# Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin: A New Era in Space Tourism Approaches



On August 10, 2023, guests at Spaceport America in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, witnessed a live broadcast from inside Virgin Galactic's rocket-powered plane Unity. This event marks a significant moment as Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin prepares for a space tourism mission as early as Sunday, seeking to recover from an engine failure incident that occurred over a year ago.

Blue Origin's upcoming flight will include Ed Dwight, a 90-year-old former U.S. Air Force captain and the first Black astronaut trainee, who will finally travel to space. Dwight was chosen by President John F. Kennedy to join an elite training program in 1962 but was never selected for a NASA mission.

Meanwhile, Virgin Galactic, founded by Richard Branson, plans a mission for June 8, 2023, with a crew of four and two pilots. This flight is part of their continued effort to make space travel accessible as the commercial space industry advances. Following this flight, Virgin Galactic will pause commercial operations to develop its next-generation Delta spacecraft, aiming for more frequent flights starting in 2026.

In 2022, Blue Origin experienced an engine failure, leading to an investigation by the Federal Aviation Administration. The company aims to resume human spaceflights and propel its goal of enabling widespread space access. Virgin Galactic, despite setbacks, has flown over 60 people to space, including the first astronauts from Egypt, Portugal, and Pakistan.

Ed Dwight's flight with Blue Origin will make him the oldest person to travel to space, surpassing the record set by actor William Shatner at age 90 in 2021. Dwight's inclusion on this mission is seen as a significant and long-overdue acknowledgment of his contributions and potential had he been given the opportunity during the 1960s.