

ATHLETA MAGAZINE

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THERE IS NO "I" IN GRL

Grlswirl is a sisterhood built to empower and connect – it just so happens that their movement is on wheels. The collective was founded to change how skate culture sees women and how women see skateboarding.



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Dancing across the pavement on a skateboard feels like freedom, but taking up space in the world as a human who identifies as a woman isn't frictionless. Skating, walking, merely existing – unwanted attention is table stakes.

Centuries of society have trained men to see women as a locus for the actualization of their own pleasure, an object of entertainment. Even at the skate park, where the men who still dominate the culture are often wildly supportive of the women who show up, patriarchy leaves no body untouched. Having internalized those same lessons about our worth and our power, women are taught to talk ourselves out of anything traditionally associated with masculinity, even when we're not being actively excluded.





So when going it alone is tough, why not try coming together?

In February 2018, nine women held an impromptu group skate in Venice, California. They've described it as magical, empowering, unlike anything they'd ever experienced. They were looking for camaraderie and what they found was community. They discovered the power in sharing something not just with others, but with others who are tired of dancing on the periphery.



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Four years later, Grlswirl isn't on the outside anymore. Those nine founding members morphed into hundreds spread across Venice, Los Angeles, San Diego, and New York City, with international energy inspiring new chapters around the world (next up, Paris). They have active partnerships with major brands like Cali Squeeze, Marshall, Cariuma, and Carver. In addition to regular group skates where everyone is welcome regardless of experience, they host workshops to teach kids how to skate and hold fundraisers for local non-profits.



Grlswirl has also evolved – instead of focusing exclusively on women and girls, they now define themselves as a women-founded skate collective, striving to create a judgment-free space where anyone of any gender can give skateboarding a try. Community leaders in the collective advocate for women of color, the LGBTQ+ community, and trans and non-binary folks.



On the surface, Grlswirl exists to help people discover the stoke of skating. They want to smother that sense of intimidation that tends to nudge fresh faces away from fun things. But the real juice comes from the buzz that builds around a group of people that just want to fly.

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At the end of the day, you don't have to be a badass to get on a skateboard, but going for it might just make you one. And in Venice, flipping off the patriarchy is a few dozen women skating down the boardwalk hand in hand, wind whipping through their hair, free to skate, free to be.