

Josefina and the Giant Tortilla

When **Josefina Lopez** was growing up in Los Angeles, one of her chores was heating the tortillas for her family's meals. The warm tortillas were then served to her father and brothers. In her family, the men ate before the women. Josefina would complain and ask why she and her mother had to wait to eat. "My parents were like, 'We don't care. That's the way it is.'"

But Josefina cared. When she was writing a play at school, an image popped into her mind of a giant tortilla pushing a girl to the ground and squashing her. She saw the giant tortilla as a symbol of traditions, even cherished family traditions that mistakenly hold women down. She wanted the tortilla to have a role in her play. "I went to the teacher, and I said, 'Is that too weird?' She said, 'No, it sounds great. Do it! Nothing's too weird in theater.'"

Josefina's play was a comedy about the daughter of Mexican immigrants. The girl isn't sure if she should follow tradition and get married young, or break with tradition and go to college to pursue her dream of becoming an actress. The play, "Simply Maria, or the American Dream," won a playwriting contest for Josefina when she was 18 years old. Her prize was having her play performed by professional actors.

Since then, Josefina has written a novel, many poems, and more than two dozen plays and screenplays, including one for the movie "Real Women Have Curves," which starred America Ferrera.

"If you are really upset about something in society, by writing about it you can inspire people to change it," Josefina says.



What's your "Giant Tortilla?"



Find an issue related to women's and girls' roles, or the stereotypes they may get trapped in, that you care about as much as Josefina cared about her giant tortilla.

What do you want to change, so women and girls can try whatever roles they want? Get your brain going and see what pops up! Trade ideas with your Junior friends, too! The more ideas you trade, the more ideas you'll have for your Speak Out story. Get started by filling in the blanks in the sentences below in a way that will help others get out of the habit of using stereotypes.

- Just because I get good grades doesn't mean I
- Just because I don't
- doesn't mean I can't try
- What if boys
- and girls
- You can be quiet and also

*markers
in
speaking
psychology
Michael
Moore -
hero
okay to
have sex
w/ a boy*