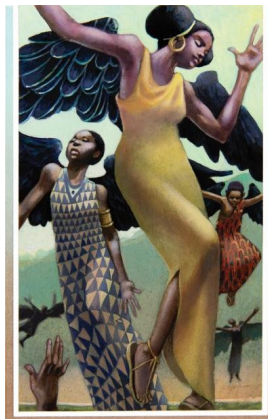




Welcome to AeroStar News!

"The People Could Fly"



*Photo from The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales told by Virginia Hamilton
(illustrations (c) 1985 by Leo and Diane Dillon, Alfred A. Knopf)*



Dear AeroStar Family and Friends,

In Virginia Hamilton's groundbreaking collection of African American folktales, *The People Could Fly*, we learn that flight was a metaphor African people used to imagine a life free from the inhumane conditions of slavery. In the old myths, when the people said the magic African words, they rose into the air and flew away to a better day.

"The air is the only place free from prejudice." – Bessie Coleman

What scholars labeled as myth was transformed into reality on June 15, 1921, when a young woman from Chicago received her pilot's license. She was the first African American and Native American in the world to do so.

Bessie Coleman was born in Atlanta, Texas, in 1892. As a young girl, she worked with her

family in the cotton fields. In 1915, she moved to Chicago, where she worked odd jobs, including as a manicurist in a barber shop.

When her brothers came home from serving in the military during World War I, they fired her imagination with stories of life in France. They teased her that French women were allowed to learn how to fly airplanes, and from that moment on, Bessie decided she would become a flier. She journeyed to France to find a school that would take her, as the skies proved easier to conquer than racial and gender discrimination in America.

On June 15, 1921, Bessie Coleman received her pilot's license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale in France. Points to note:

- She was the first civilian-licensed African American pilot in the world.
- She toured the country barnstorming, parachute jumping, and giving lectures to raise money to open an African American flying school.
- She would only perform if the crowds were desegregated. Everyone, no matter their race, entered through the same gates at Bessie Coleman events.
- Her dream was to open a flying school for African Americans, but she passed away before seeing it come to fruition.

The Importance of Bessie 100 Years Later

Fulfilling Bessie's dream led the way for new generations of dreamers and future aviation legends, such as the Tuskegee Airmen. However, 100 years after she received her private pilot's license, African American females make up less than 0.5% of airline pilots flying today; overall, African Americans make up less than 5% of the aviation industry. This is not due to lack of interest or skill. Rather, this can be directly attributed to discriminatory practices that have eliminated access and created barriers to entry for millions of black and brown people over generations. AeroStar's Aerospace Talent Pipeline Project, in partnership with The Boeing Company, is changing the narrative.

In this issue of AeroStar News, we're honored to feature the adventures of pilot, TV host, and adventurer, Kellee Edwards (Kelleesetgo.com). We also discuss our inaugural June 15 event, "The People Could Fly," that was held at The DuSable Museum of African American History. We had a wonderful time celebrating the 100th anniversary of Queen Bess and honoring those who have fought for diversity in aviation and soared high in their careers. Many thanks go to the event title sponsor, United Airlines; event partner, The Boeing Company; and event host, The DuSable Museum.

Giving Wings to Dreams!

Tamera L. Holmes

President & CEO, AeroStar Consulting Corporation

Founder & CEO, AeroStar Avion Institute NFP

#wingstodreams

#BC100

AeroStar Honors Hometown Global Icon, Bessie Coleman



Bessie Coleman received her pilot license on June 15, 1921, from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale in France.

On June 15, a helicopter salute by the Chicago Police Department and the Posting of Colors by Air Force Academy High School students kicked off the 100th anniversary celebration of Bessie Coleman earning her pilot's license. Luminaries from aviation, entertainment, and government gathered at The DuSable Museum, the oldest African American Museum in the United States, to recognize Bessie and those who stand on her shoulders today. The event was organized by the AeroStar Avion Institute and hosted by The DuSable Museum. United Airlines was title sponsor, and The Boeing Company was event partner. ABC 7 anchor Samantha Chatman served as MC for the event, which raised funds for AeroStar's youth training programs.

An Industry in Transition

"A century ago, Bessie was shut out of aviation because she was Black, but she wouldn't take NO for an answer," said Tammera L. Holmes, Founder and CEO of the AeroStar Avion Institute. "Bessie can still inspire the next generation to pursue their dreams, especially since the industry is now demanding more diversity as evidenced by United Airline's recent announcement that they will work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)."

The industry is now demanding more diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by United Airline's recent announcement that the company will train and hire 5,000 new pilots from diverse backgrounds. Aviation and aerospace industries face acute workforce shortages, with Chicago-based Boeing reporting a global industry need of 763,000 pilots and 739,000 aircraft maintenance technicians by 2039. Without broadening recruitment beyond traditional white, male pipelines, these industries will not be able to meet its workforce needs.

That is why in 2016, the AeroStar Avion Institute, in partnership with The Boeing Company, implemented the K-12 AeroStars Aerospace Education Talent Pipeline Project. Youth in underserved communities are both exposed to and trained in popular STEM and aviation careers, such as flight, aircraft mechanics, and engineering.

"If a child has an interest in STEM, there is a place for them in aviation, and now is the time to pursue those interests," Holmes continued. "Our goal is to educate and train 10,000 black and brown youth over the next 10 years. Bessie's anniversary and centennial year will inspire the next 100 years of diversity, equity, and inclusion as companies search for the talent they need."

“Partnering with the AeroStar Avion Institute is a perfect role for The DuSable Museum because our missions align and serve as a point of connection between underserved communities and the historical impact the African diaspora has on American industry and culture,” said Perri Irmer, DuSable Museum CEO. “For us, it is important to increase the diversity, equity, and inclusion in this vital industry so our young people can not only learn to fly, but can take our entire community with them on their journey.”

During Bessie's centennial year, AeroStar will continue to partner with schools, the business community, and institutions to raise awareness and access to aviation and STEM education programs.

#BC100

Event Honorees

BC 100 Awards

- Amber Scott, K-4
- Kyndall Layne Caffrey, 5-8
- Zaniya O’Neal Greene, 9-12
- Briya McIntyre, College
- Mya Coley, Career

JCFI Scholarship Recipients

- Vergie Bullie
- Kim Rowe-Barney

Guest Honorees

- Carole Hopson – pilot/First Officer, United Airlines; author, *A Pair of Wings: The Life of Pioneer Aviatix Bessie Coleman*
- Chase W. Dillon – actor, "Underground Railroad," Amazon Prime
- Kellee Edwards – adventure pilot/host, "Mysterious Islands," The Travel Channel

Posthumous Award

Robert Sengstacke Abbott (given to Myiti Sengstacke-Rice, President and CEO of the Chicago Defender Charities)



*"You've never
lived till
you've flown!"
Bessie Coleman*

Kellee Edwards, 21st Century Bessie Coleman



Travel journalist Kellee Edwards (Kelleesetgo.com) and host, Mysterious Islands (Travel Channel), with her Cessna 172

For this special issue of AeroStar News, we talked to Kellee Edwards, "One of the Most Powerful Women In Travel" according to Conde' Nast. Edwards is an award-winning travel expert, journalist, and television host by land, air, and sea. She is a licensed pilot, advanced open water scuba diver, and explorer. A pioneer in her approach to adventure travel made her brand Kellee Set Go! become recognized by some of the biggest brands in travel, including The Travel Channel. Kellee is the host of "Mysterious Islands," a series that explores some of the most remote islands in the world. She recently launched a new podcast with Travel + Leisure Magazine called "Let's Go Together" to amplify diversity and inclusion in the travel and adventure space.



Essence magazine called you "A history making jetsetter." Condé Nast called you "a modern adventurer." But at AeroStar, we call you the 21st century Bessie Coleman!

Edwards: I love! I love! Thank you! Seriously, that's an honor of a comparison to say the least. She is everything I aspire to be and more. Everyone thinks of her as a pioneer and a trailblazer, but I actually look at Bessie Coleman as a hero. She is a hero for the African American community, she's a hero for

women, and she's a hero to me. Here in the 21st century, when I step into a room and it's dominated by males, and white males at that, there's a presence that I have to make known to be respected immediately. And that's in the 21st century! I cannot imagine what it would be like during her time when they thought that black people as a whole were three-fifths of a person. Imagine a black woman saying, hey, I want to learn how to fly airplanes and be a stunt pilot. Do you know how intimidating that is to everyone and the way she owned that? It's something I take with me where ever I go.

If I could talk to her today, the first thing I would say is, I'm just so proud of you! She showed us how to get the job done *in spite of*, and that's just incredibly important. People know, when they are working with Kellee Edwards, when they meet Kellee Edwards, I don't play around. I'm here for a reason. I'm passionate about everything that I do, and I follow through and complete all tasks that I set out to do. That's exactly what Bessie did. Who learns another language so that they can learn how to fly in another country because the country you were born in refuses to teach you? A resilient person, that's who!

Bessie passed away on April 30, and I was born on April 29. It was just one day, so close. I had no idea that I would become an aviator. I discovered my passion for flying in my late twenties. Sometimes I feel like her spirit runs through me in a general aviation sense. There are a lot of black aviators, a lot of commercial black pilots—when I say “a lot,” I mean that 1%. In the general aviation space, a lot of people leave and go to commercial flying. As for me, I stay in the world of adventure and excitement. Bessie embodied that. She did aerobatics and all these gravity-defying tricks. She flew for the passion, the love, and the thrill of aviation. And that’s what I do. When people ask if I would fly commercially, I say, oh no. I’m here having fun, a lot of fun. The fact that I can get in an airplane and take myself where ever a Cessna, a Piper, a seaplane can get me, that power in my hand, in a small aircraft, is just phenomenal. That’s why general aviation is very special to me. I love being in that space, because people who fly general aviation have a passion for it. They love the thrill of it, and they’re seeking new adventures. I can’t sit in the cockpit, turn on a bunch of buttons, and everything is taken care of. I still, for the most part, have to manually fly and feel that aircraft. The connection stays stronger because of that for me personally.

You fly the Cessna 172, right?

Edwards: Yes, well, I fly about five different airplanes, but yes, primarily the Cessna.

So how and when did you receive your pilot’s license? How did you train?

Edwards: The reason I decided to get it was because I’m a travel journalist first and foremost. When I had a goal to be a TV host, all of the travel hosts that I looked at—the Samantha Browns, the Anthony Bourdains, the Andrew Zimmerns—everyone was getting on a plane to go to their destination. But no one was flying themselves to get there! That was my aha! moment. How do I separate myself from all these other travel hosts in a space that I want to belong. If you know anything about our community, we have to be exceptional, we have to overachieve, and we have to dominate in whatever we do to get the attention.

So I was sitting at Burbank Airport in Los Angeles. I was headed out on a trip to travel and shoot content for my brand “Kelleesetgo,” and in between Delta and United and Southwest, I saw this little plane landing and taking off and in five more minutes, coming back. At the time I didn’t know that was called a touch-and-go. Sitting at the gate, I literally Googled “one man small airplane” and general aviation came up. Wait a minute. You mean to tell me I don’t have to be in the Air Force to become a pilot? I can go and take lessons? When I came back from that trip, I bought a Groupon for \$99 in 2012 and took a discovery flight at Whiteman Airport. It took me eight months to receive my single-engine license, and in 2019, I got my seaplane rating as well.

My first flight lesson was really crazy. I’m used to pressurization—being comfortable in the airplane, being able to turn on the air conditioner, and waiting for the Captain to say we’re going to take off. Oh no no no! I got in that little Cessna, and we took off. Now Whiteman Airport has mountains off the runway and then open city. When you take off, you’re immediately met with some sort of turbulence. I felt like I was shaking in a Cracker Jack box. I did feel a little bit nauseous from the G’s when we were doing the turns. I felt uncomfortable. However, I looked out the window—and this was right before my instructor said, “I’m going to give you the controls for a moment.” I wasn’t 30,000 feet in the air. We flew by the ocean, the mountains. We flew over buildings. I flew over my neighborhood. I flew over my ex-boyfriend’s neighborhood. Everything I could see at such a low elevation was so eye-opening to me. This was what aviation was about! Being able to see the ocean, the mountains, the different various landscapes. I don’t care how I feel right now, this discomfort. I’m just going to have to work through it because of the power that I felt when I took control of the yoke. I thought, uh oh, the world is in trouble now!

“I refused to take no for an answer.”
– Bessie Coleman

Becoming a pilot was something that *no one* could ever take away from me. To have control over taking myself, my friends, and my family where I want to go, when I want to go (weather permitting and plane operating), I said this is it. People know me as Kelleesetgo, travel and adventure by land, air, and sea, but it is the air that captivates people. It is the fact that I’m a pilot that captivates people. I walk through the airports, if they’re not familiar

with me, people stare. They're confused. They ask me if I'm lost. They say, "You're Kellee Edwards? I thought you were a guy." No you didn't. This voice is quite squeaky. I'm definitely a woman. To this day, my presence at airports still confuses people. Every time I walk through a door, every time I rent a plane, every time I go flying, I want them to get used to seeing women. I want them to get used to seeing black women. I want them to get used to seeing black people. We now have the access, we have the resources, and this is something that more of us, if we were exposed to it, would be interested in doing. So I feel it's my job to expose as many people as I can to aviation. I'm blessed to have a platform that keeps me on television, podcasts, and commercials. I always make sure that everything I do that aviation is involved in some way, and I'm very proud of that. I feel like Bessie started something for our community, and I am helping to continue it with another set of amazing ladies who are out there. I'm just one of many voices, but I'm being as vocal as I can be about it.

"I thought it my duty to risk my life to learn aviation and to encourage flying among men and women of our race, who are so far behind the white race in this modern study."

- Bessie Coleman

*In your show *Mysterious Islands* on the Travel Channel, did you ever experience fear going to those remote islands?*

Edwards: The thing about me is that I'm scared of everything! People would be surprised by that. I'm afraid of everything, but I don't allow fear to hold me back. I use fear to propel me toward it. The difference I've found between myself and a lot of people I've met is they allow fear to make them stagnant and stop. I'm always in competition with myself. What can you accomplish? Even if it's something that doesn't work out, at least you know you tried. With *Mysterious Islands*, yes, I'm in caves with hundreds of dead bodies. I'm in the wilderness of Alaska. I'm in the jungles of Indonesia. The elements themselves can be quite insane. But I also make sure that I'm prepared. I don't go into anything blindly. Just like Bessie prepared by learning French to fly a plane, if I'm going to be in a jungle or forest, I want to make sure that I have my wilderness certification updated so that I know what I'm doing when I'm out there. I'm constantly looking up things about an airplane. I've had situations where I'm in an aircraft and lost an alternator or avionics went out. I've had a lot of sticky situations. I find that I work best under pressure. Once while scuba diving, my air cut off while on a ship wreck dive. I was way too deep in the water to swim up. I couldn't hold my breath long enough to ascend to the top. Now, because of that, I can hold my breath for three minutes. So even when I'm put in situations, my body and mind are like, okay, never again, and learn how to be prepared for it. So yes, I am always afraid of what's out there, but I do not allow that to stop me from exploring, seeking, learning, and finding, regardless.

"A woman is like a teabag - you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water."

- Bessie Coleman

What advice would you give AeroStar's aviation students?

Edwards: The first thing I would say, because they're younger, is that I was different growing up—at times, possibly a nerd. Children who are different, children who are highly intelligent and considered a nerd or a geek, we are the ones excelling greatly in the world. Those people who teased us will need us, our help and our resources. So even if you feel that you're not the cool kid now, you'll be the cool adult later. And it will benefit you greatly. Also, because aviation and STEM are challenging to learn and accomplish, you need to stay the course. Not to sound cliché, but when you realize what the things you're learning can do for your life, as a pilot, that applies to me in other areas, even when I'm on the ground. When it comes to communication with other people, when it comes to even just

checking out the weather, with knowing how things work mechanically, these skills that they're obtaining now can help them in other areas of their lives. They may not realize it yet, but if they stay the course, they'll see how it manifests in other areas, and it will actually make life more beneficial for them in the long run, and for those around them as well.



*"I decided blacks should not have to experience the difficulties I had faced, so I decided to open a flying school and teach other black women to fly."
Bessie Coleman*

HERE SOON!

Aviatrix Bessie Coleman

In Person and on the Screen with 2000 Feet of Film Showing her Flights in Europe and America.

Read the Following Facts About the Dashing and Daring Girl who Flirts with Death in Her Airplane.

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Born in Texas.

She weighs 130 lbs.

She is a graduate of the French School of Aviation at Paris, France.

She is the only woman in the world that handles a 22 horse-power German Benz Plane and she flew over the palace of the Ex. Kaiser, in Berlin, Germany, with a Pathe Camera Man.

She is the only woman in the world holding an international Pilots license, enabling her to make flights in any country.



The Governor of Ohio and Mayor of Columbus Writes Miss Coleman Letters of Welcome

GOVERNOR'S LETTER
STATE OF OHIO
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
COLUMBUS

Robert Sengstacke Abbott, Bessie Coleman's Influential Supporter



Robert Sengstacke Abbott (1868-1940), Founder and Publisher, The Chicago Defender; Founder, Bud Billiken Parade.

“Bessie Coleman shared her vision to become a pilot with Chicago Defender and Bud Billiken Parade founder, Robert Sengstacke Abbott. Inspired by her vision he, along with other Black entrepreneurs in Bronzeville, joined together to support Bessie Coleman with her flight school tuition in France. On June 15, 1921, she became the first American woman to obtain an international pilot’s license from the Fédération Aéronautique International. In further training in France, she specialized in stunt flying and parachuting; her exploits were captured on newsreel films. She returned to the United States, where racial and gender biases precluded her becoming a commercial pilot. Stunt flying, or barnstorming, was her only career option.” – Myiti Sengstacke-Rice, President and CEO of the Chicago Defender Charities

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Follow along as ***Violet Takes Flight*** for the first time! Daddy teaches her and her brother Derek the true meaning of "doing it afraid." Follow along as Pilot Holmes makes her literary debut as Violet's flight teacher!

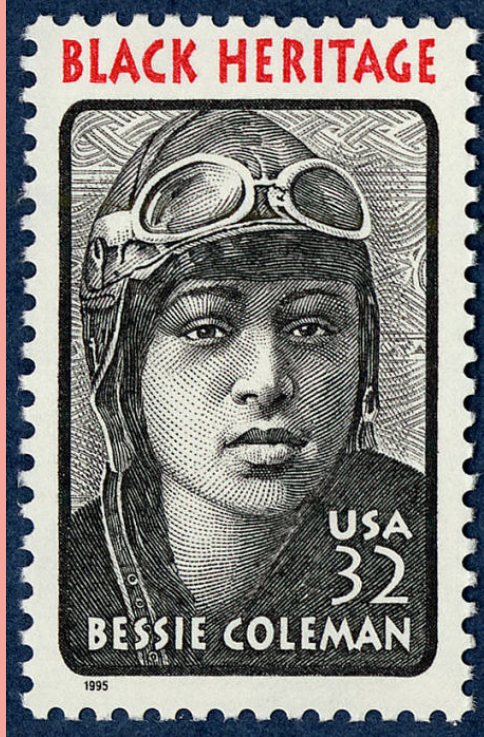
30% of all book sales support AeroStar Avion Institute, NFP, a female, minority owned NFP that teaches underrepresented youth in underserved neighborhoods about aviation STEM careers.

Buy your copy of ***Violet Takes Flight*** **HERE** today!

#thevioletbookseries
#wingstodreams

ON THE RADAR

On April 30, 1926, Queen Bess, as she was called, tragically plunged 2,000 feet to her death during a show rehearsal. To say that Black America mourned is an understatement. "About 10,000 mourners paid their last respects to the first African American woman aviator, filing past her coffin in Chicago South's Side." (**PBS**)



Today, Bessie Coleman lays in rest at Lincoln Cemetery in Blue Island, Illinois.

In 1992, a Chicago City council resolution requested that the U.S. Postal Service issue a Bessie Coleman stamp. The resolution noted that "Bessie Coleman continues to inspire untold thousands even millions of young persons with her sense of adventure, her positive attitude, and her determination to succeed." The Bessie Coleman stamp (Black Heritage series) was issued on April 27, 1995. [Photo source](#)

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