

# GERTRUDE JACKSON INDUCTED INTO ARKANSAS BLACK HALL OF FAME

At a festive ceremony in October 2022, Gertrude Jackson, along with five other prominent Arkansans, was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame. The award and recognition were accepted by her daughter, Loretta Ellington. Dr. John A. Kirk, the renowned scholar of civil rights history in Arkansas, described what the Jacksons had done and the threats, violence, and intimidation they endured.



Sixty years ago, Gertrude Jackson, along with her husband, took up the long struggle to bring the promises of equality, equal rights, and justice to the people of the Arkansas Delta. And now, three years after her death, her induction into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame brings well-deserved, public attention to her work.

In the mid-1960s, Mrs. Jackson and her husband, Earlis, opened their little farm home to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to do its organizing work in the nearby Delta towns. She and the young SNCC activists organized a boycott of the schools until the board and the administration fixed the faulty drainage pipes that kept flooding the little Black school. In the summer and fall of 1966 they organized a boycott of the segregated schools in the Marvell District and initiated a lawsuit to integrate all the schools, by then ten years after the courts had ordered all public schools to obey the *Brown v. Board of Education* law of the land. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals finally ordered it done in Marvell in 1970. Unreported was what happened to the Jacksons. Shots were fired at her car, sugar was put into the gas tank of their cotton picker. Their truck was set on fire in the shed where farm vehicles were kept.

She became a teacher in the Head Start program for preschoolers and guided the creation of BGACDC to address the social, educational, and recreational needs of the community's children and the need for affordable healthcare and good housing.

Gertrude Jackson's hopes and visions have not yet been fully realized. Her example begs us to take up all those labors anew. It is our hope that the official recognition of her courage and determination will inspire a new generation's dedication to the causes.

The Arkansas Black Hall of Fame is a nonprofit organization that seeks to correct the omissions of history and to remind the world that black history is a significant part of American history. The foundation seeks to provide an environment in which future generations of African Americans with Arkansas roots will thrive and succeed.

Each year, the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of African-American Arkansans by honoring at least six individuals at the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame Annual Induction Ceremony. Established in 1992 and still led by founder Charles Stewart, the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame has inducted 85 individuals, including poet Maya Angelou, civil rights attorney Wiley Branton Sr., athlete Sidney Moncrief and musician Pharaoh Sanders.

The Arkansas Black Hall of Fame is housed on the third floor of the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center in Little Rock. The exhibit highlights art, music, sports, education, and civil rights by emphasizing the achievements of black Arkansans beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.