

Hello, I am Madi Cooper a senior at Central Catholic. I am running for the Rose Festival Court because I would love to show young black and brown girls that they too can be princesses. During this pandemic and the recent social justice movements it has been incredibly challenging for so many families and communities around the world. Hope has been lost in other places, but I do believe Portland never lost its hope; that it has just gained hope because of the people in the community. Portland has fought for racial injustice and has fought for people of different skin tones, different religions, and different sexualities. I feel like Portland has fought for their people so much recently, and it shows. I've grown up outside of Portland in Gresham, in a predominantly White area with very little diversity and very little acceptance. Going out to Portland was very hard because I was never around people that accepted my skin tone for being good and not dangerous and the stereotypes that come along with it so in a sense it was a culture shock. I hated it because I hated myself. I hated my skin tone, because that's what I was taught growing up; I was taught that I was different. I was different from something that I couldn't change. My Dad would always tell me there are two things in life that you can't change; being Black and dying. And my dad was a proud Black man. I didn't know why honestly, I didn't know how he could be so proud in an area that told him that he was never going to be good enough.

Going out to Portland I felt the love and acceptance from the community, however, I was still learning to accept myself. During the social justice movements these past few months and years, I have dealt with anxiety and depression. I struggle with mental health issues. A few months ago, I tried to take my own life. That was life-changing. It truly was. But I felt my Portland community around me, I felt my family, I felt my friends around me because they saw me for me. That is when I began to accept and love myself and realize that Portland is my actual home. They didn't see me for someone selfish. They saw me as someone that was struggling and someone that was trying to find who they were again. And it's been hard but I'm here to tell you guys and to represent you as a person that has struggled, and still is struggling. I am a person that is open to all your struggles and open to whatever sexuality, religion, skin color, anything. I am open to you. And I am hoping that you let me represent all of you. I want to grow with the community and I want to be your Rose Festival Princess. I am proud to be a Portlander and love all of it. Portland gave me hope in humanity. Thank you.