

A Pinay to take centerstage at the Miss International 2009

Newly crowned Aileen Jan V. Yap to represent the US in this year's pageant in Macau

by MALOU LIWANAG-AGUILAR
AJPress

Photos courtesy of DANNY POZON

THE FILIPINA is a beautiful person, inside and out. She stands out from the crowd with her *morena* skin, disarming smile, deep dark brown eyes and long, silky hair. But colonial mentality has progressed in such a way that some of us see a different kind of Filipina – mestiza or fair-skinned, a lighter shade of hair and a number may have opted for physical enhancements.

But then again, beauty is in the eye of the beholder they say. And in a country where beauty pageants abound, when someone is crowned the winner, we better believe it that she's the fairest of them all. Yet when a Filipina gets a title outside her own country, you would know that there is more to her than her winning smile or beautiful gowns.

Enter Filipino-American Aileen Jan Vadehuesa Yap of Houston, Texas, who was crowned as Miss USA International 2009 last July 10. The daughter of Cagayanons Dr. Romeo Sy Yap and Virgincita Bautista Valdehuesa Yap, AJ, as her friends and family call her, is a junior student at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, majoring in Biology. She intends to pursue medicine and be a pediatrician someday. Both Miss Yap's parents are in the healthcare profession, as her

father is a psychiatrist while her mother is a nurse and the director/owner of Virginia's Lakeview Personal Care Home in Texas. A beauty with brains, Miss Yap also graduated as the Most Outstanding Student at the Sacred Heart School in Conroe, Texas and summa cum laude at Willis High School.

In an interview with *Mindanao News*, Miss Yap was quoted, "I've always wanted to be a doctor, seeing how my parents can help someone else's life and also seeing how rewarding it is to be able to help someone in need."

Barely out of her teens, the 20-year-old Miss Yap won over 15 semi-finalists, also taking home special awards as Best in Swimsuit and Best in Evening Gown. She will represent the United States in the 49th Miss International pageant which will be held at the Venetian Ma-

cao Resort in Macau, China in November. This is the same pageant that has crowned four other Filipinas in the past – Gemma Cruz (1964), Aurora Pijuan (1970), Melanie Marquez (1979), and Precious Lara Quigaman (2005).

Incidentally, Miss Yap will face another Filipina in the Miss International pageant – the Philippines' representative Melody Gersbach, a Filipino-German from Daraga, Albay.

Whoever takes the crown – Miss Yap or Miss Gersbach – it is no doubt that Filipinos all over the world will be equally proud.

As a race we have a long tradi-

tions in winning beauty contests. Aside from four Miss International winners, the Philippines has also produced two Miss Universe title holders, Gloria Diaz and Margie Moran. (See sidebar). This is proof that the Filipina has always blended well in the international beauty pageant circle, and that she could (and she is), regardless of skin color – the fairest of them all. ■

Beauty (pageant) 101

YOU may be interested to know that the Philippines had been producing beauty queens for a long time. In fact, most have been raising them – small girls competing in local or city beauty pageants (I can personally attest to this), in town fiestas, school and organization fund raisings and other events that require someone to promote the cause. As they grow older, some of these girls get the chance to represent the country to international pageants.

Here are some interesting facts about beauty queens and pageants:

- Filipinas to win Miss International – Gemma Cruz (1964), Aurora Pijuan (1970), Melanie Marquez (1979) and Precious Lara Quigaman (2005). Gemma Cruz was the first Filipina and first Asian to win the Miss International title.
- Miss International Melanie Marquez is the youngest Miss International in history. She was only 15 years old when she won the title.
- Miss International 2005 Precious Lara Quigaman is the shortest Miss International, standing at 5'6. Miss Universe Gloria Diaz was the shortest among candidates in 1969, standing only at 5'5. The shortest Miss Universe was Miss Thailand 1965, Apasra Hongsakula who stood at 5'4.
- Miss International is officially called The International Beauty Pageant and is the fourth

largest beauty pageant in the world. It is also called a "Festival of Beauty" and "Olympics of Beauty."

- Miss Colombia, Stella Marquez is the first Miss International in 1960. She married Filipino businessman Jorge Araneta and since 1964, has been the organizer of the most prestigious pageant in the Philippines, the Binibining Pilipinas, which sends its winners to the Miss Universe, Miss World and Miss International competitions.

- Filipinas crowned Miss Universe – Gloria Diaz (1969) (the first Filipina Miss Universe) and Margie Moran (1973)

- Angela Perez Baraquo (now Grey), is the first Asian-American to win the Miss America title in 2001.

- Miss Teen USA for 1998 is a Filipino-American from South Carolina, Vanessa Minnillo. She was also voted Miss Congeniality by the contestants for that year. ■



Aileen Jan Yap with parents, Romeo "Boy" Sy Yap of Cagayan de Oro City and Virgincita "Geget" Bautista Valdehuesa Yap of Balingasag, Misamis Oriental



Aileen Jan Yap being crowned as the Miss International 2009

Publisher's Note

Breaking the mold

The Pinay's beauty emerges once more, this time as a representative of the United States. Aileen Jan V. Yap, a 20-year-old Filipina stunner from Texas has been crowned this year as Miss USA International and will contend with other lovely hopefuls from around the globe in the 2009 Miss International Pageant in Macau, China in November. Aileen breaks the mold of westernized standards with her Filipina looks, charm and grace -- a fact that makes her kababayans here in the US truly proud. The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine is equally smitten as well and has chosen Aileen to grace the cover of this week's issue. ■



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