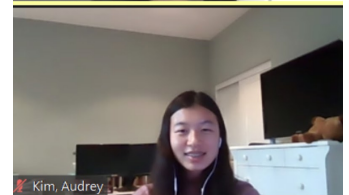
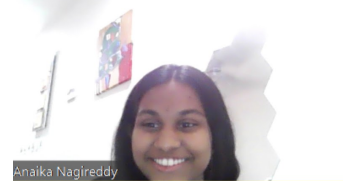
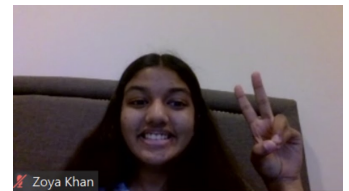


Making a Difference

People write because they have something to say, and I've been gifted with an opportunity to speak on behalf of those who cannot. The voices of young women like me must be heard now more than ever, and it's time that every male and female stands together.

I've been called many things, ranging from jokes about my physical appearance to cruel remarks about my personality. But I realized that humans weren't made to be labeled. We aren't the jars in a kitchen shelf, or the crayons on a coloring book. We're people with emotions, and the right to choose what we would like to be called. Unfortunately, these labels have formed the idea which has emerged among society of privileging some over others based on their skin tones, gender, etc., but this must come to an end. The many aspects that make us different should be embraced. They shouldn't make us feel insecure or hurt.

I was only 11 years old when I knew that trying out for an overwhelmingly male dominated team would certainly prove that being called "a girl" should be a compliment, not an insult. I strongly believed that robotics wouldn't be the best choice for me because my passions had always been writing and painting, but after four intense rounds of tryouts, I was accepted into the team, which was soon separated into four smaller teams. I'm proud to say that I am now a member of the only all girls team at my school. Even if we come across problems that other teams find easy to solve, the dedication we have to prove people wrong is more powerful than the rest.



There are three members on my team, and we're all fantastic at what we do. Audrey is our project manager and

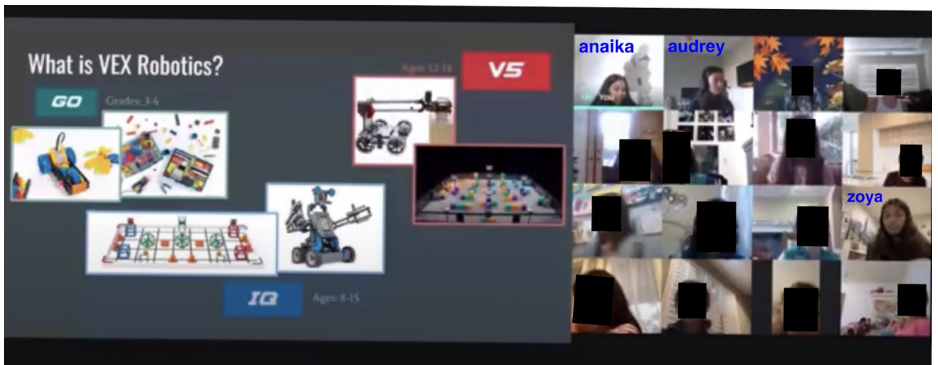


programmer. She has always been interested in coding, and her great time management skills help our team grow. She is very knowledgeable about building too, so she gives guidance to our lead builder, Zoya. After years of playing with legos, Zoya has gained

experience with creating new designs and problem solving. Her talent for writing is very helpful when it comes to the notebook. I, Anaika, am the notebook manager. Drawing robot designs and documenting our daily progress came easy to me as I've been doodling in sketchbooks and writing stories since the day I could pick up a pencil, and I also help build sometimes. Our different backgrounds and ideas help us improve on our skills and team chemistry.

To us, being girl-powered doesn't just mean demanding more girl representation in our community. We believe in equality. We believe in standing up for those whose voices are being ignored. As 13-year old girls living in an amazing city, going to an incredible school, and being supported by wonderful people, there are multiple ways we can make an impact. Although some may doubt our abilities, there are still so many people outside our front doors who we share a common belief with, where every small action can make a giant positive impact. For almost 5 years now, I've been participating in beach cleanups, food drives, and so much more. But now, our goal is to use modern technology to make an even bigger difference by being inclusive.

We noticed that students weren't introduced to VEX Robotics at an early age. Audrey, Zoya, and I only found out about robotics a couple months before we tried out for the team. If children could experience what it's like to build, program, and design robots, they'll be excited for what's yet to come in the future. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host a big event, or even a large zoom meeting. Instead, we gathered a small group of about 15 fourth grade girls, and taught them about VEX Robotics. We even taught them how to code on VEXcode VR. The students seemed to enjoy it, and hopefully they'll try out for the team when they grow older to maintain an equal balance between males and females in robotics.



A STEM role model to me isn't someone who's just invented something new, or discovered something extraordinary. A STEM role model is someone who has faced constant discrimination and has fought in a battle with criticism, yet still inspires people of all ages by letting them know that their capabilities aren't limited to what others say they can do. A STEM role model uses their talents to make a change, and anyone in this world who has done that is already a hero to many.

The significance of a person's aspirations isn't defined by their race, gender, class, or age. We're team 92620A, and we definitely CAN make a difference.

Author: Anaika Nagireddy

Other team members: Audrey Kim, Zoya Khan

Team number: 92620A

Title: Make a Difference