that beauty pageants do, which is that only one kind of body is acceptable. This is harmful to a majority of young women as beauty pageants are encouraging men to treat them as an object rather than young women with opinions and uniqueness.

Joel Yager, M. D. writes: " Every society has a way of torturing its women, whether by binding their feet or by sticking them into whalebone corsets.

What contemporary American culture has come up with is designer jeans.” (94).

With media pressuring young women to be thin and a millions of dollars spent towards dieting, higher rates of eating disorders in the population are growing (Gats, 2). Many beauty pageant contestants suffer from some form of eating disorder. Anorexia (starvation to loose weight) and bulimia (binge eating) are the two main eating disorders. Young women who suffer from anorexia have the fear of being fat so severe that they starve themselves to weight loss, often leading to death (Gats, 2). Even when anorexic young women are thin, they think of themselves too fat. A low self esteem causes them to fear even taking a small amount of food. Bulimia is binge eating that following a pattern such as, eating compulsively and then throwing it up. After a binge young women eats, they try to control themselves by throwing up their food through vomiting. Young women have extreme habits of both eating and exercising. Ideally, beauty pageants should be healthy role models, but this is not the case.

To be beautiful in the world means that a young woman never feels decent about herself, she is always putting herself down. If a woman does not see her body as acceptable, she will often be driven to change it, and these changes are often drastic. Plastic surgery can be used to alter any body part: the breasts, lips, thighs, and stomach are among the most popular. Plastic surgery can be especially harmful to adolescents. When a young women have plastic surgery done at such a early age, the risk for diseases such as breast cancer are extremely high. Many young women are striving to look their best, and they feel that plastic surgery is the only way to go. They do

not stop to think about the long-term consequences of the surgery. They want instant results, meaning that they will often pay thousands of dollars to alter bodies that had nothing wrong with them in the first place.

The promotion of this single standard of physical beauty is harmful to women everywhere because it discourages girls to love the body they are born with. The simple and realistic truth is that there are some physical aspects of a person's body that are impossible to change, and promoting the tall, slim, "supermodel" figure as being the only accepted body type excludes different styles.

Every year more than one million people are diagnosed with skin cancer in the United States. Despite this fact, hundreds of thousands of people routinely visit tanning salons (Cornforth, 1). Tanning beds generally give off 93% to 99% UVA radiation (Cornforth, 1). This is three times the UVA radiation given off by the sun! Over time, the effects of too much UVA exposure can lead to many different problems such as eye damage, immune system changes, wrinkles and premature aging of the skin, and skin cancers. The most common cancer is malignant melanoma, it is the deadliest form and its degree is flat out rising in young women under 40 (Cornforth, 1).

Beauty pageants are an unnecessary element in society because they set unrealistic beauty standards for an audience. There are beauty pageants out there which attempt to create a judgment of well-balanced young women. These sorts of competitions are trying to promote the intelligence mixed with beauty side, which should be heavily commended. However, beauty

pageants in which beauty is emphasized as a solitary basis for winning are dangerous and harmful to society.

Young women are fragile, as they try to find a place for themselves in this world. When someone sees the pain of a young women struggling with eating disorders, hears a young women beg to convince her parents to allow her to get plastic surgery because they can't stand a certain part of their body, it can be concluded that beauty pageants do a great disservice to the winners, the losers, and all children. Personal hope would be that an organization such as to find a better way to lift up the spirit of our young women.

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