

Help us make a new film about racism and
Jim Crow in Southern state parks—based on William O’Brien’s
award-winning book *Landscapes of Exclusion*.

Beginning in the 1920s, hundreds of American state parks were created across the nation. Even more were built during the Great Depression, as New Deal administration funds, labor, and design expertise made it possible for states to set aside their most splendid scenic parcels and make them accessible to residents. By 1942, when the federal government curtailed their involvement in these programs, 150 new state parks had been created in the South. But only seven of them admitted Black visitors, and all were uniformly inferior in scenic quality, size, and amenities to “white only” parks. The National Park Service did not condone segregation, leaving it to local superintendents to enforce admission policies, which were invariably racist.

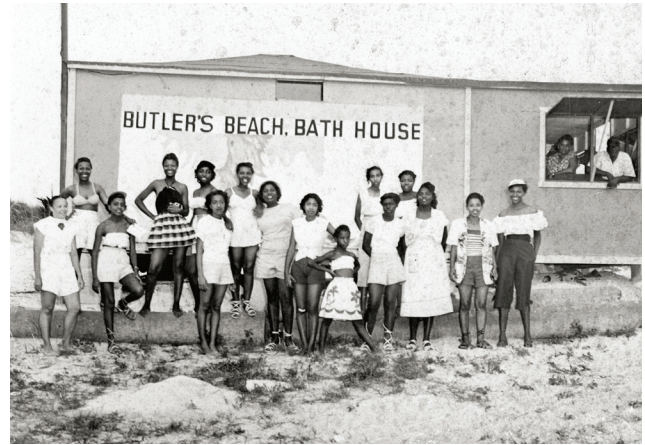
In response to intensifying legal challenges undertaken by the NAACP and other civil rights organizations in the 1950s, some Southern states eventually began more earnest efforts to increase the park space available to Black visitors. But even after the landmark case of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 and another in 1955 concerning public parks, Southern states resisted the mandate to integrate. They focused instead, in a limited way, on creating more parks for Blacks or setting aside sequestered “Negro” areas in existing parks.



Swimming at Jones Lake State Park, 1940. Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina.



Black scouting group at Camp Whispering Pines in the Crabtree Creek Recreational Demonstration Area, 1943. Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina.



A group photo at the bathhouse on Butler Beach in the 1950s, prior to the site's development as a state park. Courtesy State Archives of Florida.

By this time, however, Black Americans didn't want separate parks or park areas. They wanted equal access. And they began to use lawsuits and acts of civil disobedience to leverage their right to state-owned facilities. But their efforts were often thwarted by local administrators and long-standing inequities. Even the Civil Rights Act of 1964 failed to put a definitive end to segregation in Southern state parks. In response to court-ordered integration, South Carolina closed its state parks rather than permit Black use. It took until the late 1960s to fully desegregate state parks in the South and put an official end to Jim Crow.

This story of inequity and institutionalized racism should be remembered and told as part of the history of national and state parks in America. Through interviews, landscape footage, and archival documents, the new LALH film *Landscapes of Exclusion* chronicles the explosive collision of America's "best idea"—its parks—with one of its worst, the racist principle of "separate but equal" that defined Jim Crow.

All donations of \$250 or more received by October 15th
will be acknowledged in the film credits.

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