

## Declamation

Well, engineers are making some of the biggest advances in our society. They're solving things like global warming, making medical breakthroughs, some of the biggest technologies that are changing our lives. These are things that we use every day as people that make our lives better. And with half the population being female, we deserve to have the female perspective. It will only get better with the female perspective. But today engineering really is a boys' club, and I don't fit in. But I'm here today to share my story about how I discovered a passion for engineering, and I'm here to make a bold claim: I don't fit in, but I believe that our little girls will.

So this is me when I was a little girl, aged six. I was a pretty normal kid. I loved ballet and drawing and riding bikes. I grew up in a small town in Rhode Island, aged six. Coincidentally, this is around the age where most girls start to lose an interest in math and science, this young. And it's interesting, some people think, "Well, biologically maybe girls just aren't as good as those subjects and that's just the way it is, you can't fight nature."

Well, there was a study done very recently across 65 countries around the world where they tested boys and girls on the same science test. Around the world the girls out performed the boys, but not in the U.S. What the study suggests is that it's not a biological thing. This is a cultural thing. And this is our culture. This is what we grew up in as girls. The toy aisle, the perfect example of our culture, where we are taught from a very young age that we want to become princesses.

I remember when I was a little girl, adults would pat me on the head — well, actually I come from a Jewish family; so they would grab me by the punim and say, "Debbie, you are so smart, good for you." And I remember as a little girl being so disappointed, wishing that they told me I was pretty. I wanted to be pretty, I didn't want to be smart.

And by the time my senior year of high school rolled around, I was applying to college, and I asked my math teacher to write my recommendation letter. She said, "Okay, Debbie, what do you plan to major in? I will write it in the letter."

And I said, "I don't know."

She said, "How about engineering? I think you would really excel in it."

And I thought, engineering. I closed my eyes — and I pictured a train driver. I had no idea what engineering was, and I was way too embarrassed to ask her. I didn't want to sound stupid. But I thought, "Ugh, no way, eww,