



SCHOLARS FORUM

The National Park Service and Civic Reflection

A SUMMARY REPORT



National Park System Advisory Board





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SUMMARY REPORT

JANUARY 14, 2006

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



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INTRODUCING THE SCHOLARS FORUM

On January 14, 2006 the National Park System Advisory Board's Education Committee convened a forum of distinguished historians and sociologists to talk with National Park Service leaders about civic engagement; the place of national parks in our nation's educational system; and how an NPS commitment to young people and education can strengthen civic awareness and stewardship in America. Present at the forum were members of the Advisory Board, the National Leadership Council, representatives of the Education Council and other NPS leaders.

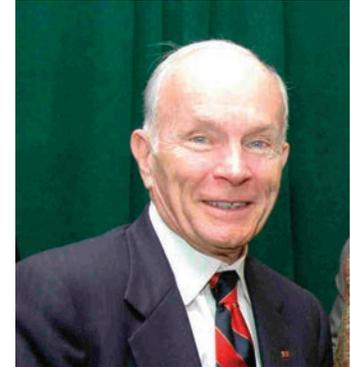
Placing their discussion in the context of our nation's educational needs, panelists cited evidence of eroding participation in civic and community organizations and declining knowledge of history and current events. As greater numbers of Americans appear to be, in the words of author Robert Putnam, "bowling alone," they argued that the National Park System is uniquely positioned to contribute to the public life of the nation, helping to rebuild the social capital of citizenship and community. The panel praised national parks as ideal venues to train teachers and advance place-based learning, where natural and cultural history can be encountered first hand, in fresh, sometimes unexpected ways. Young people can have transformative experiences in national parks through various service learning and stewardship opportunities - gaining confidence, knowledge and citizenship skills to apply in their schools and communities.

In addressing contemporary challenges facing the National Park System, the scholars declared that parks and park programs are vital components of a diverse and democratic society, contributing to what Frederick Law Olmsted once described as "a refinement of the republic." Furthermore, they emphasized, this high purpose can only be secured into the future by finding new and meaningful ways to engage historically underserved communities and youth.

In the view of one scholar, civic engagement in national parks provides multiple opportunities to "re-enact" experiences and stories uniquely associated with places that can reconnect people to the natural world, to their own heritage, and often to their most deeply held values and aspirations. This was the case for many forum participants who passionately recalled their own visits to national parks, and the impact of those experiences on their lives and the lives of their children. For everyone in the audience it was both humbling and energizing to hear the panelists speak of their deep affection for the national park system and their high expectations for its future.

Dan Ritchie
Chairman, Education Committee,
National Park System Advisory Board

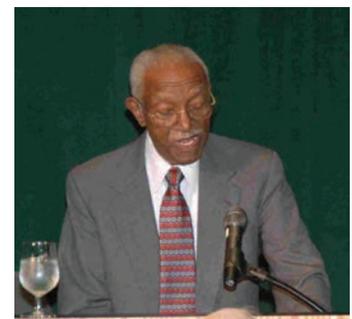
This forum today is a testimony to the deep interests that so many of us have in the subject we're considering—the role of the National Park Service as civic educator. We are looking specifically at how its unique programs can highlight the fundamental importance of and encourage active citizen participation in America's civic life. The Board believes that there is great potential to enhance the Park Service's education mission by attracting a new level of public interest in its core mission: telling America's story. This is important beyond any benefit it will bring to the Park Service because it serves a higher purpose. Many believe that we as a people are not as well informed as we should be about our history as a nation, nor are we as involved individually or collectively in community life as we once were and some believe we ought to be. The Park Service is a hugely popular agency with a distinct education mission. We can and should help. It is through education that we pass on our civilization, the knowledge and understanding that we have gained over hundreds and thousands of years. If we don't do it well, in the long run, our prospects as a people, a nation and a species will be diminished. Abraham Lincoln said it about as well as anybody ever did and I'd like to quote him, "A child is a person who is going to carry on whatever it is you have started. He is going to sit down where you are sitting and when you're gone, attend to those things which you think are important..." Richly endowed as we are of the places and memories entrusted to it, the Park Service is uniquely positioned to make a more relevant park experience and to enhance the democratic vitality of the United States.



The Board believes that there is great potential to enhance the Park Service's education mission by attracting a new level of public interest in its core mission: telling America's story. ..

John Hope Franklin
Former Chairman, National Park System Advisory Board

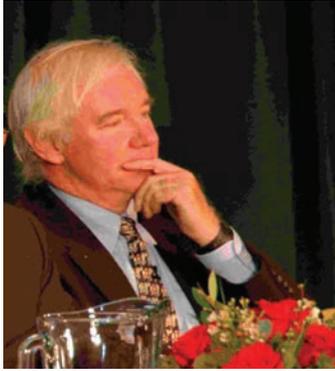
Understanding the relevance of past experiences to present conditions, allows us to confront today's issues with a deeper awareness of the alternatives before us. Standing in front of Little Rock's Central High School or in Topeka's Monroe School or on the Edmund-Pettus Bridge at Selma makes the Civil Rights Era come to life and strengthens our understanding of the use of the past and of the many voices of which it is made. Walking the desert landscape of Mammoth or Manzanar or the rolling plains of Washita Battlefield makes us think differently about what we have to learn from echoes of the past. The many sites under the National Park Service provide both the laboratories and the textbooks in which we can learn a great deal about our country and ourselves.



A CONVERSATION ON 21ST CENTURY AMERICA: HISTORICAL LITERACY AND DIVERSITY

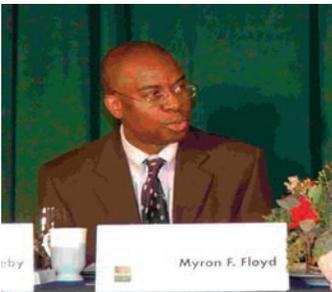


This conversation addresses the crisis in historical literacy and civic participation, and the changing demographics of 21st century American society. The dialogue begins to explore the ways that national parks need to respond to a dynamic social landscape.



Alexander Keyssar
Professor of History and Social Policy at the Kennedy School,
Harvard University

To give you a couple of examples of how this plays out in terms of actual knowledge, a large majority of 12th graders do not know what the Monroe Doctrine was, did not know how government spending affected the US economy during the Great Depression, and a very large majority did not know that the Soviet Union was an ally of the United States during World War II...Another indicator, connected with the question of civic engagement: 91 percent of 12th graders in the United States on a test could not offer two reasons why democratic societies benefit from citizen participation in politics. So we have an overall portrait of a societal decline in literacy, political participation, civic engagement and at the same time there is a world of scholarship that seems to be stressing increasingly, and I think pretty reliably, that the extent of civic engagement in a society really matters.



Myron F. Floyd
Professor, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism,
College of Natural Resources, North Carolina State University

The success of civic engagement and the advancement of the policy of being a central agent in civic education hinges on one idea; the National Park Service needs to closely examine and monitor the link between itself and the composition and characteristics of the people it's mandated to serve...The Visitor Services Project which has conducted numerous surveys around the country consistently finds that about 90 percent of visitor groups to national park sites of various designations are white, non-Hispanic or white non-Hispanic. Obviously this is not news to many of us, but these findings speak to the potential of the national park units to be sites of civic engagement and democracy education. They indicate a great distance exists between the potential and actual promise of the national parks as sites for education and civic engagement...

These trends are important to consider since foreign-born populations have different experiences with democratic institutions, may experience different pre-dispositions towards civic activities; for example, voting, voluntary participation, recreation participation, and perhaps they may not readily connect civic responsibilities to the national parks.

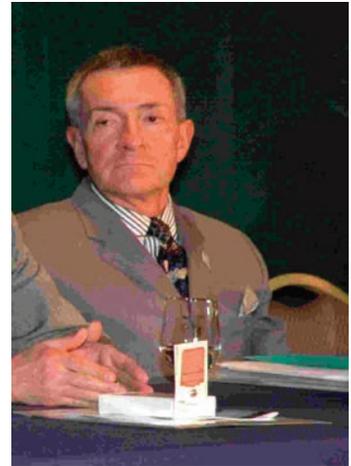
If current patterns of visitation persist into the mid 21st century, the foreseeable future, and if the population continues to diversify, where will the national parks rank as a national priority among other societal concerns. How will it engage an increasingly multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society?

Will the National Parks be relevant to future generations? Such questions are not only important from a visitor services, civic engagement standpoint, they may prove critical in preserving the political capital that the National Parks have enjoyed for so many years.

W. Richard West, Jr.
Founding Director,
Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian

Somehow institutions, if they're going to have hooks to different generations, to the diversity of this country, they will have to eventually transform themselves from the inside, and that's a much longer-range proposition.

There are museums now that speak to the true diversity of this country. But that's a large transformation you're talking about, and it does take time, and it does take commitment. I think that we have to understand the magnitude of the task and be willing to bite it off. And I think the National Park Service is going to have to do that too. Just looking, for example, at my constituency—Native America—the Park Service has come miles just in the time that I have sat as the Director of the National Museum of the American Indian in incorporating that constituency into its interpretive and representational work. And I can tell you it has utterly transformed the attitudes of native peoples toward the parks, where it was a very mixed relationship and a very mixed attitude.



Bill Kornblum
Chairperson, Center for Urban Research,
City University of New York

I just wanted to say that communities are often formed around struggle. When I look out in the room here I see a lot of people that I feel this bond with even though I haven't seen them for many years. People like John Latschar, Rolf Diamant and Patti Reilly who I struggled with to make some sense out of the initiatives in the Park Service around national seashores or urban parks, the meaning of outreach and the meaning of public involvement. In the 1970's these were new words and they were somewhat controversial terms. I'll never forget I was at a meeting of superintendents, I think it was at Yellowstone, and I had the privilege of riding in the bus with Bob Stanton and he talked to me about his experience as a ranger in his early entry into the Park Service. And he was reflecting on the difficulties that he had breaking into that community, but also the joy and the way he felt once it happened. So, [in] our mandate for our panel, one of the words was responsibility and in all the debates around the country nowadays about stewardship the term responsibility keeps coming up. Well, if you want people to feel responsible, you've got to give them responsibilities, and one of the ways you give them responsibilities is by bringing them into your struggles and getting them to be part of the community that you form.



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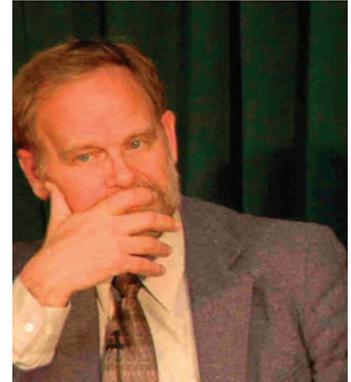
A CONVERSATION ON 21ST CENTURY AMERICA: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



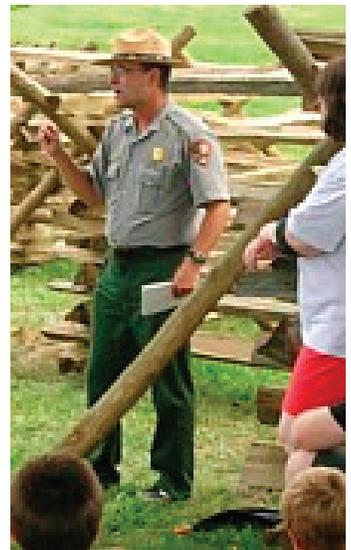
The panel discusses the critical role of national parks as venues where the principles and practice of American democracy are “reenacted and re-embraced.” They talk about the role of civic engagement and the importance of building bridges to local communities and stakeholders. They also discuss, using the example of Gettysburg, how civic engagement can open the door to more contemporary scholarship and provide a broader context for park interpretation.

John Latschar
Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park

In 2004 I was asked by an acquaintance to address the York County Bar Association in York County, Pennsylvania, which is a group of about 200 lawyers and jurists. And they wanted me to come because the American Bar Association of 2004 was celebrating the 50th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board*. And, of course, they were celebrating it in the “feel good” style as if all lawyers supported that in 1954. So there were 200 lawyers and judges in that one room and that was just too great an opportunity for me to resist. So I took them through the layman’s history of slavery from colonial days through the pre-Civil War, the Civil War era, the emancipation, reconstruction, redemption, as it was called in the South, the Jim Crow era of the Civil Rights, all the way up to where we were. But then I tried to suggest to them that the story of American freedom in the United States, as Eric Foner has written so eloquently, has always constantly evolved and always will, our definition of freedom, our definition of rights, our definitions and our social decisions on who can properly claim those rights and who can’t...

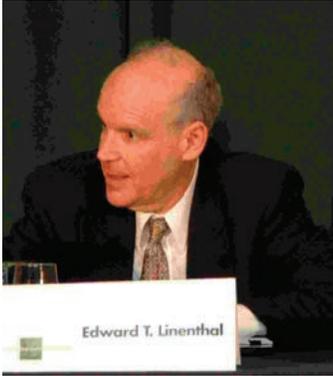


...obviously Gettysburg is a place about contested history...and I’m going to speak about Gettysburg, trying to draw some lessons. It’s a place of much engagement, much dialogue. How much of it is civic or civil we’ll leave to others to judge...But it does reflect the cultural memory of our nation of the Civil War era as David Blythe so ably pointed out in his remarkable book, *Race and Reunion*. And that’s because of a phenomenon that we label the Myth of the Lost Cause... Number one, [that] states’ rights not slavery was the cause of the Civil War; number two, that the Confederacy lost only because of the overwhelming industrial and manpower advantages of the North, thus loss did not bring dishonor; and number three, the myth proclaimed that slavery was a benign institution necessary for the protection of an inferior race.



That was the prevailing view of the Civil War in our nation’s history as well as its memory for almost 100 years. You can say roughly from 1865 to perhaps 1964 this view prevailed—aided and abetted by historians, both amateur and academic during that time period. Now obviously the Myth of the Lost Cause has been debunked over the last 40 years or so by the academic world.

But it is not so in the cultural memory of our nation and it is not until fairly recently, until the 1980’s, that the National Park Service started to take a look at this...Changing memories, changing cultural memories of the nation—because that’s really what I’m talking about—isn’t easy.



Edward T. Linenthal
Editor of the Journal of American History
and Professor of History, Indiana University

Civic engagement has always been a way of doing business although it was not always done with great sensitivity. And some of the most successful case studies in the Park Service's commitment to civic engagement reveal the tremendous energies expended to repair relationships with local communities that have often felt disenfranchised by the Park Service.



I've been impressed with the dedication of NPS colleagues to their public stewardship of the nation's cherished sites. Civic engagement has always been a way of doing business although it was not always done with great sensitivity. And some of the most successful case studies in the Park Service's commitment to civic engagement reveal the tremendous energies expended to repair relationships with local communities that have often felt disenfranchised by the Park Service. One of the ways that I would urge you to think about the how of doing this, to take it down to the local level, is to use the successful case studies in the Park Service already, to look at what Maria Burks did at Cape Cod, to look at what Rolf Diamant has done at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller, to look at what John Latschar has done at Gettysburg. ...I don't think there's a "one size fits all" answer to how to improve upon and evolve civic engagement and I really urge people to think about this and listen to your colleagues that have done this.

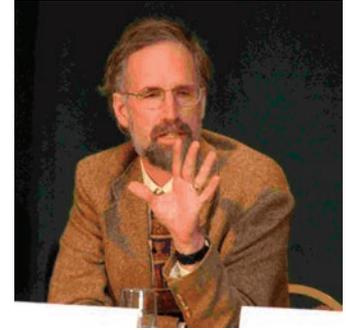
The new emphasis on civic engagement mirrors similar programs in a great number of cultural institutions, so this need is out there. Certainly in the Park Service it means one thing, a focus on an inclusive process and the word stakeholder comes up often. Stakeholder involvement in park planning for example, from programming to land acquisition issues as well as partnerships with educational and professional organizations. I've been witness to and participant in some interesting civic engagement processes beyond the world of the Park Service which I think hold some promise and some caution. At the Holocaust Museum, the democratization of exhibition planning as a content committee helped insure that survivors would be involved in the creation of the permanent exhibition and much of the other work of museum planning.

In Oklahoma City the years I was traveling there, talking to people that were members of a 350-person task force, many of them whose loved ones had been murdered in the Murrah Building on April 19th 1995, many of whom came to the process with a single goal, that their design was the only one that could in fact memorialize their loved ones appropriately. And they had to move beyond that in this volatile environment to look at the larger civic function of memorialization. It was a majestic process in lots of ways. I think they practiced the arts of democracy elegantly and a number of people, particularly mothers of murdered children who had never played a public role in their communities, moved on from their work on the memorial because they had found a public voice to other work in the community—[work] that some of them said they never would have dreamed of had they not been involved in the memorial.

William Cronon
Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies,
University of Wisconsin, Madison

One of those words that has been invoked multiple times here is the word “freedom” and if you reflect on the word freedom you know that it leans toward both poles of our political spectrum. There is a version of freedom which we might better characterize with the word “liberty” which leans, we could say, right and which is about freedom from oppression and freedom from state tyranny. It is freedom from the power of the state to oppress the individual. And there is another version of the word freedom that leans, we could say, left which is freedom from oppression, freedom from social injustice, which we celebrate as liberty and justice and freedom, all those things together. As stewards of your parks, you are also stewards of those values and the struggle to make those values real.

Those values die if they are not constantly reenacted and re-embraced. If we act as if they were achieved things; if we act as if this nation had full liberty, had full freedom, had full justice, we kill those things; they die because they in fact have to be reenacted, re-embraced, re-empowered and struggled over yet again in each new generation that encounters the burdens of taking on those values. And that’s why civic engagement is the core of the project.



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A CONVERSATION ON RELEVANCY IN THE 21ST CENTURY



This conversation is about inclusion and relevancy and also the importance of always looking at the larger context of an issue or event.

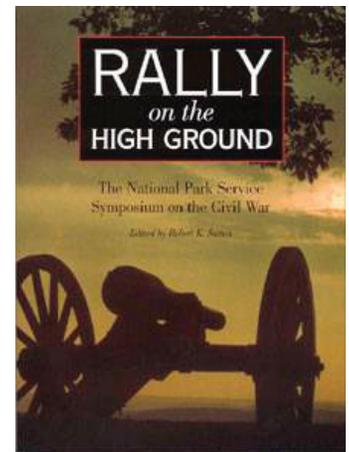
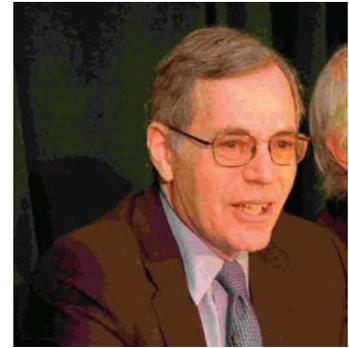
ERIC FONER

Professor of History, Columbia University

I think it's also very important for people in the Park Service—and I know many do this—to think about the *history* of the Park Service, because...parks were created at certain moments for certain reasons reflecting points of view which are often very out of date. And that may be why some people may be uncomfortable. I'm thinking more about historical sites. Take Gettysburg which I know best just because I've been involved in planning for the new Visitor's Center.

Now on the one hand the Gettysburg Battlefield is a battlefield and what can you say about that? But in fact if you study the history of the Gettysburg site itself, it has a *history*; it was put up at a moment when the emphasis in historical thinking and national thinking was all toward reconciliation, toward amnesia, as Joyce Appleby said, about the causes of the war, why people were fighting there, the emphasis on the individual soldiers rather than the issues...

Actually I was shocked the first time I went to Gettysburg: it seemed like a shrine to the Confederacy actually, even though it was the greatest victory of the Union. The high tide of the Confederacy was what Gettysburg represented and there was no mention of slavery; there was no mention of that issue in the coming of the Civil War. That wasn't just an oversight; that's because that park was created at a moment when it was reflecting a certain vision of American society and then things just got stuck. Now it is being changed in significant ways; that has led to discomfort among certain people who are comfortable with the old way of thinking. I think any historical site that deals with the Civil War ought to talk a little bit about what came after the Civil War. The civil rights sites which are now burgeoning ought to talk a little bit about the origins of civil rights and the reconstruction era and I think this is an area the National Park Service really needs to look more at.... and if it does, I hope it will further enhance the great progress that has been made in making the National Park Service a good up-to-date modern teacher of history to our American citizens.



Ed Linenthal I want to go back as we've done several times today to Gettysburg, and to think about the excitement of doing interpretive programs around a different way of looking at the battlefield. I want to read very briefly from Margaret Creighton's wonderful new book, *The Colors of Courage, Gettysburg's Forgotten History*. She writes, "When we see the battle through the eyes of immigrant soldiers for example, we come to know the Union Army at Gettysburg less as a seamless fighting body engaged with an enemy than as a socially divided set of men beset by internal battles. When we measure Gettysburg by the yardstick of women's work, the battle's geography shifts distinctly. The circumference of battle extends beyond the familiar cemetery and seminary ridges to include the burrow and the civilian farms for miles around. Seen from the vantage point of civilian women, the battle's chronology also changes. The trauma lengthens from three days' worth of killing to at least three months' worth of recovery and ministrations. Viewed through the lens of African-American experience in Pennsylvania, the Battle of Gettysburg expands again. Both the momentary explosion in 1863 and the climax of decades of threat from below the Mason-Dixon Line. It is a battle all about, utterly about, freedom."

John Latschar ...perhaps our visitors will be a little better prepared to know what to do and how to do it as they go about our common responsibility of building and refining this nation. And at Gettysburg we can change how we're known so we can become the park that's known for a new birth of freedom rather than as a high water mark for the Confederacy and perhaps we can finally attract a larger portion of the American public to this park, that's what we're going to try to do.

Myron F. Floyd Certainly there should be emphasis placed on knowing something about the visitors, their attitudes, their preferences and things they want to do that provide experiences. On the other hand I think there's a lot that the Park Service needs to know about itself in terms of how it delivers services and how it is perceived among a diverse public. And I just wanted to make the point that even among people who have physical access, who have the economic means to go to a National Park and the ability to travel there, there's also the other side of access—which are the symbols, the artifacts, the stories—are they accessible to the people who come?

...there's also the other side of access—which are the symbols, the artifacts, the stories—are they accessible to the people who come?

Rick West Putting Native voices in charge of our narratives requires the direct involvement of indigenous people. Scholars and curators must, in the words of my Smithsonian colleague Richard Curran, recognize that knowledge exists in homes, villages, slums, out in the fields, in factories and social halls as well as in the halls of academia and in museums. This scholarship of inclusion has important implications. Exhibitions, the mainstay of museum presentation, may look quite different. Even more important is the overall shift in power that inclusion brings.

Scholars and curators must... recognize that knowledge exists in homes, villages, slums, out in the fields, in factories and social halls as well as in the halls of academia and in museums.

William Cronon I would say that the things that you are trying to interpret in the parks do not end at your park boundaries...Just because you don't control them doesn't mean they're not part of your story, not part of the narrative. In fact, if you can have your visitors leave the park and keep your story going 200 miles past the boundaries of the park, then you are interpreting the United States of America.



A CONVERSATION ON RETHINKING THE INTERPRETIVE CRAFT: CONTROVERSY, RELATIVISM AND THE TEACHABLE MOMENTS



This is a wide-ranging dialogue on using and managing controversy, key interpretive skills for civic engagement. The panelists also tackled the issue of relativism—dealing with multiple narratives and historical “truth.” They focus on how to capture the special “teachable moments,” particularly in the challenging internet age, and how park experiences can be transformative.

Eric Foner There is a tendency toward feeling that simplification is necessary when you're dealing with a broad, diverse and non-academic audience. This is sometimes probably true; a presentation of a national park site is not the same as a complicated scholarly book. Sometimes I think we don't give enough credit to the audience for being able to tackle or understand new complicated and controversial ideas.

Joyce Appleby
Professor Emerita, University of California, Los Angeles

Any institution that is going to keep its shape needs to control the memory of its members. It causes them to forget experiences incompatible with its righteous image and brings to mind events which sustain the view that is complimentary to itself. This is certainly the way nations have behaved and behaved for a long time; denying past abuses, suppressing the memory of ugly events and generally whitewashing their record in order to preserve that righteous image and bring to mind events that sustain the view that is complimentary to itself. It looks to me as though the National Park Service is in the middle of this political minefield of representations and interpretations of events in American history. Any site that touches upon the Civil War, Japanese internment, battles with Native Americans, to name the most salient of controversies, will prompt conflict and promote controversy.



Edward Linenthal You used the word “provocation” and one of the other words that came up here was the word “controversy.” I tried with no success at all over the years to convince journalists and others that controversy doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong. It means that people are passionately engaged.

Rick West There's great middle territory, as far as I'm concerned, for inclusive scholarship that should lead to a transformation of institutions like the National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution into true forums that are safe places for these very important kinds of discussions to occur.

I don't think there is any way to avoid controversy when one is committed to presenting honest history...

Bill Cronon I don't think there is any way to avoid controversy when one is committed to presenting honest history. So the craft, as you say, is how do you prepare a training program that gives those people who are in a very difficult frontline position the knowledge they need to know to navigate the kinds of controversies that are likely to come up in their space. And I completely agree with you that telling a story that pulls them in, that engages, that suggests multiple points of view without resolving those points of view, that strikes me as the zone you guys are going to have to be in.

John Latschar There are two critical elements of support which are absolutely necessary and thank goodness have been there. The first is our support from the academic community. Eric Foner already mentioned the email he had fired off complaining about the fact that there was no mention of slavery at Gettysburg. A friend of mine sent it to me and I contacted Eric and in a very nice and respectful way basically said put up or shut up. And Eric came to Gettysburg and has been working with us for the past eight years as well as a plethora of other respected historians from the academic community. That's absolutely crucial. The second element of crucial support is political. Thankfully we've been blessed to have that kind of support from Roger Kennedy, Bob Stanton and Fran Mainella, which gives us the room to open things up and talk to our public.

"I think there are two different ways that the conversation can stop or be stillborn. One is "this is the truth." The other is total relativism..."

Bill Cronon The burrowing deeper, peeling back the layers or dealing with complexities, shows that the world's a more interesting and wondrous place than you ever imagined.

Alexander Keyssar I think there are two different ways that the conversation can stop or be stillborn. One is "this is the truth." The other is total relativism, in which case the conversation becomes pointless. That's why being in this middle area is important, that we're all talking about and finding best ways to do that.

Patricia Nelson Limerick
Professor of History and Environmental Studies,
Chair of the Board, Center of the American West ,
University of Colorado

I was at an event commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Whitman Massacre and there were many different interpretations offered by different people as to what the Whitmans had done to get themselves killed. One person was saying very insistently that they had purposely and intelligently and thoughtfully introduced disease to Indian people which I really can't see as tenable. We all had to be respectful because we'd all said, "Oh, well, there's different types of views." That first man who was making that argument caused me to write the limerick which I shall recite:

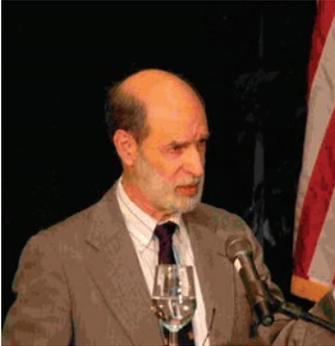
*A swirl of diverse points of view
mushes history into a stew
facts now are fiction
earning much malediction
leaving liars with nothing to do.*

David Larsen
Training Manager, Stephen T. Mather Training Center,
National Park Service

I cut my teeth at Harpers Ferry and I'll say that without much thinking about the scholarship or historiography, learning about John Brown, the white abolitionist who tries to start a slave insurrection before the Civil War, that was a very controversial story. The way that we were always able to stay out of trouble was by not presenting ourselves as giving the truth, but as starting to tell a story. Some saw Brown as this, some saw Brown as that. How do you see Brown? Brown murdered and yet Brown is a freedom fighter. What do you think? What do you believe? And while I agree with you that many come to expect the authority of the Park Ranger, to some degree it's a matter of craft, to some degree it's a matter of how you begin to tell the story and involve these multiple points of view and actually use them for provocation.



Michael Kammen
Professor of American History and Culture at Cornell University,
Member, National Park System Advisory Board



When there was debate in Congress and especially in the Senate over renaming what was once called Custer Battlefield National Monument. Senators from Wyoming, Montana, intermountain states were receiving very strong pressure from interest groups who did not want the name changed. They made remarks like, “Why can’t they leave history the way it was written? Don’t they understand that the historical facts are known and were established?” And so when we talk about the public, at least when I talk about the public and the lay public, it does not just include ordinary citizens who come to these sites but members of Congress share this failure to understand that our perceptions of what happened at these places, and the significance of what happened at these places, changes over time.

Issues of authority, issues of expertise are really contested. Now this is a bumpy road and the answer to it is not necessarily balance.

Ed Linenthal Issues of authority, issues of expertise are really contested. Now this is a bumpy road and the answer to it is not necessarily balance. One would not dream, at least in any world I choose to live in, of balancing a board of planners at the Holocaust Museum with holocaust deniers, of balancing geologists with creationists. And yet at the Grand Canyon bookstore, just this issue of professional expertise has raised its head. So this makes it all the more important for the Park Service to be able to say—these are the people we have asked to help us develop this site, this exhibition, this interpretive brochure—and here’s why. And I think these kinds of questions about who the Park Service turns to are going to increase and not decrease over time.

Larry Rivers
Dean, College Of Arts And Sciences, Florida A&M University,
Member, National Park System Advisory Board



You know, during my generation when my mother got mad with me, I had to stay in the house; I couldn’t go out. And that was big because during my generation we wanted to get outside; we didn’t want to stay in the house. This generation, you punish them by sending them outside as opposed to keeping them in the house, because they will stay on the computer for 10 to 12 hours a day. Talking about civic engagement; how do you engage young people to carry the traditions on in the parks? I guess this is just a very practical question. We can’t run away from the computer, the BLOG, or anything like that; this is what our children know today. How do we take that and get our young people involved in the Park Service and what’s happening?

John Francis
National Geographic,
Member, National Park System Advisory Board

And the question I have for the National Park System is how do you get the word civil engagement into the lexicon and take advantage of the multiplicity of through points, to your broad and diverse audience, the BLOGosphere, if you will? I would argue that at each site there's an opportunity to get the buzz of civil engagement and connect to the people who are keen, for example, on Harpers Ferry. Or connect to the people who are interested in the nature in the Tetons. And through each one of those you get the diverse audience to convene on a common theme.



Bill Kornblum One of the most moving experiences I've had in the last few years at a Park Service site was at the Lincoln Home in Springfield, Illinois. I was walking through that home, which is just unbelievably moving because you're seeing the life space of President Lincoln. And there was a little kid next to me who said to his parents, "Look at that little desk. How did he get himself down into that little desk?" It started a conversation in the room where his writing desk was. I'm going to start crying here because it was so moving to me. This kid wanted to know more about what was he writing at that desk. It was an amazing moment. We talk about these teachable moments. Now this kid is going to bring his kids to this place and try to have that kind of experience with his kids and with his grandchildren.



Bill Cronon One of the most powerful days for me was the second day when we went through Marble Canyon and you can see the spray painted signs of where the dam was being engineered—one of the two dams that would have gone up in the 60's that would have flooded the inner gorge of the Grand Canyon. For me as a kid, growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, in addition to Civil Rights and Vietnam, the question of whether dams would be built in the Grand Canyon, was one of my defining political moments when I became aware of myself as a political actor in the world. And it suddenly hit me that the people I was on this boat trip with didn't have a clue what those marks on those walls were, why there was spray paint on the walls of Grand Canyon and there was nothing done to interpret what was going on there. It was a very powerful interpretive moment and that evening I spent an hour telling that story around the campfire.



A CONVERSATION ON EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE: LOOKING TO 2016



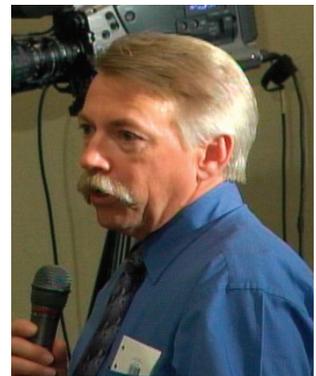
As appropriate, this final conversation is future oriented, probing the ethical dimensions of the national park system and its obligation to the American people, particularly to enrich civic engagement, education and diversity - accomplishing what Olmsted called in his 1865 Yosemite Report “a refinement of the republic.” This “obligation,” in the view of the panelists applies to all national park units, east or west, transcending any organizational divisions between what is perceived as cultural and what is perceived as natural.

Bill Cronon It is a peculiarity of this gathering that we have been talking all day as if the National Park Service had as its main mission the interpretation of American history. In fact, I could gather my biology colleagues at a panel like this who would not notice that there a historical interpretive project at all and would say that the real mission of the National Park Service is to protect biodiversity and to protect wild nature, non-human nature. And I, of course as an environmental historian, believe that both projects are co-equally important; in fact I think they are the very same project and that to try to do the one without the other is the defeat of both. So I'm a celebrator not just of the 1916 Organic Act of the Park Service but actually of the 1933 Management Act which mandates that you do both. And although there are still people in the service who regret that and who think it would be far better if you did just cultural resource management or just biology, in fact you do both of them better doing them together than to do them apart. Nature has got to be connected with culture in this project; the deep institutional divides in this agency between the nature people and the history people, the nature people and the culture people, have not served you well and they have not served our nation well.

Nature has got to be connected with culture in this project; the deep institutional divides in this agency between the nature people and the history people, the nature people and the culture people have not served you well and they have not served our nation well.

Jon Jarvis
Pacific West Regional Director, National Park Service

I appreciate Bill Cronon's comments on remembering that there are large natural landscapes in the West that we have to manage as well. As one Park Service historian said, American bison are a natural resource and buffalo are a cultural resource. It's sort of easy to talk about the role of these great historic sites, which we do have some in the West, but in the East the fires of democracy raged. But these large natural landscapes also have a story in the fact that they exist at all.



Rolf Diamant
Superintendent,
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park



I'd like for a moment just to say something about Frederick Law Olmsted since this panel has a reference to something Olmsted wrote when he drafted his preliminary report on Yosemite in 1865. Olmsted talked about "a refinement of the republic"—a refinement of the republic speaks to how the national parks, as places to learn about and practice democracy, sustainability and stewardship, make this country a better place to live. Parks contribute to the well-being of the country as a whole, it is a continuing process of refinement. It doesn't stop.

This is not just about history sites—this is about all national parks. The work being done at Great Smokey Mountains on the All Taxa project is perhaps one of the most ambitious civic engagement projects the National Park Service has ever seen.



Bill Kornblum You read Bill Cronon, and as much as he is hopeful, you can't help but feeling this melancholy for the loss of these species and the terrible mayhem that took place. And so what we do after we own this melancholy, we take a trip to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for me is one of those very, very moving places in American environmental history and contemporary environmental history, because what the students see there, is that first of all, they have within their own city a genuine bona fide wildlife refuge that you can get to by the subway or by bus. So it's the story of the resiliency of nature that we can restore, that can start coming back again, we can co-exist with it in the flight pattern of the biggest airplanes we can figure out how to get up into the air. And it instructs us about how to preserve that Jamaica Bay ecosystem and also shows the students that, you know, "I can make a difference. I might have some job some day and I might really be able to make a difference even in my own backyard."

Charlene Mires
Associate Professor of History at Villanova University

Now the main story that I was thinking of telling today comes from last summer in this traveling workshop. We started in New York, we came to Valley Forge and we came to Independence. I'd like to tell you about one of the teachers in that group who has given me permission to share her story today. She's a high school teacher in Brooklyn; she was one of the few African-American participants in this workshop. And so we came to Philadelphia just for a day and we had so much information we wanted to deliver and so many experiences we wanted them to have and we spent some time in the Liberty Bell Center across the street.

And some of you are familiar with the process that was involved in creating and recreating the exhibits in the Liberty Bell Center. You know perhaps there was much discussion involved in how to acknowledge within that exhibit space the proximity of the symbol of liberty to a site of slavery in colonial Philadelphia. It stands in such close proximity to the place where we know the home of George Washington stood when he was President of the United States and that his household included enslaved African descendants who were brought here from Mt. Vernon. And ultimately the exhibits did acknowledge that powerful convergence and offered lessons that will continue to evolve on the site.

So these are the exhibits we saw on our tour. We had a very fine ranger presentation from Ranger Joe Becton here at the park who is very knowledgeable about this site. And then we moved through the exhibits unescorted. I want to read a little bit of what this teacher later wrote me about that experience. She's an African-American teacher from New York and will probably never bring students here but this carries back into her classroom. She sent me this email. "I've never been so moved while visiting a historic location as I was when I walked through the Liberty Pavilion and read the words on the wall dealing with the promise of liberty and freedom that has yet to be fulfilled here in this nation for everyone. I'm surprised at my reaction but I think it is the fact that a public acknowledgement has been made in a government place that will be read by people from all over the country and the world that makes it so meaningful to me. My first thought was I wish that my children were here to see this. My second thought was hope really exists for this promise." So here's someone responding as a citizen, as a teacher, as a parent to an experience that was made more powerful because it acknowledged the controversy, because it engaged with issues that had been subordinated for a long time and have only recently come very powerfully back to life.



So here's someone responding as a citizen, as a teacher, as a parent to an experience that was made more powerful because it acknowledged the controversy, because it engaged with issues that had been subordinated for a long time and have only recently come very powerfully back to life.

Bill Cronon The National Parks were my classroom. They were where I learned American land; where I learned about the American people; where I learned about the American nation; where in effect I learned my love of being an American. And I put it that way in that rather patriotic formulation to remind you that obviously one of the missions of the National Park Service is to be a school of American nationalism and to teach the love of the United States. And I want to be very clear that I'm talking not about an unthinking, unreflective love, but a fully mature ambiguous, passionately complicated love.

And if we recognize the struggle that has gone into the making of the American nation, we can recognize both the good and the bad coming together as the thing that we teach. One of the things that you protect in the National Parks I believe is core American values. You are the keepers of our American myths, not its falsehoods, not myths in the false sense of that word but myths in the true sense of that word, the things that embody the deepest values that Americans have struggled with each other over and that they hold dear.

The National Parks were my classroom. They were where I learned American land; where I learned about the American people; where I learned about the American nation; where in effect I learned my love of being an American.



FORUM PARTICIPANTS

LARRY RIVERS, Introduction of John Hope Franklin. Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Florida A&M University. Member, National Park System Advisory Board.

JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN, Opening Remarks. James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of History, Duke University. Former Chairman, National Park System Advisory Board, 1999-2001.

MICHAEL KAMMEN, Forum Coordinator. Newton C. Farr Professor of American History and Culture, Cornell University. Member, National Park System Advisory Board.

JOYCE APPLEBY, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Los Angeles. Former Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford, and former president of the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association. Author of *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans*, among other works.

MYRON F. FLOYD, Professor, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management in the College of Natural Resources at North Carolina State University. Conducts research on how race and ethnicity relate to use of parks and other natural areas.

ERIC FONER, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University. Former president of the Organization of American Historians and the American Historical Association. Author of *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* and *The Story of American Freedom*, among other works.

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EDWARD T. LINENTHAL, Panel Moderator. Editor of the *Journal of American History* and Professor of History at Indiana University. Author of *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* and *The Unfinished Bombing: Oklahoma City in American Memory*, among other works.

PATRICIA NELSON LIMERICK, Professor of History and Environmental Studies, and Chair of the Board, Center of the American West at the University of Colorado. Former president of the American Studies Association. Author of *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* and *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*, among other works.

W. RICHARD WEST, JR., Founding Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, and former partner in several law firms. Chair of the American Association of Museums 1998-2000 and a member of the Executive Council of the International Council of Museums.

WILLIAM CRONON, Frederick Jackson Turner and Vilas Research Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Author of *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* and *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, and editor of *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, among other works.

WILLIAM KORNBLUM, Chairperson of the Center for Urban Research, City University of New York, unit chief of the NPS Cooperative Park Studies Unit at that Center, and Professor of Sociology. Author of *Blue Collar Community*, *At Sea in the City: New York from the Water's Edge*, and co-author of *Growing Up Poor* and *The Uptown Kids*, among other works.

CHARLENE MIRES, Associate Professor of History at Villanova University and former journalist. Pulitzer Prize (shared) winner for General Local Reporting in 1983, and author of *Independence Hall in American Memory*, among other works.

JOHN LATSCHAR, Superintendent of Gettysburg National Military Park. A 29-year veteran of the National Park Service, recipient of a PhD in American History from Rutgers University, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War, and retired from the U.S. Army Reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel.

ROLF DIAMANT, Superintendent of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. Adjunct faculty at Vermont Law School, and a contributing author of *Conservation of Cultural Landscapes*, *Reconstructing Conservation: Finding Common Ground*, *Wilderness Comes Home: Re-wilding the Northeast*, among other works.

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