

# Bessie Coleman - Eleanor Williams

## Dreams Take Flight Celebration



It is with humble respect and gratitude that the Bessie Coleman Aerospace Legacy, Inc (BCAL) (formerly the Bessie Coleman Foundation) celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Brave Bess' historic license and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Eleanor Williams' historic certification as the first African American female Air Traffic Controller through the Bessie Coleman - Eleanor Williams Dreams Take Flight Celebration On Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at the Sheraton Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland. We also recognized the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Queen Bess' tragic death and we mourned the recent passing of our BCAL member, Eleanor Williams.



Rosalyn Cole, Nancy Lawrence, PhD and Pamela Edwards

BCAL partnered with the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation Employees (NBCFAE) and the Black Flight Attendants of America (BFAOA) with this historic venue with over 240 attendees. The FAA's Education Ambassador, Jamail Larkins, was the Master of Ceremony and facilitated in honoring Rosalyn Cole (USAF Retired AWAC Instructor), Pamela Edwards (Former FAA Academy Instructor) and Dr. Nancy Lawrence (Professor Embry Riddle Aeronautical University). The three honorees were presented with "Pearls of Wisdom" (gifts from the BFAOA) to remind them of the regal elegance embodied by our First Lady

Michelle Obama. Genae Parnell was awarded the Bessie Coleman Aerospace Legacy 2011 Scholarship.

Bessie Coleman and Eleanor Williams had a lot in common. They were both smart, beautiful, brown skinned and "fly" women from Texas. They knew that the doors to the skies must be opened to those who had been shut out. When Bessie Coleman sacrificed to become the first American to obtain an International Pilot's license from the renowned Federation Aeronautique Internationale on June 15, 1921, the door was opened and fifty years later (1971), Eleanor Williams became the first African American female air traffic controller. When Eleanor made her historic accomplishment she "stuck her foot in the door" and kept it open - thus ensuring that the Federal Aviation Administration provided a discrimination free work place. Ms. Williams continued and became the first (and only to date) black female FAA Manager of an Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC).

Queen Bess refused to take no for an answer and Eleanor's mantra was "never let them see you sweat"!

I am convinced that it is because of both of these great women, that I was successful at becoming a Memphis Enroute Air Traffic Controller. Dr. Mae Jemison, the first African American woman in space, took a poster of Bessie Coleman with her in space and has stated, "I point to Bessie Coleman and say without hesitation that here is a woman, a being, who exemplifies and serves as a model to all humanity: the very definition of strength, dignity, courage, integrity, and beauty." I point also to Eleanor Williams.



**Eleanor Williams and Thelma Rudd**

BCAL is extremely grateful for our partnership with NBCFAE and BFAOA! Because of this shared relationship, BCAL will be providing scholarships to lucky students and offering our signature Bessie Coleman Aerospace Leadership Academy to young women. Thanks so much in helping us to continue the legacy of Queen Bess!

It looks like a good day to fly,

Thelma Rudd  
Bessie Coleman Aerospace Legacy, Inc President.