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Statement of Gloria Allred

Today we are here to announce a challenge to the rules of the Miss Universe beauty pageant and the rules of the Miss World beauty pageant. The rules of both pageants clearly discriminate against women who have been pregnant and have given birth.

This issue was brought to my attention by Veronika Didusenko, Miss Ukraine 2018, who is here with me today. She entered the Miss World beauty pageant, was crowned Miss Ukraine in 2018, but then was stripped of her title because she has had a child. Veronika has appealed the loss of her title, and her legal challenge is pending in Ukraine. She has been a world-wide leader on this discrimination issue in beauty pageants, and I am glad that she brought this issue to my attention and that we will continue to work together to end this barrier to the enjoyment of women's equal rights.

Andrea Quiroga, who is also here with me today, is a resident of Los Angeles, California. It has been her dream since she was 14 years old to enter the Miss Universe and Miss World beauty pageants. When she reviewed the eligibility rules, however, she was shocked to learn that although she met all of the eligibility requirements, there was one requirement that made her ineligible and prevented her from becoming a contestant.

The Miss California U.S.A. rule for the Miss Universe beauty pageant states that a contestant “Must... never have given birth to a child, cannot be pregnant or be a parent.” (www.misscaliforniausa.com/eligibility).

To emphasize the importance of that rule, the Miss U.S.A. webpage states “Here are some final questions to ask yourself... Have I ever given birth to a child? Am I the legal parent or guardian of anyone? Am I currently pregnant? If you answered no to all of those questions, congrats you’re eligible!” (www.missusa.com/apply).

Andrea does have a son, and therefore under the rules of Miss California U.S.A., Miss Universe beauty pageant, she is ineligible and may not enter that pageant.

The Miss World America eligibility rule also bars entry to Andrea and other women who have given birth. It states that contestants must “...never have given birth.”

In California, our Unruh Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination against women because they are or were pregnant.

Many years ago, my law firm and I represented an actress, Hunter Tylo, who was terminated from a television show, *Melrose Place*, because she was

pregnant. We took her case to trial and won a verdict of \$5 million dollars for Ms. Tylo.

Now we are challenging these beauty pageant rules that also discriminate against women who have become pregnant by excluding them from entering these pageants and denying them the opportunity to compete and win because they became pregnant.

This week, on behalf of Andrea, we took the first step to strike down this discriminatory rule.

We contacted the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) and submitted the intake form for Andrea to initiate the complaint process. This process will take approximately three months during which Andrea will be interviewed by a representative of DFEH. Then Andrea will be notified if DFEH will investigate. The DFEH webpage states, “If it accepts the case, DFEH independently investigates the facts and the legal issues. This involves reviewing respondents’ responses to complaints and other information and evidence that complainants and respondents submit, among other things. DFEH attempts to resolve the dispute in appropriate cases. DFEH may also decide to take legal action [by filing a civil action in court]”

[\(https://www.dfeh.ca.gov/complaintprocess/\)](https://www.dfeh.ca.gov/complaintprocess/)

In California, pregnancy discrimination is against the law, because discriminating against women who were or are pregnant is a form of sex discrimination.

We are very proud and honored to represent Andrea in this battle. She is standing up not only for herself, but for all other women in California who are or were pregnant.

Being pregnant is not a crime or a communicable disease, and there is no reason that it should result in a loss of a business or financial opportunity such as being able to participate in a pageant. We do not believe that pageants have a right to restrict women who have been or are pregnant from enjoying equal rights under the law.

We look forward to protecting and asserting Andrea's rights under California law and finally eliminating this sexist and archaic barrier to the enjoyment of equal opportunity for pregnant women.

Attorney Gloria Allred
Representing Andrea Quiroga
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