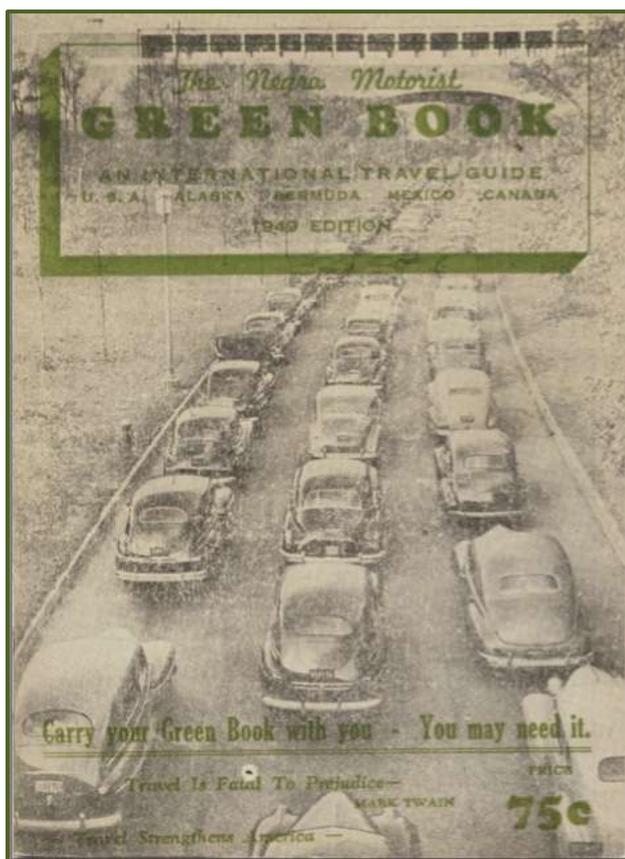


The Award Winning

Jimmy Carter Library & Museum

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Curriculum Guide: The President's Travels



Unit 3 of 19:

The Negro Motorist Green Book

THE NEGRO MOTORIST GREEN BOOK

An International Travel Guide

Lesson Summary

Many people associate segregation in the United States with the South. However, African Americans faced segregation, humiliation, danger, and hardship in many areas of the United States during the years of legal segregation. *The Negro Motorist Green Book* was written by Harlem postal worker and civic leader Victor H. Green, and was published from 1936 to 1964. As Americans took to the highways in their new cars to see the world, African Americans were among them. This guide was published in response to many acts of humiliation and violence that were prevalent in places that were strongholds of segregation. The book was a guide to places that would provide services and accommodations to African Americans when they traveled. Students will use a digital copy of the Green Book in this lesson to explore the geography of segregation.

Lesson Background

The southern region of the United States of America suffered under the system of legal segregation, from the post Civil War Reconstruction years until the triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Under the system of legally mandated segregation, whites and blacks had to adhere to a strict and, for blacks, demoralizing, social code of conduct. This social code was legalized. Violators of these laws, also called Jim Crow laws, were swiftly and brutally punished. Punishment, for both blacks and whites, was severe.

THE GREEN BOOK

“There will be a day sometime in the near future when this guide will not have to be published. That is when we as a race will have equal opportunities and privileges in the United States.”

-Victor H. Green



Quote is from the introduction to the Green Book. (Photo links to digital copy)

Enduring Understandings and Themes

1. Students will understand that segregation happened all over the United States and not just in the South.
2. Students will understand that there were often no services or amenities available to African Americans in many communities in the United States.
3. Cultural traditions such as finding friends and relatives to stay with when out of town, rather than hotels and commercial services, have origins in cultural experiences such as segregation.

However, blacks received the harshest punishments, which included physical assault, and often death at the hands of white law enforcement officials. Whites that violated these laws were ostracized, assaulted, and sometimes killed. Their businesses were boycotted, and sometimes destroyed. The Negro Motorist Green Book was necessary to assist African Americans in finding safe accommodations while traveling throughout the United States. Although all states did not have legally mandated segregation, traveling to these states was often dangerous for African Americans. Law enforcement officials often enforced social codes of conduct that kept blacks and whites separate. The Green Book provided African Americans with a way to plan a trip and ensure that shelter, meals, auto services, and any other needed service would be available to them while they traveled. Although segregation was common around the United States, and legally mandated in the South, there were often no services or businesses available to African Americans. Legal restrictions on black businesses in terms of hours and services that could be provided, and the inability to patronize white only businesses, often left African Americans without recourse when traveling.

Segregation and the Carters

Jimmy Carter grew up in segregated Plains, GA, with parents that held differing views on the system of segregation in the South. His father Earl Carter was a strict supporter of segregation of the races, whereas his mother Lillian refused to abide by the code of segregation¹. Growing up in a segregated world in a household with opposing viewpoints on segregation gave Jimmy Carter his unique ability to understand diverse points of view. In 1958, Jimmy Carter was asked to join The White Citizens Council in Plains, GA. The group's purpose was to maintain segregation throughout the South. Jimmy Carter was the only white man in Plains, GA to refuse membership in the organization².

Standards

Grade 5

SS2H1 The student will read about and describe the lives of historical figures in Georgia history.

- a. Identify the contributions made by these historic figures: ...Martin Luther King, Jr. (civil rights); Jimmy Carter (leadership and human rights).
- b. Describe how everyday life of these historical figures is similar to and different from everyday life in the present (food, clothing, homes, transportation, communication, recreation, rights, and freedoms).

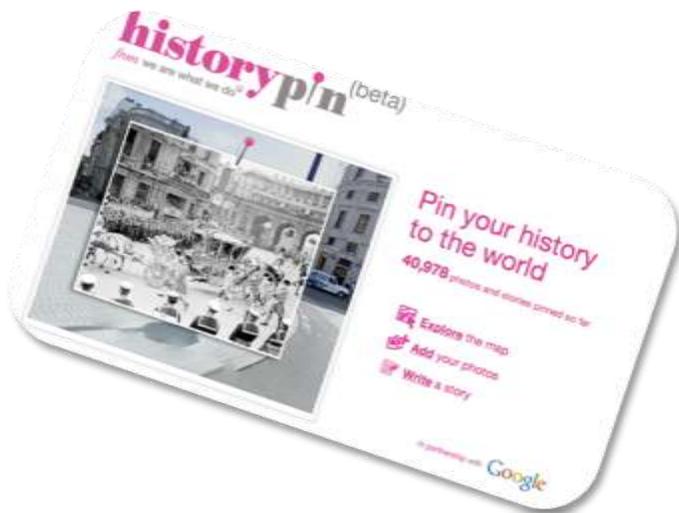
Grade 8

SS5H8 The student will describe the importance of key people, events, and developments between 1950-1975.

- b. Explain the key events and people of the Civil Rights movement; include Brown v. Board of Education (1954), Montgomery Bus Boycott, the March on Washington, Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act, and civil rights activities of Thurgood Marshall, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Activities

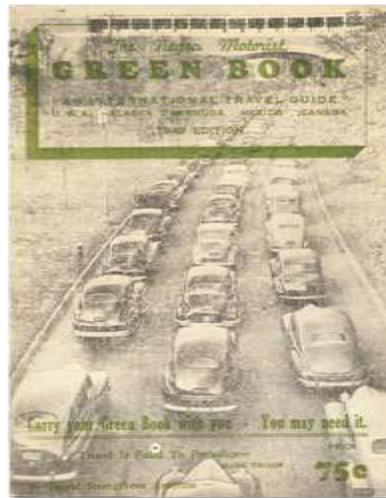
1. Have students examine a copy of the Green Book available on the CD accompanying this lesson and available for download at the sites listed in the references section of this lesson plan. Have them plan a road trip using the Green Book, and complete the lesson discussion questions as a class.
2. Have students locate the addresses of places listed in the Green Book on the History Pin site, and write about the important history of the Green Book, and the historic landmark that they are listing as having once been located at that address. Students will be contributing to the documentation of African American history.
3. Students can write journal entries about what it would feel like to live and travel during segregation.



History Pin is a site that will allow students to map historic landmarks, and contribute to the available historic information about African American history in Atlanta.



Carter boyhood friends, Willis and Earnest Wright



The Green Book

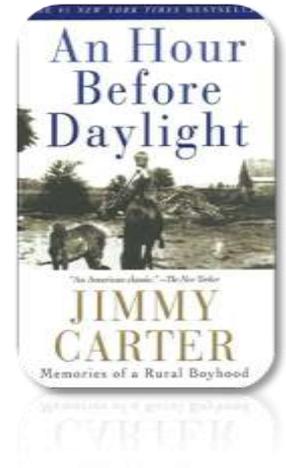
LESSON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What cities did you travel to and from?
2. What route did you take?
3. Was the trip determined in whole or in part by the cities with services and amenities available to African American motorists? If so, explain.
4. How did you feel about traveling with the limitations facing African Americans?
5. What states and cities are located in the Green Book copy that you viewed?
6. Were you surprised to find certain cities and states listed? Why or why not?
7. What did “separate but equal” mean?
8. Were things separate but equal” during segregation?
9. If people were equal, why was segregation needed?
10. How did segregation hurt African Americans?
11. Did segregation harm white people?
12. Did segregation harm the nation as a whole? The South?
13. Why do you think segregation was supported by so many people, and in so many communities?
14. Do you think segregation is still a problem today in some parts of the United States? Why or why not? If so, in which communities and why?

References

For more information, read *An Hour Before Daylight* by Jimmy Carter.

This book chronicles his life growing up during the Great Depression in segregated Plains, GA.



Links to Articles about the Green Book:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/23/books/23green.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/11/AR2010091105358.html>

http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/Negro_motorist_green_bk.htm

(Digital copy of the Green Book available for download)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_H._Green (a digital copy is available for download here)

<http://harlemworldblog.wordpress.com/2011/01/07/the-negro-motorist-green-book-1949/>

(a digital copy is available for download here)

<http://jalopnik.com/#!5735788/the-guide-that-helped-black-motorists-drive-around-jim-crow>

(Henry Ford Museum copy of the book available for download here)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/23/books/23green.html>

Children's story about the Green Book:

Ruth and the Green Book <http://www.amazon.com/Ruth-Green-Calvin-Alexander-Ramsey/dp/0761352554>

Documented Rights National Archives Exhibit:

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/section5/>

Brown vs. Board of Education:

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/brown-versus-board-education/gallery.html>

Heart of Atlanta Motel:

<http://www.atlantatimemachine.com/downtown/heartofatl.htm>

Heart of Atlanta Motel case:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0379_0241_ZC.html

Footnotes

1. Information taken from *American President: An Online Reference Resource; Jimmy Carter: Life Before the Presidency*, retrieved on 4/29/11 from <http://millercenter.org/president/carter/essays/biography/2>
2. Information taken from *American Experience: Jimmy Carter*, retrieved on 4/29/11 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography/carter-bio/>

*Photos courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum

*History Pin photo from History Pin website