



**LEONA SERAO**  
**Commercial Pilot**

My name is Leona Serao, I am a 24-year-old commercial pilot. I am Congolese, I was born in the United States, but spent most of my life in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Aviation has always been an important part of my life. My late father was a pilot and almost my entire family work in the aviation industry. When my father died, I decided to become a pilot, too. My family supported me financially. I did my pilot training at a local flight school in Florida, US, and studied Aviation Business Administration (focus on supply chain management) at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

With my flight, I want to:

- pave the way for future generations, and especially women and black women, to pursue their dreams without fear of failure and show them that anything is possible
- address diversity and inclusion in aviation.

Only 5% of commercial pilots are women. But black women constitute a mere 0.09% of the pilot population worldwide. In the US there are only about 150 black female commercial pilots. But in my native DR Congo, a country of nearly 100 million inhabitants, there are only three female pilots. I want to change this. I believe women, and black women, are just as able as men and they deserve to have equal opportunities. I believe should have the right to strive for their dreams. I believe in a world without any form of discrimination.