

Olga Custodio: Breaking Barriers in Aviation

Olga Custodio is a trailblazer in aviation who has inspired many with her incredible achievements. Born in Puerto Rico, Olga's childhood was filled with travel due to her father's military career. Graduating from high school at just 16, Olga attended the University of Puerto Rico. She wanted to join the military through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) but was turned away because the program didn't accept women at that time. Despite this setback, Olga didn't give up on her dream of flying.



After finishing college, one of her jobs was at Puerto Rico International Airlines. There she met and married Edwin Custodio. The couple moved to Panama, where Olga worked for the U.S. Department of Defense. It was here that she finally got her big break. She met with a recruiter from the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and applied to become a pilot.

She was accepted into the USAF's pilot school and became the first Latina to graduate as a fighter pilot. She also made history as the first female instructor of the T-38 Talon, which is a supersonic jet. Olga's career didn't stop there.

After leaving the Air Force, Olga flew for American Airlines and became one of the first Latina airline captains. When she retired, she had flown over 11,000 flight hours. Today, Olga uses her experience to inspire others, especially young people from underserved communities, to pursue careers in aviation and aerospace.