



For decades, research has found that some racial and ethnic groups are less likely to visit national parks. Why is this? The answer is complicated. Barriers include cultural differences and a history of national parks marginalizing or ignoring communities of color; overt discrimination (including, in some parks, there being segregated facilities until World War II); and race-related income disparity. Each of these reasons either was, or remains, a very real barrier for people of color. Pictured: Students participate in a citizen science data-collecting project at Mammoth Cave National Park (Kentucky).



The Park Service is trying new ways of talking about park values that will appeal to young people. Members of YAP (Youth Ambassadors Program) communicate park themes through hip-hop culture at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (Massachusetts).



In California, people who were once identified as members of “minority groups” now make up a majority of the state’s population. Youth engagement program, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (California).



Young people of color are finding that the parks are for them, too: (above) A Pura Vida en Grand Teton student handles the bow in a paddle with two National Park Service Academy interns, Grand Teton National Park (Wyoming); (below) Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (Massachusetts) gives youths of diverse backgrounds in-depth, hands-on learning experiences.



Opportunities to be creative in national parks are one way to reach young people at an early age. A young artists' program at Weir Farm National Historic Site (Connecticut), is designed so that local school groups can customize it to their needs.



It is a moral imperative to welcome all people to America's national parks and for the national park system to become more representative of the country as whole. In 2016, New York City's Stonewall Inn, birthplace of the modern Gay Rights Movement in the U.S., was made a part of the national park system by being proclaimed as Stonewall National Monument. It is one of the historic places identified in the National Park Service's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Heritage Initiative.



The creation of César E. Chávez National Monument (California) recognized the accomplishments of one of the nation's most prominent Hispanic Americans. Here, President Obama speaks at the park's dedication.



Manzanar National Historic Site (California) tells the story of Japanese American confinement during World War II. Every year, local residents, former internees and others make a pilgrimage to Manzanar to remember those who lived and died in the camp and to keep their stories alive. Since the events of 9/11, Muslim Americans have joined the pilgrimage to call attention to the discrimination they face today. (left) Internees during World War II; (right) Participants in annual pilgrimage to the park.





A program at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, a part of Anacostia Park and other area parks in Washington, D.C., run by the National Park Service, is reaching out to diverse student populations in local schools. Anacostia Park is part of the “The City as a Classroom” initiative, a partnership with approximately 30 District of Columbia public schools that provides a classroom curriculum designed by teachers, parents, and school officials to connect students with the city’s history and natural resources.