



## **PRESS ARTICLE**

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## **“THE FORGOTTEN CITY” LOCAL FILMMAKER PUTS BUFFALO IN NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT**

By Tanjanika Pinkston

With the intention to stimulate thought and invoke change in the current conditions of the city of Buffalo and a dream of placing Buffalo back on the map, young filmmaker Addison Henderson and his partner Korey Green created Knuckle City Film's "The Forgotten City".

Green and Henderson worked on the project for a year and have released a film that has Buffalo talking and had gained national recognition. "This film is a docudrama about the realities of the city of Buffalo and its people. It is a film about a city that has replaced equal opportunity with crime, drugs and murder," says Henderson.

Korey Green and Addison Henderson are long time friends; however their friendship reached a pivotal point where a decision had to be made. The mean realities of the inner city streets of Buffalo reached their doorstep in 2001; Korey's childhood friend murdered Addison's best friend. If they had followed the unwritten rules of the street there would have been some retaliation for the death of a friend but instead, these two decided to come together and fight as a team to avenge what they say is the true enemy, poverty, hopelessness, and lack of identity.

Once, a very prosperous city, Buffalo was home to some of the wealthiest people in America. Jobs were plentiful and there was a pride in Buffalo that made this city live up to its name the Queen City. Buffalo is rich in history with the NAACP being founded here conceived by the Niagara Movement a civil rights organization that later became NAACP. Buffalo was the home to former presidents, actors, and has some of the most beautiful architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. This is also the home of the historic Michigan Street Baptist church where Henderson's father served as pastor for numerous years.

Henderson, an actor who began his studies at [in NY], moved to LA with hopes of attending University of Southern California where he would study cinematography. USC is noted for its ability to produce award winning filmmakers like Steven Spielberg. Unfortunately, the school was more than Henderson could afford so he took small jobs acting in for film students. With dreams of becoming a filmmaker and a few productions under his belt, and the need to generate money to begin his studies, Henderson said he seized the opportunity to work with Green when Green called with the concept for the Forgotten City.

Henderson relocated back to Buffalo to begin gathering footage for the film. A year in the making, the debut was June 10th, 2006 at the Market Arcade in Buffalo. The buzz around the city has made Henderson a local celebrity. However, determined to stay humble Henderson said, "I wanted to tell a sophisticated story. Not just another documentary but the story of the people

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living this life every day. The characters in this movie are real. These are the thoughts they think daily and this is the lives they wake up to.”

Careful in the editing suite not to make the movie a “false reality”, Green and Henderson told it the way it really was. Henderson said, “Artistically, I am inspired by people. People are real art, their lives and struggles and how they overcome are beautiful. People inspire me”. He also added that filmmakers like Spike Lee and Clint Eastwood inspire him. As an actor he models the acting styles of Denzel Washington and Marlon Brando. “I was up late last night watching some old Brando movies, practicing a little,” he said with a smile. As an actor, his handsome masculine look is sure to capture the hearts of many. As a filmmaker he will capture the hearts and minds of all.

When asked why the title, “The Forgotten City”, he answered, “The title has more than one meaning. On a national front, my partner and I went to larger cities that were once industrial cities but have survived, such as Detroit, and Chicago. We also went internationally to Toronto and surrounding cities to see what people thought about Buffalo, NY. Many people could only reply about the cold weather and the chicken wings if they had a reply at all. It was hard to see that Buffalo was a forgotten city in the minds of people around the nation.” Henderson added, “I had the opportunity to interview Bruce Gordon the president of the NAACP and he had not heard of Buffalo at all.” This fact startled Henderson since Buffalo was the birthplace of the organization Gordon leads.

The second reason for the title was internal. Henderson noted since he is a native of this regal city the sad part of seeing its decline is the lost identity of its people. “Being the Queen City the inhabitants should carry themselves as royalty”, however, he adds “I have observed and documented the lives of those who have loss of identity”.

Addison and Korey took the time to go to people and ask them to tell their story. Boldly going where most people dare not, Green and Henderson took their cameras to the public welfare building where they met a man named Frank Flowers. Frank is a man who has experience as a construction worker but was unable to find employment and provide for himself and his family. Frank shared his story and his resume. “It is a shame that such talent is going to waste when the city is in need of people with his ability”, explains Henderson. “The dilapidation of the buildings on the outskirts of the city where passers by can see helps to erode the image of the city of those that visit,” he adds.

Fortunately, thanks to the film, Flowers was noticed by one of the largest construction firms in Buffalo with hopes of recruiting him and giving him a needed opportunity. “Changing lives is why we are doing this, we want to affect the lives of people in Buffalo and bring recognition to all of those forgotten.” Additionally Addison said, “If this is Gods way of using me to change the lives of others then I am available and I accept the task.

The Public Assistance building is not the only place the film makers visited, these genuine advocates went into a crack den where, abusers often go, to interview crack users. Their stories are of hopelessness and despair. One woman shared with Addison that although she is an abuser that love was the one thing she never had while growing up. Dr. Henry Taylor who was interviewed in the movie said, “To solve the problem, we must first identify the problem. Unfortunately, we don’t know who the enemy is anymore and have began to internalize and become the enemy” This harsh reality gives the media the ammunition needed to keep reporting on the crime that is ever present in Buffalo. The need to expose the enemy and identify the problem is the purpose for the film.

There have been many opinions about the film however, Henderson has had positive responses. There were some who believed the film only depicted the negatives of. Buffalo, when Henderson was asked about contrasting what was depicted he simply replied, there is a need to know who the enemy is and to expose the devices used to kill the moral of the people. Henderson explains

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that he and his staff are not outsiders. "Everyone on my staff of 13 people has all lost someone to a violent crime", he said.

When asked if he felt the church could have done more to prevent the city from falling as it has he replied. "Unfortunately, every pastor is not in service to serve the Lord but because ministry is business". Henderson says he does not know how it is to serve with impure intents. "My Father is a 'holy man', and living a lie is something he has not taught me to do." Henderson says he believes that ministers like Pastor Troy Bronner and Pastor Pridgen, who lead two of the largest, most progressive churches in Buffalo have the heart for the people and mean Gods business all the way. "They are the voices of hope in the city."

The Forgotten City has gained national attention and will be featured at the American Black Film Festival in Miami, Florida. A special screening will be held on July 19th-23rd. For more details visit the website [www.abff.com](http://www.abff.com). These young filmmakers are on their way to great success and someday Buffalo will be proud to say Henderson and Green have made a difference in the city they belong to Buffalo.

There will be another showing of the film at the Market Arcade, for more information about the film and show times, visit Knuckle City Film's website at [www.knuckelcityfilms.com](http://www.knuckelcityfilms.com). In parting Henderson stated, God is opening doors he could never imagine." He said he finally decided to do things Gods way. Addison's parting words of wisdom were "you have to live your life God's way. No other way will work and you know it's just not worth it."

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