
CELEBRATING

BLACK

HISTORY

MONTH

FEBRUARY

2021



**Mississippi Board of Licensure
for Professional Engineers and Surveyors**

Foreword

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of Black Americans in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans.

Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating black history.

“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.” – Ida B. Wells

The Mississippi Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Surveyors would like to take this opportunity to recognize just a sampling of the talented engineers contributing to the engineering profession throughout our state and nation.



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Ebonye-Rosa Allen, P.E.

**Chemical Engineering (BSChE)
Mississippi State University (MSU)**

**Engineering (MSE)
Jackson State University**

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Engineer, Toyota North America

Why Engineering:

Engineering chose me. Upon graduating high school, I planned to major in biology and go to medical school. The summer before my freshman year at MSU, I was extended an opportunity to attend MSU early through a Summer Bridge Program intended to increase minorities in the field of engineering and our access to graduate education. After that summer, I started in the Biological Engineering department with my sights set on obtaining a degree in Biological Engineering and heading to medical school. It quickly became apparent that Biological Engineering was not my calling. I started looking for alternatives and was encouraged to pursue a degree in Chemical Engineering by Dr. Jefcoat in the MSU Swalm School of Chemical Engineering.

Advice to others:

Try, try, and try again. I have had many people ask me about my career and when I discuss it with them, they often respond by saying you must be smart. My response to that statement is that engineering requires some level of smarts, but determined is what I was and am. You must be determined. You must purposefully make the decision to become an Engineer; and actively put in the time and effort to stick to that decision.

Favorite Quote:

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." – John Quincy Adams

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Olivia Brown

Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Mississippi State University



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

Why Engineering:

For the longest time I wanted to be a pediatric oncologist but after sitting down and thinking about all the time and school it would take to achieve this career path, I decided to explore some other options. I always loved math and science and after going on a National Honors Society trip in the 11th grade I decided to major in civil engineering.

Advice to others:

Never give up and pay attention in college. Always take the time to reread something you do not understand or rework extra problems for practice and do not be afraid to ask for help.

Favorite Quote:

"We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated - Maya Angelou".

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For Professional Engineers & Surveyors



Erika Chapman

Civil Engineering (BSCE)
University of Mississippi



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

Why Engineering:

I chose Engineering because I wanted a career that would be challenging and fulfilling. My love for helping others inspired me to do so in such a way that most would not think of. I can help communities by assisting in building hospitals or homeless shelters, making sure our roadways are in proper conditions, and making sure that our environment is sustainable.

Advice to others:

Go for it! You can achieve every goal and dream that you have. The STEM field is a rewarding career path that allows you to be creative and make a difference in the world. It allows you to think outside the box and explore the possibilities of what the future can be.

Favorite Quote:

"I'll keep drinking from my saucer, Lord, because my cup has overflowed."

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Henry A. Dulaney, P.E.

Electrical Engineering (BSEE)
Engineering Management (MSEM)
Mississippi State University

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Chief, Engineering & Construction Division
Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers

Most Interesting project:

I lead a team of engineers and scientists who are working on projects across the full spectrum of civil works projects that range from levees and river training structures to building design and construction.

Why Engineering:

Love of math and science. Encouragement from employees of the Corps of Engineers in Vicksburg.

Advice to others:

These rewarding (STEM) fields allow you to use your skills to make a positive impact on your community.

Favorite Quote:

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

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Gabe Harris, P.E.

**Bachelor of Science – Mathematics
Alcorn State University**

**Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Master of Science – Management Systems
Engineering
Mississippi State University**

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Civil Engineer – Program Manager
Mississippi Valley Division, Corps of Engineers

Most Interesting project:

As a Program Manager for the Mississippi Rivers and Tributaries Project with the Mississippi Valley Division of the Corps of Engineers, all the projects that I manage involve flood risk management and/or provide for efficient navigation along the Mississippi River. I truly cannot single out one project, as each is a piece of a larger integrated system. Knowing that these projects help so many people is why I love to do it.

Why Engineering:

I chose engineering because as a child I always loved to solve problems, take things apart and fix things that were deemed broken. My parents, father an Army veteran and scientist; and mother a school teacher, inspired me to pursue a career in engineering.

Advice to others:

The course work for a career in STEM can and will be very challenging at times; however, these professions have endured the test of time. STEM careers are very relevant to the success of society.

Favorite Quote:

"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail" – Benjamin Franklin

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Patricia R. Hemphill, P.E.

Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Mississippi State University

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi

USACE Facilities Engineering Level 3 Certification

USACE Project Management Level 1 Certification



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Deputy District Engineer
for Programs and Project Management
Chief, Programs Project Management Division
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Vicksburg District

Most Interesting project:

I am responsible for the oversight of Programs & Project Management and most of our projects are long term and ongoing. Mississippi River Levee Repairs – this is an ongoing project; but I get great satisfaction in knowing that our work provides protection to people, property, and infrastructure each day. The river will do what the river does, but because of our work of engineers we can peacefully coexist.... unless there is an unusually high-water event(flood).

Why Engineering:

I have always enjoyed solving problems especially math and I enjoy figuring out how things fit together.

Advice to others:

Seek out someone who is doing what you think you want to do and ask questions and follow them around to see if that is really what you are interested in. Seek opportunities to learn maybe even volunteer to help do something you may be interested in.

Favorite Quote:

Trust in the Lord Acknowledge Him because He has a plan & can make all things work together for my good
(Proverbs 3, Jeremiah 29, Romans 8)

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Eric Jefferson, P.E.

Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Mississippi State University (MSU)

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi

Certified Planner – American Institute of Certified
Planners



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Senior Planner – Waggoner Engineering

Most Interesting project:

I am particularly proud of having developed a multi-modal transportation master plan for the LOU, which utilized my knowledge and experience as both a transportation planner and a civil engineer.

Why Engineering:

I have always been fascinated with roadway design and construction, so civil engineering always seemed like it aligned with my interests. Growing up in Vicksburg, my dad was a hydraulic technician at ERDC (then called Waterways Experiment Station), and I always enjoyed seeing him at work operating and studying river models. He worked with several engineers including a young black then-graduate engineer named Deborah Robinson Cooper. Seeing Ms. Cooper as a young black engineer working with other engineers was really inspiring for me, and after talking with her about the engineering profession while I was in high school, I decided to pursue a degree in civil engineering at MSU.

Advice to others:

Study hard and push yourself beyond what you are learning in the classroom.

Favorite Quote:

“You can only become accomplished at something you love. Don’t make money your goal. Instead pursue the things you love doing and do them so well that people can’t take their eyes off you.” – Maya Angelou

Mississippi Board of Licensure
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Mauricka DeVon McKenzie, Sr., P.E.

Associate Degree – Pre-Engineering
Jones County Junior College

Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Mississippi State University

Civil Engineering (MSCE)
Louisiana State University

Master of Divinity – Expository Preaching
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Professional Engineer
States of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia,
Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, and
Wisconsin



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

President and Principal Engineer
Cornerstone Engineering, LLC

Most Interesting Project:

Working with the City of Jackson to reduce lead in the drinking water at the OB Curtis Water Treatment Plant through improvements in their treatment processes.

Why Engineering:

Engineering was my third career choice. I always liked math and science and seeing structures built. I come from a family of many master builders on my father's side of the family. My grandfather, Washington McKenzie, Sr., had had his own building construction company to support his family. My father, Sylvester McKenzie and many of my uncles have construction companies. Since there was a strong legacy of building construction in our family, I decided to pursue a career in civil engineering so that I could utilize math and science to solve problems, to challenge me and to improve the community and, in the process, save lives by making safer systems.

Advice to others:

If you are a believer in the Lord God, I would encourage you to pray and ask the Lord what his will for your life and what is his purpose and plan for your life, and how you could use your skills to make God look good.

Favorite Quote:

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Aaliyah Sibley

Electrical Engineering (BSEE)
Jackson State University



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Procurement Engineer, Entergy Mississippi

What are you responsible for:

Two of my job functions are to perform technical procurement engineering evaluations and reviews of components, assemblies, parts, and materials for all Entergy Nuclear Power Plants and perform part/item equivalency evaluations for replacement items that are not exact replacements of the original plant equipment.

Why Engineering:

I was inspired to pursue an engineering degree by a professor at the ... Jackson State University that I met when I was touring the college with my parents my junior year in high school.

Advice to others:

Learn as much as possible about different engineering degrees and choose what interests you the most.

Favorite Quote:

"Successful men and women keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit." - Conrad Hilton

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Tramone Smith, P.E.

Civil Engineering (BSCE)

Masters of Science Civil Engineering (w/ Env Emphasis)

Jackson State University

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi

Board Certified Environmental Engineer

NCEES Exam Anchor Test Committee

NCEES Exam Committee



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Environmental Engineer
Partner / Owner, WGK, Inc.

Most Interesting project:

I am currently working on a roadway/drainage improvements project. The project includes widening roads in a small neighborhood. The roadways are currently open ditch and will be rebuilt with a curb and gutter system. This project has every type of challenge you can imagine ranging from project coordination, construction sequences, weather, funding, and so on. I like work that challenges me and this project has it all.

Why Engineering:

I was inspired to go into Engineering because I like to create and fix problems. I also wanted to be able to contribute to this Earth and I am able to achieve that through Civil and Environmental Engineering.

Advice to others:

I would say go for it. It is not easy, but it is worth it. There are many opportunities afforded to you when becoming an Engineer. The sky's the limit.

Favorite Quote:

"A closed mouth does not get fed.", but I more live by my motto, "Stay Focused"

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Zechariah Smith

**Biological Engineering
Mississippi State University**



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Project Engineering Manager
Integra LifeSciences

Why Engineering:

I learned about Kwame Nkrumah as a young man, how he liberated Ghana from colonial rule. During that tenure, he solicited engineers and scientists to come to Ghana for the purpose of industrialization. From there, I connected engineering being a catalyst to inspire change and ameliorate the lives of others. I love medicine and physiology, so I decided to pursue biomedical engineering to inspire change and solve the problems within urban centers.

Advice to others:

1. Engineering is a wonderful career. Engineering touches EVERY facet of life, from medicine, automotive, aerospace, roads, bridges, water, space, and even politics. 2. Don't give up when the journey becomes difficult. 3. Take higher level math and sciences classes in junior high and high school. It will give you a great foundation for the coursework in college. 4. The pay compensation for STEMS jobs is one of the highest in the world.

Favorite Quote:

"Were I so tall to reach the pole, or grasp the ocean with my span, I must be measured by my soul; The mind's the standard of the man." – Issac Watts

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Kyle Anthony Sykes, EI

Bachelor of Science
Biological Engineering (w/ Env Emphasis)
Mississippi State University



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Environmental Analyst, Entergy

Why Engineering:

I have always had an innate attitude of wanting to know how and why things work the way they do. Engineering is the natural field that not only tries to answer these questions daily but also how to make the way things work better. So it was a natural fit. I picked Bio-Engineering initially because I wanted to attend Occupation Therapy school once I graduated. Once I was deeper into the curriculum the Environmental tract seemed to be more suitable.

Advice to others:

With our world clearly moving to more technology based occupations and fields, the need for STEM careers will continue to grow. Having a STEM career has been one of the most rewarding decisions I have personally made. If you like to be challenged or would like to make a difference in the world I would suggest really looking into the STEM field.

Favorite Quote:

Life is hard. You may slip, trip, stumble, or even fall. That is okay. But what is never okay is staying down. "So fall down once, Stand up Twice"

Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors



Tyler Sykes

**Industrial Engineering
Mississippi State University**



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

Industrial Engineer
Huntington Ingalls Industries, Inc.

Why Engineering:

I wanted a career that would challenge me and allow me to be creative when solving problems.

Advice to others:

If you have a passion for STEM, do not be afraid to go after it. It will be a challenge at times but making a difference in the world is worth it.

Favorite Quote:

"You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated." - Maya Angelo

**Mississippi Board of Licensure
For Professional Engineers & Surveyors**



Bradnado Turnquest, P.E.

Very 1st (JSU) Civil Engineering graduate
Civil Engineering (BSCE)
Environmental Engineering (MSEE)
Jackson State University

**President, Structural Engineering Association of
Mississippi**

Adjunct Professor, Jackson State University

Certified Bridge Inspector

Professional Engineer – State of Mississippi



Celebrating Blacks in Engineering In Mississippi

What do you do:

District Bridge Design Engineer, MDOT
Districts 2, 3, and 7

Most Interesting project:

I managed the replacement of 8 links (2 pins per link) on the US 84 Westbound Bridge over the Mississippi River in Natchez Mississippi. It was the Grand Award winner for the ACEC 2017 Engineering Excellence Award.

Why Engineering:

Engineering chose me. My goal was to get a mathematical degree because I love solving problems, but I ended up in the wrong major my first 2 years of college. I did not know that my athletic advisor (I played college baseball) inadvertently enrolled me in Civil Engineering. However, engineering was very interesting, and I did great in my classes, so I stuck with it.

Advice to others:

This is a great field to excel in because there is a need for engineers and will always be. If you have a creative mind and love math, then this is where you want to earn a career. You will always be able to find a job in engineering.

Favorite Quote:

"Never let the next man keep you down or behind"
and "Take advantage of what you have before you".

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