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Role Models Revealed

She struts down the runway with her elegant evening gown that shows off every curve, her curled hair shapes her face just right, and six inch high heels that accentuate her long legs. The twenty year old's answers are filled with confidence and poise, all while standing before millions of viewers. She faces the judges with a bubbly personality as if there is nothing to lose, and nothing could tear her down. At the end of a whole lifetimes work, she walks away with flowers in one hand, a signed contract in the other and a sparkling crown on top of her head.

Maybe it is not all about the glamour and the spotlight; maybe it is about representing a important cause or her hometown. The young lady proudly wears curled queen hair, slim fitting jeans, a classy western shirt, and boots that exploit her outer country beauty. Her inner beauty shines when the interview and question portions of the pageant begin. She wears an excitable smile that is calmed by the confidence she holds within the partnership with her horse that will carry her to the top of the competition. Her personality is bubbly with a sense of humor and kindheartedness that warms the room. Walking away with a sense of pride as the goal she has strived for her entire life has been rightfully earned, a crown is placed upon her cowgirl hat and a belt buckle which bears her name and title is handed over in a snug box.

Beauty Pageants vary from state titles, rodeo queens, to local organizations that need an ambassador. No matter what the pageant may be, morals and obligations of a beauty queen remain consistent. Growing up around various rodeo queens, I have seen firsthand the influence these morals convey on the lives of others. I chose to follow in the footsteps of the incredible women carrying rodeo queen titles that have come into my life because of the morals and traits they deployed. I watched as they made impacts on many other women and men alike. I am currently the 2012 El Paso County Fair Queen (a rodeo queen) and I wish to live up to the amazing reputations left behind by all of the queens before me. Competing for the title that I now carry as well as continuing to strive for other local or state titles prove challenging tasks. Being a queen isn't any ordinary walk in the park either.

The beauty queen prepared for this moment her entire life, committing to displaying positive characteristics and acting as a role model to those around her. Due to all of this hard work and dedication, great devastation would come if her crown were to be stripped away. With the growing popularity of social media pages, many cases of this have arisen. According to the article "Facebook Statistics", Facebook is now being used by 1 in every 13 people on earth, with 250 million of them logging in every day. A large percentage of not only US citizens but people all around the world will have the ability to view posts and pictures that an individual "posts". Adhikary reveals that "80 percent of the total active internet users in U.S. spent their times on Social Networks..." this is four out of every five active internet users. When an inappropriate picture, video or comment is made on a social media website, it becomes an endless struggle to remove the evidence. As a beauty, rodeo, or pageant queen, a very high standard is held towards the actions of the queen within the public eye, thus bringing me to the conclusion that pageants should be allowed to scrutinize social media pages.

Social media pages expose a contestant's true character without having to see that person diligently try to impress a panel of judges. A contestant does her best to flawlessly create an extraordinary image in every judge's mind during a competition. This image may not be a true representation of who she is offstage. Many judges now endlessly scrutinize the contestants' Facebook pages, Twitters, etc. in effort to obtain a true character description. The 2008 El Paso County Fair Queen as well as the 2012 Girl of the West Caitlin Kern states "I absolutely think beauty pageants should have the authority to scrutinize Facebook pages when picking among possible contestants. I believe it shows the judges the morals and level of respect a contestant has for them self." Pictures say a lot about someone, and if one's Facebook page contains inappropriate pictures, videos or comments, this shows the judge to not select this person. A contract that most beauty queens are required to sign states "I will remember that my Facebook or MySpace page content as well as any other internet website(s) or web page(s) is considered a reflection on me as the titleholder and the Miss Plus America Pageant System" (National Code of Conduct). Statuses and posts containing foul language, sexual exploitation of themselves, or descriptive stories of the night before possibly dealing with narcotics (legal or not) are not what the public considers to be a "positive" public figure.

Knowing that social media has the ability to expose an individual's true character, a beauty pageant contestant does not want a distinct difference to exist between the image she presents onstage and the image within her social media page. Displaying a positive image of yourself and the organization you are a part of is a given responsibility once crowned with a title. As a queen, there are a great deal of people aspiring to follow in your footsteps as they look up to you. Amy Jo Rogers, a former Miss Rodeo Colorado preaches that "...a contestant is signing up to be a role model and as a result, your entire life can undergo scrutiny". The responsibilities of a

queen are set forth long before a competition begins. One knows the expectations as well as the choices needed to pursue in order to fulfill the position with great prestige. “If you are involved in anything that damages the program, rightfully you should not be involved with the program” (Rogers). A role model is a leader, one who is able to stand up for what she believes and not give into the subjects and actions she disagrees with. “To me, to uphold the title of a queen/role model means that you have decided to lead by example with the way you live your life. It means you to step up when those around you prefer to blend in” (Kern). These qualities are ones that a queen should be made of and displayed even before thinking about entering into a competition with the large amount of other human beings old and young alike that will be looking up to her for guidance as well as leadership. The actions you commit cannot be erased. Social media is living evidence of this and if a judge has access to this evidence, so does the rest of the world.

Promoting an organization is an enormous undertaking and one must have top-notch qualifications to pledge herself to as well as honorable statures to uphold; ergo, judges want nothing short of the best for the position. Reinforcing the judgment made of an individual through the life decisions displayed upon their Facebook page allows a judge to pick out the “perfect” girl with a more educated verdict. This should not be a problem if contestants are true about who they are, in and out of the competition. As discussed above, a beauty queen must contain as well as portray a great deal of important traits such as being “relatable and kind hearted” with “no room for a bully mentality, or elitist mentality” (Rogers). The title of a queen never goes away whether a crown is upon one’s head or not. All decisions are reflected back upon the organization as well as the name of the lady that executes them. There is no excuse for misconduct. Also, with the position of a role model being “a hard, difficult position” no matter how stressful things get, “one can never have a bad day” (Rogers). A smile must always be worn

and one must be tough enough to not let little things get under her skin. A true role model is able to “rise above any situation, even when everything is against [her]” (Rogers). No matter if she realizes it or not, someone is always looking up to her thus there is no room for a meltdown.. Other characteristics that should be portrayed by a promoting leader are “thoughtfulness, ambition, generosity, and most importantly selflessness” (Kern). Giving back to the community and to the people is the most important thing as an ambassador while expecting nothing in return. A judge wants someone who will be genuine and render all of these qualities. Viewing social networking sights eliminates any girls wearing a mask. This eliminates any chance of the organization acquiring a bad name or lower standards/reputation.

Due to not first educating themselves on the background information on a contestant, judges have been, and still continue to be haunted by the failure of choosing a “bad egg” or an unfit woman for the job. Many cases have existed within the industry where crowns and titles have been stripped from the women who earned them due to pictures and information that has presented itself on social media pages. According to “Beauty Pageant Scandals”, the 2011 local beauty queen Caroline Schwitzky was forced to give her crown as well as title up due to officials learning of her appearance at a porn convention. In 2001, Miss Nevada USA Katie Rees was forced to give back her crown after promiscuous photos were posted on MySpace (10 Biggest Beauty Pageant Scandals). These are only a few of the unmoral decisions that have corrupted the title of many young ladies as well as the organization they were affiliated with. If judges would have done their research, none of this would have occurred.

Judges of beauty pageants having the ability to scrutinize social media pages may be too harsh, yet it is better to find out before the crown is handed out rather than after. A great deal of pictures taken by young ladies, especially those in high school and college may be taken and

interpreted in the wrong context by judges. For example, most photographers of senior pictures wish for the girls to pose in what can be considered “sensual” ways as well as prom dresses may be too low cut or too short in certain judges opinions. This may be so, but it’s the pictures of these aspiring beauty queens that are of them posing in barely any clothes. Also, it is understood that “kids will be kids” and post funny things on Facebook, but if one is wishing for a loaded title, then there is a line that cannot be crossed. Respecting yourself and presenting appropriate memorabilia isn’t a difficult task. This really displays how you carry yourself as well as the image you wish to exhibit yourself to those looking up to you. It proves what one truly has to offer to the program and to society. It may be too harsh on some levels, but if someone has something to hide then why would they place themselves in front of a panel of judges to be criticized for a positive role model. Making a completely educated decision is better than finding out that a decision wasn’t the right one.

Beauty Pageants are all about “...empowering young women, [and] giving them the opportunities to grow and develop positive self-images to cultivate their talents and public speaking abilities” (Royal International Miss Beauty Pageants). The image of a role model in the eye of the public while she promotes an organization is crucial. True character cannot be masked on social media pages as it can in front of a panel of judges and pageant officials. If a passion truly lies within the organization one is aspiring to support, no desire will exist to make a decision that could cause the opposite effect. It takes a great deal of work and sacrifice to be a genuine role model. Judges want nothing more than to pick the woman who is best for the job. In order for them to do so, they must be knowledgeable towards the background of each candidate. Too many cases exist where the wrong decision was made and a girl that didn’t deserve the crown received it. Beauty pageants should be allowed to scrutinize social media

pages to put an end these situations of bashing a crown. Whether it's walking down the runway in a strappy dress or stepping into a cowgirl boot before inserting one's foot inside the stirrup, every beauty queen is a role model who needs to present herself as such. Any failure to do so makes her ineligible for the honored position.

"I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance."

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