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Color and Freedom: The Unsung Heroes of World War II

For nine months until the German surrender in May 1945, the Buffalo Soldiers fought the Nazis and the Italian Fascists with honor

LOS ANGELES – Now more than sixty years after the end of World War II, comes a story about the Negro soldier's contribution to America's victory over the Axis forces of Germany, Italy, and Japan in the great struggle to preserve Western civilization. ***Black Warriors: The Buffalo Soldiers of World War II*** (published by iUniverse) is a survivor's memoir about one segment of the U.S. military, the all-Negro 92nd Division of the U.S. Army, and its magnanimous efforts to defeat the Germans in Europe.

Author Ivan J. Houston was a 19-year-old member of 3rd Battalion in Combat Team 370 of the 92nd (Buffalo Soldier) Division that entered combat in August 1944. Now 83, this is Houston's first book. The 370th was an untested Negro infantry regiment in the segregated U.S. Army. The Combat Team's assignment was to cross the Arno River and break through the German's deeply fortified Gothic Line, which stretched 170 miles across the spine of Italy.

During World War II the U.S. armed forces relegated most Negroes to service units as drivers, cooks, and laborers in support of the combat forces, never intending to place them in direct combat. The 92nd Infantry Division was one of the few exceptions. For nine months until the German surrender in May 1945, the Buffalo Soldiers fought the Nazis and the Italian Fascists, but suffered hundreds of casualties.

Combat Team 370 was comprised of 4,000 men, predominantly southern Negroes of modest education. The team's junior officers were college-educated Negroes, but all senior officers were mostly white southerners. The racism the Buffalo Soldiers endured has been documented in U.S. military archives.

When Houston and his fellow Negro GIs returned home, they encountered the same segregation and discrimination that had existed since the end of the Civil War. They had won the hearts and the minds of those in Italy, yet, returning Negro soldiers-- even those with college degrees-- could not get jobs back in the states. Houston, a three-year letterman in track and field at the University of California at Berkeley, was given an apartment with Negro shipyard workers several miles from the campus.

America is clearly a different place now. But it is important that young people of all races know how people of color contributed to America's victory over the Axis forces all those years ago, and remember the bravery of the unsung men of the 92nd Division who fought and gave their lives in defense of freedom. For more information, visit www.blackwarriorsbook.com.

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