

Brenda Ortegon Briceño – Parkrose

Inspiring, tradition, and evolving. How do these three words describe the Rose Festival?

Inspiring. When I first saw the Rose Festival Court video, it brought a smile to my face and for a split second, I imagined what it would be like to be a Rose Festival princess. A lot of opportunities are torn away from me because I'm an immigrant and that's why the Rose Festival is so important to me. It represents hope. Hope that maybe there is a chance of becoming a princess. Maybe there is a chance of breaking away from routine and getting to know the place where I live. Maybe there is a chance to represent the strength that I know the students at Parkrose High School have. Maybe there is a chance of meeting new people and making new friends. The Rose Festival is a chance for me to escape my ordinary life, even if it's just on some days.

Tradition. I must say, I am not a big fan of traditions. I think that as we move forward, times change, and what may have been considered "normal" back then is no longer normal. There are sexist traditions and racist traditions, and all sorts of other traditions that are toxic and that hurt other people. However, there are good traditions like the Rose Festival. For years, the Rose Festival has been changing the lives of many women and bringing joy to thousands of people. The Rose Festival makes Portland special, it brings us closer and celebrates all our differences and cultures. It is an amazing opportunity to be a part of and that is why I'm here because even though I am nervous and my heart is beating really fast, I want to be a part of this tradition. It is an amazing tradition, one that I hope continues on forever.

Evolving. I love evolution. Evolution is quite literally essential to life. As organisms adapt and change, so does society. I have recognized the evolution of the Rose Festival as beauty standards have shifted and things like academics, community service, and character have become more valued in the process. As somebody who worries about school and her family all of the time, I don't get to go out often and really enjoy the city where I live. There are so many places and so many events that I have never experienced. I see the Rose Festival as an opportunity to establish a deeper connection with the entire Portland community. Even if I do not become a princess, I can truly say that I have evolved because I have gone out of my comfort zone and given this opportunity my best shot. It would be an honor to represent Parkrose in the Rose Festival. Thank you.