

**“Everything is physics and math.”  
~ Katherine Johnson**

### *STEAM is the future*

Infamous criminal Willie Sutton was once asked why he robbed banks, and he allegedly responded, “*Because that’s where the money is*”. While the credit to that quote does not belong to Sutton, but rather an over-zealous journalist, it has become so well known that a handful of social scientists dubbed the process of considering the obvious first as “Sutton’s Law”. So now we ask, why should women of color join STEAM programs? Because that’s where the jobs are.

According to research by Girls Who Code, technology jobs are the fastest growing sector in this country but girls are being left behind. With 1.5 million computing jobs to fill by 2020, the U.S. is only expected to produce enough qualified candidates to fill just 29 percent. According to a 2015 report by the National Science Foundation, only 24 percent of computer scientists are women and fewer than 10 percent are women of color.

The New York Urban League has always had its pulse on what employment gaps need to be filled and what doors they can help open for the community they serve. Through a robust STEM program, the NYUL helps parents see opportunities for their children and teaches children Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math to shape their futures.

### *Never too young for STEM*

Autumn Piper first came to the New York Urban League in 2015 when she attended their annual, HSBCU Fair. “I was only in junior high school, but my Mom really wanted me to plan ahead and make sure my grades were good and that I knew all my options.” Autumn continues, “And now, I’ve got my list of schools that I really want to attend and I know the criteria I’ll need to meet to attend.” Now a sophomore in high school, Autumn’s number one school on that list: Howard University.

For tenth grader Autumn Piper, the sciences have always been her passion and she knows medicine is in her future, “My number one goal for the future is to get my college degree, continue my studies and become an obstetrician.” Autumn adds, “But that’s not my only goal. I would love to be a research doctor and find the cures of different diseases that have touched my loved ones like Sickle Cell, Lupus and Cancer.”

Autumn shares her experience at the NYUL STEAM Summer Camp, "It was kind of a mix of science and technology at the same time, but we learned so many different things: we made our own websites, we met with Start-Up companies in tech and we even learned how to do urban gardening. These are things I never would've learned in my regular school environment."

Autumn's mother, Alma, shares her thoughts, "Autumn always loved science. She would Google medical terms and watch YouTube videos on chemical reactions, but she was always a quiet kid who was very to herself. After this program, Autumn become a kid who can now stand in front of people and talk and be really social. Autumn is an excellent speaker; she's extremely eloquent and we might never have heard her voice if it wasn't for this program."

Arva Rice, President of the NYUL discusses their goals: "When it comes to the STEM Summer Day Camp it's really about exposing young people to opportunities in these fields. So it's being able to once again take them back to Google, Microsoft, Etsy and be able to see people of color; women of color in those fields so kids can break through that idea notion of what a scientist looks like." She adds, "We also encourage parental involvement because it's hard to encourage your young person to go into a career that you have no idea what that career could be or what is required to be successful in that area."

Autumn's mother adds, "It showed my daughter that she does not have to be a certain race or look a certain way to go into STEAM and now she is preparing for a path to Science and the fact that the NYUL offers this at no cost is incredible, because it has been a real blessing on so many levels."

## The future is female

Jeanine Conley, a shareholder in the Philadelphia and New York offices of Littler and the Chair of the NYUL board, discusses the goals that the organization has for expanding their STEAM programs. "Through our Civil Rights 2.0 Initiative, we are looking to establish NYUL as a hub where innovative STEAM programs are implemented, incubated and people of color in the industry come together." She expands on this campaign, "We would like to create a state of the art computer lab and work with key sponsors in the STEM field to create effective programming that addresses their areas of need." In short, the NYUL looks to create a strong pipeline so that students can go from the classroom to the workforce. In order to realize this vision, the NYUL looks to its community, the sponsors who provide the funding and the employment opportunities, as well as the students, like Autumn, who represents the future of STEM jobs.

What makes Autumn's journey even more profound is the woman in history who inspires Autumn the most: Alma, her Mother. "For a while, when I was in middle school, my Mom

was struggling for work and we ended up living in a shelter. Every day, I saw in her eyes she wanted to get out of there; she wanted me out of there. My Mom never stopped fighting for me, for us. She would keep me focused on my studies and say, 'the struggle is not forever, but my grades on my transcript are' and so I'd keep at it."

Autumn continues, "I have learned from my mother to never listen to anyone else about your worth, because you're worth much more than they would ever think." Autumn's Mom now has a good job, an apartment and Autumn is thriving. Autumn reflects on her Mom's strength, "She inspires me every day to never give up," she adds, "and the Urban League, they taught me that I can be whatever I can see myself being."

To help more young girls realize their dreams please visit: <https://www.nyul.org/>

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