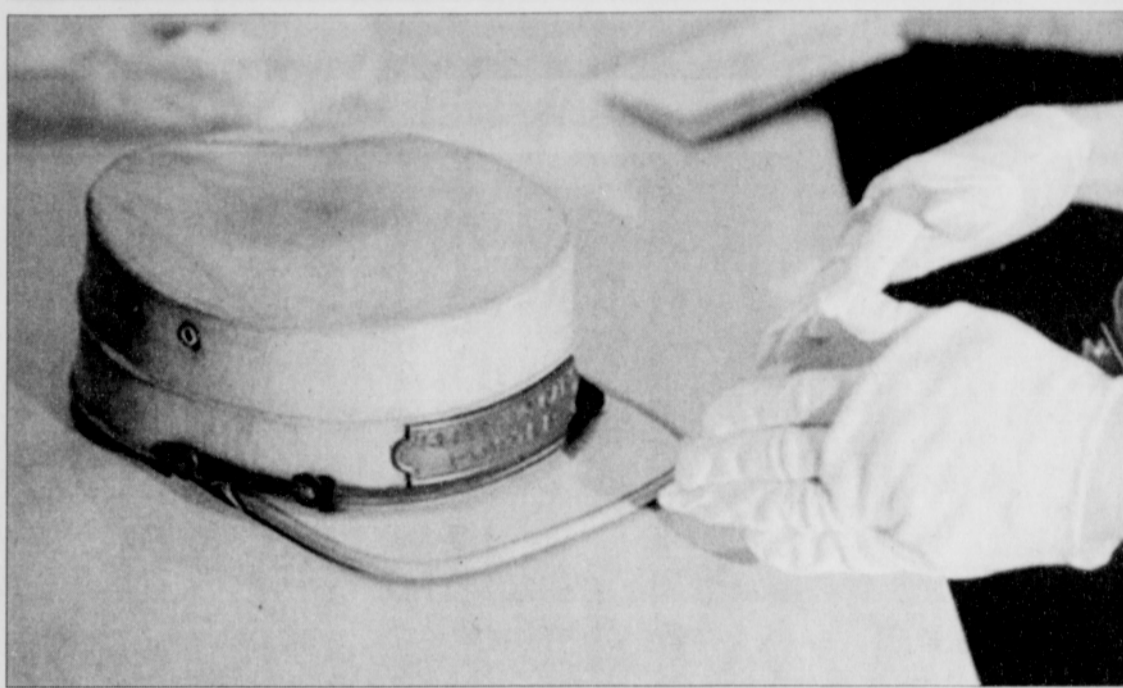


BLACK HISTORY MONTH



A Pullman railroad porter hat dating from the 1930s is among the historical items from more than 130 individuals as part of a program called 'Save our African American Treasures.' (AP Photo)

Save Your History, Museum Urges Treasures have cultural, historical significance

(AP) -- Evelyn Johnson's father has never liked talking about his time in the Army during World War II. He was angry that black servicemen like him fought for freedom overseas only to come home to face discrimination, she says.

Johnson, however, now has a window into her father's experiences, having recently inherited about 30 letters he wrote his mother while stationed in North Africa and Italy.

Johnson recently learned how to best preserve the box full of letters — written in pencil, still folded in their original envelopes — at an event organized by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture collaboration with the Chicago Public Library.

The program was the first in a Smithsonian series called "Save Our African American Treasures." Simi-

lar events are planned for Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York City and Washington, D.C.

Attendees also were able to meet one-on-one with conservation experts, similar to the PBS show "Antiques Roadshow." However, the emphasis was not on financial worth, but cultural and historical significance.

Wearing cotton gloves, the conservation experts dispensed advice on preserving more than 100 items.

Some of the items included a cap worn by a sleeping-car porter working for the Pullman Co. and a gold-colored pin given to a top saleswoman by Madam C.J. Walker, a black entrepreneur who built a fortune by developing and marketing hair care and beauty products to African-American women in the early 1900s.

"Some people say you can never

be too rich or too thin. I say you can never have too much tissue paper," Mary Ballard, a senior Smithsonian textiles conservator, said as she stuffed acid-free paper into the Pullman cap.

Lonnie Bunch III, the museum's founding director, said he came up with the idea for the event while thinking about how the museum will build its collection. The museum, created by an act of Congress in 2003, is to be built on a site on the National Mall in Washington, with construction expected to be completed in 2015.

"I began to think about, 'How do we identify that wonderful history that's still in people's homes?' As I thought about that, I realized that the history that's there — Grandma's quilt and Aunt Sarah's shawl — is

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MLK: Has the Dream Become a Nightmare?

Cosby challenges families, communities

The historic words spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the steps of the Washington, D.C. Lincoln Memorial in 1963 brilliantly and eloquently expressed his dream of love, peace, and justice transforming a suffering world filled with hate, violence, and injustice.

If Dr. King were alive today he would see that America has changed in deep and profound ways. He would see that in the South people routinely elect black police chiefs, mayors, state lawmakers, and congressmen. He would see that overt bigotry, once considered the norm, is no longer tolerated by mainstream society. He would watch this year's political race and see that a black man is a serious contender to win the Democratic nomination for president of the United States.

Dr. King would also see that millions of blacks continue to fall short of the dream.

This point is brilliantly outlined by one of America's most beloved cultural icons Bill Cosby and Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School in their book, *Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors*.

Cosby and Poussaint stress the need for African Americans to never give up the struggle to eliminate racism and classism in our society. At the same time people need to step up and begin building communities where 50 percent high-school drop-out rates, teen pregnancies, and ignoring their responsibilities as parents becomes the exception rather than the rule.

"Dr. King's dream was that his

four little children 'will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.' He was talking about children advancing to become strong, beautiful people -- not abandoned by their parents," writes Cosby and Poussaint.



Bill Cosby



Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint

"Not drug addicted, not irresponsible."

Come on People is built around the themes of Cosby's popular call-out sessions, in which he has challenged people in towns and cities across America to reclaim and restore their families and communities.

Cosby and Poussaint share their vision for strengthening America by addressing the crisis of people frozen in feelings of low self-esteem, abandonment, anger, fearfulness, sadness, and feelings of being used, undefended, and unprotected. By addressing these issues and providing tools to deal with them, Cosby and Poussaint help empower people to make the daunting transition from victims to victors.

At times challenging, at times inspirational, the book provides real-life examples of the problems plaguing communities throughout America and the time-tested solutions that can help turn things around.

Suffused with humor and moral clarity, *Come on People* challenges readers to engage in political activism, take their neighborhoods back, become purposeful and effective parents, take care of their physical and emotional health, encourage their families toward higher education and think entrepreneurially about employment and economic advancement.



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Photo by Mark Armstrong

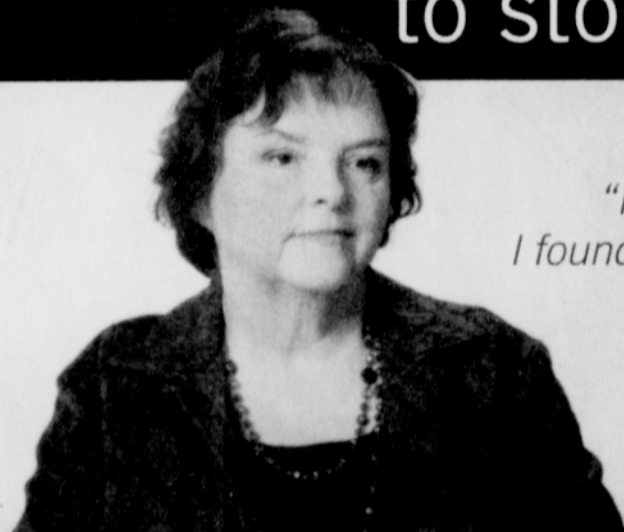
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