

Dr Mae Jemison is the first Black, female astronaut and the first Black woman to travel into space. During her career, she has earned many university degrees and has received several awards. She continues to support further space exploration as well as better access for all people who wish to study science in schools.



Childhood

Born in Decatur, Alabama, USA, on 17th October 1956, Mae Carol Jemison is the youngest child of Charles and Dorothy Jemison. When she was three years old, her family moved to Chicago, Illinois, because her parents felt that their children would have better access to a good education there.

As a young child, Mae was fascinated by science. She was extremely interested in astronomy (the scientific study of the Sun, the Moon, stars and other celestial bodies). She enjoyed watching the Apollo Moon landings but sometimes wondered why she couldn't see any female astronauts.

When she attended Morgan Park High School, Mae became curious about biomedical engineering: the field of designing, building and using machines and electrical equipment to solve health and healthcare problems. Mae's other main interest was dance. She enjoyed learning how to dance and credited it with helping her become a better astronaut later on.

University and Medical School

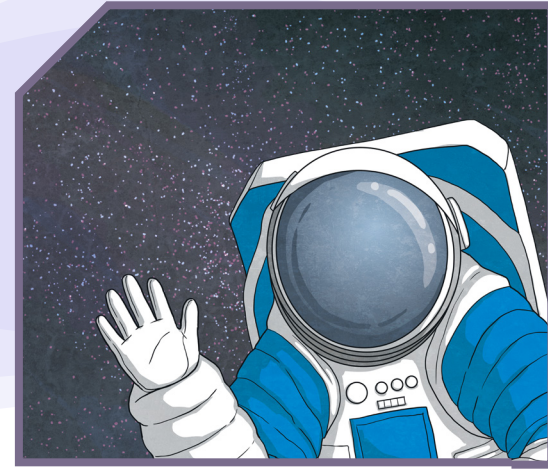
In 1973, 16-year-old Mae enrolled at Stanford University in Stanford, California. When she graduated in 1977, Mae had earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in African and African-American Studies. Moving on to Cornell Medical School, Mae studied International Medicine and also participated in a study for the American Medical Student Association in Cuba. In addition, she also took part in health studies in Kenya and volunteered at a Cambodian refugee camp in Thailand.



After graduation in 1981, Mae worked as an intern (a working student or trainee) at the Los Angeles County and University of Southern California Medical Centre and then worked for a brief time as a general practitioner (GP) in Los Angeles, California. In 1983, Mae joined the Peace Corps (an organisation that sends trained workers to help various disadvantaged areas of the world) and worked as a medical officer in West Africa. After she returned, Mae opened her own practice and worked as a doctor for the next few years.

NASA

In 1987, Mae applied for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) astronaut training programme. When she was accepted, she made history by becoming the first Black female astronaut. On 12th September 1992, she made history once again by becoming the first Black, female astronaut to travel into space. Aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour, Mae and her fellow astronauts completed 44 experiments and made 127 orbits around the Earth before landing safely back at the Kennedy Space Centre in Brevard County, Florida, eight days later.

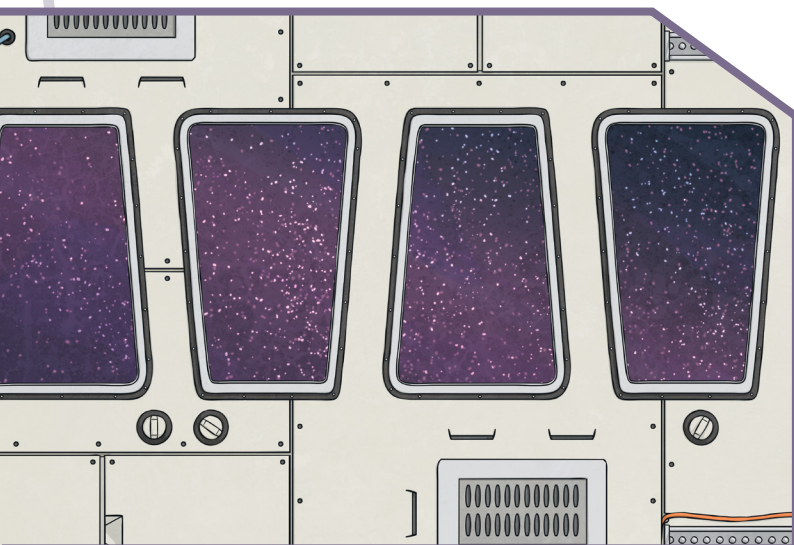


Other Interests

In 1993, Mae decided to leave NASA and create a technology consulting firm called the Jemison Group. She also founded a non-profit (reliant on sponsors and donors for funding) organisation named after her mother called the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence in 1994. One of its continuing projects is an international science camp for young people aged 12 to 16 called The Earth We Share.

As a university professor, Mae taught Environmental Studies at Dartmouth College from 1995 to 2002. Mae has also written several books, including a book about her life called 'Find Where the Wind Goes'. As of 2011, Mae is working with NASA and the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) on their 100 Year Starship project. Its goal is to enable Earth's astronauts to travel to another star within the next century.

Mae has been recognised and given numerous awards for her accomplishments as well as nine honorary doctorate degrees from several well-known universities. She currently lives in Houston, Texas.



Disclaimer: All facts and statistics correct as of January 2024.