

# Augusta shares legacy of education

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Paine College's MOSA African Dancers performed at the Feb. 24 African-American/ Black History Month program at Alexander Hall. *Photo by Charmain Z. Brackett* Augusta's African-American community has produced many great educators, lawmakers, entertainers and businessmen.

On Feb. 24, Corey Rogers, the historian at Augusta's Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, provided a glimpse into the rich legacy of some of these Augustans at Fort Gordon's African-American/Black History Month Command program at Alexander Hall.

Rogers said the museum has several permanent exhibits, but he spoke primarily on one.

"The Ebony Legacy has been around since 1995," he said. "It mainly focused on a few individuals Lucy Craft Laney and C.T. Walker. It's always evolving, always changing."

Over the years, other Augustans have been added including the Godfather of Soul, James Brown, Thelma "Butterfly" McQueen, who played Prissy in the movie *Gone With the Wind* and Laurence Fishburne, who has appeared in many films including *The Color Purple*, *The Matrix* and *Boyz n the Hood*.

Rogers spotlighted several individuals during his talk including the museum's namesake.

"She was known as the 'Mother of the Peoples' Children,'" Rogers said of Laney, who established a school for black children in Augusta in the 1880s. It was one of the first to offer kindergarten to African-American children. She also opened a nursing school for black women.

She impacted other influential black educators including Mary McLeod Bethune who founded Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla. Bethune was a teacher at Laney's Haines Normal Institute in Augusta.

Other Augustans Rogers spoke about included John Tutt, who although he never played a day of a sport in his life, coached football, basketball and track and field at Haines Institute and Laney High School. He had one of the highest winning percentages in the state and was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 2007. Tutt Middle School in Augusta is named after him.

Also, there was Frank Yerby, an Augusta-born author who lived many years in Spain. Several of his novels were turned into films.

Before wrapping up his talk, Rogers put a plug in for the museum which is located in the Laney-Walker district of Augusta.

Located at 1116 Phillips St., the museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday.