

RONDOUT LADIES

Presents

ZENDAYA COLEMAN



AS



PLUS AN ALL-STAR SUPPORTING CAST

INTO THE SKY!



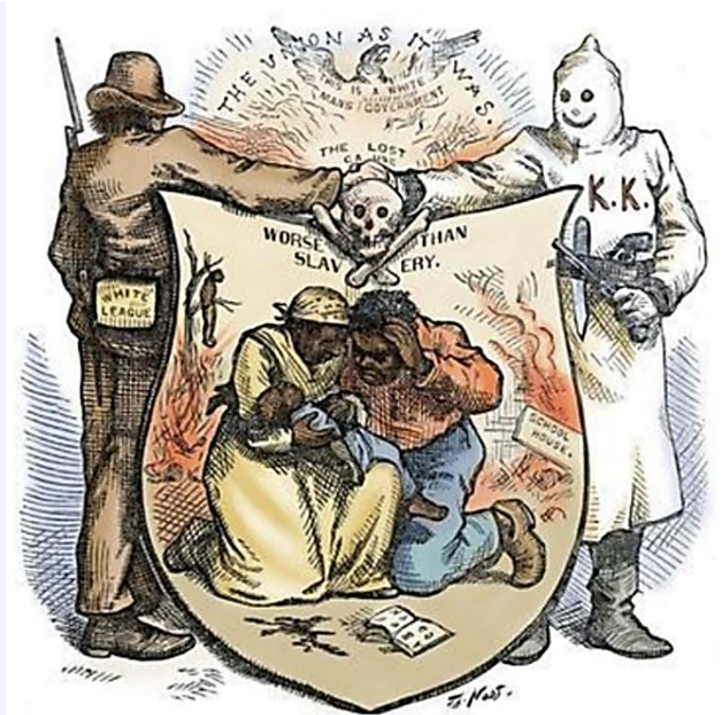
***TO BOLDLY GO WHERE NO COLORED
WOMAN HAS GONE BEFORE!***

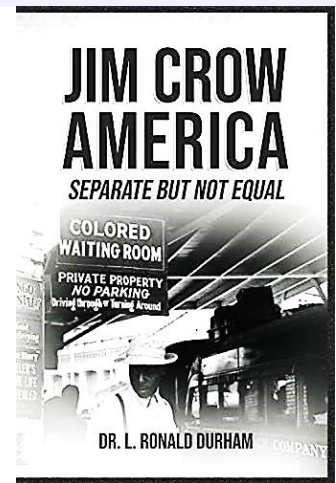
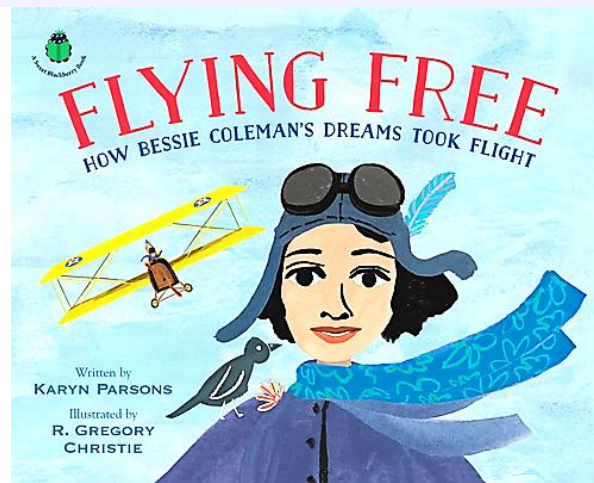
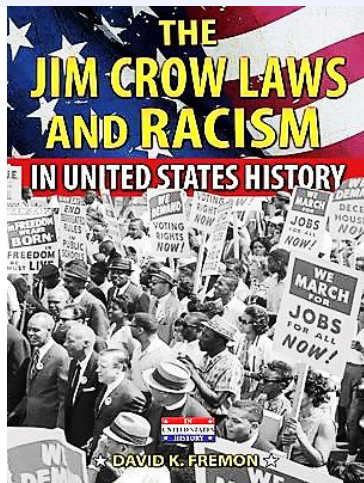
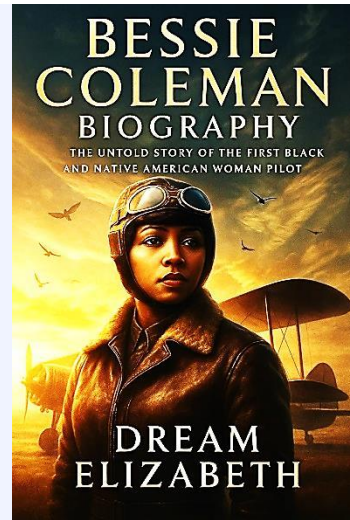
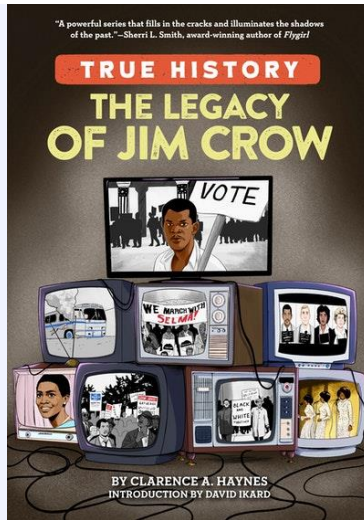
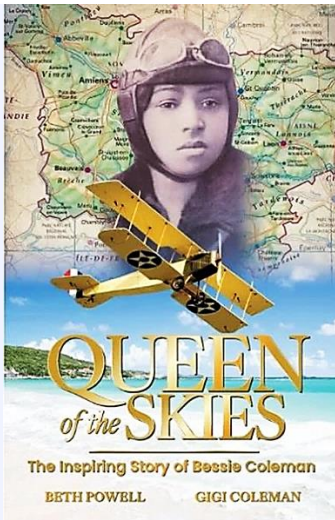
WRITTEN & PRODUCED BY KEVIN AHEARN

4/26 'INTO The SKY!' is legend
All references to actual persons, alive
or dead, made for a good story.

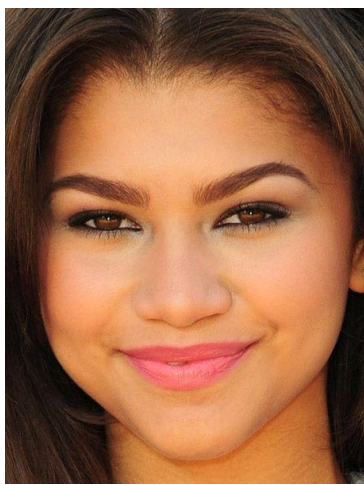
JIM CROW

"Not on my watch!"

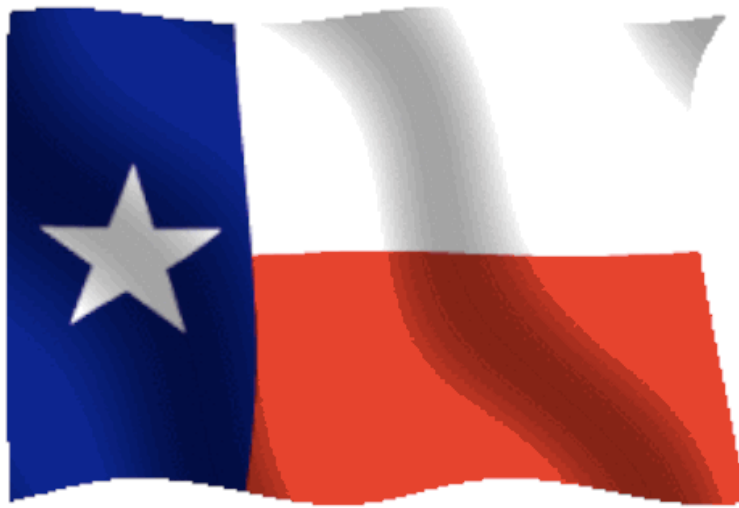




For Erika



"I refuse to take NO for an answer!"

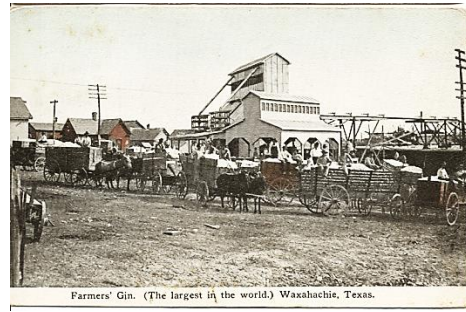
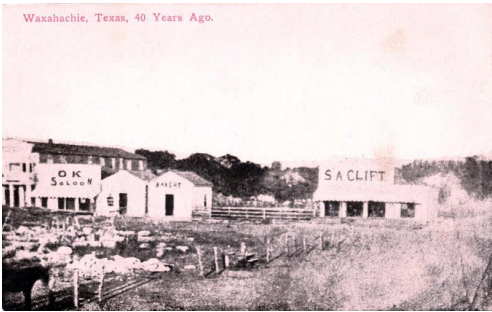


On January, 26, 1892, I was born in a one-room, dirt-floored cabin in an Atlanta nobody ever heard of, Atlanta, Texas! I was the tenth of thirteen children, but none of us were pure Negro.



Mom's ancestors came from somewhere in Africa, hundreds of years ago, but my father came from right here in America! Like me, Daddy was born in Atlanta. He was of mixed African and Native American descent, with three of his grandparents Choctaw or Cherokee. He married Mama in 1875.

When I was two years old, we moved to Waxahachie, Texas. Daddy bought a quarter-acre of land and built a three-room house in which two more daughters were born.



But with the coming of the new century, Daddy was unable to find work, so he left us for the Indian territory.



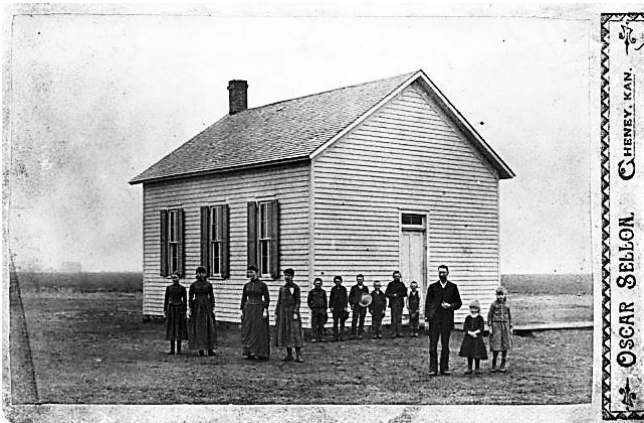
Mama and older brothers went to work and I was left to take care of my two younger sisters.



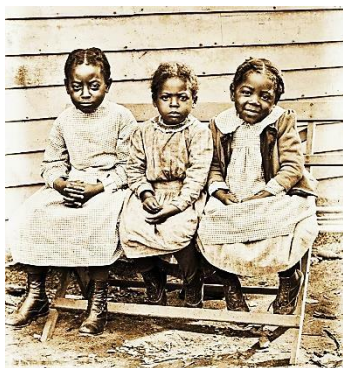
I started going to school in 1898. The one-room building held grades one through eight, all black, with only one teacher for all grades.



I walked four miles to school every day though the Texas heat and cold, wind and rain. Best thing that ever happened to me! 'Cause when I finally got to school I would treasure every last minute of it.



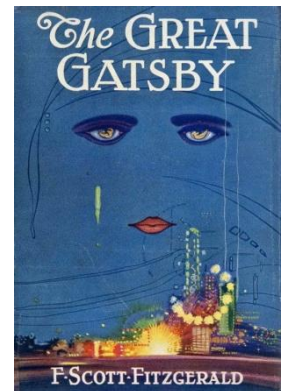
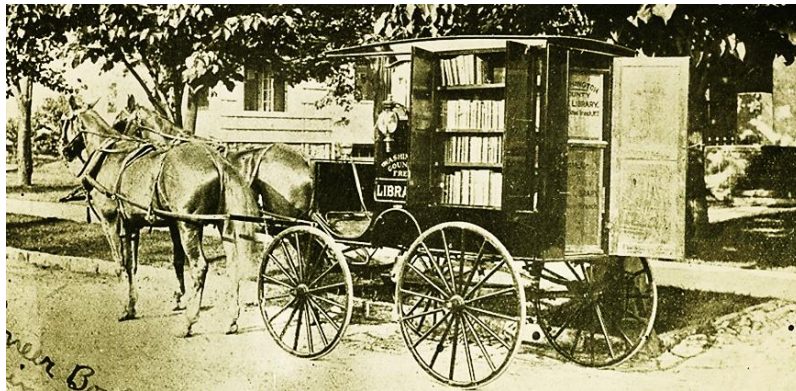
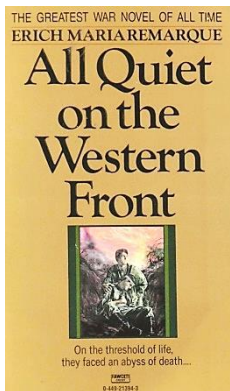
My education was limited to eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse that closed whenever the students were needed in the fields to help their families harvest cotton. I became as family leader, reading to my siblings and Mama at night. And I kept telling Mama again and again, especially after church.



“I’m going to amount to something!”



"I learned how to read in a flash, but that wasn't enough! I learned to love to read!"



Twice a month the library wagon would roll by and I'd rent a couple of books for a dime! A reading life was an adventure!

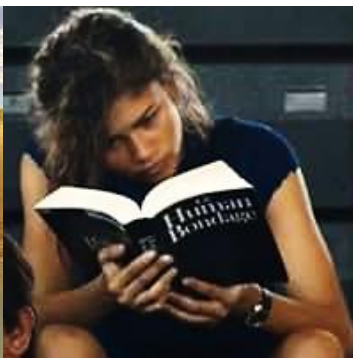
After completing school I worked as a laundress and saved my pay until 1910



"Congratulation, Piccaninny. You've found your place"

"Wishy-washey! Your all for the next half century!"

Oh, no, not me! I left for Oklahoma to attend Langston University, a real black college!



*"I loved college because I love learning!
Especially about the latest...Flying!
I could do that, couldn't I?"*

After one semester I had to leave: no money left. Back to washing clothes and picking cotton.

*I couldn't stay in Texas going nowhere so I moved to Chicago to live with my two older brothers. Finally, I'd escape **JIM CROW**.*

Or so I thought!

Back from the War to End All Wars, my brothers told me all kind of stories, especially about war planes.



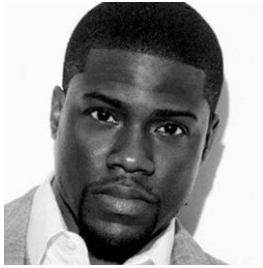
Eugene Jacques Bullard was the first black

*fighter pilot and a professional boxer who flew for
France during World War I.*

And a boxer and a jazz musician! Eugene was called "L'Hirondelle noire".

In French the "Black Swallow".

(What a beautiful language!!)



*"The Black Devil", the
pride of our race!"*

*"Good copy. Sells papers, romantic
instruments of war."*

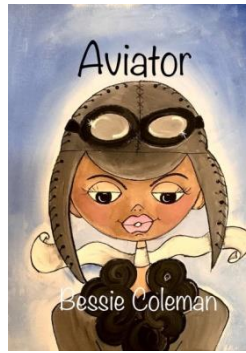


*"How come he's the only one of the race
who's become a pilot? Even white ladies have been flying.
How come no men or ladies of the race have become pilots?"*



"We're hoping for that someday."

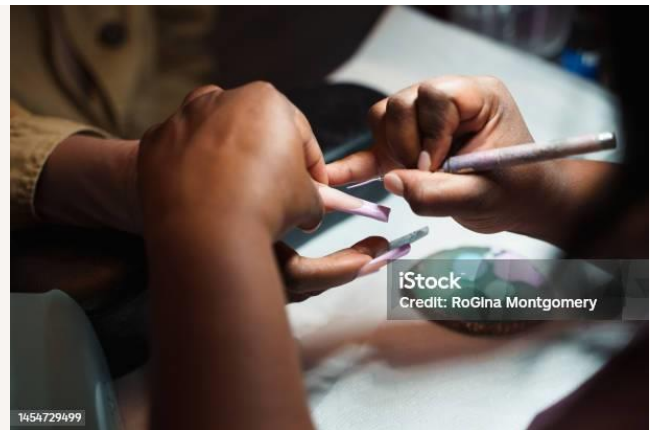
"It starts with an idea. Then a dream and hard work!"



*“A nigrass with an idea? For what—
doing the laundry!”*

*“What could she possibly have
a dream about? Being White!”*

*Back to work. As much as I tried to do my job. I wouldn't abandon my dream. I just
couldn't let go.*



*I had built up a reputation. Not just the best and the gentlest and the fastest, but the
prettiest manicurist in all black Chicago. (Made for good tips which I needed desperately)*



“Your hands, sir.”

*“Beautiful, young lady. Light-skinned.
With just the right make up, you could pass!”*



"Never! Nigress imposter! Once her secret color is out...!"

"We know just the people who would enjoy taking good care of her!"



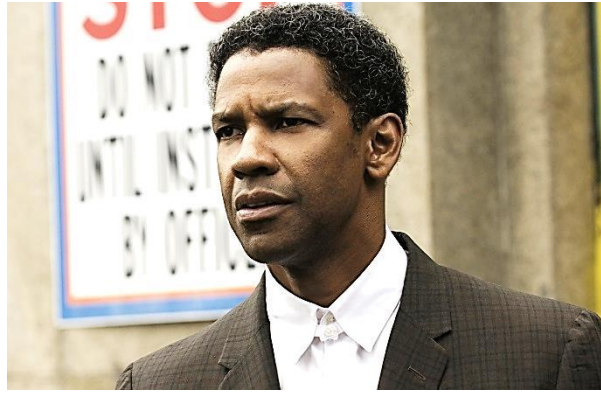
"My good sir. I am my Mama's and my Daddy's daughter and will always be so. Thank you very much!"



That's one black clown I never saw again. (But left a nice tip!)

One of my favorite and regular customers was Mr. Robert S. Abbott, the man who created...





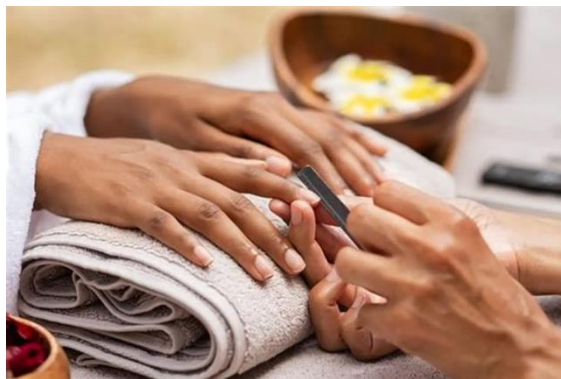
The Chicago Defender, founded in 1905, was the "most important" newspaper of its kind. Abbott's newspaper reported and campaigned against **Jim Crow**-era violence and urged black people in the American South to settle in the north in what became the Great Migration.



Abbott worked out an informal distribution system with Pullman porters who surreptitiously (and sometimes against southern state laws and mores) took his paper by rail far beyond Chicago, especially to African American readers in the Southern United States. (*Wikipedia*)



"Good afternoon, Miss Bessie Coleman."



"Mr. Abbott. always a pleasure to serve you."



Mr. Abbott was a newsman, so we talked about the BIG Story – the war my two brothers are fighting in Europe.

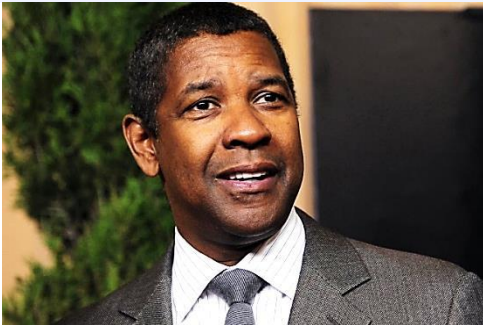


“I assure you that our reports are as accurate as can be. The Germans call them ‘The Black Devils’”!

“I take it that means the White generals just wanted to get rid of our boys ‘cause they don’t trust them.”



And of course we talked about the newest warriors of all – fighter pilots and those beautiful airplanes!



“So far, the units have been outstanding!”

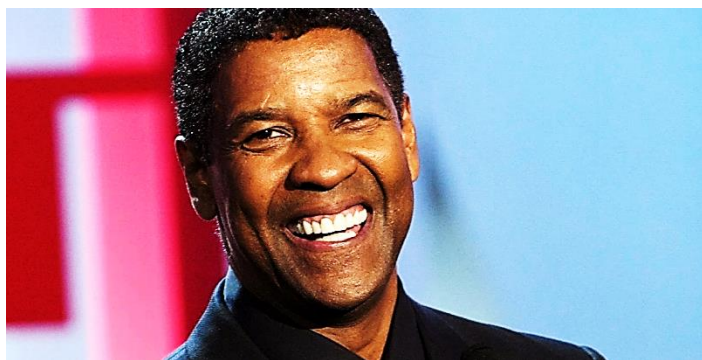
“Looks like airplanes are becoming more and important. This Ballard fella looks quite dashing.”

“Yes! He’s fighting for the French. Headstrong!”

“How come he’s the only one of the race to become a pilot? How come no ladies of the race have become pilots?”

“We’re hoping for that some day?”

“How much good is hoping? Flying is the future! We’re just gonna let it pass us by?”



“Well, Miss Bessie Coleman. That’s quite a challenge you’ve got going! Hope and dream till the cows come home, but learning to fly and doing it well takes a lot of work!”

“You know anybody ready to work and work hard?”



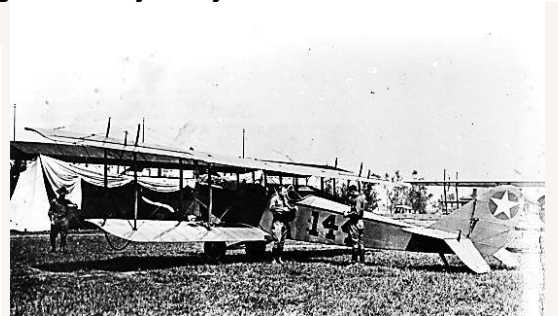
“Not yet, Mr. Abbott. Not yet!”

That was it! I applied to every flight school in the United States.



“Stupid pickaninny! You’re wasting time and money!”

“Pure and simple like you, girl! American white men ain’t gonna let you fly!”



Before I got any answers, all hell broke loose!



THE Chicago Defender

WORLD'S GREATEST WEEKLY

RACE RIOT IN CITY

COLORED YOUTH DROWNED AT BEACH

JIM CROW *is everywhere!*

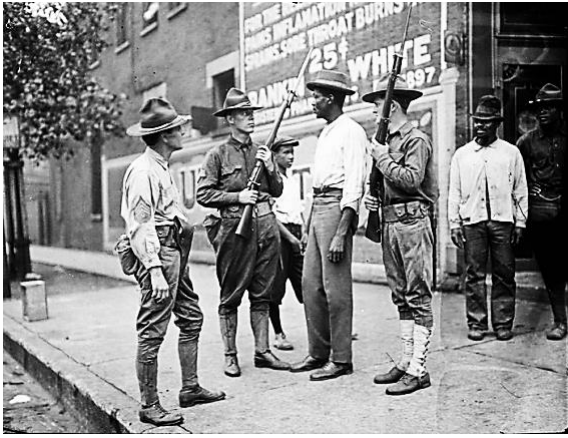


“You bet your worthless black life we are!”

The 1919 Chicago race riots was a week-long lethal conflict between black and white residents, ignited by racial tensions and the drowning of a black teenager – 38 deaths, 500+ injuries and widespread property damage.

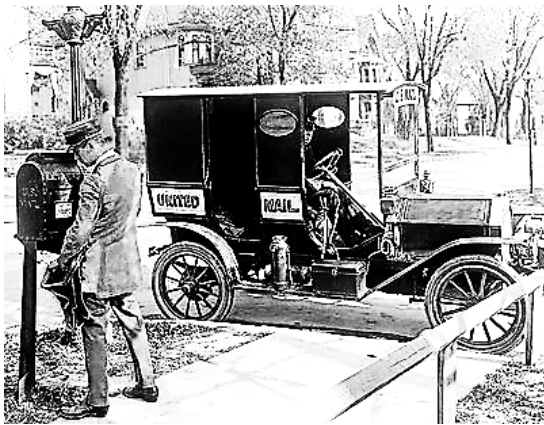


Mama came to visit with motherly advice,



*"Any time you see white folks with bats 'n torches,
it's time to be somewhere else."*

"It was like this in Texas. Now it's here."



"I got the mail. Letters for Bessie."



"Good news?"

"From who?"

"No. Rejections. Always rejections!"

*"I'm going to be a pilot, Mama, but
no women, no coloreds, no exceptions."*

"Running out of schools and ideas."



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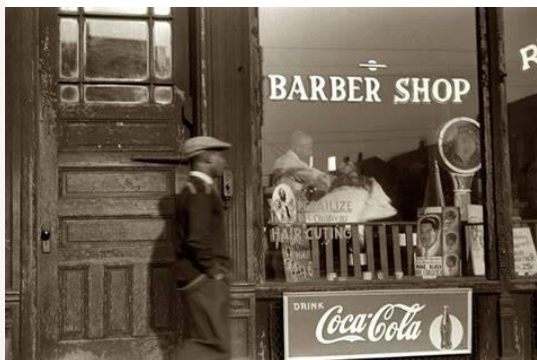


"You giving up?"



"Not while I have a breath!"

Back at work, back at the barbershop. Back! I need to go Forward, but I'll get no help from my veteran brothers.



"Gentlemen...my station is ready and so am I."



"You still doin' this, Bessie? You got the smarts and the dream. Whatever happened?"

"Our beautiful, hardworking sister. Looks like she's gonna get married and be a hardworking mother!"



"There's nothing more dangerous than a pretty ingress with a dream!"

"I'm no quitter! Not me!"

"Oh, but she will, she will, and we'll fly a lot straighter after she does!"

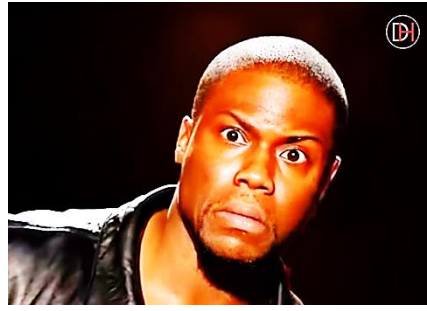
"Bessie, you can do much better than this somewhere else."

"Oh, really! Where?"

"France. We've been there. We know."

For just a moment, I couldn't help myself; I dreamt the dream that reused to die.





“Very different over there. Our American ‘superiors’ treated us like dogs.”

“French ladies, on the other hand, treated us like Americans...heroes!”



And the women...so many young soldiers slaughtered in ‘The War to End All Wars!’

“They’re businesswomen, they got careers. Some of them became pilots!”

“Left them to run things.”.

“Ain’t no colored girl ever gonna fly!”



“That was it! I’m taking off from right here right now!”



I stepped out into Chicago, hustling and bustling. And I knew what I had to do!



“First. I’m going to learn French. Not just how to speak it, but to read and write it, too. Then I’ll need to get on a ship and sail into destiny.

“I am going to amount to something!”

TO BE CONTINUED

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January 2025  "It's your New York!"
The Rondout Reader



ENTER LOIS LANE
The Love of His Life

Zinda  Blake
Born to Be...



Lady  Blackhawk!

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