

First Black Crew Member to Join International Space Station

By **Shantella Y. Sherman**
(AFRO/NNPA Member)

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has selected astronaut Jeanette Epps to join the crew of the International Space Station in 2018. Epps will become the first Black crewmem-

ber to represent the U.S. on the station. The journey will mark the first time Epps has traveled to orbit, allowing her to follow in the footsteps of the women who, she said, inspired her to become an astronaut. While other Black astronauts have flown to the Space Station for brief stays during the outpost's construction, Epps will be the first Black crewmember to live and work on the station for an extended period of time. Her journey aboard the Soyuz spacecraft and stay at the station places her as the only American and female among a crew made up of mostly Russians and men.

when she was first introduced to the idea that she could be an astronaut. "It was about 1980, I was nine years old. My brother came home and he looked at my grades and my twin sisters' grades and he said, 'You know, you guys can probably become aerospace engineers or even that Sally Ride [the first American woman to fly in space] and a group of women were selected to become astronauts – the first time in history. So, he made that comment and I said, 'Wow, that would be so cool.'"

Epps will join veteran NASA astronaut Andrew Feustel at the Space Sta-

tion. On Feustel's first long-duration mission, he served as a flight engineer on Expedition 55, and later as commander of Expedition 56.

"Each space station crew brings something different to the table, and Drew and Jeanette both have a lot to offer," said Chris Cassidy, chief of the Astronaut Office at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, in a statement. "The space station will benefit from having them on board."

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Astronaut Jeanette Epps

“NASA astronaut Jeanette Epps will be the first Black crewmember to live and work on the International Space Station for an extended period of time. (NASA)

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Epps, in the NASA video interview, shared