



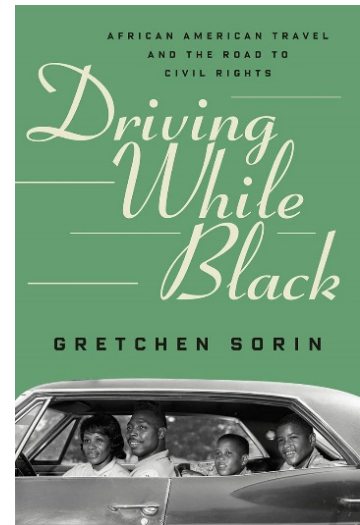
Driving While Black by Gretchen Sorin Group Discussion Guide

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your group's discussion of *Driving While Black*, written by Gretchen Sorin

ABOUT THIS NOVEL

In *Driving While Black*, the acclaimed historian Gretchen Sorin reveals how the car—the ultimate symbol of independence and possibility—has always held importance for African Americans, allowing Black families to evade the many dangers presented by an entrenched racist society and to enjoy, in some measure, the freedom of the open road. She recounts the creation of a parallel, unseen world of black motorists, who relied on travel guides, black only businesses, and informal communication networks to keep them safe. From coast to coast, mom and pop guest houses and tourist homes, beauty parlors, and even large hotels — including New York's Hotel Theresa, the Hampton House in Miami, or the Dunbar Hotel in Los Angeles—as well as night clubs and restaurants like New Orleans' Dooky Chase and Atlanta's Paschal's, fed travelers and provided places to stay the night. At the heart of Sorin's story is Victor and Alma Green's famous Green Book, a travel guide begun in 1936, which helped grant black Americans that most basic American rite, the family vacation.



DIGITAL RESOURCE

Watch the PBS Documentary

www.pbs.org/show/driving-while-black

Watch an interview with author Gretchen Sorin presented by American Ancestors/NEHGS, Boston Public Library and the Museum of African American History as part of the American Stories, Inspiration Today author series.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=360&v=mxcvK-pLfkE&feature=emb_logo



Driving While Black by Gretchen Sorin Discussion Questions

1. The phrase “driving while black” is meant to sound like “driving while intoxicated,” the law enforcement term for drunk driving. What do African Americans mean by the phrase “driving while Black”?
2. In what ways did the freedom and personal mobility provided by the automobile have special significance for African Americans in the South during the years of racial segregation? In what ways was the ability of African Americans to travel nonetheless limited or constrained?
3. Even after racial discrimination was made illegal, Black Americans faced racial intimidation and even violence when they ventured out on the road. In what ways does this racial discrimination still exist; what can we collectively do to eliminate it?
4. How do you think that looking back at history can enable us to learn something about the present? What lessons might you draw from this novel about the present?

AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION

We would love to hear about your conversation. If you would like to share any of your discussion notes, comments or photos with Legacy Foundation, please send them to mfishback@legacyfdn.org