

Good the pasadena tournament of roses parade and its cultural significance essay ...

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



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Cultural practices differentiate one society from another. Since culture is “the set of learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population” (Ember et al. 217), a cultural tradition would speak volumes about that society. A festival, in particular, is a rich representation of particular culture. The Annual Tournament of Roses Parade at Pasadena, California is an appropriate example of such festival. This event has just turned 125 years old and it reflects the beliefs, attitudes and values of the residents, not only in Pasadena, but also in the State of California.

Early Beginnings

The City of Pasadena was incorporated in 1886 (The City of Pasadena, 2014). Four years later, on January 1, 1890, the Tournament of Roses began. It was a creation of the Valley Hunt Club. The club was a group of the elite in Pasadena, California. They invited their friends from the East Coast to enjoy watching games under the warmth of the California sun. According to the

Tournament of Roses website, Professor Charles F. Holder, one of the members of the club, expressed the rationale behind this tradition. He said: Here our flowers are blooming and our orange are about to bear. Let's hold a festival to tell the world about our paradise.

(Pasadena Tournament of Roses, 2014)

The tournament included various games such as jousting, polo, and chariot races. The Rose Parade was a precursor to the games. The main element of the parade was decorating the entries and floats with fresh flowers.

California is known for its blooming flowers even during the winter, thus this event became a way to promote the beauty and agricultural products of the place.

Pasadena is one of California's oldest cities. The name Pasadena means "valley" in the Indian language Chippewa and it is located northeast of the City of Los Angeles (The City of Pasadena, 2014). Pasadena began with 391 residents in 1880, and more than a century later, in 2012, its population reached 138, 457 (city-data. com). Its residents come from various ethnic communities including Latinos, African-Americans, Asian, and American Indians. Half of the entire population is White.

In the early 20th century, Pasadena was considered home to millionaires, educators, scientists and artists. One of its streets, Orange Grove Avenue, was referred to as the " Millionaires' Row," and in 1920, the city was regarded as the " wealthiest city per capita in the nation" (Lund, 1999, p. 47). One of its residents in 1908 claimed that Pasadena was " made up of the cream of the culture, education and refinement of Eastern cities" (p. 47). Most of the earlier inhabitants of Pasadena come from the East Coast's City

of Boston, and since the climate of Pasadena ranges from 49F-75F, the wealthy considered it a favorite winter destination.

2014 Tournament of Roses Parade

On the 1st of January, 2014, New Year's Day, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses began its year-long celebration. This year was different than the previous ones because 2014 is the 125th anniversary of the Tournament. The theme of this year's parade was Dreams Come True. There were 48 creatively decorated floats, representing a diverse set of organizations. The marching bands who participated were very impressive, including the United States Marine Corps West Coast Composite Band. There were 20 marching bands, and a total of 16 equestrian in the parade. Each of the floats in this year's parade was decorated with flowers and other natural materials. Usually, it takes a whole year to prepare for the floats. When an organization gets approval from the committee that it is officially a part of the next year's parade, then it begins the conceptualization and design of its float according to the year's theme. The final decorations with flowers takes place a week before the parade, and this needs the assistance of many volunteers (Benfield, 2013).

Cultural Representations of the Parade

The Tournament of Roses Parade represents Pasadena. The parade is almost as old as the city's incorporation. Pasadena became a city in 1886 and the Rose Parade had its first run just four (4) years later. The richness of the city, both in its natural resources and human resources, are illustrated by the Parade's colorful floats, impressive marching bands, and notable

participants.

The parade strengthens kinship and family ties. Close to a million people visit Pasadena to watch the parade, and millions more watch it live on TV worldwide. For television viewers, this annual event has become a part of their own New Years tradition; watching the parade together with other members of their families, and exchanging comments about the event in a relaxed, familiar manner. For those who are actually in Pasadena during the parade, they experience a deeper involvement. Children hoisted above their fathers' shoulders are a common sight. Family members or friends go through the feelings of amazement, awe, and admiration together as they witness the spectacle before their eyes. Even the post-parade exhibit, when the floats are lined up in the street, visitors take pictures of their families in front of these creations. The pictorials contribute to the memories that families build to strengthen their ties with each other. The parade becomes a bonding experience that goes into the family history. For many grown-ups, they come back to watch the parade because it represents a positive experience shared with a family member when they were children. In this manner, the parade has become a cultural symbol, one that would mark people as part of this society. For those from Southern California, the parade is not just a historic event. It is something to look forward to, even a form of rite of passage. People of all ages, even young adults, come to the parade route days or nights before the actual parade. There would be partying and fun among them. Others become involved with the decorating process. As mentioned above, these floats are decorated with only natural materials, such as flowers, seeds, and marks. Teenagers can participate in the

decoration process, and individuals who have done so at a young age said it gave them a sense of pride and accomplishment. Those who participated in the 1960s and 1970s shared that they worked hard, and that they had done so together with other volunteers or with their church members (Neal, 2013).

The parade reflects changes in social hierarchies. The parade these years is said to accommodate more diversity. According to radio commentators from NPR (Neal, 2013), the Rose Parade has come a long way from the way it was in the 1950s and the 60s. History would show the societal tensions in American societies during the mid-20th century. The issues of social stratification, racism, and prejudices were at its height back then. At present, the themes are more child-friendly than before and not as politicized too. Women's participation is evident in the Rose Parade, from its committee leadership to the Grand Marshalls.

The parade provides a venue to show changing views in marriage. Same-sex marriage is controversial in California. Although it is now legal for gays to be married in the state, there are still members of the population who oppose such policy. One of the floats in the parade shows gay partners who would be married towards the end of the parade. In the wedding cake float of AIDS Healthcare Foundation, there were two men and a reverend. In the LA Times, it was reported that

Spectators clapped their hands as grooms Danny Leclair, 45, and Aubrey Loots, 42, faced each other and recited their vows before the Rev. Alfreda "Freda" Lanoix on the float sponsored by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation. White doves were released into the bright blue sky afterward.

(Saillant & Karlamangla, 2014, para 3)

The absence of protests among the audience of the float during the parade, and their warm greetings to the couple are indications that society has accepted the changing views in marriage. Through this float, members of California society have shown that there is a growing acceptance of this kind of marriage. Unlike before, when marriage is limited to only members of the opposite sex, the Pasadena and California society has begun to accept marriage between persons of the same sex.

Analysis of Data

The Rose Parade is a good representation of the American culture. The photographs and video materials of the recent 2014 Tournament of Roses Parade illustrate this writer's claims about the parade representing the American culture, particularly that of the State of California. At least three of the 50 pictures in the Los Angeles Times Framework pages show children with their parents watching the parade together. These pictures tell us that in this particular culture, family time is valued. The parade is one of the ways that a family can bond with each other. In the majority of these 50 pictures, the crowd's behavior is also captured. They would hold up their mobile phones to get a picture of the floats. Such action indicates that this culture appreciates the beauty and the technology. There is also an emphasis on the visual effect of the floats which presents the good stuff. One of the pictures captures an officer leading a protester away. There are also officers accompanying the Seaworld float. These scenes represent the American

culture's emphasis on the safety and security of the people, discipline, and upholding law and order.

Conclusions

The Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade is an annual event in California that represents the culture of the city and its peoples. The gallery of the pictures in this year's parade as well as video materials indicate characteristics of the American culture. A look at its historical timeline of 125 years has shown that the Rose parade is more than just another tourist attraction. It reflects Pasadena. The parade began just four years after the city of less than 400 people was incorporated. Then, in the early 20th century the city became a favorite winter vacation site for the wealthy. It was also regarded as the wealthiest city of the nation. The parade has at least three cultural representations. First, it strengthens kinship and family ties. Grown-ups attest to the bond formed among families and friends who personally view the parade. Second, the parade reflects changes in social hierarchies. In the 1950s and 60s, these events were also highly politicized. The changes that took place include women's leadership in the committee and participation in all other aspects. Third, the parade is also a venue to present controversial issues, such as changing views in marriage. One of its floats hosted a same-sex marriage ceremony, and spectators of the parade did not protest over the inclusion of the float.

The Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade is an illustration of the reach and influence of culture. It is illustrated in the beliefs and practices of society, in this case, the Pasadena society. When one becomes a part of this event,

even as a child, there is a feeling of belonging to the Pasadena society. This experience, becomes meaningful to the visitor, and motivates him/her to come back at another time, bring the family, and share such experience with the other people.

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