

Feminism and Female Empowerment in Pageantry

Webster's Dictionary defines feminism as "the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes," but it is important to realize that feminism can come in many forms.



Feminists have long held beauty pageants in contempt for awarding value to women due to their physical appearances and reinforcing traditional (and sometimes unrealistic) European beauty standards. The pageant women, as well as the women and girls who look up to them around the world, feel pressure to adhere to these standards of beauty. This can negatively impact the self-esteem of those who don't conform to this model of beauty.

However, pageants are no longer based solely on physical appearance. In the preliminary rounds of the Miss Universe, individual interviews compose [60 percent](#) of the contestant's score. As pageants have evolved, organizations have placed greater emphasis on the individual's personality and their ability to impact their communities through service to others.

Pageants give women the opportunity to enact real change. Every year the winners of the [Miss Universe](#), [Miss USA](#) and [Miss Teen USA](#) pageants travel the world to raise money and awareness for a charitable cause of their choice. I believe pageants provide an amazing platform for these women to make a difference.

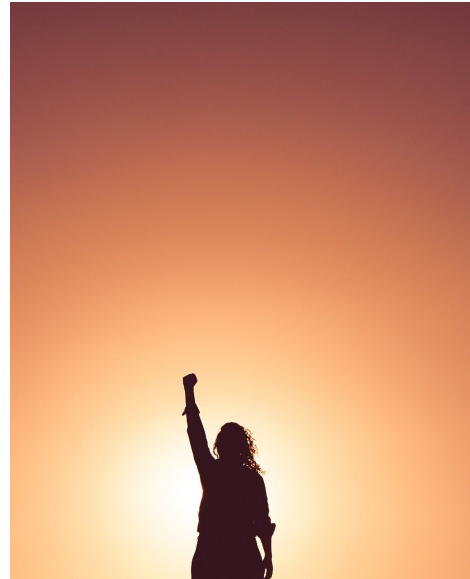
Miss Great Britain, [Anna Burdzy](#) said, "I see myself having such a platform to raise so much awareness to various, not just charities, but causes. We're all so privileged. There are 92 of us with incredible platforms. We can share throwing a pebble into the sea and watching the ripples, and because we have such platforms we're kind of making waves." (Noble 2018)

While the charitable opportunities pageants provide are respectable, women shouldn't have to justify their participation in pageants through their charity work. If a woman wants to compete in pageants, she should be able to without judgment. Women need to support women; this is the heart of feminism.

Feminism does not have to be narrowly defined. At its heart, feminism is about defending women's choice and realizing true equality of the sexes. Pageants bring many women a sense of excitement and joy. To take this away due to a difference in opinion undermines everything the movement stands for.

Many women in pageants consider themselves feminists, including Miss California 2013, [Crystal Lee](#). Lee believes that feminist criticisms of pageanty are hypocritical, and they lie solely in the fact that these competitions don't fit their idea of feminism. She asks, "If a woman wants to walk around in a swimsuit onstage, why should she be stopped? Should a contestant who loves competing in pageants give up her passion in order to satisfy someone else's beliefs on how folks of her gender should behave?" (Contributor 2018)

Women should be able to define feminism for themselves. Your body. Your choice. Let women do things that bring them confidence and self-esteem. Freedom of thought and expression for all women and men alike is the fundamental vision of feminism.



Works Cited

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