



Andrea Quiroga had a child at 19, barring her from entry to the Miss World and Universe pageants under present rules

## Would-be beauty queen: I'm not less beautiful now I'm a mother

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A would-be beauty queen from California has challenged “sexist and archaic” eligibility rules in the Miss World and Universe pageants that forbid mothers and pregnant women from competing.

Andrea Quiroga, 28, said she had dreamt of competing in the pageants since seeing an advert when she was 14 but was barred from taking part after she became a mother at 19. The winner of

Miss World America represents the US at the Miss World competition but contestants will not be considered if they have given birth. Miss Universe will also not accept mothers.

Quiroga, who has submitted a challenge to the rules with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH), said: "Becoming a mother has been the greatest joy in my life. I gave birth to a child, that's a beautiful thing, that's amazing. To find out that I'm not allowed to participate in something broke my heart.

"What message are we sending to young women? We're sending a message that beauty cannot mean mother."

Quiroga, who works for the Los Angeles Unified School District, said the pageant rules barring mothers made her feel "like I was less than those women" who are welcomed to compete. She added: "I'm not less of a woman just because I had a son at 19."

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Quiroga's challenge will involve an investigation by the DFEH, which could take legal action against the pageants.

Gloria Allred, a prominent women's rights lawyer who is representing Quiroga, did not rule out also taking out a lawsuit. She said: "We'll do everything we think possible to get these rules eliminated."

The pageants have been contacted for comment.

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