Bessie Coleman 19

Me: Good afternoon Bessie, it's a pleasure to have you here today!

Bessie: Good afternoon! Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here for the interview.

Me: Let's jump right into it! Your story is one of victory and encouragement. I want to know, what was the driving factor that pushed you to move forward, whilst people were pushing against you?

Bessie: The driving force behind my determination was my dream of flying. Despite facing numerous obstacles and discrimination, I refused to let anything stand in the way of pursuing my passion for aviation. I believed in myself and knew that I could achieve my goals with hard work and perseverance. Additionally, I was motivated by the desire to inspire others, especially young African Americans, to pursue their dreams and break barriers in the aviation industry.

Me: That's beautiful. Truly.

Bessie: Thank you. It's important to share our stories and inspire others to overcome challenges and pursue their dreams, no matter the circumstances.

Me: Your drive must have been strong to take you from Chicago all the way to France for your dreams. What are some of the obstacles you run into in France? I doubt it was easy there too.

Bessie: Indeed, traveling to France was a significant step in my journey to become a pilot. While studying aviation there, I faced several challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and financial constraints. As an African American woman in a predominantly white and male-dominated field, I encountered discrimination and skepticism from instructors and fellow aviators. Additionally, securing funding for my flight training was difficult, but I was determined to succeed despite these obstacles. Through perseverance and dedication, I was able to overcome these challenges and earn my pilot's license, becoming the first African American woman to do so.

Me: I'm aware that after earning your international pilots licenses you planned on creating a school for African American future pilots. Did you believe that even in a time where it wasn't an option for those of color along with woman that people would participate? It can be hard to challenge a system like that.

Bessie: Absolutely, I was fully aware of the challenges and systemic barriers facing African Americans and women in aviation during that time. However, I firmly believed that by providing access to aviation education and training, I could empower future generations of African American pilots and challenge the prevailing prejudices and discriminatory practices in the industry. While it was undoubtedly a daunting task to challenge the existing system, I remained optimistic and determined to make a difference. I knew that there were many talented individuals within the African American community who aspired to become aviators, and I was committed to providing them with the opportunity to pursue their dreams.

Me: As a African American, Native American, woman who started out picking cotton but then later a highly skilled aviator you are a success story I'm blessed to look up to. What do you see for future generations that you opened the door to? What's your best piece of advice you give to them?

Bessie: Thank you for your kind words. I see a bright future for future generations of African American and minority aviators. By breaking barriers and paving the way for others, I hope to inspire young people to pursue their passions and dreams, regardless of their background or circumstances. My best piece of advice for them would be to never give up on their aspirations, no matter how challenging the journey may seem. Believe in yourself, work hard, and persevere in the face of adversity. And always remember, the sky is not the limit - it's just the beginning of what you can achieve.

Me: You truly do deserve the name "Queen Bess"! Thank you for taking the time to share this with me!

Bessie: Thank you so much for your kind words and for this opportunity to share my story. It's been a pleasure speaking with you. If you ever have more questions or want to learn more, don't hesitate to reach out. Take care!