

# Fly-Sister-Fly!



Mural by Jacqueline "The Artist" Withers

## **"Celebrating 15 Years of Continuing Bessie Coleman's Legacy"**

**5<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Bessie Coleman Foundation, Inc  
Empowerment Breakfast**

Wednesday, August 4, 2010  
Memphis Downtown Marriott  
Memphis, Tennessee

## About the Bessie Coleman Foundation

In 1995, the Bessie Coleman Foundation, Inc. was established by a group of African American female pilots, and other African American aviation professionals and enthusiasts. The Foundation is based in Washington, D.C., and is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Our purpose is to be a major participant in the promotion of aviation, aerospace, and the legacy of Bessie Coleman so that all interested individuals may realize their full potential.

### 2010 – 2011 Officers

President – Thelma Rudd

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Nancy Lawrence

Thelma Rudd

## Greetings from the Bessie Coleman Foundation, Inc.!

On behalf of the Bessie Coleman Foundation, (BCF) Board of Directors, the Executive Committee and members, we welcome you to our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Fly Sister Fly Empowerment Breakfast. BCF will present the Sisters of Distinction Award to eleven recipients recognizing their accomplishments, excellence and contributions to aviation and aerospace. We will also celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> year as an organization by presenting a mural (shown on the right) to the Ida B. Wells Museum in Holly Springs, Mississippi. This piece of art by Jacqueline "The Artist" Withers archives the relationship between Bessie Coleman and Ida B. Wells, who presided over Bessie Coleman's funeral in Chicago, IL in 1926.



We are excited that "CJ" Charlton, Continental Airlines pilot and the National Director of Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP)'s ACE Academy, will facilitate our program. Our keynote speaker will be Shirley Tyus, United Airlines first African American female pilot and a founding member of BCF.



2010 has been a busy year for BCF. In January, our members celebrated Queen Bess' birthday by visiting local schools. In March, we traveled to Middle Tennessee University's Aviation Department with the Project Altitude. In April, we traveled to Denver and celebrated with the Denver "Hooks" Chapter Tuskegee Airmen International (TAI) and then in May, we participated in the Chicago "DoDo" Chapter TAI's 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Flyover at Lincoln Cemetery honoring Queen Bess, Willa Brown and Janet Bragg. The first Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy was held in Memphis, Tennessee on June 15 and June 16, 2010. The two-day workshop was designed to

commemorate the anniversary of the date that Queen Bess received her pilot's license. The Leadership Academy was formed to use Bessie Coleman's accomplishments as a model for young women to set goals and consider aviation and aerospace technology as a career.

We extend our deep appreciation to OBAP and Black Flight Attendants of America (BFAOA) for their valued support and continued partnership. We also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge our directors, officers, members and supporters. Thank you for your generous time, hard work and dedication to the Bessie Coleman Foundation.

To all of you, best wishes for an educational, enjoyable and successful convention.

Sincerely,

*Hannah Dixon and Thelma Rudd*

Chairperson, Board of Directors and President

*The Bessie Coleman Foundation: Humble Beginnings from a Labor of Love*  
Written for the 2006/ 2007 BCF Newsletter by founding BCF member – Lorraine Spencer

During my brief study of Aviation Administration at the University of Alaska Anchorage, I first saw Patrice Clarke Washington in uniform as a First Flight Officer for United Parcel Service (She went on to become the first black female Captain for a major airline). So struck was I that I decided to postpone my legal studies and pursue a career in the aviation field. After attending the 1994 OBAP conference in Chicago, I not only met my inspiration Patrice, but I met some other important people who would later help start the future Bessie Coleman Foundation. I met Mr. Charles Horn, Marion Coleman (Bessie's oldest living relative) and Captain Beverly Armstrong who later contacted me to appear on a talk show in the Chicago area.

From there, we met in Baltimore, Maryland and formed the Bessie Coleman Foundation at the home of Jill Brown (In 1978 she became the first African American female pilot for a major airline). In attendance was myself, Lorraine Spencer (vice president, public relations), Captain Beverly Armstrong, (president), Jill Brown (vice president), Michelle, a colleague of Captain Armstrong, facilitated the meeting, Patrice Clarke Washington, (treasurer); Sheldon Smith (Communications Director) and Mr. Charles Horn. About the BCF elections, with the few of us there, we just voiced our desires for whatever office came up and the rest is BCF History. None of us was truly elected in the traditional sense – we were self – appointed. After we decided who would be what, we worked on both mission and vision statements. It seemed that we were well on our way. (Jill suggested that we contact Shirley Tyus to be a part of the BCF who we later met at the Bessie Coleman stamp unveiling. I asked her at that time if she wanted to be a VP while I concentrated on public relations).

From that point, I returned to my home in Indianapolis. I had no furniture in my new apartment, but I had a phone and a living room full of BCF papers. It was then that I designed BCF letterhead that included a beautiful picture of Bessie in her flight suit with the words: "**Bessie Coleman Foundation Continuing the Legacy**" captioned around the picture. (See picture on right). A simple cut and paste at the local Kinko's copy machine made the BCF official. Kinko's and I got to be real good friends as I spent endless hours there drafting letters and faxing at various Indianapolis locations. I sent letters to everyone I thought would be remotely interested in Black female pilots and legacy of Bessie Coleman. I sent one of those letters to Lynn Vaughn's producer at CNN in Atlanta as she suggested. After reading it, they called me right away.

The Chicago bureau of CNN came to do a segment on me. I convinced the producer to expand the piece to cover the news of the Bessie Coleman stamp and the plight of black American females (civilian and military) in aviation. Three hours of take-offs and landings resulted in a 3 minute expose that included an interview with me, Capt. Armstrong, Marion Coleman and footage of Patrice Clarke Washington. About 3 weeks later, Captain Armstrong came to Indianapolis and did about 6 talk shows and speaking engagements in 2 days. Shortly thereafter, the Indianapolis Children's Museum commissioned me to write a script (in first person) of Bessie Coleman's life and legacy. I entitled it: "Dare to Dream - Dare to Fly".

The highlight of my BCF experience was the unveiling of the Bessie Coleman US Postage Stamp ceremonies in Chicago. I met so many black aviation professionals and was truly inspired. I also met Jilda Motley who is Bessie Coleman's great niece. That was especially nice as I have kept in touch her and other Bessie Coleman relatives over the past years. In April of 1995, I relocated to the Washington DC area to pursue flight training and to continue with the BCF. The group was gaining recognition and started speaking at various engagements. We attended several aviation related events around the country. In obtaining our non profit status, I recall literally trying to make it by 4:00PM in rush hour traffic to get our 501(c) 3 applications to the DC Tax office. Then Vice President Shirley Tyus was racing and flagged down a police officer to escort us safely through the DC traffic. What memories!

*Ms. Lorraine Spencer lives in Alexandria, VA. And is a Magistrate for the Commonwealth of Virginia. She is also a wife and mother of two. She can be contacted at [lorrainespencer1@verizon](mailto:lorrainespencer1@verizon).*



## Keynote Speaker - Shirley Tyus

When it comes to being first in aviation, Shirley Tyus and the Bessie Coleman have a lot in common: Tyus was United Airlines' first African-American female pilot and Coleman was the first African-American female daredevil pilot and the first American Citizen to hold an international pilot's license. Tyus' story is a dream-come-true, one that evolved after earning her wings as a pilot for United Airlines. First, she took flight as a flight attendant in 1971; Tyus grew curious about flying and began asking questions. This ex-bookkeeper and part-time model's curiosity grew intense, which led to flight instruction. Twelve years later, she was hired as a navigator for the same airline. She was responsible for maintaining cabin pressure, navigating the Boeing 727, evaluating weather conditions, and keeping watch over the plane's computer and instrument panel. She moved up the ranks before retiring. Today, Tyus has retired after flying for 25 years. Like Queen Bess, her last flight assignments were international - Europe and Asia. Again like Queen Bess, she continues to encourage African Americans to take to the sky!



## Master of Ceremony – William “CJ” Charlton Jr.



Originally from Hampton, Virginia, William “CJ” Charlton's family lived overseas for most of his first 17 years of life. After graduating from Delaware State University with a degree in Airway Science, he was recruited by the North Carolina Air National Guard (NCANG), to be a C-130 pilot. CJ currently serves as a C-130 Aircraft Commander in the 156 Airlift Squadron, operating out of Charlotte, North Carolina. During his 14 years in the squadron, CJ has accumulated over 2500 hours of flight time. In January of 2000, CJ joined Atlantic Coast Airlines (ACA) as a first officer. The following year he upgraded to Captain on the company's newly acquired Dornier Regional Jet. During his tenure at ACA, CJ was a significant factor in the recruitment of African American pilots at the company. In August of 2005, he left ACA to join Continental Airlines. He currently flies the Boeing 757 and 767 on domestic and international routes out of Newark, New Jersey. During his entire post collegiate life, CJ has been an active member of the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP). Currently he serves as the National Director of OBAP's ACE Academy program. Though OBAP holds a special place in his life, CJ's passion is the non-profit foundation, Charlton Camps for Aviation, Science and Technology Training (CCASTT), which he and his wife created two years ago. The curriculum that the Jacksonville ACE Academy utilizes is a product of their endeavors.

## Program

### *Welcome to Memphis*

Honorable A.C. Wharton  
Mayor of Memphis, Tennessee

### *Welcome to the Fly-Sister-Fly Empowerment Breakfast*

Hannah Dixon

### *Introduction of “Sisters of Distinction” Honorees*

### *Introduction of Master of Ceremonies*

Nancy Lawrence

### *Master of Ceremonies*

William “CJ” Charlton

### *Installation of 2010-2011 BCF Officers and Directors*

Mayor Wharton

### *Spiritual Blessing*

Clovis Jones

**\*\*Breakfast Served\*\***

### *Do You Know Who Knew Bessie Coleman?*

Precious Morris and the Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy Participants

### *Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy*

Jaleesa Peete

### *Introduction of Keynote Speaker*

Thomas Johnson

### *Keynote*

Shirley Tyus

### *BCF Membership and What It Means To Me*

Bessie Coleman Foundation Members

### *Sharing Cherished Moments with the “Sisters of Distinction”*

### *Acknowledgements*

Thelma Rudd, BCF President  
James Gordon, OBAP President

## Fly-Sister-Fly “Sisters of Distinction”

The primary goal of the BCF Fly-Sister-Fly Empowerment Breakfast is to recognize that humans with power write history. Therefore we empower ourselves by acknowledging and recording the histories of outstanding contributions in the fields of aviation and aerospace by women of color and, in doing so, we inspire others to pursue their dreams in aviation and beyond.

For the year 2010, BCF proudly presents the ‘Sisters of Distinction’ Award to:



**Camelia Barkley** is a 2010 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University's Aerospace Air Traffic Controller training. You know, every once in a while, we need to applaud young people who are focused, in school and who have their eyes on the prize. BCF is proud to recognize Camelia. She is a natural leader. Her outstanding commitment to the future as a young aviation leader is evident in her service as an active participant of OBAP ACE camps and as an avid aviation volunteer.



**Shirley Blache** is not only fulfilling Queen Bess' legacy, she is passing the legacy on to future generations of Memphis aviators. As the Havenview Middle School librarian, she has made a profound positive impact on students and her peers. In 2009, Blache used a Community Action Grant awarded by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation to implement Project Altitude. Project Altitude is an in-house after school program for girls and its focus is aviation career education and STEM related careers.



**Paquita Bradley** is a graduate of Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina. Community service is a passion for Paquita Bradley and she has always loved working with children. Under Paquita's leadership as Chairperson, the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees (NBCFAE) Atlanta Chapter Black & White Scholarship Ball has raised thousands of dollars for scholarships that are presented to a number of deserving students in the Atlanta area. She is also the President of the NBCFAE Southern Region.

## Fly-Sister-Fly “Sisters of Distinction”



**Sandra Campbell** is a manager of the Technology of Administrative Support Staff with Aircraft Certification Services (Small Airplanes Directorate) of the Federal Aviation Administration. She was the first African American to direct an FAA Public Affairs Office. She is also an Adjutant Professor with Webster University as an accomplished playwright and speaker. Campbell authored “Follow Your Dreams,” a noteworthy monologue about the life of Bessie Coleman. In fact, when most people think of Bessie Coleman, they think about Campbell and her “Purple Jelly Beans”.



**Tonika Johnson** flies the MD80 for African based ARIK Airlines. Johnson was the first black female to graduate from Central Missouri State University with a BS degree in Aviation. In 2002, Johnson became US Airways Express subsidiary first African American female captain. When she is not flying, she mentors young aviators and promotes aviation education. With her book, “Nikki, the Airline Pilot”, she reaches out to the younger audience and takes them through the typical day in the life of a pilot.



**Sara McVay** is a graduate of Alcorn State University and is the first African American female to attain a second level manager position at Memphis ARTCC. She joined the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation (NBCFAE) employees in 1990 and has held many positions in that organization including the Memphis Chapter President. Her continued involvement is pivotal to the success of the annual Memphis Aviation Professional Youth Award luncheon held in February for the last 20 years. Largely, due to Sara, this event has been the cornerstone for NBCFAE and other aviation groups to provide an opportunity for the youth in the city and county school systems to meet aviation professionals and to learn the history of aviation pioneers.



**Cathy Ross** is senior vice president and chief financial officer for FedEx Express. Ross is a four-time recipient of the FedEx Five Star Award, the company's highest for individual achievement. She is a native of Henderson, Tennessee, and is an adviser to Fogelman College of Business and Economics, and to the University of Memphis Research Foundation Board. In 2007, Cathy Ross joined other notable women of achievement as a member of the Tennessee Women's Forum. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Delta Sigma Pi Professional Fraternity and The Links, Incorporated, an organization of African-American women devoted to community service.

## Fly-Sister-Fly “Sisters of Distinction”



Parthenia “Pat” Thompson is a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University. She serves as the Aviation Department Coordinator at Tennessee Technology Center @ Memphis. Her leadership ability makes her to the focal point for all contact with the Aviation School. Ms. Pat, as she is known to the students, has journeyed along with hundreds of students as they prepare themselves for a future in aviation maintenance in addition to providing positive guidance along the way. Her encouragement to “press on and finish what you have started” provides the extra motivation needed.



Dawn Wanzer is a Delta Airlines pilot. In 2002, Wanzer received her BS in Aeronautical Science from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Daytona). She currently pilots a Boeing 737-800 out of LaGuardia airport. Dawn is one of the most enthusiastic individuals in the aerospace industry and is dedicated to inspiring the next generation of pilots. While working fulltime, she makes time to travel across the country volunteering to ensure the success of several pilots.



Ruby Roy Wharton, a native of Louisiana, now resides in Memphis. She graduated with honors from Southern University in Baton Rouge in 1966 and was the first African American female graduate of the Boston College Law School in 1969. She is currently Managing Partner at The Wharton Law Firm. She has devoted more than 16 years of service to the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Board of Commissioners. Currently Ms. Wharton serves as Chair of the Concessions Committee, and serves on the Business Diversity Development and Planning & Development Committees. In 2009, she was awarded the Airport Minority Advisory

Council AMAC Hall of Fame Award for her dedication in promoting the efforts of the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority. Ruby Wharton is known for her passion and service to the community, especially those areas that involve support and mentoring of youth.



Tracy Williams was the Executive Director of the Millington Airport Authority. She has just accepted a new position at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport. Her most significant accomplishments at Millington included marketing, which has resulted in attracting new business to the jetport; modernizing and formalizing written contractual arrangements; and improving the airport enterprise fund, making the Jetport self-sufficient. Her first job in airport management was that of an unpaid intern at the airport by day,

while working in a factory working on an assembly line at night. Tracy earned her private pilot license in 1990.

## Why the Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy is Important

On behalf of the officers and board of directors of the Bessie Coleman Foundation Inc. (BCF), I extend sincere thanks to the participants and the mentors for our first Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy held on June 15-16, 2010. June 15, 1921 was very special to us because that was the date that Queen Bess received her International Pilot's License.



Kelleen Terrell, Jasmine Liggins, Jalessa Peete, Diana Lugenwa, Jheri Andrade and Jennifer Pope took advantage of this intense two day workshop designed to utilize the proven skills of Bessie Coleman to expose and influence young women to set goals, and to consider aviation and aerospace technology as a career.

Our USA president Barack Hussein Obama II message of “**Yes We Can**” encourages us to understand that change comes from within. If we want change, then we must change ourselves. That is exactly what our shero Bessie Coleman did! As Queen Bess said herself, her greatest ambition was to change “Uncle Tom's cabin into a hangar by establishing a flying school.” She wanted the opportunities in aviation to be free of discrimination. So she changed herself!

She changed her financial status by disciplining herself to save money and by gaining the respect and support of people like Robert Abbott (Chicago Defender). She changed her educational environment from a society (USA) that refused to allow her to fly, for ones (France and Germany) that proudly taught her to pilot the new contraptions called aeroplanes. She changed her capacity to communicate by learning French! She changed the prevailing belief that an aeroplane would not respond to her because she was a woman and her skin was brown by earning an international pilots license. She changed the unfair laws of segregation by refusing to perform unless all spectators were allowed the same access.

She ignored and thus changed existing ideas about race relations when she earned the mutual admiration and support of whites like chewing-gum heir Edwin M. Beeman, aircraft designers Anthony Fokker and Glenn Curtiss, founder and president of the International Airline Pilots Association David L. Behncke, and pilot/mechanic William D. Wills who died with her in an old army surplus aircraft. Because she changed herself, she diversified the color of the faces of future aviators. **Yes – she did!**

This fast paced and fun filled two day workshop exposed young women to all of the skills that Queen Bess used to meet her goals of earning a pilot's license and encouraging a diverse aerospace system. I believe that this academy can change lives. We know everyone will not enter into an aviation career, however if you follow Queen Bess' formula, you can be successful in which ever career you choose.

Again I encourage you to spread the word about Queen Bess and this academy. Together we can honor Bessie Coleman's dream and her achievement of multicultural participation in all aspects of aviation, aerospace and other careers.

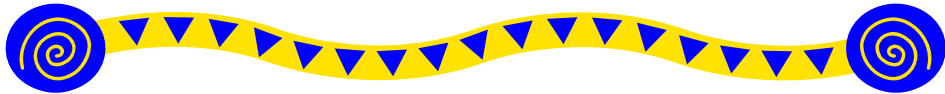
It looks like a good day to fly,

Thelma L. Rudd  
Thelma L. Rudd, President  
Bessie Coleman Foundation, Inc.  
[trudd@WeAreTheLegacy.com](mailto:trudd@WeAreTheLegacy.com)



About "The Artist" – **Jacqueline Withers** is an accomplished mural artist who attends the Art Institute of Colorado, majoring in Design Management. She recently completed a mural for the Denver's Children Home that encompasses history from the ancient Egyptians to the famous Tuskegee Airmen. In fact, she was recently awarded The Tuskegee Airmen, Inc's "Hero Youth Award" in July 2010 for her commitment to Denver youth.

"The Artist" has graciously donated two murals to BCF, one of Bessie Coleman and another depicting both Bessie Coleman and Ida B Wells. That mural will be donated to and archived at the Ida B Wells Museum in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Ida B. Wells served as the Mistress of Ceremony at Brave Bessie's funeral in Chicago.



## **Join BCF or Renew Your BCF Membership!**

**“Bring a Buddy” Stimulus Package ends August 31, 2010**

**\$40 for one** regular annual membership

**\$75 for two** regular members - at least one must be a new member

**Effective September 1, 2010,**

**BCF Regular Annual Dues will increase to \$50.**

**Join BCF online at [www.WeAreTheLegacy.com](http://www.WeAreTheLegacy.com)**