

THE WASHINGTON
Informer

The Washington Informer 2019 Sustainability Supplement
in Observance of Earth Day

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Protecting our Species

Dr. Shantella Sherman
WI Special Editions Editor



Dr. Shantella Sherman

It's official. The rapid and unprecedented extinction of species in our world today – through climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, and unsustainable agriculture – are the result of human abuses. And with this year's Earth Day, April 22, activists want people across the globe to understand their role in slowing and eliminating (in some cases) the impact of those abuses.

As early as 1953, Keep America Beautiful, organized to encourage litter prevention, promote waste reduction and recycling, and to spearhead efforts towards community greening and beautification. In 1971, their campaign helped usher in the first Earth Day, with the theme, "People Start Pollution. People Can Stop It."

It was this campaign that featured actor Iron Eyes Cody, as a broken-hearted Native American man observing man-made destruction through pollution, litter and new innovations. Despite those warnings, nearly 50 years ago, we stand at a precipice wherein the largest period of species extinction in the last 60 million years is occurring. Normally, between one and five species goes extinct annually; however, scientists estimate that we are now losing species at 1,000 to 10,000 times that rate, with multiple extinctions daily.

"The good news is that the rate of extinctions can still be slowed, and many of our declining, threatened, and endangered species can still recover," says Kathleen Rogers, President of Earth Day Network. "If we work together now to build a united global movement of consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders, and scientists, we can demand immediate action."

Earth Day 2019's Protect Our Species campaign hopes to galvanize nations to: Educate and raise awareness about the accelerating rate of extinction of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon, Achieve major policy victories that protect broad groups of species as well as individual species and their habitats, Build and activate a global movement that embraces nature and its values; and Encourage individual actions such as adopting a plant-based diet and stopping pesticide and herbicide use.

Building on that theme, the Washington Informer celebrates Earth Day by examining some of the crises impacting our city and the amazing organizations and efforts underway to thwart continued abuses of our natural resources. Join us in fighting the good fight for our future, and successive generations.

Read, Learn, Enjoy!
Dr. S



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A Message from Pepco

Earth Day is a great time for residents, community leaders, and businesses to reflect on the importance of environmental leadership. At Pepco, we are committed to powering a cleaner, brighter, and affordable energy future for all of our customers and communities. Climate change is real, and we understand the urgency of efforts aimed at reducing carbon emissions across the areas we serve. As leaders in the energy industry, we want to help usher in the clean and renewable energy future while doing our part to fight climate change and prepare for a world with more extreme weather and less predictability. Pepco is working with Exelon to advocate for policies, including transportation electrification, that reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the federal, state, and municipal levels. So, however you plan to celebrate, Pepco wishes you a safe and happy Earth Day.

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Recycling Revolution Spawns New, Innovative Products, Solutions

By Sophia Sparks
Special to the Informer

With the turn of the new year, 2019, twins Misook and Anne Corley found themselves ushering in both their 21st birthdays, and a new, environmentally-conscious city, as restaurants and other service businesses in the District, officially banned the use of single-use, plastic straws. New to the nation's capital, the ban kicked off in July 2018 in Seattle and has since moved across the nation and into major food chains.

"It was a bit weird at first to drink from a paper straw and feel the texture was not plastic, but it caught on because we all want to do our part for the environment," Misook told the Informer. "As a daily iced latte drinker, it made more sense for me to purchase and carry a tumbler and reusable straw than keep using paper and plastic products that harm the environment."

"It's something we did not even consider initially," Anne added. "We were quick to recycle bottles, glass and paper at home, but we never really thought about how much waste we contributed to those landfills."

In just the U.S. alone, one estimate suggests 500 million

straws are used every single day. One study published earlier this year estimated as many as 8.3 billion plastic straws pollute the world's beaches. Reusable and eco-friendly straws are now more in vogue than ever before. PLA is one of the most commonly found plastic straw substitutes these days, but you can now find straws made from cardboard, paper, bamboo, and grain, with differing levels of biodegradability.

"At this moment, the global PLA [plant-based plastic] and paper straw market is very stressed, and product delivery has been delayed across the board," David J. Fridland, who works on sustainability for food service provider Eco-Products, said. "We view this as an extremely positive trend that will get more and more brands and companies on the zero-waste journey."

Similarly, the German sportswear giant Adidas, has increased its environmental push through its ecological group Parley for the Oceans. Parley intercepts plastic waste at the shoreline before it enters the sea, to create its spring 2019 Outdoor footwear line. Adidas then recycled the material for the knitted uppers of its sneakers. Zero-dye technology contributed to the monochrome design, which requires fewer



Adidas' Parley for the Oceans environmental line offers stylish footwear created from recycled materials. (Courtesy photo)



Biodegradable straws have taken the place of plastic straws in restaurants across the nation, including McDonalds. (Courtesy photo)

chemicals and less energy and water to produce. In addition to being eco-friendly, the shoes are super stylish and affordable.

"We also continue to improve our environmental performance during the manufacturing. This includes the use of sustainable materials, the reduction of CO2 emissions and waste prevention," said Gil Steyaert, who is respon-

sible for Adidas global operations in a statement. "In 2018 alone, we saved more than 40 tons of plastic waste in our offices, retail stores, warehouses and distribution centers worldwide and replaced it with more sustainable solutions."

Recently, Adidas signed the Climate Protection Charter for the Fashion Industry at the

United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland—and agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent before 2030.

Starbucks plans to phase out plastic straws by 2020. McDonald's recently announced it will ban plastic straws at its U.K. and Ireland restaurants.

SS

Recently, Adidas signed the Climate Protection Charter for the Fashion Industry at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland—and agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent before 2030.

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MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



Earth's Natural Force Rangers Show Kids the Benefit of Protecting the Environment



ENF Rangers perform, showcasing the importance of a healthy natural environment. (Courtesy photo)

By Lee Ross with
Shantella Y. Sherman
Special to the Informer

When Xavier Myles first saw the dance moves and uniforms of Earth's Natural Force (ENF) Rangers, during an environmental program last year, the 7-year-old Northeast resident could hardly contain himself. Xavier's mother said her son was so concerned about environmental abuses that he had single-handedly convinced the family to adopt recycling and neighborhood clean-up activities at home and in local parks.

"ENF Rangers made him feel right at home for loving the environment and wanting to preserve the wonderful greenery around our city," Elaine Myles, Xavier's mother told the Informer. "It is important to have environmentally-conscious young kids, especially African Americans, from your neighborhood, working towards a shared goal, especially when so many environmental issues disproportionately impact people of color."

Xavier's enthusiasm demonstrates the power and reach of ENF's mission to teach youth at very young ages and encourage them to take responsibility for the care and protection of the environment.

Raina Coleman, an ENF Ranger, has been with the organization since 2013. Now a freshman in high school, Coleman plays on the girls basketball team, is a visual artist, and a talented performer with the Rangers.

"Being an ENF Ranger helped me learn more about the environment and why it's important to do things now before it's too late," Coleman said. "I have asthma and allergies and so I think we do a good job of teaching kids that the Earth wasn't always like this and it's up to us kids

to take care of it now so there won't be any more children being born with asthma and allergies."

Coleman said that kids have the power to change the world, and with the right tools, they will become the next line of defense against negative environmental changes.

ENF reaches out to children between the ages of 5-12 through school and community performances, television broadcasts, and social media promotion. But be clear, there is plenty of Ranger work to be done, both in front of and behind the scenes.

"I love performing in front of little kids because it's really, cool to see them dancing along to our songs," Coleman told the Informer. "We practice for weeks just for an hour-long show. It's fun, but a lot of work. I've been performing with the Rangers since I was eight and believe it makes a tremendous impact on other young people."

ENF encourages youth to stop littering, recycle trash and offers them an alternative way of looking at the world around them. They become, in essence, protectors and defenders of the natural world around them and what they call, their fellow "Earth-Mates."

"We really want to impress upon schools and family participants the importance of doing their small part to save the planet – as small efforts turn into large movements," ENF Founder and CEO, Allen C. Burris said. "We've incorporated fun, games, and environmental displays and presentations into our efforts because we believe it will have a phenomenal impact on attendees. We want our young people to understand they can be a force for good and they have the power to save the planet by being responsible citizens of the Earth." **SS**

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To learn more about ENF or to become an ENF Ranger visit enfrangers.org
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1300 Good Hope Road, SE Washington, DC 20020
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ENF Rangers perform at community events, schools, and environmental summits to get kids excited about their roles as environmentalists. / (Courtesy photo)

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WGL is the preferred source for clean and efficient energy solutions across the nation. But we also know that our responsibilities do not end there. We've made a commitment to help enhance the quality of life throughout the entire community. That's why we're proud to work with local organizations that improve people's health, promote a cleaner environment, support efforts to better educate our youth and as a result, enrich lives today and for generations to come.

To learn more about how WGL is helping create a healthier, more vibrant community, visit WGL.com.



WE ARE



Groundswell's Share Power™ Community Solar Program

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SOLAR?

Community solar looks just like any other solar project you might have seen. The thing that makes it different is that community solar projects generate electricity that you can share. What that means is, for example, a local church could install a solar project on its own roof that provides electricity for its members, or an apartment building could install solar on its roof that provides electricity for the people who live in the building.

Before community solar came along, the only people who could enjoy solar power were people who owned their own roof, had a good credit score, and could afford the up-front payments. Community solar means everyone, regardless of whether you rent or own or have good credit, can have access to solar energy.

WHERE IS GROUNDSWELL BUILDING COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECTS?

Groundswell is building community solar projects in partnership with faith communities and other

community-based organizations in the District, including solar projects on the rooftops of local churches in Wards 4, 5, and 7 so far. Some of the solar projects we're building are part of the Solar for All DC program, which will provide 100% of the electricity generated for free to DC residents with a household income of less than \$65,650. DC residents who enroll in Solar for All DC should save about \$500 per year on their Pepco bill – so the savings are real.

We're also building community solar projects that enable people to Share Power™, delivering the same deep utility bill savings to our neighbors who need it most.

HOW DOES GROUNDSWELL SHARE POWER™?

Groundswell's Share Power™ community solar program was directly inspired by asking ourselves how we can "love our neighbors as ourselves" using the abundance of energy from the sun.

If you live in the District of Columbia and pay a Pepco bill, you can purchase locally gen-

erated electricity from one of Groundswell's solar projects for less than \$50 per month, which is about the same you pay the utility for dirty power. Groundswell then shares the solar savings generated from the project with income-qualified households to help cut their electricity bills in half. For example, for one of the community solar projects we're building in DC Ward 5, for every three families who sign up to get locally generated power, we'll be able to enroll one income-qualified family who'll be able to save about \$500 per year. We think it's a wonderful way to work together as a community to lift each other up.

WHY IS SHARING POWER WITH OTHERS SO IMPORTANT?

The bottom line is that it's expensive to be poor. All across America, especially in Washington DC, the people who have the least household incomes have the highest utility bills. In fact, nationally the poorest 20% of Americans pay 10% of more of their entire household in-

come to keep the lights on. Why? Because families who are working hard to make ends meet typically live in less energy efficient houses and apartments, and have older appliances that use more energy.

That's why Groundswell's Share Power™ program was created - to enable neighbors to help neighbors. Families who want to get their power from a local solar project can, while at the same time, helping local families who need energy savings cut their bills.

HOW DOES GROUNDSWELL CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Washington, DC is Groundswell's hometown, and our vision is that solar power should be a "Made in DC" industry. That's just one reason why we hire locally and work with local minority and women-owned businesses to install our solar projects. The companies we work with are also committed to the community and practice what they preach by providing job training through their work. Finally, we shine a light on where and how the

DC solar market needs to improve to represent the beautiful diversity of our neighborhoods.

The way we see it, the District has a thriving solar market thanks to its commitment to run on 100% clean, renewable energy. The solar industry projects that about \$300 million will be invested to build solar projects in the District over the next five years, and every single solar panel will cut utility bills, create jobs, and build wealth. But the question we will always ask is: for whom?

HOW DO YOU SIGN UP?

If you live in Washington, DC and you pay a Pepco bill, just go to our website at www.groundswell.org/informer. Fill out the interest form on our home page and we will be in touch with more details and community solar participation availability.

If you or someone you know is, or thinks they may be, income-qualified for free solar through the Solar for All DC program, please call our Customer Engagement Team at 443.598.6773.

SS

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SOLAR?



1 Groundswell installs a community solar project

2 Solar panels produce electricity that is shared among neighbors

3 You sign up with Groundswell to receive the locally generated power

4 A portion of the energy generated is shared with qualified, low-income neighbors for free

Join Groundswell, get your energy from a local solar project, and Share Power™ with your neighbors today.

Share Power™
with Groundswell

Groundswell.org/informer



SHARE POWER WITH COMMUNITY SOLAR

Groundswell is building community solar projects in Washington, DC that connect solar power with economic empowerment and put people first. We believe that clean energy is a necessity, not a luxury; we're all in this together; and we can't afford to leave our neighbors behind.

Learn more at www.groundswell.org/informer

Share  Power™
with Groundswell



Pepco Hopes to Expand Access to Electric Transportation

Celebrating Earth Day reminds us all to be good environmental stewards. At Pepco, we never stop looking for ways to lead our community toward a cleaner and brighter energy future. This year, Pepco aims to expand access to electric transportation through its proposal to boost electric mass transit and ride share options and tackle some of the challenges surrounding individual electric vehicle (EV) ownership.

Not that long ago, owning an electric vehicle (EV) meant a hefty price tag and a long waiting list. Today, EVs are affordable and boast a growing battery life making them more accessible and practical than ever. Most major U.S. car manufacturers offer or plan to offer an EV model to customers; prices for a new EV start as low as \$23,000 before state and federal subsidies that can reduce the purchase price by several thousand dollars, and lease payments start around \$69/month. An increasing number of EVs in the used car marketplace are getting the attention of consumers as well.

Like most new technologies, early adopters help prove a market need and drive down costs. Any market savvy observer would scan the EV marketplace and predict the industry is poised for huge success. So why are we not seeing more

widespread adoption? Why does it feel like EVs are for the elite, ultra-dedicated consumer?

Like most cities across the U.S., the majority of District of Columbia residents live in multi-family dwellings; and chances are, if you're not in an apartment, you live in one of the city's row houses. For these residents, EV ownership isn't as simple as buying the car and installing a charger in the driveway.

No, for these residents EV ownership comes with a lot of questions. Where will I charge my car? How long will it take? How much will it cost? Can I trust the company selling me the electricity? Will the charging stations actually work and be reliable?

If you're one of these District residents, it's likely that these questions will dissuade you from an EV purchase despite your desire and ability to own a clean electric vehicle. This is the single greatest barrier for widespread EV adoption.

Survey data suggests that most District resi-

dents would consider owning an EV and the same number would like to see more EV ride sharing and mass transit options. With multi-family dwelling development on the rise, how can the District accommodate EV ownership and bring EV benefits like reduced pollution and traffic noise to its residents?

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is desperately needed across the District. To date, private companies have installed chargers in places like Georgetown, Friendship Heights, and Cleveland Park. For EV adoption in the District to

really take off, dozens of charging stations are needed – in all Wards. Fast chargers allowing EV owners to reach a full charge in under 30 minutes will be critical if we want people to think of a public charging station as a practical alternative to the driveway charger. Electrification of mass transit like buses will be equally important for District residents.

Managing a network of charging stations is a lot like managing a utility's energy system. All the same operational factors are involved: safety, reliability, and equitable access and delivery. Most important, utilities are regulated so that consumers are guaranteed safe, reliable electricity at a fair price. Many industry experts think that utilities are best positioned to provide the charging infrastructure needed for broad EV adoption.

"As demand for EVs continues to grow, local electric companies, such as Pepco, will play a critical role in making necessary invest-

ments to deploy, own, and operate charging infrastructure for the benefit of customers," said Edison Electric Institute Executive Vice President of Public Policy and External Affairs Brian Wolff. "Investing in EV infrastructure is a win for customers, the economy, and our environment."

In the District, Pepco agrees and is currently waiting to hear the decision on its EV infrastructure proposal to the District of Columbia's Public Service Commission. The proposal lays out a detailed plan to deliver up to 35 charging stations across all eight Wards; 20 of the proposed charging stations would be the much needed "fast chargers." Pepco's proposal features partnerships with the District Department of Transportation, Uber, and Tesla ensuring that rideshare and mass transit entities won't be left out of the equation.

Bringing this positive change to District residents won't be easy, but thanks to Mayor Bowser's leadership and the Council's work to enact ambitious clean energy legislation that supports transportation electrification, the District is poised to be a leader in clean energy transportation.

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Celebrating Earth Day reminds us all to be good environmental stewards. At Pepco, we never stop looking for ways to lead our community toward a cleaner and brighter energy future.

SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Pepco is proud to make every day Earth Day with environmental leadership in energy efficiency, transportation electrification, and support for local conservation.

How will you celebrate Earth Day?

#PepcoEarthDay

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Understanding Climate Change through Numerical Shifts

29%

Researchers at Yale University and George Mason University that tracked public opinions about climate change in a 2018 nationwide survey found that climate change is threatening the health of Americans. Roughly 3 in 10, or 29 percent of survey respondents said they are "very worried" about global warming, marking the highest level since the surveys began in 2008.

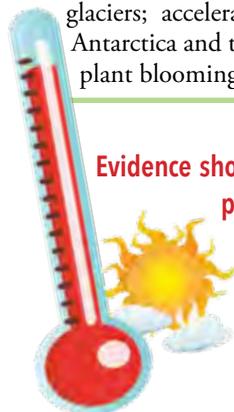
One was from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and found that humans have only until 2030 to stem catastrophic climate change. The other was the United States national climate assessment report, which found that climate change could shrink the US economy and kill thousands by the end of the century.

A World Health Organization report released in December found that meeting the commitments put forth in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement to tackle climate change could save millions of lives and hundreds of billions of dollars by the middle of the century.

Lee Ross / Special to the Infomer

What's the difference between climate change and global warming?

"Global warming" refers to the long-term warming of the planet. "Climate change" encompasses global warming but refers to the broader range of changes that are happening to our planet, including rising sea levels; shrinking mountain glaciers; accelerating ice melt in Greenland, Antarctica and the Arctic; and shifts in flower/plant blooming times.



Evidence shows warming from 1998 to the present, with the four most recent years (2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017) being the four warmest years globally since 1880.

The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) is a network of more than 90 of the world's largest cities taking action to address climate change by developing and implementing policies and programs that generate measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks.



Earth's greening – meaning the increase in areas covered by green leaves – has made the greatest gains in China and India since the mid-1990s. The effect comes mostly from ambitious tree-planting programs in China and intensive agriculture in both countries.



30%

With no benefit to itself, Earth's vast sea has gulped up around 30 percent of the carbon dioxide humans emitted into Earth's atmosphere over the last century. Critically, scientists have now confirmed that the ocean in recent decades has continued its steadfast rate of CO2 absorption, rather than letting the potent greenhouse gas further saturate the skies.

IS YOUR BUSINESS READY TO RECYCLE?



Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

ATTENTION PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY BUSINESSES

New Mandatory Recycling Requirements Begin

JULY 1, 2019

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

New County Legislation (CB-12-2018) states that all Prince George's County business owners, tenants, or operators of commercial and industrial properties, including but not limited to offices, stores, hotels, motels, gas stations, restaurants, factories, processing plants, and manufacturing enterprises, shall provide at least equally sized and equally convenient recycling containers to accompany each trash container on the interior and exterior of the property, including along storefronts. Properties should also include a collection system for the recyclables. A list of items that can be recycled shall be clearly displayed on or near the container.

To view a list of the County's acceptable recycling materials, visit bit.ly/acceptedpgc. To review a copy of the legislation, go to bit.ly/CB122018.

For more information, contact the Department of the Environment, Recycling Section, Inspection Unit at 301-883-3635.

Source Reduction Tip: Recycling one ton of plastic saves 98 million Btu's of energy

FOLLOW THE LAW TO AVOID POSSIBLE CITATION AND FINE

Prince George's County has a goal to recycle at least 60% of the waste stream by July 1, 2020.

Using the Power of Solar to Build Communities

When my two partners, President Nick Giannotti, and COO Nicole Marandino and I founded New Columbia Solar (NCS) just over three years ago, we had a vision of locals helping locals. Our mission - to make it as easy as humanly possible for D.C. residents and businesses to benefit from solar energy. We became pioneers in how solar is financed for low-income residents through a unique community-focused business model.

Today NCS helps businesses, property owners, schools, non-profits, and District residents significantly reduce energy costs and enhance sustainability through the implementation of solar power. We also have embarked on a public service campaign to educate and inform students and organizations about the impact of climate change and the use of renewable energy.

New Columbia Solar was a key stakeholder in the development and passage of The Clean Energy DC Act which will require DC to transition to 100% clean electricity by 2032. The legislation, first introduced by Ward 3 Councilwoman Mary Cheh and passed with help from Ward 5 Councilman Kenyan McDuffie, is the result of months of collaboration across environmental groups, renewable and fossil energy companies, local businesses, and others.

The Clean Energy DC Act amplifies the initiatives and policies of the last 10 years including the DC Department of Energy and Environment's Solar for All program. The expanded use of renewable energy, particularly solar, will stem the impact of climate change on our city and will have numerous benefits for our communities.

Because of the District's commitment to solar energy, the industry has already produced over 1,530 District-based solar jobs. Over \$200 million of private capital has investment into solar projects in the city since 2016 alone. According to the Solar Foundation's 2018 Solar Jobs Census, solar industry jobs are expected to grow by at least 7% this year and solar installations have increased dramatically over the last two years. More than 68 Mega-

watts of local generating capacity has been installed here in our District. As a result, local companies like NCS are growing. NCS started with three employees in 2016 and has grown to 40 employees with employees spanning all eight Wards.

Renewable energy will aid our city's ongoing struggle to maintain affordable housing by directly reducing the energy burden for our most vulnerable residents. We strengthen our communities by expanding access to renewable energy and increasing job and educational opportunities.

Recently, New Columbia Solar completed our eleventh Ward 8 solar project at Altamont Condominiums. The residents received a new roof completely paid for by New Columbia Solar as part of the solar installation. They will also benefit directly from the electricity the solar panels deliver for the next twenty years. Additionally, NCS's Ward 5 solar project at Celestial Church of Christ was installed at no cost to the church and now powers 29 homes in the community. This is a premier example of how electricity generated from local solar systems is directly benefitting District residents.

As a pending partner to the 2019 Solar for All Program operated by the DCSEU, NCS will help the DCSEU's efforts to benefit up to 6,800 income-qualified DC households in total. "Solar for All" supports the District's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) Expansion Amendment Act of 2016, which aims to reduce the energy bills of more than 100,000 low-income households by more than 50% by 2032. It's an ambitious plan calling for solar energy to directly benefit families across our community in a very real and positive way.

Perhaps most importantly, the progress our city is witnessing serves as a real-world demonstration that the policy mechanisms that have been in place for the past decade are working. Our District is becoming powered by renewable energy and this transition is taking place without increasing retail electricity rates for consumers. In fact, the District's retail electricity price has consistently remained below the

national average price with a 7% lower average price in 2017.

DC is doing urban renew-

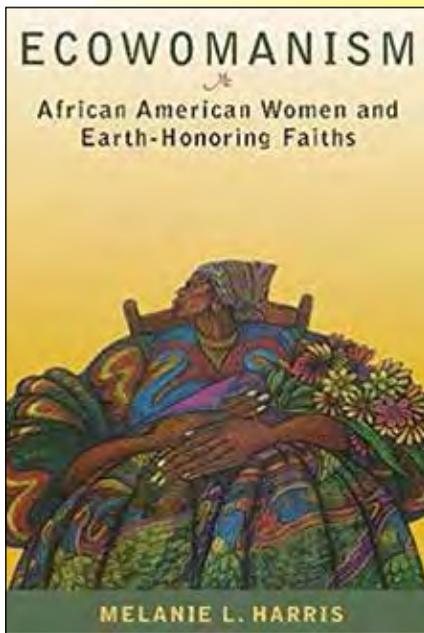
ables like no other city in the world. Through local renewable energy management and production we not only have

the potential but the obligation, to serve as a role model for other cities across the U.S. and the world. **SS**



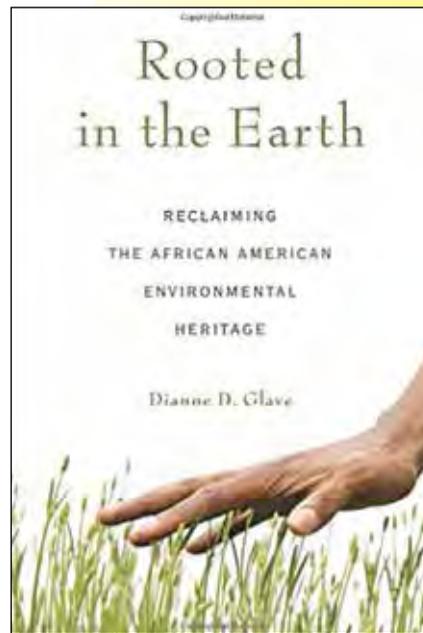
Noteworthy & Recommended Books on African American Ecological Tradition

Lee Ross / Special to the Infomer



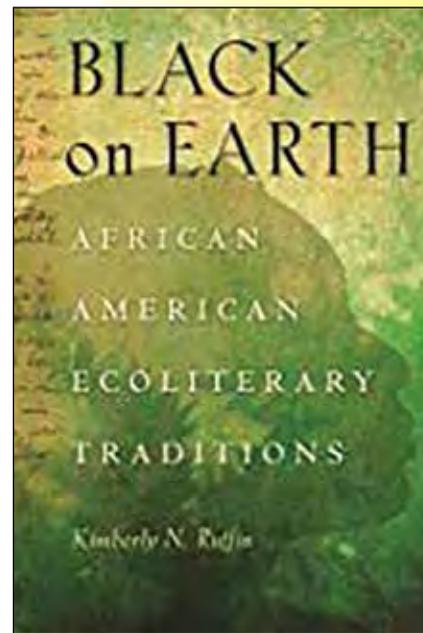
Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths. / Melanie L. Harris

Scholarship on African American history and culture has often neglected the tradition of African American women who engage in theological and religious reflection on their ethical and moral responsibility to care for the earth. Melanie Harris argues that African American women make distinctive contributions to the environmental justice movement in the ways that they theologize, theorize, practice spiritual activism, and come into religious understandings about our relationship with the earth. Incorporating elements of her family history to set the stage for her argument, Harris intersperses her academic reflections with her own personal stories and anecdotes. This unique text stands at the intersection of several academic disciplines: womanist theology, eco-theology, spirituality, and theological aesthetics.



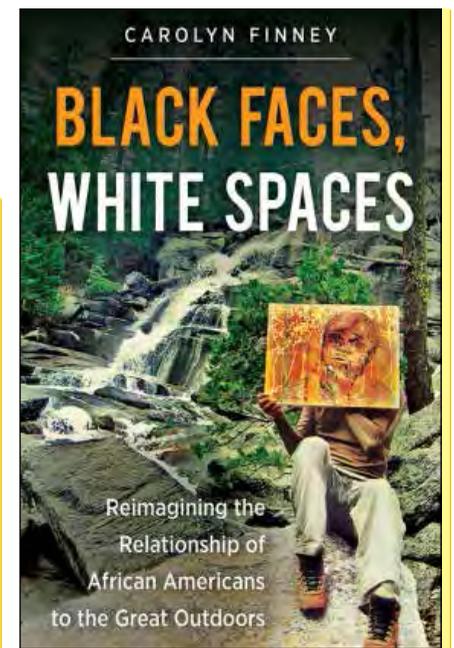
Rooted in the Earth: Reclaiming the African American Environmental Heritage. Dianne D. Glave

With a basis in environmental history, this groundbreaking study challenges the idea that a meaningful attachment to nature and the outdoors is contrary to the black experience. The discussion shows that contemporary African American culture is usually seen as an urban culture, one that arose out of the Great Migration and has contributed to international trends in fashion, music, and the arts ever since. But because of this urban focus, many African Americans are not at peace with their rich but tangled agrarian legacy. Emphasizing the tradition of black environmentalism and using storytelling techniques to dramatize the work of black naturalists, this account corrects the record and urges interested urban dwellers to get back to the land.



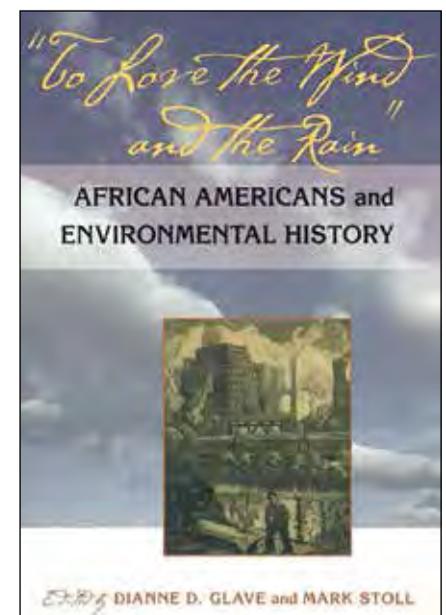
Black on Earth: African American Ecoliterary Traditions. Kimberly N. Ruffin

American environmental literature has relied heavily on the perspectives of European Americans, often ignoring other groups. In *Black on Earth*, Kimberly Ruffin expands the reach of ecocriticism by analyzing the ecological experiences, conceptions, and desires seen in African American writing. Ruffin identifies a theory of "ecological burden and beauty" in which African American authors underscore the ecological burdens of living within human hierarchies in the social order just as they explore the ecological beauty of being a part of the natural order. Blacks were ecological agents before the emergence of American nature writing, argues Ruffin, and their perspectives are critical to understanding the full scope of ecological thought. Identifying themes of work, slavery, religion, mythology, music, and citizenship, *Black on Earth* highlights the ways in which African American writers are visionary ecological artists.



Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors. Carolyn Finney

Why are African Americans so underrepresented when it comes to interest in nature, outdoor recreation, and environmentalism? In this thought-provoking study, Carolyn Finney looks beyond the discourse of the environmental justice movement to examine how the natural environment has been understood, commodified, and represented by both white and black Americans. Bridging the fields of environmental history, cultural studies, critical race studies, and geography, Finney argues that the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and racial violence have shaped cultural understandings of the "great outdoors" and determined who should and can have access to natural spaces.



To Love the Wind and the Rain: African Americans and Environmental History. Dianne D. Glave, Mark Stoll

"To Love the Wind and the Rain" is a groundbreaking and vivid analysis of the relationship between African Americans and the environment in U.S. history. It focuses on three major themes: African Americans in the rural environment, African Americans in the urban and suburban environments, and African Americans and the notion of environmental justice. Meticulously researched, the essays cover subjects including slavery, hunting, gardening, religion, the turpentine industry, outdoor recreation, women, and politics. "To Love the Wind and the Rain" will serve as an excellent foundation for future studies in African American environmental history.

As a source reduction event

20th annual

mulch madness

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

SATURDAY
APRIL 27

8 am to 1 pm

Prince George's County Organics Composting Facility
6550 S.E. Crain Highway,
Upper Marlboro, MD
(From Crain Highway, proceed on Maude Savoy Brown Road to Facility)

This mulch is primarily derived from the Christmas tree collections. For more information, please call County Click 3-1-1.

A skid loader will be available to load mulch into pickup trucks.

Learn to reduce water usage, prevent soil erosion and reduce the use of herbicides in your home gardens by applying mulch.

RESTRICTIONS:

- Prince George's County residents only
- Only non-commercial vehicles, 3/4 ton maximum weight
- No business vehicle signage will be permitted, all commercial signs should be covered or removed prior to entering the site

SOURCE REDUCTION TIPS

Use mulch to suppress weed growth and provide nutrients. Grass cycle: Use a mulching mower to finely shred your mowed grass and leave it on the lawn. Start a backyard compost pile.

Citizens and residents transporting mulch by car should bring their own containers and shovels or pitchforks.

Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive

Takeaways from the Be.Hive: Climate Change Needs Behavior Change Summit

By Stacy M. Brown
WI Senior Writer
@StacyBrownMedia

Following last month's "Be. Hive: Climate Change Needs Behavior Change" summit organized by the group, Rare, and National Geographic in Washington, the nonprofit Oceanic Society listed five important takeaways from the conference: Social norms are powerful, Momentum breeds momentum, When it comes to making decisions, identity outweighs information, People favor the status quo – and can adjust to a new one if it shifts; and Individual behaviors add up.

"Across behavioral science research, it's well understood that social norms play a critical role in shaping individual behavior; people are more likely to do things that they think or see other people are doing," Lindsay Mosher, the Oceanic Society's Blue Habits project manager wrote following the March 19 conference.

The full-day summit brought together a diverse set of speakers including renowned climate and behavioral scientists, business leaders, artists, and entertainers—even a magician.

The goal of the conference was to explore how to use human behavior insights to create solutions for climate change.

At the event, Cornell University professor Bob Frank cited the contagion or "neighbor effect," observed with installations of residential rooftop solar panels across the United States.

Studies have shown that once an individual in a neighborhood installs solar panels on their roof, it significantly increases the likelihood that other neighbors will follow suit.

To further Oceanic Society's takeaway that momentum breeds momentum, the conference highlighted research that shows that people are willing to change their behavior if they witness new behaviors that indicate a new social norm is forming, even if that means behaving in a way that is out of step with current social norms.

"For example, researchers at Stanford University found in a series of studies that people ate less meat and conserved more water when they were provided with information suggesting that those behaviors were part of a growing societal trend," Mosher said.

She also noted that presenting facts, statistics, and information – regardless of how compel-



National Geographic's Andrew Revkin, Project Drawdown's Katharine Wilkinson, and NASA's Kate Marvel have a climate conversation. (Courtesy The Medium Corp.)

ling – is largely ineffective in spurring long-term behavior change.

"What really works is tapping into the complexity of why people do what they do and understanding the inner workings of how individuals view and respond to the world around them," Mosher said.

Chris Graves, president of the Olgivy Center for Behavioral Science, shared several examples emphasizing that in order to change behaviors the problem or desired behavior must be presented in a way that's concrete, tangible, and related.

"We respond to people and situations we can relate to and identify with. If we cannot picture or imagine a scenario in our own lives, we place less value and importance on it," Graves said.

At the day-long conference, Professor Elke Weber of Princeton University highlighted the tendency to favor the status quo, but also individuals' ability and quickness to adjust to a new status quo; while Rare's President and CEO Brett Jenks closed the summit by presenting a simple, 7-step guide for individuals to combat climate change.

"His inspirational message was that if just 10 percent of Americans adopt seven behaviors, the U.S. would still meet our emissions reduction target set by the Paris agreement, even as our government withdraws from the agreement," Mosher said.

Conference organizers said that over the last 30 years, climate change has emerged as the most pressing threat to species and to life on the planet.

Human behavior lies at the center of this issue, both as the problem and the solution. At the summit, attendees were afforded an opportunity to learn about the latest academic insights from behavior science, receive inspiration from the world's leading environmentalists, artists, storytellers and explorers, and they were able to identify some of the greatest opportunities for shifting human behavior to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"[The conference was] really hopeful and motivating. Climate change is touching every single one of us so it can't just be scientists solving this problem. We have to bring in people who know how people work," said Dr. Kate Marvel, a climate scientist with Columbia University and NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

"What have we learned? We learned that while the challenges are great, solutions are everywhere," said Lynn Scarlett, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs for the Nature Conservancy. **SS**

Park Service, Preservationists Launch Work to 'Save The Tidal Basin'

Sophia Sparks
Special to the Informer

As a teenager I visited the nation's capital and was amazed at the expanse of greenways – from the Monument grounds and National Mall, to areas around the Tidal Basin and Hains Point. In fact, as a burgeoning scientist, I understood the importance of ecologically-sound natural spaces in the middle of sidewalks, subways, and urban living. The District of Columbia got it right. Unfortunately, with the unnatural rise in water levels and not-so-timely preservation efforts, areas of that great scenery are taking a beating.

In recent years, East Potomac Park and Hains Point have seen

many of its walkways, and benches, its golf course, and bicycle trails, covered with water and debris from the Potomac and erosion plaguing what was once a fisherman's paradise and a Lover's Lane for D.C. couples. According to the National Park Service, areas around the Jefferson Memorial and Tidal Basin, also face rapid erosion of the seawall surrounding the area.

"When they constructed this seawall, the construction methods that they did back then are probably not the same as what we would do today," said Sean Kennealy, of the National Park Service.

Built in the 1800s, the seawall that surrounds the Tidal Basin has had steady foot traffic – 1.5 million visitors alone for the cherry blossom festivities each year – and areas of

construction, including the memorial for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The groundswell and uneven pavement, vanishing ground, and submerged areas, have many visitors walking uneasy amid the sightseeing.

"You will actually see the roots are not only compromised but actually exposed," said Jason Clement, marketing director for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "This is not just D.C.'s calling card to the nation; it's America's calling card to the world. It is sinking, and it is flooding, and there is over \$500 million in deferred maintenance that needs to be invested in this park so that it can be saved for future generations."

The United States Army Corps of Engineers projects, in the next 50 years, locations like Roosevelt



Island, Hains Point and Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling could be inundated by water brought on by tidal flooding.

"There is significant uncertainty as to possible futures, however a community can assess its overall risk with respect to climate change and plan for and later take actions

to prepare for the possibilities," reads a 2015 report on climate change by the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment.

The Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are turning to the public for help – announcing a \$750,000 ideas lab, for the Tidal Basin. **SS**



Building a Resilient Model for Urban Agriculture

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Dean of CAUSES and
Land-grant Programs
College of Agriculture, Urban
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Like most cities, Washington D.C., is divided. Administratively, the city is organized into eight wards. Ward 8 has the lowest median household income level, at \$32,000 per year; an unemployment rate of close to 20 percent; and 90 percent of its residents are African American. Ward 3 has a median household income of \$110,000 per year; an unemployment rate of less than 4 percent; and 5 percent of its residents are African American (United States Bureau of the Census, 2014).

Similar disparities are evident in food security and health parameters. The United States Department of Agriculture defines food security as "... access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life." Wards 5, 7, and 8, are the wards with the lowest income levels, and also are home to 34 percent of the population. Yet less than 10 percent of the city's grocery stores are located in those wards. The result is food insecurity for a significant number of D.C. households: 13 percent have reported being food insecure; 19 percent have experienced food hardship; and 37 percent of households with children have been unable to get enough food (D.C. Department of Health,



2013). Among the damaging effects of food insecurity on children are impaired cognitive development, reduced school readiness, lower educational attainments, and slower physical, mental, and social development (Cook et al., 2006; Nord, Coleman-Jensen, Andrews, & Carlson, 2010).

Another concern of food insecurity stems from the declining nutrient content of some of our food. One contributing factor is the increased time between harvest and consumption. To accommodate the time spent in transport, produce is harvested before it ripens. Populations in urban areas on the east coast of the United States are especially vulnerable, since California is the top producer of fruits and vegetables. That calls for an increase in the production of nutrient-dense produce closer to where the majority of consumers

live, namely in metropolitan areas on the east coast of the United States.

In 2013, the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES), of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), set out to implement its Urban Food Hubs model. The model expands the USDA's definition of a food hub beyond its core concept of creating market prowess for small food producers by forming networks and value-added operations.

CAUSES, in collaboration with the Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), the DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE), and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), has designed and built four of its award-winning urban food hubs in Wards 3, 5, 7, and 8. A UDC Urban Food Hub



consists of four integrated components – food production, food preparation, food distribution, and closing the loop through waste and water management. Each of the four components offers opportunities for business development, training, and improved resilience. Business development is increased through high-intensity food production on green roofs, raised bed gardens, and hydroponic and aquaponic facilities; food preparation that adds value to locally grown food and improves public health; innovative food distribution models that improve access to high-quality affordable food through farmers markets, food trucks, and community-supported agriculture (CSA); and waste and water management through composting, reduced storm water runoff, and green infrastructure improvements.

Local entrepreneurs receive training and technical support to implement their business plans. These can range from a health-focused business that maximizes nutrient yield and offers health assessment and nutrition counseling; to growing microgreens and herbs for high-end restaurants; to ethnic crop production for local niche restaurants and grocery stores; to green roofs that serve as space for food production and events; and native plant seedlings grown for urban parks and rain gardens.

The metropolitan area of Washington, D.C., is growing. The Urban Food Hubs model seeks to form a decentralized network of local food centers that improve food security, nutritional health, job creation, and resilience, especially in urban neighborhoods that have deficits on all counts. The Urban Food Hubs must therefore be competitive in an environment of intense land-use pressure. Some tangible benefits of UDC's urban food hubs include reduced food-related illnesses and improved storm water management. Some less tangible benefits include

improved neighborhood aesthetics, stronger civic engagement, and neighborhood safety. By making an up-front investment in the Urban Food Hubs, UDC is building the capacity for improved food access, health, and economic development in underserved neighborhoods in the nation's capital.

Beyond applicability for Washington, D.C., the Urban Food Hubs can serve as models to improve the quality of life and economic opportunity of urban communities across the nation. The Urban Food Hubs thus have a larger agenda: to create a network of sustainable and resilient local food systems that advance economic, social/cultural, and environmental/physical benefits. The long-term sustainable development success of metropolitan communities depends on developing such resilient local economies. As urbanization continues globally, food and water security cannot be addressed without solutions that include urban communities and reimagine them as hubs for a comprehensive, sustainable food system close to where the majority of consumers live: in metropolitan communities.

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Explore CAUSES

ACADEMICS

- **Architecture and Community Planning** (BS & M'Arch)
- **Urban Sustainability** (BA & Professional Science Master's)
- **Urban Agriculture** (Professional Science Master's)
- **Water Resources Management** (Professional Science Master's)
- **Urban Leadership & Entrepreneurship** (PhD)
- **Nutrition and Dietetics** (BS & MS)
- **Health Education** (BS)
- **Nursing** (RN to BSN)

LAND-GRANT CENTERS

- **Center for Urban Agriculture & Gardening Education**
- **Center for Sustainable Development & Resilience**
- **Center for Architectural Innovation & Building Science**
- **Center for Nutrition Diet & Health**
- **Center for 4-H & Youth Development**

As the only public institution of higher education in the nation's capital, the University of the District of Columbia provides a wide range of services to District residents. The services provided by our land-grant centers help strengthen D.C.'s resiliency and improve conditions among all segments of our community.

@UDC_CAUSES
 @UofDC.CAUSES

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
 COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, URBAN SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

The Future of Urban Agriculture is Now.



As the nation's only exclusively urban land grant institution and the only public university in the nation's capital, UDC is providing research and training to answer the critical questions associated with urban growth in the new millennium. Our Professional Science Master's programs allow students to tackle the challenges of building sustainable and resilient urban communities through urban agriculture, with a strong focus on food security, food and water safety, resource management and energy efficiency.

We are building a new generation of leaders for urban America.

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Learn more about our academic and land-grant opportunities at www.udc.edu/causes.

With its Expanded Mission, OPC Continues Strong Support of District Utility Consumers



By Sandra Mattavous-Frye
People's Counsel for the District of Columbia

The Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) is pleased to contribute to the Washington Informer's 2019 Sustainability and Energy Supplement in honor of Earth Day. As People's Counsel, I am charged with educating consumers in the District of Columbia about their utility rights, protecting those rights, and advocating to ensure their utility services are safe, reliable, and sustainable and that the rates charged for such service are just, reasonable, and affordable. In the past year, the DC Council passed two important pieces of legislation expanding the scope of OPC's mission: the DC Water Consumer Protection Amendment Act of 2018 and the CleanEnergy DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018. These bills highlight the important role that sustainability and clean energy play with respect to the District's environmental goals. OPC welcomes this opportunity to share with readers information about its evolving role in the District's utility consumer advocacy landscape and is excited to continue to represent ratepayers with the new challenges ahead.

Water Consumer Protection Act: Prior to enactment of the new law on April 11, OPC only had authority to advocate on behalf of District consumers in matters pertaining to natural gas,

electricity, and telecommunications services. If a consumer had a concern or complaint about their service from DC Water, the District's sole retail water supplier, OPC did not have the authority to assist them. Because DC Water is a self-regulated entity, when water consumers had issues such as high water bills, increasing water rates, infrastructure repairs, or water-related safety issues, they could only turn to DC Water, the utility providing the service, for a remedy.

With the passage of the Water Consumer Protection Act, that dynamic has changed. OPC's authority has been expanded to bring DC Water ratepayers under OPC's advocacy and education umbrella. While DC Water will remain self-regulated and possess decision-making authority in relation to its rates, OPC will now have the authority to represent DC Water customers with complaints about service, rates and billing. OPC also now has the authority to comment on DC Water rate proposals. Further, OPC will now educate water consumers about their legal rights with respect to services provided by DC Water. Water is a finite resource fundamental to human well-being and an indispensable component of sustainable development in the District. OPC is committed to ensuring that "Water is Life" to all residents.

CleanEnergy Act: The District of Columbia is a trailblazer on setting aggressive goals for climate change and energy related sustainability issues. OPC has historically championed the District's environmental and sustainability policies. We have been incorporating these issues into our case-related policies, our outreach and advocacy efforts for many years. With the enactment of the CleanEnergy Act on March 22, the DC Council has pushed the bar even higher. Among other things, the Act accelerates and increases the District's electric service renewable energy portfolio standard so that 100% of the District's energy will be provided by renewable resources like solar and wind by 2032 and carbon free by 2050. It also increases the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund fee that gas and electric utility ratepayers pay on

their monthly bills.

This law also requires OPC to consider climate change in addition to continuing to consider safety, the economy, the conservation of natural resources, and the preservation of environmental quality in its work. OPC is embracing the expansion of its mission. For example, both Pepco and Washington Gas are presently seeking funding from

its customers for major infrastructure investment projects in the District. OPC has advocated that such projects should only be approved if, and to the extent that, they are needed, sustainable, complementary to the District's environmental policies, and use ratepayer funds efficiently. As the District's energy landscape continues to evolve, OPC remains committed to its core

principles that any new policies and initiatives must support consumers' rights to safe, affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy services; and promote a clean and healthy environment.

For more information about OPC's sustainability and clean energy initiatives, please visit opc-dc.gov and follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. **SS**

Who We Are

The Office of the People's Counsel is an independent agency of the District of Columbia government. By law, it is the advocate for consumers of natural gas, electric, telephone and water services in the District. District of Columbia law designates the Office as a party to all utility-related proceedings before the Public Service Commission. The Office also represents the interests of District ratepayers before federal regulatory agencies. The Office is authorized to investigate the operation and valuation of utility companies independent of any pending proceeding.

The Office's mandate is to advocate the provision of quality utility service and equitable treatment at rates that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory to assist individual consumers in disputes with utility companies about billing or services; and to provide technical assistance and consumer education to lay advocates and community groups.

In addition, in defining its positions while advocating on matters pertaining to the operation of public utility or energy companies, the Office shall consider the public safety, the economy of the District of Columbia, the conservation of natural resources, and the preservation of environmental quality.



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Increasing Diversity in the Solar Market

By Groundswell

Groundswell recently partnered with NYMBUS, a minority-owned management consulting firm, to assess minority and woman-owned business participation in the solar sector in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The results underscore both the growing opportunities in solar development and the urgent need for the industry to confront striking disparities in who benefits from them. The research is intended to shed light on participation trends within industries in order to identify where positive, inclusive change can be made.

We recently sat down with the president and CEO of NYMBUS, Terrell Richmond, to learn more about his observations and reflections on the result findings.

ON THE STATE OF THE SOLAR MARKETPLACE.

The solar marketplace has experienced exponential growth on a global, national, and local scale, yet regardless of the trend we still found a gross lack of representation at every level of the solar supply chain. With such a vast space to create employment opportunities and wealth, we aspired to research the current solar economy with the intent of providing a visual depiction of its current status and the availability for future diversity. Baltimore and D.C. have unique opportunities to create shared assets, establish innovation centers and foster mentor relationships that ultimately create paths to prosperity for all members of every community.

ON LEAVING MINORITY AND WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES BEHIND.

The findings in our research were pretty stark. Only 3 out of 1678 certified small businesses in D.C. were registered as minority or woman-owned full-service solar firms. That means women and minority solar firms make up less than one percent of certified small businesses.

In other words, they're not participating significantly within the solar value chain, and where they are participating, it's at the lower end as it relates to procurement and construction, as opposed to higher paying careers in development and finance. For example, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics wages in the solar segment for finance are, at

minimum, three times higher than wages in solar engineering and procurement.

So wage disparity is one thing. The other consideration is that often the developer has the financial proficiency and the backing to not only build the project, but also own it. Developers that are also owners enjoy both the financial benefits from building the project and the long-term wealth generation that comes from owning the asset. The statistics reflect that very few minorities and women are involved at this level of the solar value chain in order to reap the more lucrative benefits of solar development.

ON WHY EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOLAR ECONOMY MATTERS.

Minority inclusion within solar is a problem throughout the country, and it's largely because of the nascency of solar and because of the complexity of the value chain.

The district just gave preliminary approval to a climate bill, requiring that 100 percent of the energy that is consumed has to come from a renewable source by 2032, so we know there's obviously an environmental impact. But there's also an economic impact, and not just from an economic development perspective but from a consumption perspective. The cost of delivering solar

is less than conventional energy. A lack of participation in solar development prohibits minorities from creating economic value within their own communities and owning an asset that can generate long-term wealth.

It's sort of like the advent of information technology or the combustible engine. Renewable energy is transformative and is going to be in high demand, and legislative changes are further stimulating demand.

To not have equal access at the outset can mean you're shut out forever.

ON THE WAY FORWARD.

To address our findings, we made several strategic recommendations. Accessing the data relevant to solar or small business participation is very difficult. There's a need to create a more centralized data source to reflect as well as to understand the trends in not just the solar economy of small minority communities but the business trends of solar in general.

Other recommendations included: expanding awareness of the solar business model; forming a government and industry partner coalition to increase the participation of minority and woman-owned contractors and suppliers; increasing entrepreneurial capacity through



Terrell Richmond CEO of NYMBUS

mentorship; and exploring the launch of innovation centers to foster entrepreneurship and connect emerging minority and woman-owned businesses to business development opportunities associated with utility and university supply chains.

This is a complex space, and there's this interdependence between local legislation and policy as well as access to capital and financing to capitalize on solar opportuni-

ties. It's a very nascent market, and it is complex, with legislative and financial nuance. There are numerous companies that have the capacity, but don't have the awareness. By engaging with local governments, community leaders and industry professionals, we can collectively take necessary action to make sure growth in the solar industry demonstrates increased equity and inclusion.

SS

COMMUNITY SOLAR KICK OFF!

We are excited to announce the kick off of Dupont Park Seventh-day Adventist Church's landmark community solar project.

Construction funding for the project was provided through DC's Solar for All program. As a result, **100% of the electricity** produced by the project will be delivered to low-income households in the District of Columbia at no cost for 20 years.

Learn more about community solar and how it is empowering communities, creating jobs and improving the lives of neighbors at: www.groundswell.org/dupont-park.

Groundswell

SOLAR FOR ALL
A PROGRAM OF DC'S DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

WE ARE WASHINGTON DC GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

DRIVING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

Pepco is proud to support clean and sustainable electric transportation across all Wards of the District of Columbia.

How will you celebrate Earth Day?

#PepcoEarthDay

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SS-20