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Role of Douglass recalled at show

By Rebekka Coakley, bcoakley@altoonamirror.com

Lesleyan Lewis is interested in learning more about the struggles of black people during the time of slavery.

That's why the Penn State Altoona sophomore attended Thursday's presentation by LeCount Holmes at the campus.

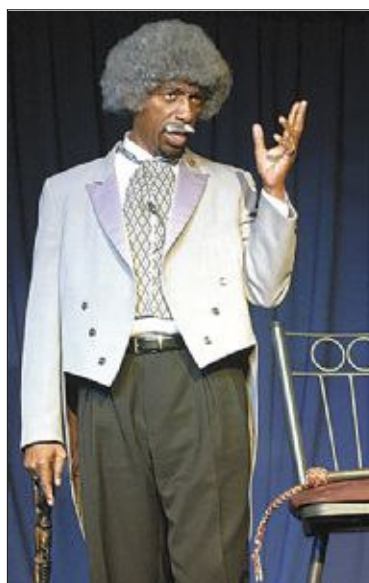
Dressed in a 19th-century gray suit with a matching gray mustache and wig, Holmes spoke to students in the Slep Center as if he were Douglass, a prominent figure in black history.

Holmes depicted Douglass' childhood as a slave who barely knew his mother and never met his white father.

He described the tears Douglass' grandmother shed when she dropped him off at a plantation that taught children to be slaves and how Douglass witnessed one of the white masters shoot his friend who tried to escape the plantation.

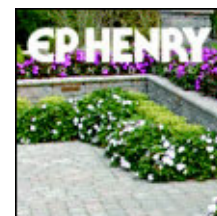
Holmes spoke of the people who had a major effect on Douglass' life, including the wife of his master, who taught him to read, and a spiritual man that told Douglass one day he would be a man of the world.

By his own means, Douglass educated himself, married a free black woman, escaped slavery and became an influential speaker,



LeCount Holmes recreates the life of Frederick Douglass at an event marking Black History Month Thursday night at Penn State Altoona's Slep Center.

(Mirror photo by Gary M. Baranec)



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abolitionist and author.

He spoke about the Declaration of Independence and the hypocrisy of its famous words.

"They didn't have anyone that looked like me in mind when they said all men are created equal."

But because Holmes is a motivational speaker with a booming baritone voice, he inspired students listening to him when he spoke of the life Douglass made for himself once he escaped slavery.

He was a successful author, became the first U.S. Negro Marshall in Washington, was an adviser to Abraham Lincoln, was a bank president and worked with abolitionists such as Harriet Tubman and John Brown to help the indentured safely find freedom.

When one student asked Holmes if he thought Douglass' literacy helped him rebel against slavery, Holmes had the student stand up against the end of a cracking whip and asked the student if he would call escaping that, rebelling.

Lewis said Holmes' repeated phrase, "where there's no struggle, there is no progress," were the most memorable words of the evening for her.

"I believe the spirit of Frederick Douglass is in this man," she said.

Mirror Staff Writer Rebekka Coakley is at 946-7435.

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