

# List of African-American astronauts

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African-American astronauts are Americans of African descent who have either traveled into space or been part of an astronaut program.

## Contents

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### African-American astronauts

Traveled into space

Never traveled into space

**Often cited as the First African-American astronaut candidate**

**See also**

**References**



The first three African Americans to travel into space – Ronald McNair, Guy Bluford and Fred Gregory





## African-American astronauts

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**Traveled into space**

| # | Image   | Name<br>Birth date  | Note  | Missions<br>(launch date)  | Sources |
|---|---|---|---|--|---------|
| 1 |    | <u>Guion Bluford</u><br>November 22, 1942<br>                      | First African-American astronaut in space   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-8</u><br/>(August 30, 1983)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-61-A</u><br/>(October 30, 1985)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-39</u><br/>(April 28, 1991)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-53</u><br/>(December 2, 1992)</li> </ul> | [1]     |
| 2 |    | <u>Ronald McNair</u><br>October 21, 1950<br>† January 28, 1986<br> | Died in the <u>Space Shuttle Challenger disaster</u>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-41-B</u><br/>(February 3, 1984)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-51-L</u><br/>(January 28, 1986)</li> </ul>   | [1]     |
| 3 |   | <u>Frederick D. Gregory</u><br>January 7, 1941<br>               | First African American to pilot and command a Space Shuttle mission; acting <u>Administrator of NASA</u> , 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-51-B</u><br/>(April 29, 1985)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-33</u><br/>(November 22, 1989)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-44</u><br/>(November 24, 1991)</li> </ul>   | [1]     |
| 4 |  | <u>Charles Bolden</u><br>August 19, 1946<br>                     | <u>Administrator of NASA</u> , July 17, 2009 – January 20, 2017   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-61-C</u><br/>(January 12, 1986)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-31</u><br/>(April 24, 1990)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-45</u><br/>(March 24, 1992)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-60</u><br/>(February 3, 1994)</li> </ul> | [1]     |
| 5 |  | <u>Mae Jemison</u><br>October 17, 1956<br>                       | First African-American woman in space   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-47</u><br/>(September 12, 1992)</li> </ul>   | [1]     |
| 6 |   | <u>Bernard A. Harris Jr.</u><br>June 26, 1956<br>                | First African American to walk in space   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-55</u><br/>(April 26, 1993)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-63</u><br/>(February</li> </ul>  | [1]     |



|    |   |   |  |   |     |
|----|---|---|--|---|-----|
|    |     |   |  | 3, 1995)  |     |
| 7  |    | <p><u>Winston E. Scott</u><br/>August 6, 1950</p>                                | Veteran of three spacewalks                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-72</u><br/>(January 11, 1996)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-87</u><br/>(November 19, 1997)</li> </ul>   | [1] |
| 8  |    | <p><u>Robert Curbeam</u><br/>March 5, 1962</p>                                   | Veteran of seven spacewalks                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-85</u><br/>(August 7, 1997)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-98</u><br/>(February 7, 2001)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-116</u><br/>(December 9, 2006)</li> </ul> | [1] |
| 9  |   | <p><u>Michael P. Anderson</u><br/>December 25, 1959<br/>†February 1, 2003</p>  | Died in the <u>Space Shuttle Columbia disaster</u>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-89</u><br/>(January 22, 1998)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-107</u><br/>(January 16, 2003)</li> </ul>   | [1] |
| 10 |  | <p><u>Stephanie Wilson</u><br/>September 27, 1966</p>                          |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-121</u><br/>(July 4, 2006)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-120</u><br/>(October 23, 2007)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-131</u><br/>(April 5, 2010)</li> </ul>    | [1] |
| 11 |  | <p><u>Joan Higginbotham</u><br/>August 3, 1964</p>                             |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-116</u><br/>(December 9, 2006)</li> </ul>   | [1] |
| 12 |  | <p><u>Alvin Drew</u><br/>November 5, 1962</p>                                  | Veteran of two spacewalks, February 28 and March 2, 2011 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-118</u><br/>(August 8, 2007)</li> <li>▪ <u>STS-133</u><br/>(February 24, 2011)</li> </ul>   | [1] |
| 13 |   | <p><u>Leland D. Melvin</u><br/>February 15,</p>   | Associate Administrator for Education at NASA            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>STS-122</u><br/>(February</li> </ul>  | [1] |

|    |   |   |                                       |  |     |
|----|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|-----|
|    |   | 1964<br>                                 |                                       | 7, 2008)<br>▪ STS-129<br>(November 16, 2009) |     |
| 14 |  | Robert Satcher<br>September 22, 1965<br> | EVA November 19 and November 23, 2009 | ▪ STS-129<br>(November 16, 2009)             | [1] |

**Never traveled into space**

| Image   | Name<br>Birth date   | Note  | Sources    |
|---|--|---|------------|
|    | <p>Robert<br/>Henry<br/>Lawrence<br/>Jr.<br/>October 2,<br/>1935<br/>†December<br/>8, 1967</p>  | <p>First African-American astronaut; selected for astronaut training in 1967 for the <u>MOL</u> program; died in an aircraft accident</p>   | <p>[2]</p> |
|    | <p>Livingston<br/>L. Holder,<br/>Jr.<br/>September<br/>29, 1956</p>                             | <p><u>USAF astronaut</u> in the <u>Manned Spaceflight Engineer Program</u></p>  | <p>[3]</p> |
|   | <p>Michael E.<br/>Belt<br/>September<br/>9, 1957</p>    | <p>Astronaut, payload specialist from TERRA SCOUT – US Army Project; retired January 12, 1991</p>   | <p>[4]</p> |
|  | <p>Yvonne<br/>Cagle<br/>April 24,<br/>1959</p>    | <p>Astronaut</p>  | <p>[4]</p> |
|  | <p>Jeanette J.<br/>Epps<br/>November<br/>2, 1970</p>    | <p>Astronaut<br/>On January 5, 2016 NASA announced that Epps would become the first African-American space station crew member when she launched on her would-be first spaceflight in May 2018, as a flight engineer on Expedition 56, remaining on board for Expedition 57. On January 16, 2018, NASA announced that Epps had been replaced by her backup Serena M. Auñón-Chancellor, due to unknown reasons, and has sparked various media attention.</p> | <p>[4]</p> |
|  | <p>Victor J.<br/>Glover<br/>April 30,<br/>1976</p>    | <p>Scheduled to fly on Expedition 62 on <u>USCV-1</u></p>   | <p>[5]</p> |
|  | <p>Jessica<br/>Watkins<br/>May 14,<br/>1988</p>   | <p>Astronaut candidate, <u>NASA Astronaut Group 22</u></p>  | <p>[6]</p> |

## Often cited as the First African-American astronaut candidate

| Image   | Name<br>Birth date  | Note  | Sources |
|---|---|---|---------|
|  | Ed Dwight<br>September 9, 1933<br> | Ed Dwight made it to the second round of an Air Force program from which NASA selected astronauts, but was not selected by NASA to be an astronaut. Resigned from the Air Force in 1966 due to racial politics. In July, 1961, Frederick Dutton, special assistant to the president, wrote to Adam Yarmolinsky, special assistant to the secretary of defense to say that it was important "that for symbolic purposes in crossing the frontiers of space, this country would have qualified members from minority backgrounds." Shortly after, General Curtis LeMay, chief of the air force told Chuck Yeager, who was running Aerospace Research Pilot School (ARPS) at Edwards Air Force Base that, "[Attorney General] Bobby Kennedy wants a colored in space. Get one into your course." This communication placed Ed Dwight on a career track that could have sent him into outer space. Dwight proceeded to Phase II of ARPS, but was not selected by NASA to be an astronaut. | [7]     |

## See also

- Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez, first person of African descent and first Afro-Latino to fly in space

## References

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3. Hoffman, Sarah (March 7, 2019). "A Space Pioneer Charts A Course For Future Astronauts" (<https://kcts9.org/programs/environment/space-pioneer-charts-course-future-astronauts>). *KCTS9*. Retrieved March 11, 2019. "He became a satellite countdown controller, worked on classified missions and earned a position with the competitive Manned Spaceflight Engineer program. While training as an astronaut, he witnessed the faces of NASA's space shuttle program shift to include women and minorities, along with the white men who first inspired him."
4. Phillips, Kerri (February 8, 2012). "Celebrating Black History Month: NASA's African-American Astronauts" (<http://www.americaspace.com/2012/02/08/celebrating-black-history-month-biographies-of-nasas-african-american-astronauts/>). *AmericaSpace*. Retrieved March 11, 2019. "Four other African-Americans were selected by NASA as astronauts that did not have the opportunity to fly in space: Livingston Holder, Michael E. Belt, Yvonne Cagle, and Jeanette J. Epps. Each of these dedicated people believed in the advancement of human knowledge and space exploration, and some made the ultimate sacrifice doing what they felt was worth the risk for this endeavor."
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6. Garcia, Mark (2017-06-06). "Astronaut Candidate Jessica Watkins" (<https://www.nasa.gov/astronauts/biographies/jessica-watkins/biography>). NASA. Retrieved 2017-06-07.
7. *We Could Not Fail: The First African Americans in the Space Program*, Chapter 5, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX, 2015, pp. 86-104

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