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When I think of what “play happy” means, I think of sisterhood. A sister is a best friend, the person you have dance parties in your room with, your future maid of honor. With my own sister, I remember playing with Lincoln Log horses in gravel piles, staying outside for hours and not wanting to do anything but be there together. Playing happy also meant getting matching rain-boots—my older sister reluctant because she hated being copied and me, totally happy because I wanted nothing more than to be like my big sister.

Playing happy means going to an all girls academy and always finding new ways to work together. I am grateful to have recently lead and performed an Alvin Ailey choreographed dance for our MLK assembly. The performance was only a portion of an incredibly moving and powerful assembly produced by our Black Student Union and other affinity clubs. Dancing with these girls and working with such inspiring young women of all different backgrounds, and having such a profound impact on our community reminded me that sisterhood is the coming together across differences and honoring each other. Sisterhood is unity.

Playing happy doesn't always begin and end with a smile though, it can also be bittersweet. To me, that means playing with the little girl at the Ronald McDonald House—she’s a three-year-old cancer patient and I’ve never seen a wider smile with pinker cheeks and brighter eyes. That girl treated me like I was her big sister, and for a couple hours, I was honored to give her the support in sisterhood that helps you handle everything difficult in life.

Playing happy meant my elementary school participating in the Rose Festival every year by having their official Rose Competition. I remember sitting in the Laurelhurst school gym assembly and watching fourteen young women—the Rose Festival Court—sing “What a Wonderful World” with the entire school. I remember saying to my mom: “Mom, I want to be a Rose Princess,” because at a young age, I had perceived that there was something beyond friendship in that group of women. I didn’t put the word to it then, but it was sisterhood.

To play happy means to be a part of this program that brings together young women from differing life experiences and dreams as a model of friendship, family, and how we want to be as community members. Playing happy is that feeling of solidarity when the Rose Princesses stand as leaders who every year, inspire our region to celebrate unity.