

# "Nikki The Airline Pilot"

## blazing trails at the FAA FSDO!

Tonika Johnson became the first black female to graduate from Central Missouri State University with a B.S. degree in Aviation Technology in 1994. A native of Springfield, Illinois, she became interested in aviation an early age. Her first flying lesson was during her senior year as a student at Southeast High School. A youth aviation program provided the means by which she completed her first solo flight. While in college, each summer she participated in internships with various airlines and the Illinois Department of Transportation. She notes: "The internships allowed me to promote aviation education while the employers became sponsors." Upon graduation, she became a flight instructor.



While gaining experience, she was also employed by the Houston Airport Management System and handled issues such as aircraft emergencies.

Throughout her career Tonika has persevered, becoming US Airways Express' first black female jet captain. She has obtained pilot licenses outside of the United States of America and took on the historic challenge of flying as a jet captain in Asia and Africa. She has been at the helm of corporate and airline passenger jets throughout the Africa, Asia, and the United States-adding Canada and the Caribbean to her routes and is certificated in various jets.

Having flown celebrities in the past, Tonika went on to become business mogul, Ervin "Magic" Johnson's private jet captain. In her own words: I had a desire to see the world and make an impact by assisting where possible. It inspired me to work as a jet captain in other countries such as India.

Not only did Tonika cut her own path in the history books, but she created a means towards providing a positive mindset for youngsters to make their way into the annals of history.

When she is not working, she volunteers in many communities, promoting aviation, participating in reading programs with her book "Nikki, The Airline Pilot", as well as, being commissioned to provide instruction in a class-room environment.

Today, Tonika has transitioned and serves the aviation community in a different capacity. She is employed by the Federal Aviation Administration and provides oversight and surveillance in General Aviation as a Principal Operations Inspector. She has recently been promoted to serve in the same capacity for part 121 air carrier, Silver Airways, a feeder service for Jet Blue, American, US Air, and United.