

My name is Kamia Bradley and I am from Denver, Colorado. I am a First Officer at Skywest Airlines, flying the Embraer E-175 aircraft. In 2020, I graduated from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. Flying is my absolute passion, and being a professional pilot has always been my dream.

Like every pilot, I always get asked, “How did you get interested in flying?” I love telling the story. My passion was sparked by a helicopter flight over the city of Denver during my junior year in high school. Along with a few others, I was selected as a student leader and was surprised with this once in a lifetime opportunity. At one point, we briefly flew over the neighborhood I lived in. For an instant, though seemingly like an eternity, I could point out the apartment building where I had been sleeping on the floor and had no working heat during Colorado winters. I had lived in many places like this, and unfortunately this was one of the better ones. However, when I looked out in the distance and saw how beautiful the whole of the cityscape was, and how even my apartment complex was a key part of the masterpiece painted onto the window of the helicopter, I was captivated. At that moment, I decided that if I could see the whole world from the sky, just like I had seen my apartment complex, I could do anything. That was back in 2014. After the flight, I did everything I could to become a pilot.

I began flying and got multiple scholarships to become a private pilot before I entered my freshman year at Embry-Riddle in 2016. While attending Embry-Riddle, I began working in the Women’s and Diversity Center, founded a student organization, became a member of Women in Aviation (WAI) and the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP). In the summer of 2018, I interned for Jeppesen/Boeing. In 2019, I interned for Alaska Airlines. Despite beginning the year with incredible momentum, 2020 proved to be a year with some of the greatest personal challenges I’ve had.

My father was in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for a week before passing away from heart complications. Additionally, flight schools and regional airlines were hurting the most during that time. Because of grief and many other factors, I stopped flying altogether. However, I didn’t stop for as long as I needed to. Two months later, I became a certified flight instructor. One year later, I finally realized that I needed a much longer break. I stopped flying for five months, and I learned a lot about myself during that time.

Taking a step back to breathe, after you’ve worked so hard for so long, is a blessing and a gift to give yourself. In this life, many people want to run, climb, and scrape their way to the top. However, unrelenting ambition without the wisdom of knowing when to rest, will make us no better than Icarus. If you don’t know that story, it’s the original cautionary tale of “flying too close to the sun.”

It took me 9 years to get to where I am—to finally attain my goal. To some, that is way longer than what they’d ever be able to commit to. For me, I wouldn’t change a thing.