

REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR AS THE BLACK ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

A year ago, when Dr. Eugene DeLoatch was recognized as the 2017 Black Engineer of the Year, he didn't realize what was ahead of him.

In addition to being shepherded through a whirlwind of lunches, breakfasts, and meetings at the conference, he shook a slew of hands, gave numerous impromptu speeches, and accepted congratulations from more people than he can remember.

"It's a distinct honor," said DeLoatch of finding himself as the "centerpiece" of attention at the event.

However, there was more to come.

All three of his alma maters asked DeLoatch to return to share his knowledge and experiences so they could bestow him with honors. Tougaloo College in Mississippi awarded him an honorary degree. New York University Polytechnic Institute recognized him during a diversity weekend. Lafayette College in Pennsylvania asked him to return to lecture. He also was inducted into the National Black College Hall of Fame and honored with the Distinguished Service Award by the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering.

DeLoatch, who was the inaugural dean of the Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. School of Engineering at Morgan State University, retired as dean emeritus in 2016.

He has had a long and storied career.

DeLoatch was affiliated with Howard University in Washington, DC, for 24 years and departed as the chairman of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. During that time, he led a department that granted baccalaureate degrees to more African-American engineers than any other school in the United States of America.

DeLoatch received a math degree from Tougaloo and an electrical engineering degree from Lafayette College. He also earned a master's degree in electrical engineering and a doctorate in bioengineering from the Polytechnic University of Brooklyn.

At the BEYA conference in 2017, when DeLoatch was named Black Engineer of the Year, previous BEYA honoree Shirley Jackson read a letter from President Barack Obama to DeLoatch.

"By breaking through barriers and expanding possibilities, you have set a powerful example through your endeavors to shape a future that reflects our diversity as a nation, one in which all young people have the chance to pursue their passions in any field of study, including engineering. You have helped bring about progress now and for generations to come," the letter stated in part.

DeLoatch said he never imagined that more than 30 years

ago, when he and Tyrone Taborn first discussed creating an event that would bring together young people with accomplished engineers and others in science and technology, that he would one day be in its spotlight. Taborn would go on to become the CEO and chairman of Career Communications

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— excerpt from a letter to DeLoatch from President Barack Obama

(publisher of *U.S. Black Engineer & Information Technology* magazine, *Hispanic Engineer & Information Technology* magazine, and *Women of Color* magazine) and launch BEYA.

DeLoatch advises the next and future BEYA recipients to be prepared for a multitude of new and unexpected experiences.

He noted that the distinction of being named Black Engineer of the Year "legitimizes you" and puts the awardee "on the radar of a number of people and organizations."

However, DeLoatch hasn't lost sight of why BEYA in all its many forms was created—attracting more African Americans into STEM careers. These careers, he said, can have a profound effect on the quality of life for all Americans.

BEYA is making a difference.

"It tells me that what we envisioned 32 years ago has had and is having its intended impact," said DeLoatch. ■



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diference.”**

Dr. Eugene M. DeLoatch
2017 Black Engineer of the Year
Dean Emeritus, Mitchell School of Engineering,
Morgan State University
National chairman, BEYA Alumni Association