

CLASS ACT

Singleton stays involved in the community

By Erik McNeal

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Singleton acts out a scene from his next project.

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Robert Singleton, or "IronE Singleton," his stage moniker, is likely the most unfamiliar, yet multitalented star in Georgia today. He is a talent across multiple arts, has a background in athletics, and gives back to Paulding County and it was not without an epic life journey.

Singleton grew up in the inner city Atlanta, in the projects of Perry Homes. He was without either presence of his mother, fallen to alcoholism, or a father in his home. His neighborhood was a dwelling of gangsters and hustlers. An eight-year-old Singleton soon moved to the Decatur area.

"I saw a different side of life," said Singleton, "I saw it was possible to see clean air and to see people have a discussion without it ending in violence."

Singleton's grandmother and other paternal relatives raised him and his brothers, serving as the familial foundation. Resultant of the move and of the sudden passing of his mother to HIV complications, a young Singleton found himself fired with more ambition to do something positive with his life. A primary goal was to use the life experiences in a constructive, and not destructive, manner. To that effort, he turned to sports when he was ten years old.

Singleton said that his passion for drama evolved gradually during his formative youth. He said that television during the 1980s particularly engrossed him as "I just lost myself in that world and it took my out of my environment." In high school, Singleton entered an oratorical contest and drafted an essay about becoming an actor. To that aspiration, the teachers deemed it "impractical" of

him, so he changed the goal to becoming a dentist and the essay changed. The passion for acting did not change.

During his time at UGA, Singleton became president of the Black Theatre Ensemble, which opened opportunities to appear in productions of "A Soldier's Play," "Richard III," and landing a role through Georgia Public Television's "Transitions."

His breakthrough performance came when producers casted him in the play "Sugar Daddy," on a nationwide tour acting opposite Ali Woodson from the Temptations and Bernadette Stanis from the TV series "Goodtimes." The play brought some extra exposure but not as much as Singleton anticipated, and he then decided it was time to travel to Hollywood.

Many people travel to Los Angeles, particularly Hollywood, to chase dreams of stardom in show business. Singleton packed into a car and traveled cross-country for a near consecutive 37 hours to arrive on the west coast. He arrived to literally nothing, carrying only a hope and a dream. Singleton attended an open audition where droves of actors herded in and out of a room, like farm cattle.

After seven hours of waiting in line, the audition closed and disappointment set.

"I could see the door from my spot in line finally," said Singleton, "They then told us it was closed and for everyone to return tomorrow."

Singleton returned Monday, waiting only three hours and gave a great audition. He was among a selection pool of actors for upcoming television show pilots for the ABC network. Unfortunately, no further acting work came for three months. Singleton had left at the blessing of his wife with child, to catch his dream, yet only was serving tables while distributing portrait photos and resumes to numerous producers and talent agencies. People would not hire him because he was not a Screen Actors Guild, an actors union, member. Singleton eventually retreated home to gather himself and refocus on his life.

Fortunes turned around after a period of reflection and revelation to exorcise Singleton's past demons. He began receiving callbacks for film roles. The work consisted of independent film and stage play roles, and a role in the 2000 sports drama "Remember the Titans," opposite Denzel Washington. Producers and directors took notice and utilized the authenticity he would bring to tough-guy roles that are easy to fall into mere caricatures. He earned three roles in Hollywood produced films within a nine-month period, however, to date, he counts his role in the 2009 film "The Blind Side," as his best work and his biggest role.

"I felt I could bring some extra dimensions to the character," said Singleton, "I made it so that the character wouldn't be so cookie-cutter."

He rose from his beginnings bringing an invaluable street knowledge and mentality to his current endeavors. To tell his story, in 2006, Singleton wrote a solo stage production, "IronE...The Resurrected," which as he said for a description is his life story. The play revolves around the notion of existing in truth and in love. The production will instrument Singleton's attributes of drama, comedy, dance, spoken word and rap to create a positive and uplifting experience. The production has previously held performances at Spelman College, Atlanta Metropolitan College and the University of West Georgia, and aired on Clark Atlanta University's television station, CAU-TV. Singleton's dedication to the craft knows no boundaries, going so far to pawn his car to fund this play's production costs. He regards it as a high personal triumph.

Singleton has lived in Paulding County since 2003. He serves as an umpire and as a referee through Georgia's Running Refs Association, for recreation league and middle school sports leagues in basketball, softball and part-time for flag football. Singleton was also a coach for the Hiram Hornets track team. Bearing in mind all his accomplishments in drama and athletics, Singleton urgently wants to bring and expose local talents and bring "IronE...The Resurrected" to Paulding County.

"I want to get to where we create better quality projects," said Singleton, "I want to take the talents abroad though we need to start at home, here in Paulding."

Information: www.ironesingleton.com.