

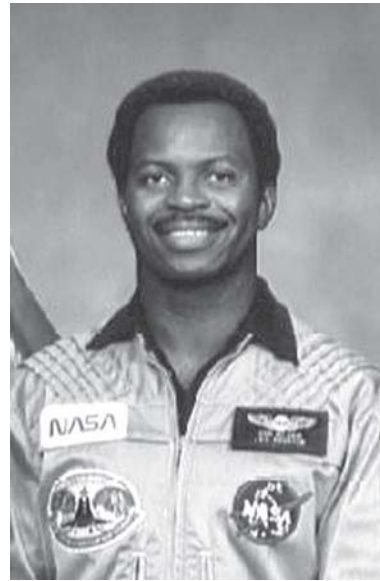
Ronald E. McNair

Astronaut

Ronald E. McNair was born on October 21, 1950, in Lake City, South Carolina. In 1967, he was the valedictorian of his high school graduating class. He was a Magna Cum Laude graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in 1971, where he studied physics and was a Ford Foundation Fellow. He obtained his doctorate in laser physics from MIT in 1976 and was the top scholar in his class. In addition to these prestigious academic accomplishments, Dr. McNair received three honorary degrees as well as many commendations and fellowships.

In 1979, Dr. McNair was accepted into the Astronaut Candidate Program and became one of America's first African American astronauts. He made his first flight into space in 1984. His second flight into space took place two years later, when he was a member of the crew of the space shuttle *Challenger*. Tragically, seventy-three seconds after liftoff at Kennedy Space Center, the *Challenger* shuttle exploded, killing everyone on board. Dr. McNair was 35 years old when he died on January 28, 1986.

After Dr. McNair's untimely death, members of Congress funded the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program in honor of his memory and his accomplishments. Thus, Dr. McNair's legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of the students fortunate enough to be accepted into the McNair Program.



Activities

1. Research the NASA space program. Write a two-page report including the answers to the following questions: What are the requirements to enter the program? How many astronauts are trained each year? What are the preparations to qualify for a mission to space? How many African Americans have been trained to go to space? How many have completed missions to space?
2. What is the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program? What are the qualifications? How can students get involved in the program?