

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES

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press information

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Dr. Mae Jemison biography

In *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES*, Dr. Mae Jemison learns of paternal ancestors who were slaves on a plantation in Alabama. A century later in 1956, Jemison was born in the same state in the small town of Decatur, the youngest of Dorothy and Charlie Jemison's three children. The family moved to Woodlawn in Chicago in 1960, eventually settling in the Morgan Park neighborhood. There, as early as grade school, Jemison remembers a strong inclination toward scientific exploration.

Jemison demonstrated far-above-average abilities as a student and graduated from Morgan Park High School in 1973 at the age of 16. She headed to Stanford, where she majored in Chemical Engineering and African American Studies. Upon graduating from Stanford in 1977 she enrolled in Cornell Medical School, spending the summers between semesters traveling, researching and providing health care in Kenya, Cuba and a Cambodian refugee camp in Thailand.

From 1983 to 1985 Jemison served as the Area Peace Corps Medical Officer for Sierra Leone and Liberia. In 1987 she was working as a doctor in Los Angeles when she was selected as a NASA astronaut. In 1992 she became the first African American woman, and first woman of color in the world, to travel into space when she was the science mission specialist aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour* on its eight-day Space Lab Japan mission.

Jemison resigned from NASA in 1993 and founded the technology consulting firm The Jemison Group, Inc. to consider socio-cultural impacts when designing technologies. As an Environmental Studies professor at Dartmouth College from 1995 through 2001, she taught courses on sustainable development and technology design. Her latest business venture, BioSentient Corporation, focuses on physiological monitoring to improve health and human performance.

A strong, committed voice for science literacy, Jemison in 1994 founded the international science camp The Earth We Share™ for students 12 to 16 years old. In her book *Find Where the Wind Goes*, she writes for teenagers about growing up on Chicago's South Side, cultivating her aspiration to be a scientist and professional dancer, and her experiences as a medical student in Africa.

An A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University, Jemison is also a member of several Fortune 500 corporate boards, a member of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, an inductee of the National Women's Hall of Fame and the National Medical Association Hall of Fame, and winner of the Kilby Science Award. In 1993 she was chosen one of the world's "50 Most Beautiful People" by *People* magazine, and in 1999 in the White House Project Straw Poll she was voted as one of the top seven women leaders most likely to become President of the United States.

Dr. Jemison resides in Houston and lives with her four cats, Dallas, Sapphire, Nathan and LeShawn.

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