Crowning Achievement

September 1, 2007 By James Wortman

It seemed touch-and-go there at the 2007 Miss Universe finals, on May 28—as if any of the five finalists could walk off with the tiara—until Miss Japan, Riyo Mori, was told: “Give one lesson you learned as a child that you would like to pass on to others.” Through an interpreter—and with the élan she hopes to bring to her Miss Universe role as global AIDS crusader—she answered that growing up as a dancer taught her to be comfortable around people, have discipline and “remain positive.” For the *HIV*-positive, she is a beacon: In 1998, the annual platform for every Miss Universe became fighting AIDS around the world. The 20-year-old Mori told *POZ*, “As the new Miss Universe, I am honored to be a spokeswoman for HIV and AIDS awareness. I am not only privileged to be continuing the work and message that others before me have championed, but also excited to start telling my own country, Japan, about the effects of this disease.” As of 2006, there were a comparatively few 13,778 people living with HIV/AIDS in the country—which has a population of 127 million—among adults aged 15 to 49.

Mori would do well to emulate her predecessor, Puerto Rico’s Zuleyka Rivera, who was named International Ambassador for the Latino Commission on AIDS. She fought HIV/AIDS stigma by getting tested publicly on Latino AIDS Awareness Day and traveled the world for prevention. Many winners remain activists long after surrendering their crowns. Congrats, then, to Mori, born in a small town at the base of Mount Fuji, as she joins the pageant’s climb toward world AIDS awareness

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/miss-universe-hiv-12760-1553