

## **In Conversation with Anita Perr**

Declan Gunn, Cole Neufield, and Keviin Shah are Teen Thinkers at the Bard Graduate Center. They spoke with Anita Perr, an occupational therapist who works at the New York University Ability Project on July 23, 2019. Below is an excerpt from their interview.

**Location:** New York University Occupational Therapy Department, New York City

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**Declan Gunn:** I've noticed a bit of a move from practical designs to more recreational designs: from wheelchairs focused on mobility to wheelchairs in, for instance, wheelchair rugby, where you have offensive and defensive wheelchairs specifically to ram into other people. So -- what do you think that says about the evolution of human centered design and the way it's -- kind of -- perceived by society?

**Anita Perr:** I think it's finally hitting people with disabilities. So -- when I first started working, and -- and really until recently -- the biggest decision you made about you wheelchair was whether you wanted black, red, or blue. And what we were doing in the medical community is providing somebody with a wheelchair and saying, "Okay! See ya! That's it; that's all you get," where what really *should* happen is that maybe somebody needs a motorized chair for their daytime stuff, a manual chair when they're going someplace that they can manage propelling themselves, and then the rugby chair when they're gonna go out and crush everybody else.