

# TRAILBLAZERS (GRADES 7-12)



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### Introduction

A Trailblazer is a person who leads the way in any new field or endeavor; someone who is among the firsts in a particular field. Another related word is pioneer. In this activity, you will explore the contributions of five Arkansas women who were trailblazers in their professions. All of them entered male-dominated professions at the time when many Americans, both men and women, considered such decisions to be inappropriate for women. All these women defied social expectations related to their gender. Three of them also defied social expectations related to their race as they entered professions not only considered more appropriate for men but also dominated mostly by white men.

You will examine five photos that will help us learn how expectations for professional women changed over time and how some of them stayed the same.

For more information about the five women, whose photos are used in this activity see:

- Charlotte Andrews (Lottie) Stephens (1854–1951): <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/charlotte-andrews-1772/>
- Roberta Waugh Fulbright (1874–1953): <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/roberta-waugh-fulbright-1653/>
- Florence Beatrice Smith Price (1887–1953): <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/florence-beatrice-smith-price-1742/>
- Charlie May Simon (1897–1977): <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/charlie-may-simon-41/>
- Joycelyn Elders (1933–): <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/joycelyn-elders-2240/>

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Photo 1: Charlotte Stephens (1854-1951), the first African American teacher in the Little Rock school district, worked as a teacher for 70 years, not dated (Women in Arkansas photograph collection, ca. 1850s-1980s)

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Photo 2: Roberta Waugh Fulbright (1874-1953) was the owner and publisher of the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, not dated, ca. early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Women in Arkansas photograph collection, ca. 1850s-1980s)

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Photo 3: Florence Smith Price (1888-1953). She was the first female African American composer in the United States whose work was performed by a symphony orchestra, not dated (African Americans photograph collection, ca. 1890-1954)

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Photo 4: Charlie May Simon (1897–1977) signs a book for a young fan. Simon was an author known primarily for her children’s literature (Charlie May Simon Papers, 1927-1977)

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Photo 5: Dr. Joycelyn Elders (b. 1933), pediatrician and public health administrator. She is the second woman, second person of color, and first African American to serve as Surgeon General of the United States, ca. 1980 (Horizons: 100 Arkansas Women of Achievement Records, 1980)

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### Questions:

1. Examine each of the five photos and read a caption by each photo. Who are the women in the photos? Write down their names and professions.
2. Look at your list of five women and five professions. Which of these five professions is still dominated by men today? In which of these five professions are there more women than men today?
3. Are there racial disparities in any of the five professions today? Do white men and/or white women still dominate in any of these five professions?
4. Do you know any women who work in any of these professions today?
5. Read the Encyclopedia of Arkansas articles about these five women listed in the “Context” section. How did each of them contribute to her field? In what ways were they trailblazers in their professions?
6. Choose one of the five women and research her life and contributions. You already have two sources: the photo and the Encyclopedia of Arkansas article. Find at least two additional sources about her and write an essay titled [Name\*]: The Arkansas Trailblazer.

\* Enter the name of the individual you chose.