

Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie Dives Behind the Scenes into Life as Black Educators at Mainstream Colleges

Dr. Mackie and podcast guest Dr. Carlotta Berry discuss the importance of Black representation in academia and ways to grow their campus presence.

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[Video Link](#)

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NEW ORLEANS, LA - On the new episode of the Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie podcast, the host and his guest, Dr. Carlotta Berry, an Electrical and Computer Engineering professor, provide a peek behind the curtain at the challenges faced by African American engineering professors working at predominantly white higher education institutions.

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Dr. Carlotta Berry

The engaging conversation between the two highly acclaimed engineering professors provides a fresh and earnest perspective of being Black in academia in the age of Black Lives Matters and Generation X, and the joys and pressures that come with it.

Dr. Mackie and Dr. Berry also discuss the importance of Black representation in higher academia, specifically, the ways modern tools, practices and support groups can be used to improve the representation of Black professors,

educators and scientists, and provide diverse students with the support needed to thrive.

The two educators, who both earned advanced degrees at Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), also openly discussed the tensions and discrimination faced as young engineering students. “I had professors who did not know my name, did not seem to acknowledge me, and did not really seem to support whether I graduated or not,” recalled Dr. Berry, who now teaches at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Indiana.

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"I love the field, but the way I was being taught and the way it was being portrayed to me, it was not a welcoming," Dr. Berry said, noting that she got her doctorate so she could teach students a better way.

A challenge that they faced as professors and students was that few of their colleagues or fellow students were Black. Dr. Mackie, a former tenured engineering professor at Tulane University, said Blacks students frequently lined up in front of his office door. "I was a professor at Tulane for 12 years...and I'll never forget it. All of the Black and Brown kids and would line up outside my door. And my (white) colleague asked me one day, 'What are you telling them in there?' And I said, 'You get in line because you need to hear too.'"

At one point, Dr. Berry noticed that, despite being the electrical and computer engineering professor, she received emails from Black students studying civil engineering, chemical engineering and mechanical engineering. "And I was like, 'why are they sending these students over here?' I'm the electrical engineering professor.' Faculty would say, 'Well, they're having a problem. So, I'm sending them to the Black professor.' And what I told them is diversity is important to me. But everybody on this campus needs to be able to counsel every student on this campus, no matter what their needs are."

In 2013, Dr. Mackie founded STEM NOLA, a New Orleans-based, non-profit committed to bringing STEM education to area neighborhoods and communities at churches, community centers and schools. STEM NOLA has impacted more than 80,000 students, 20,000 families and 2,150 schools across the United States and in five other countries. This summer, he founded [STEM Global Action](#), which oversees STEM NOLA and other affiliates across the country and in Africa.

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(For print or broadcast interviews with Dr. Calvin Mackie, please contact Michael K. Frisby, mike@frisbyassociates.com or 202-625-4328.)

For an archive of Let Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie Podcasts, go to https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_UPXlrgkzwsXFiefgOpgYlUNzD-T3iaw

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Dr. Calvin Mackie and Dr. Carlotta Berry Discuss Blacks in academia.

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