

Horace L. Williams looks STL in the eye with ‘City of Haterz’



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Horace L. Williams is the director of the documentary movie *City of Haterz: Analyzing The St. Louis Slave Mentality*

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“It was a conversation that kept coming up,” said filmmaker Horace L. Williams. “It’s been a topic of discussion for years, but it had never been explored.”

Through *City of Haterz: Analyzing The St. Louis Slave Mentality*, Williams sought out the community to help him get to the bottom of what plenty to believe is a constant negative mindset of many St. Louisans.

“First, you have to recognize a problem is there before you can do anything about it,” Williams said.

So he sets out with cameras in tow on the mission to allow people from all walks of life to offer first-hand experiences with the St. Louis hater syndrome.

It is one that Williams says he knows too well. Born in St. Louis but raised in Mississippi with the experience of living and extensively visiting several metropolitan areas around the nation, he says he has felt the burden of what he believes is a community that holds each other down – and back.

“I grew up in the South, and racism is much more here than it is there,” Williams said. “There, you know that they don’t like you – they will make it clear. But here, it’s different – from the corporate structure, to politics and everything else, there are a whole lot of issues.”

In *City of Haterz*, community leaders, activists, businessmen and women, entertainment personalities, people from the block and the barbershop all chime in with their perspective on the city’s shortcomings – mainly, the people who live here and the actions they take to prevent the area from making progress.

Plenty of the subjects of Williams’ film actually come across as continuing the stereotype of St. Louis’ legacy of haters – pointing out all of the negative aspects of the city and its citizens and how the city as a whole has had a hand in holding him or her back. Alleged victims of STL hating provide a host of examples of thwarted talent ranging from sewing skills to singing talent.

“A lot of people don’t want to face up to an issue that’s there because it’s their city, but they are real about it,” Williams said. “We’re not saying it’s fact or just totally fabricated, and we are exploring from all angles –including a historical perspective.”

The film offers compelling commentary from historian John A. Wright and Lynne Jackson, a direct descendent of Dred and Harriet Scott, as they offer historical insight on the racism that has plagued the St. Louis community since the days of slavery.

Wright gives viewers a breakdown of blacks in St. Louis from the early 18th Century, and Jackson discusses the significance of her great-great-great Grandfather Dred Scott.

City of Haterz also breaks down the racism in St. Louis from a political perspective via legendary activists Percy Green II and Norman Seay.

While the film explores racism and haters, it doesn’t create a deep enough connection between the two – or get to the bottom of why St. Louis people have what Williams and the participants in his film believe to be a predisposition to hating.

And the “slave mentality” of Williams’ title is never made completely clear.

What is obvious is that people in St. Louis have serious concerns with each other regarding the lack of camaraderie – which is keeping the area from standing alongside other metropolitan areas as one of the nation’s urban hotspots.

According to Williams, that was the primary point of his production.

“I really want for a light bulb to go off in their head,” Williams said. “I wanted them to see that, ‘Yes, there are some issues, and am I a contributor to it or am I a part of the solution.’ That is a big part.”

Williams has a parting message for the people of St. Louis.

“This is your city,” Williams said. “If you would like to see your city become a more diverse and progressive city, like other major cities, we must recognize real issues that are involving the city and move towards positive solutions to resolving those issues to reach that goal.”

City of Haterz: Analyzing The St. Louis Slave Mentality *can be ordered or downloaded from www.stlcityofhaterz.com. It's also available at Vintage Vinyl in the U. City Loop and other venues listed on the movie's website.*