

STEM Education Leader Dr. Calvin Mackie Calls on Presidential Award Winners to Continue Mentoring America's Children

He built STEM ecosystems in under-resourced areas with an innovative program called STEM NOLA that held activities in churches, schools and community centers

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-- Speaking at a White House event honoring presidential award winners for excellence in math and science teaching and mentoring, Dr. Calvin Mackie urged the honorees to continue being outstanding advocates, advisors and allies for children.



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Dr. Calvin Mackie

“It’s was important yesterday. It’s important today, and it is going to be even more important going into the future,” Dr. Mackie said. “In the 21st Century our children will only have three options. Our children will only be able to take something, break something and, or make something. And if they don't have mentors like you, mentors like us, that's only going to leave them two options that they see on the news every night.”

Regardless of their race, ethnicity or socioeconomic background, Dr. Mackie said, “we want them to be able to make something; make a life, make a future, make a

difference like you.”

At the virtual event on Friday, President Joe Biden honored 117 teachers, mentors, and mentoring organizations as recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) and Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM). The awards honor the dedication, hard work and important role that teachers and mentors play in supporting future STEM professionals,

including climate scientists, mathematicians, innovators, space explorers, and engineers.

Dr. Mackie, who won the award in 2004, was one of the guest speakers. He told the gathering that a year after winning the award he was a tenured engineering professor at Tulane University when Hurricane Katrina hit and devastated the New Orleans area. In the aftermath, Tulane made the disturbing decision to close their engineering school. "I was the first and only African American ever tenured in the history of the College of Engineering at Tulane University," Dr. Mackie said. "And overnight, I had lost a tenured position. I saw that as a sign from my creator that I should follow my heart."

Dr. Mackie did a sabbatical at the University of Michigan. "That's when I started to go to the communities and try to figure out how can we not only mentor kids in schools, and mentor kids in colleges, but how can we mentor families and communities," he said. "It gave me the courage and the wherewithal to believe that such a thing was possible."



Dr. Calvin Mackie

Returning to New Orleans, he built a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) ecosystem in under-resourced communities with a program called [STEM NOLA](#). It brought STEM education into communities of color with mentoring events where 300 K-12 children would attend and engage in hand-on, STEM activities.

"We surrounded the K-12 kids with college kids," Dr. Mackie said. "We surrounded the college kids with STEM professionals. At any event in the community, we have what we call 'vertical mentoring.' The young kids can see themselves at different stations in life. They can see themselves as college students. Then the college students can see themselves as professionals. The professionals get a chance to come back out and pour back into the community."

In eight years, he said, "we've engaged over 100,000 young people and 20,000 families. Due to the COVID, we pivoted. We jumped online and now we engage kids in 47 states and in five countries." Dr. Mackie thanked the National Science Foundation and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) for sending him on this journey.

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ABOUT [STEM GLOBAL ACTION](#)

In 2013, Dr. Calvin Mackie founded STEM NOLA, a New Orleans-based, non-profit committed to expanding STEM education, particularly in communities of color. His goal is to make STEM

education available in ALL communities. In July 2021, Dr. Mackie launched STEM Global Action, a campaign and network of affiliates that pursues STEM education for children, parents and communities. His initiatives have impacted more than 100,000 students, 20,000 families and 5,000 schools across the U.S., and in five countries. Dr. Mackie, who holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Morehouse College, as well as a Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Tech, also hosts the Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie [podcast series](#). It features interviews with guests from all aspects of STEM – entrepreneurs, educators, corporate leaders, students – who talk about the importance of STEM in their lives today. The STEM Global Action website includes:

STEM Global Action Today (<https://stemglobalaction.com/stem-global-action-today/>), a newsletter with comprehensive articles on some of the most important issues related to STEM, and takes readers into the lives of STEM educators and their extraordinary students, who will be the STEM leaders of tomorrow.

STEM Global Action Data Center (<https://stemglobalaction.com/stem-data-center/>), a one-stop resource library for studies, reports, video presentations and news coverage about STEM.

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For broadcast or print interviews with Dr. Calvin Mackie contact Michael Frisby at mike@frisbyassociates.com or 202-625-4328.

Michael K Frisby
Frisby & Associates
+1 202-625-4328
mike@frisbyassociates.com

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