Weakening Girl Power: The Beauty Pageant Factor

When Miss USA fell on the stage during the Miss Universe pageant last 2007, all hopes and dreams of the American people about regaining the crown of the most prestigious beauty pageant in the world were dashed and sank desperately. Miss Japan, another beauty title hungry country, won the title that all the other more than 70 countries, aside from Miss USA, are vying to bring home to make their citizens proud. As such, beauty competitions become more as an entertainment showcase of beautiful faces and bodies since the other internal or inherent attributes of the competing women are overlooked; thus, then that exploitation seeps in. With the misconception or superficial belief that being beautiful or that the beauty of the looks and design can be created, every conceivable things or efforts are being undertaken in order to achieve or be named the most beautiful, whether in campus, in the social clubs or organizations, and finally of the universe. Reinforcement of beauty by women is oftentimes considered as an option to strike or achieve that beautiful, head-turning look. With the aid of medical science, some of these women, although naturally beautiful already, are drawn to take the professional and often expensive surgical enhancement of their body parts. Beginning from face to foot in order to come up with visual aesthetic where most of the criteria of judging rely. Thus a voluptuous breast and buttocks could also be acquired artificially, and that the slimmest waist and thinner size apparel would then be considered a defining beauty of today. Although there may be reports that some countries do not allow their representatives to undergo such artificial beauty enhancement, but participants who assert their own right and privileges, nonetheless resort to any means that would make them look comfortably “enhanced”. This trend, in effect, further erodes the way people perceive or understand the true value or meaning of what is beautiful or beauty el naturel. While a standard rule in beauty pageants do not literally suggest nor condemn that “fixing” of the nose, the eyes’ look and even the shape of body or legs, the option to obtain professional help to enhance one’s look becomes open. Not only has the face must exude “almost perfect” and “goddess-like” beauty, but perfect poise, faultless bearing and anything that will incorporate or carry the splendor of elegance in the women’s appearance are also carefully watched. That is why it is no wonder then that the falling-off on the stage of Miss USA, even if it is but normal for a person to sometimes experience the same or similar slip in ordinary circumstance, has received flak, where she was almost condemned to have committed her gravest sin in her entire life, and thus, people believe her not winning an award is just the price she had to pay for that very slight mistake. Beauty pageant could also make or break a woman’s confidence regarding her own aesthetic value, especially for the participants. Non-winning participants could lose totally self-confidence after the event, as possibly having the notion of “not too beautiful enough to win”. In fact, incontestable exploitation of women happens because there is this concealed notion that beauty has parameters in the pageant organizers’ commercialized judgment. While Wendy Mc Elroy in her column “In defense of beauty Pageant,” defend the other merits of such competition, she however, laments the exploitative nature of such competition because the women’s public image is often the subject of harassments and fantasies. She said that political feminists are the primary contesters of these exploitations, as they are resorting to the nature of the beauty pageant which is exploitative. By natural order of representation, women represent strength of character, whereas men represent physical strength. Likewise, women who should also embody finesse and modest character as part of their
aesthetic feat are now facing tough challenges from beauty pageant principles because these natural traits of women are overturned much of the time, then packaging them into less respectable image for the sake of visual delight. Exploitation is aggravated then when this kind of petty judgment regarding beauty is viewed before the audience. Since this is a commercial exercise, the beauty contestants became the “saleable meat” by both the organizers and the advertisers that promotes this kind of aesthetic outlook and references; least to say, media is another channel that is instrumental in the further exploitation of women. When beauty competitions are aired in the media, viewers are at the receiving end to perceive or accept a distorted concept of beauty or what being beautiful is. For the affected women, they are made to think that their beauty still do not measure up; and in effect, they lose the true image of themselves.

True beauty encompasses the whole personal attributes of a person. Distinctive physical or façade features that are exclusively accepted by not so many can still stand out through the other most important factors, such as attitude, personality, health, and character. For instance character, this is one of the attributes that makes a person wonderful or beautiful and what others regard as “inner beauty.” One’s principle in life adds up a great deal to make a woman beautiful. Thus the package of all these aesthetic factors will be visible through her lifestyle, and thus justify the real beauty in a woman, not of any judgment for the rank one could get from a beauty pageant. Thankfully, aside from beautiful body and face, beauty pageants also look for a person’s social intelligence or awareness through the so-called question and answer segment. This is an opportunity for the contestants to gather additional points through beauty in wits and, sometimes, charm. The natural distinct features of women can also be considered as an aesthetic asset, based on cultural bound. Some African tribes consider their women beautiful if the necks are longer. Lips and noses are pierced and adorned with immense accessories. Asian women’s aesthetic assets are their petite and arched eyes, opposed to Western’s “big brown eyes” feature. In addition, a women’s heftiness is considered a mark of being beautiful in some sub-cultural groups however.

On the lighter side, beauty pageants such as Miss Universe, Miss World, and Miss International can be socially beneficial because victors are required to be frontrunner in promoting and advocating a cause or social agenda that needs to be addressed or resolved. NoteFromVenus.Com cited some of the beneficiaries that beauty pageants are supporting. Miss Universe beauty pageant is continuously holding their support for the AIDS awareness programs, helping organizations such as The Gay Men’s Health Crisis, and The Global Health Council. In addition with this, during the 2000 Miss Universe beauty pageant, winner Mpule Kwelagobe had established and funded her non-profit foundation, dedicating to give 400 pediatric beds in AIDS hospital and orphanage in Botswana, her native land.

In sum, beauty pageants have its disadvantages regarding social effect, but also have few advantages that justify the tradition through fundraising and outreach programs. However they may put it, real beauty defines the totality of the women including her moral uprightness, ideals, perspectives in life, philosophies, and character, but other than this, such as when other beautiful people are made to stand in front of audience with judges who will then pick based on petty criteria or contestants would “cheat” their being beautiful through “surgical enhancements,” then, beauty pageants becomes a farcical exercise, exploitative, debasing and degrading to the feminine race. Hence, beauty pageant could make or break the deeper definition of beauty, debunking the old saying that “beauty is skin-deep”. What happened is that distinctive features are least among the most promoted instead of the
representational package of how judges of beauty pageants would ascertain what is beautiful. To say that a certain kind of look is beautiful most likely leads other believes that others are not.

Works Cited


