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Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair
Opens March 16, 2013

CHICAGO (January 7, 2013) - The **Chicago History Museum** presents *Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair* a story of power, vision, and innovation told through the legacy of **Eunice W. Johnson**, Chicago's Johnson Publishing Company, and the prism of iconic fashion from **Yves St. Laurent, Christian Dior, Oscar de la Renta, Pierre Cardin, Emanuel Ungaro**, and **Patrick Kelly** among others. The exhibition will be open at the Chicago History Museum **March 16, 2013 through January 5, 2014**.

The show will include priceless garments collected over the fashion show's 50-year history. This world-renown show redefined the concept of American beauty. It was the first to showcase the fashion and beauty sense of African American women.

"The Ebony Fashion Fair legacy represents an important part of the rich African American cultural experience in America and I am extremely excited that the Chicago History Museum is bringing my mother's vision to life," said Linda Johnson Rice, chairman, Johnson Publishing Company. "My mother often spoke about the importance of African American women feeling beautiful."

The 7,000 sq. ft. exhibition will feature over 60 garments from the *Ebony Fashion Fair* collection; haute couture significant to late 20th century fashion including statement pieces donned by African American women who at the time were not deemed the standard of beauty. The exhibition will include works from the icons of fashion including **Oscar de la Renta, Christian Dior, Stephen Burrows, Yves Saint Laurent, Patrick Kelly**, and **Christian Lacroix** among others.

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“Our exhibition on the Ebony Fashion Fair show offers an unprecedented opportunity to showcase how fashion became a vehicle for African American empowerment, pride, and achievement,” states Gary T. Johnson, president, Chicago History Museum. “The Museum is proud to play a major role in telling this story and sharing with the public the opportunity to be inspired by Eunice Johnson’s vision and life, and to understand the legacy of the show.”

At the inception of the show, Mrs. Johnson traveled to Europe to buy clothes, but was turned away by designers who thought if their designs were worn by African American women White women would not value them. The exhibition will examine how, despite their reluctance, Mrs. Johnson became one of the first to buy at French fashion houses and as time progressed would travel abroad annually to purchase 200 complete ensembles to feature in *Ebony Fashion Fair* show’s presentation. Mrs. Johnson had an eye for the undiscovered, amassing a collection of future fashion greats before they were world-renowned including **Valentino Garavani**, **Roberto Cavalli**, and **Pierre Cardin**.

For some visitors, the exhibition will be an introduction to the fashion show, and its charitable heritage—the show donated more than \$55 million dollars to African American organizations.

The Chicago History Museum boasts one of the largest and richest fashion collection in the world, making it the ideal venue to re-launch the embodiment of what *Ebony Fashion Fair* show represented. Exhibition curator **Joy Bivins** is working closely with The Johnson Publishing Company to collect the stories from past Ebony Fashion Fair shows in an attempt to recreate some of the same elements in the exhibition. The exhibition will prove the significant impact Johnson Publishing Company and *Ebony Fashion Fair* show has on American culture.

Chicago**History**Museum

Exelon is the local presenting sponsor for the *Ebony Fashion Fair* show exhibition, with additional support from the Costume Council of the Chicago History Museum.

More detailed information and images are available upon request.

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The **Chicago History Museum**, a major museum and research center for Chicago and American history, is located at 1601 N. Clark Street. The Museum can be reached by CTA buses 11, 22, 36, 72, 73, 151, and 156. Parking is conveniently located one block north of the Museum at Clark and LaSalle Streets (enter on Stockton Drive). Admission to the Museum is \$14 adults with audio tour, \$12 seniors/students with audio tour, free for children 12 years and younger. Please call 312.642.4600 or visit us at www.chicagohistory.org. The Chicago History Museum is affiliated with the Chicago Historical Society and acknowledges the Chicago Park District's generous support of all the Museum's activities.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Nicholas Glenn | Communications Coordinator | 312- 799-2161

glenn@chicagohistory.org