

# Paul Green Foundation

## NEWS – October 2016



### The Power of the Pen & the Selfie



With the recent and welcome attention to Victor Green's **Green Book** and the power of its words and mission, we're reminded of Paul Green's powerful pen in the writing of "**Hymn to the Rising Sun**" in an effort to encourage – *shame* – the North Carolina Legislature to abolish the cruel and demeaning practice of using chain gangs. It was 1936.

In that same year, a publication known as the **The Negro Motorist Green Book** was published as a guide for travelling African Americans and it sold for a quarter. It

listed motels, tourist homes, Esso gas stations, and restaurants that welcomed black travelers at a time when many businesses did not. It assisted them through so-called "sundown towns," where blacks were warned by highway signs to leave city limits before nightfall. The book was named after its author, New York City postal worker **Victor Green** (1892-1960), who compiled it with information he continued to gather from postal workers all over the country, and it was updated and published annually.

Unfortunately, history has a way of repeating itself and we've read this year about the discrimination of Blacks requesting rooms at Air B&B. It all came to a head when in October 2015 **Stefan Grant**, a musician and entrepreneur, had booked an accommodation in Atlanta (where he was to perform at a music festival) and the police were called – and, as he said on his **selfie** that went viral: "The place we're staying at is so nice, the neighbors thought we were robbing the place & called the cops!" The photo posted featured Stefan, his friend, and two Atlanta, Georgia police officers in the background – all smiling. Stefan and his friend were dismayed by the experience, so they decided to take matters into their own hands and they built a platform to offer diverse travelers a better experience that is free from concern about their safety, their acceptance and their overall comfort while on the road – **Noirbnb was born**. <http://noirbnb.com/>

Segue now to **The Green Book Chronicles** <https://greenbookchronicles.com/> a documentary film being produced by Becky Wible Searles and PGF trustee, **Calvin Alexander Ramsey**. "Green loved saving people from humiliation, hardship, and physical violence," author Ramsey told the *New York Times* in 2015, "But Green's dream was that the book would not be needed one day. He was hoping equality would mean his company would go out of business." The Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, was passed in 1964. *The Green Book* ceased publication in 1966.

Meanwhile the founders of Noirbnb are mindful of their past – maybe channeling Victor Green. Starting a company to cater to minorities makes sense, Stefan Grant said in an email to VOA, "In many ways, the Black community has to create spaces and solutions to our issues in regard to every aspect of our lives."

Even in the North: I'll close with a personal story: In the early 50s when I was in high school in Dayton, Ohio, Beverly, my classmate and I, as leaders in Y-Teens, were invited to go to Ohio Wesleyan in Delaware, Ohio, for a weekend of training. I was pleased when my mother, who was driving us said, "You know, on our way let's just have a picnic." I thought it as a lovely suggestion and had no idea, until years later, why a picnic instead of a restaurant. *Marsha Warren*

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