



PromaxGAMES: Cutting the Cord on "Girl Gamer"™ Mentality

04.26.2018

Joey Noelle was a cultural anthropology major, and Mica Burton was going to be a lawyer.

Instead, they are both female role models for "girl gamers"-a phrase that in and of itself can rub people the wrong way. After all, there are no "boy gamers."

And who are gamers, anyway? It's not like there are "moveriers" or "televisioners."

Those are some of the topics addressed by Noelle, a community manager at Kinda Funny, and Burton, a cosplay model and YouTube content creator, at PromaxGAMES: Summit 2018 held Thursday, April 26, at The Midway in San Francisco.

Indeed, women account for about half of gaming culture, but it's still considered a male-dominated world that still conjures images of pasty post-teenaged men in their basement eating Cheetos in between bouts of killing sprees.

What will it take for that stigma to break down?

"As the gaming industry is growing and we're seeing more games come to light, it's more accessible to the general audience as a whole," Noelle said. "I think as the industry grows and expands, it's going to bring in more people who don't consider themselves gamers."

Geoff Ramsey, founder of Achievement Hunter and moderator of the panel, wondered if his 62-year-old mother, who spends at least an hour a day playing Words with Friends and Candy Crush Saga, is a gamer.

"I think anyone who has a cell phone is a gamer," he said.

As the medium becomes more mainstream, the notion that someone is not a gamer unless they're hardcore about it is starting to change, Burton said.

"So many people can pick up a phone, or a Switch or an XBox controller," Burton said. "It's just a unifying medium and it warms my heart."

For her and Noelle, it's also been a way to build a community around something they love.

"When I was a kid, my parents would say don't make friends with people on the internet," Burton said.

But now, it's a way to connect with like-minded, nerdy people who share the same interests, and maybe just happen to be female. It's not a matter of separating gender or race when it comes to diversity in gaming, but rather creating an organic sense of inclusion.

Nobody wants to see a pink controllers, Noelle said. Instead, she commended Overwatch for revealing character Emily Tracer's girlfriend, casually representing the LGBTQ community through a rich storyline.

"It doesn't have to be a giant statement," Burton said. "It's about just seeing yourself. It's why there were so many stories about people of color reacting to Black Panther. If I had seen Hidden Figures as a kid, maybe I would be a scientist right now."

Which is what brought Burton and Noelle to PromaxGAMES in the first place.

"I felt like I had this opportunity," Burton said. "This is my chance to be able to sit on stages like this, and tell my story, and show people of a different gender, or color, or background, that gaming is awesome."

[Photo: Left to right: Geoff Ramsey, Mica Burton and Joey Noelle at PromaxGAMES Summit 2018. Images courtesy of Jasmin Von T.]