

## **In Historic Turn, Sierra Club Gets Arrested For the Climate**

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What happens when people from the nation's largest and oldest environmental organization — the kind that sends cute nature calendars to its well-meaning supporters every year — get arrested in front of the White House? Don't worry; it wasn't for anything lewd, like a drunk and disorderly (although ecological collapse should be enough to send anyone on a bender). They were engaging in civil disobedience to protest the fossil fuel industry, and they had more than a century to get ready for it.

After the Sierra Club announced last month plans to commit civil disobedience for the first time in its 120-year history, Executive Director Michael Brune and Board of Directors President Allison Chin were arrested this morning at the White House in an attempt to pressure the president, the day after his State of the Union speech, to obstruct the construction of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. They did so with a group of nearly 50 others, including big names from other environmental groups — such as Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., of Natural Resources Defense Council, Phil Radford of Greenpeace and Erich Pica of Friends of the Earth. They were joined by landowners and other representatives of pipeline-affected communities, as well as climate protest mainstays like NASA scientist James Hansen, Reverend Lennox Yearwood of the Hip Hop Caucus, actress Daryl Hannah and, of course, Bill McKibben, whose 350.org has long pushed for this moment.

... Today's action marks a new unity between the "Big Green" environmental organizations and more grassroots efforts like McKibben's 350.org — in action, not just in word. For years, many of the Big Greens have relied on their large but disengaged member-base — whose role is mainly to fund experts, lawyers and lobbyists. Yet, as a 2012 report by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy noted, "we have not experienced significant policy changes [on environmental issues] at the federal level in the United States since the 1980s." The author of the study attributes this to a lack of support for grassroots infrastructure.

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