

The Explorers: Dr. Mae C. Jemison

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.22.16

Word Count **434**



A photo of Dr. Mae Jemison, taken in 1992. NASA

Synopsis: Mae C. Jemison was an astronaut. She was the first African-American woman to go into space. She is also a doctor. Jemison was born in 1956 in the state of Alabama. She went into space with six other astronauts. They flew on a space shuttle.

Looking To The Stars

Mae C. Jemison was born on October 17, 1956. She was born in the state of Alabama. Her family moved to Illinois when she was 3 years old. She was the youngest child of Charlie and Dorothy Jemison. She has a sister named Ada and a brother named Charles.

As a child, she loved the library. Jemison read about stars, planets and space. In high school, she decided that she wanted to use science to make new things to help people. She wanted to help the human body. Jemison wanted to learn about machines that make the heart beat normally or how to help people use new arms or legs. She was also interested in the arts. She learned to dance and act on stage while she was still a child.

Jemison's parents encouraged her dreams. She finished high school in 1973. Jemison earned an award for black high school students who work hard and get good grades. The prize was money to pay for college. Jemison went to Stanford, one of the best colleges in the world, when she was only 16. There, she studied science. She earned a degree in engineering.

A Young Doctor In Africa

After graduating from college, Jemison went to medical school to become a doctor. She even traveled to other countries to work and learn.

Jemison became a doctor in 1981. Later, she moved to the continent of Africa to work as a doctor in the Peace Corps. She went to Sierra Leone and Liberia, two countries in West Africa. The Peace Corps sends American people to poor areas of other countries where people need help.

First African-American Female Astronaut

Jemison came home to the United States in 1985. She had a new plan. She wanted to learn to be an astronaut. Jemison applied to space training school in 1987. Many people wanted to go. Only 15 people were picked out of 2,000 who wanted to become astronauts - and Jemison was one of them.

Dr. Mae Jemison finally flew into space in 1992. She was on a space shuttle for eight days with six other astronauts. She did science experiments high above the Earth. She was the first African-American woman in space. The first thing she saw from space was Chicago, her hometown, in the state of Illinois.