

December 12, 2013

Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We, the undersigned organizations, implore your personal engagement and leadership to ensure America's diverse history and natural and cultural heritage is protected in our national parks, monuments and public lands.

We are grateful for your use of the Antiquities Act to protect the inspiring stories of African-American heroes: Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument in Ohio, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Maryland, and "Freedom's Fortress" at Fort Monroe National Monument in Virginia. The César E. Chávez National Monument in California and the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument in Northern New Mexico conserve two places critical to Latino history and culture. Chimney Rock National Monument is sacred to American Indian tribes.

But there is more to do. **We must ensure that our national parks, monuments, forests and other public lands protect and honor the stories of all Americans.** A small fraction of America's national landmarks, for example, celebrate the contributions of women, American Indians, Latinos, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, LGBT Americans, and other historically disenfranchised communities.

We encourage you to please visit with communities eager to protect their culturally-significant public lands, including the Honouliuli Japanese-internment camp in Hawaii, which tells a painful World War II story about families, fear and hope in a time of war. For more than 14,000 years, from the Mountain Shoshone Indians to hunters and anglers today, people have found refuge and sustenance in the Boulder-White Clouds of Idaho. The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks in Las Cruces protect generations of Tribal and Hispanic heritage.

These and other nationally-significant places offer our young people clean air, clean water, and opportunities to stretch their legs *and* minds.

Unfortunately, Congress has failed to protect our nation's natural and cultural heritage. The last Congress was the first since World War II to fail to protect a single new acre of public land as a national park, monument, or wilderness area.

We need your leadership Mr. President, and the support of Secretary Jewell, Secretary Vilsack and others within your Administration, to conserve the places that define us as a people. **These places likely won't be protected unless you use your authority to protect them.** Please use the Antiquities Act to conserve our diverse culture and heritage and leave an extraordinary legacy for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

Association of African American Museums

César E. Chávez Foundation

Hispanic Access Foundation

Hispanic Federation

Human Rights Campaign

Japanese American Citizens League

League of United Latin American Citizens

NAACP

National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers

National Women's History Project