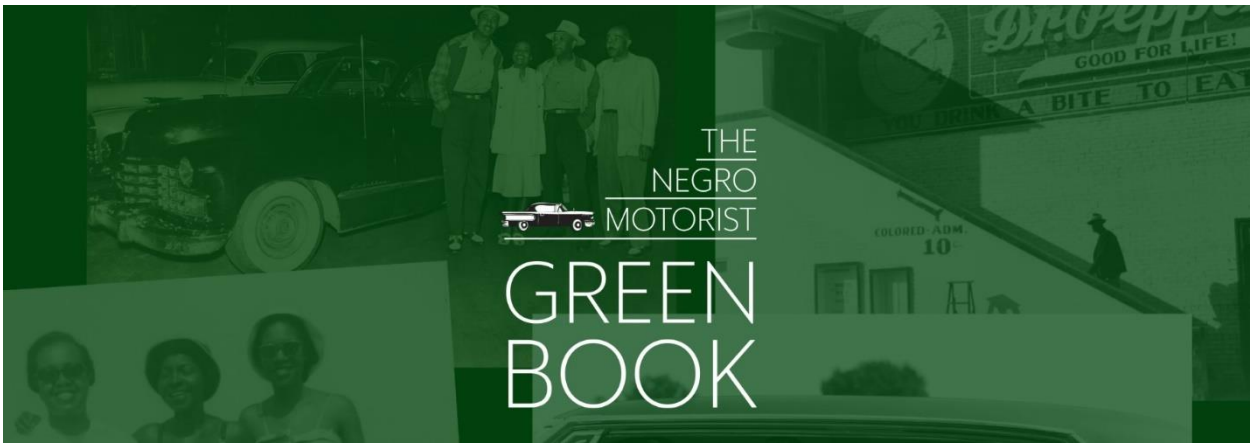
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STUDENT FIELD TRIPS

Dedicated Field Trip: includes Green Book (45 min) and Take A Stand (45 min; excludes Holographic Theater)

OVERVIEW

The Negro Motorist Green Book guided Black Americans to thousands of businesses for over thirty years, from 1936 to 1967. When the first *Green Book* was published, the American road was a metaphor for freedom. Freedom to change your present situation, freedom to determine your destiny, freedom to travel. Yet, in 20th century America, this same road was a dangerous place for Black citizens. The land was divided by segregation—through policy or through custom. For Black people, the prejudice was severe: a systematic effort to deny access to their basic human rights. Despite the indignity of government-backed and socially normalized oppression, the pain, the violence, and the disrespect, Black Americans created destinations and strategies that affirmed their humanity, their worth, their light—their lives, and took to the roads. It was done with ingenuity, with community, and with the help of a man named Victor Green, and his travel guide: *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. The *Green Book* was more than a travel guide. It was a shield, empowering Black people to explore their world with more dignity than fear, more elegance than embarrassment. It was a symbol of hope and resistance.

GOALS AND THEMES

The purpose of this tour is to facilitate visitors' exploration of the themes of resistance, ingenuity, hope, mobilization, and Upstanderism of the Black community in the face of racial oppression and segregation in the 1930s-60s United States.

EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Sanctuary/Harlem
Section 2: South
Section 3: North
Section 4: West
Section 5: Action

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	Field Trips
Introduction	5 minutes
Sanctuary/Harlem	7 minutes
South	7 minutes
North	7 minutes
West	7 minutes
Action	7 minutes
Take A Stand/Act of Art	45 minutes
Conclusions	5 minutes

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Questions:

- **When was the last time you went on a road trip? Where did you go?**
- **Where, why, and how often did you stop during your journey? [food/drinks, gas, bathroom, stretch legs, hotel, etc.]**
- **What do you know about racial segregation and the Jim Crow-era United States of the 1930s-60s?**
- **How do you think segregation may have affected travelers?**

Introduce the key message:
This is an exhibition about how Black Americans responded to discrimination, segregation, restrictions on their freedom of movement, and their struggle for human rights in the Jim Crow era. It addresses the danger of traveling for Black people, when they could be arrested and murdered for driving their own cars, and were not allowed to use gas stations, restrooms, restaurants, hotels, and other places of business. Rather than focus on victimhood, this exhibition highlights the ingenuity, creativity, resistance, and hope of Black Americans as they found ways in which to work within the oppressing system and ultimately create change.

What their experience will be like:
The exhibition is organized thematically and geographically. We will experience this story through photographs, postcards, clothing, and other original artifacts from *Green Book* sites. You will be given time during the tour to explore some of the galleries on your own.

Transition:

- **What do you know about the *Green Book*?**
- **Why would a Holocaust museum have an exhibition about the *Green Book*?**

SANCTUARY/HARLEM (7 minutes)
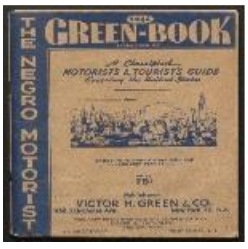


Original letter from Victor H. Green & Co., 1959

Questions to ask and discuss:

- **In the 1930s-1960s, how would someone start a nation-wide project like the *Green Book*?**
- **What challenges do you think Victor Green may have faced when developing the *Green Book*?**

Mr. Victor Hugo Green was a postal worker. He was an entrepreneur. He was an innovator. Victor Green lived in the famed Sugar Hill community in Harlem, New York. With a seventh-grade education, Green was a savvy businessman, exuding the epitome of class and dignity wherever he traveled. Alma, Victor Green's elegant wife, was from Richmond, Virginia—a city governed by people proud of its confederate past. Driving to Richmond for family gatherings meant encountering the racial segregationist realities of the South. It is possible that Victor drew inspiration for the guide from those road trips.

Until his retirement in 1952, Victor Green was a full-time letter carrier for the U.S. Post Office. When he created the *Green Book*, he enlisted his fellow postmen to make contact with Black entrepreneurs along their routes and invite them to list in the *Green Book* as well as sell the guide to travelers. Green's business approach was crafted in the footsteps of Black entrepreneur/innovator Madam C. J. Walker, the first American woman to become a self-made millionaire. From door-to-door sales to grassroots marketing tactics, Green was a part of a legacy of Black entrepreneurial success.



Copy of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1946

- **Why do you think the *Green Book* was so successful?**
- **Why would a business choose to advertise in the *Green Book*? What are some reasons they wouldn't?**
- **What do you think this small booklet symbolizes?**

Victor Green introduced his *Green Book* into a divided political moment, and as part of the rising tide of Black travel. It would go on to be the most popular and longest lasting travel guide of its kind, offering its readers safe havens and community as they traveled throughout America and beyond.

The guide included more than just yearly listings of Black-owned businesses. It included articles, humor pieces, travel tips, advertising, and eventually, political thought. Green was always looking for people to submit articles about their travels.

Since legal enslavement, financial independence has been critical to Black liberation in America. The *Green Book* would not have been possible if not for the community of self-sufficient, talented, and successful Black businesses that filled its pages. By the 1930s, Black Americans owned nearly 70,000 small businesses, and throughout its thirty-year history, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* embraced as many as it could.



Smalls' Paradise postcard, 1943

- **What images are on this postcard?**
- **What are those images communicating?**
- **Why would someone want to go to Smalls' Paradise?**

Green Book site Smalls' Paradise hosted some of the greatest names in entertainment. Rumor has it that Billie Holiday had her first audition there. Additionally, in the early 1940s, Malcolm X— Malcolm Little at the time—worked there as a waiter, serving stars such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Tallulah Bankhead, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Ethel Waters, and Joe Louis. Smalls' epitomized the rich, exciting modernity of many clubs. Even some of the most storied, like the Cotton Club, permitted Black entertainers like Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway, but not Black patrons.



Chauffeur's hat

- **What is this object?**
- **Who do you think might have owned or worn this hat?**

- **Why do you think a chauffeur's hat is included in this exhibition?**

Black Americans had many strategies in case of a dangerous encounter. For a traveling family, a chauffeur's hat could be a useful prop in an interaction with a racist police officer. If pulled over, Black men would invent stories claiming the car they drove was, in fact, their boss's. They were just a chauffeur, a servant. The woman and children? Just taking the boss's "help" home after a long day.

"Everybody had one . . . And you always kept it in the car." —Ron Burford, born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, during Jim Crow

Transition: As we move geographically through the U.S., consider the unique challenges that each area had (North, South, West). Consider the differences and also the similarities.

SOUTH (7 minutes)

Set Up/Context (2 minutes): Going south, Black families readied themselves for an inhospitable world. First, the absolute necessities: a full can of gas, and ice coolers with "shoebox lunches"—eggs, sandwiches, and fried chicken. Other essentials were unique to Black Americans: portable toilets, blankets that doubled as partitions for makeshift roadside restrooms, and spare fuses and light bulbs to avoid visiting unfriendly service stations for repairs. Packing the *Green Book* also became essential to avoid the worst of segregation.

Gallery Assignment (2 minutes): Assign students the following prompt and allow them to explore this section of the exhibition on their own, then report back to the rest of the group.

Prompt: Tell students to find a story about an individual/business that was featured in the *Green Book*. Have the students consider if and how the person/business resisted racism in the U.S. How did the person/business benefit from the *Green Book*, and what did the person/business provide for the Black community? Ask students to find a photo or object to tell the story of the person/business they selected and have students share the stories they found with the rest of the group.

Report back (3 minutes)

NORTH (7 minutes)

Set Up/Context (2 minutes): Many Black travelers had heard fantastic tales of the North: a land of respect and humanity not accessible in the southern states. Yet, those who left the South quickly learned that the practice of segregation was in full force throughout the country.

Though there was not the prevalence of the southern legal tradition of signs marked "colored" or "white" in the North, there were, in fact, many doors closed to Black people. Rare relief from constant discrimination did, however, exist in the North. There was the wealth of creativity in Harlem. There was the pulsing vibrancy of Chicago, and the booming business of Detroit. As Black Americans moved north to escape discrimination and seek greater opportunity, they established communities and found allies

wherever they landed. There were Black vacation resorts, white businesses that bucked segregation, and tourist homes that offered comfort and peace.

Gallery Assignment (2 minutes): Assign students the following prompt and allow them to explore this section of the exhibition on their own, then report back to the rest of the group.

Prompt: Tell students to find a story about an individual/business that was featured in the *Green Book*. Have the students consider if and how the person/business resisted against the racism in the U.S. How did the person/business benefit from the Green Book, and what did the person/business provide for the Black community? Ask students to find a photo or object to tell the story of the person/business they selected and have students share the stories they found with the rest of the group.

Report back (3 minutes)

WEST (7 minutes)

Set Up/Context (2 minutes): Through conquest, adventure, oppression, and opportunity, the West became an American symbol of new horizons and second chances. Black people traveled west to escape discrimination, seek economic opportunity, and for the chance to soak in the majesty of its otherworldly landscapes. However, the danger Black Americans faced traveling west could be just as treacherous as the dramatic surroundings.

In 1946, Nat King Cole recorded "Route 66," a song celebrating what became known as America's Highway. It symbolized freedom, prosperity, and the American Dream. Yet, the fantasy of "getting your kicks" on Route 66 – which started here in Chicago – was a dream reserved for white America. Half of the 89 counties on Route 66 were sundown towns, all-white communities that banned the presence of any Black person after dark, after the sun had set. Finding lodging, food, and a safe place to refuel could be a deadly gamble on Route 66.

There were so few places Black Americans could stay on Route 66 that Black drivers were getting into deadly accidents due to exhaustion. The *Albuquerque Tribune* reported on this in 1955, noting that the state police chief determined that one accident that took six lives had been caused by "speed and fatigue."

Green was dedicated to opening up more travel options for Black Americans; yet the West was a struggle. His is efforts to do so often bore no fruit, leaving the West with the smallest number of *Green Book* sites compared to other parts of the country.

Gallery Assignment (2 minutes) – assign students the following prompt and allow them to explore this section of the exhibition on their own, then report back to the rest of the group.

Prompt: Tell students to find a story about an individual/business that was featured in the *Green Book*. Have the students consider if and how the person/business resisted against the racism in the U.S. How did the person/business benefit from the Green Book, and what did the person/business provide for the

Black community? Ask students to find a photo or object to tell the story of the person/business they selected and have students share the stories they found with the rest of the group.

Report back (3 minutes)

ACTION (7 minutes)

In the *Green Book* we see a tangible manifestation of hope. The guide was fueled by a vision and a wish that seemed improbable: that Black people in America could experience dignity, comfort, and safety as they navigated their world.

In the long arc of Black American history, hope has always been unreasonable in the face of racism. Yet, at the same time, hope has been an essential tool of progress and accomplishment. As the civil rights movement dawned in the 1950s and 60s, the *Green Book* would reflect both the absurdity and necessity of a thing called hope.

The modern civil rights movement in America was an effort fueled by unrelenting hope. The Green Book listed some of the most significant locations central to the movement.

Without safe places to plan, strategize, debrief, and recuperate, civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 60s would have failed to push social justice forward in America. From hotels to beauty shops, these places became the headquarters for holding America accountable to its promise of liberty and justice for all.





Photo: Martin Luther King, Jr. outside Gaston Motel in 1963. Birmingham Police Department Surveillance Files.

- **Do you recognize anyone in this photo?**
- **What do you know about Martin Luther King?**
- **Describe the photo: where was it taken, what are the people in it doing, etc.**
- **Why do you think these individuals were at the *Green Book* site, the Gaston Motel?**
- **Why do you think the photo was taken?**

The A. G. Gaston Motel, named after its owner, was a *Green Book* site listed in Birmingham, Alabama. Gaston insisted that he could create a motel that was available to people traveling while Black. It served high-end clientele and was considered the best place for Black people to stay in the city. At the A. G. Gaston, you felt safe to congregate, eat, socialize, and strategize.

A. G. Gaston was a self-made millionaire and would become one of the most successful Black businessmen of the twentieth century. Though a conservative who thought the radicals of the civil rights movement were moving too fast, he was struck by the strength of the activists forged in the pacifist tool of non-violence and angered by the brutality of the tools of violence used to try to contain them.

He made his motel available to the activists at no cost.

Martin Luther King Jr. regularly stayed at A. G. Gaston's and held meetings in his "war room" to organize. It was here that King decided to go to jail to support the movement. During that incarceration in 1963, King wrote his influential "Letter from Birmingham Jail."





Photo: Nelson, Marvin, and Spurgeon Malden in the Malden Brothers Barber Shop

- **Where was this photo taken?**
- **Why do you think a barber shop might be important to the civil rights movement?**
- **What other types of spaces do you think might have been used in planning and organizing by the leaders of the civil rights movement? Why?**

The four-story Ben Moore Hotel was a popular *Green Book* listing in Montgomery, Alabama. The hotel was built in 1952, by M.F. Dinty Moore, a carpenter who was the son of a tenant farmer.

Before, during, and after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King and his inner circle held secret meetings on the roof of the Ben Moore Hotel. On the first floor, Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy, officials from the NAACP, and other civil rights leaders socialized in the Malden Brothers Barbershop.

Nelson Malden regularly cut Dr. Martin Luther King's hair at Malden Brothers Barbershop at the Ben Moore Hotel.

CHICAGO/CONCLUSION (5 minutes)

This section features a slide show of Green Book sites in Chicago, along with music by Black musicians who played at Chicago Green Book sites.

Point out the large quote on the wall: "The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us." —James Baldwin, *EBONY*, August, 1965

- **What does this quote mean to you?**
- **Is history only in the past?**
- **How do we carry history within us?**
- **What history do you carry within you?**
- **How does history inform our identities?**
- **If history is part of us, what responsibilities do we have regarding that history?**

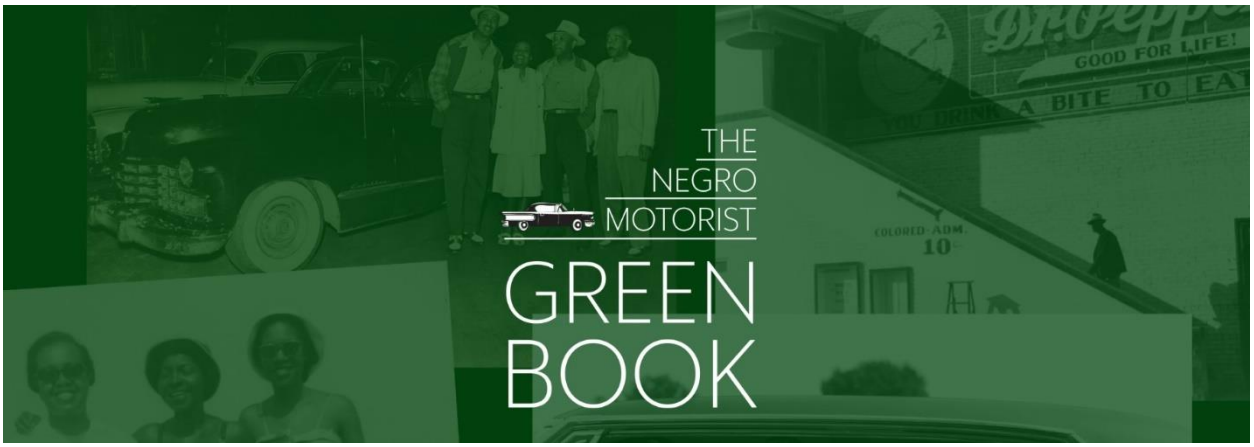
The *Green Book* was started by one person: Victor Green. It's possible that he drew inspiration for the guide from his road trips driving to Richmond for family gatherings, which meant encountering the racial segregationist realities of the South.

- **Have you encountered injustice in your life?**
- **Have you seen injustice occur against someone else?**
- **What are some creative ways to empower yourself and others who suffer from injustice?**
- **How can you use creativity, ingenuity, and hope to resist against an oppressive system?**

TAKE A STAND TRANSITION

This exhibition highlights human rights violations in the U.S. against Black people. It also focuses on the daring ingenuity of the Black community to creatively resist against the system that was oppressing them, empowering themselves and their community. Eventually the sites featured in the *Green Book* served as central places for strategizing and planning the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Next we'll learn more about human rights, explore contemporary social justice issues, encounter more Upstanders, and receive tools that each of us can use to create positive change.

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THE NEGRO MOTORIST GREEN BOOK DOCENT GUIDE

STUDENT FIELD TRIPS

20 minute tour – In Our Voices or Be an Upstander field trip segment

OVERVIEW

The Negro Motorist Green Book guided Black Americans to thousands of businesses for over thirty years, from 1936 to 1967. When the first *Green Book* was published, the American road was a metaphor for freedom. Freedom to change your present situation, freedom to determine your destiny, freedom to travel. Yet, in 20th century America, this same road was a dangerous place for Black citizens. The land was divided by segregation—through policy or through custom. For Black people, the prejudice was severe: a systematic effort to deny access to their basic human rights. Despite the indignity of government-backed and socially normalized oppression, the pain, the violence, and the disrespect, Black Americans created destinations and strategies that affirmed their humanity, their worth, their light—their lives, and took to the roads. It was done with ingenuity, with community, and with the help of a man named Victor Green, and his travel guide: *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. The *Green Book* was more than a travel guide. It was a shield, empowering Black people to explore their world with more dignity than fear, more elegance than embarrassment. It was a symbol of hope and resistance.

GOALS AND THEMES

The purpose of this tour is to facilitate visitors' exploration of the themes of resistance, ingenuity, hope, mobilization, and Upstanderism of the Black community in the face of racial oppression and segregation in the 1930s-60s United States.

EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Sanctuary/Harlem
Section 2: South
Section 3: North
Section 4: West

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Section 5: Action
Section 6: Chicago/Conclusion

Introduction & Sanctuary/Harlem	5 minutes
South or North	5 minutes
Action	5 minutes
Chicago/Conclusion	5 minutes

INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

Questions:

- **When was the last time you went on a road trip? Where did you go?**
- **Where, why, and how often did you stop during your journey? [food/drinks, gas, bathroom, stretch legs, hotel, etc.]**
- **What do you know about racial segregation and the Jim Crow-era United States of the 1930s-60s?**
- **How do you think segregation may have affected travelers?**
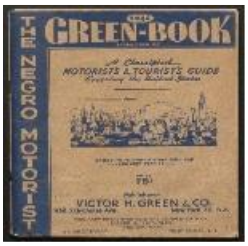
Introduce the key message:
This is an exhibition about how Black Americans responded to discrimination, segregation, restrictions on their freedom of movement, and their struggle for human rights in the Jim Crow era. It addresses the danger of traveling for Black people, when they could be arrested and murdered for driving their own cars, and were not allowed to use gas stations, restrooms, restaurants, hotels, and other places of business. Rather than focus on victimhood, this exhibition highlights the ingenuity, creativity, resistance, and hope of Black Americans as they found ways in which to work within the oppressing system and ultimately create change.

What their experience will be like:
The exhibition is organized thematically and geographically. We will experience this story through photographs, postcards, clothing, and other original artifacts from *Green Book* sites. You will be given time during the tour to explore some of the galleries on your own.

Transition:

- **What do you know about the *Green Book*?**
- **Why would a Holocaust museum have an exhibition about the *Green Book*?**

SANCTUARY/HARLEM (5 minutes)



Copy of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1946

- **Why do you think the *Green Book* was so successful?**
- **Why would a business choose to advertise in the *Green Book*? What are some reasons they wouldn't?**
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Victor Green introduced his *Green Book* into a divided political moment, and as part of the rising tide of Black travel. It would go on to be the most popular and longest lasting travel guide of its kind, offering its readers safe havens and community as they traveled throughout America and beyond.

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Chauffeur's hat

- **What is this object?**
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Black Americans had many strategies in case of a dangerous encounter. For a traveling family, a chauffeur's hat could be a useful prop in an interaction with a racist police officer. If pulled over, Black

men would invent stories claiming the car they drove was, in fact, their boss's. They were just a chauffeur, a servant. The woman and children? Just taking the boss's "help" home after a long day.

"Everybody had one . . . And you always kept it in the car." —Ron Burford, born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, during Jim Crow

Transition: The *Green Book* featured businesses all over the United States. The exhibition is arranged so that geographical areas get their own section. We are now going to explore the South/North. [You may choose based on availability of space.]

Option 1: SOUTH (5 minutes)

Set Up/Context (1 minute): Going south, Black families readied themselves for an inhospitable world. First, the absolute necessities: a full can of gas, and ice coolers with "shoebox lunches"—eggs, sandwiches, and fried chicken. Other essentials were unique to Black Americans: portable toilets, blankets that doubled as partitions for makeshift roadside restrooms, and spare fuses and light bulbs to avoid visiting unfriendly service stations for repairs. Packing the *Green Book* also became essential to avoid the worst of segregation.

Gallery Assignment (2 minutes): Assign students the following prompt and allow them to explore this section of the exhibition on their own, then report back to the rest of the group.

Prompt: Tell students to find a story about an individual/business that was featured in the *Green Book*. Have the students consider if and how the person/business resisted against the racism in the U.S. How did the person/business benefit from the *Green Book*, and what did the person/business provide for the Black community? Ask students to find a photo or object to tell the story of the person/business they selected and have students share the stories they found with the rest of the group.

Report back (2 minutes)

Option 2: NORTH (5 minutes)

Set Up/Context (1 minute): Many Black travelers had heard fantastic tales of the North: a land of respect and humanity not accessible in the southern states. Yet, those who left the South quickly learned that the practice of segregation was in full force throughout the country.

Though there was not the prevalence of the southern legal tradition of signs marked "colored" or "white" in the North, there were, in fact, many doors closed to Black people. Rare relief from constant discrimination did, however, exist in the North. There was the wealth of creativity in Harlem. There was the pulsing vibrancy of Chicago, and the booming business of Detroit. As Black Americans moved north to escape discrimination and seek greater opportunity, they established communities and found allies wherever they landed. There were Black vacation resorts, white businesses that bucked segregation, and tourist homes that offered comfort and peace.

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Report back (2 minutes)

ACTION (5 minutes)

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In the long arc of Black American history, hope has always been unreasonable in the face of racism. Yet, at the same time, hope has been an essential tool of progress and accomplishment. As the civil rights movement dawned in the 1950s and 60s, the *Green Book* would reflect both the absurdity and necessity of a thing called hope.

The modern civil rights movement in America was an effort fueled by unrelenting hope. The *Green Book* listed some of the most significant locations central to the movement.

Without safe places to plan, strategize, debrief, and recuperate, civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 60s would have failed to push social justice forward in America. From hotels to beauty shops, these places became the headquarters for holding America accountable to its promise of liberty and justice for all.





Photo: Martin Luther King, Jr. outside Gaston Motel in 1963. Birmingham Police Department Surveillance Files.

- **Do you recognize anyone in this photo?**
- **What do you know about Martin Luther King Jr.?**
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Nelson Malden regularly cut Dr. Martin Luther King's hair at Malden Brothers Barbershop at the Ben Moore Hotel.

CHICAGO/CONCLUSION (5 minutes)

This section features a slide show of Green Book sites in Chicago, along with music by Black musicians who played at Chicago *Green Book* sites.

Point out the large quote on the wall: "The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us." —James Baldwin, *EBONY*, August, 1965

- **What does this quote mean to you?**
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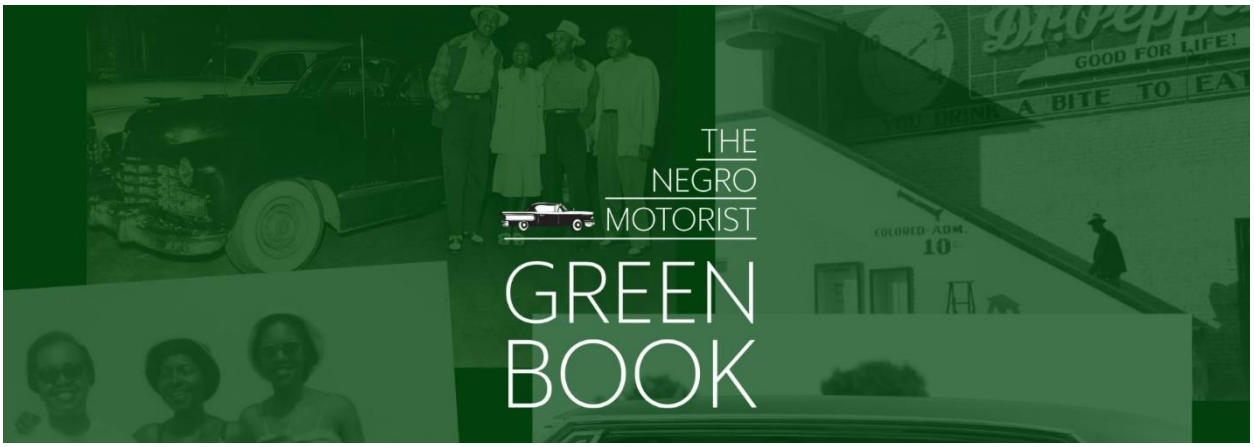
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KARKOMI TRANSITION

The foundational ideology of Nazism was centered on antisemitism, which at that point had changed from being focused on religion, to being centered around the idea of race. During the Holocaust additional groups of people were also targeted for racial reasons, including Roma/Sinti and Black people as well. We know that racism did not start in Nazi Germany, and has played a fundamental role in United States history, including enslavement, segregation, lynchings, and ongoing systemic racism against the Black community.

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ADULT GROUP TOURS

OVERVIEW

The Negro Motorist Green Book guided Black Americans to thousands of businesses for over thirty years, from 1936 to 1967. When the first *Green Book* was published, the American road was a metaphor for freedom. Freedom to change your present situation, freedom to determine your destiny, freedom to travel. Yet, in 20th century America, this same road was a dangerous place for Black citizens. The land was divided by segregation—through policy or through custom. For Black people, the prejudice was severe: a systematic effort to deny access to their basic human rights. Despite the indignity of government-backed and socially normalized oppression, the pain, the violence, and the disrespect, Black Americans created destinations and strategies that affirmed their humanity, their worth, their light—their lives, and took to the roads. It was done with ingenuity, with community, and with the help of a man named Victor Green, and his travel guide: *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. The *Green Book* was more than a travel guide. It was a shield, empowering Black people to explore their world with more dignity than fear, more elegance than embarrassment. It was a symbol of hope and resistance.

GOALS AND THEMES

The purpose of this tour is to facilitate visitors' exploration of the themes of resistance, ingenuity, hope, mobilization, and Upstanderism of the Black community in the face of racial oppression and segregation in the 1930s-60s United States.

EXHIBITION FRAMEWORK

Section 1: Sanctuary/Harlem
Section 2: South
Section 3: North
Section 4: West
Section 5: Action

Introduction	5 minutes
Sanctuary/Harlem	7 minutes
South	7 minutes

North	7 minutes
West	7 minutes
Action	7 minutes
Chicago/Conclusion	5 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Questions:

- **When was the last time you went on a road trip? Where did you go?**
- **Where, why, and how often did you stop during your journey? [food/drinks, gas, bathroom, stretch legs, hotel, etc.]**
- **What do you know about racial segregation and the Jim Crow-era United States of the 1930s-60s?**
- **How do you think segregation may have affected travelers?**

Introduce the key message:
This is an exhibition about how Black Americans responded to discrimination, segregation, restrictions on their freedom of movement, and their struggle for human rights in the Jim Crow era. It addresses the danger of traveling for Black people, when they could be arrested and murdered for driving their own cars, and were not allowed to use gas stations, restrooms, restaurants, hotels, and other places of business. Rather than focus on victimhood, this exhibition highlights the ingenuity, creativity, resistance, and hope of Black Americans as they found ways in which to work within the oppressing system and ultimately create change.

What their experience will be like:
The exhibition is organized thematically and geographically. We will experience this story through photographs, postcards, clothing, and other original artifacts from *Green Book* sites. You will be given time during the tour to explore some of the galleries on your own.

Transition:

- **What do you know about the *Green Book*?**
- **Why would a Holocaust museum have an exhibition about the *Green Book*?**

SANCTUARY/HARLEM (7 minutes)
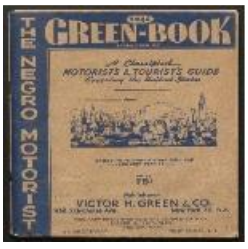


Original letter from Victor H. Green & Co., 1959

Questions to ask and discuss:

- **In the 1930s-1960s, how would someone start a nation-wide project like the *Green Book*?**
- **What challenges do you think Victor Green may have faced when developing the *Green Book*?**

Mr. Victor Hugo Green was a postal worker. He was an entrepreneur. He was an innovator. Victor Green lived in the famed Sugar Hill community in Harlem, New York. With a seventh-grade education, Green was a savvy businessman, exuding the epitome of class and dignity wherever he traveled. Alma, Victor Green's elegant wife, was from Richmond, Virginia—a city governed by people proud of its confederate past. Driving to Richmond for family gatherings meant encountering the racial segregationist realities of the South. It is possible that Victor drew inspiration for the guide from those road trips.

Until his retirement in 1952, Victor Green was a full-time letter carrier for the U.S. Post Office. When he created the *Green Book*, he enlisted his fellow postmen to make contact with Black entrepreneurs along their routes and invite them to list in the *Green Book* as well as sell the guide to travelers. Green's business approach was crafted in the footsteps of Black entrepreneur/innovator Madam C. J. Walker, the first American woman to become a self-made millionaire. From door-to-door sales to grassroots marketing tactics, Green was a part of a legacy of Black entrepreneurial success.



Copy of *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, 1946

- **Why do you think the *Green Book* was so successful?**
- **Why would a business choose to advertise in the *Green Book*? What are some reasons they wouldn't?**
- **What do you think this small booklet symbolizes?**

Victor Green introduced his *Green Book* into a divided political moment, and as part of the rising tide of Black travel. It would go on to be the most popular and longest lasting travel guide of its kind, offering its readers safe havens and community as they traveled throughout America and beyond.

The guide included more than just yearly listings of Black-owned businesses. It included articles, humor pieces, travel tips, advertising, and eventually, political thought. Green was always looking for people to submit articles about their travels.

Since legal enslavement, financial independence has been critical to Black liberation in America. The *Green Book* would not have been possible if not for the community of self-sufficient, talented, and successful Black businesses that filled its pages. By the 1930s, Black Americans owned nearly 70,000 small businesses, and throughout its thirty-year history, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* embraced as many as it could.



Smalls' Paradise postcard, 1943

- **What images are on this postcard?**
- **What are those images communicating?**
- **Why would someone want to go to Smalls' Paradise?**

Green Book site Smalls' Paradise hosted some of the greatest names in entertainment. Rumor has it that Billie Holiday had her first audition there. Additionally, in the early 1940s, Malcolm X— Malcolm Little at the time—worked there as a waiter, serving stars such as Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Tallulah Bankhead, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Ethel Waters, and Joe Louis. Smalls' epitomized the rich exciting modernity of many clubs. Even some of the most storied, like the Cotton Club, permitted Black entertainers like Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway, but not Black patrons.



Chauffeur's hat

- **What is this object?**
- **Who do you think might have owned or worn this hat?**
- **Why do you think a chauffeur's hat is included in this exhibition?**

Black Americans had many strategies in case of a dangerous encounter. For a traveling family, a chauffeur's hat could be a useful prop in an interaction with a racist police officer. If pulled over, Black men would invent stories claiming the car they drove was, in fact, their boss's. They were just a chauffeur, a servant. The woman and children? Just taking the boss's "help" home after a long day.

"Everybody had one . . . And you always kept it in the car." —Ron Burford, born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, during Jim Crow

Transition: As we move geographically through the U.S., consider the unique challenges that each area had (North, South, West). Consider the differences and also the similarities.

SOUTH (7 minutes)

Going south, Black families readied themselves for an inhospitable world. First, the absolute necessities: a full can of gas, and ice coolers with "shoebox lunches"—eggs, sandwiches, and fried chicken. Other essentials were unique to Black Americans: portable toilets, blankets that doubled as partitions for makeshift roadside restrooms, and spare fuses and light bulbs to avoid visiting unfriendly service stations for repairs. Packing the *Green Book* also became essential to avoid the worst of segregation.



Architectural brick from Charlie's Place, c. 1930s

Charlie Fitzgerald ran Charlie's Place, a *Green Book* site and legendary nightclub in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. It was the stage for some of America's greatest musicians: Etta James, Fats Domino, Count Basie, and James Brown were common headliners.

Charlie Fitzgerald was a powerful man. But for all his influence, Charlie was violently attacked by the Ku Klux Klan in 1950. After parading through Myrtle Beach, intimidating and terrorizing Black residents, the Klan shot up Charlie's Place and destroyed the interior with baseball bats. Charlie was kidnapped and beaten, but lived.

After the attack, Charlie left South Carolina while his wife, Sara Fitzgerald, ran Charlie's Place. It remained a *Green Book* staple for years, offering club goers a chance to see some of the greatest music acts of the day.



Alberta's Hotel & Snack Shop (L-R): portrait of Alberta Ellis (1955-56), Alberta's grandchildren (c. 1951), business card (1953-1955), Alberta's Hotel guest book entry (1950s)

Alberta Ellis ran a hotel, beauty salon, barbershop, snack shop, and a nightclub called the Rumpus Room in Springfield, Missouri. Her businesses were listed in the *Green Book* from 1954–64 and 1966–67.

Alberta's family-run operation served everyone, from Route 66 motorists to celebrities passing through. The Drifters, a teenage Stevie Wonder, the Imperials, and the Harlem Globetrotters could be spotted there.

Shortly after World War II, with the help of her family members, Alberta Ellis purchased a defunct hospital at auction for $10,000. One year before Alberta's appeared in the *Green Book*, Ellis purchased ten acres of land just west of the city to grow produce for the hotel's restaurant. A bed-and-breakfast on site provided additional lodging when the hotel was fully booked.



Swett's Restaurant (L-R): tiled sign, plates, trays (date unknown)

Swett's is one of the few long standing Black-owned businesses in Nashville, Tennessee. The restaurant opened in 1954 and was listed in the *Green Book* in 1960 and 1961. Since the beginning, it has been a family business. David Swett, the current owner, inherited the restaurant from his father, who ran several businesses in the 1950s including a grocery store, a restaurant, and a tavern.

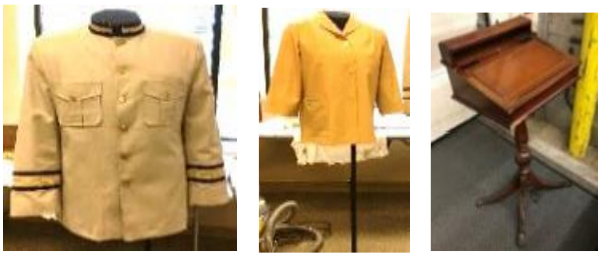
For over 60 years, Swett's has served classic food favorites from the South: country fried steak, pork chops and gravy, turnip greens, mac and cheese, candied yams, and okra. David, like his father, is a serial

entrepreneur. In addition to Swett's, he owns a shopping plaza and a gas station – carrying forward the torch of Black business that was so critical to the success of *Green Book*.

NORTH (7 minutes)

Many Black travelers had heard fantastic tales of the North: a land of respect and humanity not accessible in the southern states. Yet, those who left the South quickly learned that the practice of segregation was in full force throughout the country.

Though there was not the prevalence of the southern legal tradition of signs marked "colored" or "white" in the North, there were, in fact, many doors closed to Black people. Rare relief from constant discrimination did, however, exist in the North. There was the wealth of creativity in Harlem. There was the pulsing vibrancy of Chicago, and the booming business of Detroit. As Black Americans moved north to escape discrimination and seek greater opportunity, they established communities and found allies wherever they landed. There were Black vacation resorts, white businesses that bucked segregation, and tourist homes that offered comfort and peace.



Yorktowne Hotel (L-R): bellhop's jacket (1950s-1960s), maid's smock (1950s-60s), podium (1960s)

As desegregation dawned, the publishers of the *Green Book* wanted Black motorists to have access to all the travel and lodging options available to white Americans. This meant listing white-owned luxury hotels—previously inaccessible to Black people.

Green Book listings for luxury hotels included the Yorktowne Hotel, which opened in York, Pennsylvania, in 1925. The opulent Renaissance revival-style building was 11-stories tall, had over 400 windows, and 20-ft.-high ceilings. It was listed in the *Green Book* in the 1957-64 and 1966-67 editions, and served celebrities such as Jack Dempsey, Cab Calloway, Tony Bennett, Glen Miller, Count Basie, Lucille Ball, and Harry Belafonte.





Photo: Robbin's Airport, 1/30/33

Robbins was a semi-rural Black town south of Chicago, and a source of pride in the Black community. In 1931, John C. Robinson and Cornelius R. Coffey made Robbins the home of the only Black-owned and operated airport in America. Coffey would go on to train some of the Tuskegee Airmen—the first Black American combat pilots in the U.S. military.

In January 1941 the War Department formed the all-black 99th Pursuit Squadron of the U.S. Army Air Corps (later the U.S. Army Air Forces), to be trained using single-engine planes at the segregated Tuskegee Army Air Field at Tuskegee, Alabama. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the black press, and others had been lobbying hard for the government to allow Black Americans to become military pilots. However, neither the NAACP nor the most-involved black newspapers approved the solution of creating separate black units; they believed that approach simply perpetuated segregation and discrimination. Nevertheless, largely at the behest of Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt, a separate unit was created. The Tuskegee base opened on July 19, and their first mission was on June 2, 1943. Altogether, 992 pilots graduated from the Tuskegee Air Field courses, and they flew 1,578 missions and 15,533 sorties, destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and won more than 850 medals.

WEST (7 minutes)

Through conquest, adventure, oppression, and opportunity, the West became an American symbol of new horizons and second chances. Black people traveled west to escape discrimination, seek economic opportunity, and for the chance to soak in the majesty of its otherworldly landscapes. However, the danger Black Americans faced traveling west could be just as treacherous as the dramatic surroundings.

In 1946, Nat King Cole recorded "Route 66," a song celebrating what became known as America's Highway. It symbolized freedom, prosperity, and the American Dream. Yet, the fantasy of "getting your kicks" on Route 66 – which started here in Chicago – was a dream reserved for white America. Half of the 89 counties on Route 66 were sundown towns, all-white communities that banned the presence of any Black person after dark, after the sun had set. Finding lodging, food, and a safe place to refuel could be a deadly gamble on Route 66.

There were so few places Black Americans could stay on Route 66 that Black drivers were getting into deadly accidents due to exhaustion. The Albuquerque Tribune reported on this in 1955, noting that the

state police chief determined that one accident that took six lives had been caused by "speed and fatigue."

Green was dedicated to opening up more travel options for Black Americans; yet the West was a struggle. His is efforts to do so often bore no fruit, leaving the West with the smallest number of *Green Book* sites compared to other parts of the country.





Threatt Filling Station (L-R): cash register (used throughout 1950s through mid-1970s), cash book (1960-61), ledger (1954-55)

Seventy-five miles west of Tulsa, Black motorists could fuel up at the Threatt Filling Station, in Luther, Oklahoma, before passing through the sundown town of Edmond, Oklahoma. Threatt Filling Station wasn't listed in the *Green Book*, but this Black family-owned gas station served Route 66 motorists from 1915 to the 1950s.



Murray's Dude Ranch: Ebony magazine (1947); bolt & washer, metal and wood unknown object, ceramic shards, springs, horseshoes, barbed wire (1930s-60s); postcard (1930s-60s)

Murray's Dude Ranch was a forty-acre property listed in the *Green Book* that sat on the edge of the Mojave Desert. Murray's was owned by a Black couple, Nolie and Lela Murray. Nolie was a businessman who owned a cigar store on Ninth Street in Los Angeles; Lela was a registered nurse. In 1922, Nolie and Lela Murray bought the property. By 1937, the Murrays had turned the property into a dude ranch, which, at the time, was associated with affluence and good living. It offered Black travelers the popular culture idea of the opportunity to experience the luxury and comfort of the sprawling property.

Murray's had twenty buildings and offered lodging, dining, horseback riding, and swimming. There was also a fenced-in baseball diamond and a tennis court.

Lela dreamed of opening the property to troubled youth. She believed that the solitude and peace of the desert would not only heal the body, but also provide emotional comfort to city children who suffered from fear, stress, and poverty. Some were sent to the ranch by the courts, some came to heal their asthma, and others came to relax, swim, and learn how to ride horses.

Murray's gained popularity with celebrities like Lena Horne and Hedda Hopper, and it wasn't long before it made the cover of *EBONY* magazine. Joe Louis trained at the ranch in the 1940s, which caught the attention of Life magazine photographers who were in town to work on another story. The article propelled the dude ranch to the world, and helped put the Murrays on solid financial ground. Eventually, the Murrays hosted about 100 people every week.

Murray's was fully integrated and was one of the first sites in this part of the country where Black and white children played and swam together. The Murrays sold the ranch to entertainer and icon, Pearl Bailey, in 1955 for $65,000.

ACTION (7 minutes)

In the Green Book we see a tangible manifestation of hope. The guide was fueled by a vision and a wish that seemed improbable: that Black people in America could experience dignity, comfort, and safety as they navigated their world.

In the long arc of Black American history, hope has always been unreasonable in the face of racism. Yet, at the same time, hope has been an essential tool of progress and accomplishment. As the civil rights movement dawned in the 1950s and 60s, the *Green Book* would reflect both the absurdity and necessity of a thing called hope.

The modern civil rights movement in America was an effort fueled by unrelenting hope. The *Green Book* listed some of the most significant locations central to the movement.

Without safe places to plan, strategize, debrief, and recuperate, civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 60s would have failed to push social justice forward in America. From hotels to beauty shops, these places became the headquarters for holding America accountable to its promise of liberty and justice for all.





Photo: Martin Luther King, Jr. outside Gaston Motel in 1963. Birmingham Police Department Surveillance Files.

- **Do you recognize anyone in this photo?**
- **What do you know about Martin Luther King?**
- **Describe the photo: where was it taken, what are the people in it doing, etc.**
- **Why do you think the photo was taken?**

The A. G. Gaston Motel, named after its owner, was a *Green Book* site listed in Birmingham, Alabama. Gaston insisted that he could create a motel that was available to people traveling while Black. It served high-end clientele and was considered the best place for Black people to stay in the city. At the A. G. Gaston, you felt safe to congregate, eat, socialize, and strategize.

A. G. Gaston was a self-made millionaire and would become one of the most successful Black businessmen of the twentieth century. Though a conservative who thought the radicals of the civil rights movement were moving too fast, he was struck by the strength of the activists forged in the pacifist tool of non-violence and angered by the brutality of the tools of violence used to try to contain them.

He made his motel available to the activists at no cost.

Martin Luther King Jr. regularly stayed at A. G. Gaston's and held meetings in his "war room" to organize. It was here that King decided to go to jail to support the movement. During that incarceration in 1963, King wrote his influential "Letter from Birmingham Jail."





Photo: Nelson, Marvin, and Spurgeon Malden in the Malden Brothers Barber Shop

- **Where was this photo taken?**
- **Why do you think a barber shop might be important to the civil rights movement?**
- **What other types of spaces do you think might have been used in planning and organizing by the leaders of the civil rights movement? Why?**

The four-story Ben Moore Hotel was a popular *Green Book* listing in Montgomery, Alabama. The hotel was built in 1952, by M.F. Dinty Moore, a carpenter who was the son of a tenant farmer.

Before, during, and after the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Dr. King and his inner circle held secret meetings on the roof of the Ben Moore Hotel. On the first floor, Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy, officials from the NAACP, and other civil rights leaders socialized in the Malden Brothers Barbershop.

Nelson Malden regularly cut Dr. Martin Luther King's hair at Malden Brothers Barbershop at the Ben Moore Hotel.

CHICAGO/CONCLUSION

This section features a slide show of *Green Book* sites in Chicago, along with music by Black musicians who played at Chicago Green Book sites.

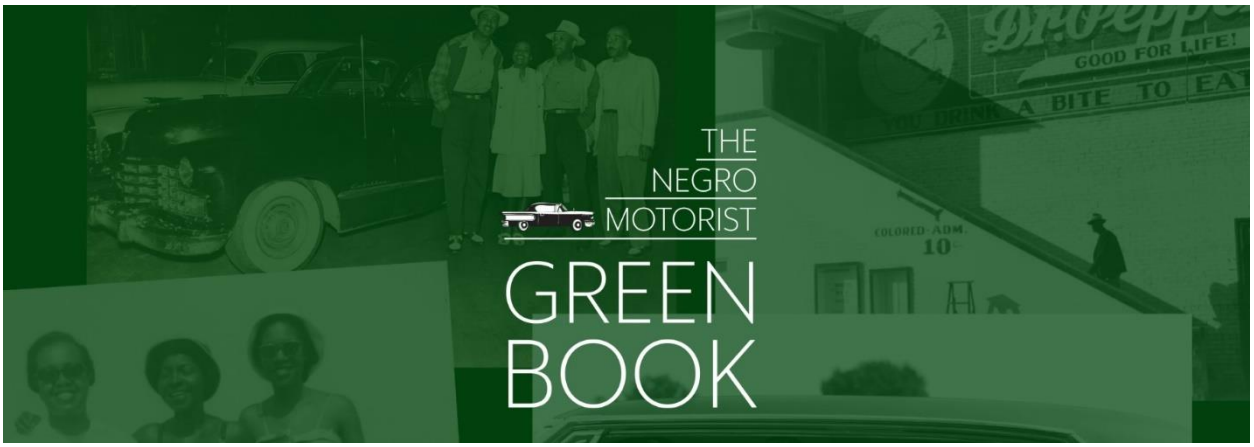
Point out the large quote on the wall: "The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us." —James Baldwin, *EBONY*, August, 1965

- **What does this quote mean to you?**
- **Is history only in the past?**
- **How do we carry history within us?**
- **What history do you carry within you?**
- **How does history inform our identities?**
- **If history is part of us, what responsibilities do we have regarding that history?**

The *Green Book* was started one person: Victor Green. It's possible that he drew inspiration for the guide from his road trips driving to Richmond for family gatherings, which meant encountering the racial segregationist realities of the South.

- **Have you encountered injustice in your life?**
- **Have you seen injustice occur against someone else?**
- **What are some creative ways to empower yourself and others who suffer from injustice?**
- **How can you use creativity, ingenuity, and hope to resist against an oppressive system?**

ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER



NOTE ON LANGUAGE

This exhibition is titled "*The Negro Motorist Green Book*." The term "Negro" is used in its historical context as the full title of the *Green Book*. That term is no longer used in reference to Black people and is now considered extremely offensive. Do not use that term other than in reference to the full name of the *Green Book* or in reference to the name of the exhibition.

IHMEC inquired with Smithsonian about the use of the term. Their response, which you are free to share with visitors, is as follows:

"Our conclusion and decision was based on the history of the word as used by Victor Green. In 1936, when he created this travel guide, spelling Negro with a capital 'N' was revolution. It stipulated that Black Americans were fully human and should be respected. The fact that that truth, that cultural point is not universally known offered us an opportunity. Not only is its use a true homage to Victor Green's achievement; it offered the chance to expand the historical landscape to include language and its use. Subtle, for sure, but part of our decision making."

While the exhibition text uses the terms "Black Americans" and "African Americans" interchangeably, we encourage you to use the former rather than the latter, since everyone who was Black was targeted, while at the same time not all Black people were African.