



Making Progress:  
Sierra Club's Department of  
Equity, Inclusion and Justice  
Annual Report 2016

In 2016 the Sierra Club took a huge step on our shared journey of self-transformation by creating a new Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice (formerly Diversity, Equity and Inclusion), headed by Director Nellis Kennedy-Howard. As we close out the year, we're reflecting on our accomplishments so far, and lessons learned to inform the work ahead.

## BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

Since the new Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice was created in March of 2016, we've been working to build a solid foundation to support transformational change throughout the Sierra Club. We began by working to create a vision, values and theory of change for the department to provide everyone in the Sierra Club community with a shared understanding of this work. This vision is designed to excite and engage staff and volunteers, to encourage our members and supporters, and to help people find their role in Sierra Club's journey toward becoming a more just, equitable and inclusive organization. By establishing values that each of us can put into practice in our everyday work, we have set the stage to deeply engage everyone at the Sierra Club in this work. In 2017 the vision, values and theory of change will be rolled out to the entire organization in an effort to promote consistency and understanding of our organization's goals and commitment.

Within the Sierra Club community we have highlighted the creation and leadership of the new department by actively seeking out venues in which to engage volunteers and staff. The department presented at the annual Council of Club Leaders meeting, led bi-weekly "Calling for Inclusion" dialogues, and welcomed new staff by participating in the quarterly new hire orientation. We also began to build strong relationships with other Sierra Club departments by working across the organization to solicit feedback on Sierra Club's shared vision for equity, inclusion and justice.





## CONNECTING WITH THE BROADER JUSTICE MOVEMENT

We have worked to increase our external presence by building more platforms for communication with allies and supporters—including our new program page on SC.org and our public-facing blog—and by working to create a thoughtful visual presence that clearly communicates our vision and values while staying consistent with the Sierra Club visual brand.

Departmental staff have also built relationships with other leaders working toward equity, justice and inclusion in the environmental movement in order to share our own experiences and to learn from others. Director Nellis Kennedy-Howard and Sierra Club Board Member Allison Chin attended Hack the Plan, a training designed to create a network of support among like-minded organizations seeking to prioritize equity and justice.

### EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE TEAMS: WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE CHANGE

The Staff Diversity Team works in partnership with the executive team to create and implement annual departmental plans to advance equity, inclusion and justice throughout the Sierra Club. In 2016, they helped to create and implement departmental plans to advance equity, inclusion and justice that included a new requirement for all conservation department staff to participate in an “interrupting toxic behavior” training module, and for all senior managers in the advancement department to participate in an anti-racism training. The Staff Diversity Team also helped to create a plan to grow the email list of Sierra Student Coalition by over 200%, garnered a commitment to create space and allocate time for internal-facing staff members to pursue equity, inclusion and justice-oriented activities outside of the workplace, and ensured Sierra Club participation in the 2016 Green 2.0 study.



The Equity, Inclusion and Justice Support Team identifies opportunities to engage and support chapters and volunteer leaders seeking to advance equity. The team offers a community of facilitators, trusted coaches and change agents to further the alignment of our actions with our values for justice and equity at the local level. This year the Support Team worked with the Leadership and Capacity Building Team to strategize around how to reach and support Sierra Club chapters in their capacity building work. The Support Team members also facilitated a full day workshop at this year’s White Privilege Conference, reaching 40 staff and volunteers to heighten awareness of this work and build skills for disrupting oppression. In the latter half of 2016, the Support Team created a



trainer resource library to help facilitate and build capacity for internal Sierra Club trainings, particularly at the local level for chapter and group leaders. So far this year the Support Team has touched over 400 volunteer leaders, providing facilitation, coaching and offering support for 22 chapters nationwide.

## SIERRA CLUB SHOWING UP FOR EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

The new Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice also took 2016 as an opportunity to demonstrate our unequivocal solidarity with justice movements in and outside the environmental movement. Director Nellis Kennedy-Howard visited Standing Rock to connect with and lift up the voices of people making the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline possible. Out of that experience we developed blog posts, videos and social media content highlighting voices of people on the ground in Standing Rock. We've used our network to raise funds for groups on the ground at Standing Rock, including a collaboration with the Dirty Fuels team to create tailored presentations for outdoor gear companies about how they can support the water protectors, resulting in donations that have helped the camp with winterization efforts. Nellis also hosted an in-person presentation and an online webinar for staff and volunteers to learn about the Dakota Access Pipeline and hear about her experiences at the camp.

In this time of powerful national organizing around racial and social justice, the Equity, Inclusion and Justice Department also showed solidarity with the broader progressive movement by using discretionary funding to support the efforts of organizations including Black Lives Matter and Showing Up for Racial Justice. Sierra Club used our substantial social media presence and email list of over two million supporters to consistently lift up the efforts of allied organizations, acknowledge the pain and suffering experienced by many of our members and supporters in the wake of continual episodes of hate-fueled violence, and provide opportunities for our members to get involved in building a better and more just world for all.

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## CONFRONTING INTERNAL CHALLENGES HEAD ON

Though the Sierra Club has made progress on increasing people of color representation on our staff, we are still working to improve staff retention and the overall experiences of people of color within the organization. The Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice has partnered with the Human Resources Department to perform an analysis that will help us to better understand retention challenges and possible solutions. This analysis will conclude with a series of recommendations for adoption and implementation by the executive team to help improve the experiences of staff people of color.

This year also includes a departmental-hosted training for forty senior Sierra Club managers, designed to help our leaders better understand the presence of privilege and oppression in their own lives, and to explore how one can begin to dismantle racism through their own actions. The department is also hosting a specially-tailored training for the Member Services Department staff to increase confidence and to offer support in handling difficult conversations that they have in response to the organization's statements regarding racial justice and demonstrations of solidarity.



This year the Sierra Club's commitment to equity, inclusion and justice has grown by leaps and bounds. More people than ever are engaged in this work, and we have created tools, teams, structures and processes to deepen our commitment. We look forward to a 2017 rich with possibility for transformative change, and ask you all to join us in creating an organization that is stronger, healthier and more equitable, just and inclusive.

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**Nellis Kennedy-Howard**

Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Sierra Club

[nellis.khoward@sierraclub.org](mailto:nellis.khoward@sierraclub.org)