

## Here she comes, Miss America...brainless and used by society



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It's about that time of year again when 50 or so women strut across the stage vying for the title of Miss America. Despite the fact that Miss America must possess talent and intelligence, it is her form and face that have been chosen to represent the ideal American woman. The Miss America pageant exemplifies the role of women as decorative objects. While men are judged for their actions, women are continually judged by their appearance.

Homecoming week is another great example. Hoping to be chosen "Homecoming Queen," some pretty young lady passes out her picture hoping you will find her the "cutest" candidate of all. She who is chosen queen is then designated the role of representing the UNLV female student body. I am quite sure that most of the women on campus would not like to be represented by someone who won a popularity contest based on her looks rather than her academic merit.

There is the mentality that being beautiful is enough. Women, beginning from a very young age, learn that they can gain approval and attention by being pretty.

A woman can make a lucrative living marketing her appearance. However, when she can no longer rely on her looks, she is left with few marketable skills. We have raised women to believe that being beautiful is an end in and of itself. A beautiful woman can simply display her beauty, and she will be taken care of; there is no reason to succeed in school or in the job market.

For women who have chosen real jobs, it is not enough for them to be successful in their career. To be valued in American society, women must also be beautiful. If a woman chooses to play down her appearance, she is

considered a "dyke" and somehow less of a woman.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to be attractive, our appearance has a lot to do with the image we relay to others. The problem is that this society encourages an obsessive, and even dangerous, pre-occupation with the female appearance.

Hairremoval instruments, corsets, hair chemicals, and plastic surgery are just a few of the million torture devices produced to make women more "beautiful." While the pursuit of beauty may be time-consuming, inconvenient, and even downright painful, in some cases it may become deadly. Witness the large number of women who have died of eating disorders.

Given the societal standards which dictate how a woman should look, it is not surprising that for most women, what we look like determines who we are. Asked to describe themselves, a majority of the women interviewed by sociologist Lilian Rubin began with a list of physical characteristics, and struggled when asked to use non-physical characteristics.

The primacy attributed to physical characteristics leads women to tie self-worth to their body image. Lots of women, even those who measure up to societal beauty standards, hold a negative self-image. Ashamed of big hips, limp hair, and less-than-perfect skin, these women downgrade their worth as human beings.

Women are socialized to accept the beauty standards that define the ideal woman. Our culture teaches them that they have to be pretty to be worthy, and sets up standards that are unhealthy and unobtainable. Even more importantly, beauty standards reduce women to nothing more than objects.

For men, a good looking woman is a great prize. For some reason, when an man is coupled with an attractive woman, he is seen as more intelligent and more successful. A beautiful woman is seen as another asset, like a sports car that proclaims to all that here stands a "real" man.

We should not be surprised at the large amount of rape, sexual abuse, and spousal abuse that takes place in our society. When women are seen as objects to be possessed, they will be used by some men to assert their power and dominance.

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## Clinton P.R. staff reinvents 'change' in Washington



NICHOLAS HALEY  
MANAGING EDITOR

"What kills a skunk is the publicity it gives itself"—  
Abraham Lincoln

Reinventing government. It doesn't sound like good news for Bill Clinton's public relations corps. After seven months in office, this is the best euphemism the White House staff could come up with to reinvent the sagging buzzword "change."

It took no time at all for former president Ronald Reagan's staff to "reinvent" the word "depression." The word was, of course, "recession" which became taboo before the middle of the George Bush term.

Bush and his staff, not to be outdone, reinvented much of the English language. Taxation be-

came a "revenue enhancement" that he "went along with." Frequent fliers may also remember the birth of "user fees" which were added on to the price of their ticket. Some may not have even realized where those fees went to or why.

Similarly, it was almost overnight that image consultants transformed Nancy Reagan from privileged elitist to woman of the people. Attempts to change Hillary Clinton's masculine image haven't been nearly as successful. Counting by the number of hairstyle changes, they're averaging a new look every 1 1/2 months. All that time, no one's attention has been diverted from her reinvention of health care.

President Clinton himself reinvented his own image by joining the Democratic Leadership Council, a group dedicated to making the Democratic Party less left-wing. It was enough to get him in office by a five percent margin over Bush, who shunned any attempt at changing his image. But now, what with the busy schedule of being president, Clinton has had no time to retool his faltering public

opinion.

But getting back to the reinvention of government, Vice President Al Gore has claimed in his report that the plan would cut 250,000 jobs from the federal payroll with the savings passed on to you, the customer of the government. The total savings, assuming the cuts become a reality, would amount to approximately \$10-15 billion, roughly the annual budget of NASA.

While I'm certainly not against the trimming of the federal payroll, this hardly amounts to reinventing government. The U.S. government will remain the nation's largest employer. Endowments, especially Social Security, will escape unchallenged and untouched, eating up close to half the federal budget. And the military that we've stationed everywhere in the world will continue to project American might around the globe.

Clinton's main concern appears to be reinventing his image and sweeping away his first six months in office. If he wants to succeed he should consider reinventing his P.R. staff.

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