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Ami Benavidez

Xavier University of Louisiana, pathways@xula.edu

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Ami Benavidez

New Town, New School

A time when I had my perspective changed was when I was enrolled to attend a Catholic high school in my hometown. I knew that I would not like the school, before I even gave it a chance. When I was five, my mom and I moved from the city of Oakland, California, to a small town called American Canyon, in Napa County, California. Before the move, my middle school had been in the heart of Berkeley, which many people know as the hippie capitol of the U.S. But Berkeley is filled with many different kinds of people, of various ethnicities, and lots of different types of food to match. I had gotten used to this lifestyle, so as you can imagine, I was very upset that I had to leave my city for an unknown town.

My mom enrolled me at a Catholic high school in Napa County named Justin-Siena. When she handed me the pamphlet, all I saw was a group of kids that lacked diversity. They all looked like typical high-school jocks and stuck-up rich kids. Despite my reluctance, I decided to give this high school a try, since it was near my house. A couple of days before school started, my mom informed me that the school had a dress code. For the girls, skirts had to be three inches below the knee, and no see-through shirts. The boys had to come to school shaven, and they had to cut their hair, so it didn't go past their ears. Students were not allowed to wear sweatpants, basketball shorts, or yoga pants, plus we all had to wear a clean, collared shirt. When I read this, I felt that I was going to lose my individuality, and that I would not have any fun in high school.

I remember hating the school during my freshman year. I was in a school miles away from the place I was used to, and in a small town where rumors spread fast. I spent the next three years reminiscing about my old life, and how much fun I had. It wasn't until senior year that I realized I was connected with my high school. During that last year, I became glad that my mom

had enrolled me there. I made friends with people in town, and was able to hang out with them after school. I wasn't allowed to do that when I went to school in Berkeley. At first, the dress code situation was tricky, but I learned to deal with my new look, and even warmed up to it. But the one moment when I knew that I had changed was when I attended the graduation of my friend from middle school. At my graduation, we were to wear dress clothes and were expected to act professionally. I was confused when I saw kids at her school showing up in t-shirts and jeans, with uncombed hair, acting ridiculously as they received their diplomas. I noticed that I was much more mature than my old friends, which was also funny since back then I was the immature one.

At first, I did not want to go to my high school, but now I am very glad I did. I know now that my school enforced their rules, so that we would grow up to be respectable adults and ready for the world.