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A Beauty With Brains

By Priscilla 11 July, 2013 4 Comments

AN INTERVIEW WITH MISS WORLD SINGAPORE FINALIST, RACHEL LENG

Student Rachel Leng, 23, whom I have known since my primary school days, is one of the finalists for this year's Miss World Singapore pageant.



Photo courtesy of Rachel Leng

From a very playful and energetic seven-year-old, she has certainly come a long way. As well as being a beauty contest finalist, Rachel has also graduated from Duke University in the USA as one of the institution's best students.

She hopes to pursue a PhD at Harvard University soon too.

I recently caught up with her.

Want to find out more about this amazing young lady? Read on.

RACHEL, WHAT MADE YOU ENTER THE MISS WORLD SINGAPORE PAGEANT?

I love Singapore and I love the fact that I am a Singaporean. As I have grown up and spent a lot of time overseas (living in Shanghai, the U.S., and travelling), I have constantly been reminded of my nationality by others around me. Consequently, I have always looked for ways to represent Singapore as a beautiful, cosmopolitan, friendly, compassionate, and culturally diverse city-nation where ever I go. The Miss World Singapore (MWS) contest is one way that I believe I can project a positive image of Singapore on the world stage through a physical embodiment of those traits.

Along those lines, the MWS pageant's strong emphasis on community service and charity work through its partnership with Jamiyah Children's Home and [Give.sg](#) particularly appealed to me. I think that people in Singapore tend to overlook giving back to local charities and community service organisations, and by entering the MWS contest, I want to raise greater awareness of these issues.

Overall, I would definitely emphasize that a key motivation for me to join this pageant was simply to have fun and learn from everyone that I have met and will continue to meet along the way!



Photo courtesy of Rachel Leng

WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A “TYPICAL” BEAUTY QUEEN? WHY/WHY NOT?

Every beauty queen that I've met or know of, is unique and has her own special charms, so I don't think I know what a “typical” beauty queen is, because everyone is so different. For myself, I would say that my most distinctive feature that differentiates me from the other finalists is the fact that I'm a huge nerd (and proud of it!). I am so grateful that my parents have worked so hard and sacrificed so much to provide me the opportunity to learn, and I make it a point to take up every opportunity that I can (including turning my participation in the MWS pageant into a learning experience).

People have repeatedly asked me why I am in the pageant when they perceive that most pageant contestants are not “smart.” I think that this is a huge misperception. All of the girls I've met through MWS are incredibly intelligent in their own ways. The common saying that there is an inverse relationship between brains and beauty, in my view, is simply not true! I don't see why they have to be mutually exclusive.



Photo courtesy of Rachel Leng

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING THE PAGEANT, AND WHY?

Honestly I don't think I can really give a proper opinion on that. I think every girl in the finals is beautiful and talented in her own right. Who knows what the next few

weeks have in store for us? I suppose our fates lie in the hands of the judges and audience on coronation night!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MISS WORLD SINGAPORE WILL HELP YOU TO ACHIEVE?

I definitely hope to improve my confidence in public speaking and communication skills when interacting with a diverse range of individuals from all walks of life. As this is my first major pageant, I also look forward to learning more about the pageant world. I want to know about how it is run, all the hard work that goes into it, and also all the emotional roller coasters that accompany excitement and anxiety with the various events and preparatory activities. Additionally, I hope that my participation will represent how Singaporean women can be global, attractive, kind, intelligent, yet elegant and poised.



Photo courtesy of Rachel Leng

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST TALENT AND HOW DO YOU FEEL THAT THIS WILL HELP YOU IN YOUR MISS WORLD SINGAPORE JOURNEY?

I believe that my greatest talent would be the ability to lead a balanced lifestyle. I think it is so important for people to take good care of their body, mind, and soul to be happy. Along those lines, Miss World Singapore should be a very well rounded woman – someone with integrity, purpose, compassion, and the ability to live her life and conduct her behaviour in a way that people around her can take inspiration from. I think that I am a pretty grounded person, and that no matter what happens during this contest, I will be able to make the most out of learning from it. In this way, I am confident that my perspective towards turning all of my experiences throughout the MWS pageant into an opportunity to learn will enable me to better myself for the future.

YOU'VE BEEN LIVING IN SHANGHAI AND AMERICA FOR A WHILE. HOW WILL THIS HELP YOU IN THE CONTEST?

Although I have lived overseas for most of my life, I keep Singapore very close to my heart. I come back at least twice a year, and my family and relatives all live here. My family history is also very traditionally Singaporean – I have Peranakan, or cross-straits Chinese-Malay heritage. I absolutely love the Singaporean food culture, and cannot get enough of all of my local delicacies whenever I come back.

I will not deny, however, that my experiences overseas have shaped my perspective immensely. I believe that rather than making me less Singaporean, my experiences have actually enhanced my ability to represent what being Singaporean is all about. I am confident that I can represent a woman who is cosmopolitan and worldly. I am also confident of representing someone who has the ability to adapt quickly to diverse environments and rapidly changing conditions as well as empathize with a multitude of cultural perspectives and personal viewpoints. As a woman who has been exposed to international environment from a young age, I see myself as straddling, and even assimilating, East and West. Isn't that what Singapore is quintessentially about? A global nation that is constantly adapting to international conditions, and is a melting pot of countless cultures and ethnicities from all over the world.



Photo credit: Rachel Leng

IF YOU WON THE MISS WORLD SINGAPORE CROWN, WHAT WOULD BE THE FIRST THING THAT YOU WOULD DO AND WHY?

The first thing I will do is to thank my family, relatives, and friends for all of their support that helped me achieve such success! Without a doubt, I would not even have made it so far today in the finals without all of their help and support.

Other than that, I will work my hardest every day to work with and help as many people as possible. In particular, I will want to have a close relationship with the Jamiyah Children's Home to care for and do as much as I can for the children there. I would also focus more attention on actively fundraising for [Give.sg](#).

WOULD YOU BE ENTERING OTHER BEAUTY CONTESTS AFTER THIS ONE? WHY/WHY NOT?

I'm not sure! I suppose I'll see how this contest turns out first. I probably won't leave the pageant world completely, but it will have to depend whether I will be able to commit to other pageants when they come around in future years – preparing and competing in them is hard work!!



Photo courtesy of Rachel Leng

ANY TIPS THAT YOU MAY HAVE FOR ASPIRING BEAUTY QUEENS OUT THERE?

Just go for it! I think all women should at least have a shot at a beauty pageant at some point. It is truly an experience that expands your perspective of the world. And you never know how far you can get until you try! Sometimes the best things happen when you don't even expect it, but you really have to put yourself out there before the opportunities come to you!

I HEAR THAT YOU'LL BE DOING YOUR PHD SOON. CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THIS?

I have been very fortunate throughout my life thus far. As a first generation college student in the US, I was not even sure if I was really going to be finishing my undergraduate degree, and would definitely not have imagined that I would be even thinking about pursuing a PhD! But recently, I have received a fellowship offer (that is, a full scholarship and stipend) to pursue graduate studies in the East Asian Studies department at Harvard University in the United States.

I will be continuing what I started research on during my undergraduate career, primarily focusing on Chinese culture, politics, and literature, but hopefully branching out to South East Asia as well! In particular, I hope to be conducting more research on Singapore, and hopefully to be contributing to knowledge and raising awareness about issues in the area internationally.

SEE MORE ABOUT RACHEL!

[***A Beauty with a Heart***](#)

[***A Beauty bound for Harvard***](#)

Rachel has published essays online. For details of these, check out [her site here](#).

The finals of Miss World Singapore will be held on July 28 at the Pacific Ballroom in the Pan Pacific Hotel.

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Tags: **beauty contest**, **Duke University**, **Harvard University**, **Miss Singapore World**, **Rachel Leng**

4 Comments



Rachel says:

12 July, 2013 at 6:33 am

Thanks for your support! 😊 Do feel free to follow me and my journey with the contest online!

[Log in to Reply](#)



Priscilla

says:

12 July, 2013 at 6:46 am

Rachel, we will be cheering you all the way!! 😊

Let's give her a big round of applause, everyone!!! 😊 😊

[Log in to Reply](#)



MinglingSg says:

11 July, 2013 at 8:12 am

She is a good choice. Hope she wins the trophy.

[Log in to Reply](#)



PriscillaChew

says:

11 July, 2013 at 3:28 pm

Yes, Rachel is a very good contender for the crown.

[Log in to Reply](#)

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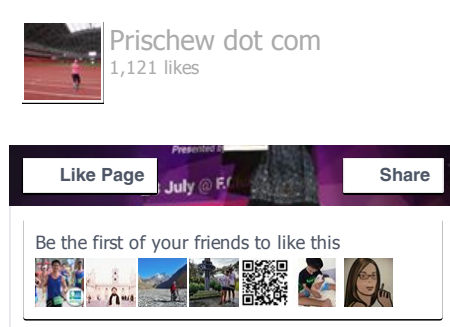
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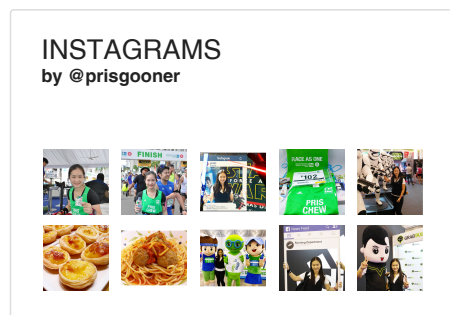
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The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook page for 'Prischew dot com'. It features a profile picture of a person running on a track, a cover photo with the text 'Presented by July @ F...', and buttons for 'Like Page' and 'Share'. Below the buttons, there is a prompt 'Be the first of your friends to like this' with a row of small profile pictures and a QR code.

INSTAGRAMS

by @prisgooner

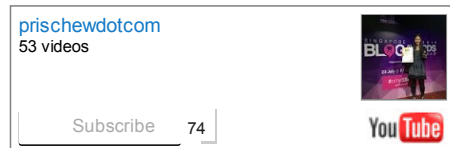


The image displays a grid of Instagram posts from the account @prisgooner. The posts include photos of people at events, food items like fried chicken, and promotional graphics for 'PRIS CHEW'.

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The image shows a YouTube channel banner for 'prischewdotcom'. It includes the channel name, the number of videos (53), a 'Subscribe' button with a subscriber count of 74, and a video thumbnail featuring a person in a 'BLOG' graphic.

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Cancer Is A Marathon By Pris Chew

I am running 42.195km at StanChart Marathon 2015
to raise funds to help cancer patients and survivors.

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