

# Michael West's Journey to Dr. Michael West, PhD



# About Me



Originally from Rancho Cucamonga, CA

College: Yale University

Graduate School: MIT

Postdoc: Johns Hopkins University

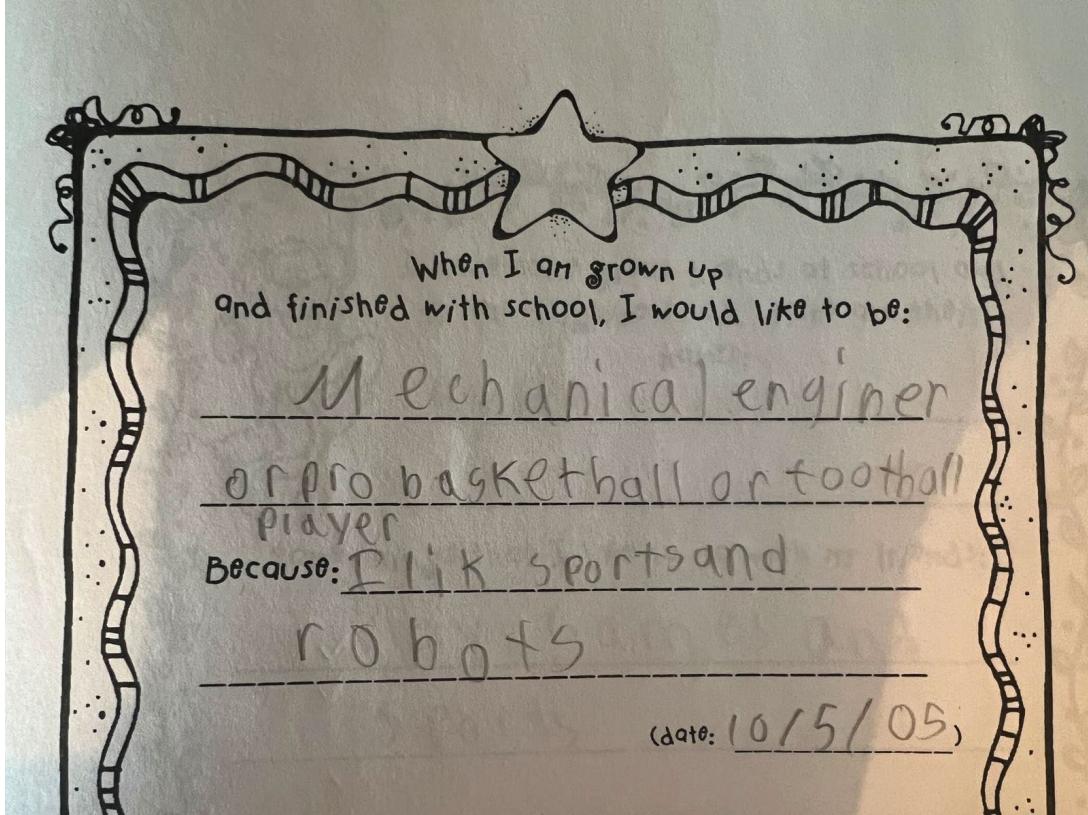
Faculty: Assistant Professor at Georgia Tech  
starting in August 2027



# River People vs Boat People



# How I became an Engineer



- Mom is a doctor, and I liked how she helped people.
- Dad is a software engineer.
- I thought robots were cool and I was good at math.

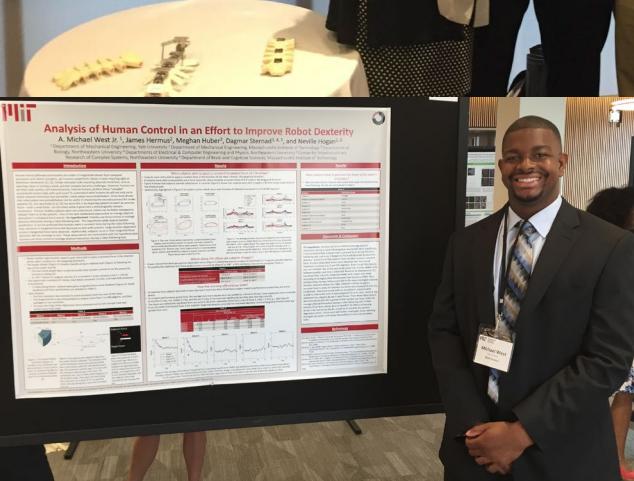
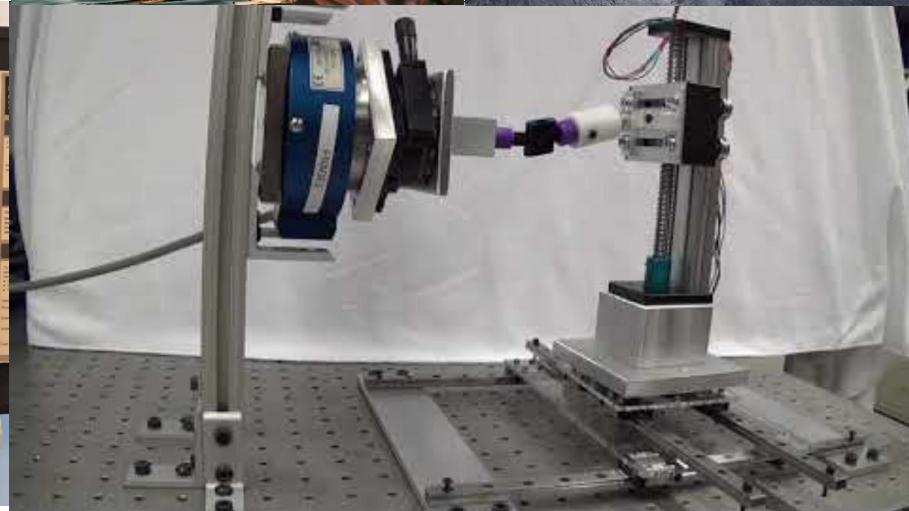
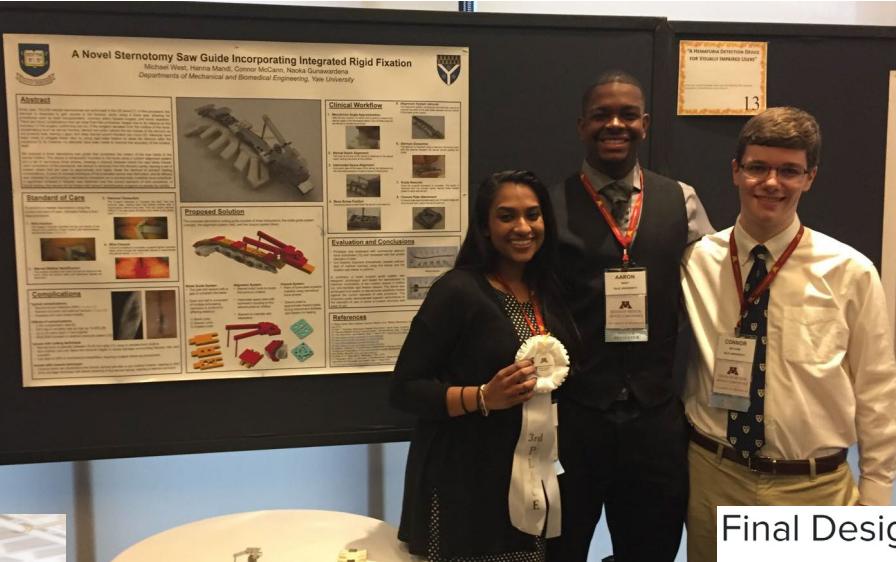
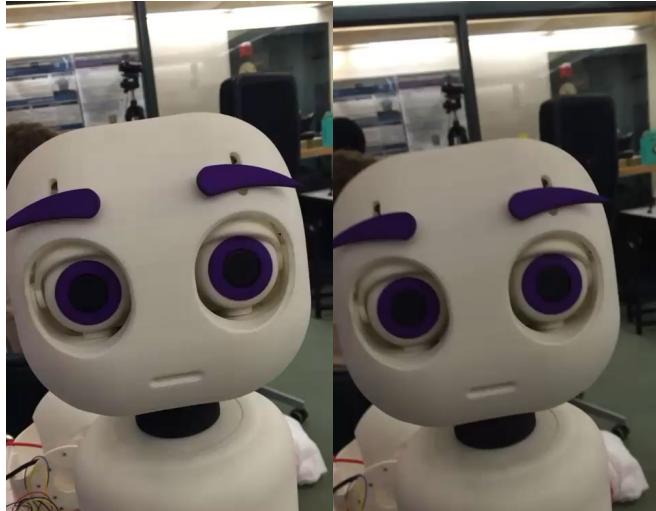
# How I became an Engineer



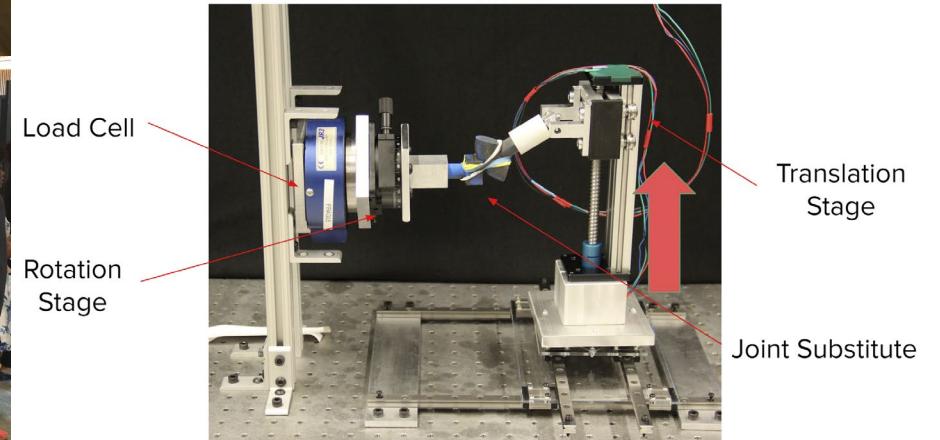
- Recruited to Yale to play football.
- Wanted to major in civil engineering.
- Declared major as a mechanical engineer on accident.



# How I got into Research



Final Design



# Why I went to Graduate School



- GEM Grad Lab @ NSBE session titled, “PhD, Why Not Me?”
  - Told me you can get paid to go to school.
  - Also told me, worst case scenario you can get paid to get a master’s degree.
- I wanted to delay adulthood.
- I enjoyed learning.
- **MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP)**
  - I enjoyed the flexibility of a research lifestyle.
  - Met some pretty cool professors and thought maybe I could emulate them.



# My Decision Process

- My girlfriend (now wife) was working in Boston.
  - She ended up going to Pittsburgh for medical school. ☹
- Through MSRP, I knew people in the graduate office who I felt would take care of me.
  - She also left after the first year. ☹
- Accepted the offer with no advisor.
- Turned down a university fellowship elsewhere.



# Your Decision Process

1. What subfield do you want to be an expert in?
2. What do you want your day-to-day to look like?
3. What is your (research) why?



# Some Advice



# Shoot Your Shot

**“I would go 0-30 before I would go 0-9. 0-9 means you beat yourself, you psyched yourself out of the game.”**



# **Love Yourself, Celebrate Yourself**



# Thank You!

