

Moviemaker to document Flint's basketball history

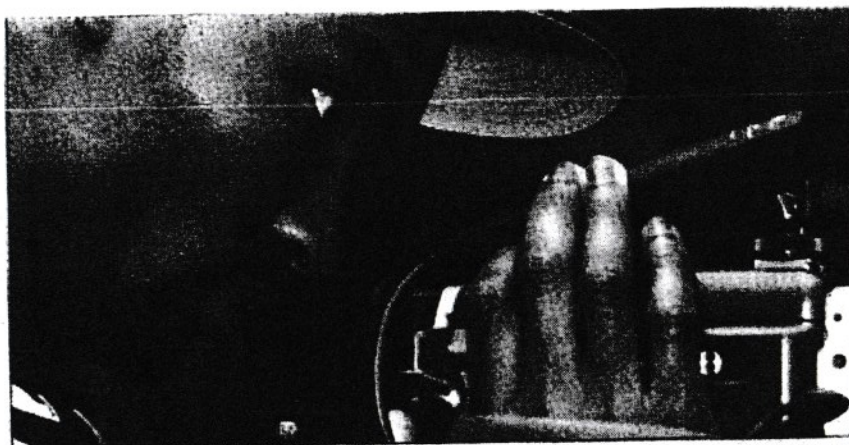
By Ed Bradley
Gazette News Service

FLINT — Like the basketball players he spent months filming, Marcus Davenport has given much of his life to the hoops game of his adopted hometown.

Davenport realized a three-year dream by completing "Flint Star," a 90-minute documentary about the Vehicle City's love affair with basketball. Now, having financed the film on his own, he has issued it on DVD and is trying to get the word out.

Davenport, 26, grew up in Grand Rapids, Pontiac and elsewhere, and he works in Detroit as a public school teacher, but "the movie educated me so much about Flint," he says.

"Flint Star" looks at the culture and history of basketball in the city through the eyes of some of its most heralded hoops emissaries — current



JANE HALE / GAZETTE NEWS SERVICE

Detroit middle school teacher Marcus Davenport, 24, films an interview in Flint in 2002 for his documentary film, "Flint Star," about the love of basketball in Flint.

and former National Basketball Association players Mateen Cleaves, Eddie Robinson, Jeff Grayer and Justus Thigpen Sr. — as well as neighbor-

hood "ballers," summer-league studs and everyday enthusiasts of the game.

Using an 8mm camera, Davenport captured more than 60 hours of

footage of interviews and action with Flint residents of all ages playing basketball in a wide range of surroundings.

"Flint Star," filmed between 2001 and 2003, also deals with the difficulties faced by inner-city African Americans in achieving their sporting dreams amid economic limitations and addictive distractions.

Basketball is "our GM, our way of getting out of the ghetto," says one of the film's many interview subjects. "It's our job."

Before he made "Flint Star," Davenport says, he would "hear people bragging so much about Flint, and now I understand. There's a certain pride among the athletes here that's so special. They're so eager to give back to the community. I think they feel that responsibility."

While attending Michigan State University in the late 1990s, Davenport began his film company, Big Thangs

Productions, with a classmate, Anthony Barnes. The two comedy show, "Big Thangs," aired on campus television.

Davenport got a close look at the universal impact of the universal "Flintstones" — Cleaves, Morris Peterson and A Davenport played on the Flint High School team that won the Class A title in the Northern High team in the quarterfinals.

Davenport moved to Flint with his family in '95 and went to work teaching at Pershing School. He is now a language teacher at Columbus Middle School in Detroit, but his heart is in Flint.

He says he financed the film on his salary — and credit was like being in a cave during the process. "I worked every day."