FAMOUS BLACK ARKANSANS

These African Americans made strides in the history of Arkansas in their various fields. In no apparent order, the ten individuals chosen are a mere sampling of many notable African Americans in Arkansas.

Butler Center Lesson Plans:
- Arkansas African American History Makers
- Important Arkansas People
- Famous Arkansans: A Who’s Who in Arkansas
- Who’s Who in Arkansas

1. SCOTT BOND

He was born a slave in Mississippi, but he established himself as a farmer in Arkansas after the Civil War. Due to his smart business insight, his holdings increased and at his death, his farms totaled over 12,000 acres and he owned a larger mercantile store, several cotton gins, a saw mill, a lumber yard and a gravel pit.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Scott Winfield Bond (1852-1933)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – Scott Bond, circa late 1880s; The Cedars, Home of Scott Bond, 1872
2. JOHN JOHNSON

John Johnson is the founder and chairman of the board of Johnson Publishing Company, the most prosperous African-American publishing company in America. His company publishes *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines. Born in Arkansas City, Arkansas, he started his business with a $500.00 loan from his mother.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – *John Harold Johnson (1918-2005)*

Encyclopedia of Arkansas image – *John Johnson, circa 1970s*

3. WILEY BRANTON

He helped integrate the University of Arkansas School of Law and became the third African-American to graduate from the program. He was a civil rights leader and in 1956, he filed suit against the Little Rock School Board for not integrating its schools. The case, *Cooper v. Aaron*, went to the US Supreme Court and he worked alongside Thurgood Marshall to win the case.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – *Wiley Austin Branton Sr. (1923-1988)*

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – *Wiley Branton (left) with Harold Flowers watching Silas Hunt apply to the University of Arkansas Law School, 1948*

AV/AR Audio Video Collection – *Morris Holmes Jr. interview audio clip 12* – Holmes talks about Wiley Branton and the sit-ins in Arkansas during the civil rights movement.
4. EDITH IRBY JONES

A woman of many firsts, she was the first African American to be accepted at a medical school in the South. She also became the first African-American graduate from the University of Arkansas Medical School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Edith Irby Jones (1927-)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – Edith Irby Jones’s senior photograph, 1952; Edith Irby Jones at a UAMS reunion, 1977; Edith Irby Jones

AV/AR Audio Video Collection – Joycelyn Elders interview audio clip 10 – Elder, a US Surgeon General, talks about how Edith Irby Jones inspired her to work in the medical field.

5. SCIPIO JONES

He was born the son of a slave, but he rose to become one of central Arkansas’ well-known African American leaders. A prominent Little Rock attorney, his most notable case was defending twelve men after the Elaine Massacre in 1919.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Scipio Africanus Jones (1863-1943)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – Scipio Jones, April 1915; Scipio Jones, circa 1920s; Scipio Jones with six Elaine Race Riot defendants

6. RODNEY SLATER

He rose from picking cotton as a child to be the Arkansas assistant attorney general and other positions appointed by Bill Clinton, both as Arkansas governor and U.S. President. Other achievements include being named chairman of the Arkansas Highway Commission, the first African-American director of the Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. secretary of transportation. He currently lives and works in Washington DC.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Rodney Earl Slater (1955-)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – Rodney Slater

7. MAMIE PHIPPS CLARK

From Hot Springs, Arkansas, she was the first African-American woman to earn a PhD in psychology from Columbia University. She is probably best known for her joint research with her husband Kenneth Clark known as the “Doll Test.” The research aided in the success of the Brown v. Board court case.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Mamie Katherine Phipps Clark (1917-1983)
8. **SILAS HUNT**

A World War II veteran, he was admitted in 1948 to the University of Arkansas School of Law. This marked the first time an African American was admitted to the school since Reconstruction and the first time a black student was admitted to any all-white university in the South since Reconstruction. Sadly, he never finished the program. He caught tuberculosis and died in 1949.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – [Silas Herbert Hunt (1922-1949)](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/article/silas_hunt)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – [Silas Hunt; Silas Hunt filling out forms at the University of Arkansas](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/images/silas_hunt)

AV/AR Audio Video Collection – Willie Booker Jr. interview clip 19 – [Audio](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/audio/willie_booker_jr_interview_clip_19) or [Video](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/video/willie_booker_jr_interview_clip_19) – Booker talks about Silas Hunt’s integration experience that required him to sit in a cage in classes at the University of Arkansas.

9. **SUE COWAN WILLIAMS**

She taught at Dunbar High School, the black high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. Seeking equal salaries between black and white teachers in the Little Rock School District, she was the plaintiff in a class action lawsuit in 1942. In trial, the verdict went against her, but the appeal was decided in her favor.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – [Sue Cowan Williams (1910-1994)](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/article/sue_cowan_williams)

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – [Sue Cowan Williams at a NAACP event, 1980](http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/images/sue_cowan_williams_at_a_naacp_event_1980)
10. MILTON CRENCHAW

A Little Rock native, he was one of the first African Americans and first Arkansan to be trained as a civilian licensed pilot. He was an original Tuskegee Airman and trained hundreds of cadet pilots at Tuskegee. When he returned to Little Rock, he helped implement a flight program at Philander Smith College. In 2007, President George W. Bush awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to him along with other Tuskegee Airmen.

Encyclopedia of Arkansas article – Milton Pitts Crenchaw (1919-

Encyclopedia of Arkansas images – Milton Crenchaw, 2007