What Cars Say: “We Need More Female Technicians!”

By Chasidy Rae Sisk

In recognition of Women’s History Month, author Rachael Alfonso has partnered with the Collision Repair Education Foundation (CREF) to raise funds in support of female collision repair students. When industry supporters [purchase a copy](https://shop.whatcarssay.com/?sca_ref=666870.tSypnMeT2w) of Alfonso’s new book, “What Cars Say,” through the dedicated link, a portion of the sale will be donated to a fund for future female technicians.

“This is a great book for any auto enthusiast,” Brandon Eckenrode, Director of Development for CREF, said. “The Foundation is proud to endorse Rachel, a female automotive professional and author, and we’re excited to announce a new fund geared towards supporting female collision students during the 2021-2022 school year. Women’s History Month may be ending, but our efforts to generate support for female collision students are just getting started, and we invite the industry to join us by buying a copy of this fun book.”

Created for car lovers aged three to 93, “What Cars Say” features 21 authentically recorded vehicle engine sounds guaranteed to bring a smile to any motorhead’s face. Alfonso, a Florida native, shared, “Growing up, and even now, cars are a huge part of my life. They bring a smile to my face, whether I am sitting in the driver’s seat – or if I’m underneath the hood, getting my hands dirty. I created this book because I believe a love for cars is inside all of us, and that love should be encouraged.”

Like so many automotive afficionados, Alfonso’s obsession began at a young age. Raised by a single dad, she never missed an opportunity to attend a local car show with him or to play Hot Wheels with her younger brother. “I was six when I went to my first car show with Dad, and though I had no interest before we got there, I ended up thinking it was so cool!” Alfonso reminisced. “My dad was into old-school American muscle cars, like the Firebird and Chevelle, but I couldn’t take my eyes off the Lamborghini.”

During high school, Alfonso attended – and participated in – racing events around the state, and though she continued to be involved with races once she got older, she also pursued her automotive passion by promoting car shows and working in shops and dealerships. While working at a luxury dealership, Alfonso made the acquaintance of Pejman “PJ” Ghadimi, who hired her to curate his collection of exotic cars.

In addition to her interest in cars, Alfonso has also always been passionate about children and teaching, and during a trip to Italy, she came up with the concept for “What Cars Say,” an idea that joined both of her passions in a flash of ingenuity. “There were no books that teach kids about cars in this capacity,” she explained. “I shared my idea with PJ, and he loved it! His mentorship and support made this book possible – working for him is like living in a motivation board. He’s been a huge part of getting me to where I am today.”

While Ghadimi has been very supportive of Alfonso and “What Cars Say,” he’s the first person to tell people that she is the author, not him. “The crazy thing about being a female who wrote a book in the automotive industry is that people don’t believe it’s mine! People always thank PJ, but he corrects them, ‘No, Rachel’s the author, it’s her book.’ It’s so hard for people to believe a woman can make her way in automotive, in whatever capacity.”

This mentality that women don’t belong in automotive tragically carries over to children as well. “I wrote ‘What Cars Say’ for children, but a lot of parents tell me the book is cool, only to follow that up with ‘but I have a little girl.’ It’s so frustrating!” Alfonso understands that “it’s rare to see women in the automotive industry, but I always encourage parents to give the book to their daughters – start them off early, innocently, organically. Even if they don’t wind up pursuing an automotive career, they might develop enough interest to learn to change their own tire and check their oil.”

Alfonso believes that women are just as interested in cars as men are, if only that interest is encouraged. “Everyone should be able to pursue whatever interests they have. Whenever I’m in a shop, there’s always that one guy who asks, ‘Who’s letting their little sister play with the cars?’ or who will tell me, ‘Be careful so you don’t break a nail.’ I may not be the badass chick that can personally lug a door across the shop, but that woman who can? I’m going to be her number one fan and constantly hype her up! People often talk about how strong men are, but if they’re honest, they’ll admit there’s nothing quite like the feminine touch; women bring grace, charm and beauty to this male-dominated industry, and that’s a perfect complement to the beauty, charm and grace of these vehicles.”

“It’s so important for women to be in the automotive industry,” Alfonso added. “It’s 2021, and we need gender equality across the board, yet there is still sexism in this industry. I’d like to see more women in all areas of automotive – in the dealerships, in the body shops, as mechanics, in technical positions. We need more women in this industry. It should be normal and appreciated for women to take interest in automotive, but unfortunately, it’s not.”

Ultimately, Alfonso believes that automotive should be taught to all students: “I would have loved the opportunity to take shop in high school. Dad took auto shop in school, and he’s never stuck or stranded; he can fix any car well enough to get it somewhere safe. As long as our society is relying on motorized vehicles, we all need to have a certain know-how. Schools mandate computer classes, but it’s okay that most of us know nothing about the large, dangerous computers that transport us? Cars may change, but they aren’t going anywhere. Everyone who drives should learn how to operate their vehicle inside and out – and everyone means everyone, regardless of gender.”

When Alfonso learned about the Collision Repair Education Foundation and its mission to support the future generation of collision repair technicians, she believed, “It’s something I can get behind. It felt serendipitous – here was an organization focused on educating children and interested in empowering women, two things I’m passionate about. It felt so right, so perfect, that I had to do it. I love what CREF does, and I’m so excited to be part of promoting the industry to young women.”

When you purchase a copy of “What Cars Say” using [this link](https://shop.whatcarssay.com/?sca_ref=666870.tSypnMeT2w), 15% of your purchase will be donated to CREF’s fund to support female collision students during the 2021-2022 school year. Funds raised will be applied towards scholarships, purchasing student uniforms, female spray suits, tools, and equipment for young women studying collision repair.

Get your copy at <https://shop.whatcarssay.com/?sca_ref=666870.tSypnMeT2w>.

To learn more about CREF, visit [CollisionEducationFoundation.org](http://www.CollisionEducationFoundation.org).