

Today, over twenty Native groups have connections to the land and use it for sacred ceremony, such as Sweat Lodge and Sun Dance. Some climbers also consider it sacred. They claim the tower as their church and their climbing as their religious practice.

The Conflict:

Some groups consider climbing to be a desecration of the tower. Others complain that climbing distracts from ceremony.

The noise and visual distraction can interrupt the silence, song and concentration. All of these pieces are required in traditional practice. For this reason, the NPS instituted a voluntary ban on climbing during the month of June, when many ceremonies take place.

Some climbers have taken offense to the ban. They consider it a regulation on their own spiritual practice, and a violation of the First Amendment.

The Situation:

I believe that true climbing (respectful, meaningful climbing focused on the movement itself without attachment to grades) is the furthest thing from desecration.

It's a powerfully respectful way to engage with the rock. It allows us to connect with the land in very basic, and creative way. It reminds us of how small we are, and how powerless we are to the world around us (despite our

