

# Christians Defend Miss California

✖ **April 23, 2009** – Miss California Carrie Prejean will appear tonight at the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Dove Awards in Nashville, Tenn., the latest show of support she has received from conservative Christian groups since her opposition to gay marriage may have cost her the Miss USA crown Sunday.

During the telecast on NBC Sunday, pageant judge Perez Hilton, an openly gay gossip blogger, asked Prejean whether she believed every state should follow Vermont in legalizing gay marriage.

(Photo credit: Miss California Pageant)

“We live in a land that you can choose same-sex marriage or opposite marriage,” she said. “And you know what, in my country, in my family, I think that, I believe that a marriage should be between a man and a woman. No offense to anybody out there, but that’s how I was raised.”

Prejean, a 21-year-old San Diego Christian College student, said the answer likely cost her the crown. She was named first runner-up to Miss North Carolina Kristen Dalton.

“It did cost me my crown,” she told Miss USA host Billy Bush on his radio talk show Monday. “It is a very touchy subject and [Hilton] is a homosexual, and I see where he was coming from and I see the audience would’ve wanted me to be more politically correct. But I was raised in a way that you can never compromise your beliefs and your opinions for anything.”

Prejean told Fox News she believes the controversy happened for a reason. “By having to answer that question in front of a

national audience, God was testing my character and faith," she said. "I'm glad I stayed true to myself."

During interviews on the *Today Show* Tuesday, pageant officials said Prejean's opposition to gay marriage likely affected her scores. Miss USA Judge Claudia Jordan admitted that a few of the judges were "very against her, they were bothered by her answer."

Donald Trump, who co-owns the Miss Universe Organization, which produces the Miss USA pageant, said Prejean's response "probably did cost her the crown."

Randy Thomasson, president of Save California, which lobbied in support of Proposition 8, said Prejean was "unfairly discriminated against" and "viciously punished just because she knows and believes that marriage is reserved for a man and a woman."

Thomasson called Hilton "the bad guy." In an online blog posted after the pageant, Hilton called Prejean a "dumb b\*\*\*h" and said a person with "half a brain" would have said the decision should be left up to the states.

"She could have said something along those lines, but she didn't," Hilton said. "She gave an awful, awful answer, which alienated so many people. And Miss California, Miss USA, she doesn't alienate, she unites, she inspires."

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins criticized pageant officials for not condemning Hilton's comments and called on them to apologize.

"The stunning silence from groups like . and the Human Rights Campaign leads me to question if these organizations regard Mr. Hilton, or at least his statements, as representative of their philosophy," Perkins said. "Most shameful, though, is that the Miss USA organization has remained mute in defending

Miss California and condemning this deplorable hate speech by one of its own judges.”

Perkins also questioned whether the controversy was created intentionally to boost ratings. He said Prejean’s Christian faith was well-known and that she quoted Philippians 4:13 in her official bio. Baptist Press reported that she is a member of Shadow Mountain Community Church, where popular minister David Jeremiah is pastor.

“It’s no secret that the Miss USA pageant’s ratings and prestige have plummeted significantly over the past several years,” Perkins said. “Carrie Prejean has been victimized by this flagging production in a vain attempt to generate interest through controversy rather than substance.”

Prejean has been widely criticized by pageant officials and gay Lewis, who runs the Miss California competition, told FOX News he was hurt by Prejean’s comments.

“As co-director of the Miss California USA, I am personally saddened and hurt that Miss California believes marriage rights belong only to a man and a woman,” Lewis said in a statement. “I believe all religions should be able to ordain what unions they see fit. I do not believe our government should be able to discriminate against anyone and religious beliefs have no politics in the Miss California family.”

Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California, told the Associated Press (AP) that Prejean’s response did not represent the views of most Californians in her generation. “It is unfortunate that Miss California, who we note did not win, is so out of touch with the overwhelming majority of people her age that she wants to deny loving, committed couples the rights and dignity that come only with marriage,”

But Ron Prentice, chairman of Coalition, said Prejean’s view is in step with the 52 percent of Californians who voted to overturn the state’s gay marriage law in November. “The

majority of California's voters-more than 7 million people-voted to protect traditional marriage," Prentice told the AP, "and we congratulate Miss California for her conviction to speak her beliefs."

The Dove Awards will be held at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville and will be broadcast live on the Gospel Music Channel.