

Time for a Chinese Miss London?

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Yinsey Wang is currently a student at Cambridge University, pursuing her second degree. A graduate of the University of Toronto, she was very involved in diaspora issues during her time there. She initiated and organised the Asian Diaspora Conference; acted as analyst for the G8 Research Group; was speaker associate for the University of Toronto China Conference; headed the East Asian Studies Students' Union; and marketed for the East Asian Film Club.

She loves singing and photography; and she is a romantic at heart (having been with her first boyfriend for eight years!). In the running to become Miss London 2011, she is aiming to become the first of Oriental descent to take the title, and is a Miss England hopeful.

About the Miss London Pageant:

Miss London is the preliminary round to Miss England. The winner of Miss England will go onto Miss World. The pageant has gone a long way from being a traditional beauty pageant to one that values the empowerment of women by giving them a platform to express their point of view of what real beauty comprises of.

Although often associated with its glamorous image, the Miss London is known for its dedication to many charitable causes; this year, the finalists are fundraising for Hope for Children, Make a Wish Foundation and Help for Heroes. There are a multitude of prizes available for successful contestants; but at the top of the list is the chance to represent one of the most "sought after" cities in the world.

Why do you want to become Miss London 2011?

As people of East Asian descent are underrepresented in the British media, I want to take a small step in the greater movement to gain exposure for the community in the UK. The Miss London 2011 Competition, as part of the Miss England and Miss World Pageants, presents an ideal opportunity for me and many other women to experience insights from individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Propelling an atmosphere of cultural exchange and bolstering active citizen participation, whether through community fundraising for those in need, supporting local contestants or just even being able to express ourselves in front of a live audience, is what makes the project so appealing to me.

Furthermore, my mission in entering this pageant is to challenge a restricted definition of beauty. Beauty comes in all shapes and in all sizes (I'm tiny at 5'3 myself!). Throughout history we can see the differing standards that societies have been subjected and have subjected themselves to.

For example, during the Tang Dynasty's grip on China, the plumper a woman, the prettier she was; corsets were designed for English women of the Tudor period to keep waists small; Heian Japan women had a habit of painting their teeth black; and today, the stereotypical female model body wouldn't fit the classical Greek standard of "perfection";.

What does this tell us about beauty? It's constructed, it's decided in the context of the times, and there isn't a universal standard. So, everyone, in their own right, is gorgeous; what's beautiful today in the media might not be beautiful tomorrow.

Enjoy what you have, because in the end, even if you're not the contemporary standard, if you're happy in your own skin, celebrate your own look and be admired for your uniqueness and confidence. Of course, we must not forget to make sure our choices are healthy and true to ourselves.

What does London mean to you?

I grew up in London, so it is definitely my home; I have a true love for the city of Toronto too. The beauty about both these cities is that they're so multicultural and rich with a history of immigration, long-settled communities and a strong appreciation for cross-border dialogue.

My favourite thing about London is the wealth of resources we have FREE as the greater public. The British Museum and British Library houses some of the finest collections. In general, London allows you to navigate through different cultures in one place; that's mind-blowing!

What's your vision for London?

Ever since Shen Fu Tsung set foot on Britain's shores over three hundred years ago, the Chinese diaspora population has grown. The Chinese community in Britain has suffered their lot in discrimination, immigration restrictions and social stigma; however, we have fought through these hard and difficult times to become active and strong citizens of the United Kingdom.

The impact we have had as a community over history has been immense (but not confined to): food culture, fashion, luxury goods (the obsession with Chinoiserie) and literature (an honorable mention is required here of Harry Potter's first girlfriend, of course!).

I hope to bring cultures from different backgrounds and groups in London together as a community. Dialogue, exchange and mutual understanding are essential to foster a giving and welcoming society.

The multicultural fabric in England presents a range of unique and beautiful opportunities to take what's around us and learn from each other; which is what I hope to provide as my vision for London.

What accomplishments are you proud of?

I'm really happy with what I did during my university years, with the support of some of the most driven and inspiring people I could ever hope to meet. I jump-started and organised the Asian Diaspora Conference, bringing together more than 20 speakers drawn from academia and leading members of the Asian-Canadian community.

Of great help were my amazing friends and team members, including Max Guo, Tracy Quan, Shary Zhang, Lydia Zhou, Eric Tran, Josh Xiong and Junho Kim. The project attracted approximately 200 audience members, and discussed a wide-ranging number of issues, from citizenship to discrimination and film culture to food.

One of the most important achievements that I believe I have managed to pull off is an academic journal and conference project that I co-founded with one of my most driven and passionate friends, Michel Marion. We were able to give undergraduates a chance to express their views and receive feedback from some of the brightest minds in the field (professors and budding PhD candidates).

I was selected as an undergraduate panellist for a graduate conference on issues to do with East Asia; and some of my work has been published in numerous formats. As a freelance and amateur photographer, I was honoured to showcase my work in several magazines.

Who do you admire?

I think that we can find heroes and role models everywhere; we just need to look under our noses. It is difficult for me to pick a favourite as I find that there are heroic and amazing deeds being done every day. In fact, the dedication and compassion of individuals we can find in this world is an encouraging sign that there is a lot of good that can be done.

The most important role models for me up until now are my family members, friends and boyfriend (as well as his family) given they have supported me and shown such strength through difficult times. The professors and teaching assistants that have guided me through my academic development have also impacted me greatly in my own search for truth and understanding of a wide span of issues.

Also, some of the most charitable projects are happening all around us, where people make things happen for great causes. I was honoured to MC for Tony Jorge's/Mikey Tsang's/Impression Events's/Performers Unite for Haiti's concert which raised over \$30,000 Canadian!

Furthermore, Danielle Graham, founder of the SWEET Project allowed me to take photographs of some beautiful models for their catalogue to support local textile manufacturers in Ethiopia (and with their new leader, Weronika, they have managed to expand operations to India too!).

Charity at the grass-roots level and at the home is an amazing place to start and make a positive contribution to society; my boyfriend's little 12-year old sister didn't get one material birthday present this year – instead, she asked for all her friends and family to donate to the Humane Society!

What charities are being supported by Miss London 2011?

The three charities being supported by Miss London 2011 are Help for Heroes; HOPE for Children; and Make a Wish. The Miss London 2011 Pageant stresses giving to others and a culture of responsible citizenship.

Help for Heroes is an apolitical organisation looking to aid those injured from service in the armed forces. They have risked their all, travelling so far away from home. It is important that, without considering the political issues surrounding the conflicts, to consider how much these men and women have given up in the name of the country.

HOPE for Children helps children in need from all over the globe. Disabled, impoverished and orphaned children have been able to rely on the giving nature of others to give them a better start in their lives. A charity that truly believes that every child should have equal opportunities in life; your donations will push us forward in reaching this universally-held value.

Make a Wish targets children with severely life-threatening illnesses and grants them their greatest wishes. Kids get to meet their heroes or take part in a profession or experience they always wanted to try. It's amazing the amount of wishes (6,400!) the Foundation has granted in the last 25 years.

To make a donation to the three charities (Help for Heroes, Hope for Children, Make a Wish) that Miss London 2011 supports, please visit <http://bit.ly/MissLondon>

Every penny goes a long way to help those with real needs. Often it is easy to take for granted how lucky we are to lead such privileged lives. Even £1 would be wonderful!

To vote for Yinsey, text 'YinseyY' to 84205 (texts cost 60p each, rates may vary). Voting closes on 28th May 2011.

Tickets for Miss London 2011 on 28th May 2011 at Café de Paris can be purchased by contacting info@ukmfpagants.co.uk

Yinsey Wang can be contacted at <http://yinseyw.com/>

Photography: Laura Catherine Hyden and Lara Jade