

The Clark Virtual Museum NEWSLETTER

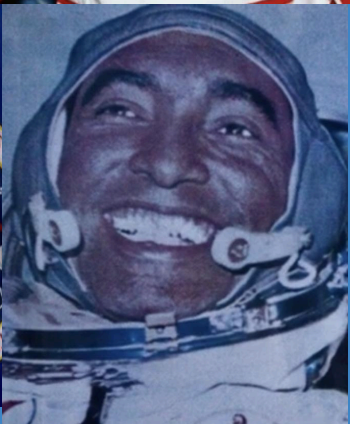
July 23, 2024

The Clark Virtual Museum

"More Than A Museum, We Honor The Life and Legacy of Our Ancestor"

What's New

- Maj. Robert Lawrence - NASA's First Black Astronaut
- Dr. Guion Bluford - NASA's First Black American In Space
- Dr. Mae Jemison - NASA's First Black Astronaut in Space
- Dr. Ronald McNair - NASA's 2nd Black Astronaut in Space
- Col. Frederick Gregory Jr. - NASA's First Black Astronaut Commander of a Space Shuttle
- Arnaldo Tomayo Mendez - The First Black Cosmonaut



Maj. Robert Lawrence - NASA's First Black Astronaut



Robert H. Lawrence holds the honor as the first Black astronaut selected for a space program. In June 1967, the U.S. Air Force selected him as a member of the third group of aerospace research pilots for the Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) Program, a joint project of the Air Force and the National Reconnaissance Office to obtain high-resolution photographic imagery of America's Cold War adversaries. Tragically, Lawrence lost his life in an aircraft accident in December 1967, and the Air Force cancelled the MOL Program in June 1969.



Maj. Guion Bluford Jr. - NASA's First Black Astronaut in Space



Man. Guion Stewart Bluford Jr. was a prominent Black Air Force pilot and NASA Astronaut. Guion Bluford was born on November 22, 1942, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The son of a mechanical engineer and a special education teacher, Bluford grew up in a household where academic success was encouraged. He enrolled at Pennsylvania State University as a member of the U.S. Air Force ROTC program and graduated in 1964 with a degree in aerospace engineering. Following his pilot training at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona, Bluford flew 144 combat missions during the Vietnam War. He won several medals for his service, including the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

After the war, Bluford enrolled at the Air Force Institute of Technology, where he received both a master's degree and a PhD in aerospace



engineering. During this time, he also became a staff development engineer and branch chief of the Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

In January 1978 Bluford joined NASA's space program and shuttle team. He officially became a NASA astronaut in August 1979. In August 1983, Bluford became the first Black person in recorded history to travel into space. Bluford was a mission specialist for STS-8 aboard the space shuttle Challenger. Bluford and the crew operated a Canadian-built robot arm and conducted several biophysiological experiments. The mission ended on September 5, 1983, when the spacecraft touched down at Edwards Air Force Base in California in a night landing, another first for Challenger. Two years later, on October 30, 1985, Bluford made his second trip to space as a specialist for mission STS 61-A aboard Challenger. He was among NASA's largest crew to date for the first dedicated Spacelab mission directed by the German Aerospace Research Establishment (DFVLR). After completing 111 Earth orbits in 169 hours, Challenger landed at Edwards Air Force Base on November 6, 1985.

Following the tragic Challenger explosion in January 1986, Bluford returned to the classroom to receive a master's in business administration from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, in 1987. However, he was determined to help the NASA space program get back on course. Despite nearly being grounded due to a herniated disc, he was back for mission STS-39 aboard the orbiter *Discovery*. After taking off on April 28, 1991, the crew conducted experiments for the U.S. Department of Defense, completing 134 orbits in 199 hours before landing on May 6, 1991.

Bluford made one final trip to space on December 2, 1992, as one of five crew members of mission STS-53 aboard *Discovery*. Carrying a classified payload for the Department of Defense, the crew logged 115 orbits in 175 hours, returning safely on December 9, 1992. Having compiled a total of 688 hours in space, the distinguished astronaut retired from both NASA and the Air Force in 1993.

Bluford joined NYMA Inc. as vice president/general manager of its engineering services division in 1993. He has since served in leadership roles for Federal Data Corporation, Northrop Grumman Corporation and Aerospace Technologies Group.

Bluford was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997, and the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010.



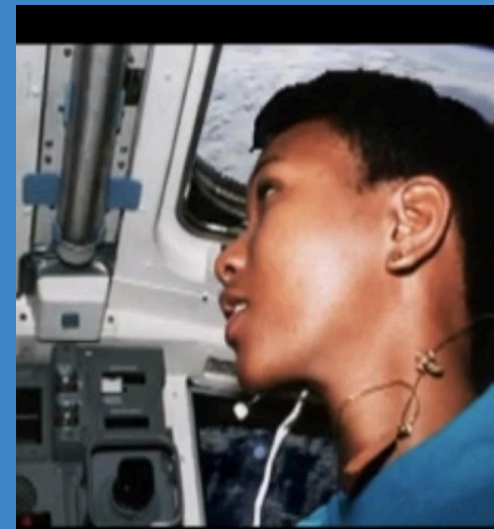
Dr. Mae Jemison - NASA's First Black Female Astronaut in Space



Dr. Mae Carol Jemison is a prominent Black medical doctor, engineer, and NASA astronaut. Mae Jemison was born on October 17, 1956 in Decatur, Alabama. She knew that she wanted to study science at a very young age. In 1973, Mae Jemison graduated from Morgan Park High School. She was 16 years old.

Mae Jemison attended Stanford University in California, serving as president of the Black Student Union and choreographed a performing arts production called *Out of the Shadows* about the Black American experience. Jemison graduated from Stanford University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering and a Bachelor of Arts degree in African and African-American studies.

Jemison went on to attend Cornell Medical School where she received her Doctorate in Medicine in 1981. Jemison was an intern at the Los Angeles County Medical Center and then went on to practice general medicine. Dr. Jemison joined the Peace Corps and served as a medical officer for two years in Africa. She also opened a private practice as a doctor.



In 1987, Dr. Mae Jemison was selected for NASA Astronaut Group 12, which was the first group chosen after the Challenger explosion. Her first mission was on September 28, 1989 as a mission specialist for the STS-47 crew. On September 12, 1992 Jemison went into space on the space shuttle *Endeavor* making her the first Black woman in space. Dr. Mae Jemison retired from NASA in 1993.

Dr. Mae Jemison speaks several languages, including Russian, Japanese and Swahili. She has written several books and appeared on many television programs including an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Jemison created The Jemison Group, a consulting company and directed the Jemison Institute for Advancing Technology in Developing Countries. She has taught environmental studies at Dartmouth College. She created an international space camp for youth and the Dorothy Jemison Foundation for Excellence. She also serves as the Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University.

Dr. Jemison is leading the 100 Year Starship project through the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to make sure human space travel to another star is possible within the next 100 years. Jemison has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, National Medical Association Hall of Fame and Texas Science Hall of Fame



Dr. Ronald McNair - NASA's 2nd Black Astronaut in Space



Dr. Ronald Erwin McNair was a prominent Black physicist and NASA Astronaut. . He was born October 21, 1950 in Lake City, South Carolina. McNair came from a low-income family where he was nicknamed Gizmo, because of his fascination for science, technical and space, McNair. was a sixth degree belt in karate and was an accomplished saxophonist. He exemplified excellence in his personal endeavors and in academics .

Ron McNair graduated from Carver High School in 1967 and was valedictorian of his class. He went on to receive his bachelor's degree in Physics from North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro, S.C., graduating magna cum laude. Ron McNair continued his education at Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he received his Ph.D. in Physics. At MIT, McNair worked on the then recently invented chemical lasers.

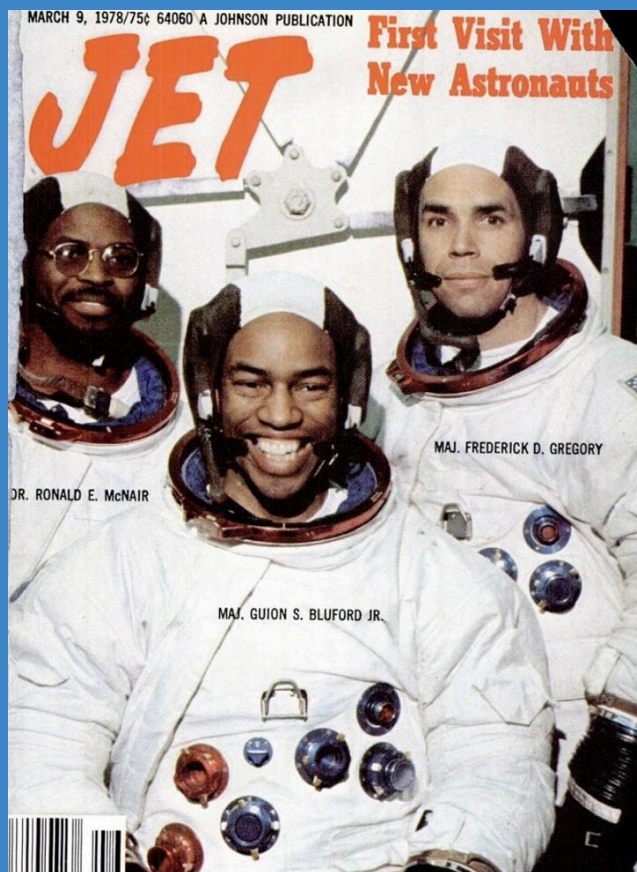


Dr. McNair worked as a physicist and expert in chemical and high-pressure lasers at the Hughes Research Laboratories. . He was nationally recognized for his work in laser physics and the development of lasers for space satellite communications. Dr. McNair was the recipient of several honorary doctorates, fellowships and commendations.

In 1984 Dr. Ron McNair was selected by NASA to join its astronaut training program. NASA Astronaut Dr. Ron McNair was the second Black person in recorded history to make a flight into space. Dr. McNair served as a mission specialist on the space shuttle Challenger. He operated the payload projects and experiments. McNair's first mission on the *Challenger* was a success, landing February 11, 1984.

On January 18, 1986 Dr. Ronald McNair along with six other NASA Space Shuttle Challenger crew members died tragically when it exploded after its launch from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The explosion occurred 73 seconds after lifting-off.

Ron McNair received numerous awards, honors and was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame.



Col. Frederick Gregory Jr. - NASA's First Astronaut Commander of a Space Shuttle



Col. Frederick D. Gregory Jr. is the first Black astronaut in recorded history to pilot a space shuttle and the third Black American to fly into space. Frederick Gregory was born on January 7, 1941 in Washington, D.C. He developed an interest in flying as a teenager and frequently attended air shows. After graduating from Anacostia High School in 1958, Gregory briefly attended Amherst College and American University before enrolling in the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Frederick Gregory graduated with distinction from the United States Air Force Academy with a degree in military engineering. He was commissioned as an officer into the Air Force and flew helicopters and fighter aircraft, including the F-4 Phantom. After serving in Vietnam, he entered the Naval Test Pilot School in Patuxent, Maryland. Gregory worked as an engineering and research test pilot for both the Air Force and NASA,

while earning a master's degree in information systems from George Washington University.

In 1978, NASA introduced Gregory as a pilot among the first new astronauts selected for the space shuttle era. His astronaut class included two more Black Americans, scientists Guion Bluford and Ronald McNair. Gregory made his first flight into space as Commander of NASA Space Shuttle Challenger for a successful STS-51B Spacelab-3 science mission. Gregory once again served as Commander on his third and final spaceflight aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis for the DOD-dedicated STS-44 mission.

Gregory served at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., in several high-level management positions until his retirement from the agency in 2005.



Arnoldo Tomayo Mendez - The First Black Cosmonaut

Arnaldo Tomayo Méndez of Cuba is the first recorded Black person to fly in space. The Cuban Air Force selected Tamayo Méndez as part of the Soviet Union's Interkosmos program that flew cosmonauts from on short visiting flights to their space stations to conduct experiments for their national space programs and academic institutions. Mendez spent eight days aboard the Soviet Salyut-6 space station in 1980.



The following sources were used to prepare articles on Black Astronauts:

<https://www.biography.com/scientists/guion-s-bluford>

<https://www.mcnaair.iastate.edu/program-details/who-was-ronald-e--mcnair->

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mae-jemison>

<https://www.nasa.gov/history/honoring-black-astronauts-during-black-history-month-2023/>

An Update On The Historical Preservation and Landmarking Of The ILBPP!

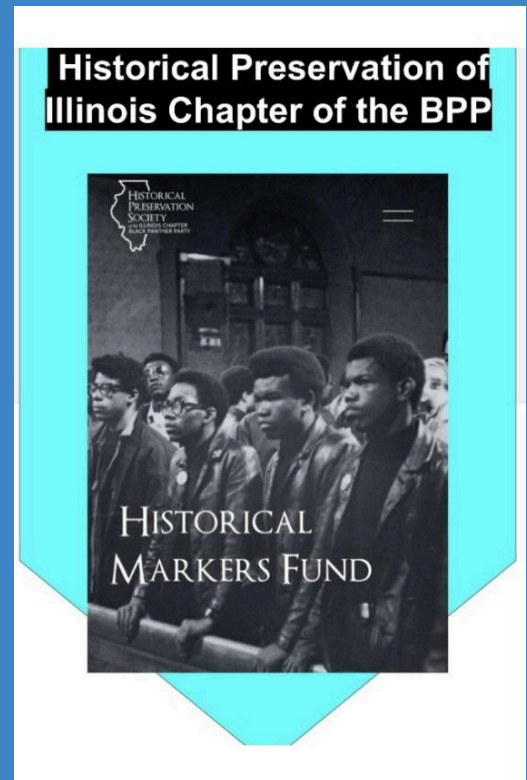


Exhibit: Preserving the Heritage of the Black Panther Party in Illinois.

Opening Reception: Wednesday, August 7, 2024, 6:00 p.m.
Epiphany Center for the Artts
201 S Ashland Ave, Chicago, IL 60607-5301, United States

Free Entry, RSVP: On August 7, an exhibit at Epiphany Center for the Arts dedicated to the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and a special opening reception will mark the Chapter's prominence for the first time in decades. The exhibit, Preserving the Heritage of the Black Panther Party in Illinois, captures the politics and programs of the Black Panther Party and is a testament to the chapter's enduring legacy.

The work of the Historical Preservation Society of the ILBPP continues. To learn more about the Historical Preservation and Landmarking of the ILBPP visit their website: ilbpp.org



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Please encourage your family and friends to log on to our website, view our exhibits, watch our videos, visit The Clark Virtual Museum Book store and Black History Library Archives!

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Our website: <https://ClarkVirtualMuseum.com>

For more information contact us via email:
clarkvirtualmuseum@yahoo.com

Best Regards, Rose X (Clark) Morris, Founder and Curator

The Clark Virtual Museum.

