



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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SHREVEPORT MAYOR TURNS PAGE ON SHAMEFUL CHAPTER IN CITY'S HISTORY

The City of Shreveport is excited to welcome Carla Cooke, Sam Cooke's youngest daughter. She will be performing at the *Let the Good Times Roll Festival* on June 22, 2019. At that time, Mayor Adrian Perkins will issue an apology to the Cooke family for the unfair treatment Sam Cooke received here more than five decades ago.

On October 8, 1963, Sam Cooke performed at the Municipal Auditorium—the famed Shreveport venue that launched Elvis Presley's career. Earlier that day, Cooke made reservations at the downtown Holiday Inn. When he arrived at the hotel with his wife, brother, and manager, they were turned away. They were turned away because they were black.

Sam Cooke toured the South many times. He was painfully aware of the humiliations regularly dealt to African-Americans by Jim Crow laws. However, he refused to be treated like a second-class citizen.

When the hotel staff attempted to turn Cooke away, the “King of Soul” stood his ground. In fact, he became so defiant that his wife, Barbara, feared for his life. She said, “Sam, we'd better get out of here. They're going to kill you.” He responded, “They're not gonna kill me; I'm Sam Cooke.” According to Cooke's biographer, Barbara shot back, “No, to them you're just another...you know.”

On October 9, 1963, the *New York Times* ran a story titled, “Negro Band Leader Held in Shreveport.” Sam Cooke was arrested for disturbing the peace. This incident was Cooke's inspiration for “A Change is Gonna Come,” which features the line, “I go downtown somebody keep tellin' me don't hang around.”

Cooke's peerless genius and indomitable spirit were able to turn this humiliating experience into the anthem of the Civil Rights movement. “A Change is Gonna Come” continues to inspire marginalized people and activists around the world to fight for fairness and equality. Mayor Perkins is continuing that fight by joining his daughter on stage to issue an apology.

Carla Cooke is a talented vocalist in her own right. She performs a set called “The Sam Cooke Experience” that features some of her father's classics. Carla Cooke will be performing this set at the *Let the Good Times Roll Festival* on June 22, 2019. Mayor Perkins will issue an apology on behalf of the City

of Shreveport for the unfair treatment her father received here nearly sixty years ago. However, this is more than an apology. It signals that change is indeed coming.

“Much has changed since 1963 and we have brave men and women like Sam Cooke to thank for that,” said Mayor Perkins. “They made incredible sacrifices in the struggle for freedom and equality. While we have come a long way, we are not perfect. We can do better. We must do better. I am issuing this apology for two reasons: First, the Cooke family deserves it. Second, because Sam Cooke’s legacy reminds us that change comes when people take action.”

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