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Introduction

Good day Chairman TJ Cox, ranking member Louie Gohmert, other Subcommittee members, and staff. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this hearing on significant factors influencing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Department of Interior and other environmental institutions.

I am Dorceta Taylor and I am a professor at the Yale School for the Environment. Before that, I spent 27 years at the University of Michigan's School for the Environment and Sustainability. Since 1985, I have worked to develop diversity pathway programs to help students who are historically under-represented in the environmental workforce, to prepare for jobs and leadership roles in the sector. I currently direct two pathway programs that I developed – the Environmental Fellows Program (for graduate students) and the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program at the University of Michigan and Yale (for undergraduates). In addition, I have conducted and published numerous research articles and reports on diversity in the environmental workforce for more than 30 years.

Culture of Discrimination and Exclusion in the Department of the Interior

Discrimination, racism, and cultural exclusion has been a part of the fabric of the Department of Interior (DOI) for more than a century and a half. Some examples include, (1) the taking and breaking up of Native American lands to create [allotments](#) and [national parks and monuments](#), or to sell to settlers, and (2) the banning of [permanent settlements](#) or the prohibition of religious ceremonies in national parks that were located on former tribal lands. (3) Native Americans [contend](#) the Bureau of Reclamation have restricted water flow to tribal lands, and (4) tribes also contend that dams threaten reservation with flooding.

Bigotry was also a part of the founding of the National Park Service. For instance, [eugenicists](#) were among those who [campaigned for](#) the creation of national parks and served in the early administration of the bureau. DOI also oversaw the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s admitted and trained working-class White males while excluding women and initially refusing to admit [Black males](#). After being [forced to admit Blacks](#) in some states, relegated Blacks to kitchen duties. Many Blacks were also assigned to segregated camps. After the CCC ended, Blacks were not hired to work in the agency. Finally, the national parks were

segregated recreational spaces in some instances. For instance, when visiting national parks, Blacks were forced to use small, segregated spaces like Lewis Mountain in [Shenandoah National Park](#).

Slow Progress on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DOI has moved slowly to increase the gender and racial diversity of the agency. According to the Partnership for Public Services' [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#), in 2006, the DOI had the following demographic characteristics. Men constituted 61.5% of the employees while women comprised 38.5% of the agency's staff. The agency was predominantly White. Whites accounted for 71.3% of the workforce, Native Americans 15%, Blacks 5.2%, Hispanics 4.7%, and Asians 2% of the staff.

The data shows that between 2006 and 2018, the percentage of women in DOI increased by 1.5% and the percent of people of color increased by only 0.2% in those 12 years. In 2018, DOI had the following demographic characteristics – men made up 60% of the workforce while women comprised 40%. Regarding race, the DOI labor force was 72.9% White, 9.4% Native American, 5.8% Black, 6.6% Hispanic, and 2.4% Asian.

In other words, the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government data show that DOI's workforce is 40% women and 23.1% people of color in 2018. Therefore, one can argue that women and people of color are under-represented in DOI's workforce.

The Case for Increased Diversity and Pathways Forward

DOI should pay attention to enhancing diversity, as it is a crucial component of effectiveness. Studies of corporate executives from around the world contend that diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences in the workforce are integral to innovation and the generation of new ideas. Executives say that having a diverse and inclusive workforce is key to recruiting, attracting, and retaining top talent (see [Deloitte Development LLC](#) 2017; [Forbes Insights](#) 2011). Scholars argue that workplace diversity is a significant factor in building cognitive growth, improving critical thinking, problem solving, skills acquisition, and enhancing productivity. Greater heterogeneity in the workplace can also lead to more committed, better satisfied, and higher performing employees (for a review of studies see [Taylor, Paul, and McCoy](#) 2019).

Diversity can also foster more desirable environmental outcomes and greater profitability in institutions ([Westermann, Ashby, and Petty](#) 2005). [Liu](#) (2018) argues that organizations become environmentally responsible by diversifying their leadership structure. Having more women as corporate heads is associated with reduced environmental violations.

I offer four suggestions for enhancing workplace diversity in DOI. (1) Begin recruiting potential workers earlier in the pipeline – while students pursuing environmental degrees are in high school and early in their college careers. (2) Broaden the places where DOI recruits new workers. (3) Focus on retaining women and people of color by ensuring inclusive work places in all units of DOI, and (4) promote more women and people of color to top leadership positions.