

Department of Medicine Inclusion Council Celebrates Black History Month Honoring Black Physicians

Mae C. Jemison, MD

The Department of Medicine Inclusion Council honors and celebrates the accomplishments of Dr. Mae Jemison, M.D. (born October 17, 1956). Dr. Jemison is an astronaut and physician who, on June 4, 1987, became the first African American woman to be admitted into NASA's astronaut training program. On September 12, 1992, Jemison finally flew into space with six other astronauts aboard the Endeavour, becoming the first African American woman in space. Jemison grew up watching the Apollo airings on TV, but she was often upset that there were no female astronauts. However, Jemison was inspired by African American actress Nichelle Nichols who played Lieutenant Uhura on the Star Trek television show and was determined to one day travel in space.



In 1973, she graduated from Morgan Park High School in Chicago when she was 16 years old, where she became convinced she wanted to pursue a career in biomedical engineering. She then attended Stanford University. Upon graduation, she entered Cornell University Medical College and, during her years there, found time to expand her horizons by studying in Cuba and Kenya and working at a Cambodian refugee camp in Thailand. Shortly after her graduation, she became an intern at the Los Angeles County Medical Center, and then went on to practice general medicine. After a stint in the Peace Corps and entering private medical practice, Jemison made a career change and decided to follow a dream she had nurtured for a long time and applied for admission to NASA's astronaut training program. In 1987, Jemison was one of the 15 candidates chosen from a field of about 2,000. Jemison left NASA in 1993 after serving as an astronaut for six years. She started The Jemison Group, a consulting company that encourages science, technology, and social change. She also began teaching environmental studies at Dartmouth College.



Dr. Jemison is fluent in Russian, Japanese and Swahili, and she joined the Peace Corps in 1983 and served as a medical officer for two years in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Currently, Jemison is leading the 100 Year Starship project. This project works to make sure human space travel beyond our solar system is possible within the next 100 years.

