

Barbara Kay: Beauty queen becomes target of the pit bully lobby

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There used to be a time when beauty contests were only about beauty. Fortunately that all changed, and beauty queens today hold and express confidently strong opinions on how to make the world a better place.

Indeed, the motto of the Miss World competition is “beauty with a purpose.” Canada’s Nazanin Afshin-Jam is a Canadian treasure in that respect, because she has used her 2003 Miss World Canada title effectively, and to great public approval, to further women’s rights under the misogynistic regime in Iran.

But another Canadian beauty queen, who also wants to use her title to contribute to the public good, is presently under attack. More than 2,300 people have signed a petition, demanding that Sahar Biniiaz be stripped of her title of Miss Universe Canada 2012.

What controversial and offensive opinion has Ms. Biniiaz expressed to receive such condemnation? Merely this: Ms. Biniiaz has called for Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) to ban or severely restrict the movement of pit bulls in the province of British Columbia. Like many advocates of BSL, Ms. Biniiaz arrived at her stand on pit bulls through lived experience. She was herself severely bitten in an unprovoked attack on her when she was 14 by her family’s pit bull.

Reason is on her side. Anyone who follows my Twitter account knows that I regularly post news reports of pit bull attacks in Canada. Lately British Columbia tops the list for nauseating stories. Just 10 days ago, four-year old Emma Cranford of White Rock, B.C. was at a family gathering when the pit bull of her uncle’s girlfriend suddenly lunged at her face. He took off part of her ear and tore a gash in her face that, a few inches lower, would have ripped out her jugular. The attack was completely unprovoked, as pit bull attacks on people and other animals typically are.

Like Ms. Biniiaz, Emma’s mother Elizabeth now realizes that pit bulls are not like other dogs. She says: “This was an unprovoked incident. I want parents to be aware. I don’t want this to happen again.” Those who know their nature use the shorthand of SRUV for pit bull attacks: Sudden, Random, Unprovoked, Violent.

Pit bull advocates are quick to voice their mantra that the problem is bad owners, not bad dogs. There are certainly many bad owners of pit bulls, just as there are bad owners of all other types of dogs. But bad ownership cannot explain the fact that pit bulls kill twice as many humans yearly as all other breeds of dogs combined.

When they attack, they are machines. In northwest Calgary, on September 5, it took a stun gun and three officers to restrain a pit bull that had escaped from a nearby backyard as it attacked a man and his dog. The pit bull was described as “unstoppable” and even a beating with a fence post “didn’t even faze him.”

Pit bulls – and pit bull types: “gripping” dogs of the same genetic strain — are a serious public health issue. They kill a North American every two to three weeks. They maul, maim or dismember at least one North American every day.

The petition against Ms. Biniiaz is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but the fruit of a well-oiled, extremely well-funded propaganda campaign by the pit bull advocacy movement (PBAM). The PBAM is wedded to the fiction that the pit bull, sadly victimized by a biased press, is a gentle, affectionate, child-loving dog. They are — until suddenly they aren’t. And nobody knows when or why they will strike with their rending, crocodile teeth and implacable to-the-death grip, except that the answer lies in their genes. The pit bull is a genetically manufactured ambulatory grenade and deserves every bit of condemnation it receives.

The PBAM is a powerful lobby group that has successfully coerced complicity in the propagation of pit bull myths from kennel clubs and humane societies, and shamefully misled gullible media. Ms. Biniiaz is the best thing to happen for public education about pit bulls in a long time, and I urge her and the Miss Universe organizers to turn a deaf ear to her detractors, and use her high public profile to grow a spine in the dog industry’s institutional spokespeople.

The PBAM is surely the oddest breed fan club in human history. All other groups exist to promote the proven virtues of their beloved breed. Only the PBAM exists to promote denial of their beloved breed's proven vices.

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