

# Healthcare Executive James Burroughs: Black & Brown Children Need Role Models to Build Confidence for STEM Careers

On New episode of the LET'S TALK STEM WITH DR. CALVIN MACKIE podcast the topic is how to put more minority children on pathways to successful STEM Careers

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On the new episode of Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie, James Burroughs, a top executive at the Children's Minnesota healthcare system, asserts that Black & Brown children must have role models in STEM professions to build the confidence that they can also succeed in those careers. But, too often, they don't exist.

“

Once you put on that white coat, and I'm sure you've seen it, that confidence goes up. That level of 'I could do anything goes up' and that is what I love to see in our young people.”

*James Burroughs*

Burroughs, a senior vice president at one of the nation's largest freestanding pediatric health systems, cites the major STEM professions at their facilities - doctor, nurse, medical assistant, certified surgical assistant, radiologist, technician, laboratory technician. “I see nobody looks like me,” he maintains, adding that the lack of people of color can send the wrong message to young minorities, that these jobs are not for them.

Young people, he says, may think “maybe this is not for me, but I see everybody in the basketball court, they look like me, okay. I need to go play basketball.

All my boys are playing football. Let me go play football. And not saying either of those things are wrong. But if that's the only thing I think I can be that determines sometimes my trajectory of what I think I can be.”

Further, Burroughs talks about the positive images that can be portrayed with the right

scenarios and narratives. He extols Dr. Mackie, his classmate at Morehouse College, for creating STEM NOLA, the rapidly growing program that excels at giving K-12 children from under-resourced communities hands-on experience in STEM fields.

“The things that you do with your STEM Saturdays, the young people in white coats, that innovation, that creative knowledge create solutions for the things in the future, the problems of the future, is what we need,” Burroughs says.

“One of the things that I love (is) seeing the young kids in white coats. Once you put on that white coat, and I'm sure you've seen it, that confidence goes up. That level of ‘I could do anything goes up’ and that is what I love to see in our young people. So, when they do decide to get into medicine, you know, they've been wearing a white coat since they've been five years old. So, they get their white coat when they graduate medical school, it's where they're supposed to be. It's not a new thing to them. It's where they were supposed to be. And you have put them in a place to say, ‘okay, this is my rightful place. I need to own it.’”

Dr. Mackie agreed, saying that a major goal of his programs is “to bridge that gap” in the lack of representation of healthcare workers.

“Recently we had a lung and respiratory day where we had over 200 kids in white lab coats, and we had upward of 50 healthcare professionals,” Mackie says. “We had a couple of cardiac thoracic surgeons. We had surgery residents. We had Black and Brown students from LSU and Tulane medical schools. We had pre-medical students from Tulane.

But to see these families and to see these kids respond to the fact that they were in a safe place in a collaborative environment with healthcare workers really created a mindset that ‘I can be this too.’ We are trying to bring together these entities and these stakeholders so they can develop this relationship so that our kids can dream.”

Enjoy the entire enlightening conversation by clicking [HERE](#).

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The graphic is a promotional poster for a podcast episode. At the top, it says "LET'S TALK STEM WITH DR. CALVIN MACKIE" in white text on a dark blue background. Below this is a white microphone icon and a button that says "WATCH OR LISTEN NOW". In the center, there is a logo for "STEM GLOBAL ACTION" with the tagline "Inform • engage • inspire". On the right, there is a circular portrait of Dr. Calvin Mackie, a Black man with a goatee, wearing a grey jacket. On the left, there is a portrait of James C. Burroughs II, a Black man in a dark suit and white shirt. At the bottom right, it says "FEATURING SPECIAL GUEST: JAMES C. BURROUGHS II" in bold white text, followed by his title: "SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY RELATIONS, CHIEF EQUITY & INCLUSION OFFICER CHILDREN'S MINNESOTA". The background features a blue brick wall and a white torn-paper effect at the bottom.

(For interviews with Dr. Mackie, please contact Michael Frisby at 202-625-4328 or [mike@frisbyassociates.com](mailto:mike@frisbyassociates.com))

#### ABOUT STEM GLOBAL ACTION

Dr. Calvin Mackie founded STEM NOLA in 2013. The New Orleans non-profit is committed to expanding STEM education, especially in communities of color. In July 2021, Dr. Mackie launched STEM Global Action (<https://stemglobalaction.com/>), a campaign and network pursuing 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. An archive of Let's Talk STEM with Dr. Calvin Mackie podcast episodes is at [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_UPXIrgkzwsXFiefgOpgYIUNzD-T3iaw](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_UPXIrgkzwsXFiefgOpgYIUNzD-T3iaw)

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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