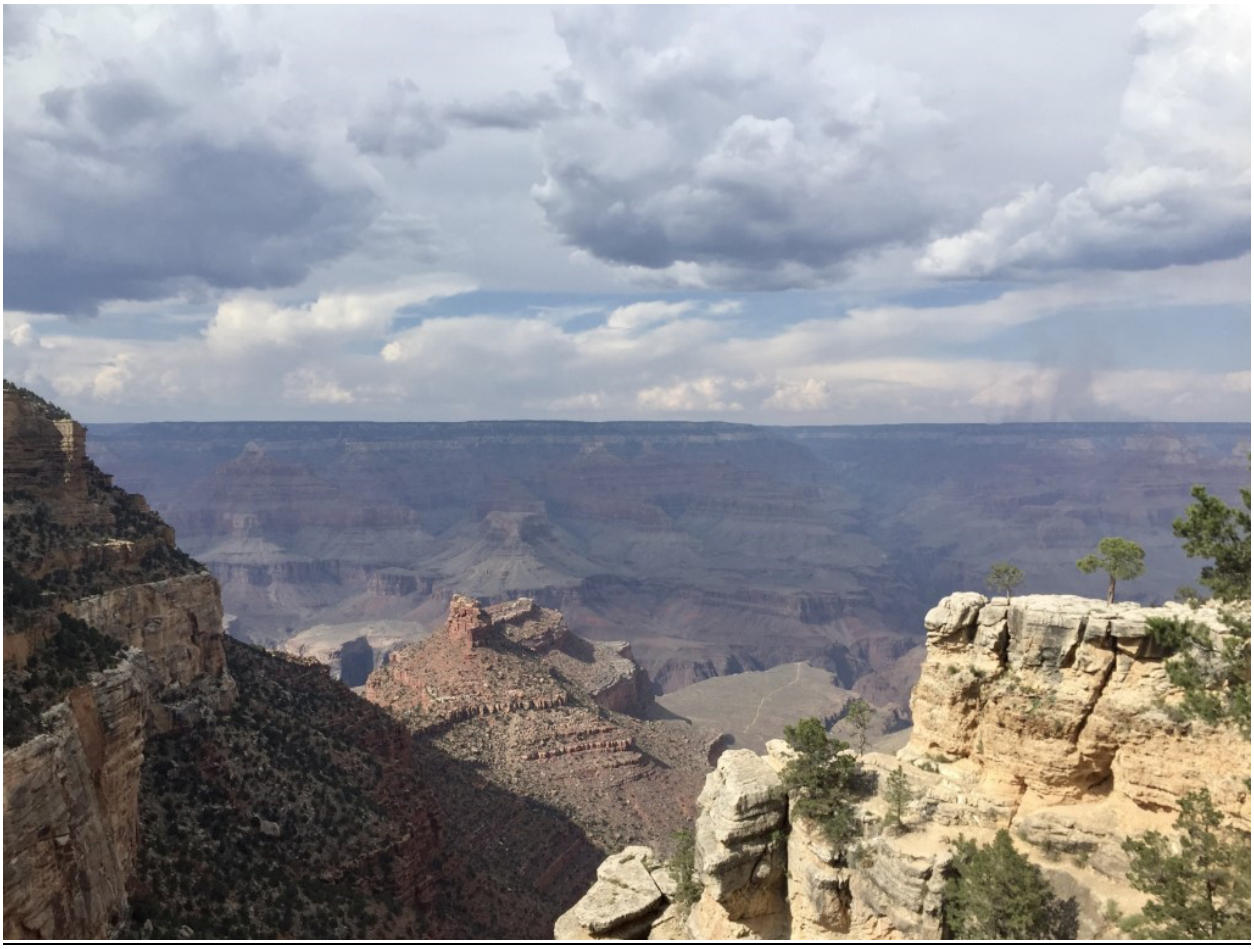
Who is "America's Best Idea" For?
Race, Class, and the Grand Canyon National Park



Julia G. Boral
American Studies Senior Thesis
Fall 2020

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Professor Nathan, your guidance, feedback, and unwavering support of my capstone allowed me to take my topic in directions I never even considered. Thank you for teaching me the value of editing line by line and to trust the "bird by bird" process.

To Professor Pfitzer, your mentorship over the past three years has shaped me into the American Studies Senior I am today. Thank you for the many meetings that always leave me invigorated to keep learning how to question our society.

To the department, Professor Beck Krefting, Professor Jacquelyn Micieli-Voutsinas, Professor Aaron Pedinotti, Professor Tammy Owens, and Sue Matrazzo, I felt your support during this project and cannot thank you enough for encouraging an environment of critical thinkers.

To Professor Eric Morser, your constant enthusiasm, meetings, and book recommendations about the West inspired me to explore this complex topic.

To my American Studies team and groupmates, Kathleen, Samantha, and Jackie, thank you for your support. It was exciting to see how your dedication to telling these stories developed the past few months. My fellow AM-374ers, I appreciate our laughs and the comradery we created while writing under these unprecedented circumstances. I am incredibly impressed with the work you have created.

To Meghan, Cassie, and Henry, my family away from home, your constant support is unparalleled. Thank you for engaging my ideas, listening to my presentations, and being my biggest hype girls.

To my parents, your critical lenses, passions for learning, and exploring is inspiring. Thank you for instilling a love of nature in me and for encouraging me to seek out the intersections in everything. I could not have done this without your love and support.

Finally, to all the BIPOCs and historically excluded communities in the outdoors who commit their lives to diversifying and protecting the outdoors. I see you and I hear you. Thank you for sharing your stories. I am inspired by them and have the upmost respect for the work you do to inspire this change.

Abstract

A recent study reports that 78.7% of Grand Canyon tourists are white. Visitors with different racial and ethnic identities—American Indian or Alaska Native (7.7%), Asian (9.2%), African American (2.3%), and Pacific Islander (2.1%)—are disproportionately underrepresented at the site. The same study reveals that around one in eight visitors (12.4%) indicate that they are of Latino or Hispanic origin. There is a clear racial and ethnic disparity among visitors to the Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP). Using race and class as cultural lenses to examine the GCNP illustrates the historical impact these barriers have on today's outdoor recreation environment. Unfortunately, many Americans do not get to experience the Grand Canyon. This study examines why, where, how, and who these issues effect the most. Specifically, how these barriers impact BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) people of lower socioeconomic status. My research engages possible solutions to make the Grand Canyon and other National Parks more accessible for historically excluded people. Additionally, I assess the commitment organizations, leaders, and the government have to Indigenous justice. Individuals experience the outdoors in a wide range of ways. Each person's story is valuable, and many demonstrate how myths and fears about the outdoors are created in American culture. Investigating and analyzing the intersections of race, class, tourism, Indigenous rights, and environmentalism exhibits the exclusionary tactics that were used to establish the National Parks. Ethnicity and outdoor recreation theories and intersectional environmentalism inform my close reading of the Grand Canyon and scholarship about it. I also critique media articles, travel websites, social media accounts, and oral histories about peoples' experiences with the Grand Canyon and in the outdoors. Too many people have felt excluded and hesitant about traveling to the canyon and other outdoor sites. This paper aims to uplift the voices of BIPOC people, especially Native Americans, who have devoted their lives to diversity, accessibility, and Indigenous justice.

Vast, Powerful, Ancient, and Deep

The Grand Canyon has an ancient and complex history. Native Americans have ancestral connections with the canyon and its surrounding areas that are valued in their communities today. In the decades before Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) was established in 1919, relationships between white settlers and local Native Americans changed in response to disputes over land ownership and access, natural resources, and farming. After the creation of the park and throughout its early years, relationships between park staff and Native American tribes grew tense. This story is not unlike other histories of National Parks in the U.S. The phrase "America's best idea" was coined by writer and historian Wallace Stegner in 1983. He thought that the parks "reflect us at our best rather than our worst."[1] How can this be the case when people were actively removed from their land? Since 1919, as the GCNP became more popular and more accessible, Native tribes have felt ignored and taken advantage of. Today, the park is celebrated as one of the most popular places to visit in the U.S. In 2019, 5.9 million people visited it.[2] When people visit the park, how aware are they of the Navajo, Havasupai, Hualapai, Hopi, Zuni, Kaibab Paiute, Shivwits Paiute, and San Juan Paiute tribes, all of which have ancestral connections with the park?

My interest in this topic has its origins in my visit to the Grand Canyon in the summer of 2018. I was on a nine-day rafting trip on the Colorado River with my mom and a group of her

---

[1] "America's Best Idea Today," National Park Service, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea/#:~:text=Writer%20and%20historian%20Wallace%20Stegner,by%20the%20National%20Park%20Service.

[2] "Park Statistics," National Park Service, accessed September 9, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/statistics.htm. This is a much larger number of visitors based on the NPS's report on annual park recreation visits since the GCNP opened in 1919. In its first year as a National Park, the Grand Canyon had 37,000 visitors. See https://irma.nps.gov/STATS/SSRSReports/Park%20Specific%20Reports/Annual%20Park%20Recreation%20Visitation%20(1904%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year)?Park=GRCA.

work friends and their family members. Standing in front of the canyon was unlike anything I had ever experienced. It is difficult to put into words the effect that the land had on me and many others who have visited the canyon. It is vast, powerful, overwhelming, spiritual, ancient, hot, and deep. Over the course of the nine days I spent on the river, I became engrossed in the cultural history of the land and the range of emotions people have documented from being in that environment. After doing some research about the history of tourism and the Native communities who have ancestral ties to the Grand Canyon region, I became interested in how these communities have been impacted by shifts in tourism and the presence of the National Park Service (NPS). The dominant narrative about the establishment of the National Park Service and the Grand Canyon National Park ignores and silences Native voices. This paper focuses on and honors the perspectives of the local Native Americans who are working to restore a tribal presence in the park.

For some people, rafting on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon is a unique and spiritual experience. I deeply value the time I spent in the canyon and what I learned about it when I was there. When I was growing up, my parents took my brother and I on many hiking, canoeing, and camping trips. They encouraged me to explore and be curious about the natural world. I am comfortable doing outdoors activities and find that I am most at peace in nature. While I grew up having access and resources for outdoor recreation, I realize that many people who look like me do not have the same opportunities. In this capstone, I connect issues of accessibility with the efforts leaders are making to help others build relationships with the outdoors. I believe everyone, especially young people, should have the ability to explore and experience nature if they desire. It can be challenging, relaxing, and inspiring. Different natural environments can teach us new things about ourselves and others. In the context of Grand

Canyon National Park, I examine how National Park Service rangers and their executive boards have been working to address diversifying the park's visitorship and accessibility, while incorporating the opinions of local Native American communities and their leaders.

Throughout this paper, I explore who visits the park and how tourists experience it. Who is not visiting the park and why? What barriers prevent some people from visiting the Grand Canyon? And how can we begin to remove these barriers to get more people to explore the canyon who do not have the opportunity, while also emphasizing responsible and ethical tourism that respects and supports the Native American tribes in region? Examining the history and current state of tourism in Grand Canyon National Park through the lenses of race and class reveals that the park is not available to everyone. For some people, there are notable disparities in terms of access and experience at the Grand Canyon. And yet my argument is that there can be a more mutually respectful and productive relationship among the National Park Service, tourists, and local Native Americans. Examining the intersection of race and class at a specific Western tourist site contributes to discussions about how the National Park Service has upheld the values and promises that were made when the Grand Canyon National Park was established.

Methodologies and Theoretical Approach

The methods and approaches at work in this project address issues of diversity and accessibility in Grand Canyon National Park, and ethical and responsible tourism at this site. To explore my subject, I use an interdisciplinary methodology that includes close reading, content analysis, oral history, and material culture. I use this mix of methods because they allow me to delve into materials with an approach that best fits the mostly text-based sources I found. I culled a plethora of books, journal articles, media sources, oral sources, among others, during the

research process. As I examined and learned from each source, I analyzed what information it had, how it was conveyed, and how the material contributed to my topic. Historically, scholars have studied the Grand Canyon and its past in ways that promote an American exceptionalism narrative. These canyon researchers infrequently critiqued this narrative that reinforced harmful myths of Indigenous communities. Over time, though, scholars have included a broader range of voices. In this paper, I acknowledge the ways that academics have shaped an American exceptionalism story, yet I also critique more recent scholarship that takes a race, class, and gender-centric approach. Analyzing sources and offering my own opinions about them contributes a perspective that I did not come across in my research. While studies of race, class, and gender do often counter the dominant narratives, I argue that some scholarship does a poor job of noting how race and class intersect to make outdoor tourism more accessible and empower the communities that are most impacted by visitors.

To build upon my questions and concerns, I look for and assess sites of intersection, places where information about how the relationships among Native communities, the NPS, local businesses, and tourists formed and changed over time. I analyze the sources and the different ways in which they describe the history of Native American tribes in the Grand Canyon region and other groups that infringed upon their land rights and usage. I compare these narratives with contemporary material culture, oral histories, and social media accounts about how Native communities and outdoor advocacy groups have demonstrated agency in advocating for their goals. I evaluate how ethical and accessible tourism is from these sources about the cultural history of the Grand Canyon in the nineteenth through the twenty-first century. I specifically look for where race and class did or did not appear on social media and websites. My methods help us discern whose history is remembered and why. By considering what features of the past

are ignored as a result of whose history dominates the shaping of American history, I identify where the impact of these historical narratives is felt today in outdoors recreational tourism.

It is important to think about the myth of the wilderness and the West and whose voices have been traditionally celebrated and popularized, and whose have largely been ignored and silenced.[3] In this essay, I consider Westward expansion, tourism in American culture, intersectional environmentalism, and racial diversity in the outdoors. These contexts frame the lens of my capstone and the themes I examine. I draw on theories about race, class, tourism, and environmentalism. One of the theorists I use is Myron F. Floyd, a scholar who studies parks and recreation and diversity and the author of "Getting Beyond Marginality and Ethnicity: The Challenge for Race and Ethnic Studies in Leisure Research." In his article, Floyd discusses the marginality hypothesis, ethnicity or subcultural hypothesis, and perceived discrimination.[4] He explains how these theories show patterns of race and class in tourism. Floyd also critiques these hypotheses by describing how they have been reduced to make conclusions when definitions and explanations are needed to explain what other factors may be happening. As we will see, Floyd's theories and ideas about the intersections of race and ethnicity in the outdoors support my argument about diversity and accessibility in the Grand Canyon National Park.

In later sections of this paper I engage Floyd's theories and discoveries to discuss several solutions to the race, ethnic, and class disparities in public parks. These solutions include establishing youth programs, redefining the outdoors, and racially and ethnically diversifying hiring practices. Although Floyd's research does not explicitly include the Grand Canyon

---

[3] For more on the myth of the wilderness and the West, see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

[4] Myron F. Floyd, "Getting Beyond Marginality and Ethnicity: The Challenge for Race and Ethnic Studies in Leisure Research," *Journal of Leisure Research* 30, 1 (1998): 4-5.

National Park, his work provides suggestions that can be adopted by the site's staff. For example, Floyd found that the "Outdoor Youth Connection Program invites 80 teenagers from 'the most disadvantaged communities of color for a leadership camp in the woods.' The camp assigns certain responsibilities to each participant and focuses on developing problem-solving and communication skills."[5] The program, run by the Office of Community Involvement at California State Parks in conjunction with the California State Parks Foundation, provides youth with outdoor experiences that help them become community leaders.

This organization's goals of instilling long-term values of nature and leadership in youth can be implemented in other programs in the Grand Canyon region. The NPS and the GCNP have similar programs that I evaluate in a future section. I view outdoor leadership programs geared toward historically excluded youth as solutions to the racial and ethnic disparities in tourism in the GCNP. One way they do that is by providing long-term career paths. Organizations and leaders that focus on providing similar opportunities for young people challenges the cycle that the outdoors is mostly occupied by white and affluent people. In the sections where I evaluate the programs and responses from leaders and groups who work to make the public lands more reflective of the U.S. demographics, I include several people and organizations from outside of the Grand Canyon region. I do this to illustrate that the race, ethnic, and class inequalities are not unique to this area. The National Park Service and the Grand Canyon park staff can learn from other people and organizations about how to make the parks more reflective of U.S. demographics.

---

[5] KangJae Jerry Lee, Jonathan Casper, and Myron Floyd, "Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion Efforts of Public Park and Recreation Agencies," *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* 38 (Spring 2020): 99.

My work is also informed by intersectional environmentalism. Intersectional environmental activist Leah Thomas describes

> intersectional environmentalism [as] an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet. It identifies the ways in which injustices happening to marginalized communities and the earth are interconnected. It brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and the earth, to the forefront and does not minimize or silence social inequality.[6]

This theory expands my lens of how tourism and environmentalism connect within my topic. My conclusion includes ideas about environmentalism, climate change, and the country's projected demographic changes. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the next few decades "the population of people who are two or more races is projected to be the fastest growing racial or ethnic group."[7] Not only will the country look different in terms of race and ethnicity, but many BIPOC communities and people living in low-income areas will be vulnerable to a warming planet. As these issues are felt more intensely, how people experience the outdoors and who experiences the outdoors will reflect these national and global changes. All of these concerns are linked and will be amplified sooner than we think. These theories, ideas, and my work show where we were and where we are regarding race, class, tourism, and environmentalism.

Literature Review

This capstone argues that the tourism at Grand Canyon National Park needs to be more diverse and accessible in terms of race and class. I further argue that this is possible by looking at

---

[6] Leah Thomas, "Why Every Environmentalist Should be Anti-racist," *Vogue*, June 8, 2020, https://www.vogue.com/article/why-every-environmentalist-should-be-anti-racist.

[7] Jonathan Vespa, Lauren Medina, and David M. Armstrong, "Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060," U.S. Census Bureau, March 2018, last modified February 2020, https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf.

the history of the area's settlement, the park's establishment, and the work of Native leaders and outdoor recreational activists. Collectively, these subjects contribute to shaping a new outlook of the intersections at this popular tourist site. Many of the scholarly materials I use in my project can be categorized into three groupings. The first is the relationships among Native communities, the NPS, and the GCNP. The second focuses on Native communities and their relationships with local businesses and tourists. The third concerns diversity and accessibility in National Parks and GCNP. All of the scholars I have read make arguments and use evidence that overlaps, yet these are the three areas that I use to evaluate how my topic has been studied.

Scholars have long discussed Native Americans' rights and issues in relationship to land ownership and the GCNP's establishment. In *A Place Called Grand Canyon: Contested Geographies* (1996), Barbara J. Morehouse makes connections between how Native communities were negatively impacted by the NPS and the GCNP. She declares that her "book is a meditation on how the mosaic of the greater Grand Canyon has changed over time and what brought about the changes."[8] Her work focuses on changes in the Grand Canyon region. She uses boundary markers, physical alterations, and ownership shifts across the environment to illustrate the impact these changes had on Native communities. Morehouse acknowledges that businesses and tourists altered parts of the Grand Canyon.

In *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (1998), historian Hal K. Rothman focuses on the relationships among Natives, local businesses, and tourists. This second trend in the scholarship highlights how branding the Grand Canyon as a national landmark and a commodity impacted Native communities. In his chapter "Railroads, Elites, and

[8] Barbara J. Morehouse, *A Place Called Grand Canyon: Contested Geographies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), 6.

the Grand Canyon," Rothman argues that "the combination of entrepreneurial activity embodied in the Fred Harvey company and the AT&SF [i.e., the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway], and the rise of the Grand Canyon as national symbol, created a special kind of meaning."[9] This major shift in tourism and attitudes about the site appear in other scholarly texts such as Leo McAvoy's article "American Indians, Place Meanings and the Old/New West." McAvoy writes that "part of [this] sense of place and place meaning is wrapped up in the symbolism of these landscapes, especially the symbolism of national parks, monuments, forests, wildlife areas, and wilderness areas" centers on the influence popular opinions have on public lands.[10] Other scholars include how these perspectives impacted tourism at the GCNP. Yet none of the other authors focus on how "with tourism comes unanticipated and irreversible consequences, social, cultural, economic, demographic, environmental, and physical consequences that communities, their leaders, and their residents typically face unprepared."[11] In his chapter about the Grand Canyon, Rothman touches on why and for whom this Western tourist site was established. This history is explored in greater depth by Marguerite S. Shaffer in *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (2001).

Among other subjects, *See America First* considers tourism, diversity, and accessibility. One of Shaffer's central arguments is that "tourism, as a form of consumption, allowed white, native-born middle-and upper-class Americans to escape the social and cultural confines of everyday life to liminal space where they could temporarily reimagine themselves as heroic or

---

[9] Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 80.

[10] Leo McAvoy, "American Indians, Place Meanings and the Old/New West," *Journal of Leisure Research* 34, 4 (2002): 390.

[11] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 10.

authentic figures."[12] The scholarship about the establishment of outdoors spaces and who was included in the specific tourist demographic includes the National Park systems' history. By highlighting who the parks were intended for, Shaffer expands on who was excluded from them and other outdoor spaces.

More recent scholarship about ethnic and racial diversity in the outdoors and National Parks delves deeper into identifying how different groups have been excluded from these spaces. Scholar Laura Burd Schiavo writes about race, ethnicity, and environmental tourism. In "White People Like Hiking," Schiavo advocates "to uncouple the reductive reasoning that limits the relevance of sites to a given racial or ethnic group, many of which are the same as those identified in visitation studies."[13] Schiavo and Myron Floyd engage topics that respond to the race and ethnicity gaps in Shaffer's work. Their work about the institutionalization of National Parks demonstrates how history impacts contemporary diversity and the accessibility of visitation.

Scholarly work specifically about the Grand Canyon and the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and tourism at this site take the studies done about the NPS and the national parks and apply them to this specific highly visited site. The "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study" (2005), published by researchers at Northern Arizona University, and "Not Yet America's Best Idea: Law, Inequality, and Grand Canyon National Park" (2020), by Sarah Krakoff from the University of Colorado Law Legal Studies program, use race, class, and tourism to illustrate how these lenses intersect at the site. These publications

---

[12] Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2001), 5.
[13] Laura Burd Schiavo, "White People Like Hiking," *The Public Historian* 38 (November 2016): 208.

offer in-depth analyses of data about visitors' experiences and of how laws have been used to displace Native communities. These studies are rich in information about how historical decisions and institutions have been used to control who experiences the GCNP. I use these foundational publications later in this paper.

Scholarly books and articles published in the 1990s about the relationships among Native American communities, the GCNP, and tourists are helpful in illustrating the history of the site's cultural and commercial dynamics. But academic studies, even recent work, is insufficient if we want to get a good sense of the recent efforts of Native people in this region. Tribes such as the Navajo, the Hualapai, and the Hopi, among others, have utilized social media, webinars, and audio recordings to advocate for their agenda and rights. These resources matter in discussions about Native American agency and efforts to educate tourists about their presence in the GCNP. Because most of these resources are recent, there is a lack of scholarship about them and the self-advocacy of tribes in the Grand Canyon region. These materials demonstrate a personal and reflective narrative that is largely absent in many books and scholarly articles. My capstone includes many sources distributed by Native communities and contributes to existing scholarship in this way.

Part I: History

Geological History of the Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon as a geological wonder existed long before people inhabited the lands in and around the canyon. The canyon began forming 5-6 million years ago when the Colorado River began to carve its way downward and further erosion by tributary streams led to the

canyon's widening.[14] But the canyon's history is even older. The canyon started forming "about 2 billion years ago when igneous and metamorphic rocks were formed. Then, layer upon layer of sedimentary rocks were laid on top of these basement rocks."[15] Today, visitors can see parts of these layers in the large rock faces. Tourists on the canyon's rim have the best views of the youngest layers. The canyon's oldest sections are at the bottom, closest to the river and are hard to see from the edge. The Colorado River at the bottom of the canyon has played a part in shaping these layers that have formed over billions of years. Ecologist Larry Stevens explains, "the integration of the river's course had provided egress for 74,420 mi^3 (310,000 km^3) of the Earth's crust from the Colorado Plateau, perhaps unweighting the Plateau and allowing it to rebound (rise) and erode even more rapidly over time."[16] Today, the canyon is measured in river miles. Stevens notes that the "Grand Canyon is 277 miles (446 km) long, with distances traditionally measured from Lees Ferry (Mile 0), and the side of the river is designated as left or right, looking downstream."[17] Every part of the Grand Canyon holds ancient geological history from long before humans lived in the region (indeed, from long before homo sapiens existed). The site's story is grander and more complex than most people realize. Knowing this element of the Grand Canyon's story is humbling. Well before Anglo-Americans traveled Westward and caused disputes over land claims, the canyon and the Colorado Plateau came first.

---

[14] "Geology," National Park Service, last modified April 27, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/nature/grca-geology.htm.
[15] "Geology."
[16] Larry Stevens, *The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon: River Map and Guide* (Flagstaff, AZ: Red Lake Books, 2013), 86.
[17] Stevens, *The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon*, 56.

A Brief History of National Parks as Institutions

National Parks were established as highly institutionalized spaces that reflected the political, economic, environmental, and segregationist values at that time. Yellowstone National Park was the first national park. The Act of March 1, 1872, established the site in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming "as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people and placed it under exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior."[18] The park was created to allow people to enjoy being in nature. Public attitudes about parks and public lands changed due to the influence of figures such as Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmsted, and John Muir. Upon seeing the Sierra Nevada in 1869, Muir declared that "no description of heaven that I have ever heard or read of seems half so fine."[19] Historian William Cronon explains that Muir

> was hardly alone in expressing such emotions. One by one, various corners of the American map came to be designated as sites whose wild beauty was so spectacular that a growing number of citizens had to visit and see them for themselves. Niagara Falls was the first to undergo this transformation, but it was soon followed by the Catskills, the Adirondacks, Yosemite, Yellowstone, and others. Yosemite was deeded by the U.S. government to the state of California in 1864 as the nation's first wildland park, and Yellowstone became the first true National Park in 1872.[20]

According to Muir, in the "wilderness" you could have an experience more powerful than heaven. This was a compelling myth-building statement that inspired people to escape their lives and experience the divinity in nature. This vision of nature made it appear as pristine, free of people (who were in fact there), and for the U.S. to declare control of it. As public support of the

---

[18] "Quick History of the National Park Service," National Park Service, last modified March 14, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/articles/quick-nps-history.htm.
[19] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1 (January 1996): 9.
[20] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 9.

parks increased, consideration for the Indigenous people who had lived on these lands for thousands of years decreased.

Myths about the wild crafted a vision of nature that was specifically for white, middle- to upper-class members of society. Muir, other conservationists, and the government wanted to keep public lands free of anyone who did not fit their (romantic) vision. This included BIPOC people and those who were not of a certain socioeconomic status. Leaders worked to justify their ideal for public parks in the name of conservationist and preservationist efforts. The "pristine" state of nature was placed above Indigenous sovereignty and their land rights. The Act of Dedication of Yellowstone National Park stated that "all persons who shall locate or settle upon or occupy the same, or any part thereof, except as hereinafter provided, shall be considered trespassers and removed therefrom."[21] This included tribes such as the Eastern Shoshone and the Nez Perce.[22] The act to declare the first National Park prohibited Native Americans from having access to the land. The declaration to protect and preserve the environment was used to legitimize the establishment of public lands and the removal of Indigenous people.

Indigenous tribes were not the only ones affected by the establishment of the early national parks. BIPOC communities and their right to travel to public lands was also controlled by the leaders who made these decisions. These people, who were often white men and well-off financially, dictated the narrative and reality of who these sites included and excluded. This ideal reflected in the government's support of Muir and Olmsted's appointment as chair of the

---

[21] "Yellowstone National Park Protection Act (1872)," National Park Service, last modified July 13, 2018, https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/yellowstoneprotectionact1872.htm#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20Congress%20established,Park%20Protection%20Act%20into%20law.&text=AN%20ACT%20to%20set%20apart,River%20as%20a%20public%20park.

[22] "Associated Tribes," National Park Service, last modified February 5, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/associatedtribes.htm.

Yosemite Commission. Olmsted was vocal about how "the wealthy had always seized for themselves the best places: 'The enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country and the means of recreation connected with them is thus a monopoly, in a very peculiar manner, of a very few, very rich people.'"[23] Once businesses and the NPS established parks as destinations for white, affluent people, it became clear to the rest of the country which communities were not supposed (or able) to enter these sites.

In the late 1800s and the NPS's early years, racial segregation impacted how people experienced public lands. At the time, the country was healing from the Civil War. Reconstruction, racial segregation, and Jim Crow laws all contributed to tension across the country. During this tumultuous time, BIPOCs did not feel welcomed in the outdoors. This was in part due to the fear instilled in African Americans about the outdoors. Blogger Joshua Walker articulates that

> for a long time, the woods were a scary place for people with my skin color. Bad things happened in the woods if you were a runaway slave. Bad things happened in the rural south if you were a black man driving through the wrong town after dark. All of these events have scarred the collective imagination of the wilderness for a lot of black people. The same applies for water activities. Our ancestors arrived by the sea; many drowned, or were thrown overboard, or even jumped to escape bondage. Whether that trauma has been passed down or compounded by other factors, learning to swim is something that just does not happen in black households unlike with other races.[24]

This legacy of a fear and hesitancy about the wilderness is reflected in the populations who do not visit these outdoor environments today. National parks came to fruition by way of laws and the public desire to have them as places for people to visit to renourish themselves and have

---

[23] Jason Mark, "Across the Great Divide," *Sierra Magazine*, June 24, 2020, 27.
[24] Joshua Walker, "Lions and Tigers and Black Folk, Oh My! Why Black People Should Take Up Space in the Outdoors," Melanin Base Camp, April 11, 2019, accessed October 22, 2020, https://www.melaninbasecamp.com/around-the-bonfire/2019/4/10/why-black-people-should-take-up-space-outdoors.

something like religious experiences. The establishment of national parks was created in part by a dominant exclusionary narrative, one that is evident today.

Early Settlement

Settlement and Western tourism in the Grand Canyon region in the nineteenth century, before the Grand Canyon National Park was established, altered the lives of Native tribes and reflected anti-Indigenous sentiments. While the first Europeans to see the Grand Canyon were led by García López de Cárdenas while on the Coronado expedition in 1540, the story of Anglo-American settlement does not begin until the 1860s.[25] In the 1860s, the Mormons had already established their church in Salt Lake City, Utah, and wanted to continue to obtain "desolate regions that no one else wanted, or would want."[26] The Colorado River Plateau fit their image of where they wanted to live.[27] The Mormons' plan failed to recognize the Native tribes who had been living in this region for thousands of years. Native tribes had established their own diverse cultures and economies. They had migrated to and from this area long before the Mormons decided to live in the region. The idea that Anglo-Americans had the right to take what they wanted has shaped the country. The idea of Manifest Destiny encapsulates the values that were used to justify Westward expansion.[28]

The arrival of the Mormon settlers in the Colorado River Plateau region in the 1860s led to a turning point in 1870 that threatened the farming practices and natural resources of the

---

[25] Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 132.
[26] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 67.
[27] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 67.
[28] For more on Manifest Destiny, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2011).

Kaibab Paiutes (a tribe of the Southern Paiutes). Kaibab Paiutes "irrigated fertile land to raise corn, melons, squash, pumpkins, beans, amaranth, and, in the nineteenth century, wheat."[29] Their way of farming and self-sufficiency became difficult when the Mormon settlers brought their own livestock and cut down vegetation on which the Paiutes relied. When the Mormons took control of Yellow Rock Spring (renaming it Pipe Spring), this disrupted the Paiutes' way of life and led to a depletion of their natural resources.[30] This is but one example of how Native American communities have been treated in the U.S. The myth of "untouched" or "virgin land" is evident in how Mormon settlers treated the Kaibab Paiutes. The land was not untouched. People had been living on it for a long time and then, in a matter of a few decades, saw their lands taken from them by force. The myth of the West as being unsettled and the dominant historical narratives about it have been used to justify Anglo-American settlers' actions for far too long. We need to understand and acknowledge the harm these myths did and continue to do.

In the Grand Canyon region from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, several Indigenous tribes realized they had few options for living on their homeland. As tensions between Natives and Anglo-American settlers grew, the government intervened by forming reservations and passing governmental acts that took power away from tribal communities. In 1868, the creation of a Navajo reservation by the federal government led to a "pacification of Navajo and Southern Paiutes."[31] This drastic change in where these Native tribes were able to live set the precedent for early relationships among Indigenous communities, settlers, and the government in the Grand Canyon region. The tale of how the federal government initially controlled where these tribes lived is a story of suffering and loss. The government also created a reservation for the Kaibab

[29] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 68.
[30] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 69.
[31] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 70.

Paiutes in 1907. This "reserve was eighteen miles long and twelve miles wide, its boundary beginning south of Kanab, Utah, and west of Fredonia, Arizona. It included Yellow Rock Spring."[32] The removal of Native people from their homes in the Grand Canyon region contributed to the inequitable dynamics between Indigenous communities and Anglo-Americans. This history of prioritizing Anglo-American interests and values above the well-being and land rights of Native tribes set the precedent and influenced how the Grand Canyon National Park was established.

The establishment of the Grand Canyon National Park changed the physical, social, and cultural landscape of the region. But before the site became a national park, in the 1880s, entrepreneurs began to develop personal enterprises around the canyon's rim.[33] Mining companies and businesses that catered to visitors were early industries. Ralph Henry Cameron was one of the early entrepreneurs. He had resources and political connections that enabled him to make the Grand Canyon more accessible to people in the early 1890s.[34] As these new businesses altered the rim's landscape, the dominant narrative of how the Grand Canyon became a popular tourist destination excludes the opinions and concerns of local Native tribes. Mining was environmentally risky. It threatened contaminating the land and water. The desire to commodify the canyon put the safety of the tribes and their environments at a high risk of being harmed. Conversations about building tourist attractions and mining sites near the Grand Canyon are still prevalent.[35]

---

[32] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 71.
[33] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 51.
[34] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 52-53.
[35] *Into the Canyon*, Disney+ Streaming, directed by Pete McBride (2019; Insignia Films).

The social landscape of the Grand Canyon region changed as the site became available and appealing to visitors. The early 1900s experienced a shift in transcontinental tourism when it became easier for white elites to travel this way. Marguerite Shaffer details that this change grew to be "increasingly visible as railroad passenger departments and travel agencies infused the national media with brochures, images, and advertisements, a group of western boosters hoped to open the West to tourism on a grand scale."[36] Tourism to and in the Grand Canyon was part of this phenomenon. On September 17, 1901, the AT&SF opened the first train to reach the Grand Canyon's rim. Hal K. Rothman writes in *Devil's Bargains* that "instead of remaining an out-of-the-way symbol, the canyon quickly became an American cultural institution, a place that elite Americans could reach and felt they must see."[37] This meant that "upper-class and upper-middle-class Americans could visit it on their own terms, in comfort."[38] Improvements in accessibility changed how and which people viewed and experienced the Grand Canyon. The cultural and social environment along the canyon's edge began to include people who were not from the immediate area. Combining this change with the work of entrepreneurs shifted the visibility and influence Native tribes had on decisions made about land usage.

The Canyon Becomes a National Park

The establishment of the GCNP in 1919 and the site's early years reveals how tourism impacted Native tribes and their relationships with the National Park Service staff and administration. The Havasupai are one of the tribes that have had a strained relationship with the NPS. The tribe has existed long before the park and the first tourists to visit the Grand Canyon.

---

[36] Shaffer, *See America First*, 26.
[37] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 55.
[38] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 55.

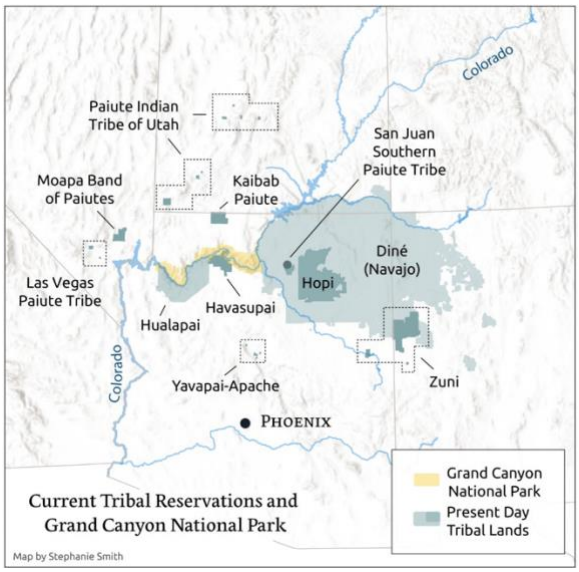


Figure 1: Map of current tribal reservations and the Grand Canyon National Park. Stephanie Smith, "Current Tribal Reservations and Grand Canyon National Park," map, in "Not Yet America's Best Idea: Law, Inequality, and Grand Canyon National Park," accessed November 18, 2020.

Coleen Kaska, a member of the Havasupai tribe, describes how long before there was a park or train, her people were "farming, raising children, trading goods, and making pilgrimages in the canyon."[39] Over time, she explains, "the tribe has lost over 500 million acres, which includes all the plateau lands up here and Grand Canyon National Park. We were told that we could not live there anymore."[40] In February of 1919, the Grand Canyon National Park Act was a major reason tribes such as the Havasupai lost large areas of their homelands. The act allowed "the secretary of the Interior [Franklin Knight Lane], '[at] his discretion, to permit individual members of [the Havasupai] tribe to use and occupy other tracts of land within [the] park,' but officials chose instead to restrict all native use of park lands and resources."[41] Changing who had access to the lands and how much of a presence the government wanted Natives to have is one of the reasons Indigenous communities in the region did not have a positive relationship with the NPS in these early years of the GCNP's existence.

In the park's early years, and for decades, the NPS officials who worked at the Grand Canyon continued to silence and minimize Native voices and cultures in an attempt to "Americanize" the site. One way this was done was by naming of sites within the park. In Grand

[39] "The Voices of Grand Canyon," The Grand Canyon Trust, accessed October 28, 2020, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b22a6a09bb2344ff845d9efd3e4152f7.
[40] "The Voices of Grand Canyon."
[41] Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 135.

Canyon National Park in 1998, "of the 230 placenames, 8 are Havasupai, 13 Paiute, and 4 Hopi. Except for the Paiute, more Grand Canyon names originate with Asian and Egyptian mythology than from native words."[42] This was done largely because the NPS and local businesses wanted to create a sense of ownership over the land. Giving geological landmarks, trails, and areas within the park non-Native names was part of the process of ignoring any rights to or ownership of the land that Indigenous people were entitled to have. This was not the only way that the NPS attempted to take power and agency away from Native tribes. Native Americans were also exploited by the local businesses that used their cultures and crafts as tourist attractions.

Crafts sold by the Fred Harvey Company in GCNP shaped how many visitors viewed the local Native communities. The Harvey Company frequently mythologized and profited from the surrounding local Native groups' myths. This business mostly served tourists and made an impact where "the craft work and jewelry of local peoples slighted in favor of those with mythic regional cachet. In the eyes of visitors, Hopi replaced Havasupai as the dominant Indian people of the canyon."[43] The Harvey Company's work with local tribes such as the Hopi sold a vision of "Indianness" to tourists that resulted in a homogenized image of all the local Native tribes. At the same time, Native Americans viewed visitors and the NPS staff "with a mixture of confusion, incredulity, and resentment."[44] Indigenous reactions to the tourist environment have frequently been excluded from historical accounts of how people experienced the park in its early years.

In addition to the Harvey Company selling crafts, many of which projected an image of Native Americans, several park staff members described Native tribes around the Grand Canyon Park in ways that contributed to how tourists perceived local Native communities. Several NPS

---

[42] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 133.
[43] Rothman, *Devil's Bargains*, 70.
[44] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 134.

staff engaged in "Othering" Native communities such as the Havasupai when the rangers dubbed Supai Camp as a headache and did not want it to disrupt tourists. Supai Camp was the residential area for the Havasupai who "worked for wages in Grand Canyon Village, on trails, on constructing a sewage plant, and on a suspension bridge across the Colorado."[45] This community of Natives was often targeted by the NPS rangers and leadership who saw the camp as an eyesore. Dama Margaret Smith worked for the NPS and published an article, "The Home of a *Doomed* Race," in 1923. She wrote about visiting Supai village. According to Smith, "The bucks, howled and chanted, the children ran around naked, and fat, greasy squaws gibbered at visitors."[46] This illustrates Natives as being "savages," uncivilized, wild, and disorderly. All these descriptors were used to create an image of Indians that made them seem unapproachable and unsympathetic to visitors. This article and her book *I Married a Ranger* (1930) are riddled with stereotypes, prejudices, and fetishizations about Native communities. She compares people to animals, calls Indigenous people savages, and criticizes their rituals and religious practices. Many of these ideas about Natives were consistent with widespread prejudices and stereotypes against Native American communities. The literature published about the GCNP during the site's early years used rhetoric that supported horrible descriptions and perceptions of Native Americans in the area. Knowing and understanding the extent of the GCNP's ugly early history shows how much Native communities faced as they were forced to adjust to and accept these unwanted changes on land that was stolen from them.

[45] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 134.
[46] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 135.

Part II: The Grand Canyon Today

Centennial of GCNP

Since the park's early years, and up until the GCNP's centennial in 2019, the relationships among Native communities, the NPS, and tourists have been tumultuous. Many of the recent issues pertaining to visibility and land rights and usage can be traced to relationships dating to the park's establishment. The centennial celebration initiated a series of conversations among tribal communities about their perspectives. These meetings were in response to the GCNP centennial events. The park service held events such as the Phoenix Symphony's performance of Ferde Grofé's "Grand Canyon Suite" (1929-31), a play titled *Teddy Roosevelt: The Man in the Arena*, and the Centennial Summerfest Film Festival.[47] The events celebrated the canyon's history through performances, educational talks, and special exhibits. To the NPS's credit, the events included the histories and cultures of local Indigenous communities. In August, the park held Native American Heritage Week. The programs "celebrated the rich cultural diversity of the Colorado Plateau, the Arizona Strip, and the Grand Canyon." Visitors could "stop by for special programs by tribal members and non-tribal members on a variety of subjects, ranging from ethno-botany to American Indian flute playing and dance."[48] These events demonstrate that the NPS wanted to celebrate the local Native histories, yet there were no educational events or dialogues about the darker side to the GCNP's history. None of the events illustrated how the NPS othered Natives and that the park initially excluded Indigenous communities from having access to the land. Looking deeper into how the GCNP staff engages local Native communities, we have to question the effectiveness of the park's efforts to address

[47] "Archive of 2019 Park Centennial Events," National Park Service, last modified January 4, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/grca/getinvolved/2019-centennial-events.htm.
[48] "Archive of 2019 Park Centennial Events."

its discriminatory history. Based on the conversations among local Indigenous communities, the NPS has not honored or collaborated with local tribes in the way they desire.

Comprised of local Native people, the Intertribal Centennial Conversations wanted to increase the visibility and recognition of Indigenous people in the GCNP. These meetings were a direct response to the NPS and a call that it needs to face its troubling history and begin making amends. The leaders' main goal is "to reclaim their ancestral homelands, using the centennial—which marks the anniversary of 100 years of being excluded from the national park, for natives—and flipping it into a way to integrate native presence back into the park."[49] Leaders developed a three-step plan to increase the Native presence in the park and to alter the way tourists interact with the canyon. Coleen Kaska of the Havasupai and Jack Pongyesva of the Hopi explain:

> The first step is to add native names onto park signs and maps. Many visitors hike the Bright Angel Trail, but Kaska says they don't know it's an old Havasupai path.
> "The Bright Angel Tail, our people call *Gthatv He'e*: that's because of the trees, cause the way their branches are, or the leaf part of it, is how my dad explained it to me," Kaska says. "*Gthatv He'e*: that's Coyote Tail Trail, because it's kind of bushy at the end."
> The next goal is to work with the Park Service to hire more Native guides, artists, and entrepreneurs. Nikki Cooley was the first Navajo woman to work as a licensed commercial river guide in the Grand Canyon.
> "I felt very alone in that respect. I didn't see a lot of brown people on the river," Cooley says.
> The Intertribal group's third goal is to involve tribes at higher levels of management and policy. Jason Nez is a Navajo archeologist. He says native culture and environmental protection are closely linked, but parks were founded on a false idea of 'untouched wilderness.'[50]

Working in the park, adding new signs, and incorporating local Native businesses in the canyon would return some semblance of power and claim over the land to Indigenous communities who

---

[49] Melissa Sevigny, "'Not Your Playground': Indigenous Voices on Grand Canyon's Centennial," KNAU Arizona Public Radio, February 26, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.knau.org/post/not-your-playground-indigenous-voices-grand-canyon-s-centennial.
[50] Sevigny, "'Not Your Playground.'"

have long been negatively impacted by the NPS and its authority. A full return of control to local Indigenous communities is unrealistic. The Grand Canyon is a major tourist destination for people all over the world. But if the Grand Canyon National Park adopts all these steps, it would usher in a completely new era in the relationships among local Natives, tourists, and the NPS.

We all live on stolen land. The public lands we enjoy visiting were stolen, too. Today, as we all wrestle with whose stories have been excluded from dominant historical narratives and attempt to learn these stories, the GCNP and the NPS have the opportunity to act as role models for other national parks and public lands because "no national park has a model for restoring native presence."[51] The promise that these lands are for all people needs to include the communities who lived on the land first. The Grand Canyon is more than a tourist site. It is living and spiritual place that produces powerful energy. The more that tourists recognize the significance of the canyon in these ways, the more we will learn about local Indigenous people and their histories, which enriches everyone.

Contemporary Tourism

How visitors experience the Grand Canyon reveals the commodification of this popular destination. Tourism is an enormous industry that creates jobs and revenue that supports conservation efforts and the lives of people around the site. According to a 2019 NPS report, "6.3 million visitors to Grand Canyon National Park in 2018 spent $947 million in communities near the park. That spending supported 12,558 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of $1.2 billion."[52] In recent years the economy around the Grand Canyon

[51] Sevigny, "'Not Your Playground.'"
[52] Kris Fister, "Tourism to Grand Canyon National Park Creates Economic Benefit," National Park Service, May 28, 2019, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/news/

has been stable and lucrative. The canyon is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the U.S. and offers a wide range of visitor experiences. From hiking to river rafting to helicopter tours, these experiences provide unique ways of interacting with the canyon. It is important to recognize that these outdoors attractions are costly. For example, hiking into the park cost approximately $20 a person.[53] Camping is either $12 to $18 a night depending if you are staying at the Desert View or Mather Campground. Both camp sites are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.[54] While these are the most reasonably priced ways of visiting the canyon, for family groups they can quickly add up to over $100 a night. Of course, these park and campsite fees do not include transportation and food costs. Then there are the more extreme and expensive experiences, such as hot air balloon tours. These tours are one of the most expensive ways to see the canyon. Apex Balloons offers "private charter hot air balloon flights over the Grand Canyon from October through March." Depending on the number passengers, these tours range from $20,000 to $32,000.[55] These examples show the vast range in experiences people have at the Grand Canyon. Yet when discussing tourism and the Grand Canyon, it is insufficient to focus solely on these expenses. The intersection of race and class matter, too. Analyzing how people see and experience the canyon, I demonstrate how and why each visitor's trip is different and that the site is not accessible to all.

---

grand-canyon-economic-benefit.htm#:~:text=Grand%20Canyon%2C%20AZ%20%2D%20A%20new,local%20economy%20of%20%241.2%20billion.

[53] "Entrance Fees," National Park Service, last modified October 24, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/fees.htm.

[54] "Grand Canyon National Park Trip Planner," National Park Service, Department of the Interior, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/news/upload/trip-planner-grca.pdf, 7.

[55] "Grand Canyon Hot Air Balloon Flights," Apex Balloons, accessed October 28, 2020, http://www.grandcanyonballoonrides.com/.

Before people can begin exploring GCNP, they have to get there. Getting to the Grand Canyon can be an ordeal. It is expensive and time consuming. Based on Google maps, the canyon is located about an hour and a half north of Flagstaff, Arizona. It is also about four and a half hours from Las Vegas. Obviously, the Grand Canyon is in the West. People who live on the other side of the country will have a harder time getting to the canyon because of how far it is. If people do not live nearby, they will likely have to take the time to drive, ride a bus or train, or fly to the GCNP. All of these transportation methods cost money and require the ability to take the considerable time to travel a long distance. Even before someone or a family decides they want to see the Grand Canyon, these financial barriers make it difficult for people who do not have the means to spend on a trip or who cannot take time off work. People who are faced with these kinds of tough decisions about money and whether they can take time from work may feel like the park is unattainable for them and may hinder their commitment to visit the canyon.

When a person who does not have these kinds of barriers or who navigates around them decides to make plans to visit the Grand Canyon, the National Park visitor centers are some of the places they are likely to stop at first. Upon arriving at the GCNP, these are some of the most popular and accessible places to stop. The NPS website lists the centers, museums, and historical attractions that are available to tourists. At the Grand Canyon visitor center on the south rim, you can find information about hiking, the shuttle service, and the park ranger program. The center also shows the 20-minute video *Grand Canyon: A Journey of Wonder* and has exhibits that display maps and artifacts.[56] Other attractions on the south rim include the Yavapai Geology Museum (established in 1928), the Kolb Studio (1905), the Tusayan Ruin and Museum (1928),

[56] "Visitor Centers, Information Desks and Museums," National Park Service, last modified October 19, 2020, www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/visitorcenters.htm.

and Desert View Watch Tower (1932). These sites are included in the park's entrance fee. For a relatively low fee, tourists can visit these museums and historical landmarks to learn about the park's history. People who visit these sites experience the park through an educational lens. People get sweeping views of the canyon from walking from one site to the other and learn about the park's anthropological and geological history. This method of seeing the park is one of the most accessible and approachable ways of experiencing it because of its low cost and how feasible it is to navigate.

Hiking the day-trip trails in GCNP is another economical way of experiencing the canyon. Visitors have access to hikes such as the Bright Angel Trail, the Hermit Trail, the Roosevelt Point Trail, among others. Ranging in mileage and steepness, trails take hikers along the north and south rims or into the canyon.[57] Hiking enables visitors to experience the plant and wildlife and different rock faces and formations. The NPS does warn visitors that "there are no easy trails into or out of the Grand Canyon!" Another warning posted on the day-hikes website is that "over 250 people are rescued from the canyon each year. **The difference between a great adventure in Grand Canyon and a trip to the hospital (or worse) is up to YOU.** DO NOT attempt to hike from the rim to the river and back in one day, especially during the months of May to September."[58] The hikes are hard, especially in the warmer months when temperatures can reach well over 100°. If someone does not have much hiking experience, does not remember to drink enough water, or to eat salty snacks, a day hike can quickly become dangerous. This unique way of experiencing the canyon is exciting and offers beautiful sights, yet it can be limiting to people who are not physical capable or lack hiking experience.

---

[57] "Day Hiking," National Parks Service, last modified October 14, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/day-hiking.htm.
[58] "Day Hiking."

In addition to these NPS tourist services and guides, there several tour outfitters that run trips in the Grand Canyon that are more expensive than hiking on one's own. Grand Canyon Flight Tours has been operating since 1998 and runs several trips each day. The trips are around four hours long and range from $298 to $459.[59] This price is steep compared to the park's entrance fees. The company advertises the rides as a way to "explore the canyon like never before" and that "this Grand Canyon tour is the only helicopter ride in Vegas that gives you 30 miles of flight above and below the Grand Canyon itself." The company stresses that comfort and luxury are a part of the visitors' experience.[60] Not only is the cost vastly different than the GCNP's fees, but how people will feel while experiencing the canyon is marketed differently. During this tour there are few opportunities to learn about the canyon's cultural or natural history, like there are at the visitor centers. The helicopter tours focus on the passengers' views, comfort, and unique experience.

Similar to the aerial tours, Pink Adventure Tours is another company that offers a high-priced, unique experience. This business takes tourists along the rim of the canyon via bright pink jeeps. Ranging from two to three hours with rates of $99 to $138 per adult and $90 to $125 per child, the company advertises that it will bring you to "the gorgeous views along the rim on your journey [and] to scenic viewpoints." The "tour of the Grand Canyon includes park admission fees and tickets to see the IMAX movie, *Grand Canyon: Hidden Secrets*. Several of the tours include a guide who brings you to stops and tells you info about the area, geology,

---

[59] "Helicopter Tours," GC Flight, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.gcflight.com/product-category/helicopter-tours/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw2or8BRCNARIsAC_ppyYVVU2mmh CMhPid7LlaVESKuw0fuO4_ZN8EGovIM2dpT5E21j95f54aArEXEALw_wcB.
[60] "Helicopter Tours."

botany, myths, and legends of the canyon."[61] The helicopter and pink jeep tours at the Grand Canyon are unavailable to most people who visit it. They cost too much for most people. Even if people have the money, they may be hesitant about spending it if they do not know the details of what they would be paying for. TripAdvisor is a free resource that provides information about and reviews different tours and sites. GC Flight Tours provides a link to the comments people leave about their experience with the company. This is one way to learn about what to expect from the tour and may encourage people to sign up for one when they are planning a trip to the canyon. In one review, user mimi_vang88 writes that her "boss just recently went on a tour with y'all and loved it. He pretty much told me if I didn't do it while I was in Las Vegas, I would regret it the rest of my life."[62] Another reviewer mentions, "We got awesome pictures and have recommended GC Tours and Serenity Helicopters to our friends when they go to Vegas!"[63] These examples show that some people who plan a trip to the Grand Canyon visit it in a way that they have heard about from friends or family. If most of the people in a person's social circle have seen the canyon from the rim while riding in a jeep or from a helicopter, it seems more likely that they will do the same kind of trip. Visitors will do what occurs to them that is imaginable and feasible based on their circumstances. This keeps visitors' experiences within similar social and class groups.

---

[61] "Grand Canyon Tours," Pink Adventure Tours, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.pinkadventuretours.com/tours/grand-canyon-tours/.
[62] mimi_vang88, "Awesome Solo Weekend Trip," December 20, 2018, review of GC Flight, https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g45963-d2208982-r548199412-GC_Flight-Las_Vegas_Nevada.html.
[63] Heidi K, "Grand Canyon-Canyon Floor Tour!" August 18, 2017, review of GC Flight, https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g45963-d2208982-r515040645-GC_Flight-Las_Vegas_Nevada.html.

River rafting is another way to experience the canyon that is influenced by social and class dynamics. There are different companies that run rafting trips that range from one day to around sixteen days. Tourists have the option of doing a section of the river or its entire length. They also have a choice of the type of boat on which they want to travel. Making a reservation for a rafting trip can take up to a year and a half to two years. When I visited the Grand Canyon with my family in the summer of 2018, it was because we had committed to a rafting experience in the canyon with a group of friends. We went with Arizona Raft Adventures because our friend who organized the trip had used it before. We chose the "Classic Lower Canyon Adventure," which lasted for about nine days. On the first day we set out on our hike into canyon at 4 a.m. via the Bright Angel Trail. I remember walking through the haze of the morning and as time passed the sun rose and illuminated the canyon. The rock faces around me glowed in rich orange, brown, and red hues. Blue, purple, and grey tones appeared in the deep crevices and valleys that stretched as far as I could see. Those nine days on the river were unlike any experience I had ever had. In a line from my journal from the trip I noted the frigid water churning around me and how laying beneath the walls of rock felt comforting. My time in the canyon deepened my appreciation of the natural world and how vital it is to respect it. I recognize that this was a unique trip that few people have the opportunity to experience. I wish that these trips were more accessible for anyone who wanted to go on them because they have the potential to teach us new skills and values and to enrich us in multiple ways.

People visit and experience the Grand Canyon in a variety of ways. Race, class, region, and level of exposure to the outdoors all affect how tourists visit the Grand Canyon. These identities and lenses may act as barriers which hinder people and communities from perceiving the park as a place where they feel welcomed. These elements of tourism that intersect in the

Grand Canyon also exist in discussions about the companies run by local Native American communities. Since tourism in this area first became popular, several Native tribes have established rafting businesses, visitor centers, and provided access to the land.

Native Communities and Tourism

The increased commodification of the Grand Canyon in the twentieth century impacted how local Indigenous communities became involved with businesses, on and below the canyon's rim. The Hualapai River Runners, the Skywalk, and trips to Havasu Falls all developed over time. These ventures reflect how local Native tribes adopted commercialization. Native communities dictate how visitors experience certain areas of the canyon and profit from welcoming tourists to their territories. Over the hundred years since the Grand Canyon became a national park, local Natives' participation in tourism has changed. As noted earlier, in the early twentieth century the Fred Harvey Company emerged as the leading business in the region. Shaffer notes that "by the 1920s the Santa Fe/Harvey partnership operated over a dozen major hotels and had established its famous Indian Department for collecting and selling Native American arts and crafts."[64] During this time, local Native communities had little control over how depictions of them and their cultures were presented to tourists. Today, the Hualapai and the Havasupai have more control over how they are represented, and they teach tourists about their cultures. These Indigenous communities have learned to adapt to tourism to enable their survival in the Grand Canyon.

The Hualapai River Runners lead tourist groups on short trips on the Colorado River. This rafting experience is different than other options for visitors because of the Native history

[64] Shaffer, *See America First*, 52-53.

tourists learn about. These one, two, and five-day trips teach visitors about the Hualapai's history of living in the canyon along the river. River guides explain how "the canyons served as a refuge for the Hualapai people when they were being rounded up for relocation in 1874 and how they study the geology, plant and animal life along the river."[65] Understanding these histories diversifies how people view the land's cultural elements. The darker pasts and the Hualapai's deep attachment to the land are narratives that the Hualapai describe on their own terms. The river guide company was established in the 1970s as part of the ongoing business ventures "the Hualapai have sought out to turn their 108 river miles into cash."[66] As tourism impacted the canyon's economy, the Hualapai people struggled to assert themselves as businesses owners. It is important to note that this was not of their own volition, but because the economic and social systems in place were stacked against the Hualapai and other local Indigenous communities. The establishment of the Hualapai River Runners was a positive and significant turning point in their economy because they were "the only Native-owned and -operated rafting business on the Colorado River."[67] This is one place where culture and class intersect. Rafting has historically been dominated by white and well-off people. This is still the case. The River Runners as a Native-owned and operated rafting company culturally diversify the river. The company breaks through the historically negative perceptions about local Natives and class barriers to show visitors that their perspectives (that is, the Hualapai's) are valuable and that there is more than one rafting narrative. The Hualapai profit from rafting and other business established on their land that alter the social and economic landscape of the Grand Canyon.

---

[65] "Hualapai River Runners," Grand Canyon West, accessed October 25, 2020, https://grandcanyonwest.com/explore/colorado-river-rafting/.
[66] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 146-147.
[67] Jeffrey P. Sheperd, *We Are an Indian Nation: A History of the Hualapai People* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 16.

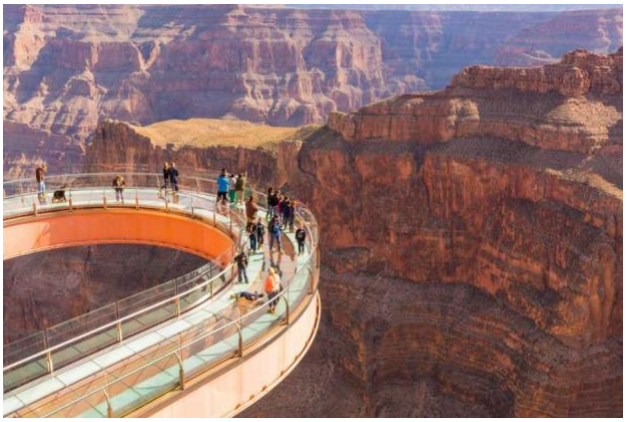


Figure 2: Tourists at the Grand Canyon Skywalk look out over the canyon. "Skywalk and Eagle Point," photograph, Grand Canyon West, accessed November 15, 2020, https://grandcanyon west.com/explore/west-rim/skywalk-eagle-point/.

The Hualapai River Runners are one part of Grand Canyon West. This is a larger tourist complex that is split between the canyon's west rim and Peach Springs off Route 66. At this center, located on the Hualapai's reservation in between Grand Canyon National Park and Las Vegas, tourists can ride a zip line, visit the Hualapai Ranch, and view the canyon from the Skywalk.[68] The Skywalk is the main attraction at Grand Canyon West (see figure 1). The glass bridge allows visitors to walk approximately 4,000 feet above the canyon's floor. It is a controversial architectural feat that "consists of a horseshoe shaped steel frame with glass floor and sides that projects about 70 feet (21 m) from the canyon rim."[69] Debates over the construction of the Skywalk fell into two categories. One was that the glass bridge would damage the integrity and physical nature of the land. The other perspective, as articulated by Sheri Yellowhawk, was that "tourism is our only means of self-sufficiency, of our people coming out of poverty and social problems."[70] The Skywalk would help achieve this goal of supporting the community. This was a tough debate that deeply challenged the Hualapai people's values. Ultimately, the Skywalk was built and opened in 2007 and since then it has been visited by millions of people. The Hualapai community's tourism efforts reflect how Natives have had to make sacrifices to the environment and their values to support themselves. The Hualapai adapted

[68] "Getting Here, Your Adventure at a Glance," Grand Canyon West, accessed October 26, 2020, https://grandcanyonwest.com/.
[69] Stevens, *The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon,* 52.
[70] Sheperd, *We Are an Indian Nation,* 200-201.

and readjusted to cater to visitors to survive the commodification of the canyon, which was established by Anglo-Americans. These business ventures demonstrate how Native American groups are reshaping Western tourism.

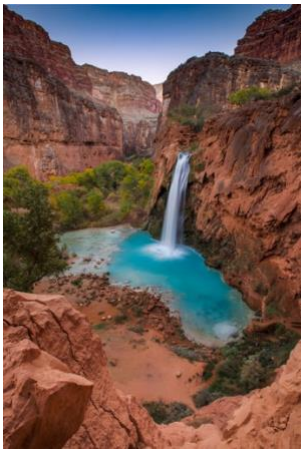


Figure 3: Havasu Falls, "Havasupai Campground Reservations," photograph, Havasupai Tribe, accessed November 18, 2020, https://www.havasupaireservations.com/.

The Havasupai are another local Indigenous community which has engaged in transforming outdoor tourism in the Grand Canyon. This tribe is also known as the Havasu Baaja and People of the Blue Green Waters. Their community has existed for "over 1,000 years in the remote village of Supai, Arizona, located eight miles hike below the rim of the Grand Canyon."[71] Their reservation was established in 1880 and is located "at the end of Route 18 off historic Route 66. It consists of 188,077 acres of canyon land and broken plateaus abutting the western edge of the Grand Canyons South Rim."[72] Havasu Falls is located on the Havasupai reservation. These falls are some of the most stunning and secluded waterfalls and series of pools to visit at the Grand Canyon. It is difficult for visitors to access because reservations are required for all hikers and campers before arriving at the site. Once visitors secure their reservation, they can hike down and enjoy splashing, jumping, and swimming in the turquoise blue streams.[73] The waters are gorgeous and of course people want to see and experience them. The Havasupai have allowed tourists to visit their lands, which garners a great deal of revenue. Havasupai researcher Stephen Hirst details that "Havasu Creek produces

[71] "About Supai," The Official Havasupai Tribe, accessed October 26, 2020, https://theofficialhavasupaitribe.com/About-Supai/about-supai.html.
[72] "About Supai."

[73] Lucy Yang, "People are going crazy over this hidden 'blue water paradise' in Arizona," Insider, August 24, 2017, https://www.insider.com/hidden-blue-water-swimming-hole-arizona-2017-8.

a series of breathtaking waterfalls and lovely blue pools that more than 30,000 visitors a year come to see. Tourism provides the principal locally generated income for the Havasupai people, bringing in $2.5 million annually."[74] (That was in 2006.) The Havasupai have financially benefitted from opening their lands to visitors. The decision to make their sacred waters accessible contributes to ongoing debates about the balance between needing to be self-sufficient and wanting to protect the environment. The system that the Havasupai have in place to limit the number of tourists, and because of how secluded the falls are, enable harmony between these values of protecting the land and supporting the Native community.

There are many ways for people to see the Grand Canyon that reveal the social, racial, and economic differences across the range of tourists and the local establishments. These examples of contemporary tourism show how commercialized the canyon has become since the era of the Fred Harvey Company. Over time, local Indigenous communities have adjusted to the changes around the canyon. By developing ways to assert themselves as business owners and communicators of their histories, the local Natives strive towards a more mutually respectful and ethical relationship among themselves, tourists, and other local businesses. These efforts are crucial to showing tourists and the NPS that the local Natives' history and presence is important. Effectively communicating their goals, appreciation, and commitment to the land teaches non-Native people that they (that is, Indigenous people) have a right to decide how to use the land. Many of the arguments over land rights and usage between Native people and the government stem from how local Natives want to use the land within their boundaries. The federal government retorts that this will disrupt conservation efforts.[75] There is a long way to go to

---

[74] Stephen Hirst, *I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People* (Grand Canyon: Grand Canyon Association, 2006), 18.
[75] Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 144-145.

achieve a completely respectful partnership among local Natives, tourists, and the NPS, but these tourist experiences are an important step for local Indigenous communities to be self-sustaining and exercise their land rights.

Part III: Diversity, Equity, Indigenous Justice, and Beyond

Diversity in the NPS and the GCNP

A lack of racial and ethnic diversity in tourism reflects in the NPS's and the GCNP's management. Before I explore how concerns that the park does not mirror the U.S.'s demographics, I have to examine how disparities in race and ethnicity reflects in the entire agency. As I mentioned earlier, these public lands were formed with a specific vision of nature in mind. The ideal of a pristine environment excluded BIPOCs and people of a lower socioeconomic status. In the last hundred years, this ideal has drastically shifted and the NPS "is now trying to employ more minority youth in parks through several programs, most in partnership with universities or nonprofit groups like the Student Conservation Association."[76] These efforts are important and demonstrate that the NPS wants historically excluded communities to become part of its mission. Researchers of a study on race, ethnicity, diversity, and the inclusion efforts of park and recreation agencies argue that "organizations need to have employees who have knowledge of and experience with communities of color by hiring people of color or conducting diversity training with current employees."[77] The NPS's Student Conservation Association has been trying to hire people from more racially and ethnically

[76] Jodi Peterson, "Parks for All?" *High Country News*, May 19, 2014, accessed October 27, 2020, https://www.hcn.org/issues/46.8/parks-for-all.
[77] KangJae Jerry Lee, Jonathan Casper, and Myron Floyd, "Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion Efforts of Public Park and Recreation Agencies," 102.

diverse backgrounds. This important program demonstrates that the NPS recognizes that there is a lack of diversity in this way and the agency is working to serve and support historically excluded people. Outdoors recreation scholar Nina Roberts illustrates the unfortunate reality that these programs do not have long-term support for most participants. She explains that

> last year, thanks to shrinking budgets, the National Park Service offered just 425 full-time openings nationwide. Such intense competition, along with the fact that park managers often like to hire from within, makes it even harder to find a foothold: Less than 20 percent of recent new hires were minorities.[78]

There is a clear issue here with the NPS-sponsored programs. They can shape staffs that are more reflective of the U.S.'s demographics, and yet they have not committed to this goal.

Low levels of racial, class, and ethnic diversity on park staffs follows the same trend as those in tourism. In a report connecting the 2010 U.S. Census to National Park visitors, researchers found that "the overwhelming majority of visitors in the VSP (visitor services project) database were white (95%). One percent or less were black / African American or Native Hawaiian / other Pacific Islander. By comparison, 72% of those in the U.S. Census were white, 13% were black or African American, and less than 1% were Native Hawaiian."[79] This shows that the parks are overwhelmingly white spaces. This suggests something about who runs the parks and who visits them. Non-white people do not see themselves represented in the National Parks. This may hinder these people from visiting these sites. These disparities illustrate some of the barriers that make it difficult for non-white people to feel comfortable or welcomed in the public outdoor and natural spaces.

---

[78] Quoted in Peterson, "Parks for All?"
[79] Jerry J. Vaske and Katie M. Lyon, "Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors," (Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, 2014), 20.

Clearly, many white people visit the GCNP. The Northern Arizona University's tourism study on Grand Canyon National Park report that "the overwhelming majority of respondents (78.7% or 'yourself' in the table under 'Average' column) were White, although smaller but significant percentages of respondents were American Indian or Alaska Native (7.7%), Asian (9.2%), African American (2.3%) or Pacific Islander (2.1%)."[80] Historically excluded communities are not visiting the Grand Canyon. There are several reasons this is the case. The marginality thesis suggests why these disparities exist within African-American communities. Attorney Andrea Waye explains how this thesis has been used to argue that African Americans "visit the national parks less frequently than white Americans because they have less money, less leisure time, and less adequate means of transportation than white Americans due to 'the cumulative effects of social, economic, and education discrimination and segregation practices.'"[81] While these may be factors for some people, this cannot be used to explain why all members of these communities do not go to the GCNP. Many African Americans do travel and have the money, time, and access to transportation. Other regional and comfortability factors explain why some African Americans are not going to the National Parks.

One of these reasons is due to the regional barriers. That is, where there are higher and lower populations of African Americans compared with where most National Parks exist. Travel blogger Joshua Walker writes:

> Venturing to national parks, even in the absence of discriminatory policies, is very difficult for MOST black people today. Let us consider where our national parks are located. If you divide the U.S in half longitudinally, most national parks are located between the mid-west and the west coast. Most African Americans are not. Many of us

[80] Cheryl Cole Cothran, Thomas E. Combrink, and Melinda Bradford, "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study" (Flagstaff: Northern Arizona University, 2005), 23.
[81] Andrea Waye, "An Environmental Justice Perspective on African-American Visitation to Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks," *Hastings Environmental Law Journal* 11 (Spring 2005): 135.

> still live in the Southeast. Planning a trip to visit one of America's crown jewels becomes incredibly expensive. Aint gonna happen level of expensive. It would require flights, hotels, car rentals, equipment rentals, park passes, and paid time off to really experience all that the parks have to offer. The alternative is living close by in an all-white or mostly white mountain town.[82]

Walker combines elements of the marginality thesis with the regional limitations that make it difficult for some people from these communities to go to sites like the Grand Canyon. In this case, some Black individuals are not traveling long distances where there are smaller populations of Black communities. This is due, writer Kim A. O'Connell asserts, to "a deeply rooted fear among people of color that a visit to our nation's remote areas might make them vulnerable to racial hostility."[83] BIPOC individuals are cautious about going to places where they do not believe many people who look like them exist. According to Sarah Krakoff's "Not Yet America's Best Idea: Law, Inequality, and Grand Canyon National Park," in the Grand Canyon region "Black, Latinx, and other nonwhite residents of Phoenix [have been] shut out from the benefits flowing to the Valley of the Sun, and discrimination throughout Arizona created a less-than-welcome environment for nonwhites who might otherwise think about hitting the road to visit the GCNP or any other protected public lands."[84]A fear of being discriminated against and of entering potentially hostile environments influences the racial and ethnic disparities in the parks, including the Grand Canyon. These deeply rooted fears, and racial and ethnic barriers, have been difficult to eliminate and are far greater than the NPS and the GCNP's ability to solve.

Class, which is often defined by socioeconomic status and education level, needs to be included in discussions about the barriers that limit some people from visiting National Parks.

---

[82] Walker, "Lions and Tigers and Black Folk, Oh My!"
[83] Quoted in Waye, "An Environmental Justice Perspective," 138.
[84] Sarah Krakoff, "Not Yet America's Best Idea: Law, Inequality, and Grand Canyon National Park," *University of Colorado Law Review* 91 (2020): 636-637.

race and ethnicity are not the only disparities across visitorship in the national parks. There are class-related issues that make it difficult for some people to visit the public parks. The report linking the 2010 census to national parks visitors reveals that "household income among visitors was normally distributed. Six percent earned less than $25,000 and another 6% made $200,000 or more; about a quarter (24%) had a household income of between $50,000 and $74,000. People in the 2010 Census reported lower income levels. For example, 24% earned less than $25,000."[85] The report also states that "a third (32%) of national park visitors earned $100,000 or more, compared to 20% of individuals in the Census."[86]

Obviously, there are people who do not have enough money, time, or access to reliable, affordable transportation to travel to sites like the Grand Canyon. These factors limit how people travel, for sure, but they do not completely prevent people from ever traveling. One reason park tourists' household income tend to be slightly higher than the national average may depend on where a visitor is from. People who have more money may feel more comfortable traveling farther from home than someone who does not have similar financial means and prefers to stay closer to home. Another possible reason why park visitors may be wealthier is because individuals with more financial security feel able to take more time off work than people who cannot take long vacations. The economic differences of potential visitors are outside of the NPS's control and reflect the larger inequalities in America. I understand that it is unrealistic for the NPS to solve these issues, but the agency needs to be more outspoken about how financial disparities impact how people experience the parks. Only after acknowledging why some people

[85] Vaske and Lyon, "Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors," 17.
[86] Vaske and Lyon, "Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors," 31.

are not visiting the parks will the NPS be able to engage in the tough conversations about how to make the outdoors more accessible to people from a variety of socioeconomic situations.

Education levels among NPS visitors are also notable. One report indicates that the visitors to national parks "are more highly educated than the general public. Nearly two-thirds of NPS visitors held a Bachelor's or Graduate degree; about one-third (32%) of the individuals in the 2010 Census reported this level education."[87] Grand Canyon tourists are consistent with these findings. According to the "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study" conducted by Northern Arizona University, "visitors are a highly educated group. One-fourth (24.8%) were college graduates and another third (34.3%) had engaged in post-graduate study or earned graduate degrees – a much higher percentage than the U.S. population generally."[88] The national parks, including the Grand Canyon, have disproportionately highly educated visitors. It is difficult to know why this disparity exists and there is not much scholarship on this phenomenon. I suspect that the skewed education levels among park visitors is because people's families and friends tend to have comparable academic achievements.[89] People in their social circles and familial groups are likely to talk to one another about their vacations. This may create a pattern of common travel destinations. I am still unsure of why less well-educated individuals visit national parks less frequently than more highly educated people. There are aspects of this research that still need to be explored. Although there are ambiguities about education, tourists, and national parks, this situation shows that diversifying the visitorship of parks needs to be examined—and then remediated.

---

[87] Vaske and Lyon, "Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors," 31.
[88] Cothran, Combrink, and Bradford, "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study," 13.
[89] Jennifer Flashman, "Academic Achievement and Its Impact on Friend Dynamics," *Sociology of Education* 85 (January 2012): 61-80.

Examining how race, ethnicity, and class intersect in terms national parks tourism and the Grand Canyon illustrates the profound inequalities that exist in these sites (and this country). The Grand Canyon is a magnificent and beautiful place that everyone should have the ability to experience if they wish. Making this site more accessible is an undertaking that the NPS cannot support without external help. The deeply rooted barriers that prevent people from feeling comfortable and able to visit the Grand Canyon stretch back to the establishment of the first National Park (and arguably much farther). Currently, the NPS, non-profit organizations, social media campaigns, and leaders in the movement are working tirelessly to make parks' visitorship more reflective of the U.S.'s demographics. This is demanding, yet vital work that needs to be done to remove the social and economic barriers that prevent some people from exercising their right to enjoy the outdoors.

Responses from Leaders and Groups

Making parks accessible and more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics is challenging. The NPS, environmental and educational foundations, grassroots organizations, and outdoors influencers have all been working to solve these issues. Several of their methods include introducing more people to the parks and outdoors spaces, diversifying hiring practices, and increasing the visibility of BIPOCs exploring and advocating for the environment. As mentioned in my methodologies and theoretical approach section, I will analyze the work of leaders and organizations within the Grand Canyon region and others from across the country. Specifically, I will evaluate how these groups have committed to providing historically excluded people experiences in nature, and careers in the outdoors industry and environmentalism. There is a mix of reactions and level of effectiveness to how these groups and

leaders have been working to make recreational tourism more inclusive. It is difficult to determine how much change has come from this work because of how recently the campaigns and initiatives have been implemented. In the last few months, established organizations have made diversity and environmental justice pledges and new programs and social media platforms have emerged. All of these new statements and methods have ideas with which I agree and disagree. The organizations that I include here can all learn from one another about what is working. Many of the programs and non-profits have the same goals but different approaches. One way I can evaluate the methods and effectiveness of these entities is through reading and analyzing responses from the organizations, participants, and responses on social media.

The NPS has tried to attract more tourists to the parks by subsidizing entrance fees and launching social media campaigns. Each year the NPS announces several Free Park days. According to the "NPS Deputy Director David Vela, 'free entrance days serve as additional motivation for people to get outside and enjoy these places of inspiration and recreation.'"[90] While this initiative does alleviate the cost of getting into the parks that have fees, visitors still have to consider the other travel and lodging finances. The "Find Your Park" social media campaign was launched to celebrate the NPS centennial in 2016. This online initiative was criticized by Glenn Nelson, the founder of The Trail Posse. The Trail Posse "is a non-profit journalism and advocacy project seeking to change the perception of the outdoors to be more equitable and inclusive, so our country's emerging non-white majority grows a meaningful stake in our planet and its environmental challenges."[91] Nelson uses racial, ethnic, and equity-focused

[90] "National Park Service Announces Fee-Free Days for 2020," National Park Service, last modified November 5, 2019, https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/2020-fee-free-days.htm.
[91] "About the Trail Posse," The Trail Posse, accessed October 28, 2020, https://trailposse.com/about-the-trail-posse/.

lenses in his work to make the outdoors more accessible. His response to the "Find Your Park" campaign is that it "includes but doesn't specifically target minorities and was delivered mainly to the already converted."[92] The NPS is not strategic enough about attracting people who are hesitant about going to a National Park or who lack experience in these places. I acknowledge that it is difficult to dismantle the historic limitations and hesitations people have about going to these institutionalized outdoors spaces, but there is a demand to upend these barriers. Nelson offers several suggestions about how the NPS can improve the approaches. He explains,

> The park service should use its resources and partnerships to execute an all-out effort to promote diversity within its ranks and its parks. Its outreach should be tailored to minorities and delivered where they log in, follow, Tweet, view or listen. The park service needs to shout to minorities from its iconic mountaintops, "We want you here!" Such a campaign could include educational programs about the importance of the outdoors to a healthy lifestyle, transportation solutions for carless urban dwellers, and advice on easy and safe ways to enjoy the parks.[93]

The NPS has the resources to diversify its hiring practices and improve its outreach programs to underserved communities. The NPS needs to prioritize accessibility and cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in every sector of its practices. Nelson's suggestions align with the work of other outdoors inclusivity organizations and collectives to fill in the gaps that the NPS is not addressing.

The Grand Canyon National Park is not exempt from these issues. To reiterate some of what I have already noted, a disproportionate number of the GCNP visitors are white. Another finding from the "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study" published by Northern Arizona University researchers is that "97.1 percent of respondents used a motor

---

[92] Glenn Nelson, "Why Are Our Parks So White," *New York Times*, July 10, 2015, accessed October 16, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/12/opinion/sunday/diversify-our-national-parks.html.
[93] Nelson, "Why Are Our Parks So White."

vehicle for some part of their Grand Canyon visit."[94] Someone with a license and a car has easier access to the canyon than someone who does not. Not everyone has these resources, especially if they live in a city and do not need a car or have the means to access one. This supports Nelson's suggestion about needing to provide transportation for people who do not own or have access to a vehicle. Clearly the GCNP visitorship does not reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S., but the park does have several programs to promote and encourage diversity in the park ranger programs.

The Northern Arizona University (NAU) Seasonal Park Ranger Training and the Seeking Opportunities through Academic Recruitment (SOAR) programs are GCNP diversity initiatives. The NAU program offers a course that trains students in NPS "law enforcement, specific emergency services physical fitness training, and additional concentration in resource protection."[95] The program's website notes its commitment to promote "equal career opportunities for women and minorities."[96] This program is valuable and offers students the chance to pursue a career in the NPS. I support the NAU program's values and equal opportunities for historically excluded individuals. However, I question how effective this program is in making seismic changes because park management is mostly comprised of white people. Jodi Peterson, managing editor of *High Country News* explains that "at least 80 percent of the agency's roughly 22,000 employees are white; for administrators, it's more like 85 percent."[97] I acknowledge that my critiques of the NPS, the GCNP, and affiliated programs that

---

[94] Cothran, Combrink, and Bradford, "Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study," 15.
[95] "Course Information," NAU Parks and Recreation Management Program, accessed October 28, 2020, http://www.prm.nau.edu/rangers/course.htm.
[96] "Diversity in the National Park Service Workforce," NAU Parks and Recreation Management Program, accessed October 28, 2020, http://www.prm.nau.edu/rangers/minorites.htm.
[97] Peterson, "Parks for All?"

attempt to address diversity, equity, and accessibility cannot be solved by these groups on their own. The history of exclusion in the outdoors is institutionalized. The only way to dismantle or radically change the system is to address the inequalities in environmentalism and the outdoors industry in other facets of our lives.

The SOAR program combats similar issues that the NAU program does, but the volunteer and job opportunities are offered to students instead of adults. According to its website, SOAR is "designed to introduce students to careers in the National Park Service. The program represents a commitment to increase youth development and staff diversity at Grand Canyon National Park."[98] My hesitancy about applauding this program is that there are still limitations that may cause some students to be unsure about applying for one of the opportunities. For example, students must be "enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a degree seeking student (diploma, certificate, etc) in an accredited institution" and "students must have their own transportation to get to and from work sites."[99] These are two of several requirements students need to be eligible for this program. What about students who do not meet these requirements? Are they not able to have access to these opportunities? Based on the requirements, many students are excluded because of educational and socioeconomic barriers.

In the Grand Canyon region, the NPS is not the only group working to diversify hiring and educational programs and park visitors. The Grand Canyon Trust is a non-governmental affiliated program that works to diversify visitors' experiences by making a Native presence more widely known and to encourage tourists to be more mindful and respectful at this popular site. The Grand Canyon Trust works across Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado.

---

[98] "SOAR Program," National Park Service, last modified March 28, 2019, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/soar-program.htm.
[99] "SOAR Program."

Established in 1985, the organization has been advocating for the protection of land, energy, water, and Native American laws and policies.[100] The organization's online and physical presence makes a positive impact in the Colorado Plateau region by working with youth across the country and elevating the voices of Natives in the area.

LeaderShift is a three-week long young adult program that fosters connections among staff from the Grand Canyon Trust, tribe members in the Grand Canyon region, and young people who are passionate about environmental and social justice. The program is described as "a place-based advocacy workshop that explores environmental justice issues on the Colorado Plateau and teaches skills and strategies for change."[101] Other environmental and social justice programs based around National Parks can learn from this opportunity. One reason LeaderShift is an effective program is because it is more accessible to a wide range of young people. If participants have trouble accessing the technology or the internet connection that they need to do the workshops, the organization will help in any way it can to get them these resources. Another benefit of doing this program is that the organization will pay each participant $200 for the three-week session because it is committed "to providing all students with the materials they need to participate in the course. The Grand Canyon Trust also recognizes the current economic challenges and values the time youth choose to spend learning about environmental justice."[102] This stipend alleviates some of the potential economic pressures students may face when deciding to participate in the program. The only "requirement" to apply for the program is to

---

[100] "Our Work," The Grand Canyon Trust, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/our-work.
[101] Maria Archibald, "Five Reasons to Apply for LeaderShift 2020," the Grand Canyon Trust, April 27, 2020, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/blog/five-reasons-apply-leadershift-2020.
[102] Archibald, "Five Reasons to Apply for LeaderShift 2020."

have an interest in the issues in the Colorado Plateau and to be a young person. In the most recent LeaderShift program, one student stated, "I learned the properties which uphold the extractive economy and how they were at play in the overtaking of Black Mesa. I also learned a lot about the history of Indigenous lands and have gained a newfound love and respect for the land."[103] This participant was impacted by the work and deepened their values and appreciation for the environment. Based on this positive reaction, among others, it seems that the program is effectively encouraging a love for the land and a commitment to protect it in a way that respects Native people. LeaderShift is significantly more accessible than the NPS and NAU programs because those opportunities had educational and cost requirements that LeaderShift does not. The youth program run by the Grand Canyon Trust is a model for other environmental and Indigenous justice organizations. The leadership workshops are attainable to a greater range of youth with different socioeconomic and education levels and different racial and ethnic identities.

The Voices of Grand Canyon is another initiative from the Grand Canyon Trust that works to create a more complete picture of what the Grand Canyon signifies to Native people. Its series of interviews from members of the Diné, Hualapai, Zuni, Hopi, and Havasupai tribes mix text, audio recordings, videos, and images to illustrate the importance of the canyon besides being a popular tourist destination. The organization and local Natives work together to show tourists that "today, 11 tribes maintain cultural connections to the Grand Canyon. Their stories stack up as high as the mile-deep canyon itself—stories of movement and migration, hardship and struggle, origins, reverence, and awe. But rarely do tourists hear firsthand from the people

[103] Amber N. Benally, "Behind the Screens: LeaderShift 2020, October 16, 2020, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/blog/behind-screens-leadershift-2020.

whose cultures, worldviews, and livelihoods are inextricably tied to the Grand Canyon region."[104] There are thousands of years of history about the spiritual and ancestral significance of the Grand Canyon to local Indigenous communities, yet many tourists are ignorant of it. This is in part because the dominant historical narrative keeps Natives in the past and implicitly suggests that they no longer exist. The Voices of Grand Canyon interviews and reflections shows that Native tribes live around the Grand Canyon and have active connections with the land. This work makes their presence known and challenges the idea that the canyon is at the disposal of tourists. The Natives in the region have ancestors who are a part of the land. In the video "Not a Theme Park," Nikki Cooley from the Diné tribe describes when she worked on the river as a guide, she made offerings to the river of corn pollen or white corn meal

> To ensure that the river knew that I was respecting him and her. In the Diné way, the big Colorado River is considered the male river, the Little Colorado River that comes out, and the San Juan River they are all considered female rivers. The waters come together at the confluence, so that is where the male and female meet. Together they nourish the rest of the Grand Canyon. It is a very sacred place that we must treat very carefully, respectfully, and not think of it as a theme park.[105]

All the tribes in the area today have different creation and ancestral stories that have been passed down for generations. Tourists who understand and acknowledge this history honor the local Indigenous communities and gain a fuller idea of how amazing the canyon is beyond its physical impressiveness. As organizations and leaders work to diversify parks' visitorship by increasing awareness about the racial and class disparities in outdoor tourism, there also needs to be a commitment to elevating the Indigenous presence and history at these sites. The argument here is that the leaders and organizations working to diversify parks need to include Native rights and visibility in their advocacy to change the perception that these sites are exclusive.

---

[104] "Voices of the Grand Canyon."
[105] "The Voices of Grand Canyon."

To effectively make the GCNP more racially and ethnically reflective of the U.S.'s demographics, and to educate non-Indigenous people about Native American history, organizations outside of the Grand Canyon region need to support this change. There are organizations all across the country that provide programs and new approaches to diversify public lands. Organizations have a range of priorities when it comes to diversifying the outdoors and committing to Indigenous justice. New York City Outward Bound is a non-profit that works to reframe how we define the outdoors. NYC Outward Bound diversifies these spaces by providing wilderness experiences to urban youth. The trips it offers encourage personal growth and skill-building techniques through unique outdoor expeditions and adventure retreats. The New York City site grew from Outward Bound, which was founded in 1941 by Kurt Hahn and Lawrence Durning Holt. The New York location was established in 1987 by "a group of Outward Bound enthusiasts, frustrated by the enormous number of New York City students receiving an inadequate education."[106] This team wanted to provide students from urban areas opportunities to experience and grow from challenges. The organization supports kids and creates situations where they can work in groups and in environments outside of their comfort zones. Currently, this organization serves predominately high-needs populations across the city. NYC Outward Bound runs upstate adventure retreats that

> helps groups recognize and discuss pertinent issues, explore challenges, set goals, and give one another meaningful feedback. NYC Outward Bound Schools' retreats include components such as high and low challenge courses, hiking, large group games, and orienteering. We deliver these programs at several different facilities in upstate New York and New Jersey. The accommodations are simple and rustic, and the time away in a natural setting enhances focus and reflection.[107]

---

[106] "Our Story," New York City Outward Bound Schools, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/about-us/our-story/.

[107] "Adventure and Team Building," New York City Outward Bound Schools, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/adventure-team-building/#adventure-retreats.

Making recreational activities accessible to kids from the city teaches them that nature and wilderness spaces are valuable to their lives. Learning lifelong skills through these methods begins to break down personal barriers while enabling kids to grow accustomed to the challenges of being in nature. Overcoming the tests of a new environment is a big deal for anyone, but for kids it has the potential to influence their passions and interests for the rest of their lives.

Although this organization does not directly work in the Grand Canyon region, the program encourages values that can be taught by other youth programs. Additionally, the organization does not explicitly define a responsibility to support Native rights and history. There is a missed opportunity here to influence how young people learn about the land on which they are exploring. I recognize that this is not NYC Outward Bound's goal and it does valuable work that should not be dismissed. Everyone has the opportunity to reevaluate and grow, and I hope that this foundation begins to adopt supporting Native rights and history in their courses. The NYC Outward Bound programs have the potential to influence how other organizations in urban areas introduce young people to nature and its many wonders. Introducing kids who do not have opportunities to travel far outside of the city to the impact nature can have, may plant the seeds of their potential interest and appreciation for the environment. Young people are the future. As environmental and social justice issues continue to impact society, these people will be the care takers of natural spaces. The programs and organizations that instill leadership, teamwork, and environmental values in young people will hopefully contribute to making the world a more just and sustainable place.

The Sierra Club is a non-profit organization that wrestles with these questions and the responsibility to promote environmental justice and diversity in the outdoors. Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club has grown tremendously and now works on projects that combat

climate change, advocate for conservation, and environmental justice.[108] Nonetheless, the Sierra Club has a troubling and problematic past. It has been forced to reckon with it. In an interview with InsideClimate News, Ramón Cruz, who was recently appointed president of the Sierra Club, discussed his new role and how the organization is placing environmental justice at the forefront of its work. In response to a question about Muir's racist and derogatory statements about BIPOC communities, Cruz explained, "I have to understand and reexamine history and learn from it. I wouldn't want to get rid of John Muir's contribution, but there are things that you need to put out there to become a more inclusive organization that is more consistent with the values that we profess."[109] I agree with Cruz, but hope that over the next few years I see him and the Sierra Club develop initiatives that are more inclusive of communities that Muir excluded from his vision for a "clean" wilderness.

It is difficult for an institution to confront its checkered or unsavory past. The Sierra Club is clearly trying to change by diversifying the hiring practices of leadership positions. I support this shift, but this is only one way that the organization can honor its commitment to change. My earlier comment about how these issues cannot be solved by the work of only a handful of organizations includes the Sierra Club. I understand that the club, despite its membership of over 700,000 people, alone cannot completely overturn the white supremacist legacy of some forms of environmentalism. The organization is just a small part of the larger shift that will come as other groups commit to diversity and equity in the outdoors. Although the Sierra Club is not

---

[108] "About the Sierra Club," Sierra Club, accessed October 28, 2020, https://www.sierraclub.org/about-sierra-club.

[109] Evelyn Nieves, "Q and A: The Sierra Club Embraces Environmental Justice, Forcing a Difficult Internal Reckoning," InsideClimate News, October 17, 2020, accessed October 28, 2020, https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16102020/sierra-club-ramon-cruz-environmental-justice.

affiliated with the NPS, it shares similar origins and functioned as a place for the affluent and white people. The Sierra Club is a part of this ongoing conversation about how to dismantle the initial exclusionary practices of outdoor spaces and how this legacy lingers. The Sierra Club is the country's largest organization of its kind.[110] The club's commitment to diversifying its hires may influence other outdoors advocacy organizations to do the same. This shift in hiring practices may also gain the attention of young people and adults who will begin to see institutions as places that welcome them.

Social media and recreational influencers are resources that work to make public lands more accessible through self-advocacy. The Instagram posts by groups such as Latino Outdoors, Hike Clerb, and Indigenous Women Hike all promote racial, ethnic, and class diversity in the outdoors. These organizations are not directly linked with the Grand Canyon, and yet, they offer suggestions for how people can post from public parks such as the canyon. The social media posts showing BIPOC people in the outdoors and how families have adopted environmental practices based on their circumstances may inspire how Grand Canyon affiliated organizations approach the images and messages they highlight about the canyon. The three communities I mentioned above also promote ethical and responsible tourism that honors the land ownership and ancestral ties Native tribes have with the locations from which people post. These Instagram accounts all post and repost images of BIPOCs hiking, biking, running, and enjoying the outdoors. These accounts promote inclusivity by connecting cultural and ancestral practices with the values of environmental justice and conservation. Several posts by Latino Outdoors connect conservation with cultural practices people may have learned while growing up. In a July 21, 2020 post, a Latino Outdoors volunteer describes how "in Latino culture, we are taught that

[110] Nieves, "Q and A."

nothing goes to waste. My grandma was reducing, reusing, and recycling before it was even a slogan … Hard working people around the U.S., people of modest means, like my grandma, are some of the best environmentalists because they can't afford not to be."[111] This post shows that protecting the environment by reusing bags and containers is a practice that people may already do. Environmentalism is manifested differently in communities across the country. A raised consciousness about resources and cutting down on waste is one way to participate in preserving the environment. It does not require large heroic acts or a career devoted to this work. Several communities may unknowingly already be doing this work, which they learned while growing up because of their circumstances. Organizations and leaders from the Grand Canyon region can incorporate images and narratives of historically excluded communities from around the area in their social media posts that are frequently excluded in history.

Hike Clerb challenges the whiteness of outdoor recreation and tourism by showing that BIPOCs participate in these activities, too. Based on the dominant images of hikers and the reality of who controls the outdoors industries, a perception of whiteness creates a cycle of exclusion that is hard for BIPOCs to break. On these Instagram accounts, community members control the narrative that diversity is a valuable part of outdoor recreation and needs to be recognized. Images of people from all different backgrounds and cultures show that they have a right to take up space in the outdoors. The Los Angeles-based organization is an

> intersectional womxn's hike club founded in 2017 by social activist, Evelynn Escobar-Thomas. Inspired to take action by the lack of representation of people of color in the outdoors, Hike Clerb was born as a radical solution to this issue and more. We are equipping womxn of color with the tools, resources and experiences they need to collectively heal in nature from Los Angeles and beyond.[112]

---

[111] Latino Outdoors, (@Latinooutdoors), "Maritza Oropeza, who volunteers with Latino Outdoors, shares a little about her connection to #ConservationCultura," Instagram photo, July 21, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CC6hY1Inm2K/.

[112] "Who We Are," Hike Clerb, accessed November 2, 2020, https://www.hikeclerb.com/about.

This community of womxn support each other and the lessons and meditative qualities that can be learned from the environment. Most young people use social media. We can connect with communities and strangers in ways that did not exist 20 years ago. These forms of technology and connectivity allow for self-representation as a partial solution to the issues of accessibility and racial and ethnic diversity in our public lands.

The Indigenous Women Hike social media account focuses on Native rights, personal stories, the often-ignored histories, and the problematic legacies of conservation and environmentalism. An October 16, 2019 post illustrates how many outdoors organizations do not include Indigenous rights and land access in their work. It is wrong and counterproductive to any organization's pledge to environmental justice if Indigenous sovereignty is excluded. The post argues,

> Non Indigenous environmental orgs as well as climbing orgs need to stop placing recreational value above ancient indigenous connection and realize that if you stand with Indigenous people you stand with the land … We need to protect the land because she is sacred. When we learn from and let Indigenous people lead we strengthen and create deeper connections to the land. If you stand with Indigenous people you stand for the land.[113]

I completely agree with this critique of the outdoors industry. Intersectional advocacy in outdoors and environmental justice needs to include Indigenous communities. Leah Tomas, leader of the Intersectional Environmentalist movement, asserts that this work "advocates for both the protection of people and the planet ... It brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and the earth, to the forefront and does not minimize or silence social inequality."[114] My research suggests that few organizations acknowledge and include Indigenous

[113] Indigenous Women Hike, (@IndigenousWomenHike), "Non Indigenous environmental orgs…" Instagram photo, October 16, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B3sMwAXlrUS/.
[114] Thomas, "Why Every Environmentalist Should be Anti-racist."

communities and perspectives in their work. Indigenous Women Hike is one way for people to become educated. Followers of this account who look at and read its posts cannot stop learning and unlearning. The site includes music, webinars, books, and links to other Instagram accounts produced by Native communities that want to engage people. Without this continued educational and self-reflective work about Indigenous justice, change across our public lands will not occur.

Suggestions and Reflections

The organizations and communities that I examine above all do important and valuable work. There are pros and cons to how each group approaches and incorporates diversity, accessibility, environmental justice, and Indigenous justice in outdoors recreation. Several of the organizations do not work directly in the Grand Canyon region, but their goals and methods can be applied to different sites. These issues will continue to be challenged as people change their perspectives and reevaluate their efforts for a just public lands system. One of the issues I have with the youth programs is that there are often no long-term ways of supporting participants into their adolescence and adulthood. Youth from historically excluded backgrounds who participate in these programs need to be supported for years to come. It is important to ensure that youth who do discover a passion for the environment have the resources to turn their interests into a career. This may help to racially and ethnically diversify fields in environmentalism and outdoors recreation. It is unproductive to introduce children to the outdoors and encourage their curiosity and connection to the land if there is no way for them to continue as they get older.

The social media accounts and posts by the advocacy groups show adults exploring public lands. These images of historically excluded racial and ethnic minorities subverts the idea that recreational tourism is only for white and affluent people. Social media followers who identify as BIPOCs see people who are racially and ethnically similar to them in the outdoors

and have role models to inspire and encourage their engagement with the natural environment. These accounts foster inclusive communities that redefine the outdoors, tourism, and environmentalism. This shows youth that there are people who look like them with careers in the outdoors. This relates to the Sierra Club hiring Ramón Cruz and how he may inspire younger Latinx environmental enthusiasts.

It is beneficial to have these kinds of role models, but it is not enough. Programs that can prepare youth and young adults for opportunities may initiate an increase in racial and class diversity in environmental and recreational fields. I realize that this is easier said than done. Small steps can be taken as programs self-evaluate how they are supporting youth after they finish the trips. I suggest that youth-based outdoors programs incorporate elements of long-term life planning through mentoring and initiating informational interviews with people who work in the areas youth are interested in pursuing.

Helping youth make plans for their life paths is one way to make the outdoors accessible for all. A commitment to Indigenous visibility and rights is another way to promote a more equitable world. Leaders of these programs and in the industry need to make a commitment to Indigenous rights. Several of the Instagram posts made by the outdoors advocacy groups write the name of the Indigenous people whose lands a photo or video was taken on. They include both Native communities who once existed on the lands and/or who currently have ancestral connections with the area. This is one way for people to respect the Native communities that have ancestral connections with the lands that people visit. Tourists who make posts that include notes about the Native tribes who live on and close to the lands creates awareness and acknowledgement to their followers, friends, and family. This may inspire their peers to do the same or become curious about a site when planning a trip. Another way for anyone to become

educated about lands where Indigenous people once lived and currently live is by visiting https://native-land.ca/. This interactive map shows which Native tribes lived on or currently inhabit areas in the U.S. Using this map whenever someone travels in the U.S. will reveal the history that is not widely acknowledged. This is a small way for travelers to learn about the land they are on. This is only a starting point for making larger changes in how Native American history and rights are understood. Non-Indigenous people need to research Native American run organizations and business. This includes non-Native folk seeking out ways to have discussions with peers about supporting Indigenous communities beyond land acknowledgements.

The Intertribal Conversations led by local Indigenous leaders in the Grand Canyon region serve as a model for federal governmental, community, and tourist engagement. These groups come together to reassess how all non-Native people can support education about local Indigenous communities on their ancestral lands. The discussions can be used to combat prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, and racism direct at Indigenous people. Teaching visitors about the diverse cultural histories and practices of the different Indigenous communities today may begin the process of debunking the misconception that Natives no longer exist. Several social media posts by the outdoors advocacy accounts and leaders of these communities write the name of the Indigenous people whose lands a photo or video is from. They sometimes include Native communities who once existed on the lands and/or who currently have ancestral connections with the area. There needs to be a heightened awareness of the shameful ways the American government has treated Native Americans in history. This may reveal to non-Natives that land ownership and rights have been shaped to reflect America in a positive way. The American exceptionalism narrative needs to end. This one-sided and problematic history harms communities by allowing the dominant culture to dictate who and what matters. Unlearning and

being critical of what we have been taught about Native Americans and their history is important. We need to replace old narratives with new, more inclusive and accurate histories.

Conclusion

The Grand Canyon is a beautiful, deeply meaningful place. For thousands of years, people have traveled in and around the canyon captivated by its beauty and intrigue. Local Indigenous communities have ancestral connections with the land. Their histories, cultures, and artifacts reflect this. The canyon has inspired painters, poets, musicians, and other artists from many different backgrounds. It is evident that the Grand Canyon is special based on their work. Standing on the Grand Canyon's rim, viewers can easily become mesmerized while looking out into the wide-open horizon that seems to stretch forever. People at the edge of the canyon gaze out at the crevices far below and follow the sharp jagged edges of the canyon's walls and peaks. The layers upon layers of ancient rock stack up high on top of one another and represent millions of years of history. People are entranced by the Grand Canyon. They stand in awe of its magnificence. I know I did.

Witnessing this marvel should be available to all Americans. Sadly, this national treasure is unequally accessible to Americans. Visitors to the canyon do not reflect this country's racial and socioeconomic demographics. At the canyon, there are inequalities that further reflect the local disparities of how tourists experience the site. As different organizations, the NPS, and community leaders work to dismantle the barriers that exist and prevent people from accessing the canyon, historically excluded individuals will begin to have the opportunity to learn about its beauty and the power. Along with these necessary changes, there needs to be a commitment to acknowledge and respectfully recognize local Indigenous communities. The Havasupai,

Hualapai, the Kaibab Paiutes, among others, have existed in and around the Grand Canyon for much longer than any other communities. They call the Colorado Plateau home and know how to care for and honor the land. These communities have the right to share what they know about local lands and should be included in any potential changes to the environment. Many tourists only see the land as a geological and ecological wonder, but the environment has anthropological and cultural value that is often neglected.

The future of the Grand Canyon and outdoor tourism is intersectional. As the country faces social, racial, economic, and environmental changes, how we travel and spend time in nature will shift. Recreational tourism, race, class, and environmentalism are all inextricably linked. History has shown that social and economic concerns shaped tourism's landscape in the early years of the National Parks. This still rings true. Of course, this is a multilayered and complicated issue that does not have one clear solution. A more diverse, ethical, and respectful Grand Canyon tourist landscape is possible. Currently, there is a hopeful confluence of ideas and opinions to make all public spaces more accessible through redefining the outdoors. A widespread dedication and openness of everyone who has and wishes to have a relationship with the outdoors, paired with a Grand Canyon that reflects America's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics and is committed to incorporating the rights and opinions of local Native communities is achievable.

Bibliography

Apex Balloons. “Grand Canyon Hot Air Balloon Flights.” Accessed October 28, 2020. http://www.grandcanyonballoonrides.com/.

Archibald, Maria. “Five Reasons to Apply for LeaderShift 2020.” Grand Canyon Trust, April 27, 2020. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/blog/five-reasons-apply-leadershift-2020.

Benally, Amber N. “Behind the Screens: LeaderShift 2020.” Grand Canyon Trust, October 16, 2020. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/blog/behind-screens-leadershift-2020.

Cothran, Cheryl Cole, Thomas E. Combrink, and Melinda Bradford. “Grand Canyon National Park Northern Arizona Tourism Study.” Northern Arizona University, April 2005. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/sites/default/files/Grand_Canyon_Comprehensive_Final_Report.pdf.

Cronon, William. “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” *Environmental History* 1 (January 1996): 7-28.

Fister, Kris. “Tourism to Grand Canyon National Park Creates Economic Benefit.” National Park Service, May 28, 2019. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/news/grand-canyon-economic-benefit.htm#:~:text=Grand%20Canyon%2C%20AZ%20%2D%20A%20new,local%20economy%20of%20%241.2%20billion.

Flashman, Jennifer. “Academic Achievement and Its Impact on Friend Dynamics.” *Sociology of Education* 85 (January 2012): 61-80.

Floyd, Myron F. “Getting Beyond Marginality and Ethnicity: The Challenge for Race and Ethnic Studies in Leisure Research.” *Journal of Leisure Research* 30 (1998): 3-22.

GC Flight. “Helicopter Tours.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.gcflight.com/product-category/helicopter-tours/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw2or8BRCNARIsAC_ppyYVVU2mmhCMhPid7LlaVESKuw0fuO4_ZN8EGovIM2dpT5E21j95f54aArEXEALw_wcB.

Grand Canyon Trust. “Our Work.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.grandcanyontrust.org/our-work.

Grand Canyon Trust. “The Voices of Grand Canyon.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b22a6a09bb2344ff845d9efd3e4152f7.

Grand Canyon West. “Getting Here, Your Adventure at a Glance.” Accessed October 26, 2020. https://grandcanyonwest.com/.

Grand Canyon West. “Hualapai River Runners.” Accessed October 25, 2020. https://grandcanyonwest.com/explore/colorado-river-rafting/.

Heidi K, “Grand Canyon-Canyon Floor Tour!” August 18, 2017, review of GC Flight. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g45963-d2208982-r515040645-GC_Flight-Las_Vegas_Nevada.html.

Hike Clerb. “Who We Are.” Accessed November 2, 2020. https://www.hikeclerb.com/about.

Hirst, Stephen. *I Am the Grand Canyon: The Story of the Havasupai People.* Grand Canyon: Grand Canyon Association, 2006.

Indigenous Women Hike. (@IndigenousWomenHike). “Non Indigenous environmental orgs...” Instagram photo, October 16, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/B3sMwAXlrUS/.

Into the Canyon. Disney+ Streaming, directed by Pete McBride (2019; Insignia Films).

Keller, Robert H., and Michael F. Turek. *American Indians and National Parks.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998.

Krakoff, Sarah. “Not Yet America’s Best Idea: Law, Inequality, and Grand Canyon National Park.” *University of Colorado Law Review* 91 (2020): 559-648. https://scholar.law.colorado.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2367&context=articles.

Latino Outdoors. (@Latinooutdoors), “Maritza Oropeza, who volunteers with Latino Outdoors, shares a little about her connection to #ConservationCultura,” Instagram photo, July 21, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CC6hY1Inm2K/.

Lee, KangJae Jerry, Casper, Jonathan, and Myron Floyd. “Race and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion Efforts of Public Park and Recreation Agencies.” *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* 38, 1 (Spring 2020): 88-105.

Mark, Jason. “Across the Great Divide, Can America's Public Lands Help Heal a Wounded Country?” *Sierra Magazine,* July/August 2020. 27-31, 46.

McAvoy, Leo. “American Indians, Place Meanings and the Old/New West.” *Journal of Leisure Research* 34, No. 4 (2002): 383-396.

mimi_vang88. “Awesome Solo Weekend Trip.” December 20, 2018, review of GC Flight. https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g45963-d2208982-r548199412-GC_Flight-Las_Vegas_Nevada.html.

Morehouse, Barbara J. *A Place Called Grand Canyon: Contested Geographies.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996.

National Park Service. “America’s Best Idea Today.” Accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea/#:~:text=Writer%20and%20historian%20Wallace%20Stegner,by%20the%20National%20Park%20Service.

National Park Service. “Archive of 2019 Park Centennial Events.” Last modified January 4, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/grca/getinvolved/2019-centennial-events.htm.

National Park Service. “Associated Tribes.” Last modified February 5, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/associatedtribes.htm.

National Park Service. “Day Hiking.” Last modified October 14, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/day-hiking.htm.

National Park Service. “Entrance Fees.” Last modified October 24, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/fees.htm.

National Park Service. “Geology.” Last modified April 27, 2018. https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/nature/grca-geology.htm.

National Park Service. “Grand Canyon National Park Trip Planner.” Department of the Interior, https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/news/upload/trip-planner-grca.pdf.

National Park Service. “National Park Service Announces Fee-Free Days for 2020.” Last modified November 5, 2019. https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1207/2020-fee-free-days.htm.

National Park Service. “Park Statistics.” Last modified June 1, 2020. https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/statistics.htm.

National Park Service. “Quick History of the National Park Service.” Last modified March 14, 2018. https://www.nps.gov/articles/quick-nps-history.htm.

National Park Service. “SOAR Program.” Last modified March 28, 2019. https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/management/soar-program.htm.

National Park Service. “Visitor Centers, Information Desks and Museums.” Last modified October 19, 2020. www.nps.gov/grca/planyourvisit/visitorcenters.htm.

National Park Service. “Yellowstone National Park Protection Act (1872).” Last modified July 13, 2018. https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/yellowstoneprotectionact1872.htm#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20Congress%20established,Park%20Protection%20Act%20into%20law.&text=AN%20ACT%20to%20set%20apart,River%20as%20a%20public%20park.

NAU Parks and Recreation Management Program. “Course Information.” Accessed October 28, 2020. http://www.prm.nau.edu/rangers/course.htm.

NAU Parks and Recreation Management Program. “Diversity in the National Park Service Workforce.” Accessed October 28, 2020. http://www.prm.nau.edu/rangers/minorites.htm.

Nelson, Glenn. “Why Are Our Parks So White.” *New York Times*, July 10, 2015. Accessed October 16, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/12/opinion/sunday/diversify-our-national-parks.html.

New York City Outward Bound Schools. “Our Story.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/about-us/our-story/.

New York City Outward Bound Schools. “Adventure and Team Building.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.nycoutwardbound.org/adventure-team-building/#adventure-retreats.

Nieves, Evelyn “Q and A: The Sierra Club Embraces Environmental Justice, Forcing a Difficult Internal Reckoning.” *Inside Climate News*, October 17, 2020. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16102020/sierra-club-ramon-cruz-environmental-justice.

Official Havasupai Tribe. “About Supai.” Accessed October 26, 2020, https://theofficialhavasupaitribe.com/About-Supai/about-supai.html.

Peterson, Jodi. “Parks for All?” *High Country News*, May 19, 2014. Accessed October 27, 2020. https://www.hcn.org/issues/46.8/parks-for-all.

Pink Adventure Tours. “Grand Canyon Tours.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.pinkadventuretours.com/tours/grand-canyon-tours/.

Rothman, Hal K. *Devil’s Bargains.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

Sevigny, Melissa. “‘Not Your Playground’: Indigenous Voices on Grand Canyon’s Centennial.” *KNAU Arizona Public Radio*, February 26, 2019. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.knau.org/post/not-your-playground-indigenous-voices-grand-canyon-s-centennial.

Schiavo, Laura Burd. “White People Like Hiking.” *The Public Historian* 38 (November 2016): 206-235.

Shaffer, Marguerite S. *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940.* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2001.

Sheperd, Jeffrey P. *We Are an Indian Nation: A History of the Hualapai People.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010.

Sierra Club. “About the Sierra Club.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.sierraclub.org/about-sierra-club.

Spence, Mark David. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks.* New York City: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Stevens, Larry. *The Colorado River in the Grand Canyon: River Map and Guide.* Flagstaff, AZ: Red Lake Books, 2013.

The Official Havasupai Tribe. “About Supai.” Accessed October 26, 2020. https://theofficialhavasupaitribe.com/About-Supai/about-supai.html.

The Trail Posse. “About the Trail Posse.” Accessed October 28, 2020. https://trailposse.com/about-the-trail-posse/.

Thomas, Leah. “Why Every Environmentalist Should be Anti-racist.” *Vogue*, June 8, 2020. Accessed October 28, 2020. https://www.vogue.com/article/why-every-environmentalist-should-be-anti-racist.

Vaske, Jerry J., and Lyon, Katie M. “Linking the 2010 Census to National Park Visitors.” Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, 2014. https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/495294#:~:text=People%20in%20the%202010%20Census,%25)%20of%20national%20park%20visitors.

Vespa, Jonathan., Medina, Lauren., and David M. Armstrong. “Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060.” *U.S. Census Bureau.* Last modified February 2020. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf.

Walker, Joshua. “Lions and Tigers and Black Folk, Oh My! Why Black People Should Take Up Space in the Outdoors.” *Melanin Base Camp,* April 11, 2019. Accessed October 22, 2020. https://www.melaninbasecamp.com/around-the-bonfire/2019/4/10/why-black-people-should-take-up-space-outdoors.

Waye, Andrea. “An Environmental Justice Perspective on African-American Visitation to Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks.” *Hastings Environmental Law Journal* 11, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 125-142.

Yang, Lucy. “People are going crazy over this hidden 'blue water paradise' in Arizona.” *Insider,* August 24, 2017. Accessed October 27, 2020. https://www.insider.com/hidden-blue-water-swimming-hole-arizona-2017-8.