



Mae Jemison
Engineer, Physician, NASA Astronaut
(First African American Woman in Space)

From the Desk of
Senator
Lew Frederick

- Born in 1956 in Decatur, Alabama
- Her interest in space was stoked by the tv show Star Trek, specifically African American actress Nichelle Nichols' portrayal of Lieutenant Uhura
- Enjoyed studying nature and physiology and although both parents were supportive of her interest in science, she did not always see the same support from her teachers, with her kindergarten teacher assuming she wanted to be a nurse when she said she wanted to be a scientist
- Began studying ballet at the age of 8 and entered high school at 12 years old, where she joined the cheerleading team and Modern Dance Club and learned several styles of dance
- After graduating from Chicago's Morgan Park High School in 1973, she entered Stanford University at the age of 16 where there were very few other black students

and she continued to face discrimination from her professors

- Served as head of the Black Students Union at Stanford and also choreographed a musical and dance production called *Out of the Shadows*
- Graduated Stanford in 1977 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in African and African American studies
- Attended Cornell Medical School and during her training she traveled to Cuba to conduct a study funded by the American Medical Student Association, to Thailand to work at a Cambodian refugee camp and to East Africa to work with the Flying Doctors
- While attending Cornell she continued to study dance by enrolling in the classes at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- Graduated Cornell with an MD degree in 1981, interned at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center and then worked as a general practitioner for Ross-Loos Medical Group
- Joined the Peace Corps in 1983 and served as a medical officer until 1985 where she was responsible for the health of Peace Corps volunteers serving in Liberia and Sierra Leone and also worked with the Centers for Disease Control helping with vaccine research
- Upon returning to the US she settled in Los Angeles where she entered into private practice and took graduate level engineering courses
- Inspired by the flights of Sally Ride and Guion Bluford, she applied to the NASA astronaut program and after an initial postponement due to the Challenger explosion she was selected to be one of 15 people in the NASA Astronaut Group 12 out of 2,000 applicants
- Her work with NASA prior to her shuttle launch included launch support activities at the Kennedy Space Center and verification of shuttle computer software in the Shuttle Avionics Integration Laboratory
- Selected to join the STS-47 crew as Science Mission Specialist, a new astronaut role being tested by NASA to focus on scientific experiments
- Flew her only space mission in September of 1992 where she began communications on her shift with the salute "Hailing frequencies open", a quote from Star Trek
- After returning to Earth she served on the board of directors of the World Sickle Cell Foundation
- Founded The Jamison Group Inc. in 1993, a consulting firm that considers the sociocultural impact of technological advancements and design
- Founded the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence, named after her mother, where projects included *The Earth We Share*, a science camp for students aged 12 to 16
- Was a professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College from 1995 to 2002 where she directed the Jemison Institute for Advancing Technology in Developing Countries
- Her first book entitled *Find Where the Wind Goes* is a memoir of her life written for children

"Never limit yourself because of others' limited imagination; never limit others because of your own limited imagination."

(Mae Jemison)