



# TRAVELING WHILE BLACK VR & DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

## OVERVIEW

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Students will go through the “Traveling While Black” experience, listening to first-person accounts of this racial equality aspect. The testimony and footage will spur thinking to be used in small group or classroom discussion.

## MATERIALS

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- Oculus Rift or Rift S
- Oculus Touch controllers
- Post-it notes if using Affinity Mapping

## CREDITS

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[www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/](http://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/)

[www.grinnell-k12.org](http://www.grinnell-k12.org)

## SYNOPSIS

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“Traveling While Black” is a 20-minute VR experience that takes the user on a brief historical trip of the racial challenges travelling has posed during the pre- and post-civil rights movement era. Through the use of 360° videos, historical footage, first-person interviews, and computer generated environments, the experience offers a brief look at the hurdles faced by African Americans who wanted to travel. Stories recount issues of getting gas, eating, lodging, and bathroom access.

The VR experience sheds light on some of the history of distrust between races in our country. A distrust that is deeply rooted in a tainted history of human rights violations. Our challenge is to acknowledge its existence, find ways to unite, and move the relationship forward. This challenge still faces us today. This change begins with us.

## TIMELINE

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This activity is designed to take be completed in two-45 minute sessions.

Note: The VR experience uses the “n” word on a couple of occasions in first-person historical context.



## DISCUSSION FORMAT SUGGESTIONS

### *Conver-Stations*

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**Basic Structure:** Another great idea from Sarah Brown Wessling, this is a small-group discussion strategy that gives students exposure to more of their peers' ideas and prevents the stagnation that can happen when a group doesn't happen to have the right chemistry. Students are placed into a few groups of 4-6 students each and are given a discussion question to talk about. After sufficient time has passed for the discussion to develop, one or two students from each group rotate to a different group, while the other group members remain where they are. Once in their new group, they will discuss a different, but related question, and they may also share some of the key points from their last group's conversation. For the next rotation, students who have not rotated before may be chosen to move, resulting in groups that are continually evolving.

### *Affinity Mapping*

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#### *a.k.a. Affinity Diagramming*

**Basic Structure:** Give students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as "What were the impacts of the Great Depression?" or "What literary works should every person read?" Have students generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.

**Variations:** Some teachers have students do much of this exercise—recording their ideas and arranging them into categories—*without* talking at first. In other variations, participants are asked to re-combine the ideas into new, different categories after the first round of organization occurs. Often, this activity serves as a good pre-writing exercise, after which students will write some kind of analysis or position paper.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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- In one of the first-person accounts, how does the use of a certain word affect them?
- How would you have reacted if you were in the position of the narrator?
- What is the point or “big idea” of the experience?
- Which details or events are the most important and why?
- What are some similarities or differences to your personal experiences?

## STANDARDS

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### American History

- **Expectation:** Summarize the struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil rights that occurred in the United States in the postwar period.
- **Learning Targets:** Summarize the struggle for racial, gender, and extension of civil rights that occurred in the postwar period.

