

Karyn Parsons' Nonprofit Sweet Blackberry Uses Film To Teach Children Black History

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Black history isn't just for Black Americans. It's American history; the history of this country and all of its people. Sadly, it's a history that is often overlooked and risks being lost if not for the active efforts of colleges, universities, the public education system and individuals. - See more at: [Karen Parsons' Sweet Blackberry Uses Film to Teach Black Children](#)



Hilary Banks from "The Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air" may not have been known as a fierce advocate for education. But the actress who played her sure is.

Last year, [Karyn Parsons](#) -- actress, mother, author and amateur historian -- founded Sweet Blackberry, a nonprofit devoted to teaching kids about some of the lesser-known figures of black history. The organization publishes books and videos on people like Henry "Box" Brown and Garrett Morgan, and facilitates school visits and children's workshops centered around promoting "creativity, literacy skills and social responsibility."

Sweet Blackberry recently launched a Kickstarter for its latest project, a short film that will tell the story of Janet Collins, the first African-American prima ballerina in the Metropolitan Ballet. Collins, who died in 2003 at age 86, rose to fame despite being shut out of dance theaters that refused to let her perform unless it was in whiteface.

The first DVD in the series is about Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who mailed himself to freedom. Henry was shipped, by wagon, boat and train, from Virginia to Philadelphia. When the box was opened, he became a free man. Using the captivating voices of Alfre Woodard and illustrations by Mark Page, this is a great tool for sharing 'underground' stories with our youth.

The second DVD narrated by Queen Latifah and illustrated by R. Gregory Christie, tells of day-dreamer Garrett Morgan, who was always trying to come up with great new inventions, but it wasn't until he witnessed an accident in the big city that he decided to create a traffic light. By following Garrett on his journey to find his calling, children see that some paths to success are more indirect than others.

To learn more about [Sweet Blackberry](#) and how to support this project, [click here](#).