April 2012 --

Hello and THANK YOU for reading my zine! I wanted to write this zine as a personal dare-- I'd had enough of all of the crappy depictions of black women in most forms of popular culture that I decided to challenge myself to write a zine series about some of the black women (real and imagined) I continue to be inspired by, when I need a boost. When I need to remember that there are women in the world who look like me, thrive like me, create like me, laugh like me, challenge stereotypes and perceptions of everyday black life, just like me.

And so, MOCHA CHOCOLATA MOMMA is HERE!!

Okay-- the title IS a little ridiculous, but I wanted something that felt good in the mouth to say. 'The Annals of Black Women' just didn't have the right ring to it. Besides-- this zine series will by no means be in chronological order. The stories will be timey-wimey, full of spirals, double-backs and flipped bitches.
GREAT THANKS to all librarians everywhere—you keep the archives alive. MUCH THANKS to zinesters caught in the web of gathering synthesizing stories based on historical facts. This kind of zine is NO JOKE.
And... okay, I KNOW these pictures are not mine— but I HAD to share them. I try to keep my photo theft to a minimum, but I don't think I could tell this story the way I wanted to without them. Sorry, flickr gods...

THANK YOU to all the ears I wore out, talking about this zine. Thank you, Shawn Jackson for loaning me Y THE LAST MAN, I read the entire collection while I finished this zine. You and B. Vaughan are my brothers-in-arms.
And, thanks to Billy, for folding down my list of black lady names to reveal the first one in the series—Bessie Coleman. That simple action is a big reason this zine exists at all.

Love,
Marya

MCM, published
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Written by
Marya Errin Jones
the aviatrix wouldn't have preferred a road closer to the Checkerboard Airdrome, now Chicago Midway Airport where Bessie Coleman, the world's first black woman aviator performed daredevil loops, nose dives and other barnstorming moves in front of breathless admirers.

I first heard of Bessie Coleman when I was in high school--I always had a voracious appetite for information. I'm sure I started collecting factoids when I got my first set of Childcraft Encyclopedia. My parents bought me the complete set before I could read them. When my parents divorced when I was 6 or 7, and my mom decided to go to grad school, I started diving into my imagination and my books.

I loved the bookmobile that rolled into the Florida State University family student housing loop where I lived with my momma and little brother. We must have lived in the international section, because I remember having friends from all over the world. My friends and I would slide down the furry, green hill outside our spartan, red brick homes. We'd careen down the hill on collapsed cardboard boxes over and over again. I was pretty independent, for a little-ish girl. I even did my own laundry. Once I turned all of my underwear pink. Every week I'd wait for the bookmobile to turn up. It was the thrill of my life. Always checked out more books than I could carry, let alone read...
Flash forward to high school... during my senior year I worked at the Leon County Public Library in Tallahassee, Florida. I came across Bessie Coleman while chasing my obsession with WWI. Yes, WWI. I would lose myself in sepia-toned photographic scraps of the War I studied battles. I stared into the trenches and broken battlements in my mind. I read personal accounts, and Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms. I found all I could on the Harlem Hellfighters, a.k.a. the 369th—the all-black regiment that fought in the US Army—a separate—but—equal army. They were among the first regiments to land in France.

The 369th—also known as the Harlem Hellfighters

I'm NOT A WARMONGER.
It's the idea that everyone thought THIS would be the GREAT WAR, and the last one—we won't do it again. How could we?

Now look at US.

WWI was only the beginning of the military industrial complex. THE GAS. THE GUNS. THE SOMME.
This horrible war, some 94 years gone, still has the power to melt my face off. During Season 2 of Downton Abbey during the reenactment of the Battle of the Somme scenes, I had to turn my head away. The Battle of the Somme—20,000 English men DEAD in one day. ONE DAY. War Horse? Forget it. In the Doctor Who (10th Doctor) episodes, Family of Blood/Human Nature, set during WWII—all of that action was sanitized and IMPLIED. Didn’t matter. I still cried.

I even started wearing a poppy on Remembrance Day (Poppy Day, Armistice Day, November 11th) The 11th Day, at the 11th Hour, in the 11th Month, Lest We Forget. As I gathered my thoughts about this zine, as I retraced my mental steps of the War, and the results, I wept like a baby. I cried like a crazy lady for those men, who had long since turned to dust, either left to rot in the open wound of the trenches across Europe, or in their own beds, many years later. “Oh you poor boys,” I kept saying to myself, head down on the kitchen table. No, not to myself—OUT LOUD, as the tears gushed out of my distorted face. “You poor, poor boys!” This is what comes of factoids. This is what comes of knowing too much, and living “out of time.” This is what comes of chasing down leads for a story you’re never going to write—the Winchester Mansion of the mind—constructing rooms that lead nowhere.
January 26, 1892- Bessie Coleman was born- the tenth of thirteen children of Susan and George Coleman-- share croppers living in Atlanta, Texas population 1,000 (Scott Joplin, the wonder of Ragtime was born nearby. So was Ellen Degeneres. Just saying!) 

To put things in a bit of historical context-- the year 1892: Ellis Island started allowing European immigrants to enter the United States. Prim and proper Sunday school teacher Elizabeth Borden was arrested for allegedly bludgeoning her family in Fall River, Massachusetts. (If you've never been to Fall River, you should know that place is spooky-- crazy, and pin-drop silent, even on a week day. Lizzie Borden's house is a museum.) The Nutcracker, with tunes, by, you know TCHAIKOVSKY debuted in St. Petersburg, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle published The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. P de Coubertin launched the plan for the first Modern Olympic Games. Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I and Edna St. Vincent Millay drew their first breaths of life, in their respective corners of the world. Two popular songs of the day were Daisy Bell, (A Bicycle Built for Two) and The Virginia Skedaddle. Grover Cleveland became the US President elect, and an anarchist bomb killed six in a police station in Avenue de L'Opera in Paris. Tremors of WWI were just whispers on the air, but there was cause for concern. The world was about to change.

Very exciting! Even so, what chance did a black girl born on the cusp of a new century in the American South have of being what she wanted to be, if she even dared to dream? A rut, a trench was already cut and dug out for most women regardless of color. That song went something like this-- birth, marriage, children, servitude, death. A black woman not only had to sing this tune for her own family, but she was also expected keep the beat in the household of a white family across town.

The South was a dead end for Bessie and if she wanted more from her life, she would have to take her future in her own hands. In 1915, at the age of 23, she left Texas. She moved to Chicago to live with her brothers-- to start a new life.

CHICAGO...

Before you can say chili cheese dog, Bessie Coleman was working at the White Sox Barber Shop in an area of town called "The Stroll," giving out manicures and dreaming of something better. Something to set her mind to. The soldiers of WWI started to wander back home, in pieces, shrapnel buried in them-- tin men missing this or that. They returned with stories, too. (Both of Bessie's brothers served in The War to End All Wars.) Tales of the Kaiser, salty rations, muddy, filthy trenches infested with rats. But the stories that stuck with Bessie, the ones that she no doubt played over and over in her brain victoria were the tales of flight. That's what Bessie wanted. She wanted to fly.
It was The Roaring Twenties! Short hair, skirts even shorter. The First World War is over, and we ain't going back. If we die, we'll die dancing! People scuffing up floors from Hoboken to Hanover, doing the Charleston, the ones who came back from the war with both their legs, that is. Music with a cymbal crash 

Crash . . . Crash! Crash!!!

Umph-pa-umh-pa-pa-umh-pa-pa tuba pumping away in the background, whiny clarinet cryin' on top. Yes sir that's my baby, NO sir I don't mean maybe. Yes sir, that's my baby, noOooow . . . arms and legs going round and round, flesh propellers, like birds trying to take flight before crashing to the ground.

Bessie was young and in the big city-- and she had a dream--all she had to do was hot-foot it down the nearest flight school and sign up for classes, right?

Wrong.

Bessie couldn't enter a flight school because she was a woman. NO US aviator would accept her risk license and limb to train her. Bessie's brothers teased her by telling her that they met French women who'd earned their licenses already, so what's wrong with her? The teasing only made her work harder, I would imagine. Bessie saved her pennies, she took French lessons at the Berlitz School and with the help of Jesse Binga, a prominent, black Chicago banker and the journalistic support of the Defender a black-owned Chicago newspaper founded by Robert Sengstacke Abbott, Bessie took her business elsewhere. On November 20, 1920, she sailed to Paris on the S.S. Imperator. Yes sir that's my baby, NO sir I don't mean maybe. Yes sir, that's my baby, noOooow. Go get 'em!

Photo by NH 101645: S.S. Imperator, which was USS Imperator in 1919

Jesse Binga
It was a windy, winter's night in Albuquerque. I found myself at Barns and Noble, strolling the shelves. I hardly ever go to box stores for more than toilet paper, but there are just a small handful of independent book sellers left in the Duke City, and most are closed on Sunday. I wandered past the bargain books, headed for the biographies. Everyone's got one--Oprah, Captain America, Snookie. And... Amelia Earhart. Several. I picked one. It was thick--not as robust as Mark Twain's Autobiography, volume one, which tips the scales at just under 2,000 pages, but full enough to serve as a doorstop.

Amelia Earhart--best known woman aviator in the West--probably the other three cardinal directions as well. "Lady Lindy" has had books and movies written about her. Articles in Cosmopolitan and LIFE Magazine. The things that Bessie Coleman and Amelia Earhart have in common? They were both pioneering aviators, risking their lives for flight. And, they are both missing. One lost over the Pacific Ocean. The other? Lost to history. If we placed the timelines of these two women next to each other, we'd find that Bessie Coleman was already in France, studying at Ecole d'Aviation des Freres Caudron, preparing to earn her pilot's license from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale, while Amelia Earhart was just becoming enamored with flight. To make a long story short--Bessie was there first. She wasn't following in the footsteps of Charles Lindbergh, like Ms. Earhart. Bessie was charting her own course, and sat in the cockpit, not as a passenger, but as a PILOT, several years ahead of Earhart.

Bessie Coleman didn't have an inheritance to give her a leg up into the pilot's seat. She earned her money, and paid her own way. She "pulled herself up by her bootstraps." Why does the world celebrate the achievements of one, but fails to acknowledge the very existence of the other? Immediately, I flipped to the back of the Earhart tome I was holding, wrist weakening by the minute. I looked through the index. No Coleman, not even in passing--not even as a footnote.

I was not surprised, and yet I was slightly disappointed. I went up to the counter with my purchase--two blank books and a copy of BUST magazine. My total: $19.21. 1921 is the year Bessie Coleman earns her pilot's license. As I don't believe in coincidence, naturally I take this as a message from beyond. "Interesting!" I cry out as the cashier stares at me blankly.
God made birds. She did a great job. Birds are rapidly beating heart things that can transcend the gravity of earth and sail on the invisible. They are pretty. The don’t live too long. They crash, but BOY, when they’re in full flight, wings unfurled, there’s nothing more amazing.

Back in the day . . .
Daedalus gets cocky and gets burned.

180-- Kongming Lanterns invented in China accredited to Zhuge Liang. (Think “Hunger Games . . .”)

Abbas Ibn Firnas (800-887 AD--) Makes paper wings, covers himself in feathers, launches himself from a high point. Crash.

1010 AD—English monk builds glider, leaps from the tower at Malmsbury Abbey, flies the ubiquitous length of a football field. Breaks both his damned legs. Needless to say, crash.

1460s-- Leonardo di Vinci’s drawings. Game-changer.

1609—1640 Hezarfen Ahmet Celebi-Turkish aviator builds articulated wings based on di Vinci’s drawings. Meh . . .

Lighter than air = no controlled flights.
1790— Bartolomeu de Gusmão—Almost gets the Kind of Portugal to front his designs, his plans were dangerous, combustibles—crazy. Persecuted during the Portuguese inquisition, he was "encouraged" to throw in the towel or get dead. Fail. I think someone would have died if he'd continued with those experiments. Crazy.

SO MANY OTHERS
It was a race for airspace!
Heavier than air-controlled flights!

Alphonse Pénaud (May 31, 1850 – October 22, 1880), was a 19th-century French pioneer of aviation design and engineering. He was a real genius. No, I mean an ACTUAL genius. He imagined on paper and invented in the form of 3D models more things than I have space to mention in this zine, but I will say he because of Alphonse Pénaud's early efforts, we have enclosed cabins for pilots, and double propellers which eliminated the dangerous torque reaction caused by a singular propeller, the differential barometer to show a flyer's rate of ascent and decent. He had so many more ideas, like elevators, and a retractable undercarriage . . . I said I wouldn't go into it—but his work, his discoveries were more than amazing. Unable to secure financial support his creation of an amphibious aircraft, Alphonse Pénaud committed suicide on October 22, 1880.

He was 30 years old.

The Wright Brothers.
Thanks.
Your contributions have been WELL DOCUMENTED.

(First heavier-than-air manned flight, December 17, 1903.)
The timeline,
(((the fracture)))

Beauty with wings unfurled...

And then

HELL fell to earth

The air filled with gunpowder and metal.

In 1908, farmers René and Gaston The Brothers Caudron build a glider they called The Firefly. They employed their mare to drag the flying machine towards the wind to launch their first glider, and here we are. The last time something this fantastic happened in the sleepy, French seaside town of Le Crotoy was when Joan d'Arc was imprisoned there.
Have you ever been in a single engine airplane? It's possibly the worst decision you ever made. It's like a postal jeep with wings. You're hoping there's enough gas to get you to the end of the runway, and then enough to launch you into the blue.

The drone, eeeeeeeeeeEeeEeeEeeEeeEee the sound of the inside of a honeybee's head is now in YOUR head. The dips. Sudden loss of altitude, warm air sending you up, cool air forcing you down-- your stomach flip-flopping like a dirty politician and you can't catch. Your Breath.

And now, imagine flying in that airplane without protection from the elements. In the early days, you would have been sitting on a seat, guiding your wings by means of gripping a 3-foot joy stick between your legs.

For a few more years, the possibility of aviation would be just like this: breathless, gorgeous, handmade, poetic gestures in loving memory of all those that had tried and failed bigger. EVERY step forward counts-- even if we don't complete the journey together-- we never will. Every test flight counts, even if we die trying. Those heaven-bond daredevils that made us hungry for flight gave us thrills, and fulfilled something in us. We could be beautiful. We could be like beautiful birds.
The Brothers Caudron began building planes for the war effort—they improved on their designs, and by 1914, Caudron aircraft numbered in the thousands.

In 1915, Gaston died in a test flight over Lyon. The war raged on, and Rene continued alone. More than 10,000 planes later, the Allies wrestle Germany to the ground. It was 1918.

One year later, Rene opened The School Ecole d'Aviation des Freres Caudron at Le Crotoy, in the Somme. It was at the Caudron Brothers' school that Bessie Coleman would learn to fly the French Nieuport Type 82 bi-plane—loop'd'loops, tail spins, banking, engine repair, etc.
Famous residents of Le Crotoy:
+ Toulouse-Lautrec
+ Colette
+ Jules Verne
+ Joan of Arc

"I am not afraid... I was born to do this." -- Joan of Arc

Suddenly, the poetic became the pragmatic. The Allies and the Enemy would come to depend on the inventors of the airplane to create beasts of vengeance--the war demanded this. Why am I talking about WWI? AGAIN! It's hard to just barrel through the timeline to get to Bessie Coleman without going into the trenches of the Great War. The men who trained her to fly came from both sides of the battlefield. From the Allies side, at the school founded by René and Gaston Caudron, Bessie Coleman would earn her pilot's license. On the side of the Germans, the BEST aircraft builder would teach her some badass moves.

The Germans had something of a secret weapon. His name: Anthony. Fokker, a Dutchman. From here on out I'll refer to Anthony Fokker as A. Fokker. Not because I think he's an asshole, but because it sounds funny, and I bet that was the joke, his whole life—for better or worse, and I bet at times he really lived up to his name.


Official-looking dude approaches. Photographers... FLASH nearly blinds everyone. We see official's face emerge from the smoke. Young man emerges from the smoke as well.

OFFICIAL: Are you A. Fokker?
YOUNG MAN: Why yes, I am.
OFFICIAL: Are you A (mother) Fokker?
YOUNG MAN: Yes. Sometimes...
As I mentioned before, A. Fokker was Dutch. At the risk of sounding like I'm perpetuating a stereotype (that you probably haven't even heard because it's just something I believe) the Dutch can build the shit out of things. Cities, furniture, slave ships, whatever-- for better or for worse.

That's just Dutch innovation and ingenuity, baby. For better or for worse. Not to be outdone by his own damned self, A. Fokker is often credited with having invented the device to make is possible to shoot in the direction you're flying in without shooting the hell out of your propeller-- a synchronization device. By the end of the war, the Allies battled some 5,000+ Dreideckers...

A. Fokker built badass airplanes for the Luftstreitkräfte -- the Imperial German Air Service. His planes were so badass, that Manfred von Richthofen, you know... THE RED BARON flew in A. Fokker's Dreidecker (tri-plane).

You can understand, then, why when the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919, Germany was forbidden... FORBIDDEN from building aircraft. A. Fokker took his planes and headed back for the other side of the divide, which is where Bessie Coleman met him. She took private flying lessons, and learned to come as close to dying as possible through the kind of risky maneuvers that got The Red Baron shot down, over what swatch of ground? Oh yeah, THE SOMME. That place is like a mouth ready to eat you.
In my mind, Bessie Coleman learned the rudiments and the beauty of flying from the French— and she learned to be reckless from and flirt with death from the Germans— from the enemy. Enemy. Tha’s my own bias— being “raised” by popular, Post WWII American culture to despise Germans. No, no— my momma never taught me to hate NOBODY. But yeah, I am basically talking about German characters in Hogan’s Heroes and The Indiana Jones franchise, and “He Who Shall Not Be Named. I try never to speak THAT name. I have an old encyclopedia that has a picture of “him.” It was written when “he” was still alive. And somewhere that creature’s festering atoms are still attaching themselves to things, to ideas, to crazy people who still preach his philosophy of Aryan superiority so I try not to say his name, even in jest. For the purposes of this zine, I am talking about Germany before Hitler. I am talking about Germany before WWII. Goethe’s Germany. I’m talking about The Flying Dutchman who fine-tuned a black woman’s aviator skills and didn’t turn her away because she was black. That’s more than any American aviator had done.

Bessie Coleman returned to The United States in 1921 with a new perspective. For two years she would be on top of the world, miles above it, even. She performed great feats of flight, she paid tribute to the 369th with a wild and breathtaking, barnstorming show. She was talked about from coast to coast—they called her “Queen Bess” and, “Brave Bess.” Want to hear brave? She refused to go up for segregated audiences. That’s fucking BRAVE.
CRASH
LOS ANGELES 1923
34° 3' 25.2" N, 118° 14' 16.8" W
Bessie Coleman crashed in a field in Santa Monica, en route to her first ever West Coast show, February 22, 1923. She lost her Jenny, and she lost the support of financial investors and the press. Once she could walk again, it took her nearly three years of practically going door-to-door, giving lectures about her adventures, dinners with potential investors and getting the press interested in her comeback. While Los Angeles, Bessie got involved with filmmakers there and got hired to be in a featured called Shadow and Shade. Can you say, Stephen Fetchit? Head scratchin’ eyes rollin’ scot of the dark.

She was not having it. Walked off that set, honey. Thanks but no thanks. Now, I know Stephen Fetchit laughed all the way to the bank, and had a white butler, a Hollywood mansion and whatever else his money could buy-- but Bessie Coleman was not an f-ing comedian. She was the FIRST BLACK WOMAN TO FLY AN AEROPLANE.

See ya Hollywood, AIN’T gonna be ya, or reinforce your bullshit advertising of what a black woman ought to be. Maybe it took a little longer, but she found support she needed to proceed, and due to a generous donation from an heir to the Beecham Chewing Gum fortune, Bessie Coleman was able to make the final payment on another surplus WWI Jenny she found outside of Dallas. Things were back on track and she was ready to take to the air.

FINAL FLIGHT

It must have been a gorgeous day-- and that’s saying something when it comes to Jacksonville, which was the industrial center of the Pan Handle (that upper part of Florida). I grew up in Tallahassee, the beautiful city built on seven hills, like Rome. Jacksonville with its East Coast brick and mortar bulldog-strong building was like Gangs of New York, but with GATORS... what do you expect from a city named after Andrew f-ing Jackson-- the former duelist and great enforcer of the Indian Removal Act?! Anyway... I’m sure it was a lovely day-- the sky is blue, everywhere, right? The rising tide lifts all ships, right? Bessie Coleman was ready to fly again. Ready to prove to the world that she COULD fly as well as anyone. But, it was not meant to be.

Bessie Coleman died on April 30th, sometime in the evening. She was 34 years old. She was flying over the field where she planned her exhibition for the following day. She had to decide which patch of sky she would jump from-- to parachute to the ground. Bessie wasn’t flying the plane herself-- she was in the second seat-- her new mechanic, William Wills was flying the old WWI Jenny, so Bessie could scout the field. It wasn’t the best plane, no, but it was what she could afford. She would fly it until it broke.

She was not wearing a seatbelt on that test flight, as her plan was to parachute from the plane, the next day-- she needed mobility to see about the wing. Her mechanic, William Wills was young, and not nearly as experienced as flying as she--

The test flight was going to plan, when suddenly, while going into a planned nosedive, Wills could not pull out of the spin. Bessie Coleman was thrown to the ground. She fell 1,000 feet to her death. Moments later, Wills fell to earth as well, in a fireball of a crash. Later, when the wreckage was examined, a wrench was found in the engine. What it a mistake? Or was it murder.
Do I think there was foul play that caused Bessie Coleman's plan to crash that day over Jacksonville? Yes. Yes, I do. This is my zine, and I can be a conspiracy theorist if I want to, I guess. I've done my best to provide accurate information, but, well, yeah, I think someone killed her, or made it easier for her to die. Bessie Coleman was an exceptional pilot. She learned to fly from the best in the world--by aviators from both sides of a bloody war. She recovered from a near fatal crash that took her plane--and her reputation in the papers as a brilliant aviatrix. It took every dime she had to purchase that WWI Jenny, and build her name up again. Bessie was about to take all she learned in Europe to establish a flight school, open to black folk, and anyone else desiring to take to the air. She believed in equality, liberty, and freedom--all of which she experienced abroad, so why not right here in America? What could stop her? She was FREE in the air, and she wanted the same freedom on the earth. As above, so below! But, no.

Even as I finish up this zine, Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton is throwing her support towards a new investigation into the disappearance of Amelia Earhart. Great. That's great. It really is. Who isn't curious about what really happened to her, some 75 years ago? I also want to know what happened to Bessie Coleman in 1926. How did that wrench end up in the engine of her plane? Was it William Wills's carelessness? Or was there something else behind her untimely death?
CONSPIRACY THEORIES

William Wills sabotaged the test flight by leaving a wrench in the engine, knowing she would certainly die. I don't think he expect to go with her.

Bessie Coleman was murdered to obscure her monumental achievement of becoming the first black woman to earn a pilot's license.

William Wills was somehow compensated (perhaps his family received a large cash payment, or an insurance policy) for crashing the aircraft. I mean, it was the 1920's. Nice work if you can get it.

Maybe during her stay in Europe, Bessie Coleman and A. Fokker became lovers. I mean she was cute, and he was huiking and handsome, nicely placed dimples-- even as a pudgy, doughy Dutchman-- he looked good in tweed. He moved to the US when she returned to America in 1921. Maybe she become privy to certain engineering secrets A. Fokker took with him when he left the Luftstreitkräfte that could compromise the German cause in the future...

The previous crash in LA in 1923 was also an attempt on Bessie Coleman's life-- but it was designed to look like an accident-- just like the crash that killed her looked like a careless mistake.

Bessie Coleman's death was the work of The Culper Ring. Yes, yes, I know this theory is crazy, but WHATEVER. The Culper ring was a nest of spies hatched by order of George Washington in 1778.

The Culper Ring wasn't discovered until 1939-- you know they were doing all sorts of shit, all covertly and such. What. YOU didn't discover The Culper Ring until your read Y The Last Man, anyway so what's it to you? What if The Culper Ring believed that someone like Bessie Coleman who had already proven formidable in the air was a threat on earth-- she was OUTPACING the achievements of the dominate culture! White women had just earned the vote-- now some negress was flying around in an airplane, as skilled as any white man, or woman, for that matter. WHAT? Hell to the No. So they pulled some Illuminati shit and took her out.

Someone went League of Shadows on the situation, left a wrench in the engine, and here we are.

I know, some of these theories of mine are more ridiculous than others, but the fact remains-- Bessie Coleman died mysteriously, and a proper investigation into her death was never conducted, and never will be.
Bessie Coleman was returned to Chicago, to Pilgrim Baptist Church where she was a member of the congregation, and where 10,000 people viewed her casket before she was buried on May 5th, 1926 at Lincoln Cemetery. Pilgrim Baptist Church was built in 1890, designed to be a Synagogue. It nearly burned to the ground in 2006, only its brick and stone walls survived. Some things you just can’t destroy, no matter how vigorous the attempt.

If you’re just learning about Bessie Coleman through this zine, don’t feel bad. She is remembered in so many ways. Bessie Coleman aero clubs formed shortly after her death—some remain active. A street in Frankfurt, Germany, a small park on the South Side of Chicago, and Old Mannheim Road at O’Hare are named in her honor. In Chicago, Bessie Coleman Day is May 2nd. She even got a US Postage stamp in 1995. Bessie Coleman was inducted into the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame in 2000. That museum is probably the only decent thing George Bush has ever done. It’s nice that the country that wouldn’t educate her, remembers her. Merci, Beaucoup.

Now that Red Tails, a fictional account of the bravery of the Tuskegee Airmen finally made it to the silver cineplex, maybe someone will make a film about Bessie Coleman. I wrote a script about her, long ago--

But, I have no idea where it is...
Hey-- wanna know who's up next in the series? there's a clue in the Brothers Caudron section of this zine!

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