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Contact: Joanne Levine, Levine PR, joannepr@aol.com

BESSIE COLEMAN CENTENNIAL AVIATION FILM FESTIVAL TAKES FLIGHT IN CHICAGO SOUTH SUBURBS ON MAY 2, 2026

A first-of-its-kind aviation film festival celebrates courage, innovation, and the future of flight.

Chicago, IL — December 8, 2025 — The legacy of aviation pioneer Bessie Coleman, the first African American and Native American woman to earn a pilot's license, will soar again with the launch of the Bessie Coleman Centennial Aviation Film Festival, a new national celebration of film, innovation, and flight on Saturday, May 2, 2026.

Founded by the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce, the Advance Air Mobility Institute, Vertiport Chicago, Tuskegee Airmen, Bessie Coleman All-Stars, Queen B Productions, AeroStar Avion Institute and Aviatix Company, the festival honors Coleman's trailblazing spirit while spotlighting the next century of aviation — including electric aircraft, eVTOLs, drones, and sustainable flight technologies.

"Aunt Bessie opened the sky for everyone," says Gigi Coleman, great-niece of Bessie Coleman and founder of the Bessie Coleman Aviation All-Stars. "This festival carries her legacy into the future — inspiring new generations to see aviation not just as a career, but as a calling."

About the Film Festival (BessFF.com)

The Bessie Coleman Aviation Centennial Film Festival is the first in the nation to combine aviation history with emerging technologies in sustainable flight. The festival will showcase films inspired by Coleman's life, women in aviation, and the innovations shaping the skies of tomorrow. This aviation film festival is the first aviation film festival in the world.

The festival will be held at [Bult Field](#), 28261 S Kedzie Ave, Monee, IL 60449.

Programming will include:

- Film Screenings – Short and feature films exploring innovation, history and courage in aviation.
 - A special Bessie Coleman presentation by Gigi Coleman, great niece featuring her One-Woman Show about the legacy Aviatrix.
 - Tuskegee Airman flyover and special presentation.
 - Electric Aviation & eVTOL Demonstrations – Hands-on experiences with new flight technologies.
 - A special event at [Vertiport Chicago](#)
 - A special film screening of “*Discovering Bessie Coleman*” documentary by Captain Beth Powell.
- Panel Discussions – Women leaders, engineers, and filmmakers discussing diversity and sustainability in aerospace.
- Family and Youth Engagement – STEM education and storytelling workshops inspired by Coleman’s legacy.
- Gigi Coleman and her Bessie Coleman Aviation All-Stars STEM Education program.
- Week-long sharing of Bessie Coleman original pilot license and other family artifacts at DuSable Museum, Chicago.

Why Now

The centennial of Bessie Coleman’s death (April 30, 1926) offers a historic moment to reflect on a century of aviation progress — and to envision the next 100 years of inclusive, sustainable flight. The festival aligns Coleman’s pioneering courage with the innovation and environmental awareness driving the future of aviation today.

“Our goal is to connect the fearless spirit of Bessie Coleman with the future of flight — one powered by imagination, sustainability, and equity,” says Musacchio. “Her story reminds us that flight is more than machinery — it’s what’s possible.”

How to submit to Film Festival

Aviation filmmakers can submit their short and feature films to FilmFreeway. Submit a film to the Queen Bess Centennial Aviation Film Festival at <https://filmfreeway.com/BessieColemanAviationFilmFestival>. Awards and prizes include: the Bessie Coleman Centennial Award, the Best Aviation Feature Film Award, the Best Aviation Short Film Award, the Best Drone Film Award and the Best Aviation Experimental Film Award.



About Southland Chamber of Commerce

The Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce provides regional leadership, advocacy, strategic alliances and programs that unite and grow its members and the business communities we serve.



About AAM Institute

The Advanced Air Mobility Institute, Inc. is an international non-profit research center dedicated to educating and advocating for the broadest public benefit through the aviation ecosystem globally. Ultimately, the AAM Institute is committed to protecting people, their rights, and the systems we rely on. We seek to accelerate access to these new technologies in an ethical and responsible way.



About Vertiport Chicago

Vertiport Chicago is home of the Sky Taxi and the future location to the electric “flying cars”, or electric vertical take-off and landing vehicles (eVTOL.) Vertiport Chicago is a critical infrastructure for emergency medical services (EMS) operations in the Midwest with a primary focus to facilitate organ and patient transfers at no cost. There are less than 5 Vertiports worldwide, we pride ourselves as leaders in the industry by delivering quality experiences to our customers.



About Tuskegee Airmen

The Chicago “DODO” Chapter of TAI, CDCTAI, is a 501(c) (3) charitable organization whose mission is to perpetuate the historic legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and to encourage and assist minority youth in pursuing post-secondary education and careers in the aerospace industry



BESSIE COLEMAN AVIATION ALL-STARS

About Bessie Coleman Aviation All-Stars

Bessie Coleman Aviation All-Stars, founded by Gigi Coleman to honor her great-aunt Bessie Coleman, is a dynamic educational program dedicated to inspiring youth through aviation, history, and empowerment. The initiative preserves the legacy of the first African American and Native American woman pilot while

introducing students to aviation careers, STEM pathways, and the power of resilience. Through interactive presentations, community events, and storytelling, Gigi Coleman connects past to future, encouraging young people—especially girls and underrepresented youth—to believe in their own potential and pursue their dreams. Aviation All-Stars keeps Bessie Coleman’s pioneering spirit soaring into the next century.



About AeroStar Avion Institute

AeroStar Avion Institute is a Chicago-based aviation and STEM education program dedicated to preparing diverse youth for careers in aviation, aerospace, and advanced technologies. Through hands-on training, mentoring, and real-world industry exposure, AeroStar empowers the next generation of pilots, engineers, and innovators to soar into high-demand aviation fields.



About Queen B Productions

Captain Bess Powell, founder of Queen B Productions, is a pioneering aviator dedicated to empowering women and youth through aviation storytelling, media, and education. Through dynamic programs, films, and

community engagement, Queen B Productions inspires future pilots while honoring the legacy of trailblazing women who broke barriers in flight.



About Aviatrix Company

Founded by filmmaker and pilot Susan Roe Musacchio, Aviatrix Company is dedicated to connecting aviation’s past with its sustainable future through films, festivals, and

public storytelling. Musacchio's projects include For the Love of Flying and Pulitzer Trophy Electric Air Race 2025, bridging history, innovation, and women's leadership in aviation.

*Bessie Coleman Aviation Centennial Film Festival
Celebrating 100 Years of Courage, Innovation, and Flight
Tomorrow Takes Flight*

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