

DR. MAE JEMISON

retired astronaut



Photograph: The Jemison Group

Dr. Mae Jemison served six years as a NASA astronaut, becoming the first woman of color to go into space with her mission aboard Space Shuttle *Endeavor* and the only astronaut to appear on *Star Trek*. Today, Jemison leads 100 Year Starship®, a bold new initiative to assure the capabilities exist for human travel to another star within the next 100 years. Trained as an engineer, social scientist and dancer, Jemison is also a medical doctor who was the Area Peace Corps Medical Officer for Sierra Leone and Liberia. In addition, Jemison is one of the most highly sought after speakers on issues of sustainability, advanced technology, science education and science literacy, diversity and social responsibility.

Who is your favorite character from fiction, and why?

I can't name just one, but all have the same qualities: intelligence, physical stamina, perseverance, strong sense of self, determination and courage. Ellen Ripley in the *Alien* movie series; Hush Puppy in *Beasts of the Southern Wild* and Lyra Belacqua from Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series. **When was the last time you were truly impressed?** Audra McDonald is amazing in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*. **What cause do you most identify with?** The 100 Year Starship: Pathway to the Stars, Footprints on Earth (100YSS.org) **How would you describe the current state of American politics?** A team sport with frequently unbalanced, superficial media coverage that facilitates failure to understand that "winning" must include the entire country now and in the future. **What is your greatest professional accomplishment?** Don't think of the world that way—each small success facilitates the larger, notable ones. **What is the best advice you have ever received?** If you're bored, you must not be paying attention. **What do you consider the greatest innovation of the past 10 years?** Rewind on live TV; I have friends and family who talk! **What is your guilty pleasure?** Coffee. No, chocolate. No, it's coffee. OK, it's Ben & Jerry's Coffee Toffee Bar Crunch ice cream. **What was your closest brush with death?** Being born! It's touch and go for all of us at times. **How would you define love?** Caring so intensely about the welfare of a being, place, concept or thing that you willingly, freely will stop what you're doing to give all you can—resources, energy, reputation, peace of mind—to make sure it has the best outcome.