

Statement
Chair Raúl M. Grijalva
Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Hearing
*Examining the Barriers and Solutions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Department of
the Interior*
September 17, 2020

- **Thank you, Chairman Cox.**

- **I'm very glad we're having this conversation today and I'm especially grateful to our panel of witnesses who are here to offer their expertise and help us move this conversation forward. There's no question that it's long overdue.**

- **But first, I do want to acknowledge that this is not just a problem that started with the Trump administration; diversity, equity, and inclusion is something that the Department of the Interior has struggled with since its beginnings.**

- **That being said, I also want to be clear in saying that this administration has repeatedly shown—through both blatantly overt and more surreptitious tactics—that their goal is to maintain the status quo for the benefit of the White, the rich,**

and the powerful. A goal they've illustrated so clearly with their plea for us all to reverse course and erase progress in order to—quote—Make America Great Again.

- For example, this administration has used the ongoing pandemic as an excuse to slash environmental regulations on dirty energy facilities, putting surrounding communities, which are often communities of color, in harm's way.**
- They've bulldozed Native American gravesites for their inherently racist and ineffective border wall.**
- They've left Puerto Ricans—American citizens—in the dark and without support after the devastation of Hurricane Maria and earthquakes that followed.**
- They've put Park Police in charge of launching an attack on peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters mere days after the brutal murder of George Floyd.**

- They've put a known racist in charge of the Bureau of Land Management, the largest public land holder in the country and home to many Native American cultural and historical sites.
- They told nearly 41% of the Bureau of Land Management's black employees to quit or move out of DC.
- They recently silenced any federal agency trainings that use the terms "critical race theory" or "white privilege," calling them—quote—"divisive anti-American propaganda."
- The list goes on and on.
- So although the Department of Interior has made some progress in addressing diversity over the past few years, I want to make clear that the comments this President and his allies have made, the actions they've taken, and the voices they've

silenced speak louder than any updated policy or procedure ever could.

- **As a result, we end up with a workforce that feels unsupported, untrusted, and afraid for their jobs, especially those employees who don't fit this administration's backwards and bigoted vision of quote, unquote, "Great."**
- **This only serves to maintain the racist and White supremacist origins that have pushed out and excluded people of color from our public lands for far too long.**
- **No matter what the next four years brings, it's time to move Interior and our public lands forward into a future that reflects the diversity that truly makes this country great.**