



1
00:00:11,250 --> 00:00:15,049
I am Markeeva Morgan. I am the
Avionics Hardware Manager for

2
00:00:15,052 --> 00:00:19,873
Space Launch System Core Stage
and the Flight Termination Systems

3
00:00:19,880 --> 00:00:21,880
Integration Lead for all stages for
Space Launch System.

4
00:00:34,182 --> 00:00:38,686
I grew up in rural Mississippi, you
know, parts of the state where

5
00:00:38,686 --> 00:00:42,051
you are not from places, you are
from close to places. I graduated

6
00:00:42,051 --> 00:00:44,998
from Coldwater High School in
Coldwater, Mississippi. I went on

7
00:00:44,998 --> 00:00:48,702
to the University of Mississippi
where I earned a Bachelor of

8
00:00:48,702 --> 00:00:52,999
Science degree in Electrical
Engineering. After graduating,

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00:00:52,999 --> 00:00:55,982
I volunteered to join the Navy,
was commissioned as an officer in

10
00:00:55,982 --> 00:00:58,822
the US Navy, and was stationed at
the Washington Navy Yard in

11
00:00:58,822 --> 00:01:02,986
Washington, DC. My first day on
the job was September 6, 2001, and

12
00:01:02,986 --> 00:01:08,000
a few days later, as we all know,
we were attacked, and so my career

13
00:01:08,000 --> 00:01:14,003
was put on hyper drive. I was there
for about six years and then my

14
00:01:14,003 --> 00:01:18,024
wife and I moved here to Huntsville
in 2007. While I was in DC, I also

15
00:01:18,024 --> 00:01:22,845
earned a bachelors degree in
Engineering Management, and so now

16
00:01:22,845 --> 00:01:28,050
I am here at NASA. Been here for
about nine and a half years and am

17
00:01:28,050 --> 00:01:29,830
thoroughly enjoying it.

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00:01:29,830 --> 00:01:34,966
Moving from Mississippi to DC was
very interesting, especially for

19
00:01:34,966 --> 00:01:39,964
someone who was not, at the time,
very well travelled. I can sum it

20
00:01:39,964 --> 00:01:45,249
up in one story that both being
from Mississippi got me in trouble

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00:01:45,249 --> 00:01:50,196
and out of trouble. So a lot more
traffic in Washington, DC than in

22

00:01:50,196 --> 00:01:56,035
the rural roads of Mississippi and
when we had gone up there in the

23

00:01:56,035 --> 00:02:00,046
early days of moving up there, we
were travelling on one of the many

24

00:02:00,046 --> 00:02:05,021
six, eight lane highways and my exit
was coming up. And so I learned very

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00:02:05,021 --> 00:02:09,497
quickly that when your exit comes,
you get over otherwise you are going

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00:02:09,497 --> 00:02:15,978
to miss it, so I pretty aggressively
changed lanes and was pursued by a

27

00:02:15,978 --> 00:02:24,243
police officer. I was given a ticket
and went to, went to court to address

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00:02:24,243 --> 00:02:28,046
the ticket and it turned out my
vehicle was similar to a vehicle

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00:02:28,046 --> 00:02:32,973
that was of interest at the time.
Coincidentally, that aggressive lane

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00:02:32,973 --> 00:02:37,069
change came right after the police
officer who was sitting in the median,

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00:02:37,069 --> 00:02:41,270

so add all of that together and there is a story that was fabricated, well,

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00:02:41,270 --> 00:02:43,894

I would not say fabricated, but there was a story that was created that

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00:02:43,917 --> 00:02:50,116

did not turn out to be true. So I am in court and not realizing the severity

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00:02:50,116 --> 00:02:54,058

of what the situation was, I thought it was just a traffic ticket, and so the

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00:02:54,058 --> 00:02:58,082

Mississippi to DC got me in trouble. But here's where Mississippi got me

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00:02:58,082 --> 00:03:02,985

out of trouble. I told that story to the judge. I said, "Hey, I just moved

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00:03:02,985 --> 00:03:07,418

here from Mississippi, there are no six, eight lane highways in Mississippi,

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00:03:07,418 --> 00:03:12,083

and so I was just trying to get to my exit," with a little bit of a more

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00:03:12,130 --> 00:03:23,184

of a slow twang and overemphasizing the Southern vocal dialect there.

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00:03:23,184 --> 00:03:28,934

And he laughed and yeah I believe you and that was the end of it. So moving

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00:03:28,934 --> 00:03:34,096
from Mississippi to DC, there was a
lot of it that was different, but

42
00:03:34,096 --> 00:03:40,078
overwhelmingly, the difference was
good. Washington, DC and the metro

43
00:03:40,078 --> 00:03:48,669
area is such a potpourri pot of
different cultures, and that is

44
00:03:48,669 --> 00:03:52,992
probably one of the things I miss
most, you know, the variety of foods

45
00:03:52,992 --> 00:03:58,962
and people. And what is interesting
is Huntsville is similar to that on

46
00:03:58,962 --> 00:04:03,634
a smaller scale. One of the things we
say is most anything you are interested

47
00:04:03,634 --> 00:04:08,100
in doing you can find here. There may
only be one of them, but you will probably

48
00:04:08,100 --> 00:04:13,120
find it. And so, ultimately, that
experience in Washington, DC was great,

49
00:04:13,120 --> 00:04:18,951
and if not for divine direction to move
here, I would still be there. My wife and I

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00:04:18,951 --> 00:04:24,274
are both from Mississippi, so eventually
we probably would have moved south, but

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00:04:24,274 --> 00:04:27,037
other than the traffic and the cost of
real estate, we both thoroughly enjoyed

52
00:04:27,037 --> 00:04:28,394
our time up there.

53
00:04:36,974 --> 00:04:42,957
The STEM education experience at the
University of Mississippi was fairly

54
00:04:42,957 --> 00:04:47,884
independent of who you were and where
you came from. Now, if you asked that

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00:04:47,884 --> 00:04:51,183
question form the university as a whole,
you know, what was the experience of a

56
00:04:51,183 --> 00:04:55,975
Black student at the university, that is
a different question. Now I would say

57
00:04:55,975 --> 00:05:01,121
that that experience likely is not
dissimilar to the experience at most

58
00:05:01,121 --> 00:05:05,946
universities, especially in the South.
The University of Mississippi, what I

59
00:05:05,946 --> 00:05:09,192
discovered when I first got there was
the reality of the University was

60
00:05:09,192 --> 00:05:15,137
better than the perception of the
University. It is the case that early

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00:05:15,137 --> 00:05:22,934

on my predecessors at the University
selected pretty much every symbol that

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00:05:22,934 --> 00:05:27,946

you could choose to officially represent
the University that tied to the Old

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00:05:27,946 --> 00:05:33,996

South. The heart of the university though
was no different than the heart of other

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00:05:33,996 --> 00:05:38,035

southern universities, it just so happens
those universities did not choose outward

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00:05:38,035 --> 00:05:44,955

expressions of that heart that everybody
could see whereas Ole Miss did. And so

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00:05:44,955 --> 00:05:49,998

the University of Mississippi has been
and remains in the spotlight as it relates

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00:05:49,998 --> 00:05:54,935

to race relations. In many respects, it
has had to lead the charge in moving

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00:05:54,935 --> 00:06:00,913

forward because it is so observed. The
University is not perfect, it was not when

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00:06:00,913 --> 00:06:05,607

I went there, it is not today. Is it better
than when I went there, yes,

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00:06:05,607 --> 00:06:12,769

unquestionably. We all have a lot of work
to do. This is not a topic that cannot be

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00:06:12,769 --> 00:06:19,975

fully encompassed in statistics and facts; it is injury and hurt and strategic,

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00:06:19,975 --> 00:06:28,874

systemic shifts in the way racism and prejudice has manifested itself throughout

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00:06:28,874 --> 00:06:36,947

history. One way is replaced by another, so it's more of a complex topic. My

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00:06:36,947 --> 00:06:42,026

experience was great, no complaints, have a great relationship with the

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00:06:42,026 --> 00:06:47,026

university today, volunteer there as much as I do in this community, serve on

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00:06:47,026 --> 00:06:54,768

a number of boards there. But like I said, it is not perfect. If I had the

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00:06:54,768 --> 00:07:04,048

opportunity to choose again, I would go again. It had as much to do with choosing

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00:07:04,048 --> 00:07:09,877

to remain in Mississippi for higher education as anything else. I do not regret

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00:07:09,877 --> 00:07:16,904

the decision at all. You know, like I said, I think most students, most graduates can

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00:07:16,904 --> 00:07:22,915

say some of the same things about their alma maters. Some of my best friends were

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00:07:22,915 --> 00:07:30,032

from there, I met my wife in college, so
to separate my experience at the University

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00:07:30,032 --> 00:07:34,969
of Mississippi from my life now is
difficult to do. In the end, I will

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00:07:34,969 --> 00:07:40,190
reiterate, it is not perfect. We have
members in our community at the University

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00:07:40,214 --> 00:07:46,861
of Mississippi who do not represent the
values that we as an entire community are

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00:07:46,862 --> 00:07:53,992
trying to cultivate, and that is true and
the University of Mississippi, that is

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00:07:53,992 --> 00:07:59,125
true at Alabama and the University of
Alabama and at Auburn and we could go

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00:07:59,125 --> 00:08:05,689
down an entire list of places whose
history is rooted in a different genre

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00:08:05,689 --> 00:08:12,509
than we are trying to create today and
that there are members of those

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00:08:12,509 --> 00:08:16,317
institutional families who would love
for things to revert back to the way

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00:08:16,317 --> 00:08:21,962
things were. Fortunately, at most of
these universities, the majority and

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00:08:21,962 --> 00:08:24,551

majority in power will not allow that to happen, I certainly hope not.

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00:08:24,551 --> 00:08:32,203

To me the state of STEM education is interestingly part of the issue, as I

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00:08:32,203 --> 00:08:36,099

see it, is referring to it as STEM education in the first place. Now,

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00:08:36,099 --> 00:08:41,980

I am in a technical professional, so that in no way diminishes the

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00:08:41,980 --> 00:08:45,780

importance of trying to encourage students to study science, technology,

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00:08:45,780 --> 00:08:50,922

engineering, and mathematics related curricula and pursue careers in those

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00:08:50,922 --> 00:08:55,996

areas. However, part of our issue, I believe, is we have created this

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00:08:55,996 --> 00:09:01,034

artificial chasm between STEM education and all other education pursuits. And

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00:09:01,034 --> 00:09:06,902

that chasm is not real. A corollary to that, and in association to that, we have

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00:09:06,902 --> 00:09:11,992

also not only said that STEM is different but that somehow STEM is only accessible

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00:09:11,992 --> 00:09:18,887

to the most academically elite of us.
And, and that characterization of it

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00:09:18,887 --> 00:09:24,086
being academically elite or not is
thrust upon children very, very young,

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00:09:24,086 --> 00:09:28,899
so kids are being conditioned to
believe that STEM is out of reach

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00:09:28,899 --> 00:09:34,127
for them before they really even
understand what STEM is, right. So

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00:09:34,127 --> 00:09:38,097
a kindergartener and first grader
and a second grader, they understand

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00:09:38,097 --> 00:09:41,152
what math is because they have math
class and when they have math class

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00:09:41,152 --> 00:09:43,633
at school, it is called math. They
do not know what engineering is

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00:09:43,633 --> 00:09:46,173
necessarily, unless they happen to
have parents who are engineers,

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00:09:46,173 --> 00:09:49,325
etcetera. They do not really know
what it is, but they know what

110

00:09:49,325 --> 00:09:51,325
math is and they know what science
class is because we call it that,

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00:09:51,325 --> 00:09:55,885

right. And if it is depending on
how that interest and excitement

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00:09:55,885 --> 00:09:59,092

is cultivated in those students and
their resulting excitement about

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00:09:59,092 --> 00:10:05,978

those topics as they grow older
and the correlation between science

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00:10:05,978 --> 00:10:10,139

and math in first grade starts to
become evident between these careers

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00:10:10,186 --> 00:10:14,847

that we call STEM and they have been
raised to believe this is hard, I am

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00:10:14,847 --> 00:10:21,015

not good at this, I cannot do this.
It is human nature to enjoy things less

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00:10:21,015 --> 00:10:26,045

that you are not good at, except golf.
That is probably the exception, right?

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00:10:26,046 --> 00:10:31,931

So we are raising children who believe
they cannot pursue STEM education and

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00:10:31,931 --> 00:10:38,029

then, therefore they are not interested
in STEM education, which makes it more

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00:10:38,029 --> 00:10:42,260

difficult to convince them to be
interested. I am a strong believer

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00:10:42,260 --> 00:10:48,933

in STEAM education, that we have to inject the arts into this conversation.

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00:10:48,933 --> 00:10:56,812

There is no difference, right. There is this separation between what we call

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00:10:56,812 --> 00:11:02,938

STEM and everything else is reckless, it is having accidental, I think,

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00:11:02,938 --> 00:11:07,056

reckless may be too strong of a word, I am being a little dramatic, but this

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00:11:07,056 --> 00:11:12,876

separation is counterproductive. And one, in my opinion, if you actually are

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00:11:12,876 --> 00:11:18,009

going to be a "STEM" professional, we need STEM professionals who are

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00:11:18,009 --> 00:11:22,707

well-rounded enough to have some understanding of the arts and they are

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00:11:22,707 --> 00:11:28,008

injecting it into their careers. STEM requires creativity, empathy, and teaming,

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00:11:28,008 --> 00:11:33,994

and appreciation of, I mean, all of those things are required to be a good STEM

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00:11:33,995 --> 00:11:39,302

professional as well. If you are pursuing a career in the arts, the world is

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00:11:39,302 --> 00:11:44,742

increasingly technological, you cannot escape it. So to presume that I am going to be a

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00:11:44,742 --> 00:11:48,910

professional author, therefore I do not need to understand these things that are

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00:11:48,910 --> 00:11:54,053

technical is folly because all of your tools are technological. One of my

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00:11:54,053 --> 00:11:58,238

daughters is extremely interested in fashion, and even at her young age, I

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00:11:58,238 --> 00:12:03,998

see the seeds of the separation being calcified in her brain, so we are working

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00:12:03,998 --> 00:12:09,952

really hard to let her know there is no difference. When we go to the store to

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00:12:09,952 --> 00:12:16,903

choose fabrics, which most would say is a purely artistic exercise, we make sure

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00:12:16,903 --> 00:12:19,967

to explain to her what thread counts are and how they are manufactured and

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00:12:19,967 --> 00:12:23,319

understanding the differences between qualities of fabrics, and it has a lot

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00:12:23,319 --> 00:12:27,259

to do with understanding the supply chain all the way back and how they are

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00:12:27,259 --> 00:12:29,899

manufactured. When she sits home and brings out the sewing machine to sew a

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00:12:29,899 --> 00:12:35,102

pillow, this is a very complex piece of machinery. And so, to separate

143

00:12:35,102 --> 00:12:38,473

yourself from your future competition by understanding the technological

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00:12:38,473 --> 00:12:42,461

side of this artistic enterprise, that is a competitive advantage. And

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00:12:42,461 --> 00:12:49,087

so, the separation between all of these pursuits is counterproductive.

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00:12:49,087 --> 00:12:56,140

What does this have to do with STEM education? Well, the point is that A,

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00:12:56,140 --> 00:13:02,053

you do not have to be a genius to enjoy mathematics or to be an engineer, right.

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00:13:02,053 --> 00:13:06,993

And you know, there are all sorts of examples, Einstein making a C in

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00:13:06,993 --> 00:13:15,059

mathematics or whatever the legends are. It is an understanding that the

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00:13:15,059 --> 00:13:21,009

whole world is art and the whole world is science at the same time and there

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00:13:21,009 --> 00:13:26,008

is a correlation between science and mathematics and your life just as much

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00:13:26,008 --> 00:13:30,809

as there is a correlation between social studies and reading and writing

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00:13:30,859 --> 00:13:35,700

and spelling and your life. It is all-encompassing. And if we can get to a

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00:13:35,700 --> 00:13:40,129

place where we are doing that, where we are not teaching our children they cannot

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00:13:40,129 --> 00:13:44,000

pursue STEM before they even really understand what it is, that is a huge

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00:13:44,000 --> 00:13:48,919

barrier that will be released. That, in effect, affects the entire community,

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00:13:48,919 --> 00:13:53,927

not just the African American community. So when you talk about our community

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00:13:53,927 --> 00:14:01,944

specifically, it is not any different, right. There is a resources question

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00:14:01,944 --> 00:14:06,441

that comes into play when you want to peel that onion back a little bit more,

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00:14:06,441 --> 00:14:11,952

right. There is a resources question: do you have people who can demonstrate

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00:14:11,952 --> 00:14:17,100

the accessibility of these career pursuits? That is a resources and

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00:14:17,100 --> 00:14:24,072
exposure question. And so I would say that the issues we face in

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00:14:24,072 --> 00:14:28,931
the African American community with STEM education is not

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00:14:28,931 --> 00:14:32,196
something that is unique to our community. It is something, that

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00:14:32,196 --> 00:14:35,983
perhaps, is exacerbated by certain statistical attributes that we

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00:14:35,983 --> 00:14:38,314
have to face and overcome.

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00:14:46,487 --> 00:14:51,459
Mentoring is paramount, right. There is a saying that experience

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00:14:51,459 --> 00:14:55,291
is the best teacher but you will never live long enough to have

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00:14:55,291 --> 00:15:00,995
all of them. So understanding as early as you can how to learn from

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00:15:00,995 --> 00:15:05,117
other peoples experiences is absolutely crucial. When I was

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00:15:05,117 --> 00:15:10,679
younger, I had mentors and I

did not know, I did not know the

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00:15:10,679 --> 00:15:15,164
value, right. These were people
older than me who recognized the

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00:15:15,164 --> 00:15:19,565
value and they took it upon
themselves to pour into me. As

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00:15:19,565 --> 00:15:21,565
I got older and I started to
recognize the value and the

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00:15:21,565 --> 00:15:25,234
returns and how they were
helping me to be better, then I

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00:15:25,234 --> 00:15:32,013
insisted on A, pursuing mentorship
from other people, and B, trying to

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00:15:32,013 --> 00:15:35,723
do the same thing that others had
done for me and that take things that

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00:15:35,723 --> 00:15:39,981
I had learned and pour them into other people.
You know, there are all different

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00:15:39,981 --> 00:15:44,179
sorts of mentors. There are mentors
with whom you never have a

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00:15:44,179 --> 00:15:49,093
conversation, just that silent
confidence, that continuous consistent

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00:15:49,093 --> 00:15:56,086
observing they are just getting it done

and are getting it done in a way that

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00:15:56,086 --> 00:15:59,419

exemplifies the way I want to get it done, I want to be able to get it done,

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00:15:59,419 --> 00:16:06,373

so there may never be a conversation. There are mentors who are very good at

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00:16:06,373 --> 00:16:11,010

amplifying the things about you so that you dont forget. Dont forget

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00:16:11,010 --> 00:16:15,210

while you are working on other things to work on to be better, dont forget

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00:16:15,210 --> 00:16:19,723

to maintain these things that you do well. There are mentors who are very

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00:16:19,723 --> 00:16:23,127

good at helping you find the blind spots and the dust piles that you put under

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00:16:23,127 --> 00:16:27,993

the carpet and the dirty sock that's been under the sofa for so long that

189

00:16:27,993 --> 00:16:30,411

you forgot it was there. They are very good at helping you understand

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00:16:30,411 --> 00:16:36,956

something about you that you probably dont see. And, and then there are

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00:16:36,956 --> 00:16:40,960

mentors who also are advocates and

they are the ones who are actively

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00:16:40,960 --> 00:16:49,134

representing you when you are not there.

And all of them are valuable and some

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00:16:49,134 --> 00:16:52,994

may serve all roles, some may only

serve one of those roles, but to get

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00:16:52,994 --> 00:16:59,134

better is, is, you know, mentors are

just so critical in helping you get

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00:16:59,134 --> 00:17:04,900

better and just showing you what you

can be, right. Sometimes your mentors

196

00:17:04,900 --> 00:17:10,165

can show you, can convince you that you

can be something you never really even

197

00:17:10,165 --> 00:17:13,234

thought about being before, right.

198

00:17:22,119 --> 00:17:27,131

At Marshall Space Flight Center,

for, I have been here for nine and a

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00:17:27,131 --> 00:17:36,046

half years, and we have, in various

forms, really emphasized diversity

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00:17:36,046 --> 00:17:43,733

and inclusion. And diversity is one

of those conversations that if you

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00:17:43,733 --> 00:17:50,041

dont have it right, it becomes

counterproductive and when it is

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00:17:50,041 --> 00:17:54,171

counterproductive, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and it

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00:17:54,171 --> 00:17:58,315

becomes uncomfortable and nobody wants to have the conversation.

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00:17:58,315 --> 00:18:06,964

And look, we should be valuing the uniqueness of individuals because

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00:18:06,964 --> 00:18:11,449

it is the right thing to do, get that out of the way, right, aside from

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00:18:11,449 --> 00:18:16,140

all the other values it adds, it is the right thing to do. Beyond that,

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00:18:16,140 --> 00:18:21,085

at an agency chartered with doing things that nobody has done before,

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00:18:21,085 --> 00:18:24,922

we have to create an environment where uniqueness is encouraged

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00:18:24,922 --> 00:18:29,144

because in the presence of encouraged uniqueness, more

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00:18:29,144 --> 00:18:34,145

solutions to the problems we face now and are going to face to get

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00:18:34,145 --> 00:18:40,982

humans to Mars and back safely, we have to have more potential

212

00:18:40,982 --> 00:18:47,167

solutions on the table. To me, my definition of diversity is variety

213

00:18:47,167 --> 00:18:50,231

in thought whose genesis is variety in persons. That variety in persons

214

00:18:50,231 --> 00:18:54,357

comes from a lot of different places. It comes from racial diversity and

215

00:18:54,357 --> 00:18:58,963

educational diversity, demographic diversity, socioeconomic diversity,

216

00:18:58,963 --> 00:19:02,288

and it comes from generational diversity. It comes from all of

217

00:19:02,288 --> 00:19:07,953

those. Now, we are in a part of the country with a history that amplifies

218

00:19:07,953 --> 00:19:17,006

racial diversity and understandably so and necessarily so. When we have

219

00:19:17,006 --> 00:19:22,196

those conversations, we have to make sure, we hope to make sure that all

220

00:19:22,196 --> 00:19:25,592

of the persons involved in those conversations understand that we are

221

00:19:25,592 --> 00:19:29,705

not trying to check boxes, we are trying to do things the right way

222

00:19:29,729 --> 00:19:34,888

because it is the right thing to do
and we are trying to do things in a

223

00:19:34,888 --> 00:19:40,063

way that furthers our ability to
execute the mission of this agency,

224

00:19:48,023 --> 00:19:56,034

lot of good progress and I think
the work that remains can be more

225

00:19:56,034 --> 00:20:02,170

subtle. It lies in just the
innocence of human nature.

226

00:20:02,170 --> 00:20:08,930

When you look at who are getting
opportunities for development,

227

00:20:08,954 --> 00:20:12,170

and it is hard to put your finger
on it, it is trying to make sure

228

00:20:12,170 --> 00:20:18,141

that when I am in a crunch, Space
Launch System is in what I call

229

00:20:18,141 --> 00:20:22,179

silly season, we are trying to
build a rocket, and any time I

230

00:20:22,179 --> 00:20:25,245

need something done, and I mean
I, Markeeva Morgan, any time that

231

00:20:25,245 --> 00:20:28,407

I need something done, I am looking
for somebody to help me get it done,

232

00:20:28,407 --> 00:20:32,778

my natural inclination is to go
to the folks who I know will get it

233

00:20:32,778 --> 00:20:36,992

done and I will repeatedly go to
the folks who I know will get it

234

00:20:36,992 --> 00:20:42,278

done. One of the limitations of
that statement, as understandable

235

00:20:42,278 --> 00:20:46,578

as it is given our schedule
pressures, one of the limitations

236

00:20:46,579 --> 00:20:50,403

of that statement is going to the
folks I know will get it done,

237

00:20:50,421 --> 00:20:54,814

which means I am repeatedly going
to a small group of people created

238

00:20:54,814 --> 00:20:58,922

by my own experiences. And
occasionally, I need to break out

239

00:20:58,922 --> 00:21:03,957

of that, break out of the autopilot
and be deliberate about looking

240

00:21:03,957 --> 00:21:07,690

for more, for new people who might
be able to get it done because all

241

00:21:07,690 --> 00:21:12,817

that does is expand the group within
the "I know will get it done." And

242

00:21:12,817 --> 00:21:17,112

the more people that I know will get it done, quite frankly, the faster

243

00:21:17,112 --> 00:21:18,903

we are going to get it done because we are not asking the same people

244

00:21:18,926 --> 00:21:23,980

over and over again. And it is a natural thing, so we have to make

245

00:21:23,980 --> 00:21:29,579

sure that we continue to put emphasis on developing everybody

246

00:21:29,579 --> 00:21:34,931

to the peak of their capabilities and desires. That is easy to say,

247

00:21:34,931 --> 00:21:42,925

it is an easy and eloquent thing to say, and it is more challenging to

248

00:21:42,925 --> 00:21:46,949

do, especially in real life. It is not even as challenging to want to

249

00:21:46,949 --> 00:21:50,991

do, but when you really get in and you are trying to get the work done,

250

00:21:50,991 --> 00:21:57,798

sometimes, sometimes we fall back in autopilot and we have to try to live

251

00:21:57,798 --> 00:22:03,771

and make decisions more deliberately to be inclusive, again, because it is

252

00:22:03,771 --> 00:22:06,816

the right thing to do and then
because it is the right thing to do

253

00:22:06,816 --> 00:22:15,047

for the Agency. Whether we are
talking about making sure that we are

254

00:22:15,047 --> 00:22:22,293

recruiting people who are coming to
us from a variety of schools. You

255

00:22:22,293 --> 00:22:28,024

know, an over exemplified example is
if every engineer we hire is from the

256

00:22:28,024 --> 00:22:33,099

University of Alabama and they are all
electrical engineers, over a period of

257

00:22:33,099 --> 00:22:37,879

time, you are going to start getting
people who are all taught by the same

258

00:22:37,902 --> 00:22:43,650

professors. And in some way, you are
creating a homogeneity of

259

00:22:43,650 --> 00:22:49,031

problem-solving. Now, they are all
individuals, so we're not going to

260

00:22:49,031 --> 00:22:54,090

be recruiting you know, numerical
sequences of the Borg, but they are

261

00:22:54,090 --> 00:22:59,016

all taught by the same people,
so that does create at least some

262

00:22:59,016 --> 00:23:03,876

portion of homogeneity whereas
someone who studied the same

263

00:23:03,876 --> 00:23:08,061

subject from a different professor
at a different school, that is an

264

00:23:08,061 --> 00:23:13,905

important aspect of this as well. And
so, trying to make sure that we

265

00:23:13,905 --> 00:23:18,726

appreciate, no, that we go past
appreciation to a point at which

266

00:23:18,726 --> 00:23:23,204

we are fascinated by the uniqueness
that individuals bring to teams.

267

00:23:23,204 --> 00:23:29,915

Quite frankly, I am interested by
people. People are, I have to

268

00:23:29,915 --> 00:23:33,798

pause because maybe you will
edit it out, but people are,

269

00:23:33,798 --> 00:23:38,078

everybody has a little crazy
right? And it is fascinating,

270

00:23:38,078 --> 00:23:42,981

people are fascinating when you
really hear their story. And you,

271

00:23:42,981 --> 00:23:48,192

when you talk to ten different
people and you realize, you know,

272

00:23:48,192 --> 00:23:53,959

if each of their lives is built
with ten Legos and you realize

273

00:23:53,959 --> 00:23:58,738

that eight or nine of those Legos
are all the same, or everybodys

274

00:23:58,738 --> 00:24:03,296

ten Legos came out of the same
box of twenty and so you start

275

00:24:03,296 --> 00:24:08,842

seeing, wow, you know, we are
really all similar. But then you

276

00:24:08,842 --> 00:24:13,130

start appreciating how we can
all be so similar and so unique

277

00:24:13,130 --> 00:24:16,511

at the same time. And then you go
past the point where you do not

278

00:24:16,511 --> 00:24:20,056

care. Because what I am trying to
figure out as we are moving forward

279

00:24:20,056 --> 00:24:23,407

trying to do all the cool stuff
that we are trying to do around

280

00:24:23,407 --> 00:24:27,248

here, what is it that we can all
bring to the table that makes this

281

00:24:27,248 --> 00:24:32,892

work? You know, how can I enrich your
life because mine is different from

282

00:24:32,892 --> 00:24:38,794

yours? How can I help you do your job because, my life is different from yours?

283

00:24:38,817 --> 00:24:43,044

That means I have a different perspective on this problem than you do, so how can I

284

00:24:43,044 --> 00:24:45,410

bring that perspective to the table and help you do your job better?

285

00:24:45,410 --> 00:24:51,877

I am eternally grateful to my predecessors in the African

286

00:24:51,956 --> 00:24:55,549

American community. My experience at Marshall Space Flight Center

287

00:24:55,549 --> 00:25:01,080

is all that it is because of an incredible amount of work that

288

00:25:01,080 --> 00:25:06,063

has been done before I ever showed up. You know, somebody came through

289

00:25:06,063 --> 00:25:09,682

when this was a wilderness for us, with a machete and was just cutting

290

00:25:09,682 --> 00:25:14,178

down the brush. And then others came through and trampled down

291

00:25:14,178 --> 00:25:17,581

and made a path, and then somebody else came through and laid gravel,

292

00:25:17,581 --> 00:25:21,212

and then somebody else came through
and paved it. And you know, I come

293

00:25:21,212 --> 00:25:26,056

through and I want it to be clear
that I recognize that this road I

294

00:25:26,056 --> 00:25:32,753

get to travel on, it was not always
here. As smooth as it, and that is

295

00:25:32,753 --> 00:25:36,519

not to suggest that it is, you know,
easy sailing, I'm not in the back

296

00:25:36,519 --> 00:25:40,211

of a Maybach sipping on Champagne
by any means, but as smooth as it

297

00:25:40,211 --> 00:25:46,706

is, as much as I am able to enjoy
this career that I have is a direct

298

00:25:46,706 --> 00:25:50,702

result of people who came before
me who did not have the same experience

299

00:25:50,702 --> 00:25:55,003

that I have and who sacrificed so
that generations coming after them

300

00:25:55,003 --> 00:26:00,809

could have this type of experience.
And I hope, I hope that daily as I

301

00:26:00,809 --> 00:26:04,695

do what I am doing and having the
conversations that I have like this one,

302

00:26:04,695 --> 00:26:08,100

behind closed doors and making myself available to have conversations,

303

00:26:08,100 --> 00:26:11,310

because that is what it is about, having conversations and increasing

304

00:26:11,310 --> 00:26:16,920

understanding and that I am making this path just a little bit smoother

305

00:26:16,920 --> 00:26:20,243

for the next generation to come through and make it even smoother,

306

00:26:20,243 --> 00:26:30,001

that I am continuing what is a fantastic, just, just awesome trend of making it

307

00:26:30,001 --> 00:26:36,924

better. Because it certainly was made better for me and I would, I would never

308

00:26:36,924 --> 00:26:43,528

want to have any conversation like this without recognizing that my career and

309

00:26:43,528 --> 00:26:52,993

my life is enabled by people who dont even know my name, who, who put

310

00:26:52,993 --> 00:26:57,681

everything they had on the line for a generation of hope.

311

00:26:57,681 --> 00:27:03,159

Often times, truth is not a prerequisite for real and we have

312

00:27:03,159 --> 00:27:10,832

to deal with real aspects of this.

What is real for you is, is based

313

00:27:10,878 --> 00:27:16,012

on the amalgamation of your lifes

experiences and if that reality for

314

00:27:16,012 --> 00:27:22,761

you creates a, creates an impression

of me that is not true, the way we

315

00:27:22,761 --> 00:27:27,797

start to share that truth is by having

conversations from your reality and

316

00:27:27,797 --> 00:27:32,898

my reality and for me to recognize

that the legitimacy of my opinion

317

00:27:32,898 --> 00:27:36,426

and my reality is not necessarily

threatened by the acknowledgement

318

00:27:36,426 --> 00:27:40,116

that there is an alternate one that

you share. If we have a conversation,

319

00:27:40,116 --> 00:27:44,079

we are seeking to learn from each

other as opposed to a debate where

320

00:27:44,079 --> 00:27:48,058

we are seeking to convince the other

one I am right. And, and through

321

00:27:48,058 --> 00:27:51,580

those conversations develops

understanding, through understanding

322

00:27:51,580 --> 00:27:56,025

is the minimization of fear, and the
eradication of fear brings togetherness,

323

00:27:56,025 --> 00:28:03,090

and that is, that is the goal. It's not,
we are not seeking to be the same, right,