



BLACK WARRIORS: THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS OF WORLD WAR II

A Memoir by Ivan J. Houston with Gordon Cohn about the Only Negro WWII Infantry Division to Fight in Europe

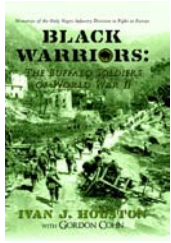
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July 12th AACCFE Dinner Speaker Series Features Ivan J. Houston, Author of "Black Warriors: The Buffalo Soldiers of World War II," Chronicling His Experience in WWII's First Black Infantry Combat Unit

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LOS ANGELES – On Sunday, July 12 at 5 pm in St. Eugene Parish Hall, the African American Catholic Center for Evangelization (AACCFE) will hold its next Dinner Speaker Series and book signing featuring Ivan J. Houston, author of the highly-anticipated new memoir, *Black Warriors: The Buffalo Soldiers of World War II* (iUniverse). Though Houston is one of the nation's African American business icons, *Black Warriors* is his riveting account of serving in WWII with the U.S. Army's segregated Black 92nd Infantry -- also known as the legendary Buffalo Soldiers – that became WWII's first African American Infantry Combat Unit in Europe. While the 92nd was profiled in Spike Lee's recent film, "Miracle at St. Anna," Houston hopes to expose even more people to the true story of the 92nd with *Black Warriors*. At the event, he will share his war experience, followed by a Q&A.

Released in this 65th anniversary year of D-Day and the combat infantry's first engagement of battle in August 1944, *Black Warriors* is the first book by Houston, who is the former Chairman/CEO of Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, one of the largest Black-owned businesses in the country. He is also renowned for his civic leadership (such as having chaired the L.A. Urban League and being President of the L.A. Human Relations Commission), and his business acumen (having sat on a myriad of corporate boards -- from other predominately Black-owned companies, such as Broadway Federal Bank to Fortune 500 entities, such as Kaiser Aluminum). Now with the book, he will also be renowned for something not too many knew – he is a decorated WWII veteran. In fact, Houston's father, Norman O. Houston, was one of the few Black officers in World War I, and has a residential park in Los Angeles named after him. His great grandfather, Benjamin F. Talbot, served in the Civil War, and his name is listed on the African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, DC. His great-great grandfather, Charles Dyde Hine, was a member of the British Monarchy's famed Life Guards. Therefore, in 1943, Houston, along with his brother, Norman B. Houston, became the fourth generation of his family in the armed forces when he voluntarily enlisted while a student at UC Berkeley.

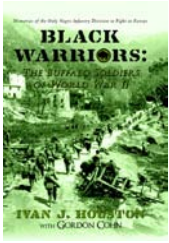
At 19, Houston was one of the youngest members of the 3rd Battalion of Combat Team 370 that had 4,000 men, and entered combat on August 23, 1944. On the enthralling pages of *Black Warriors*, that include WWII maps

(MORE)

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and archival photos, Houston reveals his personal journey as a Black infantryman and the 370th's odyssey as a Black infantry regiment. Based in Italy, the Combat Team's assignment was to cross the Arno River and break through the Germans' deeply fortified, "Gothic Line," which stretched 170 miles across Italy's "spine." This assignment countered how the U.S. Armed Forces had previously – and unjustly – relegated most of its Black military personnel to service units, in support of the combat forces, such as the Red Ball Express driving munitions to the front line. Eventually, the Tuskegee Airmen flying and defending their escort missions and the 92nd Infantry bravely and fiercely fighting on the ground to victory would defy that infamous relegation.

Most members of Combat Team 370 were African Americans from the South. Many of the junior officers were African American, but the senior officers were predominately white southerners. This made for tense situations, but despite that, Houston and his fellow 92nd soldiers were victorious in the end, defeating their German and Italian foes after nine months of fighting until Germany's May 1945 surrender. They were actually greeted with flowers, hugs and kisses by Italian citizens. Houston received a Purple Heart and a Combat Infantryman Badge.

Unfortunately, despite the victory, Houston and the over one million other African American men and women who served in WWII, still faced segregation and discrimination back in the United States. They had won the hearts and the minds of those in Italy, yet, could not get the same support from many of their fellow white U.S. citizens. Houston returned to UC Berkeley, eventually became a three-year letterman in track and field, and graduated in 1948 to begin an illustrious business career that spanned over 40 years. He is still a member of the *Military Order of the Purple Heart, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans.*

In 1948, President Truman finally banned segregation in the military, but segregation was not illegal nationwide until 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling. Civil rights were not legally protected nationwide until the 1964 Civil Rights Act – over twenty years after Houston and others served America with distinction.

While the country's made progress, it is important that people of all races – especially young people -- know how people of color contributed to the United States' victory over Hitler's army all those years ago, and to remember the bravery of the unsung heroes of the 92nd Division, who fought and gave their lives in defense of freedom...

The event begins at 5 pm on Sunday, July 12, 2009 at St. Eugene Parish Hall, at St. Eugene's Church, 9505 South Haas Ave., L.A, CA 90047 (ph.323-777-2106). Public parking is available in the lot behind the church. For further information on *Black Warriors: The Buffalo Soldiers of World War II* or on Mr. Houston, please email info@blackwarriorsbook.com or go to www.blackwarriorsbook.com .

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