

**Elaine, Arkansas, Race Riot of 1919**, a riot by white mobs that resulted in the deaths of 200 blacks and in the convictions of black union members. The riot marked one of the first times a federal court intervened against a racially biased southern court.

In the summer of 1919, black sharecroppers and tenant farmers in Elaine, Arkansas, were angered by suspicions that they were being cheated by wealthy white landowners. Whites were accused of deliberately suppressing wages and undervaluing the price of cotton produced on black farms. A group of black farmers established the Progressive Farmers and Householders Union, and hired a white attorney to negotiate with white landowners for higher wages and better cotton prices.

On September 30, a group of white officials from the Missouri-Pacific Railroad set out to disrupt **union activities** by firing upon a group of blacks attending a union meeting. Union members returned fire, killing two whites. Word of the gunfight spread quickly, and soon hundreds of armed whites arrived in Elaine bent on revenge. The white mobs burned black homes and businesses. In response to the mayhem, federal troops targeted blacks who were trying to protect their possessions and defend their lives. Hundreds of blacks were arrested and many were forcibly held in the basements of the city's public schools.

Two hundred African Americans were killed in the riot and 67 African Americans were indicted for inciting violence. A white mob gathered outside of the courthouse as 12 black union members were convicted and sentenced to die. In 1921, the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** persuaded the Arkansas Supreme Court to reverse six of those convictions. The NAACP appealed the six remaining convictions to the U.S. Supreme Court and in 1923, the Court ruled that the Arkansas convictions had violated federal due process law. In January 1925, the remaining black union members were released, marking one of the first times that a federal court had intervened to reverse a racially biased southern court.

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