

This past April, I had the amazing opportunity to attend the Vex World Championship Tournament in Anaheim, California. Witnessing the upbeat tone of the competition, including the intense style of matches taking place, was one of the best parts of the trip. Seeing that many mechanical marvels in one area was incredible and inspired our team to build an even better robot for next year. I talked with a judge from New Zealand with a cool accent, who referred me to the University of Auckland for their bioengineering program. One of our team members performed in a cultural flash mob while everyone was leaving at the end of one day. Being from a small Midwestern town, traveling to California broadened my horizons and heightened my awareness of the wide world beyond our borders.

Last year, twenty-four countries were represented in California by a Vex team. Twenty-four countries banding together towards a common goal: constructing machines to get the job done. Twenty-four countries in the same place, helping and encouraging each other to excel. While adults are threatening each other across international fences, adolescents are making friends and strategizing with each other in a display of worldwide fellowship. During the World Championship, Vex proved to me that it's not what we look like or what language we speak that matters, but it's our goals, our dreams, our deepest desires that enable people to communicate on a mental level that transcends all external judgements and bonds us all together on the inside.