



Informative and Explanatory Writing

On Demand

Teacher Directions:

The texts provide the information needed to address the prompt, and students should independently read the texts carefully before writing. Encourage students to refer back to the text while writing and to take notes, and to markup the text as much as is helpful to them.

Students should be given three sessions for the prompt. Allow approximately 45 minutes for each, but the prompt should not be strictly timed. Students should be given as much time as needed to plan, write, and proofread.

The writing must be done without help, but students may have access to personal dictionaries, or any other resources to support spelling and mechanics that they are accustomed to using while writing.

Be sure students have paper to take notes or do whatever pre-planning they might choose to do. If students are writing by hand, provide lined paper from your classroom for writing. If they are using a word processor, make sure they save their work so it can be accessed the next day.

This will be first draft writing, but encourage students to proofread and correct any errors they find.

Student Activity

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different - or not.

The Jim Crow era, in the United States, was one of these events. The segregation and disenfranchisement laws known as "Jim Crow" represented a formal, codified system of racial apartheid that dominated the American South for three quarters of a century beginning in the 1890s.

You are going to read four texts about the Jim Crow era: a Freedom Rider article on what Jim Crow was, a poem by Countee Cullen called "Incident," a letter from Frederick Douglass to an unknown recipient in Washington D.C., and a small excerpt from an essay on *The Green Book*.

As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Jim Crow seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it. Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did Jim Crow have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Student Activity (cont)

Remember, a good informational essay:

Has a clear introduction

States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully

Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence

Concludes effectively

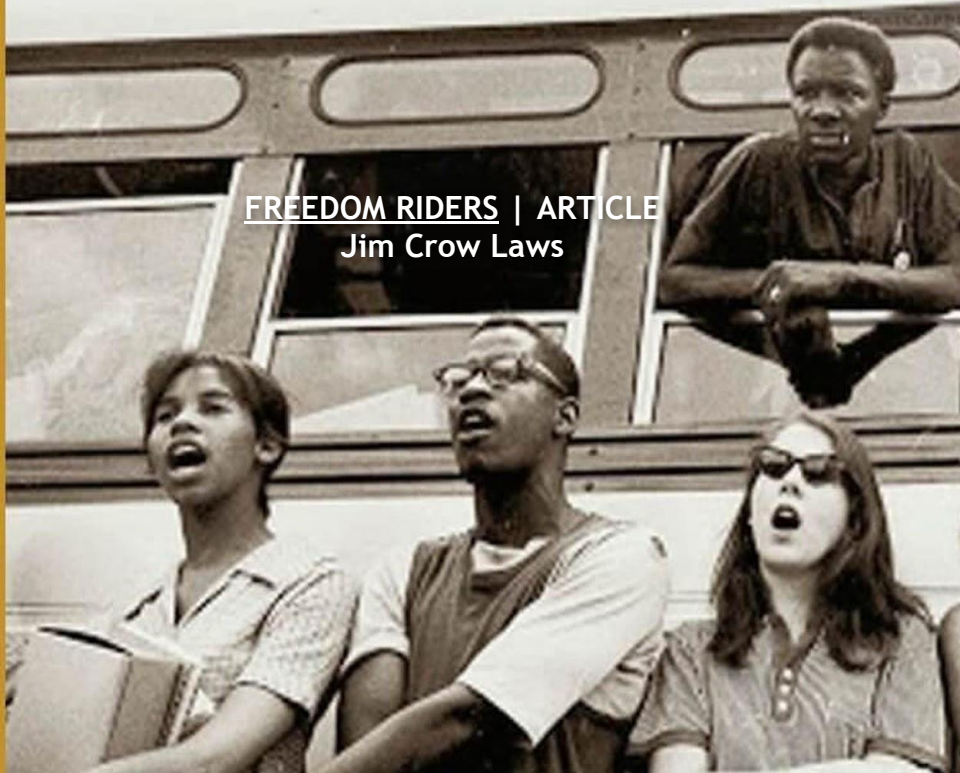
Uses precise language

Shows control over conventions

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

FREEDOM

FREEDOM RIDERS | ARTICLE Jim Crow Laws

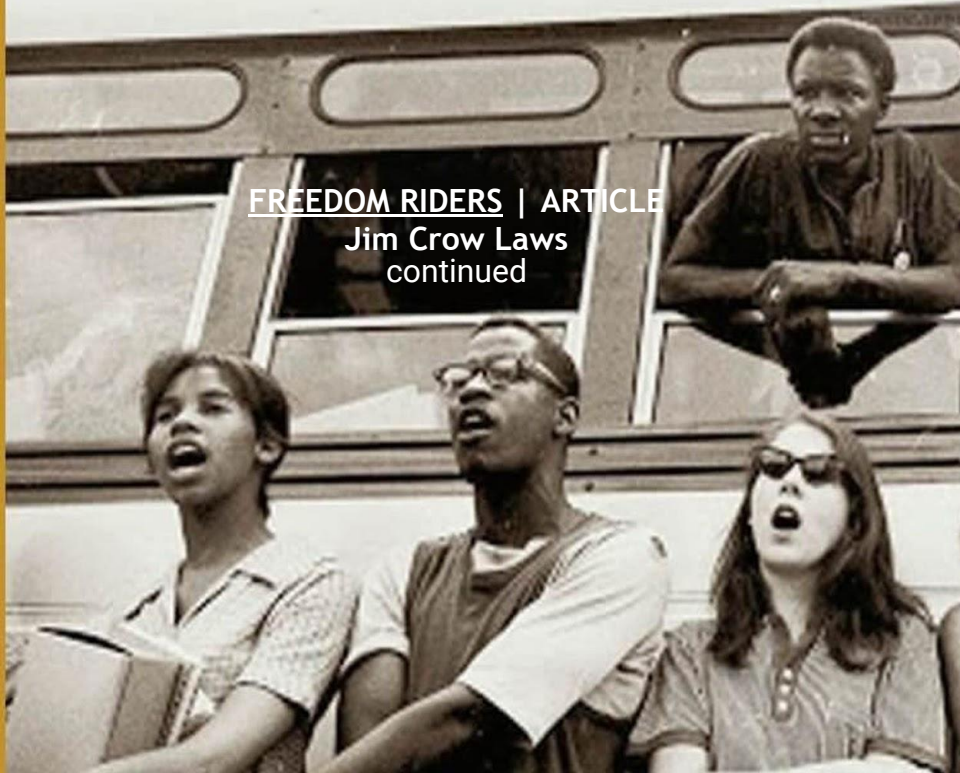


The segregation and disenfranchisement laws known as "Jim Crow" represented a formal, codified system of racial apartheid that dominated the American South for three quarters of a century beginning in the 1890s. The laws affected almost every aspect of daily life, mandating segregation of schools, parks, libraries, drinking fountains, restrooms, buses, trains, and restaurants. "Whites Only" and "Colored" signs were constant reminders of the enforced racial order.

In legal theory, blacks received "separate but equal" treatment under the law — in actuality, public facilities for blacks were nearly always inferior to those for whites, when they existed at all. In addition, blacks were systematically denied the right to vote in most of the rural South through the selective application of literacy tests and other racially motivated criteria.

FREEDOM

FREEDOM RIDERS | ARTICLE Jim Crow Laws continued



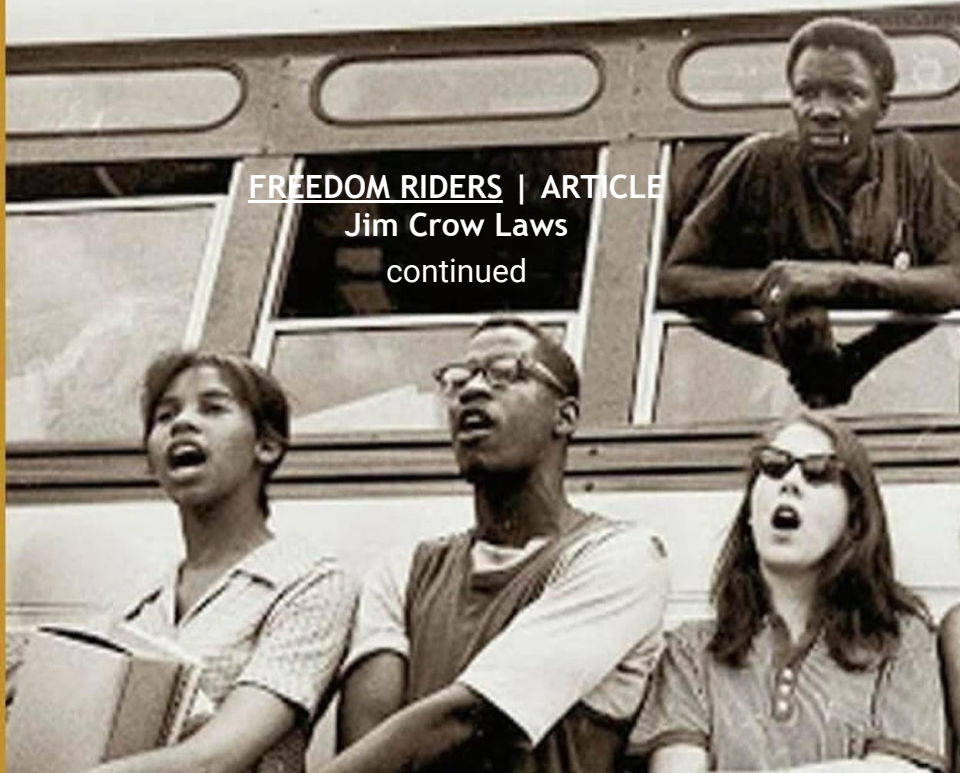
The Jim Crow system was upheld by local government officials and reinforced by acts of terror perpetrated by Vigilantes. In 1896, the Supreme Court established the doctrine of separate but equal in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, after a black man in New Orleans attempted to sit in a whites-only railway car.

In 1908, journalist Ray Stannard Baker observed that "no other point of race contact is so much and so bitterly discussed among Negroes as the Jim Crow car." As bus travel became widespread in the South over the first half of the 20th century, it followed the same pattern.

"Travel in the segregated South for black people was humiliating," recalled Diane Nash in her interview for *Freedom Riders*. "The very fact that there were separate facilities was to say to black people and white people that blacks were so subhuman and so inferior that we could not even use the public facilities that white people used."

FREEDOM

FREEDOM RIDERS | ARTICLE
Jim Crow Laws
continued



Transit was a core component of segregation in the South, as the 1947 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) pamphlet and Bayard Rustin song, "You Don't Have to Ride Jim Crow" attests. Keeping whites and blacks from sitting together on a bus, train, or trolley car might seem insignificant, but it was one more link in a system of segregation that had to be defended at all times — lest it collapse. Thus transit was a logical point of attack for the foes of segregation, in the courtroom and on the buses themselves.

It would take several decades of legal action and months of nonviolent direct action before these efforts achieved their intended result.

Incident

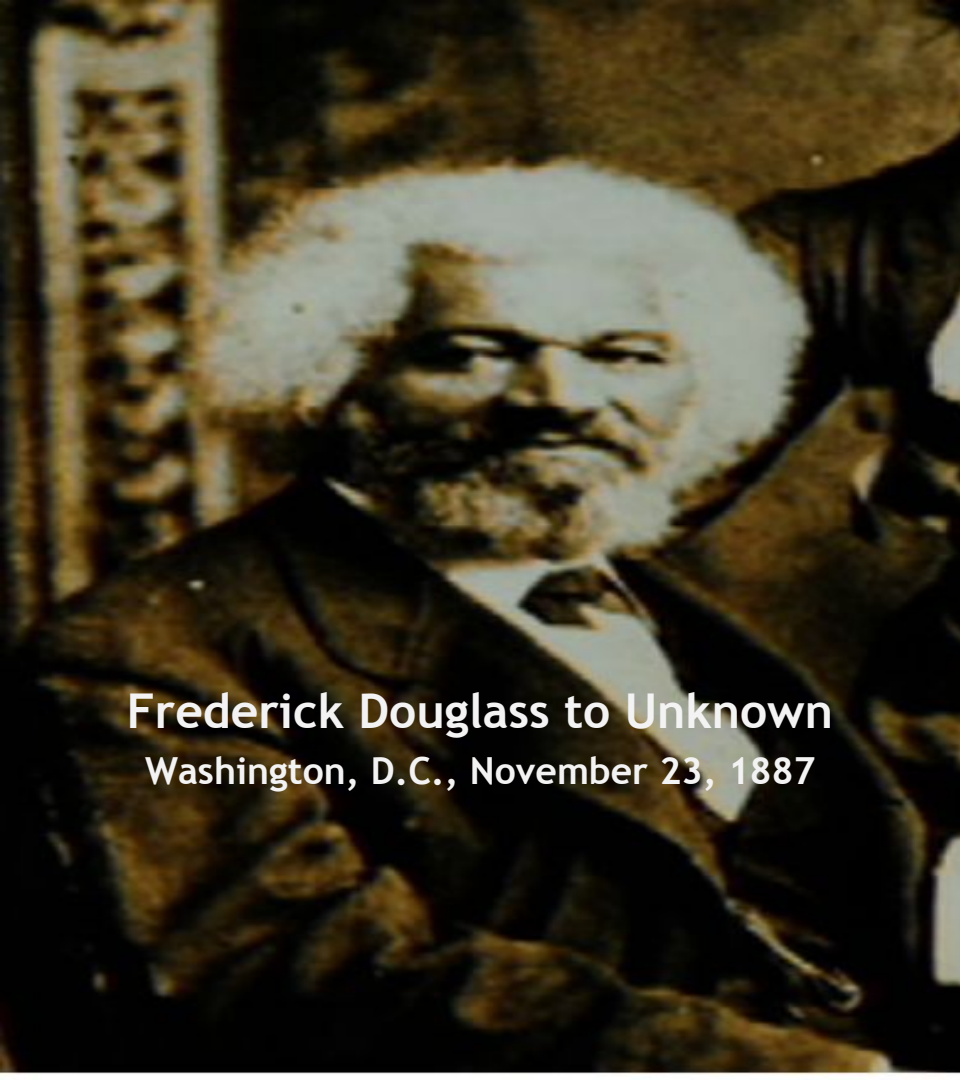
Countee Cullen

Incident

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee;
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

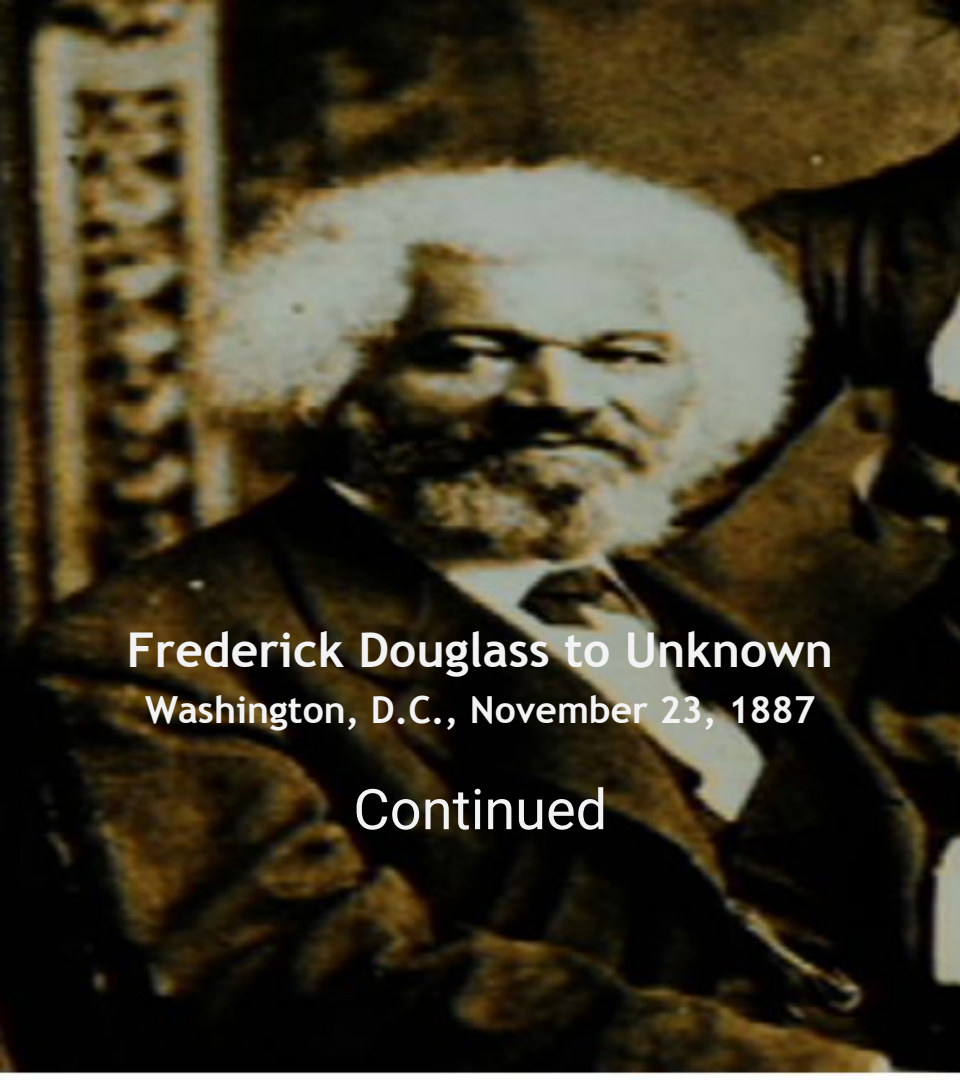
I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
—— That's all that I remember.



Frederick Douglass to Unknown
Washington, D.C., November 23, 1887

My dear sir:

Pardon delay - answer to your letter made careful enquiry necessary. From all I can learn colored Lawyers are admitted to practice in Southern Courts, and I am very glad to admit the fact - for it implies a wonderful revolution in the public sentiment of the Southern States. I have not yet learned what are the inequalities between the races as to school privileges at the south - In some of the states the time allotted to colored schools is less than that allowed to whites. And I have heard and believe that in none of the states are the teachers of colored Schools as well paid as the teachers of White Schools. My own observation has been that white teachers of Colored schools in the southern states, show but little interest in their pupils. This is not strange, since they [2] have been selected as teachers more because of their necessities, than from any interests they have shown in the progress and elevation of the colored race. [struck: bu] I say this not of all, but of those in Virginia for instance who have come under my observation.



Frederick Douglass to Unknown

Washington, D.C., November 23, 1887

Continued

In Kentucky I believe so far as the law is concerned equal advantages are extended to colored children for Education, and the Same may be true of other states. I think the Bureau of Education will give you all the information you may require on this branch [3] of the subject of your enquiries, our wrongs are not so much now in written laws which all may see - but the hidden practices of a people who have not yet abandoned the idea of Mastery and dominion over their fellow man.

With great Respect

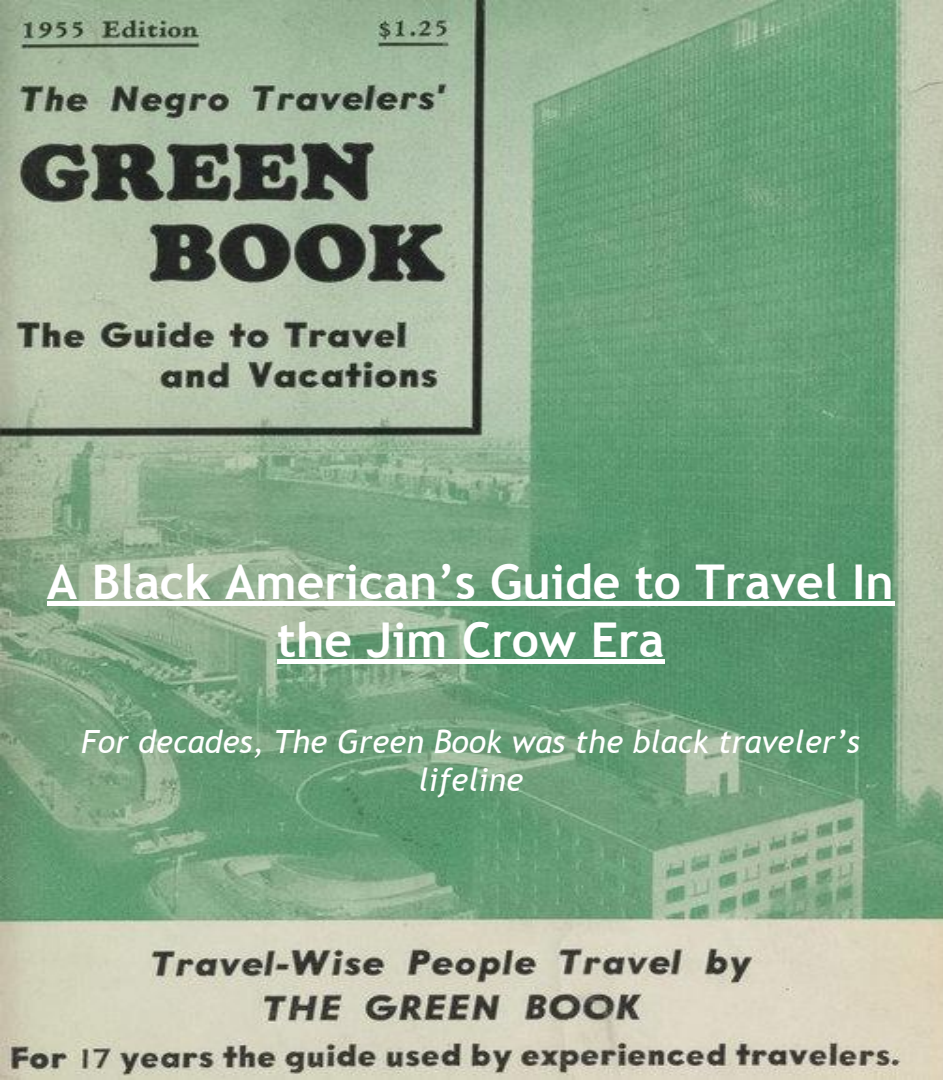
Yours truly

Frederick Douglass

Cedar Hill Anacostia D.C. Nov: 23. 1887

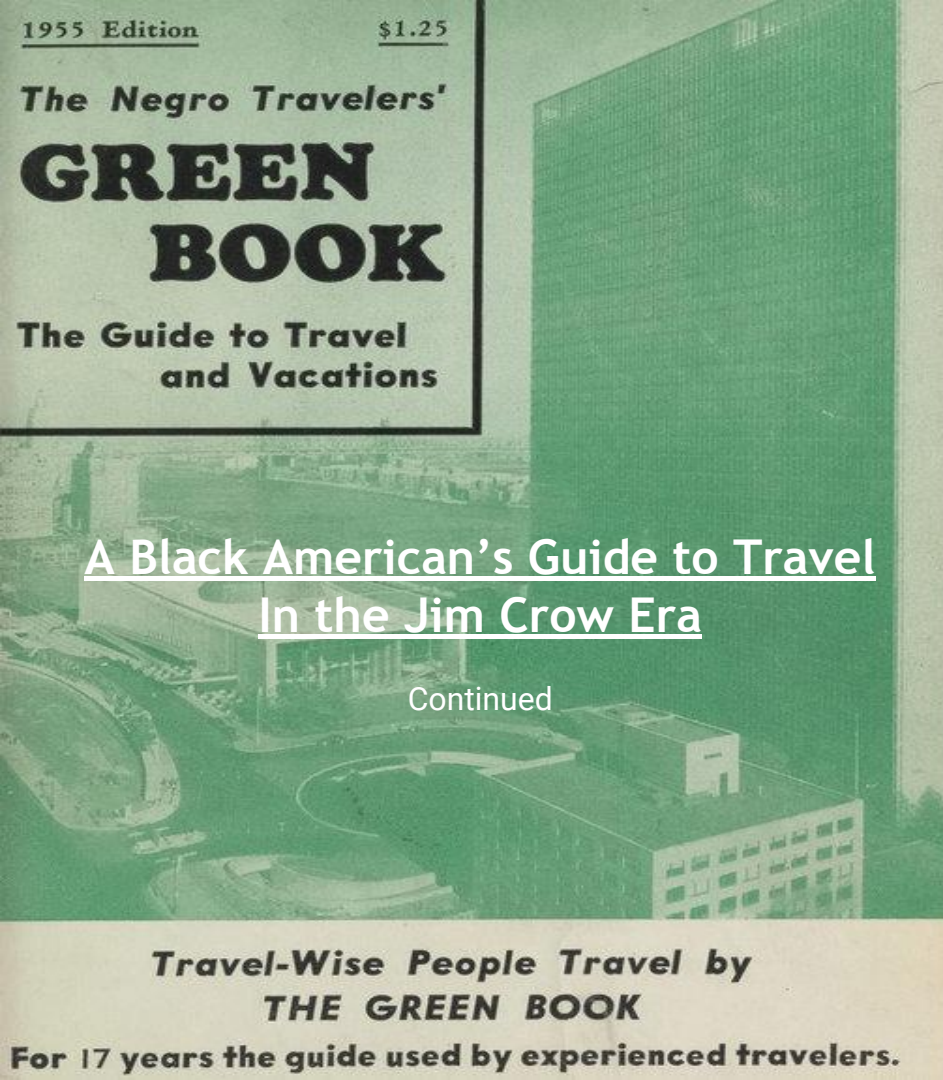
The Gilder Lehrman Collection GLC08992

www.gilderlehrman.org



For most travelers, a road trip is as easy as packing up luggage, hopping in the car and heading out into the great unknown. But for black Americans, things were never that simple. A series of groundbreaking travel guides from the Jim Crow era have been recently digitized, Gustavo Solis reports for DNAinfo, shedding light on the sobering dangers of segregated travel.

Invented by a postal service worker named Victor Hugo Green, The Green Book was published between 1936 and 1966 as a crucial resource for black travelers. Each guide vetted lists of businesses that would safely serve black travelers—a lifeline in an era of segregated hotels, businesses and "sundown towns" that banned black people. And this year, Solis writes, almost every Green Book has been digitized by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library.



A Black American's Guide to Travel In the Jim Crow Era

Continued

In an extensive background on the guides, CityLab's Tanvi Misra calls them a creative way for black travelers to "sidestep humiliation (or worse) on their journeys." At times charming and matter-of-fact, and other times chilling, the guides offered insight on everything from changing modes of transportation to the fears and anxieties that black travelers carried during the Jim Crow era.

By Erin Blakemore
SMITHSONIAN.COM
NOVEMBER 3, 2015

Resources and Citations

<https://www.jconline.com/story/news/local/2018/01/25/freedom-riders-tells-civil-rights-story/1058892001/>

<https://nuratiqahmohdisa.wordpress.com/2013/10/26/poetry-reflections-countee-cullens-incident/>

<https://www.history.com/news/frederick-douglass-book-omissions-autobiography>

“The Travelers’ Green Book,” 1960 edition. CreditCreditSchomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library