



Black Lives Matter in the Outdoors and in Our Lives

-Isabel Bousson

Friends and Family of Camp Chippewa,

We, the staff of Camp Chippewa, are sad without the laughter of children filling our camp this summer, but we are even more disheartened to see the disproportional violence towards our Black American brothers and sisters in Christ plaguing our country, not just for the past two weeks, but since our country was founded. Following the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others, we, at Camp Chippewa are motivated to do better, to make camping and nature as a whole, an equitable experience for our camp family and other communities who may utilize our space.

We understand the complex relationship between race and outdoor spaces. This being said, there is not going to be a quick fix to this systemic problem, but Camp Chippewa is committed to making our grounds equitable and accessible to everyone regardless of their racial identity. This is not an individual effort, this is our camp family's effort to be more welcoming. As a place where people from all backgrounds come together, we recognize everyone as human beings and children of God who have the right to experience a God-filled camping and outdoor experience.

To celebrate diversity at Camp Chippewa, these are some steps we commit to:

- 1.) Continually evaluate and update our programming to ensure the diversity of all of our campers are represented in our curriculum.
- 2.) Deliberately work towards diversifying our staff and be more intentional with our staff training to include sensitive topics including the racial oppression some of our campers may face.
- 3.) Reassess our marketing and advertising material and then revise both to ensure that our campers of all races and ethnicities are represented equally.

We are a collective of imperfect individuals who are striving to cultivate an inclusive environment where faith and fun come together. This being said, we look forward to hearing from our camp family in ways we can improve or with any ideas surrounding diversity and inclusion they may have going forward.

Black lives matter in outdoor spaces and in our lives.

Love and Grace,
Your Camp Chippewa Family



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Outdoor spaces have been historically exclusionary spaces, and to this day, still are. According to the 2019 Outdoor Participation Report from the Outdoor Industry Association¹, of all the typical moderate participants of outdoor activities, 74.3% identified as white or caucasian. With the overwhelming majority of participants identifying at white, one may wonder what are some of the identified barriers as to why outdoor lands are so whitewashed².

- Outdoor spaces can often not be affordable or accessible. When people have to take off work to access the outdoors, they are losing out on income that may be sustaining them from month to month.
- There are some experts that have identified that access to the outdoors is vital as a child in order to make it an enjoyable and healthy habit into adulthood.³
- Before the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Black Americans were not allowed to visit or were segregated at National and State parks; this exclusionary mindset shown towards Black Americans still lingers today.
- We have come to understand outdoor spaces do not feel safe and welcoming for everyone. Historically, the outdoors have been places of oppression and violence for our Black American brothers and sisters. This is exemplified today as Ahmaud Arbery was jogging in his neighborhood when he was killed.

There is a complex relationship between race and the outdoors as well. For many white Americans, the Homestead Act of 1842 was a way for them to go west and cultivate their own land, while slaves were at the same time still being held captive and cultivating land for their owners. As the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments were ratified, there were still significant barriers to Black Americans' access to the great outdoors. They were transitioned from slavery to the Jim Crow era⁴ where

¹ <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2019-outdoor-participation-report/>

² <https://www.resourcesmag.org/common-resources/diversity-in-the-great-outdoors-is-everyone-welcome-in-americas-parks-and-public-lands/>

³ <http://richardlouw.com/blog/what-is-nature-deficit-disorder/>

⁴ <https://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/media/pdfs/tnp-abi-untold-stories-pt-01-segregation.pdf>



access to National and State Parks was limited and segregated. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a lot has changed in our country, but indifferent or negative mentalities towards the outdoors and outdoor spaces for people of color remain the same.

In Matthew Charles Goodrid's 2018 thesis, "Racial Complexities of Outdoor Spaces: An Analysis of African American's Lived Experiences in Outdoor Recreation,"⁵ he put forths the experiences and perceptions of several young Black Americans in regards to outdoor spaces and recreation. From his research, he identified three major reasons Black Americans may stay away from outdoor activities:

- Media/marketing
- Upbringing/exposure and
- Systemic racism

There is not going to be a quick fix to this systemic problem, but Camp Chippewa is committed to making our grounds equitable and accessible to everyone regardless of their racial identity. We are learning and working together on this. This is not an individual effort, this is our camp family's effort to be more welcoming. As a place where people from all backgrounds come together, we recognize everyone as human beings and children of God who have the right to experience a God-filled camping and outdoor experience.

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Love and Grace,
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⁵ https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4120&context=uop_etds



For further resources:

The Bishop's Statement:

<https://www.greatplainsumc.org/newsdetail/a-discipleship-response-to-racism-and-injustice-14018193>

From the Conference:

<https://www.greatplainsumc.org/audiodelail/in-laymans-terms-black-lives-matter-14021856>

From the denomination:

<https://www.gcorr.org/resources/>

Children's Books About Race:

- 1.) The Stone Thrower by Jael Ealey Richardson (ages 4-9)
- 2.) More, More, More, Said the Baby by Vera B. Williams (ages 0-2)
- 3.) All the Colors We Are by Ktaie Kissinger (ages 3+)
- 4.) What's the Difference? Being Different is Amazing by Doyin Richards (ages 2-10)
- 5.) A is for Activist by Innosanto Bagara (ages 0-3+)

For more children's book recommendations:

<https://www.todaysparent.com/family/books/kids-books-that-talk-about-racism/#gallery/books-that-talk-about-racism/slide-5>

21 Children's TV Shows and Movies About Race:

<https://www.sheknows.com/entertainment/slideshow/4747/movies-and-tv-shows-that-educate-kids-about-diversity-and-race/>

More advanced reading:

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander

Black Faces, White Spaces by Carolyn Finney

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Articles and essays:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/05/the-lack-of-diversity-in-childrens-books-about-nature/590152/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/08/opinion/george-floyd-protests-race.html?referringSource=articleShare>