

INDEPTH

THE EDUCATION OF SRA. MOLINA

Spanish teacher Leticia Molina is known at Branham for advocating for her students and encouraging them to do their best in every way possible. However, her journey to receiving an education and becoming a teacher was not easy.

Students who have been in Molina's class may have heard her story before: That she defied her parents for a chance at higher education, literally running away from them for this opportunity. Molina's story, in her own words, is incredible, weaving the emotional and physical conflict she feels with her parents and their traditions and Molina's goals for her own future. Below is the edited interview.

— Annalise Freimarck
Illustrations by Catherine Monroy

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A WOMAN AND A YOUNGEST CHILD

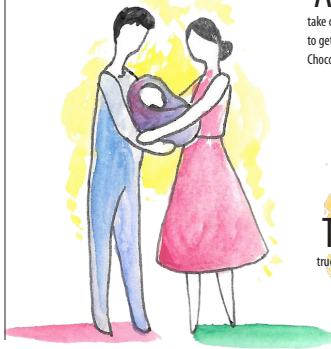
Note: Interview condensed and edited



I come from a very traditional family with very set gender roles, where women are supposed to get married and have kids and take care of the family. Men are supposed to provide. If you are going to leave your home, it's because you're getting married. That is the only reason why you should leave your home.



I'm the youngest of eight and my older sisters, that's exactly what they did: They graduated high school, and a year later they both married. They started families because that's what was expected of them. But being the youngest, I got to see my brothers go to college. Four of my brothers went to college.



As the youngest child, my dad would always tell me "It's your job, it's the youngest's job to take care of the parents," so I wasn't even supposed to get married, actually. Exactly like "Like Water For Chocolate!"

"LIKE WATER FOR CHOCOLATE" SYNOPSIS

The youngest daughter in her family, the beautiful Tita is forbidden to marry her true love, since tradition dictates that Tita must care for her mother.

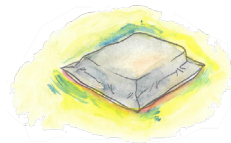
ENCOURAGEMENT, AND APPLYING TO COLLEGE

I was always surrounded by good teachers, who saw in me potential. They all encouraged me to go to college. They would ask me, "What are you gonna study?" No one had ever asked me that before because that was not my expectation. There were programs in my high school that put me on the route to have all my college prerequisites. Not that I went out and looked for them, somehow someone showed me in that direction and opened up this whole new world that I never imagined.

I never told my parents that I was applying to college. So I stole their information, and I filled out my application, and I signed the application. They didn't know I had applied.



When the packages started coming in, my mom knew. She knew from experience. She knew that a big package meant that you had been accepted. The first one to come in was from Santa Barbara, and when I came home she was crying, and I'm like, "What's wrong mom?" and she's like "You're gonna go away." And then, "Don't tell your Dad."



When UC Berkeley came in, I was home alone. There was no one there. I went and I picked up the mail and I saw it, and I just remember dancing in my living room, so happy. I didn't even open it, but I knew because back then a big package meant that you were accepted and a small letter means that you weren't accepted. I was so happy. I was crying. I knew I was going to go to UC Berkeley.

BREAKING FROM TRADITION



I graduated on Thursday, and I called my brother and I said, "You need to come pick me up because I am done with high school. He told me to wait outside on the street corner, because we lived in a cul de sac. "Wait outside 'cause there's no way I'm going to the house to pick you up" because then they were gonna blame him for taking me away.



I had never gone anywhere and I had never traveled, so I didn't even have a suitcase. I just looked around and found my stuff and I put it in grocery bags.



My mom walked by and she said, "What are you doing?" I said "Mom, I'm leaving," and then she starts crying. I was feeling all these mixed emotions: My excitement that I was about to go away, knowing that I had broken tradition gonna go live on my own.

I remember telling her, you raised me, so "You know what kind of person I am, you should trust that you did a good job."



AND I LITERALLY JUST RAN

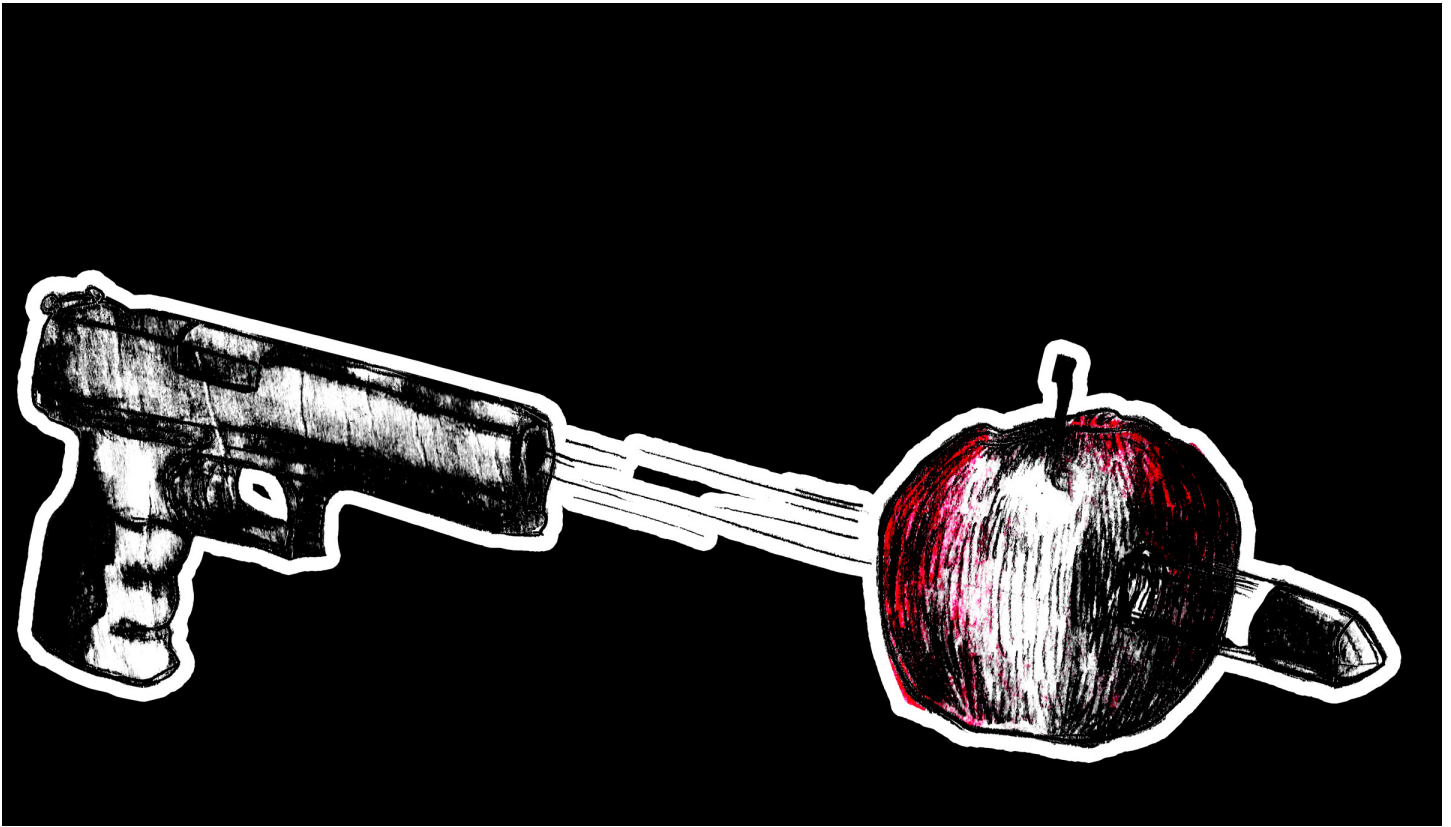


My dad told me that if I left, I was no longer his daughter and so I was disowned. I didn't want to cause conflict by going home, so I think for the first full year I didn't go home.

I ran away to college. I only went to college because I saw what it did for my brothers. I saw what my sisters not going to college did, and I just knew I wanted something better. I grew up poor so I remember a lot of times people making fun of my clothes and my shoes. I just wanted to buy what the other kids had so they wouldn't make fun of me. That was like my motivation to go to college. I never knew what I wanted to do, I never knew what I wanted to study. And in the end I did Spanish.

"The Education of Sra. Molina" June 2018

The idea for this page came about when News Editor Annalise Freimarck interviewed Spanish teacher Leticia Molina about her life. Her stories about growing up poor with migrant parents were so vivid that we felt it was impossible to tell without visuals. We realized that a graphic novel style approach would fit the story best. Annalise and I read through her interview and highlighted the most important parts. The colors, influenced by Mexican culture, represented her mood, with yellow being happy, and mixed colors representing her mixed, complicated emotions.



"Branham, Under the Gun," April 2018

A visual take on arming teachers with guns. The bullet of the gun pierces through the symbol of the connection between student and teacher.



"All choices valid when choosing career paths," June 2018

Digital artwork of the progress from a student to a graduate. All the struggles, tasks, and achievements of the student have helped form the graduate. The colors are dim and clustered to represent a sense of stress and the unknown of self-identity, while the colors of the graduate can represent freedom and new knowledge of themselves.



Catherine Monroy, Cassidy Chang/Bear Witness

From October to January, long live Xmas

MAHTA DELSHAD
Copy Editor

Holiday shopping: it begins as early as the summertime for some and as late as mid-December for others. It all depends on the resources and motivation of the shopper.

Aside from summertime, which only has Independence Day, most of the calendar is packed with festivities. In October, there is Halloween, then November's Thanksgiving and December's Christmas and Hanukkah.

The season carries expectations of family reunions and fun decorations; one who celebrates these holidays has to brace themselves for the transition from spooky decorations to colorful light. Stores and shops take note of the holiday seasons' atmosphere and prepare accordingly.

To give customers the chance to shop early, stores begin selling products and goods related to the upcoming holidays extremely early. Many dislike the heaps of holiday stock months before what they deem appropriate, but I think it's not only

fun to get into the spirit early, it's also useful and time-saving.

According to Wikipedia, a term called "Christmas creep" defines "a merchandising phenomenon in which merchants and retailers introduce Christmas-themed merchandise or decorations before the traditional start of the holiday shopping season, which is on the day after Thanksgiving." Bringing in merchandise before the holiday season even begins is a way for stores to allow their customers to start their holiday shopping early and save both money and time. Not only that, but it provides the participating stores some extra green.

The holiday creep has proven effective: A study by the National Retail Federation has depicted that about 40 percent of people begin holiday shopping before Halloween and are done before December, lowering the stress leading up to the holidays and further proving the popularity and usefulness of early holiday goods in stores.

But the holiday spirit doesn't just begin

early; it also lasts a while, and subsides typically through late January.

Around 80 percent of students at Branham celebrate Christmas, according to a survey, and more than 90 percent of those keep their tree up through the first month of the new year. More than 80 percent of students at Branham also stay in the Christmas spirit by wearing holiday sweaters and not getting rid of their decorations after the holidays terminate.

"The tree doesn't stay up for long, but I always eat Christmas cookies for weeks after Christmas because there's so many leftovers," said junior **Sabrina Jones**.

For people whose favorite holidays include those of December's, the long-lasting holiday spirit proves to be fun in keeping the holiday more than a one-day event.

There are people, however, who dislike the habits of beginning the holidays too early and ending them way too late; 20 percent of students stop doing holiday-oriented activities right after it's over. Others simply stay "Christmassy" until the arrival of the new year.

Reason for the season isn't about religion

SHLOK GORE
Staff Writer

The holidays are a time for good spirit and spending time with loved ones. Christmas, Kwanzaa, Diwali and Hanukkah are celebrations that take part in the holiday season, which is traditionally during the months of November and December.

Every year as this season rolls around, a popular debate arises. The common phrase, "Merry Christmas!" has been accused for having a Christian meaning for quite some time. While Christmas started as a Christian holiday, it has long assimilated into the American culture. Even though this may seem like a trivial issue, a slew of altercations have surfaced. For example, a few years ago, one of the Cambrian School District ele-

mentary schools, Sartorette, had to cancel its annual visit to Santa because of a complaint that the school was reinforcing Christian beliefs by taking the kindergartners to a local Kris Kringle.

This seasonal argument can be dubbed the "War on Christmas," and it is not new. As early as the 1920s Christmas-related sayings and memorabilia have been protested against. Most of the complaints come because of the misguided notion that commonplace Christmas has to mean, and only mean, the birth of Jesus Christ. That is simply not true, because it has moved on to symbolize togetherness and that wonderful holiday feeling.

There is an animosity towards "Merry Christmas!" even though the phrase is used

to convey well wishes during a season that society, not a certain religious group, celebrates.

"I really don't think there is a religious connotation attached to 'Merry Christmas,'" sophomore **Jairo Montes** said.

On the road to becoming president, Donald Trump said, "I'm a good Christian. If I become president, we're gonna be saying 'Merry Christmas' at every store." Trump's claims of a war on Christmas may be erroneous; past presidents have used that phrase often around this time.

So when you're saying "Merry Christmas," whether you actually believe in the birth of Jesus or not, know that millions of Americans celebrate Christmas, and not all of them are Christian.

"Christmas card," December 2017

This is originally a 3D Holiday card. I've made pop-up cards since I was young so I wanted to use that skill to make the art look more handmade. This was used as a visual for two separate articles on a similar subject.



"Week of games up in smoke," November 2017

The NorCal fires were two hours' drive away, but affected a lot of sporting/outdoor events in the Bay Area. The drawing is a mix of Photoshop and colored pencil, and represented the various sports that had to adjust to the unsafe levels of smog that week.