MINORITY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY DURING THE AGE OF SEGREGATION

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Abstract
In the era of segregation, African Americans and other minority travelers often ran into institutionalized racism that legally prevented them from booking into and utilizing motels and hotels, restaurants and nightclubs, salons, and gas stations. The purpose of this review was to examine minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the age of segregation. I relied on a modified systematic review method and reviewed current literature on the phenomenon. Findings showed that it was mostly the African American community who opened their homes and hearts to these weary travelers, serving the African American community and other minorities in times of need.

**Keywords:** Minority, African Americans, hospitality, review, segregation, discrimination.
1. INTRODUCTION
For many years now, students have had opportunities to learn from home for various reasons. However, despite the efforts made by school teachers and leaders, including the rapid development of strategies to satisfy students’ requirements, plans for remote teaching, and online lesson development, the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges (Parks et al., 2021; Verlenden et al., 2021). The challenges were more serious for school districts in poor and rural regions, resulting in the loss of learning time (Leidman et al., 2021). While situations improved in general over time compared to the early stages of the pandemic, with more school districts reporting online and in-person learning, minority students were significantly less likely to be enrolled in high schools full-time (Gilbert et al., 2020).

2. Literature Review
During the era of segregation, the possibility of a certain city being an African American hospitality region was not assured. Consequently, the process of touring and traveling is often transformed for minorities into one of seeking refuge. Like hospitality, refuge involves a vacationer seeking shelter. African Americans’ capacity to find hospitable places in which they would not be exposed to humiliation was not a guarantee during segregation. African Americans searched for and struggled over refuge on unfair grounds with respect to the various social practices and ordinary negotiations for enabling hospitality.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, touring in mainstream locations for holidays by African Americans challenged existing social practices and established expectations across tourist destinations in an era in which racial discrimination was authorized. Consequently, tourists of African American heritage in those years were mostly from an economically privileged part of the minority population, such as African American entertainers. Existing evidence suggests that the experiences of African Americans with hospitality, which shaped their contributions to the hospitality industry, were achievements made possible by hard labor and perseverance.

Before books, such as the Green Book, were published, African Americans came to learn and gather vast knowledge regarding cultural history to navigate the era of segregation. The challenges experienced by traveling African Americans in attempts to find hospitality resulted in them being set apart from their White peers in ways that no other element other than their race could account for. African Americans’ experience with hospitality is also shaped by the fact that they lacked an identity that would allow them to navigate freely and with pride. Instead, they were provided with an identity that required them to be cautious. Even when existing conventions were observed, African Americans did not always succeed in escaping humiliation and physical violence, as segregation had provided a ground for intimidation and fear.

Existing studies show that social, political, and legislative actions contributed to beginning and sustaining the era of segregation, and made discrimination an ordinary part of the environment. Findings also show that segregation and discrimination helped racialize the landscape and develop new dependencies as African Americans began to obtain greater access to personal vehicles. Further, literature also shows that while increasing access to personal vehicles allowed African Americans to travel more, it also led to them finding it difficult to discover places that were hospitable. In this environment, an opportunity emerged for African Americans to contribute to the hospitality industry to accommodate their needs, as evident in resources like the Green Book which allowed African Americans to participate in travel and tourism.

Considering these developments, the purpose of this review was to examine minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the age of segregation. The aim was to fill a gap by synthesizing existing knowledge on minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the segregation era. It was hoped that such a synthesis would provide a picture of the various contributions to the hospitality industry by minority individuals made during the segregation-influenced environment in US history, where various discriminations led African Americans to develop methods of navigation that contributed to the US hospitality industry. The research question guiding the review was: “What were minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the age of segregation?”

3. Methodology
To carry out this review, I employed a modified systematic review method, which consisted of using current literature to obtain evidence and improve existing knowledge on a phenomenon (Forristal, 2021). Accordingly, I reviewed the literature on minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the age of segregation. I set the scope of the review based on the research question and used key terms related to the phenomenon to identify data from the databases. After discovering the studies, the key terms yielded, I reviewed the literature and utilized extracts from the studies to conduct a descriptive analysis. For the phenomenon and the study purpose, I limited the scope to the segregation era and minority populations. To search for the literature, I used the following databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, and JSTOR.

4. Results
A synthesis of the existing research on minority contributions to the hospitality industry during the age of segregation revealed several themes. These themes can be summarized in this quote from 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. It will be a great day for us to suspend this publication for then we can go wherever we please, and without embarrassment. (Green, 1936, p. #)

According to Pogue (2020), “Staying in a Black home with like-minded guests made them feel safe, seen, and celebrated” (p. #). Pogue continued, recalling the dining room table at his parents’ inn, Akwaaba, which regularly hosted African American travelers from around the U.S. and abroad, “over warm biscuits and creamy grits, they talked about the museum exhibit they planned to see and the Broadway show that left them breathless.” What truly made the trip for these travelers, though, was the camaraderie they shared at Akwaaba, free from harassment, racism, hostility, and violence (Pogue, 2020).

As I write these words, I sit back and reflect on the many travelers of color who wondered about the prospect of their being assaulted, jailed, or killed simply for staying in a White-only establishment after dark. These ‘sundown towns’ may sound like a horror movie creation, designed to instill fear and suspense in the viewer's mind. The reality, however, is a sobering turn of events when we realize that over 10,000 of these towns existed between 1890 and 1960 (Coen, 2020). The towns’ laws were ‘simple’ as applied to persons of color: vacate the town limits by sundown, else you might be shot, beat up, jailed, or killed. A ‘helpful’ aid came about through numerous signs, from matter-of-fact statements like, “Whites Only After Dark” to others with a more forceful and pointed wording, “N——r, Don’t Let The Sun Go Down On You In Alix” (Coen, 2020). Businesses and establishments that provided work opportunities and more for African Americans and other minorities often found themselves boycotted or worse. People of color who could afford to purchase homes in these neighborhoods were actively discouraged through blatantly aggressive signage. “No Mosquitoes/No Blizzards/No Malaria/No Drought/ No Negroes”.

The mass migrations of African Americans from the South from 1910 to 1970 strongly indicated that people of color were tired of enduring the ongoing racism, lynching, and other forms of physical violence, missed economic opportunities, and more. The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 is an example of the horrors suffered by African Americans and other minorities, where over six million individuals finally decided enough was enough. The exodus meant family members were split apart and left behind but never forgotten. The perils of navigating these treacherous and hostile waters were a well-known danger, but the need to visit family and friends was the overriding factor (Petras & Loehrke, 2021).

Along came Victor Hugo Green, a postal worker and the brilliant mind behind the Travelers’ Green Book (Green, 1936), a guide highlighting establishments and homes that were safe havens for African Americans and other minorities during their travels on the road. According to filmmaker and playwright Calvin Ramsay, Green was familiar with the New York City metro area. He knew which homes and establishments would welcome people of color and was often aided by African American members in the postal service union capable of rooting out more. These members would mail Green-friendly establishments and homes and contributed to the foundation for the African American hospitality industry. Essentially, the Green Book was a smart response to the Jim Crow legislation implemented in the Southern States. According to Scot Brown, a professor of African American Studies and History at the University of California, Los Angeles, “It was one of many things African Americans had to develop to survive a hostile environment. A modern-day equivalent could be a Black GPS” (Petras & Loehrke, 2021, p. #).

During the 1930s, roughly 50% of the 89 counties dotted along Route 66 featured no hotels, motels, and restaurants that catered to African Americans or allowed them to remain within town limits after dark (Coen, 2020). The first edition of the Travelers’ Green Book, published in 1936, covered Green’s proverbial backyard and, according to Townsend (2022), “created a safety net. If a person could travel by car—and those who could, did—they would feel more in control of their destiny. The Green-Book was what they needed”.

Sociologist James Loewen, and author of Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism, surmises that Green was unaware of:

The astounding prevalence of sundown towns across the North, so his Green Book didn't do much to help Black folks avoid them. Of course, the point of his book was to tell folks where they could stay, eat, and play, not where they couldn't.” (Petras & Loehrke, 2021, p. #)

Loewen also implies that these all-White towns surrounding major cities were the basis for the “housing segregation that characterizes most of the nation’s metropolitan areas to institutional racism more than market forces or individual choice” (Jong, 2012, p. #).

The guide doubled in size with each passing year, accepting recommendations from African American travelers who could provide insight into the good, the bad, and the ugly regarding hospitality across the United States. It is interesting that although the South was known for its inhospitality toward people of color, the entire country showcased segregation in various industries. The guide not only shattered misconceptions about the North’s warmth and
friendliness toward the African American community but was also key in boosting the economic success of African American-owned businesses, many of them helmed by women (Fitzgerald, 2019).

We discover that a listed motel, Motel Simbeth in Columbia, South Carolina, owned by Modjeska Simkins, was a way for Simkins to earn her financial freedom to continue activism work. According to National Park Service (2022),

She probably will be remembered as a woman who challenged everyone. She challenged the White political leadership of the state to do what was fair and equitable among all people, and she challenged Black citizens to stand up and demand their rightful place in the state and the nation. (p. #)

Simkins is best remembered as the matriarch of the civil rights movement in South Carolina.

The Green Book’s final edition, published in 1967, was just under 100 pages and covered the continental U.S. and several international cities. The guide ceased publication when more White-owned businesses opened their doors to the African American and other minority communities. This brought about its own set of issues. According to Latham (2019),

Approximately one-third of the buildings featured in the Green Book are estimated to remain in existence, and even fewer of the businesses are still in operation… Due to the progress of the Civil Rights Movement, more Black people could go to White hotels, but as a result, they were not going as much to Black hotels… At the same time, many Black business owners still could not get loans and financing from many White-owned banks in order to modernize and compete. (p. #)

5. Discussion
While legally enforced segregation has become relegated to the pages of the tumultuous history of the United States, African American businesses continue to attract attention and special interest within the community as beacons that offer excellent service and support. We are reminded of individuals like Glenn Pogue’s parents, who started off with a small, family-run inn decades ago and have now passed on a legacy to the next generation. Glynn and his wife, Monique, have established a renowned Bed-and-Breakfast franchise across several states. Another key staple and once premier lodging in the Green Book, the Dunbar Hotel in Los Angeles, has now become the centerpiece of the Dunbar Village development and can offer comfort to communities in need.

Looking back, we can confidently say that Victor Green’s guide, the Green Book, was essential to the rise of African American hospitality in the 30s, 40s, and 50s. It not only highlighted the rise of the Black middle class but focused on the determination, spirit, and entrepreneurship of the African American women and all they could accomplish. As noted by Townsend (2022), “Green’s lasting influence was showing the way for the next generation of Black entrepreneurs” (p. #).

References

