



April 27, 2017

Dear Mayor Bowser,

The Sierra Club is outraged to learn of the assault of our friend and climate justice movement leader, the Rev. Lennox Yearwood, [at the hands of a Metropolitan Police Department Officer](#) this past Saturday as he attempted to cross the street to attend the March for Science. The Sierra Club has worked closely with Rev. Yearwood for more than a decade in our shared efforts to work toward a just, healthy and safe planet for us all. His bold leadership and unwavering vision have fueled the growing climate movement and secured the reverend numerous honors, including recognition as a 2015 White House Champion of Change and one of the 100 Most Powerful African Americans by Ebony Magazine in 2010.

That a distinguished leader like Rev. Yearwood would suffer the insult of being singled out among a group of mostly white pedestrians, thrown up against a truck, detained, and harassed, just for crossing the street is evidence not only of an injustice against an innocent person but of a much deeper injustice. This is a manifestation of systemic racism and racial profiling by police departments which threaten people of color for simply marching while being black or brown and which erode the very foundations of our democracy.

We write to ask for an immediate investigation and review of police interactions with demonstrators, especially participants of color. If your office is serious about creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all constituents who live in and who visit our nation's capital, then your immediate attention to these problems is essential. Everyone should be able to work, play and exercise our constitutionally-protected right of free speech and assembly without fear of assault. We request that you give swift scrutiny to this problem, particularly in light of the large number of people who will be marching on our streets over the next four years.

Specifically, we are concerned about how this discriminatory behavior may impact this weekend's People's Climate March, to which organizations across the country – including our own – have invited millions of our members to come to the District – and during which we are eager to see a peaceful demonstration of public engagement. The nation's Capital should offer a safe place to live, work, march, and cross the street for everyone – regardless of their skin color.

The Sierra Club is fighting for an environmental movement where #BlackLivesMatter is more than just a slogan. To that end, we call on your office to initiate a full review of police practices and fully investigate this injustice against Rev. Yearwood.

Sincerely,
Mark Rodeffer
Chair, D.C. Sierra Club

CC: Peter Newsham, Chief, Metropolitan Police Department
Charles Allen, Chair, D.C. Council Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety