

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner



Derron C. Cook

Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award

DESCRIBED AS A GRIOT IN HIS COMMUNITY, DERRON C. COOK IS AN ART AND MEDIA EDUCATOR, LOCAL ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, AND BLACK HISTORY ENTHUSIAST in St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana who leads student and community talks in the search and knowledge of Black history.

As an art and media educator, he connects to youth by making ties to Black history through as many exercises and assignments as possible. He also teaches Black History through self-produced documentaries, interviews, photography, and art. Through his youth organization, Motionphics In Action, Mr. Cook engages students from marginalized communities in fine arts, media arts, and travel education to teach students African American History.

People often seek out Mr. Cook's expertise to recall local Black history that he has captured from the elders of his community. He continues to explore and understand the past practices of African Americans in the South and globally. In doing so and seeing a need for continued education in African American studies in the community, Mr. Cook founded the Revolt1811 Museum. Dr. Tia Mills, President of the Louisiana Association of Educators, portrays his museum as "his answer to the threats and actions of politicians and others who are on a mission to rid our schools and communities of textbooks that serve to educate on the past struggles and triumphs of Blacks in America and beyond."

Mr. Cook is a community leader spanning many years. As Councilwoman Tammy Houston of St. John the Baptist Parish described, Mr. Cook "is a habitual activist in all pertinent causes affecting our community, state, and nation. He began volunteering at a young age and has continued his passion for attempting to correct all injustices. He is a vital component necessary to ensure harmonious relations in our community." For example, Mr. Cook took a month-long stand against police brutality and in support of Black lives through daily demonstrations. He engaged community members from all backgrounds to create dialogue surrounding race relations. Mr. Cook also was a leader in ensuring that the community could build back stronger after facing the devastation caused by Hurricane Ida.

Derron Cook continues the legacy of Carter G. Woodson, a scholar and historian known as the father of Black history, through his work as a historian, leader, and educator. He uses the lessons from the past to advocate for a better future for Black youth in his community, state, and across the United States.