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The Buzz (<http://blogs.ajc.com/the-buzz>)

Pre-Oscars, here's a local "Blind Side" tale

2:51 pm March 7, 2010, by Jennifer Brett



IronE Singleton with John Lee Hancock, director of "The Blind Side," at the film's New York premiere last year.

We'll be blogging and tweeting about the Academy Awards later today. For now, here's an Oscar story with a metro Atlanta tie.

Local connections abound this year, of course. **Mo'Nique** is all but guaranteed to win best supporting actress honors for her role in the **Tyler Perry-Oprah Winfrey** produced "Precious." And Perry will be presenting tonight, a first for him.

Sandra Bullock is up for best actress for her role in "The Blind Side," which features scenes filmed here, and several locals in various roles.

Among them is **IronE Singleton**, who plays **Alton**, a tough-talking guy who from the projects who is highly suspicious of **Leanne Tuohy**, Bullock's character. You can see a snippet of his performance in this clip, at about a minute and a half in.



IronE Singleton and his wife, Commaleta, have three children.

For Singleton, a University of Georgia graduate who lives with his wife of 11 years and three children in Paulding County, it was not hard to summon the hard edges of his character in "The Blind Side." He grew up in an Atlanta housing project.

"Not only did I observe people with those traits but I possessed some of those qualities myself," he said during an interview with Buzz Friday afternoon. "Whether it's poverty or lack of education, it brings about a lot of insecurities. The only thing you have for the most part is your pride. You can do it by being physically demanding. Some people might like to bully other people. You also do it by talking to the women and showing that you're a ladies man."

Growing up in Perry Homes, it wasn't unusual to hear gunfire at night. He knew plenty of people who wound up hurt, dead or imprisoned. His brother has been in and out of jail for years, he said.

"He chose the streets," said Singleton. "He chose to sell drugs."

When he was about 10, he started spending time with relatives whose home was not across the street from the city dump, as his was.

"The air was fresh. The grass was cut every day," he said. "For me it was kind of like Beverly Hills. I was motivated. I started having my conversations with God."

He knew he wanted a better situation for himself, and when an aunt got him into a program exposing inner city children to drama, it was like a divine road map to success. He found he loved Shakespeare and after high school earned a drama degree from UGA.

"There's a spiritual force behind everything," he said. "The Blind Side" is his first acting job in a major motion picture.

"The story is so powerful," he said. "On top of that to get to act opposite Sandra Bullock. It was like, wow. It was a dream come true. The one word to sum it all up is just love. Every aspect I just loved."

Tonight, as his fellow actors don tuxedos and prepare for the red carpet, Singleton will be tuning in from home, with his family.

"I said I'd rather stay behind and attend my kid's track event," he said.

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