Green Leadership Trust Statement on the Recent Murders of Black and Brown People and the Incident in Central Park

We are outraged and devastated by the recent events surrounding the deaths of black and brown people at the hands of police officers and white domestic terrorists. The history of using the legal system as an instrument of oppression is well known; what happened to our brother and fellow environmentalist, Chris Cooper, in Central Park is only the latest example. We have observed a trend of white people calling the police on innocent people of color.

Chris Cooper serves on the board of New York City Audubon, an environmental nonprofit that “prides itself on connecting people to nature and conservation through engaging programming that brings together individuals united by a passion for wildlife and the outdoors.” Green Leadership Trust is comprised of people of color serving on the boards of U.S. environmental nonprofits. We are also dedicated to ensuring that all people can experience and benefit from a safe and healthy environment.

We work every day to address the devastating impacts that racism has on our society and our environment. For this reason, we cannot be silent while our brothers and sisters are hurt, harassed or killed as a part of the daily manifestations of racism. We forcefully reject these heinous acts of violence and intimidation directed at people of color in this society. These acts are egregious whenever they occur, but it is especially horrifying to witness increased racism and hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Public servants act as arms of the State. Whether it be a racialized call to 911 against Chris Cooper, or the string of recent killings—George Floyd in Minnesota, Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky—we see this pattern of systemic racism being deployed that we recognize and condemn.

Our hearts go out to members of our community who have lost loved ones through to these appalling acts of violence. We grieve with their families during this time of unimaginable loss. We call on all our fellow board members- who, like us, are fiduciaries of some of the world’s most important environments and organizations - to commit and recommit to opposing these actions, to actively challenge the specter of white supremacy, and to pursue justice as a central pillar of our work to protect the environment.
We know that until we eliminate the chokehold that the current system has over the environment of black, brown and people of color, our shared Earth will continue to face mortal threats, and none of us will be truly free. All of us in the U.S. carry the historical traumas of one race being systematically and brutally uplifted over others for the past 400+ years. The privileges many of us hold now are inextricably linked with this history. Many existing systems of power continue distributing privilege and access inequitably, without recognizing the historical legacies on which they are built. Moreover, our very communities of color continue to be the most heavily impacted, for example, by climate change and pollution caused by fossil fuel extraction. Yet, our very same communities have fostered indigenous wisdoms regarding the stewardship of our natural resources. If we can work together from a shared and unshackle dedication to these issues, we have a chance to be stronger and bolder, to truly address the myriad of challenges we collectively face.

The members of Green Leadership Trust stand in solidarity with those fighting on every front to build a more just and sustainable world. We will champion the following priorities as we work to change the environmental movement into true allyship with those who are battling for racial justice: engagement, strategic and equitable support, reciprocal learning, and connection. We envision an environmental movement that embeds an ethic of justice across all the sectors and institutions we touch upon. We are steadfast and resolute and work to win victories at all levels of policy and society. Together we will win this war against racism and hate...and we will work alongside anyone that envisions a more beloved community for us all.

"Justice will not be served until those that are unaffected are as outraged as those who are." ~ Benjamin Franklin

In Solidarity,

1. Mustafa Ali, Board Member, OneMillionofUs; Board Member, Union of Concerned Scientist; Board Member, National Children’s Campaign
2. Karim Al-Khafaji, Board Assistant Secretary, National Audubon Society
3. Professor Shalanda H. Baker, Board Member, Clean Energy Group; Chair of the Board, The Solutions Project
4. August Ball, Board Member, Milwaukee Environmental Consortium
5. William Barber III, Board Member, Repairers of the Breach
6. Joy Blackwood, Board Member, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Board Secretary & DEIJ Committee Chair, Maryland League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
7. Allison Chin
8. Chanté Coleman, Board Member, Chesapeake Commons
9. Ramon Cruz, Board President, Sierra Club
10. Mark Conway
11. Tony DeFalco
12. Dr. Natasha DeJarnett, Vice-Chair, Citizens’ Climate Education and Board Member, Physicians for Social Responsibility
13. Dianne Dillon-Ridgely, Board Member, Center for International Environmental Law
14. Dr. M.K. Dorsey Treasurer, Board Member Sunrise Movement
15. N. Bruce Duthu, Board Member, Earthjustice
16. John Echowhawk, Board Member, Natural Resources Defense Council
17. Kirsten Feldman, Board Member, Environmental Defense Fund
18. Arturo Garcia-Costas, Vice-Chair and Board Member, Friends of the Earth
19. Michel Gelobter, Board Member, CERES & New Energy Nexus
20. Carmen G. Gonzalez, Board Member, Earthjustice
21. R. Flip Hagood, Board Member, The Wilderness Society
22. David Hahn-Baker, Board Member, Clean Water Fund
23. Adrienne L. Hollis, Vice-Chair, Endangered Species Coalition; Board Member, Healthy Gulf
24. Stacey Isaac Berahzer
25. Tykee James, Board Member, Audubon Society of the District of Columbia; Board Member, Wyncote Audubon Society; Board Member, Audubon Maryland-DC
26. Taylor Jang, Board Member, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council
27. Andres Jimenez, Board Member, Ecotropics
28. Larissa Johnson, Board Member, Maryland League of Conservation Voters Education Fund
29. David Lamfrom, Board Vice President, Training Resources for the Environmental Community; Board Member, Center for Diversity and the Environment
30. Mark Magaña, Board Member, League of Conservation Voters; Board Member Children’s Environmental Health Network; Board Member, Green 2.0
31. Juan D. Martinez (Tzapotecah Be’ena’a), Board Member, The Wilderness Society
32. Anuja Mendiratta, Board Member Emeritus, Women’s Voices for the Earth
33. Vernice Miller-Travis, Vice-Chair, Clean Water Action
34. Ayako Nagano, Board Member, Transition Berkeley; Board Member, Clean Water Fund
35. Hughey Newsome, Board Member, Audubon Naturalist Society
36. Francisco Ollervides, Executive Director, Green Leadership Trust
37. Stevie Parson, Board Member, National Wildlife Federation
38. Thu Pham
39. Adrianna Quintero
40. Pallavi Phartiyal, Board Member, American Rivers
41. Estelle Raboni, Board President, Population Connection
42. Ruth Santiago, Board Member, Earthjustice
43. Melanie Santiago-Mosier, Board Member, Climate Access Fund
44. Patricia Salas Pineda, Board Member, EarthJustice
45. Kent Salazar, Board Member, National Wildlife Federation
46. Patrice L. Simms, Board Member, Environmental Integrity Project (former Board Member, Earthjustice)
47. Siva Sundaresan, Board Member, National Wildlife Federation
48. Tamara Toles O’Laughlin, Chairwoman of the Board, Women’s Voices for the Earth
49. Jumana Vasi, Board Member, Americana Foundation; Board Member, River Network
50. Wynnie-Fred Victor Hinds, Chair of Board, Stepping Stones Resources
51. Irene Vilar, Board Member, Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office
52. Leslie K. Williams, Board Member, Earthjustice
53. Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., Board Member, League of Conservation Voters; Board Member, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, President and Founder, Hip Hop Caucus

*The names of organizations are listed for identification purposes*