



Playing The Game: Turning My Personal Defeat into Aviation History

David D. Strachan

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PLAYING THE GAME: Turning My Personal Defeat into Aviation History A Memoir by David D. Strachan Edited with an Introduction by Brenda Carpenter Osayim This story is both a memoir and a handbook for survival for young men and women of color in 21st-century America. It includes a step-by-step instructional on how to become a commercial pilot, with specific advice that lays out a road map showing how to get from Point A to Point B to achieve this goal. It is also the story of the Everest-like climb of a group of poor black students from a Brooklyn, New York high school who went on, despite the barriers that have been systematically placed in their paths, to become professional airline pilots, many of them currently occupying the captain's seat on some of the world's most sophisticated aircraft. Most importantly, it is the life story of the one man who accomplished this incredible feat, David D. Strachan. His encounter with white-supremacy racism is neither new nor unusual. What is different about his story is the fact that he was able to overcome his anger and turn the tables on the white supremacists who systematically kept him from achieving his career goal. The attempt to bar him from fully participating in the American dream backfired: David D. Strachan got even. The result is that hundreds of black and Latino men and women are now pilots for major airlines and freight carriers, and in the military, at home and abroad. Almost single-handedly, "Brother Strachan" taught his students and others whom he mentored how to go around the minefields that inevitably stand in their way as they attempt to follow their dream. Their success is his success. Their episodes with white supremacy are reverberations of his experiences forty years earlier. At every level in American society and in every industry, there are still people who guard access to the best jobs, maintaining these high-paying positions for themselves and others who look like them. To get past these gatekeepers, an African-descendant or Latino person must know how to play the game. He or she has to be more qualified and more knowledgeable than any European candidate, and that still does not guarantee that the more qualified individual will get the job. David D. Strachan has taught a generation of people of color how to play the game, and they, in turn, are teaching others.

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