

The Civil Rights Movement and the Future of the National Park System in a Racially Diverse America

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Abstract:

The U.S. National Park System contains places of world-renowned beauty and tremendous historical significance that represent some of the central values and experiences in American culture, democracy, and freedom for everyone, for all time. However, the vast majority of visitors to these parks are white, which has increasingly been seen as a problem as it suggests a lack of full participation by all members of society. While there are several perspectives on low minority visitation, it is possible that park policies or interpretation may not appeal to, or may unintentionally exclude minority visitors. This study examines how efforts to expand the inclusiveness and representativeness of the park system may affect its geography. Recent National Park Service plans to commemorate the Civil Rights movement are examined with the goal of understanding how the geography and purpose of the park system may be changed over time. The expansion of the park system into cultural themes will likely necessitate a continual expansion of the number and kinds of park units.

Keywords: National parks | African Americans | Civil Rights tourism | historic site

Article:

Introduction

The U.S. National Park System (Figure 1) contains places of world-renowned beauty and tremendous historical significance, including the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Hawaii Volcanoes; historical sites such as Yorktown and Gettysburg battlefields; and landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty or the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. These parks are considered representative of 'some of the central values and experiences in American culture' (Nash 1970: 726), and the 'best idea America ever had' (Duncan & Burns 2009: xxiii). They were created 'not for kings or noblemen of the very rich, but for everyone, for all time' (Duncan & Burns 2009: xv). Visiting parks has long been a family tradition for Americans and during much of the postwar era visits to parks grew at a faster pace than population, leading to problems of overcrowding (National Parks

Second Century Commission 2010). However, the vast majority of national park visitors are white.

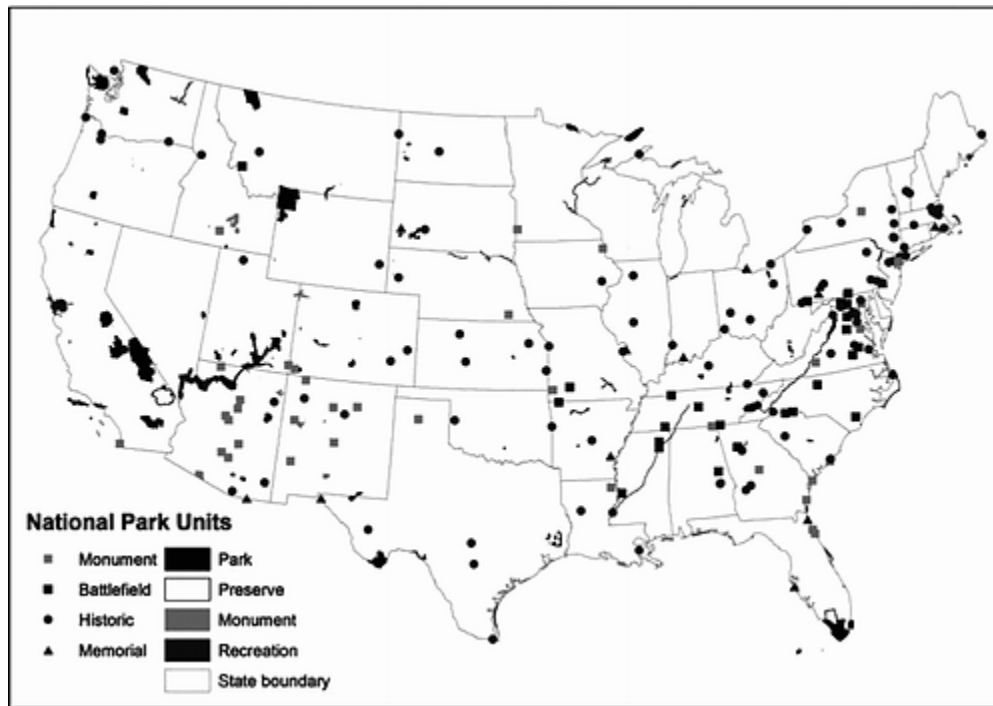


Figure 1 The National Park System. *Source:* National Park Service.

Concern over limited national park visitation by minority population can be traced back to the 19th century (Sax 1976), but visitation data by ethnic group are still limited. There are few National Park Service (NPS) statistics available that report the racial or ethnic characteristics of visitors, but a 2003 survey showed that only 13% of African Americans visited a park in the previous two years, compared to 27% of Hispanics, 29% of Asians, 33% of Native Americans, and 36% of non-Hispanic Whites (Solop *et al.* 2003). A follow up survey in 2009 (Taylor *et al.* 2011) reported similar patterns. This difference has been much discussed in recent years (for example, Smith 2008; Fimrite 2009; Khokha 2009; Navarro 2010), and is disturbing because at the heart of the park system idea is the political construction of national identity and history and the ideals of democracy and freedom. For America to imagine and construct itself as a multicultural society, it must foster a sense of belonging for non-whites. Given that national parks are funded through taxes, if these facilities are used only by narrow segments of the population then important equity issues arise (Nicholls 2001; Wolch *et al.* 2005; Timperio *et al.* 2007; Zhang *et al.* 2011). Experiencing fewer visits to national parks has been associated with ‘nature deficit disorder,’ in which children who spend less time outdoors may lose contact with and respect for the natural world (Louv 2005). In addition, in the last several decades visitation has been flat or declining, and it is projected that many national parks will experience a decline in visitors in the next few years. Park budgets, and therefore visitor services and protection of the environment and historic buildings, are dependent on visitation (Rettie 1995). While fewer

visitors may reduce pressure on the natural environment and historic resources, it will also be accompanied by reduced funding and staffing for services and protection, and so a decrease in visitation can ultimately be expected to result in a decline in the quality and integrity of the National Park System. Diversifying the population of potential park visitors may maintain or increase visitation levels and prevent a loss of support for the treasures of the National Park System (Shultis & More 2011). Attracting minority visitors is a social responsibility that will help foster the preservation of national parks for everyone. Projections show that the non-white population of the USA will continue to grow faster than the white population, and non-Hispanic Whites may make up only 46% of the US population by 2050 (Ortman & Guarneri 2009; National Parks Second Century Commission 2010). The future of America's National Park System, as with many valued cultural institutions, requires the increased support of a multicultural population.

The NPS has greatly expanded the geographical and thematic scope of the park system over the last century. This study will examine how efforts to expand the inclusiveness and representativeness of the system, especially with regard to the African American population, have affected its geography, and will likely do so in the future. We suggest that there are inherent difficulties in doing so, and that success may require new kinds of park units and management philosophies. These will likely commemorate people and events that the typical white American visitors may not be familiar with, or may not view as appropriate as a park unit. Just as scenic parks such as Yellowstone have been battlegrounds between opposing environmental attitudes, these new parks may be battlegrounds over cultural views.

Origin and Expansion of the National Park System

Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872, and was the first attempt at setting aside public land in order to protect it for non-destructive uses (Rettie 1995). It was followed by several hundred other national park units, which expanded the ideal of scenic beauty to include desert landscapes, caves, volcanoes, swamps, and geologic oddities (Frost & Hall 2009). In each case, the pattern remained the same as that set for Yellowstone, with the park in federal ownership, existing inhabitants removed (humans were not seen as part of the natural environment), no hunting, agriculture, mining, or other economic uses allowed, and the landscape preserved in its existing condition (or restored to a pristine condition presumed to exist before visitors arrived). While Yellowstone and other vast areas of spectacular mountains, forests, and waterfalls continue to represent the National Park System in the minds of many, the number and types of places within the system has continued to proliferate over time. By 2011 the park system included 394 separate park units, with 19 different designations used to describe them (Table 1). National Recreation Areas, Seashores, Lakeshores, Rivers, and Parkways are among the most visited sites in the park system. National Preserves were first created in 1974 and are similar to national parks but also allow non-traditional uses such as hunting or mining (Rettie 1995). These large outdoor parks together make up over 96% of the acreage park system and account for 63% of visitors (Figure 2).

Designation	Abbreviation	Number (2009)	Visitors (2008)	Acreage (2008)
National Parks	NP	58	61,159,714	52,095,046
National Preserves	Npreserve	18	2,790,473	24,157,571
National Reserves	NR	2	85,893	33,740
National Recreation Areas	NRA	18	49,584,382	3,700,277
National Rivers	Nriver	5	4,538,091	426,349
National Lakeshores	NL	4	3,403,376	228,995
National Seashores	NS	10	15,909,135	595,014
National Wild and Scenic Rivers	NWSriver	10	1,281,000	319,914
National Parkways	Nparkway	4	30,165,232	177,340
National Scenic Trails	NST	3	Not counted	239,659
National Battlefields	NB	11	1,528,532	14,545
National Battlefield Parks	NBP	3	2,131,732	15,056
National Battlefield Site	NBS	1	Not counted	1
National Military Parks	NMP	9	4,564,033	41,900
National Historical Parks	NHP	45	27,304,519	173,709
National Historic Site	NHS	77	9,385,959	37,506
International Historic Sites	IHS	1	Not counted	45
National Memorial	Nmem	28	29,507,434	10,588
National Monuments	NM	74	21,610,296	2,027,865
Other designations		11	9,903,148	36,827

Source: National Park Service

Table 1. National Park designations, visitation, and acreage

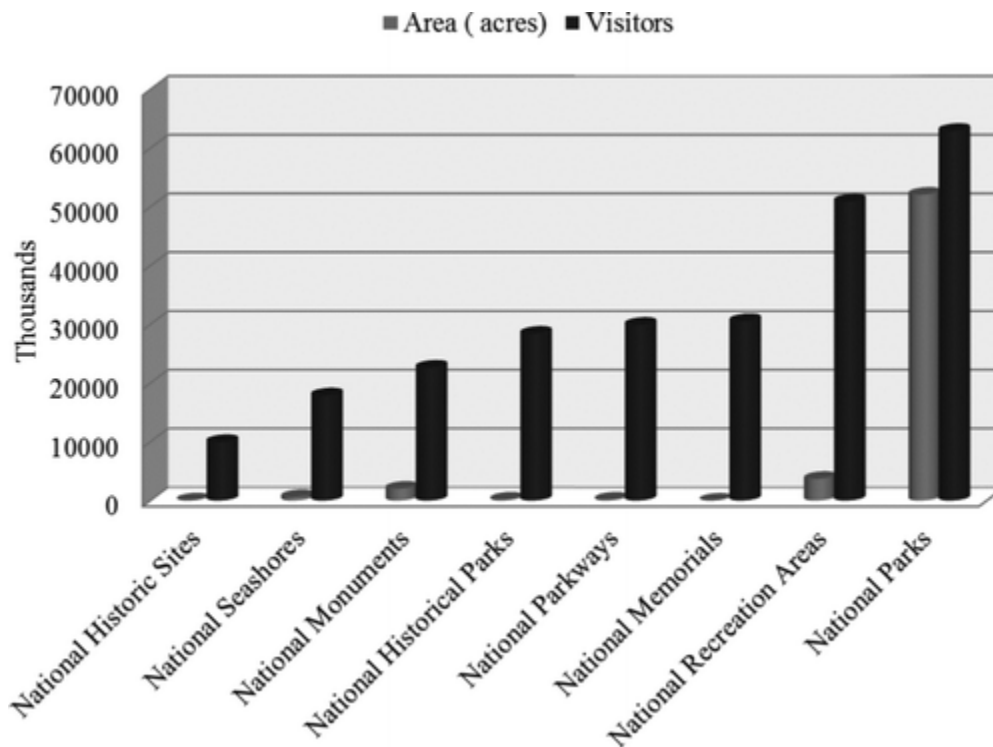


Figure 2. Park visitation and acreage by park type. Source: National Park Service.

However, there exists a very different set of places within the park system, those devoted to historical and cultural sites. In the early 20th century, the preservation of historic sites became an important part of the National Park System. The 1906 Antiquities Act gave the president the power to proclaim a National Monument to preserve historic sites, prehistoric ruins, or archaeological sites, as well as natural areas (Ise 1961; Rothman 1989). This authority was quickly used to preserve many Native American ruins in the southwest, as well as many other sites. In 1933, battlefield parks, such as Gettysburg and Shiloh, were transferred from the War Department to the NPS to create National Military Parks and similar units. With these moves, the NPS became the primary federal agency involved in historic preservation. While the large nature parks get the majority of attention, and might be thought of as ‘traditional’ national parks (Tweed 2010), the smaller National Historic Sites and Parks are actually the most numerous type of park designation. These make up less than 4% of park acreage, but they serve at least 36% of all visitors (Figure 2), in part due to their location within many urban areas in the eastern USA (Weber and Sultana, in press). These cultural sites serve a much greater number of visitors per acre than do the much larger nature parks (Figure 3).

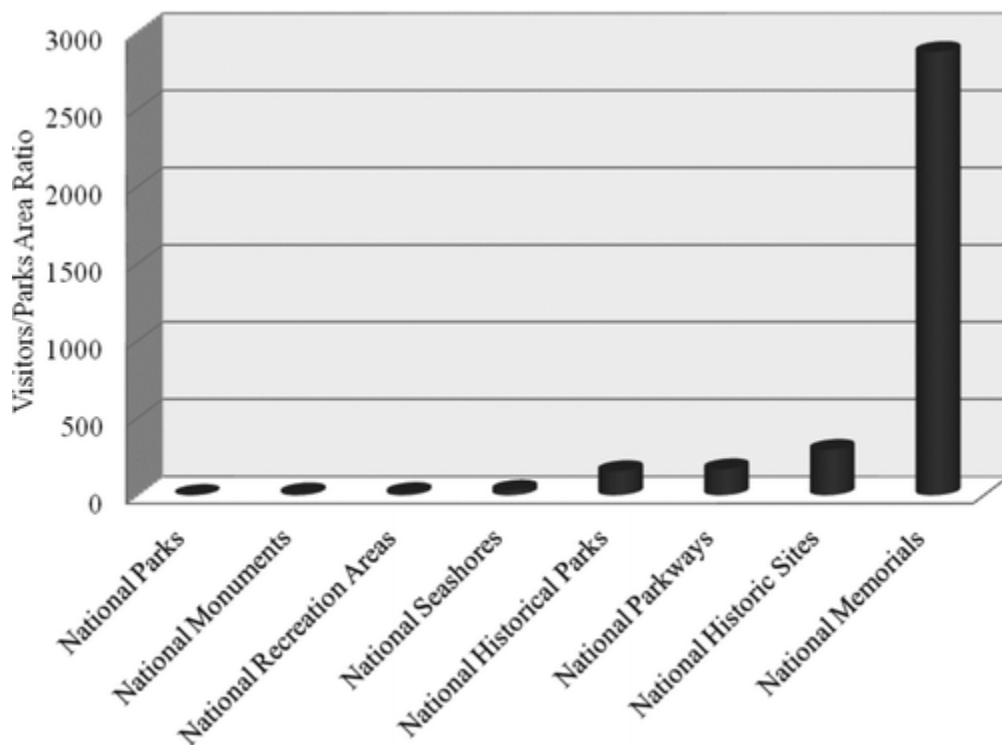


Figure 3. Ratio of visitation to acreage by park type. *Source:* National Park Service.

The NPS's responsibility for cultural and historic sites has expanded beyond the boundaries of federal lands. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 gave the NPS the goal of inventorying historic¹ properties for inclusion within the nation's park system (Mackintosh 1985). Survey teams would investigate properties and those that were of national significance or exceptional value would become park units. The majority of historic sites at the time comprised battlefields

and forts, and the agency saw the historic property inventory as a means of both adding units and expanding the geographic scope and content of the system. Few of the potential additions actually became park units, but those that did not (whether privately owned or public) were designated as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs). In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act created the National Register of Historic Places – an NPS-guided program for identifying properties of state and local historic significance (Mackintosh 1985). In the 1970s, interest in urban preservation led to the opportunity to designate historic districts within the National Register to represent collections of historic properties in cities and towns (Mackintosh 1985). These districts could be nationally significant even if many buildings in them weren't.

In the 1980s, the NPS further expanded its historic preservation efforts by allowing the creation of National Heritage Areas (NHA), which are private/public partnerships and represent a cultural or natural landscape, and can range from neighborhood scale to the size of entire states. They are locally organized and funded, with the NPS providing only a supervisory role. They build on and support local economic activities, and they do not contain the exclusion on commercial activity found in national park sites and NHLs. NHAs serve to protect physical and cultural resources while also promoting economic development, usually through tourism. NHAs were first used in 1984 and now include 40 areas across the country (National Park Service 2011a).

As part of this expansion in historical and cultural themes, the National Park System engaged directly with African American and other minority individuals. The first national park unit dedicated to an African American was George Washington Carver NM, which was created after his death in 1943 at his birthplace near Carthage, Missouri, in part to counter Nazi propaganda by showing inclusiveness in American society (Toogood 1973). Additional African American sites did not follow until 1956 when Booker T. Washington NM was created, and again in 1962 with Frederick Douglass NHS. In addition to adding more African American park units in the 1970s (Tuskegee Institute was created in 1974, followed by Maggie Walker NHS in 1978), there was also push to recognize privately owned sites that represented African American history as NHLs (Mackintosh 1985). The official NPS view had previously been that any racial or ethnic history related to a site should be incidental to the site's importance. In 1974, the first of these NHLs was designated and 61 had been designated by 1977. Many in the NPS were opposed to these African American sites, feeling that the designation of a property as nationally significant should be colorblind and in no way reflect race (Mackintosh 1985). The fact that no African American site had previously been found to be nationally significant was presumably taken as simple evidence that African Americans had made no significant contributions. One official wrote that 'I have great difficulty in convincing myself that recognition by race is conducive to national homogeneity' (Mackintosh 1985: 75), apparently not recognizing that the homogeneity of which he spoke did not exist.

The number of park units dedicated to African American individuals or themes has continued to grow, especially in the 1990s. Several lists of national park units commemorating African American individuals or history have been created (African American Experience Fund 2008),

and while such lists can easily be proven incomplete (for example, they do not mention the Buffalo Soldiers in western parks such as Yosemite), they provide an indicator of the geography of the African American presence within the National Park System (Figure 4).

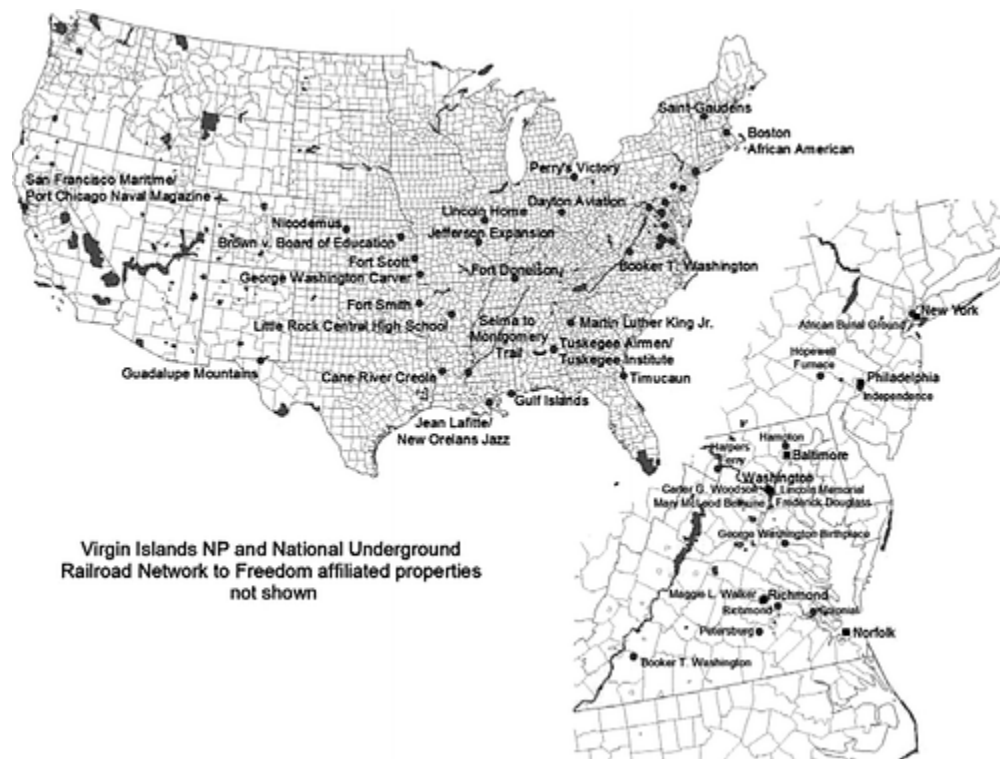


Figure 4. National Park unites with African American themes or interpretation. *Source:* National Park Service; African American Experience Fund (2008).

The National Park System has clearly expanded from its origin with the unique beauty of Yellowstone to include a wide range of natural, recreational, historic, and cultural units. Rather than containing only unspoiled nature, the majority of the National Park System is in fact increasingly oriented towards preserving the nation's historic and cultural heritage. The NPS has further helped recognize the historic importance of many thousands more places in private ownership, and assemblages of these properties in historic districts and neighborhoods. How well this park system serves the nation's minorities, and how that may change, will be discussed in the next sections.

National Parks and African Americans

As we mentioned earlier, very limited data exist to show visitation to individual parks by race. The only source of this information is visitor surveys carried out by the Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho (2010). These surveys ask a range of questions about the home state or country of visitors, places they have visited in the park, transport mode, size of their group, and opinions about park services and facilities. Around half of the surveys carried out since 2000 also

ask for the respondent's race (the options were Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, or Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and multiple responses were permissible) and whether they are Hispanic. Between 2000 and mid-2010, 111 surveys had been conducted in park units in the 48 contiguous states, with 62 surveys for 51 park units containing race and ethnicity information. Among these 51 parks, about 93% of visitors were white, 3.75% were Hispanic (of any race), 3.53% were Asian, 2.1% were Native American, 2.06% reported Black or African American, and 0.24% described themselves as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Most park units show very low levels of minority visitation, which is generally similar to that expected by the location of each population within the country (Figure 5). Few of the 51 parks in the sample are located in the southeast, where the African American population remains concentrated, and 13 of these parks reported no African American visitors at all.

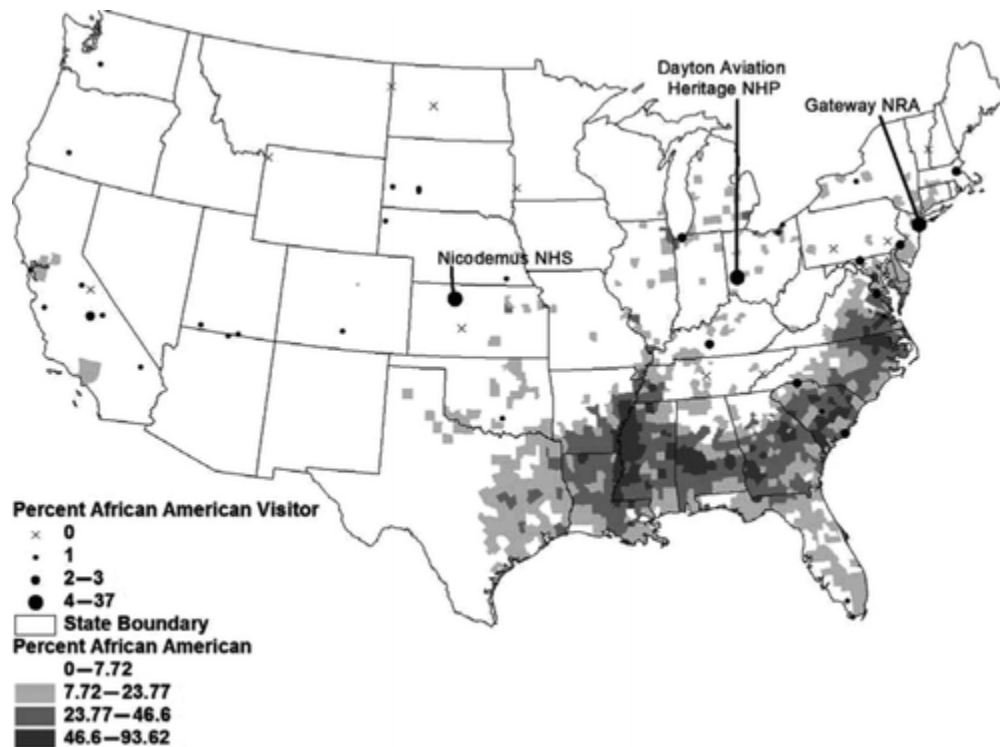


Figure 5. African American population and national park visitation.

However, while African Americans and other minorities may be absent from the large nature-oriented national parks, they are visible in other units of the National Park System, particularly historic sites. For example, Nicodemus NHS in Kansas reported that 37% of visitors to this town settled by former slaves were African American. Dayton Aviation Heritage was next highest at 4%. This park was included on several lists of African American-themed parks because it includes the home of African American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar.

There are several perspectives on why minorities have lower visitation rates to national parks and other outdoor recreation sites. These are often described as the marginality, subcultural or

ethnicity, assimilation, and discrimination hypotheses (Sax 1976; Floyd *et al.* 1994; Floyd 1999; Carter 2008; Byrne & Wolch 2009). The marginality hypothesis was first discussed in the 1970s (Washburne 1978) and states that socioeconomic constraints prevent minorities from participating in recreation activities such as visiting parks. They may have more limited sources of information and not be aware of these possibilities, or they may be interested but lack the means, time, or money to do so (Floyd 1999; 2001; Johnson *et al.* 2007). National parks may be particularly susceptible to these sorts of issues, as the very idea of national parks has been criticized for the 'elitist' characteristics of its clientele at least since the late 19th century (Sax 1976; Bultena & Field 1978). The origin of the national park idea was rooted in early travelers' experiences of America's wilderness, with artists and writers emphasizing the exceptional beauty of these remote places. National parks were therefore for those who had the taste and abilities to enjoy or experience these areas. There has been a persistent discussion on the underrepresentation of poor and minority visitors in national parks and the question raised of whether the image of 'elitism' associated with national park preservation and expansion are keeping these populations away. Some research has indicated that the social contexts are more important than economic issues in influencing whether someone will visit a national park or not (Bultena & Field 1978).

The subculture or ethnicity hypothesis states that different groups have different preferences and levels of interest in outdoor recreation activities independent of socioeconomic factors. Lower levels of attendance are not therefore a socioeconomic limitation but a valid expression of cultural differences. Treating activities favored by white as the norm and superior to other activities favored by non-whites is clearly not appropriate. This has been supported by research showing that compared to whites, African Americans are less likely to camp or hike, but are more likely to take part in team sports (Washburne 1978), are more likely to engage in long-distance travel to visit friends or family, tend to travel in larger groups, and more likely to travel on cruise ships and spend as much time and money on leisure travel (Carter 2008). It has also been argued that values regarding the attractions of national parks differ by white and non-white people, as the former view parks as places for refuge and escape for urban stress, while the latter view little enthusiasm for parks and wilderness because these places remain within the collective memory of African Americans as reminders of their violent subjugation and oppression (Meeker 1991; Johnson 1998).

A further explanation for varying park attendance patterns is geography, and particularly the relative distribution of parks and population. The largest and best known park units are in the interior West, while many minority populations are concentrated in the east or west coast. A correlation between accessibility to national park units and visitation by minorities has been found (Weber and Sultana, *in press*), with those park units closest to minority population concentrations having a higher level of visitation by those groups. For the African American population it was found that they tend to have higher levels of accessibility to newer and smaller

park units, reflecting their location in the eastern USA where the number of small National Historic Sites has greatly expanded in the last half century.

It is also possible that the park policies, interpretive programs, employees, or other visitors are a negative effect on minority visitation patterns. An early African American presence was removed from several parks (Erickson *et al.* 2009; Algeo 2010), while segregated facilities were present in several southern national parks such as Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains (Young 2009). The legacy of these segregation practices may survive in the ways parks are presented to the public, as many public spaces are not neutral but have been coded as 'white' spaces. The 'whiteness' of outdoor spaces has been demonstrated in magazine advertisements as well as in websites (Martin 2004). It has been found that there is some level of discomfort among whites if photographs of parks show a majority of black visitors (Stanfield *et al.* 2005). Even former plantations worked by slaves have been whitewashed, with slave quarters and living conditions either not mentioned or presented in a positive light (Eichstedt & Small 2002; Alderman & Campbell 2008; Alderman & Modlin 2008; Butler *et al.* 2008; Alderman 2010). Given that the overwhelming majority of park units are visited nearly entirely by whites, it can be expected that park interpretation and visitor facilities will not only reflect this demographic groups' needs, expectations, and desires, but do so in ways that renders this 'whiteness' invisible to this group. Many of the units of the National Park System tell a story about the heroic settlement of North America by a technologically innovative population, and contain the natural wonders they found. This narrative has largely ignored the presence of minority populations who do not fit into the story.²

There is evidence of this problem in national parks. Miller (1991) visited a number of mostly American Revolution and Civil War park units in 1990 and provided an African American perspective on these parks' interpretive programs, museum exhibits, and employee attitudes. He found that while many NPS employees were dedicated to what he termed the 'inclusionary imperative,' or the goal of ensuring that parks reflect the experiences of all Americans, the reality often fell short. There was also tremendous uncertainty as to how to go about doing it. For example, as NPS visitor interpretation guidelines at the time included the goals of ensuring that visitors had a good time in the park and their visit was an escape from the pressures of life, it is not clear how slavery or Jim Crow segregation could be incorporated into a park's visitor experience. Yet 'often the Black connection at these sites involves some aspect of slavery, some racially tainted legal injustice, or points out some other negative aspect of the American past. Some might call it inherent racism which has kept Blacks out of the interpretive picture, others a Eurocentric idealism combined with a tradition of emphasis on the positive. Whatever the explanation, the Nation's Black citizenry can rightfully complain that it has been ill-served by NPS programs over the years' (Miller 1991: 3).

Miller felt that urban parks were more likely to include black themes in interpretation than more isolated rural ones. Horseshoe Bend NMP in rural Alabama was an example of a park that did a poor job with African American (and Native American) issues. Antietam NB did not mention

that the outcome of the battle persuaded Abraham Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, yet 'from the Afro-American viewpoint this document deserves celebration no less than that enjoyed by the revered Gettysburg address at the NPS National Military Park and cemetery where its reading is commemorated' (Miller 1991: 12). Likewise, Lowell NHP in Boston documents the growth of the New England cotton industry, yet made no mention of the southern slaves who produced the cotton for these mills (though it does now).³ More recently, visitor surveys of attitudes towards the presentation of slavery in interpretive exhibits in Civil War battlefield parks have been carried out (Strait 2004; Heard 2005), with the findings that not only do these sites still not present the issue of slavery in an effective manner, but also that the majority of visitors would be interested in seeing the topic interpreted in the park. A recently released official NPS guidebook to the Civil War prominently features slavery and emancipation, as well as impacts of the war on women, civilian life, and its connection to westward expansion and conflicts with Native Americans (Eastern National 2011). It remains to be seen if the 150th anniversary commemoration of the Civil War will fundamentally change interpretation at national park units, though a reenactment of the beginning of the war at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, attracted little interest among African Americans (Smith 2011).

Most national park units encompass a wide range of themes, which will likely change over time. Virtually all park units contain a mix of resources, such as scenery, developed outdoor recreation areas, wilderness, and historic and archaeological sites. While a park may be known predominantly for one resource, it will likely contain several, each of which may appeal to different groups of visitors. It can be a substantial challenge for the park service to manage each of these resources consistently and in the face of pressure from visitors and interest groups (Dilsaver 2005). Nonetheless, existing parks can expand their interpretation to include recognition of minorities and minority history, appealing to a larger audience. For example, Yosemite NP has added interpretation for the Buffalo Soldiers, an African American cavalry unit that protected that park (and several others) against poachers and loggers between 1891 and 1913. The NPS is well aware of these issues as well, and considerable efforts are underway to make the park system more inclusive in a more diverse America (Linenthal 2008; Peterman & Peterman 2009; National Parks Second Century Commission 2010). It should also be noted that the NPS is attempting to increase diversity among its own employees as well. A survey in 1999 found that 79% of NPS permanent workers were white (*Los Angeles Times* 1999) and 11% were African American, of these few were rangers or otherwise in positions where they would likely be visible to visitors. Hispanic workers made up about 5% of workers, Native Americans comprised 3%, and 1% were Asian. At that time the NPS began a policy of recruiting minority workers and taking greater efforts to diversify its workforce.

Race and Future Geographies of the National Park System

New park units will be created to commemorate individuals, places, or themes not currently represented within the system, and it can be expected that the expansion of the park system will lead to greater representation by African Americans. Since 1980, Congress has been in control of

determining which places are investigated by the Park Service (Dilsaver 2008). An investigation or resource study must be authorized to document presence of resources, feasibility of sites, and whether it meets the criteria for national park status. If so, a bill must be passed by Congress and signed into law to create the new park, which must also be funded. While a perusal of the Internet may reveal considerable discussion of possible national park units, very few of these possibilities result in authorized studies and become proposals, and even fewer are actually created.

For a park to be created, it must meet particular criteria. It must be of national significance, meaning that it must meet each of four standards: 'It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource; it possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our Nation's heritage; it offers superlative opportunities for recreation for public use and enjoyment, or for scientific study; it retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource' (National Park Service 2011b: 1). NPS criteria for new parks further specifically excludes 'cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historic figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, and reconstructed historic buildings' (National Park Service 2011b: 1), as well as those that have become important within the past 50 years, although exceptions to all of these are allowable in cases where a person or structure is of clear significance.

Several examples exist of proposed or potential parks oriented towards minority individuals or themes. The NPS recently completed a study to create a site to commemorate the former slave, abolitionist, and slave liberator Harriet Tubman (National Park Service 2008). This study examined more than 100 sites associated with her, with two privately owned sites having the strongest association and feasibility. A bill submitted in Congress would create a Harriet Tubman NHP in Auburn, New York, and a Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad NHP in eastern Maryland, with a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the private owners. These would add additional park units in the northeast, an area with a high density of such sites.

A more recent study by the NPS (National Historic Landmarks Program 2008) examined various civil rights movements that have existed during the country's history up to 1976, and events, people, and places associated with them. These cover a range of topics, including segregation in public accommodations and education, voting rights, and tribal sovereignty issues for Native Americans. Only 10 sites not already in the National Park System were found to be nationally significant (Table 2 and Figure 6). These 10 sites have all been recognized as NHLs, and could therefore be considered for addition to the National Park System. The majority of these sites are located in urban areas of the southeast, with four of them in Alabama associated with the 1963 protests in Birmingham, the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, and the 1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott (Figure 7). Among the sites are the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, which was a meeting place for 1963 demonstrations against segregated businesses, and was in turn bombed by segregationists. The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, was

the location of meetings for organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1954, and was where Martin Luther King, Jr. first rose to national prominence.

Table 2. Civil Rights parks and landmarks

Map no.	Place	City	State	Themes
<i>Existing NPS Civil Rights sites</i>				
1	Lincoln Memorial	Washington	DC	Public desegregation
2	Martin Luther King NHS	Atlanta	GA	Voting rights, public desegregation
3	Selma to Montgomery NHT	US Hwy 80	AL	Voting rights
4	Brown v. Board of Education NHS	Topeka	KS	School desegregation
5	Little Rock Central High School	Little Rock	AR	School desegregation
6	Boston African American NHS	Boston	MA	School desegregation
<i>Nationally significant NHL properties</i>				
7	Bethel Baptist Church	Birmingham	AL	Public desegregation
7	Sixteenth Street Baptist Church	Birmingham	AL	Public desegregation
8	Dexter Avenue Baptist Church	Montgomery	AL	Public desegregation
9	Brown Chapel AME Church	Selma	AL	Voting rights
2	Martin Luther King Historic District	Atlanta	GA	Voting rights, public desegregation
10	Dorchester Academy	Midway	GA	Voting rights
11	Lincoln Hall, Berea College	Berea	KY	School desegregation
6	Charles Sumner House	Boston	MA	School desegregation
12	Robert Russa Moton High School	Farmville	VA	School desegregation
1	Supreme Court	Washington	DC	School desegregation
<i>Potentially nationally significant properties</i>				
13	Greyhound Bus Station	Anniston	AL	Public desegregation
13	Trailways Bus Station	Anniston	AL	Public desegregation
7	Greyhound Bus Station	Birmingham	AL	Public desegregation
7	Birmingham Civil Rights Historic District	Birmingham	AL	Public desegregation
7	Gaston Motel	Birmingham	AL	Public desegregation
8	First Baptist Church Montgomery	AL	Public desegregation	
8	Post office and courthouse	Montgomery	AL	Voting rights
8	Alabama State Capitol	Montgomery	AL	Voting rights
9	Edmund Pettus Bridge Selma	AL	Voting rights	
14	Foster Auditorium, University of Alabama	Tuscaloosa	AL	School desegregation
15	Butler Chapel AME Zion Church	Tuskegee	AL	Voting rights
5	Daisy Bates House	Little Rock	AR	School desegregation
16	Howard High School	Wilmington	DE	School desegregation
2	Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals	Atlanta	GA	Voting rights
17	Mount Zion Baptist Church	Albany	GA	Public desegregation
17	Shiloh Church	Albany	GA	Public desegregation

18	Mount Zion Baptist Church	Baton Rouge	LA	Public desegregation
19	Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals	New Orleans	LA	Voting rights
20	Greyhound Bus Station	Jackson	MS	Public desegregation
21	Lyceum, University of Mississippi	Oxford	MS	School desegregation
22	Woolworth's	Greensboro	NC	Public desegregation
23	Peabody Hall, Miami University	Oxford	OH	Voting rights
24	Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma	Norman	OK	School desegregation
25	Penn School Historic District	Fragmore	SC	Voting rights
26	Summerton High School	Summerton	SC	School desegregation
27	New Kent Middle School and George Watkins school	New Kent	VA	School desegregation
28	US Post office and Court building	Richmond	VA	School desegregation
1	Rankin Chapel, Foundard Library, Federick Douglas Memorial Hall, Howard University	Washington	DC	School desegregation
1	John Philip Sousa Middle School	Washington	DC	School desegregation

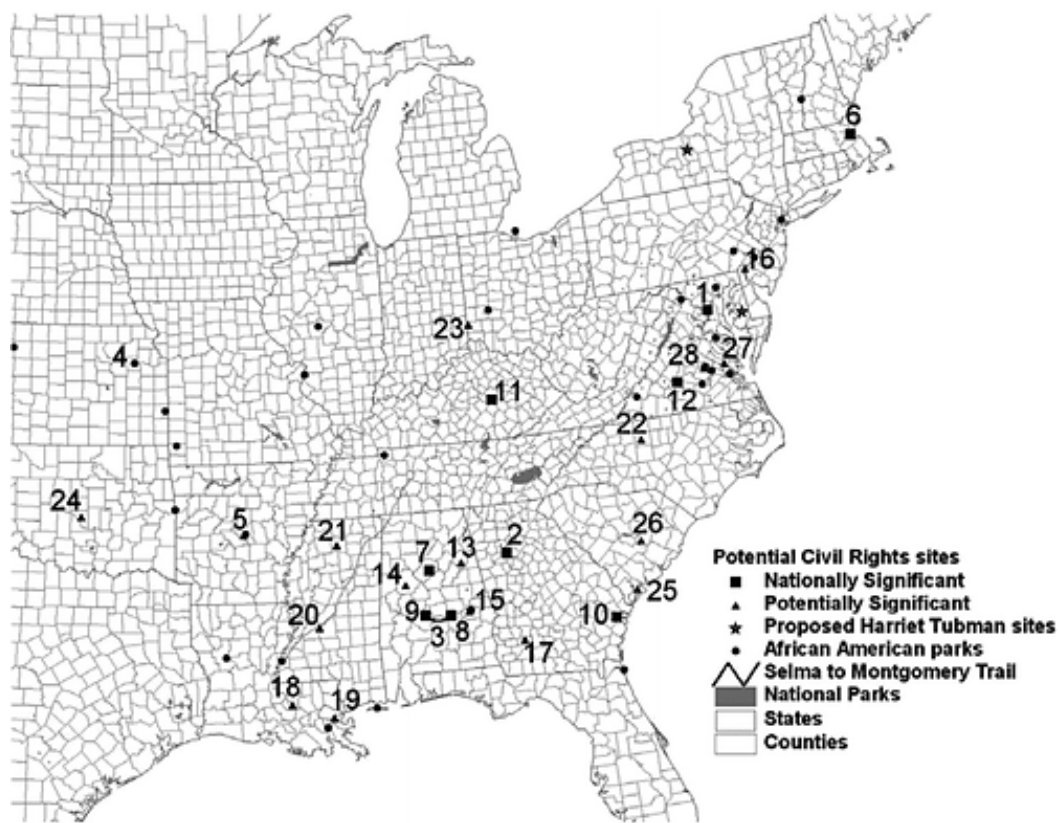


Figure 6. Nationally Significant Civil Rights sites. *Note:* Numbers indicate cities in Table 2.

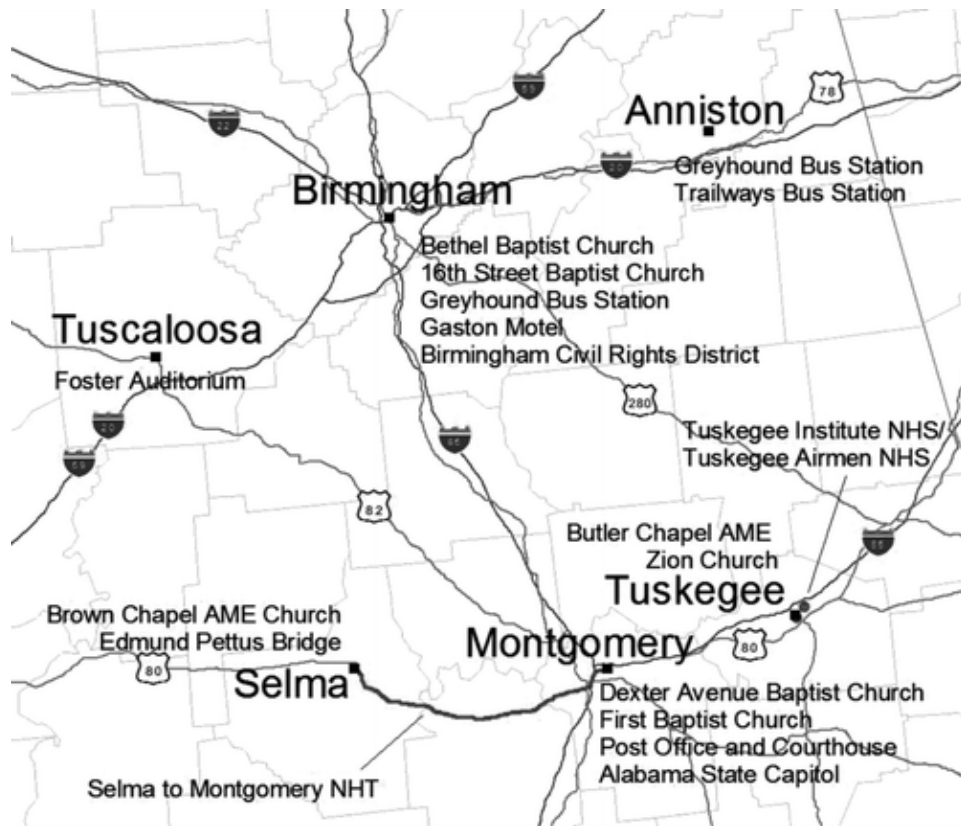


Figure 7. Alabama Civil Rights sites in or potentially eligible for the National Park System.

In addition to these sites, a number of other Civil Rights sites are potentially significant and worthy of further study to determine if they are of national significance (Table 2). The majority of these are associated with school desegregation efforts at both the K-12 and university level, but these also include five sites associated with the 1961 Freedom Rides to desegregate interstate bus transportation and one site in Greensboro, North Carolina, commemorating student sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters and other public places. A further list (not shown) included properties that no longer exist, have lost their historic integrity, or could not be found, and were therefore removed from further consideration. Buses and railroad cars associated with some desegregation stories cannot be located or no longer exist. Ollie's Barbecue in Birmingham survived desegregation but the historic structure was abandoned when it moved to the suburbs in 1999 (though closing two years later because of declining business). Many school buildings have been demolished, while other properties survive, but have been altered. The Montgomery Greyhound bus station is one of several where Freedom Riders, attempting to desegregate interstate bus transportation, were beaten upon arrival in the city in 1961. It was ruled not eligible as an NHL due to a lack of historic integrity, but was restored and reopened as a museum in 2011 (Johnson 2011). Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham (formerly West Park) has been redeveloped with a series of statues commemorating the 1963 protest marches and forms the heart of the city's Civil Rights district, but this redevelopment removed the park's historic integrity.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these lists. First, the more nationally significant the sites are, the fewer the Civil Rights stories they represent. Many stories were weeded out by the need to pursue properties with sufficient historic integrity. There is also a geographic component, with a core of nationally significant properties located in a handful of cities primarily in the Deep South and a larger set of less significant or no longer extant properties scattered more widely. An attempt by the NPS to create one or more park units from these sites would presumably focus on only one or two sites, perhaps within Alabama. In practice, national significance for potential parks has meant that a site must appeal to people throughout the country (Dilsaver 2008). For sites reflecting the values of the majority white population this may not be a significant problem, but for sites clearly associated with minority populations, history, or culture, this could represent a substantial barrier to the creation of more Civil Rights parks.

It is also evident that many Civil Rights stories investigated by the NPS took place in everyday buildings such as schools, churches, bus stations, or restaurants. This is a problem for recognition as within the field of historic preservation 'standards are heavily weighted in favor of traditional thinking about architecture as art and history' (Stipe 2003: 30). This works against the commemoration of Civil Rights events or the interpretation of slavery and segregation. Although the standards of the historic preservation field have become more flexible since the 1980s, with the idea of landscape and cultural preservation and the participation of minority groups becoming more common (Downer 2003; Lee 2003), the focus on buildings and great men remains. While the NPS is seeking properties to be added or designated, it does not seem to be rethinking the basic set of criteria used to identify historic resources.

A further problem is that many of these properties have not survived intact to the present day. This presents difficulties for Civil Rights parks because the traditional approach to creating national park units would require them to be federally owned facilities that preserve a building or site in a particular (historic) condition and allow no economic activity other than tourism. The NPS can essentially only commemorate an event or person if a building or property associated with that person or event survives relatively unchanged. While this provides a direct link to the past for many visitors, it also limits the people and places that can be memorialized. It has been difficult to find surviving buildings to commemorate the lives of some 20th century US presidents (Mackintosh 1985), and finding commercial buildings that have survived unchanged from a Civil Rights event is even less likely, though certainly not so difficult as finding structures with which to commemorate slavery and the lives of slaves (Heard 2005).

Churches and schools make up the many of those properties that have survived. Churches were among the few institutions controlled by African Americans and vital parts of their communities, so it is unsurprising that they were central locations in the Civil Rights movement. It is also not surprising that these churches remain in use with minimal changes, and so rise to the level of nationally significant properties that have preserved their historic integrity. Yet, because they remain in use they are not likely to be considered to be feasible as park units.

Civil Rights sites are therefore often inherently triply disadvantaged when discussing representation in the National Park System, as they are unlikely to be associated with the architectural achievement of white men, are less likely to survive, and, even if they do, may remain in use in their originally intended function and so be ineligible.

While many Civil Rights sites were removed from consideration by the NPS due to a lack of historic integrity or other issues, these structures remain part of memorial landscapes developed since the 1980s commemorating the struggle for racial equality (Dwyer 2002). Atlanta, Birmingham, and Memphis have the three largest Civil Rights memorial landscapes, though only Atlanta currently has a national park unit (Dwyer & Alderman 2008). Instead, locally supported museums, church displays, parks, and historic markers provide interpretation in these areas. Fazio (2010) provides a detailed historic and geographic overview of Birmingham's Civil Rights marches and rallies in the former African American business district of the city. These landscapes have become important tourism destinations for African Americans and a growing travel market. Alabama produced the first state guide to African American history sites in 1983, and numerous guides to these sites exist now (for example, Curtis 1996; Carrier 2004; Cobb 2008; Alabama Tourism Department 2009; Gaillard 2010).⁴ Mississippi is the most recent state to join the Civil Rights tourism boom, and recently announced its own Civil Rights heritage trail, with 30 sites to be marked by signs (Lucas 2011).

However, substantial barriers remain as these memorial landscapes are often located in peripheral areas of downtown in 'the decimated remains of segregation era Black business districts. The spaces in which these memorials are located ... are considered by many to be marginal and dangerous urban areas' (Dwyer 2002: 43). Even when physical remains of Civil Rights sites exist, they are often in parts of the city where white tourists might rarely go or that they consider them shabby and dangerous. Their locations 'straddle the border between commemoration and confinement' (Dwyer 2002: 43). This could certainly be a deterrent to creating a national park unit, though it has undoubtedly contributed to their survival, as these declining neighborhoods were less likely to be redeveloped and lose their Civil Rights era landscapes.

Just as the collective memory of African American tourists may retain a negative view of wilderness and nature (Johnson 1998), many whites may share a negative view of the downtown spaces of many Civil Rights sites. However, in both cases these collective memories of places are the result of a legacy of racism. The National Park System therefore includes a geographic division of places based on racial attachment to place, with wild nature appealing to whites but less so to African Americans and newer urban historic sites commemorating the lives and achievements of African Americans that may be less appealing to whites.⁵ The roots of the former situation in slavery, servitude, and danger have been documented (for example, Johnson 1998) but the latter case has only recently been identified as an issue in Civil Rights commemoration. This can be seen clearly in the creation of Civil Rights memorial landscapes in cities such as Birmingham, Memphis, and Atlanta, which have encountered considerable

resistance (Dwyer 2002; Dwyer & Alderman 2008). A frequent point of contention is whether these sites are necessary or will merely serve to reopen old wounds, as different views of history are being fought over. As documented for debates over display of the Confederate battle flag (Webster & Leib 2001; 2002; 2008), a cultural ‘cold war’ can be said to exist over the meaning of the Civil War and Civil Rights Movement in the South. Even more resistance would undoubtedly have occurred had there been an attempt to locate these sites in more prominent locations within the city, as has been documented for attempts at renaming streets after Martin Luther King (Alderman 2000). There are many complex political issues involved in these memorials, between competing stories about the past and tensions within the Civil Rights movements.

Despite the efforts of the NPS, the requirements for park status or historic preservation would appear to work against the greater representation of African American people and history in the park system, as these sites may be (perhaps intentionally) invisible on the landscape, and without visible landscape remnants they cannot be included in the park system. Slavery and the Civil Rights movement may be fundamentally incompatible with the traditional park model because they rely on privately owned sites and land uses incompatible with traditional national park units, or are based on preserving a living culture. NHAs may be more useful as an approach to Civil Rights commemoration, though at the expense of not being an ‘official’ site in the park system. Among the NHAs is Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, created in 2005 to preserve Gullah culture in coastal North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Its creation followed an NPS study that looked at several alternatives, including direct NPS operation of facilities. However, it does not appear on the official NPS map or website.

The creation of national parks in the late 19th century was tied up with attempts at creating or recognizing a national identity (Frost & Hall 2009). The precedent set by Yellowstone NP has been referred to as the ‘Yellowstone Model,’ in which a national park protection is permanently established by the national government to protect ‘natural wonders and monumental scenery,’ with no regard for indigenous peoples who may be living in the area (Frost & Hall 2009: 28). More recently, in places such as Australia and southern Africa, people have been recognized as part of the environment and legitimate inhabitants. It has been estimated that half of all the national parks worldwide are located on lands traditionally used by indigenous peoples (Zeppel 2009), and since the 1980s these people have attempted to assert greater influence over the management of these parks. It is also increasingly recognized that natural parks have cultural landscapes within them, either those recognized by inhabitants or those created during park development. An alternative approach to parks based on participatory management has been termed the ‘Uluru model’ after the Australian national park.

Commemorating a living culture or way of life or integrating a National Historic Site into buildings and neighborhoods still an active part of the daily lives of a community presents a challenge for the Yellowstone model. NHAs may provide one means of doing this, as NHAs ‘are inclusive of diverse peoples and their cultures because they encompass living landscapes and

traditional uses of the land' (National Park Service 2005: 129). NHAs require local support to be created and sustained over time (no federal funds are allowed after an initial start-up period). The local population would be stakeholders. 'The federal government would not assume any ownership of land, impose zoning or land use controls in heritage areas, or take responsibility for permanent funding' (National Park Service 2005: 129). It would obviously be easier to preserve living culture with an NHA than in a static museum. The future of the U.S. National Park System may therefore have more in common with that of other areas, such as Africa, where integrating the livelihoods of local peoples with the goal of creating parks and promoting tourism have created tremendous challenges (Frost & Hall 2009).

Conclusions

The National Park System is not a complete set of places. It has been expanded continually since 1872, and continues to expand, with about one new park unit added each year (Barna 2010). On August 28, 2011, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC, was formally dedicated as the 395th unit of the park system. While there may be a perception that the number of parks is fixed, the expansion of the park system into cultural themes will likely necessitate a considerable and continual expansion of the number and kinds of park units. Many recent presidents have been honored by a National Historic Site, so it is likely that a Barack Obama NHS will someday be created. The American public has considerable opportunity to influence the future composition of the National Park System, and it is evident that the priorities of the public have changed considerably over time (Dilsaver 2008). The large nature parks, with their associations of elitism, will become a smaller part of the park system.

As of May 2011, 12 bills to create new national park units were under consideration in the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee, along with several bills to direct the NPS to investigate the feasibility of new park units, including one for the Buffalo Soldiers. Similar bills were under consideration in the House of Representatives Natural Resources committee, including one to authorize a study of a potential NHS commemorating the 1921 Tulsa race riots. However, while adding new park units is a worthy goal, it is not clear that current standards or approaches for identifying worthy topics and places will yield many suitable locations, and may ignore many sites considered to be of crucial importance to the cultural heritage of particular groups.

It is interesting that the goal of greatly expanding national park access and visitation has been tried before, during the Mission 66 program designed to build new facilities and infrastructure for car-driving middle class families (Foresta 1984; Carr 2007). This effort was successful, but also created a counter movement that led to the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the preservation of undeveloped areas. Efforts to increase minority visitation could in turn lead to a counter reaction or backlash, or perhaps a concern among white visitors that parks have become non-white places. In that respect it is interesting that while many Australian national parks (such as Uluru) have

taken Aboriginal names, American parks that are of tremendous cultural importance to Native Americans such as Devil's Tower or Rainbow Bridge have not (Sproul 2001).

There are many challenges facing the national parks, including global warming, invasive species, air pollution, and budget shortfalls (Rettie 1995; Sellars 1997; O'Brien 1999; Yochim 2009). A considerable body of work exists on environmental and biological issues involving the large nature parks within the National Park System, their sustainability and ecological value, and whether protecting these resources is compatible with increasing tourism and outdoor recreation. This paper has been concerned with a different issue, and a different part of the U.S. National Park System, those units that deal with cultural and historical resources. These get much less attention but represent the area of greatest growth in the past half century. They could also be crucial to the survival of the entire park system as they could be instrumental in increasing the representation and participation of America's increasingly diverse population in the National Park System. The increasing frequency of reassessments of the National Park System suggests the NPS has lost its direction, its connection to the American public, and 'a clear vision of how the National Park System should fit into an evolving society' (McDonnell 2008: 9). While the NPS has a broad range of activities it is involved with, including 'clean air and water, protection of archaeological resource, historic preservation, endangered species, wild and scenic rivers, 40 NHAs, large cooperative landscape projects, and environmental protection' (McDonnell 2008: 13), perhaps the greatest long-term threat is a lack of support by the American people.

Notes

The definition of 'historical' has changed over time. In 1937, the NPS was not concerned with any structure built after 1860 (changed to 1870 in 1941). Since 1952, historic sites were defined as being over 50 years old, though exceptions were allowed (Mackintosh 1985). Many important events of the Civil Rights movements are or will soon be commemorating their 50th anniversaries, removing this barrier to preservation and commemoration.

Interestingly, Reitman (2006) suggests that the idea of colorblind spaces can be traced back to the Civil Rights movement and particularly Dr Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech, which was delivered in August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, a unit of the National Park System.

Lowell NHS in Boston is also now heavily utilized by a local Cambodian population (Joyner 2005). The park has no thematic ties or previous links to Cambodians but has worked to establish a connection to the community, including the establishment of a walking tour through the Cambodian neighborhood.

Curtis (1996) makes frequent use of National Register information for Civil Rights sites, and so draws heavily on the historic preservation work done by the NPS, as does Savage (1994) for her guide to African American historic sites. The Park Service has also issued several reports that discuss locations associated with the heritage of Hispanics, Asians, and African Americans

(Joyner 2003; 2005; 2009) that are within national parks, have been designated as NHLs, or are on the National Register of Historic Places. This includes lists of places recognized for their association with historic individuals, events, ideas, or architectural ideas associated with a particular group or era.

Visitation data is not available for these sites and their appeal to white visitors cannot be stated definitively. It may be that encouraging minority visitors to large outdoor national park sites is only one component of broadening participation in the National Park System. This remains to be examined in more detail.

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