

ARKANSAS BLACK HISTORY



Image courtesy of Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Curtis Sykes was an educator and historian from North Little Rock, Arkansas (Pulaski County). He worked tirelessly as a community leader and activist for equality in the school systems. He was one of the first Black principals in the Little Rock School District. Sykes was a graduate of Scipio A. Jones High in 1947 and attended Dunbar Junior College in Little Rock. He served in the Korean War in 1950 and was honorably discharged in 1953 as a sergeant. After his service, Sykes earned his Bachelor of Science in physical education and social studies from Arkansas Baptist College, Little Rock, and his Master of Education from Texas College in Tyler, Texas. He earned a Master of Science in elementary education in 1965 from Harding College (now Harding University) in Searcy (White County) and was the first African American graduate from that institution. Sykes was a charter member of the North Little Rock History Commission in 1975 and the North Little Rock Historic District Commission in 1993. As part of the Black History Advisory Committee, he pushed for legislation to have African American history taught in Arkansas's public schools. He was a member of both the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society's Arkansas Chapter and the Preservation of African American Cemeteries. In 2005, Sykes was named to the national task force to study the contributions of enslaved people in the building of the U.S. Capitol.

