

To be a woman interested in STEM is to be discouraged. Left alone in a room where you are alienated and told you will never be able to succeed. You have to work twice as hard than your male counterparts to get even half of the respect you deserve. That is the harsh reality of the environment my team goes into. To have “girl power” is to turn the entire understanding of STEM history on its head. To not just think of robotics as a man’s game, with its Joseph Engelbergers and Marvin Minskys, but as an environment for inventors, for the David Barretts and the Cecilia Laschis. To have Girl Power in a robotics team, is to have pride and passion for what you are doing not in spite of being a girl but because you are a girl.

When I was informed about VEX Robotics and asked if I wanted to start a team, I could not have said yes faster. My team and I go to St. Agnes Academy in Memphis, Tennessee; it is an all girls school where girl power is driven into our minds every day. But even with all of the girl power, interest in a robotics team was not even a guarantee because women and robotics were not words often used together. Seven girls. Out of the entire high school student body there were seven girls interested, and that was enough to get a robotics team up and running at our school, and I could not be happier with the group. An interest in STEM often ends with the end of a science or math class for girls at our school, but this robotics team helps to expand those interests out of the classroom with real world application.

Any real world application puts any woman unfortunately a man’s world. In a man’s world, how do women even compete? We already start miles away from the competition, having to prove ourselves to even get through the door, and that is why it is always the best solution to have women in the room. I argue to say that whenever a team even has just one girl they are better of than if they have none. We all are extremely aware of the world that we are born into,

being told to be lesser than the best, to make room for a man. We know we must come to the table more hardworking than anyone in the room. Women create a perspective of handwork based on survival. If we do not work the hardest, we do not get the job or the recognition or the resources we need. I would vouch to say every female member on a VEX robotics team feels that they need to be the best to prove in this man's world that women can be the best too.

Coming to a tournament as an all girls team from an all girls school, my team knew that that we had to be the boldest team in the room. Sure, we might have not had the best robot in the room, but our ultimate goal was to strike fear in the hearts of our opponents. Needless to say we succeeded. At our very first tournament we ever competed in, we were the only team who decided to compete with a wall-bot to simply show that we has the guts to make a risky decision that ultimately payed off in the end.



I say all of that to say that Girl Power is to have guts. It is to be a woman who has the courage to survive in an environment where she is not always welcome, where a reminder of having Girl Power is another tool in your survival tool kit. To embrace Girl Power is to embrace a collaborative future, where all genders are linked and not ranked. Girl Power is your war cry to be whoever you dream of.

Entrant: Veronica Thompson

Team: 99142A Starburst

Title: Girl Power is a War Cry