

Mae Jemison

Fact File

Date of Birth: 17th October 1956

Place of Birth: Alabama, USA

Early Life

From a young age, Mae Jemison had an ambition to study science and travel into space. In 1969, the *Apollo 11* mission succeeded in landing a man on the Moon. Five subsequent *Apollo* missions also landed men on the Moon, but Jemison was frustrated by the lack of female astronauts. Jemison went to Stanford University at the age of 16, where she encountered discrimination from teachers due to the colour of her skin. This led to her becoming the head of the Black Students Union, campaigning for equality for women and minorities in a society dominated by White males. Jemison graduated in 1977, with degrees in chemical engineering and African and African-American studies. She then went on to study to become a doctor at Cornell Medical School, graduating in 1981.



Key Achievements

Became the first African-American woman in space in 1992.

Received several awards and honorary doctorates, including being inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1993 and the International Space Hall of Fame in 2004.

Contribution to Science

In 1983, Jemison became a medical officer in the Peace Corps, a government agency providing international assistance. She also helped to research vaccines for the Centers of Disease Control. After seeing the space flights of Sally Ride (the first American woman in space) and Guion Bluford (the first African-American man in space), she was inspired to apply for NASA's astronaut training programme. In 1987, she became the first African-American woman to join the programme, fulfilling her childhood dream to become an astronaut. Jemison travelled into space on the *Endeavour* space shuttle on 12th September 1992, becoming the first African-American woman in space. While on the mission, she took part in several research projects, including two bone cell experiments. She resigned from NASA in 1993 and founded her own company, The Jemison Group, Inc., which aims to research and develop technological innovations to improve everyday lives. She also set up the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence (named after her mother), which runs science camps for students aged 12 to 16, among other projects.