

Mae Jemison: Space Star

Have you ever dreamed of flying freely through outer space, surrounded by a sea of stars? Mae Jemison fulfilled that dream. On September 12, 1992, aboard the spaceship *Endeavour*, she became the first African-American woman to blast into outer space. This wasn't the only time, however, that Jemison had reached for the stars and realised her dreams.

Jemison was born on October 17, 1956, in Decatur, Alabama, but she grew up in Chicago, Illinois. There weren't many well-known African-American female role models while she was growing up, but she didn't let that stop her from achieving her goals.

She was especially interested in anthropology (the study of mankind), archaeology (history) and astronomy (space). Luckily, her parents encouraged those interests. That encouragement drove her to success. She graduated from high school at only 16! Then she earned degrees in chemical engineering and African-American studies at Stanford University. Later, she graduated from Cornell University's medical school. No challenge was too great for Jemison to take on.

Jemison's accomplishments did not end there. In 1981, she joined NASA's space program in Houston, Texas. A few years later in 1988, Jemison realised her biggest dream: She finally became an astronaut! Just four years later, she was named 'Science Mission Specialist' (another NASA first) on an *Endeavour* flight. Neil Armstrong quoted "I am so proud of Mae. She well and truly deserves this magnificent achievement for all her hard work in science."

Today, Jemison encourages young people—especially women and girls—to study science. Her life example teaches us to follow our dreams, no matter how great they might seem.