

Tia-Alexi Roberts  
5/10/21  
Delegate  
Empowerment Academy Pageant

## *How Do You Use Pageantry for Your Own Personal Growth?*

Oftentimes the subject of pageantry will bring a negative connotation of it being superficial and lacking in substance when it comes to life experiences. The reality of it, is I have done pageants since I was 6 years old, which I am now 27 and can tell you that it is not the case at all. Infact, I believe it has lead me to an amazing path to success, given me opportunity to network with other people, and has transformed me into the young women that I am today. My name is Tia-Alexi Roberts, I am a biracial Native American and have been living the best of both worlds my entire life. Pageantry for me, has helped me develop in areas such as interpersonal/extra personal skills, leadership, community service, and professionally as well.

I have been asked countless times “Why do you do that?” “ What do you gain from being in Pageants?” These kinds of questions will lead to even bigger conversations than expected because one may think that it seems like such an irrelevant and mindless endeavor. It starts with looking within yourself and thinking “ What can I do to be a better person?” “ How can I utilize my talents to unite and better my community?” and “ How do I become successful at whatever I am trying to pursue?” To answer these questions, you need the interpersonal/ intrapersonal skills, to begin that endless journey of learning and evolving as a person. The truth is, is that there is never a final destination. I have lost pageants, and have been a title holder. I have won powwows and have not placed as a fancy shawl dancer and both require a great deal of growth, and cognitive and physical labor.

One of the main characteristics that most pageants focus on is confidence. This magical idea of confidence is not so magical, when you finally have it because once you've put the work in, you come to the realization that you deserve that confidence. When I say putting the work in, I mean networking, communicating, doing community service, speaking publicly, practicing, being prepared, making sacrifices, making sure things are being done correctly, budgeting, all done while taking care of yourself personally and financially. Another aspect of pageantry is getting out of your comfort zone and facing your fears. Typically, most people would want to avoid the spotlight and public speaking. For me, getting on stage to perform, dressing up, and being asked about my passions in an interview are the FUN parts of pageantry because prior to the pageant I spend the majority of my time working towards my goals and future.

In general, community service is very important because it is a way for the community and contestants to grow together. If you think about it, our world would be in a much better place if every human being did just a little bit of community service. Whether it's

Tia-Alexi Roberts

5/10/21

Delegate

Empowerment Academy Pageant

picking up trash on a nice Sunday afternoon, volunteering at the local food pantry, organizing events, donating that extra \$10 you found on the ground to a charity you are passionate about, or even supporting another pageant queen on her platform because she also represents a great cause, it would make a big difference in our communities. My Platform is Indigenous Arts and for me, I would like to create a non-profit organization that provides money for resources, so that Indigenous artists can sell their art to make income. Some resources, can be found outside, such as birch bark, sweet grass, lavender, etc. that can be used for baskets, botanicals, and even jewelry. Native American communities can benefit from this greatly because oftentimes, people refrain from dancing due to the lack of supply and resources. I believe that everyone deserves a chance to be able to dance because it is a form of healing and a huge part of Native American Culture.

As a title holder I would love the opportunity to be able to bring together our modern society and the Native American communities. My goal is to own an Indigenous dance and yoga studio and become a professional actress. When I was younger, my mother originally subjected me into pageantry because she wanted to see me on the big screen. I've always shown a love for the camera, and performing but for her, I think there were just a bit of dollar signs in her eyes. She liked the idea of fame, glamour, and spotlight and if not that, then to be a CEO or a doctor of some sort, but there is just so much more to life than all of that. I was told many times that Native American culture would not be acceptable in the eyes of society. I think that the more people know about our culture, the more that they would understand so that they can be not only supportive but be involved in our activities as well. We have so much to offer in our knowledge, the arts, and even philosophies of life that I believe society today could benefit from. Earlier in my life, I struggled to find my niche because I wanted to appeal to the people who were important to me, and I also wanted to finally be established financially because I was tired of not being able to afford the necessities in my everyday life. Now in life, I've realized that I can use pageantry as a tool to utilize my strengths because for me, success has no monetary value, and can be measured through impact, influence and fulfilling my purpose in life.