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Freedom House documentary distribution problem because it's an African American project



Larry Underwood and Walt Brown

(UrbanMediaToday) - Freedom House "Street Savivors" is a documentary that tells the story of the 44 men and women who saved lives in the inner city with methods never used in emergency care in America. Gene Starzenski, the producer of the documentary, is having a tough time getting the documentary distributed and he believes the color of the Freedom House paramedics has everything to do with his dilemma.

“So far I have been unable to seek a distribution deal because it’s an African American project. If this was about a bunch of White people that created the first paramedic system – it would have been sold a long time ago,” Starzenski said after showing the documentary on September 25 at the Hill House Kaufmann Center on Centre Avenue.

Starzenski has a film script ready, but said he cannot find a studio that is willing to give the green light for a movie about Freedom House.

A plaque honoring the Freedom House ambulance paramedics and other workers was unveiled in front of the Hill District Federal Credit Union building. The building stands beside where Freedom House once was from 1967 until 1975.

“They set the standards for what EMS (Emergency Medical Services) is today,” declared John Moon, a member of Freedom House and retired as an assistant chief of medical services after working with the city of Pittsburgh for 34 years.

Moon sued the city for discrimination claiming he was passed over for the deputy chief's position and in 2007 was awarded \$40,000.

The ambulance service workers at Freedom House were people from the inner city who had no prior knowledge of medicine and many of them were on a fast track to trouble. George McCary, a taxi cab driver, admits that becoming a paramedic was a lifesaver for him.

“The areas that I lived in was corrupt. The bad habits would have swallowed me up if I hadn't gotten into a realm of good habits. It helped me survive.”

The program itself didn't survive after Mayor Tom Flaherty in 1975 began a city run emergency services unit and cut Freedom House funding.

The city required Freedom House workers to take tests to work as city paramedics – which they did but most of them failed to pass the tests and the city emergency services unit was predominantly White.

“I had hatred – a deep hatred at one time. But I got over it now. Doesn't matter now. I done got old,” Freedom House paramedic Walt Brown said about the events 39 years ago that ended the historic program.

For more details about Freedom House documentary go to www.freedomhousedoc.com.

See more of Tené Croom's exclusive interviews in this video.

Reach Tené Croom at tene.croom.tc@gmail.com and follow her on Twitter @TcTene.

Click here to view the video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=7ABsLSr-Ak