

O

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This Is What *Looks Like*

X

INSERT AGE HERE

The number of birthdays you've racked up really is just that—a number. These awe-inspiring, decade-defying superstars are living proof.

Photographs by JILL GREENBERG





The **17**-year-old

PILOT



Kimberly Anyadike

WHEN KIMBERLY ANYADIKE was little, her heroes were superheroes. "I'd see Superman or Wonder Woman flying on TV and think, *That's so cool!*" she says. "My brother and sister and I would tie towels around our necks for capes and run around the house jumping off the couches and banisters. Every year I would ask Santa for a jet pack." In an after-school program at Tomorrow's Aeronautical Museum in Compton, California, the 12-year-old took a spin in a single-engine Cessna 172. Midflight, she was thrilled when the instructor handed her the controls. "Afterward my mom asked if I wanted to take flying lessons, and I said, 'Yes!'"

Three years later, in 2009, Anyadike became the youngest African-American female in history to pilot a round-trip, coast-to-coast flight. (Her chaperone for all 7,000 miles was Major Levi Thornhill, one of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen, the African-American pilots whose heroism in World War II inspired Anyadike's record-setting journey.) "Flying over Texas was the most fun because there were a lot of summer rainstorms," Anyadike says. "I wasn't scared—I'm never scared. I just focus. And before every flight, I pray."

Anyadike plans to become a cardiovascular surgeon after college, but for now the big goal is earning a couple of licenses this summer—pilot's and driver's. "When I'm flying, I'm in control. I trust myself," she says. "The sound of the engine, the movement of the propeller—it's like gravity gets suspended. It's as if you're closer to heaven." Or to being a superhero. —MARCIA DESANCTIS