

Michelle Le – David Douglas

We wouldn't be Portland without these three words: inspiring, tradition, evolving.

We are known as the city of roses. Just like a rose, we as a city flourish and bloom larger than life every single day. Portland, filled with its weirdness, is truly an amazing place to be, and I couldn't be any prouder to call it my forever home. We Portlanders love a good time, which is why hundreds of us attend some of our favorite annual festivals such as the Starlight parade, the Grand Floral parade, and my personal favorite, the City Fair. It has been said that, "the greatness of a culture can be found in its festivals." our festivals not only highlight how great we are, but set a positive example for our country to follow. At these festivals, you can see us laughing until our stomachs hurt with smiles so big that they can be seen from space. You can see us genuinely enjoying the company of the people we love and the joy of meeting someone new visible on our faces. You can see our eyes widen as we take in the vivid colors and artistry of our surroundings. The Rose Festival does amazing things for our growing community; the most beautiful thing it does is push our differences aside to bring our melting pot of a community together.

As much as we are one, there are many traditions that each and every one of us holds that makes us unique. As an Asian-American with two immigrant parents, I can say that my family never felt as though they fit in. With little family around, it was hard to call Portland home and even harder when traditions were slowly abandoned.. As much as they loved their new lives, they missed home. One thing the Rose Festival has given my family is the opportunity to create new traditions while holding onto our roots. In my culture, having big dinners with friends and family is a celebration in and of itself. It is not only a time to catch up, but a time to embrace our culture with delicious foods. Before the City Fair, my family typically goes to one of our favorite Chinese restaurants and then heads down to the waterfront where the fun begins. No matter how busy we are during that time or how stressful life seems, it has been my family's way of coming together and remembering life is about having fun and enjoying the little moments as well as embracing new traditions.

With that being said, the once small community known as the Rose Festival committee has evolved into a community that includes you, me, and our friends and families. The Rose Festival not only invites us to days of fun and laughter, but more importantly reminds us of a family we have created in our very own city. We are stronger united than we are divided, and with all that is happening around the world, we Portlanders need to know that we have each other. I have gone from being a shy, starry-eyed girl without any traditional ties to Portland to becoming an independent young woman running to represent David Douglas as a Rose Festival princess because of my love for the community and my city. As much as the city has evolved, you can see first hand that I am a product by how the rose festival inspires me to be the best version of myself.

