

**Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award**  
**C. Jerome Woods (Member)**  
**Los Angeles, California**

Inspired and inspiring, C. Jerome Woods is a gifted special education teacher and artist who takes great joy in celebrating creative expression and using it in teaching and learning. He knows the importance of preserving cultural memory and revealing it as a way of encouraging personal and racial pride, and he recognizes the value of sharing life and heritage experiences across cultures. As he sees it, not only is it necessary for all people to honor their own heritage, but they need to learn about and respect the racial and cultural heritage of others.

Believing that Black History is World History and should be observed on a daily basis and not merely during one month a year, he has become both a popular worldwide ambassador for and an ardent archivist of Black life and culture. A published poet, he has forged partnerships with a spectrum of cultural organizations, from neighborhood arts centers in Los Angeles to international agencies in South Korea, Brazil, and the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Woods taught special education students for 22 years at the Dr. Joseph Pomeroy Widney High School in Los Angeles, from which he recently retired, and initiated at the school the observance of Black History Month, along with studies of Black history. His efforts to enrich the lives of students have not been limited to cultural awareness and the celebration of racial heritage, but have extended to improving the conditions of their lives and extending the capacity of schools to serve their local and world communities. At Widney, he began a "Clothes Closet" program to provide clothing for needy students and initiated a city-wide campaign for "Pennies, Pencils & Pens to South Africa." A Special Olympics coach, he has chaired programs for the visually impaired. He has coordinated an education program to prevent tobacco use, led professional assault response training, worked to select mentor teachers, and collaborated with other Los Angeles artists to help Black youth understand the injurious effect to the N-word and to cease using it among their friends, as well as in public. It is only natural, then, that he should have been a member of his school's first Human Rights Caucus.

Beyond Widney, Mr. Woods has been active for many years in promoting and administering the United Teachers of Los Angeles/Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship program. Along with encouraging the educational achievement of Black students, he has taken part in the vibrant Los Angeles arts world, organizing tributes for Black artists and volunteering his expertise and services to such cultural groups and events as the Lula Washington Dance Foundation, the William Grant Still Arts & Music Center, the First A.M.E. Church Drama Department, St. Elmo Village, Inc., and the Pan African Film Festival.

From the time he was a child dancing around the kitchen, he wanted to devote his life to the performing arts, especially dance. But a career of community service captured his interest early when he went to work for Los Angeles County, first as a typist and then as a business office supervisor. Having earned his B.A., M.A., and specialized credentials from California State University Los Angeles, as well as an A.A in Theater Arts from Los Angeles City College, he joined the Los Angeles United School District in 1981, as a special education teacher. His early interest in the combination of physical education and dance theater has led to his vision of a National Black Dance Archive, for which he has collected nearly 1,000 documents and artifacts, from photographs and playbills to poster and other promotional items. He has also begun a document and artifact collection for a Western States Black, Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Archive.

His colleagues place a high value on his wit and wisdom, and the entire community honors him for his devotion to education and the arts. In describing his many roles at Widney High School, principal Jessie Lucas-Thompson writes of this advocacy for special needs students and his high expectations of colleagues, and concludes with the statement that he has been among the “most humorous and most favorite” member of the staff. Dr. Frances Copeland-Miles, Chair of the African-American Education Committee of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, has written of C. Jerome Woods, “His many assets and work ethics are prime examples of ‘Ordinary People Doing Extra-Ordinary Things’.”