Arkansas African American History Makers

A project coordinated by the

Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission
101 East Capitol Avenue, Suite 214
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 683-1300 or (888) 290-KING

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Dear Friend,

This second edition of the *Arkansas African American History Makers* coloring book is an important resource to educate young people about the accomplishments of important Arkansans.

There are so many history makers from and living in our state that we could not include them all in this publication. This project will be ongoing so that different history makers may be featured over time. If you are aware of outstanding individuals, please let us know.

We hope that you will gain a better appreciation for the lives, contributions and achievements of the history makers featured in this book and also encourage you to find out more about them than the information we have included. Remember that African American history is also American history.

Sincerely,

Tracy Steele, Executive Director
Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission

Mission Statement

The mission of the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission is to promote understanding and acceptance of nonviolence and human equality as a way of building community among all Arkansans.

Purpose

The purpose of the Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission is to:

- Promote racial harmony, understanding community service, respect, and goodwill, among all citizens.
- Promote principles of nonviolence.
- Promote awareness and appreciation of the Civil Rights Movement and advocate the principles and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Develop, coordinate, and advise the Governor and General Assembly of ceremonies and activities throughout the state relating to the observance of Dr. King's holiday.

Electronic Resources

http://arkedu.state.ar.us/africanamerican/intro.htm
http://justusbooks.com
http://unbrokencircle.org
http://www.arkhums.org
http://www.ark-ives.com
http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc/hillfoundationinc.htm
http://www.littlerock9.com
http://www.mosaictemplarscenter.com
http://www.naacp.org
http://bcri.bham.al.us/index.html

http://www.rootsweb.com/~araahgs
http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/afroam.htm
http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/index.htm
http://www.thehistorymakers.com
http://www.thekingcenter.com
http://www.thirdworldpressinc.com
http://www.nps.gov
http://www.arkansas.gov
htttp:www.arkansas.gov/mlk

Services and Opportunities

King Team Program - Through the King Team Program, young people across Arkansas can accentuate their strength by gaining an appreciation for teamwork and community service. The goal of the program is to inspire young Arkansans to undertake community service projects and activities to help others. The program also requires that members commit to promoting human equality and nonviolence.

Drum Majors Leadership Program - the Drum Majors Leadership Program, inspired by one of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s most famous sermons, The Drum Major Instinct, was developed to attract present and potential adult leaders from across the state of Arkansas to harness and unselfishly direct their innate desire to improve their lives, their communities, and the lives of young people.

Junior Commissioners - The King Commission is also comprised of a Junior Commission which was created to give outstanding Arkansas high school and college students who have demonstrated strong leadership qualities and a commitment to serving their communities a voice in the work of the King Commission.

King Holiday - The King Holiday is a unique American holiday. In 1994, President Clinton signed legislation establishing the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and Service Act making the King Holiday a time for community service, thus establishing a new direction for King Holiday celebrations. The King Commission coordinates and plans Holiday celebrations throughout the state.

National "I Have a Dream" Youth Assembly - The youth assembly is designed to bring hundreds of young people together to teach effective techniques for daily applications of Dr. King's philosophy through national motivational speakers, interactive workshops, and educational activities.

Youth Hall of Fame - As a salute to outstanding young people between the ages of 12 and 19, the King Commission inducts five new members into the Youth Hall of Fame during each youth assembly. Categories in academics, athletics, the arts, community service and leadership are recognized.

Volunteers - Volunteers play a vital role in planning events and providing professional assistance to the King Commission. Contact our office to find out how you can be of service.

Annie Abrams

Mrs. Annie Abrams is a retired teacher, civic activist, and cultural worker from Arkadelphia. Mrs. Abrams has many life experiences and over 50 honors for community service, including receiving The Making of the King Holiday Award from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, and being selected as the North American delegate to the United Nations Conference in Switzerland. After the first national observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, Mrs. Abrams founded the annual King Holiday Marade in Little Rock with a few community members in her living room. Later, the Marade became a part of the NAACP under the leadership of Rev. Robert Willingham.

"Broadway" Joe Booker

Joe Booker's 30-year broadcasting career began in the military in 1976. By 1983, he moved to Central Arkansas and quickly became a well-known radio personality as "Broadway" Joe. He is the program director for KIPR Power 92.3 FM, KOKY 102.1 FM, and KLIH Rejoice 1250 AM and the host for The "Broadway" Joe Morning Show, Talk Show, and Video Show. His video show is the first urban music video program in Little Rock. His Power Jam, Juneteenth, Retro Soul and Blues on the River events have helped to raise over $4 million in profit for Cornerstone and Citadel Broadcasting. He also serves the community through the Viking's Youth Football Association and the Watershed, Inc. annual Christmas food drive.

Sen. Irma Hunter Brown

Senator Irma Hunter Brown became the first African American woman elected to the Arkansas House of Representatives and served from 1980 to 1998. She is the first and only African American woman in the history of the Arkansas Senate. She attended Shorter College and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Senator Brown is a former teacher and past president of Shorter College in North Little Rock.

Abraham Carpenter, Jr.

Abraham Carpenter, Sr.

Abraham Carpenter, Sr. began Carpenter's Produce in 1967 with one acre of land and sold what he raised out of a car on the side of the road. Nearly 40 years later, he has 1,000 acres, 18 wheelers that distribute the produce nationwide, and 35 family members and over 50 employees that work together to run the family business. His son, Abraham Carpenter, Jr., has managed the business since he graduated from high school with top honors. The two have received many awards over the years for their hard work.

Ellen Carpenter

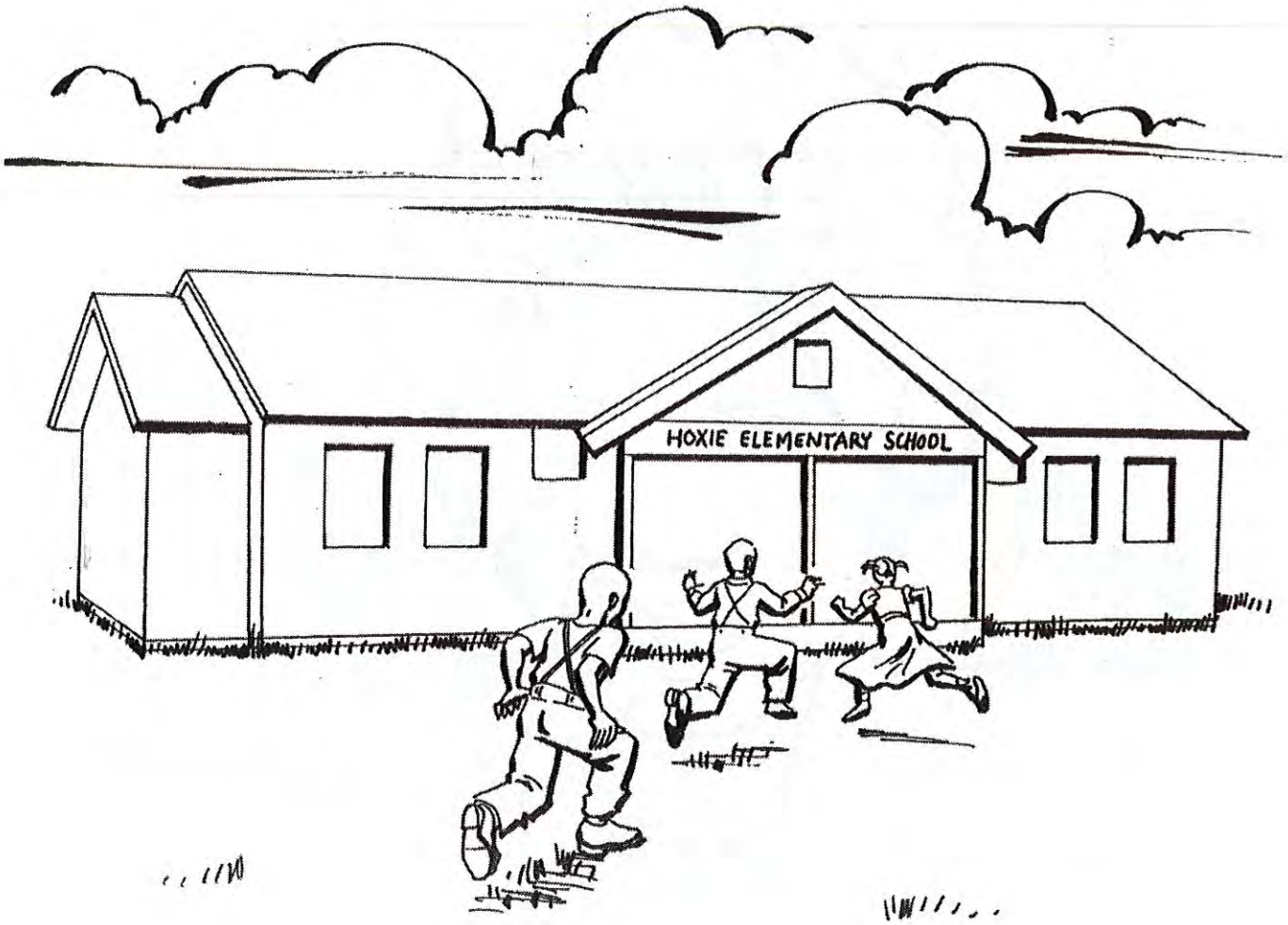
Ellen Carpenter was born in Little Rock's historic Ninth Street district. She is a community servant, retired teacher, and former president of the Retired Educators of Little Rock Public Schools and other community and neighborhood associations. Governor Mike Huckabee appointed Mrs. Carpenter to the Mosaic Templars Center for African American Culture and Business Enterprise Advisory Board and her firsthand experiences have assisted with the rebuilding of the Mosaic Templars Building that was built in 1911 and dedicated by Booker T. Washington in 1913.

Dr. Davis and Dr. King in 1958

Dr. Lawrence Davis, Sr.

Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Sr. was the second president of Arkansas AM&N College and the first chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). Davis, a native of McCrory, was 29 when he became president of Arkansas AM&N, making him the youngest college president in the United States. During his 30 years of leadership, the institution grew tremendously. In 1958, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave the commencement address at the college. Dr. Davis believed that everyone had the right to a college education and helped many students to further their education. His son, Dr. Lawrence A. Davis, Jr., now serves as the current chancellor of UAPB.

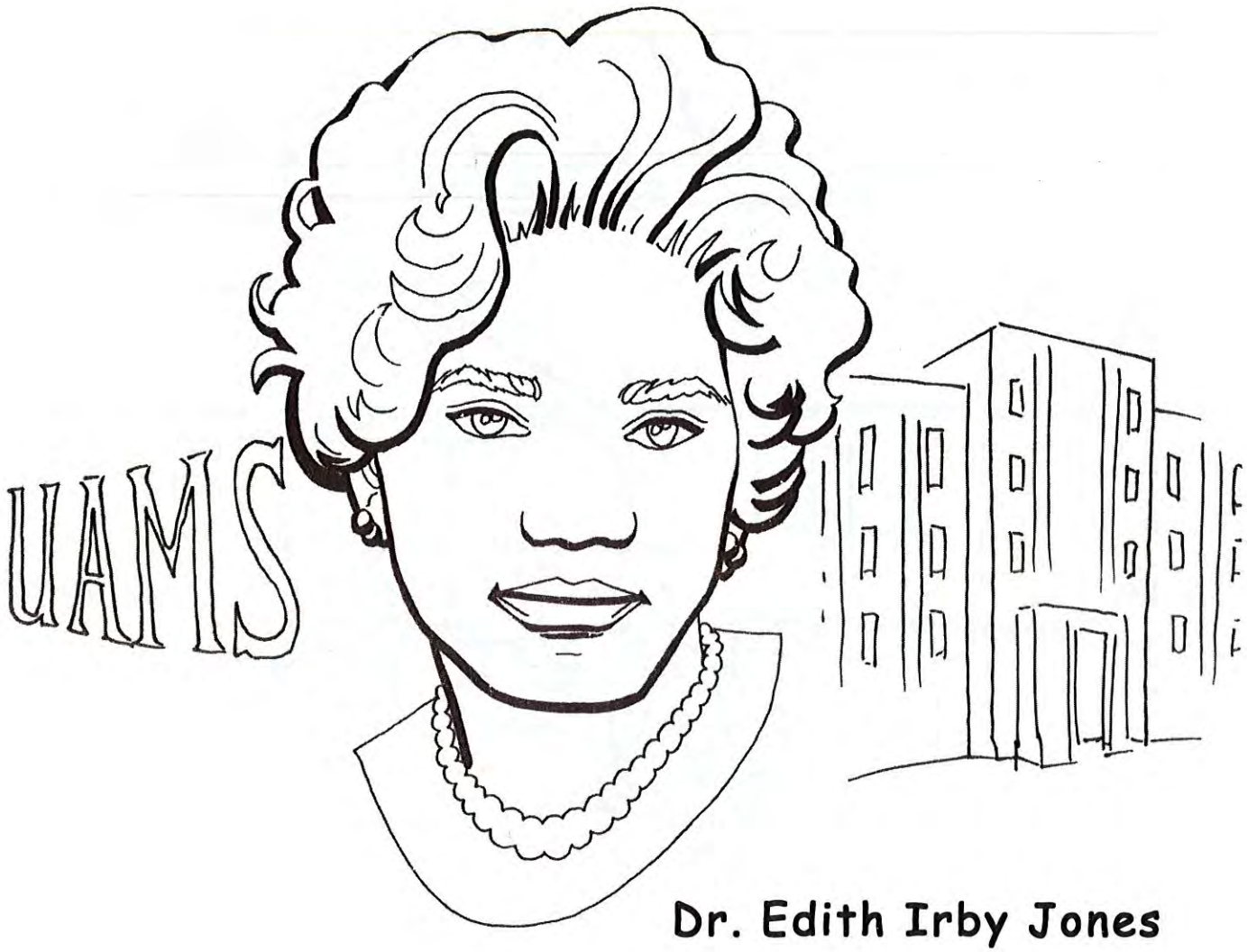
Geleve Grice was born in Tamo near Pine Bluff in 1922. He became interested in photography while he was in high school. As a photographer, he was known for taking pictures of the daily life of African Americans. He was also able to photograph important civil rights events in Arkansas and public figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune, and President Harry S. Truman. Mr. Grice worked as a photographer at Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal College in Pine Bluff (now UAPB), the *Arkansas State Press*, and owned a studio in Pine Bluff for over 60 years.



The Hoxie 21

In 1955, Hoxie School District became the first system in the Mississippi Delta that attempted to desegregate. The students, grades first through eighth, previously attended a one-room "colored school." After an article about the merge appeared in *Life Magazine*, tensions arose in the small town. Fayth Hill-Washington, a 1955 Hoxie student, established the Hill Foundation to increase the awareness of the historical event that happened in Hoxie. The Hoxie 21 are:

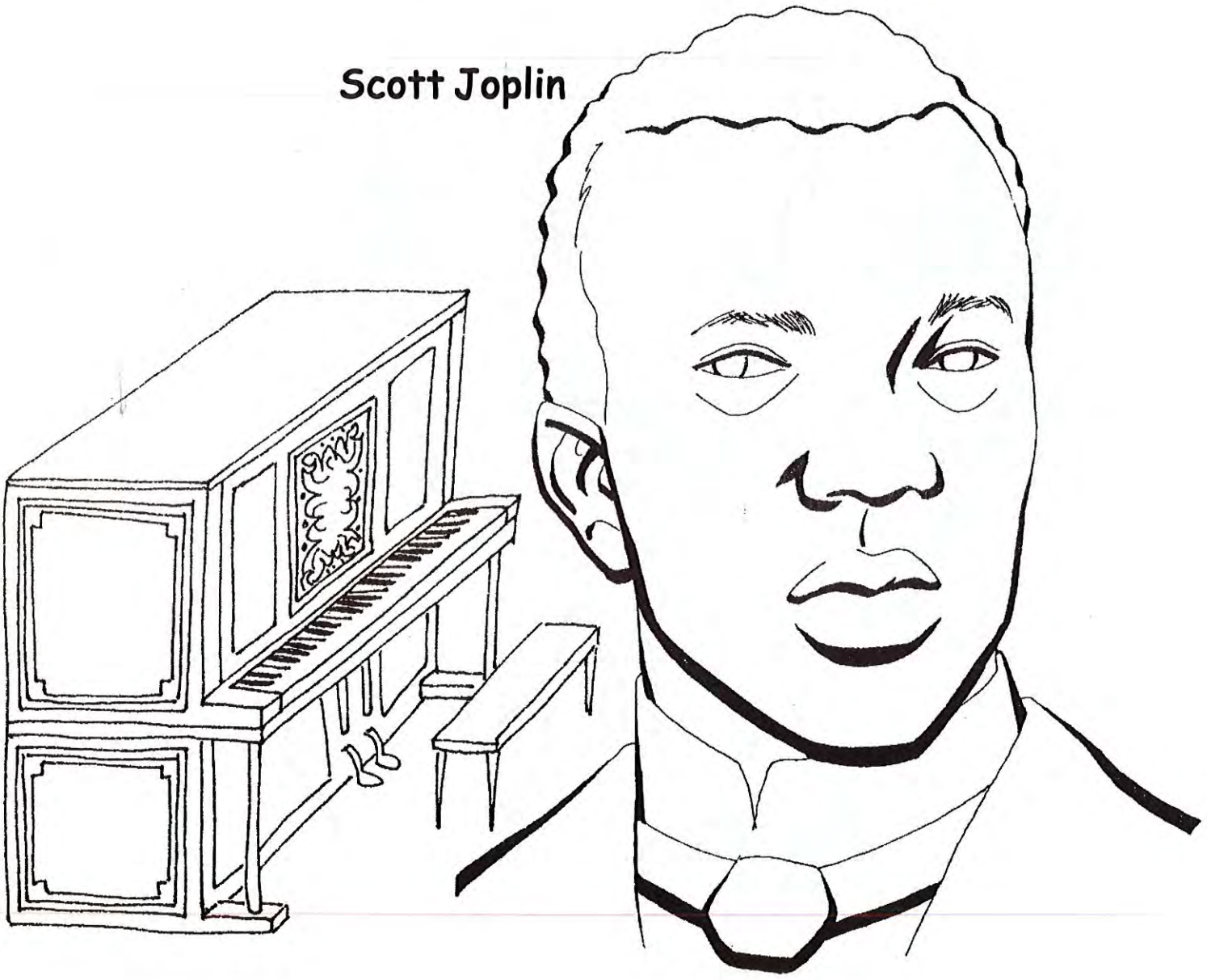
DonJean Barksdale
Rosetta Barksdale
Billy Joe Braxton
Clark Braxton
Terry Lee Braxton
Robert Brown
Freddie Sue Henderson
Fayth Genie Hill
Wesley Hill
Annie Bell Kelly
J.B. Kelly
Chester Kelly
Willie Mae Kelly
Paulette Riley
Billy Ruffin
Louis Ruffin
Mary Ruffin
Sally Ann Ruffin
Sharlene Ruffin
Beverly Ruffin
Ethel Tompkins



Dr. Edith Irby Jones

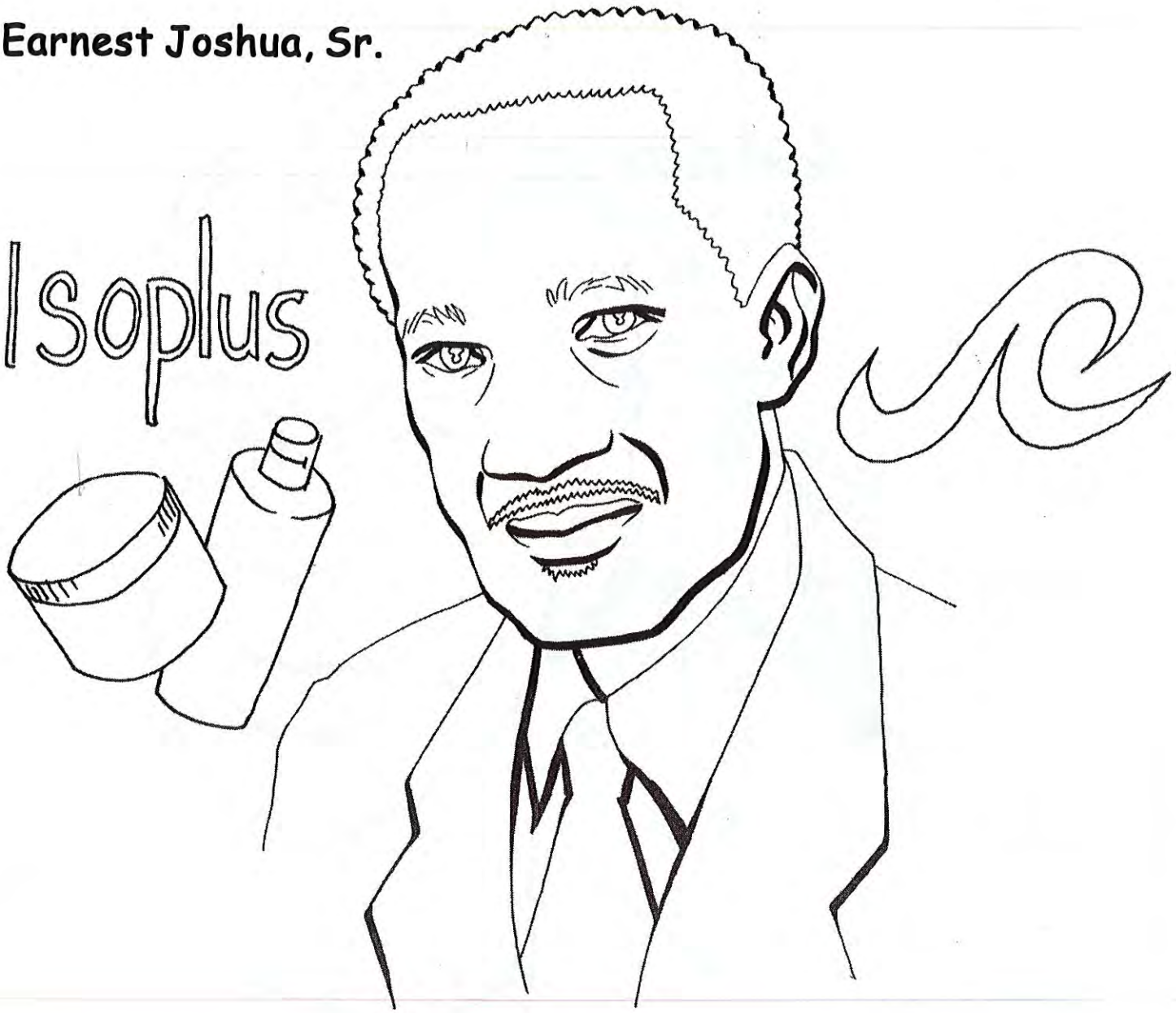
In 1948 Dr. Edith Irby Jones of Hot Springs was the first African American student to attend the University of Arkansas School of Medicine (now the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences). Later she became the first woman to lead the National Medical Association and helped sponsor the establishment of a medical clinic in Haiti. Today Dr. Jones has a private practice in Houston, Texas.

Scott Joplin

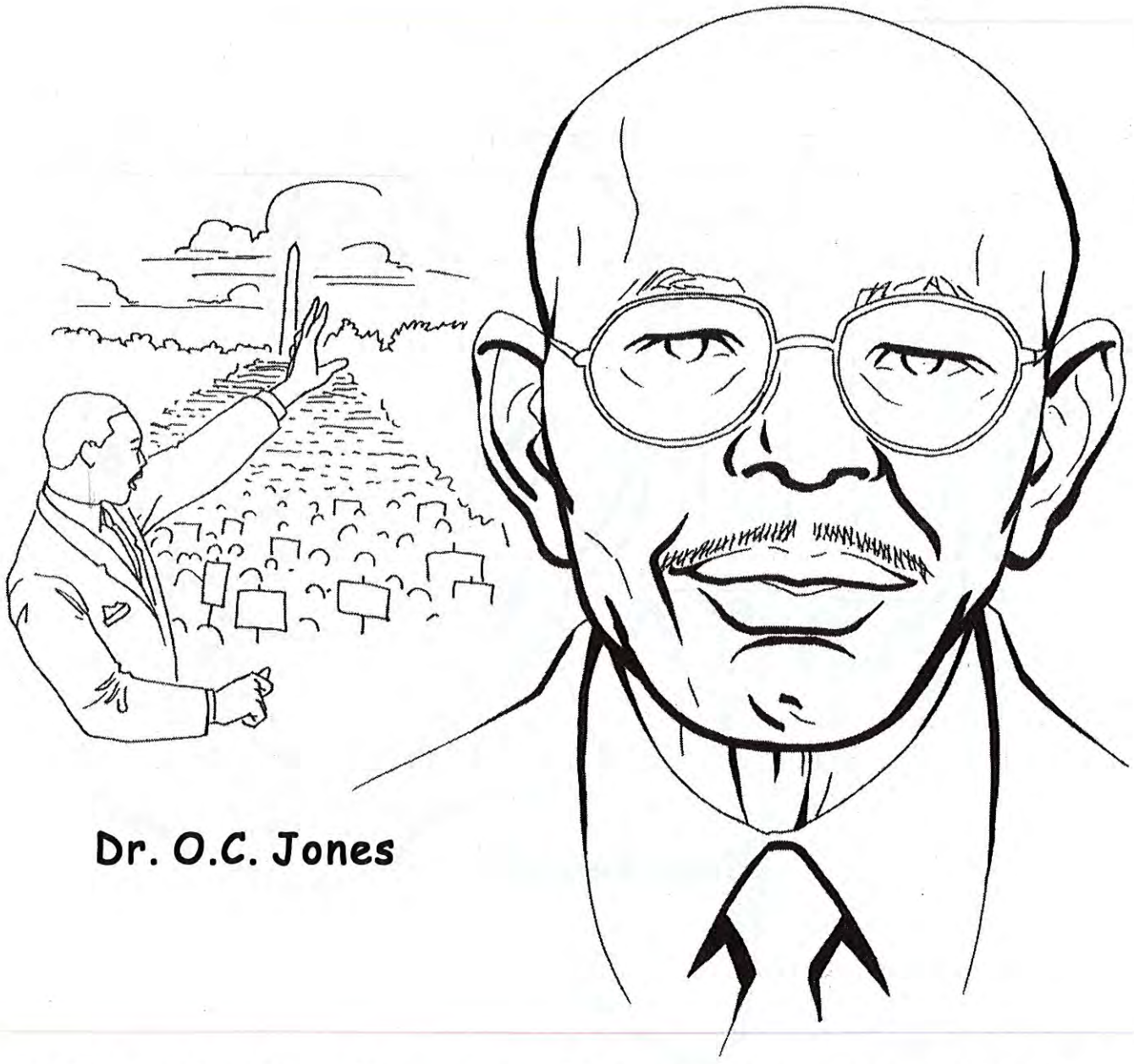


Scott Joplin was a ragtime composer and musician born in the Texarkana area around 1868. He became world-famous for his ragtime music. His "Maple Leaf Rag," composed in 1899, sold more than a million copies of sheet music and earned Joplin the title "King of Ragtime."

Earnest Joshua, Sr.



Mr. Ernest P. Joshua, Sr. was the founder and CEO of J.M. Products, Inc., a mentor and a philanthropist. In 1987 Mr. Joshua was the first businessman from Arkansas to be honored at the White House for his achievements by President Ronald Reagan and in 1994 was invited by President Bill Clinton to participate in the first U.S. Trade Mission to South Africa. His company was founded over 30 years ago and is one of the largest manufacturers of hair care products in America and the largest African American owned company in Arkansas. J.M. Products are made in Arkansas as well as Jamaica and West Africa.

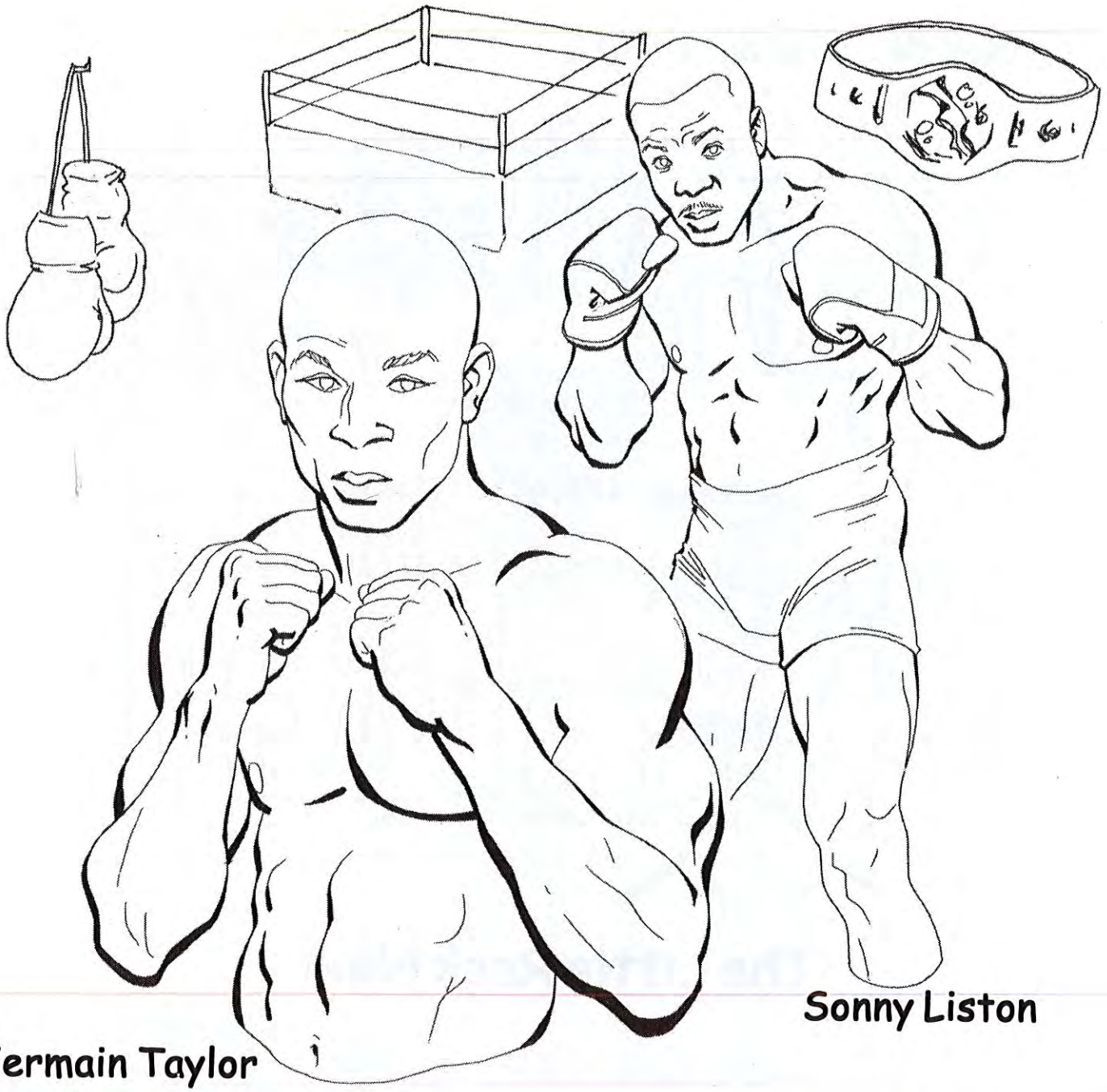


Dr. O.C. Jones

Dr. O.C. Jones has been the pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in his native North Little Rock for nearly 50 years. As a community leader and minister during the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Jones traveled in 1963 to be a part of the historic March on Washington. Dr. Jones marched with over 250,000 people, both black and white, from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial in August and was inspired by several civil rights leaders such as John Lewis, and heard musical performances by artists such as Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson. It was there that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, one of the most famous speeches in American history.

Janis Kearney

Janis Kearney was born in Gould, Arkansas, one of 18 children. After buying the *Arkansas State Press* newspaper from Daisy Bates in 1987, she published it for five years in Little Rock before joining the Clinton-Gore campaign in 1992. Later she served in several positions for President Clinton and became the first presidential diarist in U.S. history in 1995. She recently wrote *Cotton Field of Dreams: A Memior* in which she shares about her many brothers and sisters who entered and graduated from such colleges as Harvard Law School, Stanford Law School, Yale Law School, Brown University and other exceptional schools, her parents, and her life in the Arkansas Delta.



Sonny Liston

Jermain Taylor

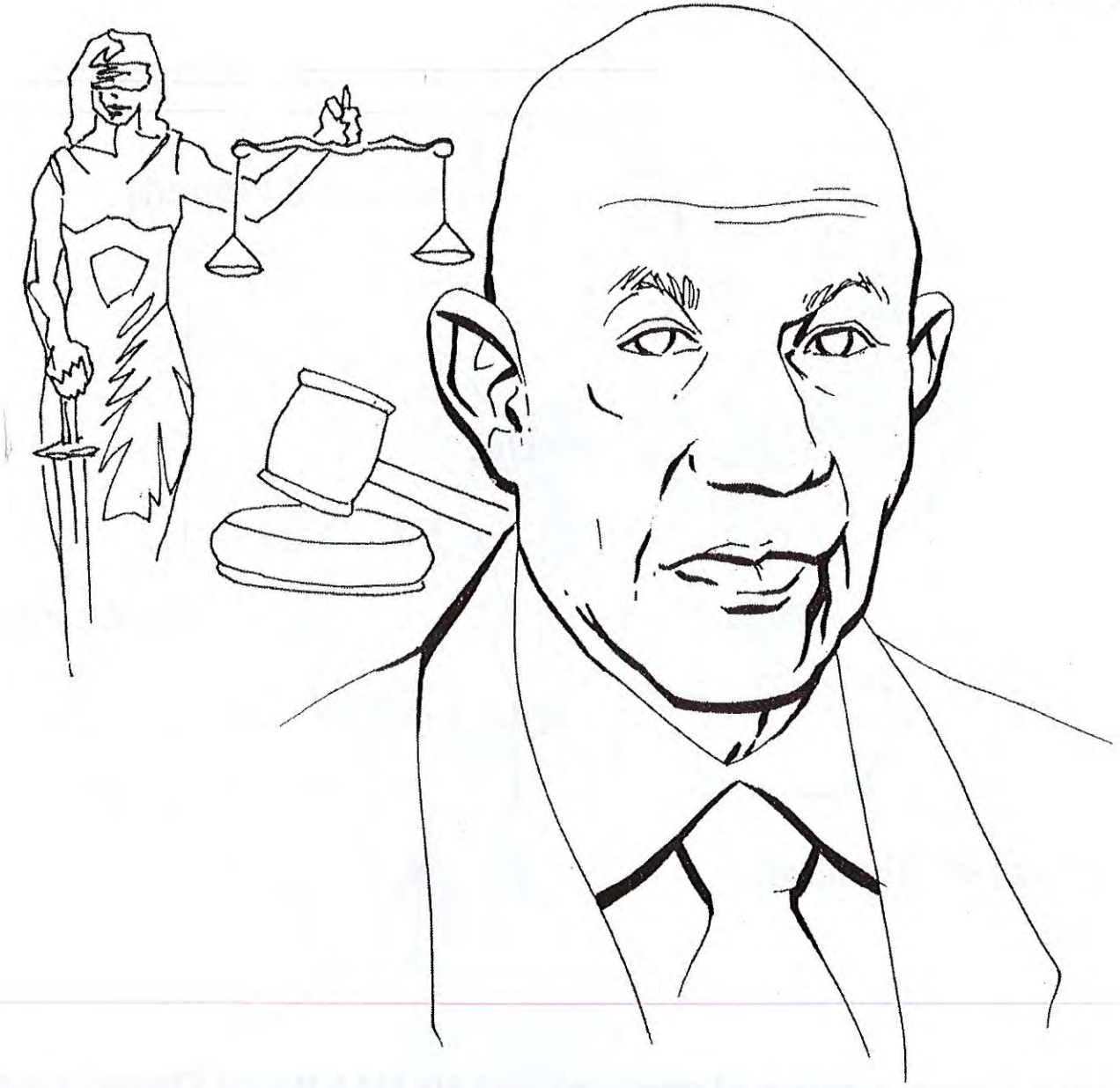
Sonny Liston was reportedly born near Forrest City in 1932 and began his boxing career in 1953. By 1963, he was the World Heavyweight Champion. Liston lost his title to Muhammad Ali in 1964. His boxing career included 39 knockouts and only 4 losses.

Born in 1978 in Little Rock, Jermain Taylor showed an interest in boxing as early as 13 and won his first national tournament by 1995. Jermain has won several titles and the bronze medal in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Since he made his professional debut in 2001, he has been known as Jermain "Bad Intentions" Taylor and is the undisputed Middleweight Champion of the world.

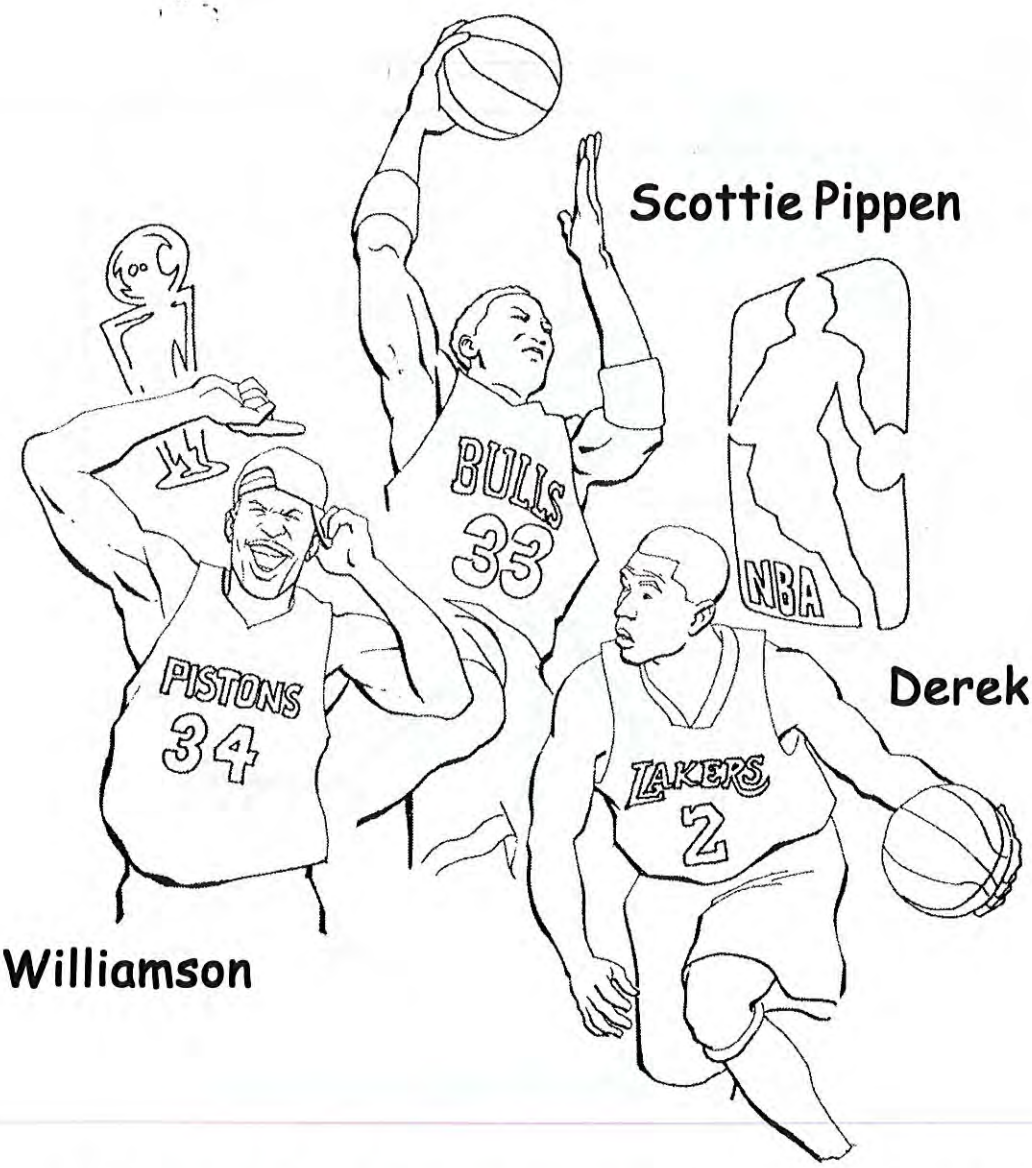
The Little Rock Nine

The Little Rock Nine were the nine African American students who were prevented from attending the all white Central High School in 1957 in Little Rock. During that time, President Dwight Eisenhower sent Federal troops to protect the students and allowed them to integrate the school. To honor their bravery during that crisis, nine statues resembling the students were erected on the Arkansas State Capitol grounds in August 2005. The Little Rock Nine are: Ernest Green, Elizabeth Eckford, Jefferson Thomas, Dr. Terrence Roberts, Carlotta Walls-LaNier, Minnijean Brown-Trickey, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Thelma Mothershed-Wair and Melba Pattillo Beals.

Christopher C. Mercer, Jr.



Christopher C. Mercer, Jr. of Pine Bluff was one of the first African Americans to graduate from the University of Arkansas School of Law in Fayetteville and has been a licensed attorney for over 50 years. He received his license to practice law on May 17, 1954 — the infamous date on which segregation in America's public schools was challenged with the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court case. Mr. Mercer also played a role in the integration of the Little Rock Nine into Central High School and advised the Hoxie school board during its school integration.

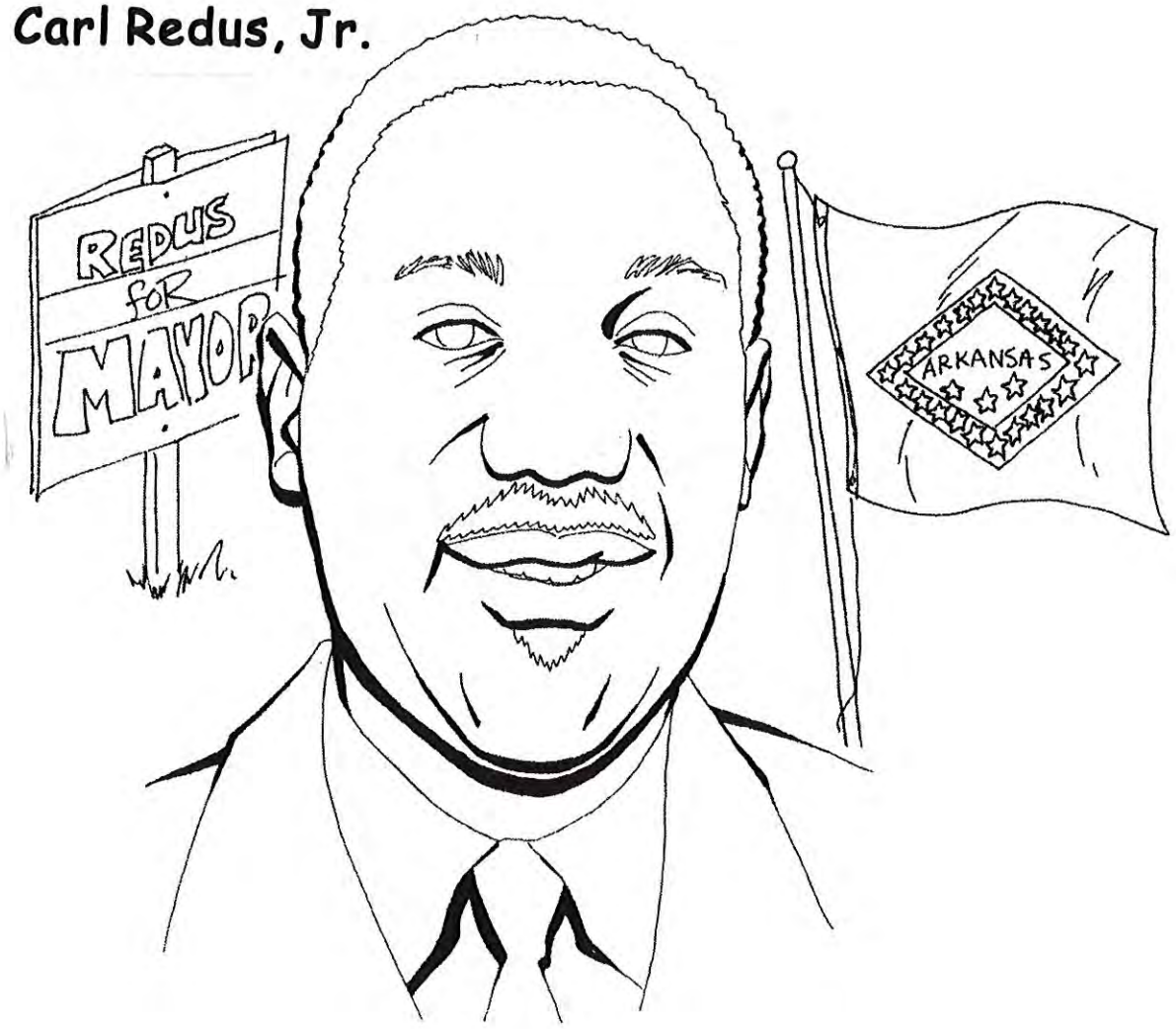


Scottie Pippen, a native of Hamburg, won six NBA World Championships with the Chicago Bulls. Pippen is also a two-time Olympic gold medalist and one of the 50 greatest players in NBA history.

Corliss Willamson, originally from Russellville, has been a member of the NBA for over a decade. While playing for the Detroit Pistons, he helped lead the team to win the 2004 NBA World Championship.

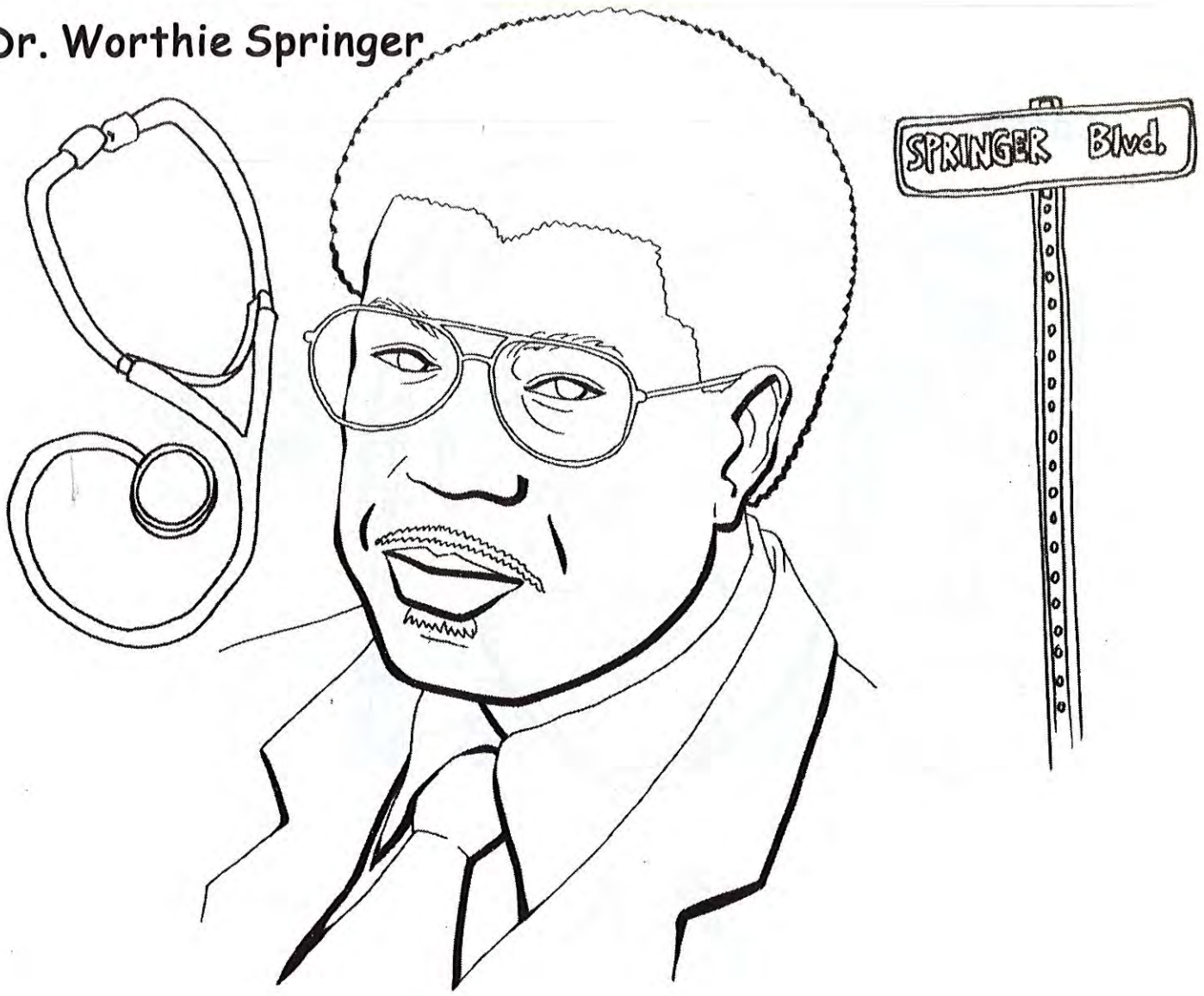
Derek Fisher was selected by L.A. Lakers in the first round of the 1996 NBA Draft while attending the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The Little Rock native helped the Lakers win three consecutive NBA World Champion titles.

Carl Redus, Jr.



On January 3, 2005, Carl Redus, Jr. was sworn in as the first African American mayor of Pine Bluff. Mayor Redus grew up in Pine Bluff and went from grade school through college there at Arkansas AM&N College, now UAPB. After a very rewarding 30-year business career in Atlanta, Georgia, the he returned to lead Pine Bluff in a promising direction.

Dr. Worthie Springer



Dr. Worthie Springer is well known for his willingness to help to those in need. As a doctor, he made house calls and often did not charge his patients for his services. He is also known for his community service, especially among Granite Mountain residents. Springer Boulevard in the Granite Mountain area was named to recognize and honor the efforts of Dr. Springer and his family.

Charlotte Stephens

Charlotte Stephens was born into slavery in 1854 and later became the first African American teacher in Little Rock. Her career began around the age of 14 and lasted 70 years, from 1869 to 1939. During her career, Ms. Stephens taught all grades and subjects, and also served as a school librarian. In 1950, Charlotte E. Stephens Elementary School in Little Rock was named in her honor.

Eudora Mosby

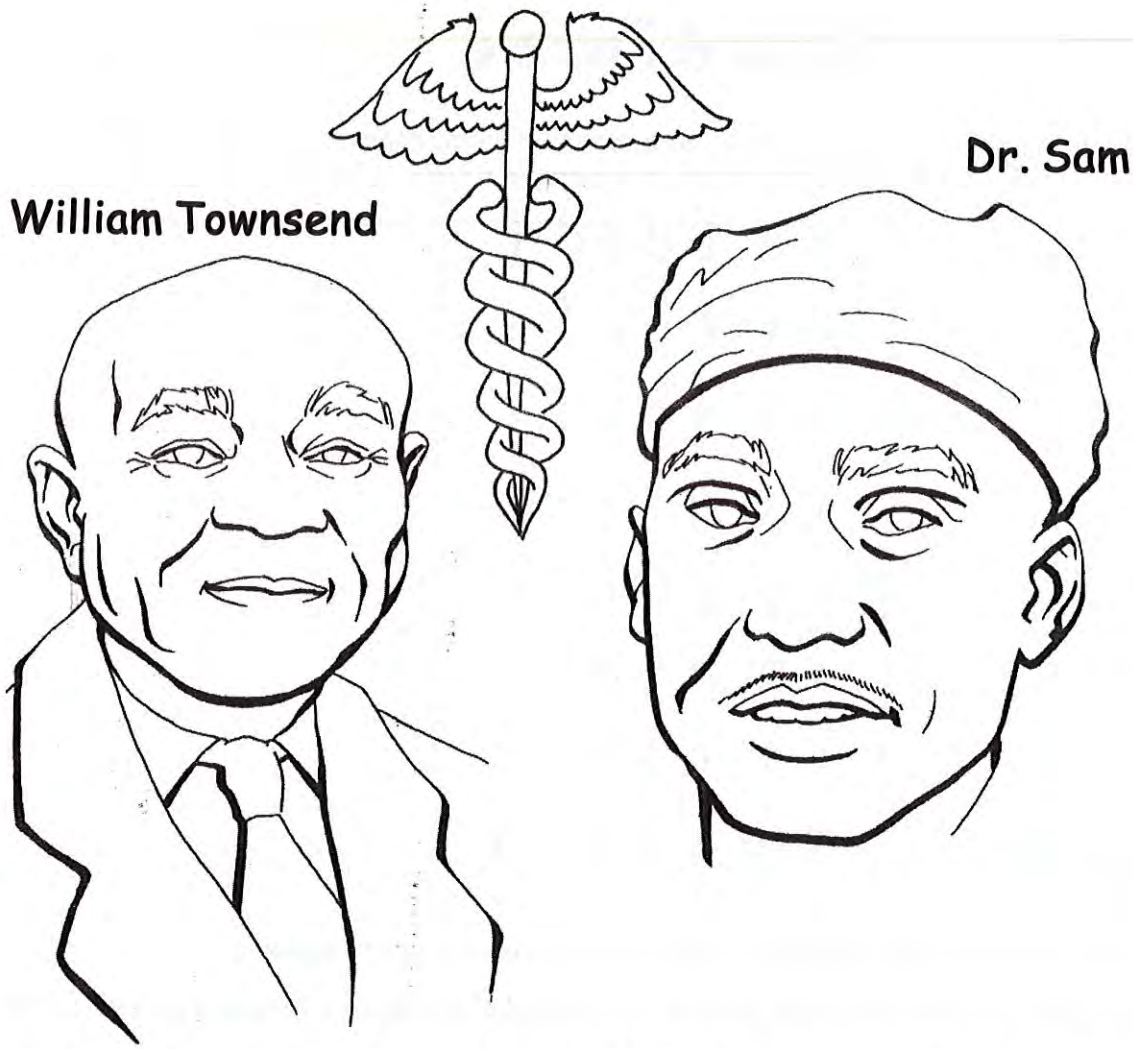
Lencola Sullivan

In 1980, Lencola Sullivan became the first African American to be crowned Miss Arkansas. She also went on to become one of the first African American women to win preliminary awards and place among the top five contestants during the 1980 Miss America scholarship pageant.

Hazen native Eudora Mosby was crowned as the 2005 Miss Arkansas, making her the second African American to be crowned in 25 years. Eudora entered her first scholarship pageant, Miss Black and Gold, while a student at the University of Central Arkansas. Later she won the titles of Miss Essence, Miss Conway, and Miss Central Arkansas.

Dr. William Townsend

Dr. Samuel Kountz



Dr. William H. Townsend was born in 1914 and was raised in Earle. He was the first licensed African American optometrist in Arkansas. As well, he became one of the first African Americans in the Arkansas State Legislature in 80 years with his election in 1972 to the House of Representatives, where he served for 24 years. During the Central High crisis, Dr. Townsend was a founding member of the Council of Human Relations and Council on Community Affairs, organizations that promote civil rights.

Dr. Samuel Kountz, born in 1930 and a native of Lexa in Phillips County, was the country's first African American transplant surgeon. In 1959 he participated in the first West Coast kidney transplant and his research led him to discover how to improve the rejection of transplanted kidneys, which helped to extend the lives of his patients. He performed hundreds of kidney transplants during his lifetime.

Quiz & Puzzle

Search and find the occupations of the Arkansas African American history makers.

a a t d e d f
c r l o c f a
t e a c h e r
i l w t a b m
v y y o r o e
i m e r e x r
s w r i t e r
t m a y o r o

activist doctor lawyer teacher
boxer farmer mayor writer

Answer these questions about the Arkansas African American history makers.

1. Who served as a North American delegate for a United Nations Conference in Switzerland?

_____

2. Who was the first African American elected as mayor of Pine Bluff?

_____

3. Who was the first African American teacher in Little Rock?

_____

4. How many students integrated an Arkansas school in 1957?

_____

5. Who was the personal diarist for President William Jefferson Clinton?

_____

6. Which doctor helped to improve kidney transplants?

_____

7. At what Arkansas college did Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give a graduation speech?

_____

Arkansas African American History Makers

Arkansas Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission

Kimberly King, Project Coordinator

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