

From: Cash, Cassius <Cassius_Cash@nps.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 29, 2020 10:07 AM
To: NPS GRSM All Employees
Subject: Letter of Solidarity and My Reflections

Good morning colleagues--

I want to share an open letter with you that was authored by the National Park Conservation Association (NPCA), which included over 50 signatories from national and local organizations. This letter comes in support of us, regarding what many have viewed as a racist vandalizing act with the recent repugnant display of a killed black bear accompanied with a sign stating in essence that "black lives don't matter." I will talk a bit more in detail about the act itself, but, for now what speaks the loudest is the overwhelming support that we have within our communities. I know that this is not by luck or chance, folks. It is because of you! The work you put in to manage this park and the relationships each of you have developed over the years is indicative of this unprecedented and unflinching support being demonstrated.

I shared with the Southeast Regional director for NPCA that when I initially received the memo from him [on Friday evening](#), I needed time to process it because I was moved beyond emotion. I couldn't quite organize the words to articulate my appreciation of their (and the communities) support for all of us here at GRSM. So, please, take a quick minute to read the memo.

Now, as to the act itself: I took some time to reflect on this, because I wanted to be measured in my thinking before I shared my initial thoughts with you. And what helped me in shaping my thoughts are actually some of yours that I have heard indirectly or those expressed by the public. I have learned that there are two camps of thinking on this horrible act: 1) This wasn't a racist act per se, but likely done by some racist thinking (or believing) people who wanted to demonstrate an act of defiance to us in how bears are managed here in the park or as an expression of their believed rights to harvest bears at their discretion; and they happened to have used "a play on words" with the BLM signage; and, 2) The killing of the bear and the sign was clearly an explicit act of racism.

I want to say to all of you that in this scenario, there doesn't have to be an "either or." This can be both! Regardless of what you believe from these two positions--both (the outcome of a racist act and having the mindset of being a racist) are both harmful to all; both are offensive to all; and, both do not stand for what the NPS stands for. And I will personally tell you as an African-American man, I was saddened and angered by this despicable act. But, yet, I remained unmoved from my faith in believing that there are more good people out there wanting to do the right thing than those, like this individual(s), who may think racist beliefs or actions will overshadow good.

I will leave you with the closing statement that I shared with NPCA, because I've worked with all of you for almost six years now and I truly believe this to the core of my soul. I stated, "**This**

recent act will not deter us and I assure you that we will remain unshaken in our purpose in carrying out the mission of the NPS."

Thanks for what you do folks!

Cassius M. Cash
Superintendent,
Great Smoky Mtns. National Park
[107 Park Headquarters Rd.](#)
[Gatlinburg, TN. 37738](#)
[865-436-1200](#) (office)