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The Need for STEAM in Mississippi: A Personal Perspective

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As a minority entrepreneur and advocate for youth education, I've witnessed firsthand the disparities in access to quality education, particularly in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) fields, in Mississippi. Growing up as a Black woman in the South, I encountered numerous challenges in navigating educational pathways and career opportunities, often feeling isolated from industries that seemed to lack diversity. It wasn't until later in life that I recognized the profound impact STEAM could have—not only for career advancement but also for breaking down long-standing barriers and creating opportunities where they had been scarce.

In Mississippi, particularly in underserved communities, STEAM education is still a rarity. Many students—especially those from minority backgrounds—lack exposure to these critical fields and are not equipped with the resources or mentorship needed to pursue them. Reflecting on my own journey, I realize how transformative it could have been if I had early access to STEAM education. The doors it would have opened, the skills it would have helped me develop, and the pathways to entrepreneurship I would have discovered much sooner would have been invaluable. As an adult, I am now fortunate enough to run a business and mentor others, but many young people in Mississippi still do not have access to these essential opportunities.

One of the most significant barriers to STEAM participation in Mississippi is the lack of representation and visibility. Growing up, I seldom saw people who looked like me in fields such as engineering, technology, or the arts. This absence of role models creates a sense of disconnection and makes it difficult for students to envision themselves pursuing these careers. Without role models or mentors to guide them, many young people, particularly those from underrepresented communities, struggle to see the potential within themselves to succeed in STEAM.

As the world becomes more technologically driven, the demand for skilled professionals in STEAM fields is growing exponentially. The state of Mississippi, and its minority communities in particular, must be equipped to meet these demands. If we fail to invest in STEAM education for all students, we risk leaving behind an entire generation of potential innovators and leaders. This is a critical moment for our state; if we want to create a future that is economically viable, we must ensure that all young people—regardless of their background—have access to the tools, resources, and opportunities to excel in these fields.

At Camille Mason Enterprises, my work focuses on bridging the technology gap through providing STEAM programs to youth in underrepresented communities. Through hands-on learning, mentorship, and exposure to the wide range of careers in STEAM, we can help students realize their full potential. I've seen the power of mentorship and real-world experience in my own life, and I'm committed to ensuring that the next generation of Mississippi's youth has access to the same opportunities.