

Abstract

RESEARCH PAPER: The Nationalist (Re)Turn to National Parks: A Critical Appraisal of the Roots

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Domestic visitation demographics dub America's national parks as homogenously white. This paper argues that current quantitative explanations to this puzzle fail to take into consideration the historical roots of the environmental conservation movement and how those effects are translated today. President Theodore Roosevelt, Madison Grant, and John Muir have a history of advocating for policy and ideological positions that were exclusionary to racial minorities and immigrants, setting a precedent of exclusion. Contemporary white nationalist groups are reclaiming this ideology by establishing public land as neo-white gathering spaces under the guise of environmentalism. Furthermore, domestic attacks from right-wing extremists have been on the rise since the attacks of September 11, 2001. There have been incidents the past few years that suggest environmentalism provides an additional motive to radical right-wing extremists. This paper hopes to gain a better understanding of the links between (1) environmentalism and race and (2) environmentalism and far-right extremism by analyzing the homogeneity of national parks and the exclusionary roots of the conservation movement. Furthermore, if there is a way the adverse effects can be mitigated, the Environmental Justice movement may provide solutions.