

## **Racialized Spaces Along Route 66**

### **Transportation Routes and Discrimination**

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Grade Level: 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Subject: U.S. History and Geography

### **CURRICULUM STANDARDS:**

U.S. 28 Analyze the impact of the Great Migration of African Americans that began in the early 1900s from the rural South to the industrial regions of the Northeast and Midwest. (T.C.A. § 49-6-1006)

U.S. 32 Describe the impact of Henry T. Ford, the automobile, and the mass production of automobiles on the American economy and society.

U.S. 35 Examine challenges related to civil liberties and racial/ethnic tensions during the 1920's.

### **SOCIAL STUDIES PRACTICES FOR TENNESSEE:**

#### **SSP 01**

Collect data and information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including:

- Printed materials (e.g., literary texts, newspapers, autobiographies, speeches, interviews, letters, personal journals)
- Graphic representations (e.g., maps, timelines, charts, political cartoons, photographs, artwork)

#### **SSP 02**

Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to:

- Extract and paraphrase significant ideas
- Discern differences between evidence and assertion
- Draw inferences and conclusions
- Recognize author's purpose, point of view, and potential bias
- Assess the strengths and limitations of arguments

### **SSP 03**

Synthesize data from a variety of sources in order to:

- Establish accuracy and validity by comparing sources to each other
- Recognize disparities among multiple accounts

### **SSP 04**

- Construct and communicate arguments citing supporting evidence to:
- Demonstrate and defend an understanding of ideas
- Compare and contrast viewpoints
- Illustrate cause and effect
- Predict likely outcomes
- Devise new outcomes or solutions to appropriate questions for further investigation

### **SSP 05**

Develop historical awareness by:

- Recognizing how and why historical accounts change over time
- Perceiving and presenting past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present mindedness
- Evaluating how unique circumstances of time and place create context and contribute to action and reaction
- Identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present

### **Historical Background**

In 1865, 90 percent of the nation's black residents still lived in the southern states. For the first time, their decision of when and where to migrate was based on free choice. Between about 1916 and the 1970's, as many as five million of these descendants of former slaves packed up whatever possessions they could and moved by train, bus, or automobile to the cities of the Northeast, Midwest, or West. The Great Migration remains the greatest mass movement of people in the history of the United States. Aiming to escape intimidation, Jim Crow laws, and sharecropping that became another method of re-enslaving the black population, many of the migrants had to sneak out of town to escape, as southern whites tried to prevent their labor force from leaving...Escaping the South became the critical next step in the freedom of mobility---and, simply, in gaining their freedom---for many African Americans.

While the growing tide of Jim Crow laws and practices determined almost every aspect of their lives---where black people could live, work, eat, sleep, and go to school---the train and later the automobile became tools of defiance and dignity in the journey to full equality. For a people restricted in movement for so many generations, the pilgrimage back to the South to visit family and friends became a tradition, and traveling as they pleased came to be an essential part of citizenship.

### **Materials:**

**Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library. "The Negro Travelers' Green Book: 1959" *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. 1959.**

<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/89ed7cc0-8486-0132-e7b6-58d385a7bbd0>

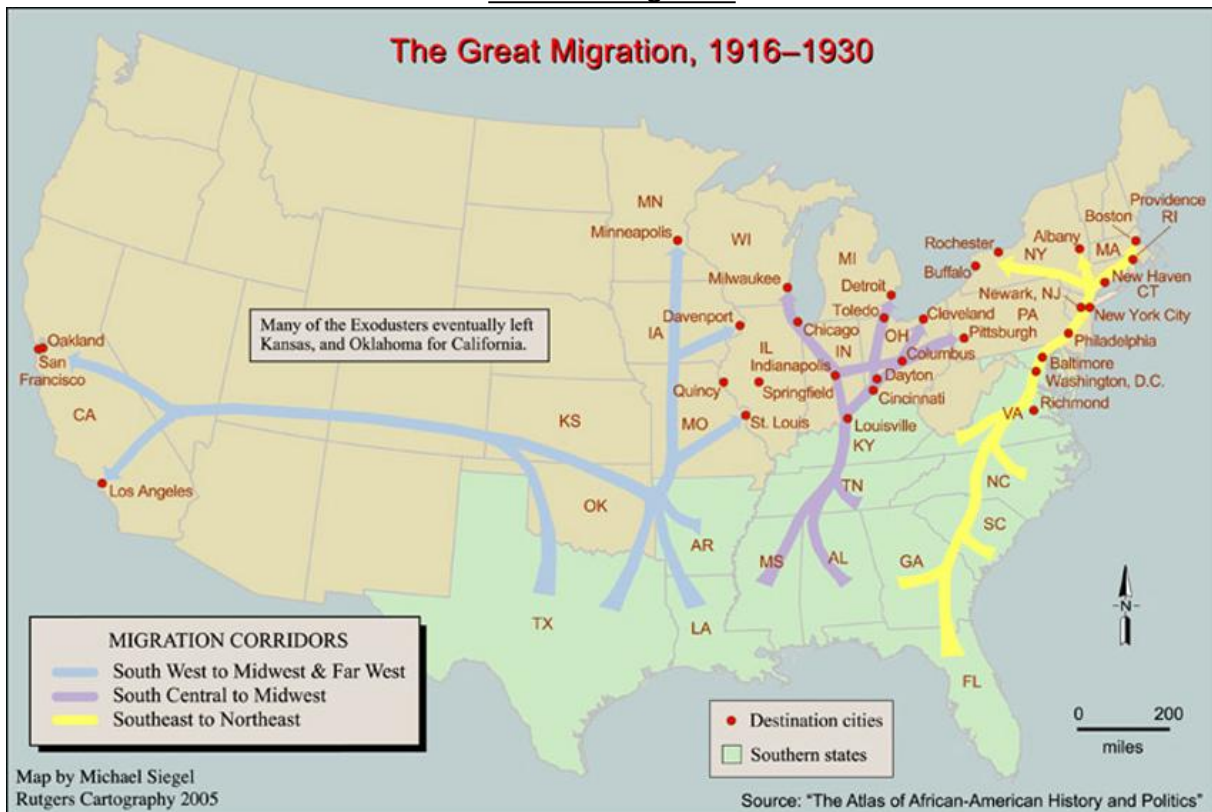
**Sorin, Gretchen Sullivan. "Driving while black: African American travel and the road to civil rights." New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.**

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Provide background information on the Great Migration. Then have students complete The Great Migration individually.
2. Students will be given background information about sundown towns. Then students will use the New York Public Library Green Book digital collection to find sundown towns in our area and look for two towns along Route 66. Students will need to be guided on how to access the digital collection.
3. Students will then be placed in pairs to read selected excerpts from Driving While Black by Gretchen Sorin. They will discuss the excerpt and answer questions based on the excerpts. Then, they will present their observations.
4. Students will write and describe three things they learned from the lesson.

My goal is to increase students knowledge about researching digital collections and the analysis of primary and secondary sources.

## The Great Migration



The map above shows how African Americans moved out of the South during the twentieth century. Each arrow on the map represents the African American population moving from the Southeast elsewhere. Answer the following questions based on the map and your own knowledge.

1. Why do you think African Americans chose to leave the South at this time? Why did they choose to go to other parts of the country?
2. What do you think made them decide which cities to migrate to?
3. How would a large influx of African Americans from the South affect Northern cities?
4. How do you think blacks were treated in the West compared to how they were treated in the South?
5. What effects would "The Great Migration" have on Southern society short term? What about long term?

## Excerpt 1

Read the following excerpt from Driving While Black (pages 150-151) and answer the questions that follow:

Sitting at the dining-room table, my father plotted and carefully marked the route to Niagara Falls on an Esso map from the local gas station: Garden State Parkway to the New York State Thruway; Thruway to Niagara Falls. The trip was our first family vacation by car other than the annual drives south to my grandmother's house in Fayetteville, North Carolina---which my father detested. We rose before dawn and left Newark on the major highways. The first night, we stayed with some family friends on a farm near a tiny hamlet in western New York. The tidy white farmhouse had chickens in the yard, puffy down comforters on the beds, and fresh milk for breakfast in the morning. For the second night of our trip, my father had reserved a room in advance in Niagara Falls. In the 1950s and 1960s, vacationers often drove until they found a motor hotel that looked appealing and had a vacancy sign out front, but making a reservation provided the best possibility of securing a room successfully.

When we reached Niagara Falls, we found the motor hotel easily. My father, whose anxiety was apparent, went in to secure the reservation. My brother and I, sitting in the back seat, did not know that there was a chance we could be sent away by the establishment. But our father returned smiling. He need not have worried; with fair skin and wavy hair, his racial identity was quite ambiguous. The modest hotel room, decorated with kitschy figurines of Latin dancers hanging over the beds, was clean and roomy. My father's careful planning and my mother's skills as a navigator had paid off. Like so many other African American parents, they worked hard to shield us from the trials and perils of the road.

1. Why do you think the father was anxious?
2. What do you think the author means when she says "they? worked hard to shield us from the trials and perils of the road"

## Excerpt 2

Read the following excerpt from Driving While Black (pages 177-178) and answer the questions that follow:

Gary and I just assumed that families always drove through the dark hours of early morning when heading out on summer vacations. I attributed these marathons to my father's enthusiasm for the road, and, on the way home, to his loathing of Fayetteville, North Carolina, but I now realize he had other concerns. I knew that many families, black and white, departed for vacation in the predawn hours, so why did these trips make my father so anxious? For my brother and me, the ride to Fayetteville was an adventure. For my parents, it was a journey filled with potential danger.

The trip "back home" to the South, usually in the summer, was a common annual event for thousands of families who had moved north during the Great Migration. The Seaboard Coast Line train that ran from New York City all the way to Florida was one option, but, by the 1950s, a lot of families drove down. Indispensable for so many families making the trip was The Negro Motorist Green Book.

1. Why do you think the author described the trip as one filled with potential danger.
2. Based on previous knowledge, what do you think these dangers involved?