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8 Questions

by Krissy Mallard

The Miss Plus America pageant has been celebrating full-figured women since 2003, turning many young girls' dreams into a reality. We spoke to 2014 winner Lia Freeman and quickly found out that beauty pageants aren't just about smiling and looking pretty, they're also about service, confidence and hope. As a major advocate of self-love and charitable work, Lia is a statement that pageant queens are more than what meets the eye.

Q1: Did you watch pageants going up?
No, I didn't. I had no interest in the average pageant world until I found out about Miss Plus America in 2013. I really loved that in Miss Plus America, 80% of your score is based on your interview, and each girl has her own platform; it's not your average "beauty" pageant.

Q2: What was the first pageant you ever did? Miss Plus America! I represented my hometown of San Bernardino, the Inland Empire, and I placed 'First Runner-Up.' I also won 'People's Choice' and 'Most Photogenic.' In 2014, I won 'Covergirl,' and I was crowned Miss California Plus America 2014.

Q3: How has doing pageants boosted your self-esteem? Participating in Miss Plus America pageant became a tool that helped polish the person that I already was. As a queen, it definitely opened doors for me that provided more community service opportunities, better communication skills, and it was a ton of fun! I wouldn't have been able to compete without the level of self-confidence I have now. Joining a pageant just to fill an empty hole or to prove to someone that you're good enough is a 'danger zone,' and I work as a mentor to make sure that our youths learn the truth. I've seen many girls become hard on themselves when they don't win the crown, and this is why some people believe that pageants have a

negative result on a person's self esteem.

Q4: What motivates you to be a Queen? My biggest motivation is promoting my platforms, empowering inner-city youth, and autism awareness. During my 2014 reign as Crowned Queen, I went above and beyond serving my community was recognized and crowned California's first Lifetime Ambassador!

Q5: What is one of your favorite memories from being part of the Miss California Plus pageant? My favorite memories would have to be a mixture of visits to children's hospitals, orphanages, and visits with disadvantaged youths. These girls are fighters, and I had the amazing opportunity to be a small part of making their day magical. As a mentor, I get to see them grow into confident, young women.

Q6: Which charities have you worked with? I have had the privilege to work with numerous nonprofits that support Autism awareness, breast cancer awareness, literacy, Boy & Girls Clubs, veterans, homelessness, and many more.

Q7: What is your ultimate goal in life? I am currently in a master's degree program at California Baptist University. My short-term goal is to complete my master's degree and to continue working with both my family business, Lias Got Good Cense, and our mentee program M.Y Girls (mentoring young girls). I would like to help out and make a difference in as many lives as possible.

Q8: What advice do you have for young girls who want to participate in the pageant world? Believe in yourself, stand up for yourself, and love yourself!



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