

## Excuse Me, Miss

By Dónal Thompson



Miss Who?

The Miss World Contest began in 1951. It has raised over £100m for children's charities. It is a successful franchise in over 140 countries.

But it's a lot of nonsense too, isn't it? They give a crown to the winner. It is a physical feudal system. Miss Pretty is the Queen and Miss Ugly is the peasant. It is the dream of a 1950s man . floating lip-stick women in ball gowns and swimsuits. It must be a real woman's nightmare.

Even the name, "Miss World", is offensive. Miss World? What world?

There are 1.3 billion poor people in the world. Guess what! 70% of them are women. There are 27 million refugees in the world. 80% of them are women. There are 1 billion illiterate adults in the world.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of them are women. Have a look at the photo of Miss World again. Does she seem to be representative of the misses in the world?

In 2002 the Miss World Organisation wanted to hold its finals in Nigeria; a country where a woman was going to be stoned to death for having a baby.

Let's read that last paragraph again.

How will the world's women get better education, health and civil rights, if we organise competitions that treat them as objects?

As an Irishman I am ashamed to see my country represented in such a way. Ever since the Book of Genesis and the male aetiological cult myth of Adam and Eve, women have been second class citizens.

In 1850 Sojourner Truth, the ex-slave and civil rights activist said, .If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back , and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them. "

It's 2004 and the Miss World Contest broadcasts the wrong message. It says we should put appearance before substance It encourages superficiality and portrays women as vacuous bimbos tottering on high-heels. It helps chavinst men to avoid engaging with women as equals.

It is, therefore, ultimately wrong.

In my opinion the Miss World Organisation should give an annual prize to a woman who has achieved something special in the fight against poverty, illiteracy and oppression.

Wouldn't that be beautiful?

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