



# Dear Ellison:

An open letter to a girl who has inspired me.



It's probably pretty strange that a room full of judges will read this before you do. I think this works out better for everyone- you've never been one to brag or over inflate yourself and I'm certain hearing something like this (although it's completely true) might be uncomfortable.

It's better for the judges too- one day, when they're eating dinner with kids or grandkids, commuting to work, or working in their gardens, your name will come up on the news for revolutionizing something that nobody even realized could be revolutionized, and they will have the opportunity, like me, to say "I knew her." and maybe, just maybe, be able to say "I was her inspiration."



This will not be the first time they hear your name, and it will not be the last; I'm sure you'll keep achieving for years to come. You've started from square one and already achieved so much.





# The first time I ever heard your name was weeks before I got a glimpse of you in person.

Two weeks, I worked in a lab full of boys who might have been as afraid of me as I was of them, the only girl there. Your name was a horror story; I only ever heard it in whispers, asking if you'd ever come back and saying things like **"I wouldn't want to if I was her."**

The head coach came to the boy who was going to be my team captain and sternly told him, **"She can't end up like Ellison last year."** I had never met you, but I wasn't sure I wanted to.

## To my surprise, you were kind and soft spoken from the moment you stepped into the lab.

You weren't bitter about whatever happened last year, but you were ready to work. You formed your own team, just you. Boys asked again and again for you to join them, but I don't think you were ever going to let yourself be silenced again by someone who takes your achievements as his own or stops you from reaching your potential.

As the leaves fell and the snow followed, you worked alone but you were still kind to everyone.

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**It takes a steel core to be able to maintain kindness after being wronged.**

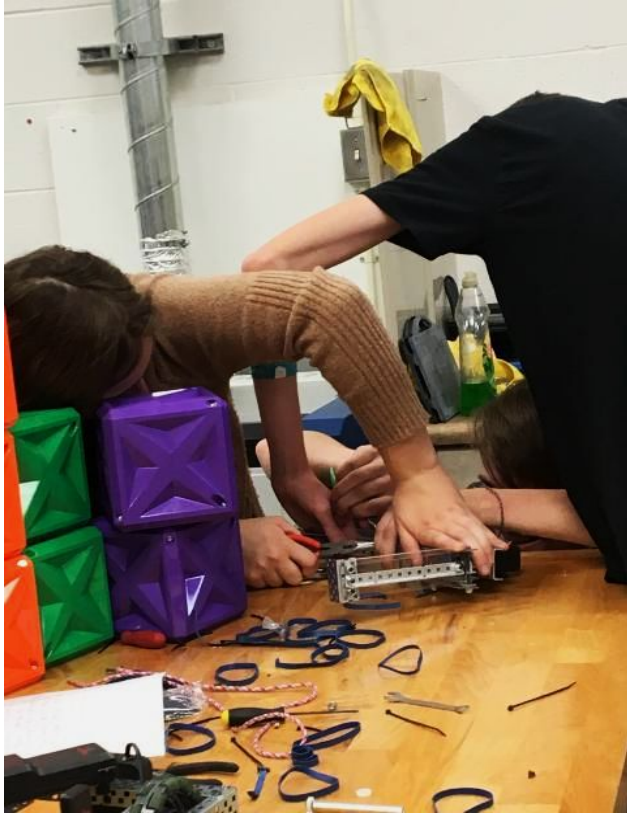


## On the other side of the robotics lab,

I worked too. I was on a different team that was on the verge of falling apart. Every day, I wanted to tell my team captain that it wasn't his team, it was ours. It wasn't his bot, it was ours. And it wasn't his success, it was supposed to be ours. Dismissed again and again, told that my work wasn't up to standard, ignored if I achieved but berated if I failed. I considered quitting robotics.



Pictures of the separate R-team members- Matt, Rachel (me), and Ellison



**Then you, the one person team,  
reached out a hand to someone in a  
situation you were all too familiar  
with. The minute you offered me to  
join your team, I knew that I would do  
it.**



# Two days later, I had joined a team that became more like a family.

Our team was not like the others; they were formed like clay, shaped over time to eventually fit perfectly. We were put together like planets colliding, ricocheting from different corners of the universe and crashing into place. I will always be grateful that you have so much gravity that you could set me on the right course, on the right team.



When I asked you where your logbook was so I could begin compiling work and data, you were so grateful. You didn't stop me, but you thanked me. Every time my work got us an interview, you thanked me again and again.

*You let our work be our work.*

It changed the dynamic of a team. You accepted me and Matt, another new person in the robotics program, and then Jessica and Denice when they eventually migrated to us to finish out the year with us. The dynamic of our team, thanks to you, was different than the others at Davis. We welcomed people because of their potential, not because of their stereotypes

**You've showed me that Girl powered robotics is more than just a team with girls in it.**

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Girl powered is a catalyst for everyone to reach an uninhibited potential. Girl powered is every win being a win for everyone. Girl powered robotics is an opportunity regardless of the person to succeed. Girl powered means that it doesn't matter when the girls on our team have different interests, races, and styles than us; it doesn't mean pushing boys out- it means letting girls in.



In fact, having so many different types of people and opinions pushes us forward.



Stereotypes would say that I'm just a dumb blonde- but I contribute to building and keep things in order; They'd say that Denise would be 'fiery' and loud, (whatever that's supposed to mean), but she's focused and quiet, and she always keeps her head on her shoulders. The stereotypes would try to tell us that Jessica might be a dumb flirt, but she's loyal and on task, and doesn't let things get in her way. Stereotypes say that Matt should be a commander and in charge- a sporty student body officer on a team full of girls- but he's open and flexible, soft spoken, and never demanding.

Because of the Girl Powered movement, we can be who we are without the assumption that we are who our stereotypes make us out to be.

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**WE**

**DEFINE**



**OURSELVES**



# Thank you.

Thanks for being the best team captain I could have ever asked for this year. Thanks for being girl powered and leading the way; defying stereotypes and maintaining kindness, but not letting yourself be walked over by the boys who haven't figured out how capable you, and every female robotics student, really are. I look forward to the upcoming competitions with our team- whatever new shape it takes through this year.





**From Rachel Ott, someone you've inspired.**





# Credits:

Team 2131R

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