



PRESS ARTICLE

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“THE FORGOTTEN CITY” TWO THUMBS UP!

By Alnisa Banks

Knuckle City Film's "The Forgotten City" is one of the most important reality documentaries ever produced about Buffalo and its "forgotten" Black community. Last Saturday evening the Market Arcade Film and Arts Center was the scene of the young film company's red carpe premiere. It was a huge success. Four sold out theatres and overwhelming thumbs up from viewers, literally placed the talented filmmakers on top of the world by night's end.

It was a triumphant event after a year of hard work and struggle for filmmakers Addison Henderson, Korey Green and their crews; Melvin Williams, Christian Johnson, Dion Giles and Durand McLeod II. Prior to the screening, a humble Henderson said that he was "nervous" about premier. By the end of the first showing Addison/Korey and company were exuberant as they waved their fists in the air, hugged and congratulated one another. Even they seemed surprised at the awesome impact their film had produced.

In truth, Saturday's premiere really marked just the beginning for the extraordinarily talented Knuckle City and their amazing film. "A lot of people said we couldn't do it," remarked co-director Green during a brief introduction before the film was shown. "But if you feel a calling from God, don't wait...as African Americans, we have a job to do." Editor Steve Powell called Addison Henderson "a genius with" with "great vision." Henderson, who studied acting and filmmaking in New York City and Los Angeles, founded Knuckle City Films; a company he says was created to present "real stories about real life situations." "The Forgotten City" epitomizes their stated goal. "I didn't pull any punches in the editing room," said Henderson.



-The Screening-

Anticipation was high in the theatre just before the screening began. Addison and Korey, both 24 chose to try to heal, rather than retaliate after the murder of Jermaine Cross in the summer 2001. Cross was a close friend of Addison's. His murderer, a friend of Korey's. That healing came in the form of the film project, where the two not only began to speak out against the problems plaguing their city, but also sought to give some historical perspective to the problems facing many inner city residents today. The film is an enormous undertaking with unlimited potential. And considering the youthful age of its creators, they did a tremendous job of revealing the mindset and real life existence of the least of us. The strength of the documentary

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is in their probing, frank interviews and ability to film situations where cameras are rarely allowed. Their subjects were open and vocal; and despite their “thug life” status, high intelligent and aware of the impact politics, miseducation, unemployment, the “criminal” criminal justice system and racism has had on their condition. “The Forgotten City” successfully humanizes people who are traditionally dehumanized by the media, and exposes some of the “the powers that be” for the powerless, insensitive, pseudo powers they really are.

A history lesson as well as an eye opener, the film is important because it tells the truth and keeps it real. And for the first time, it gives those who are trapped in the cycle of violence and hopelessness-many of them young people-a chance to tell their story to the rest of the city. It can, and has had, a profound impact on its young viewers. A story in the program book tells of encounter between Korey and a young man who some years ago had attempted to murder him. Normally, the meeting would have had a tragic end. But instead it was peaceful and the two embraced and buried the past without words, proving to Korey that his work on “The Forgotten City” has and will continue to make a difference. And that is all these young filmmakers are attempting to do. It is an awesome testament to their vision, that they took it their own words. Powerful words and sometimes-shocking images.

They also provide comic relief, for example, in the scene where they go to Toronto, Canada to find out what people there think about Buffalo. Their answers are for the most part amusing, and they find residents more interested in stopping the war. Korey joins their protest-but protests stopping the madness in Buffalo instead.

In the end, not everybody makes it out of the cycle, but there are signs of hope: the homeless man with a degree and an extensive resume finally gets a job; the girl who was expecting to go to jail for robbing a bank, ends up going to school instead and is about to graduate; and an ex-inmate, ends up making a rap album. We also heard from the children at Kipp Sankofa School who are happy with their education, and sing the praises of a teacher-Mr. B- who makes a profound difference in their lives. Mr. B’s interview was one of the most important in the film as it related to our children and education.

The interview with UB’s Dr. Henry Taylor was profound as well. Also, strong were interviews with Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples and Rev. Darius Pridgen.

Christian Johnson, associate producer and the only female member of the team, referred to the film as “a movement,” in her remarks last weekend. Indeed it is. Every person-young and old-should see this documentary. The beauty is that the filmmakers, after having exposed mountains of the pain, still believe there is hope, somewhere in Buffalo. There is certainly plenty of support for their noble efforts. The company received a \$5,000 donation from the CAO at the premiere, to help with the cost of additional work on the movie, as they prepare to enter their first film festival in July at the American Black Film Festival in Miami.

Knuckle City is hopeful that at least one major distributor will pick them up. CAO Executive Director and others had high praise for the young team. Noting that Buffalo’s population dropped from 600,000 to 300,000 in a span of 45 years, Hare praised the efforts of Knuckle City Films for capturing the city’s other reality. “Today, because our children paid attention and had the vision, we get to see our story on the big screen,” he said. And although it is not pleasant; picture, Hare added that it also, “speaks to our sense of hope, that Buffalo can rise again.” He called on the community to continue to support Knuckle City’s efforts.

True Bethel’s Rev. Darius Pridgen, in a prayer before the screening, asked God to bless the young people who’ve “taken their rightful place in this community.” “We see them now oh God, rising higher than they ever dreamed because they dared to be different.” He said that although “the enemy meant for our city to die,” that Knuckle City, with their film project, “brought attention to it.”
The rest is up to us.-A.B.

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