



Miss America Stands Strong

[Sophie Divilek, Grade 9]

Nina Davuluri bursts into tears of joy as she is announced as Miss America 2014. Nina, at the age of 24, is the first Indian American to ever win a Miss America title.

The Miss America Pageant is a long-standing competition that awards scholarships to young American women. The winner of the national pageant is awarded scholarships as well as the title of "Miss America" for one year, campaigning on a platform to support causes that help with issues such as poverty and depression. On September 15th, 2013, Nina Davuluri was crowned as Miss America at the pageant's 87th run.

This was not the first time that Nina has been involved in pageants. She was named Miss Michigan's Outstanding Teen 2006 and first runner-up at Miss America's Outstanding Teen 2007. She received scholarships from these recognitions that allowed her to attend the University of Michigan, and she only returned to the pageant world when she finished her undergraduate education. In 2013, she won Miss New York, the state-level of the pageant.

As soon as she was crowned, social media, especially Twitter, exploded with negative posts and tweets, many of them hateful and extremely racist, saying things like, "This is America, not India" and calling her culturally degrading names, such as Miss Seven Eleven and Miss Al-Qaeda. They even went as far as saying that Miss Kansas, Theresa Vail, was "more American" and therefore should have won.

Through all of this, Nina held her head high and handled the outburst with poise and positivity. "I have to rise above that. I always viewed myself as a true American." Davuluri is using the money she earned from winning the pageant to pay for medical school. She advocates for racial and cultural rights, and was recently named as a role model for young and old alike. She has also created a social media campaign, Circles of Unity, which focuses on multiculturalism and civil rights and discourse.

"I have always viewed Miss America as the girl next door," Nina says. "But the girl next door is evolving, as the diversity of America evolves. She's not who she was 10 years ago, and she's not going to be the same person come 10 years down the road."

Nina Davuluri has truly inspired all of us, with her poise, bravery, and beauty inside and out.



Miss America
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