

**Lamarra Haynes
Franklin High School**

Calypso music fills the air and the people of Jamaica fill the streets. Dancing bodies clothed in vibrant colors move to the island rhythms of calypso. Carnival is a celebration that takes place annually in Jamaica. During Carnival, Jamaica is renewed. Awakened from her slumber, the island throbs with life.

Three thousand miles away from the calypso filled streets of Jamaica, the Rose City celebrates a carnival of her own. The Rose Festival. The Portland winter washes away and the days become longer. The absentee sun begins to pay more frequent visits the Portland skies. Portlanders begin to venture out from their homes. The waterfront is filled with life again.

Nine years ago, my family and I moved from Kingston, Jamaica to Portland, Oregon. While I was too young to experience Carnival; I have had the privilege of experiencing the Rose Festival

I clearly remember my first Rose Festival experience. It was a warm day in May. The rays of the afternoon sun licked my skin and I brimmed with **excitement**. My parents allowed me to go the waterfront with my friend and her mother. We sat on the sidewalk, with front row seats to the parade. A marching band clambered by. Their sweet melodies filled the air. Heads swayed to the beats and children danced uncontrollably to the syncopated rhythms of jazz. I sat captivated. Portland came alive before my eyes.

The Rose Festival. The carnival of roses unites all of Portland. Portlanders travel from all five corners of the city to pay homage to its unique culture. A culture that is beautiful and rare like a rose. A culture that accepts. A culture that shares itself with those who have never experienced it before, the way my friend and her mother shared it with me.

Vibrant and filled with life, Portland itself is a carnival. No two parts of the city the same. Each Portland neighborhood houses its own unique monument. In the North there is Overlook Park; in Southeast, Mt. Tabor. Portland's excellent high schools are also a part of Portland's carnival.

For nine years I have lived inside the Portland Rose. During this time I have experienced one of the most marvelous carnivals. The Rose Festival, the celebration that embodies the true accepting culture of Portland. For the last four years, Franklin's Petal of the Portland Rose has nourished me. Giving me the education I need for the next steps in my life. Thank you.