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Letter - Examining John Muir's Impact

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Examining John Muir's impact

Jul 23, 2020

Dear Pacificans,

Yesterday, the executive director of the Sierra Club criticized and distanced the environmental organization from its founder, John Muir, who made deeply disturbing and racist comments about Native Americans, African Americans and others.

University of the Pacific is home to the most extensive collection of Muir's papers, which are available online. This collection has been and will continue to be of importance to students and historians researching and interpreting for themselves both Muir and the early environmental movement.

We believe racism has no place in our society, and as educators we are dedicated to studying the painful racist history of our country. As scholars we have not just the ability—but the responsibility—to examine Muir's life in full. With that:

- The College of the Pacific, our liberal arts and sciences college, will conduct a research study, drawing on Muir's papers, focused on his life, including his racist views and how we can shape a more just society.
- The room that houses the Muir collection will be designed to teach about both Muir's work on the environment and his views on race.
- A biannual class that examines Muir and the American conservation movement will refocus on all aspects of his work and life.

Pacific will continue to look at additional ways to study Muir's impact and to engage our students, faculty and staff in the process.

Christopher Callahan
President