Sample Biography

Mae Jemison: Star Child

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 realized her dreams.

Jemison was born on October 17, 1956, in Decatur, Alabama, but she grew up in Chicago, Illinois. There weren’t many African-American female role models while Jemison was growing up, but she didn’t let that stop her from achieving her goals. She was especially interested in anthropology, archaeology and astronomy. Luckily, her parents encouraged those interests. That encouragement drove her to excel. She graduated from high school at 16! Then she earned degrees in chemical engineering and African-American studies at Stanford University. Soon after, she graduated from Cornell University’s medical school. No obstacle was too great for Jemison to overcome!

Jemison’s accomplishments did not end there. In 1981, she joined NASA’s space program in Houston, Texas. In 1988, however, Jemison realized her biggest dream: She finally became an astronaut! Just four years later, she was named Science Mission Specialist (another NASA first) on the *Endeavour* flight.

Today she encourages young people, especially women and girls, to study the sciences. Her life example teaches us to follow our dreams, no matter how great!