



EQUALITY ON THE SCALE OF BEAUTY

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

A year or so ago, there was this debate on whether a certain candidate could be allowed to join a major beauty pageant. The candidate was tall and good looking and possessed a great smile. Gifted with a good body, the contestant looked every bit as qualified as any other candidate. But there was a technical aspect of the criteria for applicants to the beauty pageant that the contestant did not meet: she was not a naturally-born female. Ms. Talackova was a transgender.

The facts that she had sexual reassignment surgery, had lived as a woman for at least a decade, and had undergone hormone therapy apparently did not change the single fact that she was born male. There were many that saw her case as something that could change the way we regarded transgender individuals in general: they are entitled to being recognized for their beauty as well as any other born female. With all the idle talk about equality in the world, what's to stop transgender individuals from having their spot in the limelight?

There are those who have argued vehemently that just because someone has all the equipment and even the thinking, it doesn't mean they can change what they are. Let's say we put headlights, brake lights, a horn and a steering wheel (if that was possible!) on a bike, will that make it a car? Besides, that beauty pageant was designed to be for women, naturally-born ones. The fact that the specific criteria was not met in that case, then the only resolution would be to change the criteria, which has already been traditionalized, to something that Ms. Talackova and others can find more justifiable for them. However, doing that will change everything, including the pageant's philosophy on womanly beauty and pulchritude.

Transgenders have been successful at getting their own recognition in friendlier pageants. In fact, someone from my country-make that, someone from my city- recently bagged the crown in an international beauty competition. Kudos to her and to the many other transgenders who have dared to show the world that they also have what it takes to become the world's most beautiful transgenders. Many of them have excelled in the beauty pageant arena, and this is certainly more than can be said for the true females among us who can barely summon the courage to go up a stage and speak before an audience.

I am happy for those out there who dare to make a statement on equality like transgender people do. I am not against homosexuality on any scale, as long as those that have a different sexual orientation do not allow themselves to be abused by others nor be branded noisy screaming faggots. Those who aspire to be women truly love women because they want to be like women. That's equality in action, plain and simple.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. If you were a judge for a beauty pageant, what would be your specific criteria for judging?
2. Can a groundbreaking change in criteria be more justifiable than simply disqualifying a contestant based on what has been set? Why or why not?
3. How can a different sexual orientation become a cause for discrimination in different settings? Cite examples.
4. Should there be equality between the sexes? Elaborate on your answer.
5. If you were in a situation of inequality, how would you even out everything? Be as specific as needed.