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## Equality and the Miss USA pageant

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# Equality and the Miss USA pageant

Here is my embarrassing admission for the week: I watched the Miss USA pageant last Sunday.

My roommate and I criticized the women, picked our favorites and hoped one of them would trip on stage. We made it through the swimsuit competition, the evening-gown walk and held our breaths when the time came for questioning.

Miss California, a blonde Barbie look-alike, took the stage and by the luck of the draw was questioned by Perez Hilton, a gay gossip-queen blogger. He asked her if she believed same-sex marriage should be legalized in every state.

She stumbled a bit, saying our country was great for allowing a choice between same-sex marriages and "opposite marriage," and then changed her tune.

Her final answer: "I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman." In the same breath, she quickly added, "No offense to anybody out there."

Good thing you're beautiful, Carrie Prejean.

Perhaps it was my upbringing in a liberal-dirty-hippie-recycling kind of family, but I was always taught that everyone is equal. I'm pretty sure that's what our forefathers told us in the Constitution as well.

I was sadly disappointed when a woman who is supposed to be a role model announced she was not for equality. How would she feel if we made laws prohibiting bleach blondes

from getting married? Or maybe Californians? People with blue eyes? Or even straight people? She'd be singing a different tune then.

All Americans should be entitled to marriage. Love is love. Our hearts gush for the banned courtship of Romeo and Juliet, but somehow we turn our noses up at a story of Romeo and Romeo, or Juliet and Juliet.

I am relieved by the recent news of same-sex marriage gaining ground in America. Vermont became the fourth state in the nation to allow the practice this month. Massachusetts, Connecticut and Iowa were predecessors. Now, Maine is on the chopping block.

A rally in Augusta on Wednesday allowed over 200 speakers to address the topic in the Maine legislature. Crowds were huge. News coverage was wide. University of Maine students left at the break of dawn to rally.

I can only hope their voices make a change and make Miss California a little more uncomfortable. If only she had been around for Pride Week, or talked to members of Wilde Stein or taken a glance at the MLK plaza – "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

If there is one thing that makes me angry more than anything, it is discrimination. I find it ignorant and small-minded to deny basic rights to anyone. Being heterosexual is natural, but so is being homosexual.

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but humility is the key to success. My advice for winning a competition – don't offend anyone. It didn't surprise me Miss North Carolina triumphed over Miss California for the crown.

*Rhiannon Sawtelle is features editor for The Maine Campus.*



Rhiannon Sawtelle