

INTRODUCTION: Hello, this is Michael Eure and I'd like to invite you to the Michael Eure Show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube channel.

ALEX FLOWERS: Yeah, let's get real, right? Let's give it up.

To, the first thing I want to say is thank you to all of those who came out. All the panelists, all of the participants.

Today you were gonna get hip hop and STEM together, but I'll be remiss if we did not have a welcome from our mayor.

BLAKE MASSENGILL: Welcome, everybody tonight. How's everybody doing?

CROWD: Excellent.

MASSENGILL: Excellent. That is right.

My name is Blake Massengill, and I'm the mayor of Fuquay Varina.

I want you welcome you here you here tonight at our Fuquay Varina Arts Center.

We also have school member Monika Johnson-Hostler, I saw her right over there. Thank you so much for joining us tonight.

Number one, I want to thank Alex Flowers right here, Alex. Alex is the man behind the show.

He's a man that's bringing innovative hip hop outreach here to our community.

And Alex, none is this is going on for our middle school and high school students and supporting STEM. So, thank you.

There's been also countless volunteers I've been involved to put this on, to everyone of you volunteers are important and are integral part of this and also the panelists.

You cannot have an event without great panelists, and I know that you're gonna have fun today.

But look, most importantly, y'all didn't come here to hear me talk. You came here to see Alex and see these great, panelists and lots of great things happen.

So, thank you so much for coming tonight. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this and Alex, on with it.

ALEX: Get ready for the show.

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, everyone. Good evening, everyone. Alright, I'll check the temperature of the wrong.

So, we're gonna do a quick check out already. I might age myself or date myself a little bit.

Aaaaaaaah Oooooooh.

CROWD: Alright!

ANNOUNCER: Okay, we're in the right place. So, we are at the midway point of the Grand [inaudible]. Cypher would you please come to the stage? Give a round of applause everyone.

And while they are traveling, please, people, please remember that we do have vendors out front. Go by, check out our vendors.

We have some amazing people that we definitely want to support and can we give a round of applause to Alex Flowers for this great event.

Excellent. We appreciate everyone who has stayed thus far and all of our panelists at this time, coming to the stage is going to be Iconic Bond. A round of applause please.

ICONIC BOND: Check check.

I'm a hip hop artist by the name of Iconic Bond. I am the first in my family to get a chemistry degree and pursue pharmaceutical manufacturing, I guess.

First hip hop artist and first something else that I can't remember, but I'm not gonna go to my notes.

Let's see, I am a youth mentor. I'm a certified mental health first aid coach.

Umm, executive director and cofounder of the House of Creatives, which is non-profit, we started this year to give opportunities, guidance and resources to underrepresented artists and creatives, and also to work with towns to diversify their entertainment.

So, Fuquay Varina, if Blake is still here, hit me up. So, I can help you diversify your entertainment, sir.

Um, I'm the interfaith director of Alnoor Islamic Center in Fuquay. I'm also a board member of the Holly Springs Interfaith Alliance. Umm, I think that's good enough. Alright.

ANNOUNCER: Awesome.

And now coming to the stage and Noah Bunn.

NOAH BUNN: Good evening. I am Noah Bunn, I'm a computer science student, and musician at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. Aggie pride.

And I am the first to I'm the first musician in my family to perform and get an award from a legendary jazz musician, Wynton Marsalis.

I also started my own piano-tuning business and over here in the Wake County area and Greensboro.

So, my first, let's see, inspirations were both my parents and my middle school band director, who made coming to school fun for me because I got to go to school, see all my friends, play music, which I really enjoyed. And my parents who instilled the methods of practice and the mindset that I needed to transfer into my computer science studies.

So, yeah, thank you.

ANNOUNCER: And now we have coming to the stage, Joe Brown.

JOE BROWN: Good evening everyone, I'm Joe brown. I'm the owner of Great Expectations Lawn and Landscape.

I'm the first in my family to take a group of youth from the inner city of Chicago and create a six-figure business.

I started it twice. We started again in Fuquay Varina. We're the first ones to work with the youth and go all the way to the President Barack Obama's house to mow their lawns and take care of their communities.

I'm the first in the family, also with those same views to make the newspaper for doing what we done in the inner city of Chicago.

I first got induced to STEM when working with United Cerebral Palsy. We restored and recycled computers for our youth to go back to in inner city schools where we did not have technology.

We did that for ten years, so I'm the first in the family to come back and do it twice.

ANNOUNCER: And now coming to the stage [inaudible.]

PANELIST: Peace everyone. Thank you for having me.

By the end of this year, I will be the first doctor in three families, biological, foster and adoptive.

The first that those three families to be a martial artist with the black belt in two different disciplines.

The first published poet, the first hip hop emcee very inspired by the likes of KRS-One. Lyricists such as Lupe, Fiasco, Papoose, and I'm really honored to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

ANNOUNCER: Okay. And now coming to the stage, Michael Eure.

MICHAEL EURE: Good evening. It's a great honor to be here and I am just so proud of you, Fuquay. And I'm so proud that I had opportunity to meet Alex.

Uh, I am an engineering success coach at Wake Tech and this is very new, so I am the first that has been assigned to a particular major and Wake Tech is transforming and all students that come get success coaches no matter what their major is.

When I went to college, we didn't have those, because you might think you want to be an engineer, but you really need to be an accountant. So, we help guide them and we all have care teams. We have a career coach, we have academic advisors, the Deans, etcetera.

But I'm a first-generation college student and I'm sure I'm the first person in my family that made a point of visiting all of the HBCUs in North Carolina so that I can see the differences as well as the similarities because they're not exactly the same.

One of the people that I would say really inspired me and this was at A&T, but I got a chance to meet Dr. Ronald McNair, and he was like astronaut. And I saw him, and he was just practicing his martial arts and I learned later that he played the saxophone and that led me know you could be an engineer or a scientist and still have the cultural arts.

And I think that we need to integrate and I'm going to just go one thing off into the ancient days.

Uh, with the Dogon people in Africa used to do a dance to the star Sirius 2, which could not be seen by the naked eye, and they did that thousands of years before we could see it. So, the music and the art are teaching tools.

You don't just have to just memorize formulas, you can memorize through the movement of the dance, and I just appreciate it and thank you.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you. And last but not least, Dr. Cornelius Toliver.

CORNELIUS TOLIVER: Good evening, everyone. I am Cornelius Tolliver I'm originally from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

I am the first doctor in my family, doctor of pharmacy. I'm also the first licensed diabetes educator in my family. That's where my passion is teaching diabetes, especially to African Americans and Hispanic communities, because we don't get enough of that.

So, much of it is usually detailed about the medications, but it's a lot more than that with physical activity and nutrition part.

I'm also the first, well, actually take that back, the second, my dad would be so mad at you right now. I'm just second, to have my own business, actually have my own business, To-Live-Right Medication Therapy Management. I make my own elderberry formulation as well.

Oh, I'm also a shoe designer at my own shoe coming out here in the fall. So, get ready for that as well. It's for healthcare professionals only. So, you can be a healthcare professional and still rock some nice kicks.

Inspiration for me, I would say definitely is my family. I mean, they pretty much instilled everything in me as far as values and putting God first and without God, I wouldn't be here today to share my story with you.

So, it's really it's really cut and dry for me. My family's definitely my inspiration is still to this day, they're my biggest supporter. And also, they're quick to put me in my place if I get out of control.

So, thank you for having me. Looking forward to so much.

ANNOUNCER: We have an amazing panel, so we're gonna go ahead and get into this side A or side B.

Side A being, which hip hop artist is most scientific to you and why?

Side B, explain one moment you overcame a challenge during your journey in STEM rather, and whether it was in high school, college, graduate school or professional.

Who wants to volunteer?

PANELIST: Okay, looks like I'm forced to, by default.

When I was in high school, one of the major challenges was to finish and that's why one of my mottos is, you know, I don't work until I'm tired. I worked until I'm finished.

So, there's plenty of time that I wanted to quit, you know?

So, one of the major challenges I had to overcome was really just getting started.

So, I had this teacher that really, really got on my nerve, that is my favorite girl right now, Ms. Carmichael. She helped me finish. So, that's my biggest challenge right there.

ANNOUNCER: Alright. Thank you. Thank you.

BUNN: I'll be choosing B.

ANNOUNCER: Okay.

BUNN: So, I'm still in my STEM journey, but my first year of college was a long one.

I was in the university marching band, Magnificent Marching Machine, playing trombone. And if you don't know how hard they work, they work like five hours a day.

So, I was getting up and doing homework, going to class. In the afternoon I was in rehearsal, and I'd be getting back home at like 10:30 and keep doing more work.

And was repeat all day, every day, weekends were like ten hours. And so it got me really distracted and my priorities weren't really straight.

So, I didn't have a GPA that I was really proud of. And that never happened to me in my whole school career.

So, I lost a lot of my confidence that year. And the next year I took semester off, took a video game programming class at Wake Tech. And I had a professor that was really supportive.

I was learning new programming language coding a video game, so I'd never done it before. And my last project was to make a full video game. And through that process I learned that it's not that I can't do something, I can't do it yet.

ANNOUNCER: I like that.

BUNN: And so, I completed that project with a 95.

After the semester I was trying to roast myself because I was like what are you tripping for? I was like I have had a time in my life where I was like, I can't do this. [inaudible.]

Last semester, my band director asked me to... so, for context we had to we had a performance in Tennessee that would get ready for and our bass player couldn't be there, and I had picked up the string base like a week before that, and he was like can you play bass for the concert?

And for whatever reason, the thought 'I can't' never came to my head. It was, I can't do it yet.

So, I starting picking up the bass in March, and our concert was in May. I ended up playing that concert on both trombone and bass. So, I learned to never doubt myself like that ever again.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you.

BOND: It's looking like it's my turn. I didn't study at all, can you tell me what the question is?

ANNOUNCER: Absolutely, Sonic.

A is, which hip hop artist is most scientific to you and why? Side B. Explain one moment that you overcame a challenge during your journey in STEM, whether it was in high school, college, graduate school, or professional.

BOND: Okay, I'll just go B, because of there's no way I'm gonna think of the hip hop artist right now.

ANNOUNCER: Okay.

BOND: I probably should studied so I did forget to say something else when I was up there.

Inspiration, because it kind of leads into the story. It was my father. My father is the youngest of nine children. He's from Egypt originally.

He's the only person to ever get a college degree or go to college in his family. Umm, and he would tell me his story growing up.

He's the one that took care of the whole family. He's the youngest and that stuck with me my whole life, even into my career. He's somebody that doesn't know how to stop. He's addicted to going. He's non-stop, so that's what I became.

So, I started my career in STEM, so I work in pharmaceuticals. Not, not as a Pharm-D, like the doc, but umm in manufacturing. So, being a diverse employee in all white company, that was probably the biggest challenge. I was new to this company.

I busted my behind. I gave him everything I had to the point where, and I'll tell you this little story, because this is also kind of part of my journey at a difficult thing that I had to overcome.

We were developing, so I am a chemist, so I was developing test methods for a product that had never been tested before, so even in doing research, there was nothing that could help.

So, I got stuck doing this one thing and you know my parents are, you know, from the ghetto in Egypt. So, my mentality is kind of ghetto, I'm not gonna lie.

So, I had to find some pig skin, so, we were developing a topical product and the closest skin to human skin is pig skin.

Mind you, I'm Muslim too, so I don't even... I don't even like that stuff, right?

So, I hit up a hog farm, and I was like, I need, I need some skin and they dropped off an entire piece of hog's skin, but it had hair on it so I can't get hair, you know, in the experiment.

So, me being ghetto, I drove the Sally Beauty supply and got some clippers and sat it on the on the floor and shaved this pig skin so I could use it for my experiment.

Anyway, so I'm just giving you that as example of everything that I did for this company.

But honestly, and this is in corporate America, is difficult sometimes for people who are diverse.

Um, while DE and I are still being pushed right now, it's like the topical thing is the cool thing, right? It's a trend, right?

Everybody wants to hire diverse, hire diverse. The problem is people hiring are not diverse.

Now I have that opportunity, and I only hire diverse.

Anyway, so there was a situation where, and I have been with this company eight years, a new employee came in, a Caucasian male, we're sitting in a breakroom, and this was, I can't remember what year was, but Wakefield High School, it was on the news because some kids hung a black bear from a tree.

Umm, because the principal, it was a new principal. And this was playing on the screen...

I'm at work and the guy sitting next to me vocalized that why they just playing a joke, why they in trouble, blah blah blah.

So, I explained it to him, professionally, not in a mean way. The next day I got written up for being aggressive.

Um and I gave my two-week notice that day and had to keep it moving because and that's why I gave him my father's example because my father in that example he wouldn't have stopped. He would have just had going. Same with the pig skin, you just gotta keep, you gotta find a solution. And that's really what made me fall in love with STEM in the first place.

I'm a problem solver and STEM solves everything.

ANNOUNCER: Awesome.

BOND: Math. That's all that math is.

That's all that science... that's all logical. That's all problem-solving. Umm and yeah, okay.

ANNOUNCER: Alright. Thank you.

PANELIST: That's funny because we get pig skin too. It looks so sketchy when they pull up. We get it from a butcher, but we use the hearts.



But anyway, I'm gonna be the first one to answer the other, the hip hop, scientific hip hop artist question, but I do really quickly wanna stay internal [inaudible.]

Just in case anyone's gone through the same thing, but the doctoral program I should be finishing by end of this year. I did start it homeless, sleeping in my car. So, to have come so far, I'm very grateful.

Not just for that, but for my own hard work and for never giving up. In terms of a scientific hip-hop artist, I already mentioned KRS-One. But I think when we look at KRS-One as an artist from the Bronx, the birthplace of hip hop, coming up on its 50th year, we understand hip hop is an art form for those who are afforded no other way of expression, right?

They had no other way to express themselves, and so you get this art form that transforms the personal into the political, and then the political into the universal. Classically, we understand STEM to be only science, technology, engineering and math, right?

But many philosophers and revolutionary theorists, people like Kwamé, Torae, Senam, they see a dialectical materialism. A science as a way that we apply to understand history, and coincidentally in the song Aw Yeah, KRS-One mentioned a lot of these people.

Kwamé, Torae and Marcus Garvey, all of whom are dialectual materialists, so when we look at that as an extension of science, it's very easy to see his subject matter with scientific, but his delivery is also scientific, right?

So, as a hip hop emcee myself, as a freestyler, you have to understand that the essence of freestyle hip hop, because KRS-One could freestyle and still does to this day at the Bimbe Cultural Art Festival in Durham a couple weeks ago, he did it.

He is synthesizing. You have to say what you're saying, considering your audience and how it's going to be received by them. You have to make it run. You have to make it flow.

There's a beat unless you're going acapella, you have to make it on beat and you're doing this immediately. All synapses are firing, and you're synthesizing this information and presenting it all at once.

I sat at a lot of tables with a lot of physicians, neurosurgeons, [inaudible] investors, very rich and powerful people, and have not seen anyone think on their feet the way I have seen people think on their feet on a random corner, on Poole Road, [inaudible] rapping.

So, I do believe that the highest level of science is hip hop and the only reason it is not considered a classical science in the way that quantum mechanics is because of racism.

ANNOUNCER: And that's why she [inaudible].

EURE: Okay, I'm gonna take Side A.

ANNOUNCER: You said Side A?

EURE: Yes, Side A.

ANNOUNCER: Okay.

Side A being which hip hop artist is more scientific to you and why?

EURE: And this is a little bit different, but we go around a little bit of a story. I've been working with students for a long time, like 30 years and one thing that I do is empower that to be ambassadors and help them achieve what they want.

And I have a student that wanted to major in sports journalism, and I worked in an adult degree completion program. So, students came to finish their degrees in an accelerated form at night.

And this student, our degree was organizational management and I said you can get a minor in sports communications. And I took him over to the department head. All he had to do was take 18 hours, and he did.

But in the meantime, I worked with the football league, Carolina Football Development League, and I was the life skill coordinator.

But I said, you know, y'all need to do programs like when you have these games so that people can read about you, and I had him in charge of that.

He ran into this artist in a store, Christopher Martin. I don't know if y'all know him.

And he had the time was doing a little TV clips and he was choosing students at North Carolina Central primarily.

And he taught hip hop in context at Central, but he hired that student to be his sports person.

And so, I got to meet Chris and then I worked a lot with people, National Society of Black Engineers. But particularly Rene Daughtry at Cisco Systems, and we kind of connected him and that student and the man didn't believe he knew Chris Martin.

So, he said I don't believe you know, you know, but we wanna do something with Durham Public Schools.

And if you know Chris Martin maybe he'll do a rap song. And they got together with two other people and they worked with the students, elementary school students, in Durham. And they produced a hip hop song about STEM.

And so, I think using your notoriety to get other people inspired, even though he was not a STEM person, he was using his skills to inspire STEM.

So, that's my person.

ANNOUNCER: Awesome. Thank you.

TOLIVER: Okay. I'll think I'll take the challenge question.

ANNOUNCER: The challenge question?

TOLIVER: Yeah.

ANNOUNCER: Talk about B? Which one, A or B?

TOLIVER: I am a big sports guy, obviously.

I like sports, so there was a time period where I really thought was really nice on the basketball court. In high school, and I was pretty good. I had a little 25 points per game.

North Carolina A&T came out to check me out. Offered me a little scholarship.

I told my mom... don't worry, I got it from here. I'm going to the league, and I was so sure

Yeah, I was going to North Carolina A&T and I thought I was going, yeah, yeah. But was a great school. Great experience.

But umm, that's all I had ever done up to that point was play basketball every single day of my life. It was rain, sleet, snow, working out, shooting basketball.

Obviously, I am not that tall so, I had the to work a little bit harder than everybody else.

So I get to A&T and guess what? I realize I realize that the other 15 guys on this team also averaged 25 points per game, and that the other 15 guys on this team were also 6-4, 6-5, 6-6, 6-7... And I am a freshman... and I'm 160 pounds at the time.

So, it's like, okay, this, you know, might not be the best idea for me. I might want start looking at other things. But I didn't give up. I didn't give up.

I worked out really hard, put on a little muscle came by my sophomore year, got a little bit of playing time. Came by my junior year and was back on the bench and I had to make a decision.

God kind of looked into me and kind of said, hey, son, you think it might be time to find out some other things that you're gonna be able to do besides keeping the team GPA up?

So, so should everybody's with my dad has, like, absolutely not. You cannot give up sport.

He's thinking about free tickets to games, of course I'm sure.

And my mom's like, whatever you want to do, baby, we support you. It's going to be fine, you can do anything you want.

My mom's already, they're going to support you. I had no idea what I wanted to do.

But anyway I decided it's like God woke me up one day and just said you need to let it go.

And you need to find out what else you can do. And before that, I had never looked into the healthcare field before.

Around that same time, when my grandmother began struggling with cancer and I remember going to see her when that time period when I was kind of deciding on if I was gonna let basketball go and I remember seeing those medications on the table. And no one knew in my family what they were.

They just knew she took 15 pills at eight o'clock 20 pills at 12 o'clock, with no rhyme or reason, right?

No educational background for anything. It's not their fault. It's just we weren't given any information to help her. We thought we were helping her, but in reality I know now that it was harming her. I wish I would have been able to help her a lot sooner.

ANNOUNCER: Yeah.

TOLIVER: So, went by A&T and I knew right there I had to let it go. One of the hardest decisions I ever made, but sometimes in life you just have, and I don't even consider that failing because that was a great experience for me, being able to play basketball, travel.

You have great friendships that I still have to this day with a lot of the players there.

But it also sometimes means that you have to step down in order to step up, right?

So, sometimes you have to just take a step back and some people consider it failure.

I don't really consider it failure. I consider just taking a leap of faith, right?

Following God's direction. If there's a door that he opens, you need to walk through it, don't question it, right?

And sometimes I think we just find ourselves questioning whether or not we should walk through that door and that's why I say most of the, I guess they say, most of the greatest talents are in the graveyard because people don't take chances.

So, don't be afraid to take chances. Don't be afraid to fail. I tell my sons all out that all the time.

They, I mean my son can hit 20 points and if they lose the game, he considers... you didn't fail. Just go back. Learn what you can learn and try to, you know, get better the next time.

And it's like that with life, it's like that as a pharmacist, it's like that as a father. It's just trying to get better each day, no matter what you're doing and then be able to uplift and help support other people to help them get there.

That's because my newest passion, just helping students learn how to become diabetes educators so that maybe they can help their family, when I didn't have the opportunity when I went to help my grandmother.

And so that's my biggest challenge. Sometimes you just gotta step down to sometimes step up, right?

ANNOUNCER: Awesome. Yes.

That was a great closing to the mid-brain cypher, and we're gonna give you a round of applause as you exit left.

KEVIN: Hi everyone, this is Kevin. I am a student at Wake Tech Community College. I want to give everyone a shout out here at this event.

You know, we have a lot of Wake Tech students, we have lot of people the town of Fuquay, from the town of Holly Springs and everyone's coming in here, putting the work together to make this an event such a great experience.

I'm an ambassador at Wake Tech for the STEM academic training program. And I'm over here to get inspired just like everyone else out here.

Quick shout out to Dr. Flowers for making this all this possible and just keep inspiring us and inspiring everyone else here.

I wanna give a quick shoutout to all of the Wake Tech employees that are out here. Specifically, Mr. Eure who invited me out here personally, along with Dr. Swanik, who is one of our, who is assistant dean at the school of mathematics, at our school.

She is assistant Dean of mathematics and on top of that, wanna give a shoutout to Dr. Flowers for making this all possible.

And our cameraman as well. He's also a student at Wake Tech. He's just making all this possible.

We're all out here to inspire and get inspired and push each other to be better and we just want to see each other succeed.

So, thank you for staying tuned.