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Women's identities formed by reality shows

I, along with many other Americans, am fixated with reality shows. I will admit I was an "Apprentice" addict. My eyes teared up many times during "American Idol," especially the second season (yes, I adored Josh Gracin and Clay Aiken).

Recently another reality show aired which held my friends' attentions. "The Swan" showcased ugly ducklings who, through a three-month intensive boot camp of sorts, are turned into swans using exercise, diet, cosmetics, therapy and plastic surgery.

I observed a few problems with this show. While I did watch it a few times and came under the spell of "who's going to win," I could not shake a feeling of complete mortification for the women involved. Dare I say that I feel they were exploited? I dare. Not only did I feel they were exploited, but I also feel that girls and women across the viewing audience were misled.

How does a woman become beautiful, meaningful and worthy of attention? According to "The Swan," the only way to gain recognition as a woman is to become skinny, cake on the makeup and fix whatever is not just right (according to Barbie measurements) with a painful and expensive surgery (or surgeries). Well, then, I have a long way to go and I would venture to guess all of my female readers do as well.

One other mind-blowing aspect to the show for me was that after they take these women and completely alter them they do not really compliment them—yet. Only one woman each week was allowed to remain in the running for a final beauty pageant. Personally, I would think after the ordeals the women went through they each deserved a crown. Evidently, I am wrong again. How would you feel if, after all that



Observations

by Joy Stodghill
Staff writer

work, all that pain, you still are not considered "beautiful" or "good enough." I would be devastated and would probably have worse self-esteem than I did at the start of the show.

I do have to give the show praise for their attempts at confidence boosting. Through my experience in Wayne County's Junior Miss Scholarship Program four years ago, I gained confidence in myself and learned more than I could ever have time to share about myself, about my surroundings and about the world.

For many reasons Junior Miss was my defining moment, my awakening, if you will. Many people, perhaps all people, have confidence problems. They do not think very highly of themselves when humans, of all creatures, should be extremely confident yet humble because of the complexity of their creation. So, I am all in favor of aiding women, and men for that matter, in gaining confidence. I just think "The Swan" tried, but didn't try all the way. I think they kind of fell short.

Maybe I am simply naive, but I don't think anyone is ugly. Everyone is made differently for a reason. How boring would it be if every woman looked like Julia Roberts and every man looked like Mel Gibson? Everyone is beautiful to someone, just like there are no bad kissers since one person may think someone is a terrible kisser and another thinks they are wonderful. I guess that's a new way of

describing one man's trash is another man's treasure. Besides beauty really is way more than skin deep if we would only take the time to search for each person's true beauty. Deep inner beauty is often much more appealing and attractive than outward beauty anyway.

Let me put it this way. If I see a guy who is absolutely breathtaking, I may think "Wow," but, if he acts like a jerk, I immediately think he is the ugliest person on earth. Likewise, if a guy who may not be up for next year's Mr. Universe title comes up and acts like a gentleman and treats me with respect, I will automatically think he looks way better than I did at first sight.

I would also dare to add that the women really did not look that great after they were "fixed." Honestly, I thought they looked fake and stiff like victims of too many injections of Botox. Also, I read on a message board at www.realitytvfans.com that the winner could not cry because her tear ducts were messed up by the cosmetic surgery she had. I may not like the way my face looks, but thankfully I can cry and show emotion.

I could continue with more observations such as "How long will their looks last before surgery is necessary again?" "Is it true that the show's therapist received her Ph.D. online?" "Just how much did the contestants have to fork out for the taxes on their 'free' surgeries?"

I guess my observation in all of these musings is reality television shows are not always real reality. There is not something wrong with us and unreal about us because we do not bring drama to every situation or play other people's feelings for our benefit or look like a Barbie doll clone and act like a Stepford wife. Be happy to be you—the real you.

Opinion

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