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Author: El Jones

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I Tried to Learn About Girls From Google

By El Jones

To commemorate International Women's Day this year on March 8, The Philanthropist collaborated with Mount Saint Vincent University and the Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender and Social Justice to offer a writing and publishing opportunity for girls participating in the 2019 Girls Conference in Halifax. This week, we're publishing poetry/spoken word pieces written and presented by two of the conference delegates and speakers, El Jones and Mam-Mary SarrFox.

I tried to learn about girls from Google

Why do girls is what I wrote

Why do girls wear makeup, why do girls get periods

Is the way that it finished the quote

I thought maybe I could just change the search

So why are girls is what I tried

Why are girls so cute, why are girls called chicks

Is what the search engine replied

So then I just typed famous girls

I tried that out letter by letter

It gave me back 50 hottest women

It didn't get any better.

I wanted to know about heroes

I wanted to see girls' stories

But it seems that all anyone else wants to do
Is just reduce girls to your bodies
It seems no matter where I search
The message is just be attractive
But I didn't want to judge other women
I wanted to see leaders and activists
But I can't even blame them
When there's no girls in our history books
If nobody's ever taught us
That girls can be more than their looks
I thought about Greta Thunberg
15 years old at the UN
Leading the movement against climate change
So not all of our leaders are men
And then there's Mari Copeny in Flint, Michigan
Fighting against lead in the water
She began at only 8 years old
So it looks like the future is daughters
Ruby Bridges was only 6
When she fought for her education
Crowds of screaming people tried to stop her
But she ended segregation
And I'm sure you know of Anne Frank
And the diary she wrote in the attic
Joan of Arc led the entire French army

Ada Lovelace invented programming
Mary Shelley was only 18
When she wrote Frankenstein
So it's obviously not the truth
When they tell you this isn't your time
When they say to sit down in the corner
When they say you're too small or too young
When they say you're not strong enough to lift it
When they tell you to bite your tongue
When they say that you can't do science
When they say the things girls like are dumb
They'll make fun of your pronouns or gender
They say you look funny when you run
They bully you for your hijab
Or your head full of kinks and curls
They get mad at your dance at the powwow
And they'll say you can't because you're just girls
And maybe you think you can't either
You think others are braver or smart
Or maybe you want to make a difference
But you have no idea where to start
But the quietest girls can surprise you
Just think of a piece of blank paper
If you've ever had a paper cut
I wouldn't underestimate her

Just think of the tiniest ant
Carrying 50 times her own weight
Size has nothing to do with it
Strength is something that you create
Maybe you say, but I'm just a raindrop
But a raindrop can join the storm
It's when we each share of our power
That we see this world transform
Even one cup of water
Can do a phone or laptop damage
So now imagine joining our cups all together
They wouldn't be able to manage
Think of the power of just one word
When we just say things that are true
How many girls and women joined together
Simply by saying me too
And the people we thought that have power
And we'd never get them to stop
When girls and women supported each other
They're no longer there at the top
So that's why they say you're just cute
And tell you to wait your turn
They pat you on the head and say
We just have to watch the world burn
So they say cross your legs and be quiet

They say you'd be prettier if you'd just smile
They want you caught up in hating your body
So you don't think you can do anything worthwhile
And so they'll make you believe
That your skin or background is what defines
They only teach us that to hope
We don't use the power of our minds.
You don't have to be a genius
You don't have to be specially gifted
Just stand up for what you believe in
And one day you'll find that the whole world has shifted
You don't have to have the most money
Just nurture your inner riches
And one day you will find that the tide that you rise
Means that all the boats have lifted
When you start to speak they'll try to stop you
They'll hate or they'll just laugh
And then you'll look back in the future
And find they're all walking your path
And maybe one day we'll sit down
And do a Google search
And your name will be there on the screen
Saying you changed the earth
But even if you never get awards
If you don't get money or fame

If you're out here making a difference

Those that matter will know your name

So don't be defined by their boxes

Their limits or stereotypes

If they give you blank paper

What will be the history you write?