

U.S.

Openly Gay Teen Voted Prom Queen at LA High School

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LOS ANGELES — An openly gay teen was voted prom queen at Los Angeles' Fairfax High School in a campaign that began as a stunt but ended up spurring discussion on the campus about gender roles and teen popularity. Sergio Garcia, 18, was crowned queen Saturday night at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel.

"I feel invincible," Garcia said in his tiara and charcoal-gray tuxedo.

A few days earlier, he gave a speech that won over some cynics and led to an ovation and his unlikely victory.

"At one time, prom may have been a big popularity contest where the best-looking guy or girl were crowned king and queen. Things have changed and it's no longer just about who has the most friends or who wears the coolest clothes," Garcia told a gymnasium full of seniors. "I'm not your typical prom queen candidate. There's more to me than meets the eye."

Garcia assured the crowd he wouldn't wear a dress on prom night.

"I will be wearing a suit," he said. "But don't be fooled, deep down I am a queen."

The school, which sits at the end of the rows of chic shops on Melrose Avenue and was once attended by members of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, has long been a haven for students who would be considered outcasts at many schools.

Garcia said he saw fliers advertising the prom and the election, and they didn't specify that the queen must be a girl. He thought the role would suit him better than prom king.

"I don't wish to be a girl," he told the Los Angeles Times. "I just wish to be myself."

Senior class President Vanessa Lo said she and many other students initially were against the idea, but Garcia's speech persuaded them that he wasn't just an attention-seeking clown.

"It just goes to show how open-minded our class is," Lo said.

Seventeen-year-old Unique Payne called the speech "great" and said she voted for Garcia "because I support the gay community."

Other students weren't as happy, and suggested many voted for Garcia just to see the spectacle of two boys dancing together at the prom.

"I'm not really happy about that," said 17-year-old Juan Espinoza. "He should've run for prom king."

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