

ARTS

Filmmakers don't knuckle under to the streets

By Deidre Williams

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Updated: January 30, 2010, 4:00 pm / [0 comments](#)

Published: January 30, 2010, 4:00 pm

Young filmmakers Addison Henderson and Korey Green had no money, no camera, and no clue when they first decided to get into the movie industry.

What they had was a great idea.

They put it in motion, and today they are partners in their own production company. They have a slew of film festival awards and a wide portfolio of documentaries, feature films, dramas, comedies, music videos and infomercials.

The young men are examples of local minority entrepreneurs.

But not only do they work the business angle, they even extend their reach into the community. The pair helped the Buffalo City Mission give out Thanksgiving meals.

Every summer since 2006, the pair has sponsored an annual block party at Delavan and Courtland avenues, an area plagued with crime and poverty.

"People come from all over, from Bailey [Avenue], from Jefferson Avenue. It shows we can all come together without being violent," Green said.

And the two took their feature film, "The Forgotten City," on a screening tour with Buffalo Public Schools, replete with a study guide of key persons, a synopsis of major scenes and study questions. The guide was co-authored by Henry Taylor, a University at Buffalo

professor and urban expert.

Henderson started Knuckle City Films in 2004 "to show young people they can be what they want, not what they see," said Green, who runs the film company's Buffalo office in the Tri-Main Building. He came on board as a partner in 2005.

"The streets can swallow you whole, and they will. You've got to have some inner strength and external support to make it," he said.

Growing up on Buffalo's East Side, Green, 28, came to a point early in his young life where he wanted to strive for something more than what was going on around him.

Henderson, 28, runs the Los Angeles office. A Buffalo native, he is the son of Bishop William Henderson, longtime pastor of Michigan Street Baptist Church, one of the last stops on the Underground Railroad for escaping slaves.

Green and Henderson knew each other as teens. They both graduated from Alfred State College — Green with a degree in creative writing and Henderson with a degree in business management.

After a stint in New York City to try his luck at acting, Henderson left for Hollywood to make it in the movie industry.

Not long afterwards, he founded Knuckle City Films, a name that aptly describes the hardships he faced as a struggling thespian, Henderson said.

"I was having a hard time. I was sleeping in my car. A lot of the people I was going out on auditions with looked like me. I wondered, "How am I going to be respected as an artist?" " Henderson said. "Knuckle City Films was birthed from that experience of the struggle, of the fight."

Together, Henderson and Green write, direct, act and produce.

Their first collaboration was "The Forgotten City," a documentary based on a 2001 Buffalo murder by a robber who wanted the victim's DVD player and gold chain. Green was a friend of the victim. Henderson was friends with the murderer.

The cinematic duo forged an unlikely partnership and embarked on the film project, which took them into the heart of one of Buffalo's most dispossessed communities and crime-ridden streets. The film explores race relations, segregation, crime and politics with footage and one-on-one interviews with many residents and some of Buffalo's most influential leaders.

Green and Henderson followed "The Forgotten City" with "The Experience." The documentary follows five individuals — four of whom are Buffalonians — on a pilgrimage to Ghana in West Africa in search of the buried history of the transatlantic slave trade.

It premiered last month at Buffalo State College's Rockwell Hall.

Other projects include a short film directed by Henderson entitled "Benevolence," a drama about a young black couple facing the murder of the husband's absentee father, who has a number of illegitimate children.

A comedy called "Bad Fish" that Green directed is about a couple of twenty-something friends since childhood.

They have also produced a piece on the abortion debate. Buffalo GYN Womenservices, an abortion clinic, is across the street from the film company's office. Protesters routinely rally at the site, Green said.

In addition, they put together a live gospel show, as well as a short film from the night President Obama was elected.

"We roamed around the city and got people's reaction," Green said.

They have won numerous film awards, including prizes from the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival, the Buffalo

Niagara Film Festival and the Denver and Chicago film festivals.

Later this year, the duo plans to do a tour with public schools and colleges all over the country, especially in Western New York. The tour — entitled "Know Your Identity" — will feature "Bad Fish," "Benevolence" and "The Experience."

Now that Henderson and Green have a thick portfolio under their belts and have done some award-winning work, they are ready to take it to the next level.

Henderson is in the process of writing a science fiction feature film. Meanwhile, Green is working on his first feature film, a piece entitled, "Closeout." He hopes to break into Hollywood with it.

"This is it," Green said. "This is my crossover project."

dswilliams@buffnews.com