

<p style="text-align: center;">Executive Summary NPCA Mosaic Conferences</p>
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In 1999, the National Parks Conservation Association, led by their Diversity coordinator, Ms. Iantha Gantt-Wright (now in private practice) used funding and initial guidance from the National Park Service to attempt to address a number of issues that both the NPCA and the NPS agree were timely, important, and in need of closer scrutiny, including;

- The low rate of minority visitation to national parks;
- The interpretation of race and ethnic history in national parks;
- The diversification of the NPS workforce;
- Political support for national parks as they relate to changing American demographics; and
- Barriers, real and perceived, that prevent Americans of color from seeing the national parks as belonging to them as well as to the rest of the nation

The National Park Service agreed to fund these conferences in large part as a way of coming to grips with diversity issues in the agency and in the system. A key aspect of these conferences as planned and executed was the fact that they brought NPS staff and managers into direct contact with community groups representing people of color.

These conferences took place in:

1999 (San Francisco, California)

2000(Santa Fe, New Mexico)

2002 (Stone Mountain, Georgia)

Conference Purpose

The major purposes of the Mosaic Conferences were established as:

- Identify ways to encourage communities of color to find themselves in the national parks and find ways to make them larger stakeholders in the national park idea;
- Assist the Park Service to diversify its workforce;
- Identify means to allow Americans of Color to become advocates for and constituents of the national park system;
- Develop meaningful diversity partnerships, cultural diversity initiatives, and a guidebook;

- Provide an opportunity for the National Park Service to begin to look at the issues, practical, tactical, and strategic that shape and will continue to shape the future of America's national parks.

1999 Conference

The NPCA announced that its primary goal for the 1999 conference was to “bring together the National Park Service with representatives of culturally diverse organizations and institutions to engage in three days of interactive workshops to develop legislative, administrative and policy initiatives for creating lasting systemic change.”

This first conference brought together several hundreds of people, including a large number of NPS employees and managers. A combination of presentations, plenary sessions, and workshops with local groups and organizations provided an auspicious beginning for subsequent conferences.

2000 Conference

In 2000, the NPCA hosted another Mosaic in Motion conference, this time in Santa Fe, New Mexico. More than 300 participants from around the country attended this conference.

The conference featured 25 mobile and stationary workshops, 30 exhibitors, and a host of national and local speakers. The 2000 conference revisited the previous year's conference recommendations, explored progress from 1999 to 2000, and attempted to identify those barriers that remained.

2002 Conference

After a one-year hiatus, the NPCA held another Mosaic conference, this time in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

The conference celebrated diversity at Stone Mountain, Georgia, one of the birthplaces of the Ku Klux Klan and a place historically associated with racism and intolerance. Luncheon remarks were made to conference participants by Congressman John Lewis of Atlanta who praised the choice of Stone Mountain because of its symbolic importance.

The 2002 conference was attended by more than 450 state, local, government, and community participants who came from as far away as Alaska, Hawaii, Miami, and Seattle.

Over 75 youth delegates attended the conference and were engaged actively in the many workshops. Many of these youth were able to participate through scholarships provided by NPCA, the NPS, and other partners.

Participants included community-based organizations, environmental justice groups, social justice groups, minority educational institutions, business owners of

color, American Indian tribal organizations, historic preservation associations, transportation agencies, leaders of youth programs, and officers from charitable foundations.

Outcomes

NPCA Community Partners Program

The NPCA believes that their Community Partners Program is one of the best ways to realize their vision of a national park system that is diverse and is valued by diverse Americans.

Community Partnerships were created by NPCA in six cities and are comprised of local residents, entrepreneurs, students, activists, and volunteers who join with National Park Service staff to enhance cultural diversity throughout all aspects of the Park Service.

The NPCA currently has Community Partner programs in six cities: Atlanta, Miami, the District of Columbia, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

In all instances, the individual partnerships function as wholly owned subsidiaries of the national program, with their agendas and work plans developed at monthly meetings driven entirely by local concerns.

Introspection

As a result of all three of the Mosaic in Motion conferences, the National Park Service has moved into some new directions. These include:

Making Parks Matter:

This “White Paper” authored by a team led by Intermountain Region Assistant Regional Director for Workforce Enhancement looks at the problems and potential solutions to the Diversity issues facing the National Park Service.

Its premise is that the survival of the resources of the national park system and the organizational survival of the agency may now be dependent on how relevant the agency can make national parks to a rapidly changing America.

The report goes on to examine issues such as:

- Demographic Change
- The Crisis in Human Capital
- Agency Culture
- Failure of the National Park Service Diversity Action Plan
- Lack of strategic workforce planning
- Lack of a focus on retention
- Lack of information about qualified diverse candidates
- Failure to make full use of special hiring authorities

- Uncoordinated recruiting
- Failure to reach out to under-served audiences
- Inconsistent or unavailable social science data on diversity, demographics, and park use patterns

Solutions are identified around five basic categories including:

- A. Eliminating Excuses
- B. Creating accountability for poor performance as well as recognition for superior performance
- C. Providing Tools and Resources
- D. Tracking Results
- E. Going the Extra Mile

The report offers solutions and action items as well:

1. Creating an NPS Diversity Development Advisory Board
2. Develop partnerships with urban, ethnic, and tribal community partners
3. Coordinate NPS Recruiting nationwide
4. Develop and train National recruiting teams
5. Develop and utilize improved Diversity Training courses that take agency culture into account
6. Develop Training on Special Hiring Authorities for park-level selecting officials
7. Provide newly developed employee development courses that deal with diversity
8. Realign Employee Development Courses
9. Review and evaluate Employee Development Courses on Diversity
10. Provide Follow up to Diversity Training Courses.
11. Reinvent mentoring and developmental programs and NPS Intake opportunities to be more meaningful as they relate to diversity
12. Promote Diversity in NPS Developmental, Leadership, and Intake Programs
13. Redesign DOI, USDA, and NPS Leadership Programs
14. Form strategic partnerships with "grassroots" minority environmental organizations and historically diverse-serving colleges and universities
15. Develop connections with grassroots minority environmental organizations.
16. Work with historically diverse serving colleges and universities
17. Develop youth academies focusing on outdoor skills, resource management, and NPS Careers.
18. Support the Development of Diverse Serving Seasonal Law Enforcement Academies
19. Create a coordinated Agency-wide Diversity Education Program

20. The National Park Service should develop an agency-wide commitment to retaining diversity employees who leave in frighteningly large numbers
21. The National Park Service should use and track exit interviews in ways that makes the information useful and accessible
22. There should be an agency-wide approach to the use of retention and relocation bonuses to help with Diversity retention issues
23. Investigate the potential for an NPS American Indian Hiring Authority
24. Use quality social science should inform our decisions at every step
25. Institute a SCEP Diversity Student Positions in Parks
26. Create clarity with our partners regarding diversity

The issues brought up in the Mosaic conferences also include:

- Recruitment Futures Workgroup
- National Strategic Recruitment Plan
- Recruitment Futures Implementation Team

Summary:

For a number of reasons, the Mosaic in Motion conferences were good for the National Park Service and good for our relationship with the NPCA.

As a result, we do have better connections with some community groups and have entered into dialogue with others in meaningful ways.

While no additional Mosaic in Motion conferences are being planned for the future, they served a number of important functions for the National Park Service and were worth the investment of time and financial resources.

In the final analysis, these conferences provided the NPS with”

- An opportunity to identify the barriers, real and perceived that separate people of color from connecting with their natural, cultural, and outdoor recreational heritage;
- Issues related to the agency’s structure and corporate culture;
- New ways to connect with communities and individuals of color,
- A chance to understand how other people see the agency, and;
- Reasons to look at solutions for the hard questions we face about our past and our future.

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