

Meet the Producers Bringing Black Journeys and Debates In Grand Rapids To Film in the Documentary A City Within A City

Michigan, Grand Rapids, Mar 9, 2021 (Issuewire.com) - Grand Rapids Media Initiative and Film Incubator together with Grand Stand Pictures and affiliated partners will soon begin pre-production of their full-length documentary film. It reveals how the dignity and humanity of the Black community in Grand Rapids, Michigan persists in overcoming the insidiousness of #ManagerialRacism as defined by author Todd Robinson, in his book *A City Within A City: The Black Freedom Struggle in Grand Rapids, Michigan*.

To embrace the efforts of local under-resourced Black storytellers, videographers, and other dispossessed groups, Grand Rapids Media Initiative & Film Incubator will make internships and development partnerships a part of their project. This has already begun through internships during pre-production and will happen during production and post-production through apprenticeships with industry experts engaged to work on the film. After the film, building a community-driven creative media hub will become the focus, where local talent can pool resources and networks to shore up their demo reels and develop a viable client base of civic and business organizations looking to diversify their contracts. Industry leaders are exploring how to create sustainable incubator programs, and GR-MiFi looks forward to being a part of such ground-breaking strategy design efforts. Their process is currently being observed for a publication on community-driven media for the Ford Foundation.

Having the city of Grand Rapids “own” the film is a goal of the organization. The community can “pitch in” to the project by networking for the incubator, following and sharing social media (“Grand Stand Pictures”), contributing to upcoming Indiegogo crowdfunding efforts, submitting personal experience stories, and sharing memorabilia. Sending your ideas is also a way to pitch in. What stands out in the book? What do you want to see on the screen? What got left out but needs to be included? Ideas can be pitched to info@grandstandpictures.com, where you can also sign up for their mailing list. Visit www.grandstandpictures.com for more information.

While some outlets report that Grand Rapids is one of the best places in the country to raise a family, it is simultaneously described as one of the worst for African Americans in the country. As residents try to reconcile living in a city that is really two or three different cities at once, various reactions play out. Many try to wrest themselves free from being “managed” wondering why others seem to be participating in our own demoralization. Those enjoying privileges wonder how their good intentions can be so misunderstood. Hence, the “A City Within A City” documentary was envisioned.

Grand Stand Pictures’ purpose is to inspire and educate future generations about the Black journeys and debates in Grand Rapids. Their mission is aimed to propel all to recognize similar forces in their own regions and to overcome personal and societal hurdles that must go, in a quest to create a more just and equitable society. The founders of both organizations met in, live in, and advocate in the Grand Rapids community with a diverse background which will bleed through the documentary. Below are the principals involved:

Producer Victor Williams, born and raised in GR, is a natural creative, who found his way early in the music business and established himself as a pioneer in the Michigan hip-hop community. He founded The Grand Rapids HipHop Coalition, an organization designed to support and advise budding local artists, and The Love Movement Inc, a HipHop Non-Profit that focuses on youth education through HipHop arts and culture.

Producer Rodney Brown, born and raised in GR, has served as a professional educator, non-profit executive, and community organizer, including his work with the Grand Rapids African American Community Task Force. The Founder and President of West M.E.G.A Films & Productions, Mr. Brown has a master's degree in Urban Education from Davenport University and currently works as an Administrator with the Grand Rapids Public Schools.

Producer Jazmyne Fuentes spent the majority of her career producing an interview show in Grand Rapids about ethical & justice issues that progressed from community access TV to national PBS on 60+ stations. Inner Compass was distributed through WGVU-TV until 2015. Inspired by Todd Robinson's presentation of his book *A City Within a City* to an eager GR audience, she began a web show called "Mixed Reviews" GR to explore the vastly different experiences of black people and white people living in GR.

Associate Producer Kimberley Williams, born and raised in GR, earned her B.A. in Criminal Justice and Sociology from Western Michigan University and holds a master's degree from Ferris State University in Criminal Justice Administration. In addition to active engagement in various civic and social organizations throughout Grand Rapids, Kimberley makes time to serve in various leadership positions within her beloved sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho.

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