

# Juneteenth Contest

Renee Horton is a black physicist who was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and loves everything about science and NASA. Graduating Louisiana State University with a Bachelor's of Electrical Engineering along with a minor in Math in 2002 and a Ph.D. in Material Science with a concentration in Physics, she became the first African American to graduate from the University of Alabama in 2011. Dr. K. Renee Horton currently works as the Space Launch System ( SLS ) Quality Engineer in the NASA Residential Management Office at Michoud Assembly Facility (MAF) in New Orleans. She first started working for NASA as a student from 2009 to 2011, and then started her career as a mechanical test engineer in 2012. I'd say that Renee's contributions have helped me shape how I see myself represented in STEM because knowing that there are many young women including me in this world and seeing a grown woman working at a job that is usually portrayed as a man's job to society is very powerful to me. This is because for many centuries, women are usually shown or told that they only cook , clean , and stay in the house all day taking care of the family, while the men go out and work , hunt , etc. This shows that men are stronger than women, by completing tasks that they think are " hard " or " not fit " for women. This makes lots of women normalize this routine , and when another woman has a different perspective of the situation, other women tend to get angry not knowing what is really best for them. As for men, some may get angry at the situation because they want to feel superior and when women take on that role, men most likely feel insecure. I feel that Renee along with many other women boost lots of young girls' self esteem, making them want to prove society wrong by working or doing hard tasks, or doing things that men usually do. Something that also makes Renee so special is that she is African American. We all know for centuries we've been depicted as slaves and other derogatory terms to white people and to other young kids throughout. It took us a very long time to gain self confidence , which is why you see more successful African Americans today. I'm sure Renee has experienced lots of people telling her she couldn't do what she loved, but here she is today, overlooking all those people, defying the purpose of what is normally considered to be a woman.