

Pageant competition can be used as "tool"

By LaVerna Fountain

The Miss America Pageant and the Miss U.S.A. Pageant have been called everything from a sexist show to sanctioned prejudice. But what are those pageants really all about and is it fair to join the two together when making generalities?

The Miss America Pageant can be used as a tool by women to further their education. The emphasis is placed on talent and the prizes awarded have reached over two million dollars in scholarships on the local, state, and national levels each year.

Over 70,000 women enter the competition each year in four phases of competition; talent, interview, evening gown, and swimsuit. A well-rounded scope of each competitor is presented.

Miss U.S.A., however, is a pageant that emphasizes physical beauty as opposed to talent. The prizes are more luxurious and consist of things such as jewelry, wardrobe collections, cash and automobiles. Education through scholarships is nonexistent.

My sister, a former Miss Pennsylvania/U.S.A. contestant, Yvonne Thompson said, "As a Black woman competing in the pageant, I was very much aware of the fact that beauty was in the eye of the judges. Black women have a unique beauty with a distinct difference than white women who compete, yet it is very difficult for people to recognize and accept this beauty. Thus, it is difficult for Black women to win in a competition when it is based on physical

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world, too, is based on a physical through personal interviews get a deeper understanding of the person who will represent America.

Contrary to the bias competition, the Miss America Pageant can and does examine talents and beauty as shown in job interviews, and other areas of the work force that must meet and deal with the public. A person is more likely to be hired if he or she looks good.

In this form of competition, Black women have a better chance to present a positive image and be crowned Miss America.

Unfortunately, the stereotypes of the White Miss America and White Miss U.S.A. may actually have discouraged many Black women from entering the Miss America Pageant.

Are the pageants sexist? That, too, is in the eyes of the beholder. For the thousands of women who enter the contests each year, it is a stepping stone to a better future. For others, it is an exploitation of the female physique and once again points to the women as a sex symbol.

Whether to participate in the Miss America Pageant in hopes

of furthering your education, to participate in the Miss U.S.A. Pageant to promote your physical beauty or not to compete at all, must be decided in your own mind guided by your own conscience.

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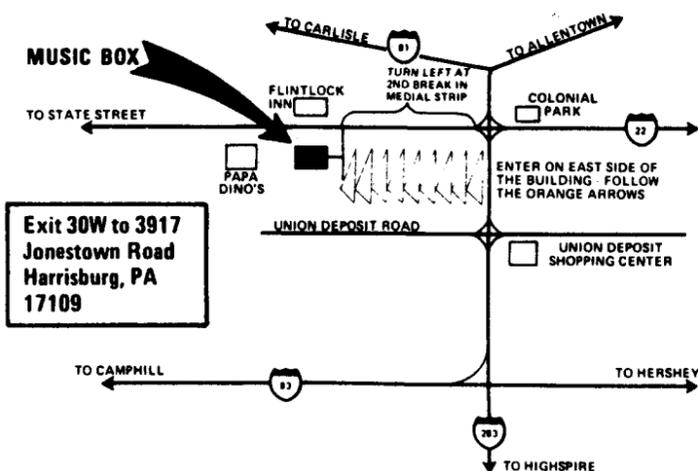
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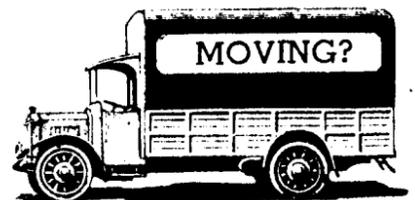
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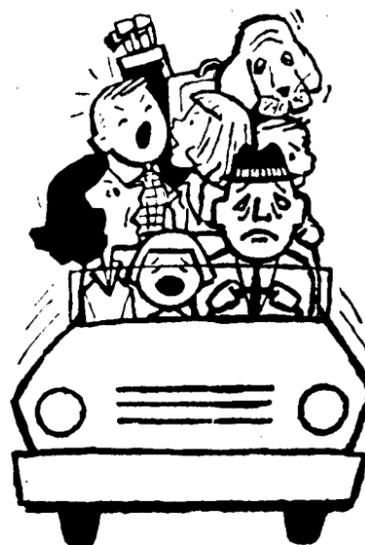
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