

National Religious Partnership for the Environment

Press Statement

For Immediate Release: June 28, 2024

Washington, DC – Last week, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland officially established Blackwell School National Historic Site in Marfa, Texas as the nation’s newest national park. This park is only the second National Park Service site dedicated specifically to modern Latino history. It comes after two decades of persistence from community activists and school alumni, who recognized the importance of the school as a piece of American history and example of the racism and cultural discrimination that Mexican Americans faced during the period of *de facto* segregation in the United States from 1889 to 1965.

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment applauds this designation and commends the Biden Administration for its commitment to telling the complete story of American history. Our recent report “[Changing the Landscape: Honoring Hispanic Heritage on Public Lands](#),” which summarized interviews with community and religious Hispanic leaders across the country, revealed a strong feeling of connection to nature and the land among Hispanic Americans. However, it also revealed a common feeling that American public lands were often not welcoming or accessible to the Hispanic community, and that our public lands rarely protected places or stories reflecting Hispanic American history.

As a multi-faith organization partnering with diverse faith-based organizations, we believe in our collective commitment to truth, healing, reconciliation, and justice. The designation of Blackwell School National Historic Site is in line with these common values and is an important step in our country’s reckoning with its past, in the hopes of a better future for all.