

October 18, 2013
Community Impact Statement for Judge Stuart G. Nash

Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC 2B)

Case# 2013 CF2 011941
Gregory Teal
Sentencing Date: October 28, 2013
Honorable Stuart G. Nash

To Judge Nash:

Background

The Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC 2B) represents approximately 20,000 residents of the District of Columbia.

On October 9, 2013, ANC 2B voted 8-0-1 to authorize us, its public safety liaisons, to submit to you a statement representing our community regarding the sentencing of Gregory Teal (case# 2013 CF2 011941) who has plead guilty to one count of second degree theft (felony) for theft-from-auto, and was also charged with another similar charge (for a crime committed just one week later, both in July of this year), which was dismissed as part of the plea.

Immediately afterward, we notified our community via neighborhood list-servs asking for their input and including the recent Septmber 27 article in Washington City Paper that began, *"If you ever have seen broken car glass in your hoods, Mr. **Gregory Teal** is more than likely the person that committed the crime."* That's what MPD's Second District Commander **Michael Reese** wrote in an email to Dupont Circle residents this July. Teal had just been arrested for the 43rd time for "theft from auto."

We have received an enormous community response in just one week's time, with dozens of residents writing us to say that they had been victims of such crimes or live frightened on streets plagued with such crimes.

We have excerpted just a few of them for you. Not all of them made a sentencing recommendation. Those who do, ask for a "long" or "tough" sentence in order to put a stop to Teal's unyielding sprees.

Theft-from-auto (aka "smash-and-grab") is the most common crime in our neighborhoods and our residents are outraged that Teal has been arrested over 40 times and keeps getting back on the streets to continue stealing from them and damaging their property.

Community Impacts

These crimes, as you can see from residents' comments below, while not physically harmful, leave them feeling violated, insecure, and unsafe in their cars,

homes, and neighborhoods – and have cost them hundreds of dollars in repairs, and thousands of dollars in new parking expenses to protect themselves.

- One victim said *“I do hold my breath when I walk outside every morning - I expect to have my window smashed in... it feels that the security of our neighborhood has been compromised,”* adding that the three smash-and-grabs that she has suffered have cost her over \$1500 in total. She said, *“I hope that many people speak up about the break-ins and we can remove this man from the streets.”*
- Another victim, a student, said that although she had insurance, *“there was no compensation available for the feelings of violation and unease that I felt from knowing that someone had violated my property and rifled through my belongings,”* adding that, *“frequent car break-ins, although not violent crimes, have a detrimental effect on our neighborhood’s value and general well-being.”*
- Another victim said his street, Caroline Street, NW has been repeatedly targeted. He said, *“Our morning walks to work should not have to include a daily check to see if there are any new smash and grabs overnight... I now understand why there have not been any recent reports and that the weeks without new smash and grab reports were likely the periods of time Gregory Teal spent in jail following one of his more than 40 arrests. Your honor, it is time to put an end to this and you can do that by a long sentence for this repeat offender.”*

Many other residents without cars have told us that while they have been directly affected, they often see broken windows and broken glass and are extremely disturbing that innocent neighbors are being victimized. It makes them wonder which passersby they should fear and whether they will try even more harmful/violent crimes next and whether the next time, the victim will be them.

We have a relatively safe neighborhood and we want to keep it that way. The “broken windows theory” (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) states that repeatedly viewing broken windows in a neighborhood can lead to much bigger problems. Whatever you may think of that theory, we are asking you to help keep our community from becoming less safe. You have a chronic window-breaker in front of you. Please stop him. Please put him away.

Our Sentencing Recommendation

Teal’s prior shorter jail sentences have not seemed to deter him in the least bit. In fact, he has shown the callousness to repeat his crimes almost immediately after being released.

Therefore we seriously doubt even a one year sentence would deter him. Not only is a multiple-years sentence necessary to deter him from future crimes and to deter others from following in his shoes, but getting him off of our streets is a real priority.

Our community has suffered long enough and will not tolerate him preying our streets anymore. Our police force has been frustrated by dozens of arrests that have not stopped him from committing his crimes (which are not easy crimes to investigate since there are rarely witnesses or much evidence).

Based on our community's input, we hereby ask you, on behalf of our community, to sentence Gregory Teal to several years in jail. Please sentence him to **at least** two or three years to give our residents some minimal relief (and justice) and to show other criminals that such callous recidivism will not be tolerated in the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

Kishan Putta and Noah Smith
Commissioners, Public Safety Liaisons
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission

Attachments Below:

- 1) Excerpts from a few of the comments we received from residents
- 2) September 27 article in Washington City Paper, "Dupont Residents Rally Around Serial Car Bandit"

Excerpts of some community comments:

J.M.

1900 block of 19th St., NW

We live on the 1900 block of 19th st and have off street parking in the alley way behind our house. Our cars have repeatedly been broken into or ransacked (if we forgot to lock them), sometimes multiple times in a month and often in the middle of the day. This has given us a great deal of unease being in our own alleyway and has caused a great deal of inconvenience and some \$\$ (to have windows repaired etc). **It would be a great relief to know that the person behind these crimes was behind bars.**

M.R.

1900 block of S Street NW

My car has been broken into three times in the past few years - twice, something was stolen (of little to no value), the third time, my window was simply smashed - nothing taken.

It costs roughly 300 dollars to replace a window (which is not covered by insurance, since they don't cover glass breaks under \$500). Between the time it cost me to take time off of work, clean up the glass, and have my windows replaced, his actions have cost over \$1,500 to me personally. Not to mention, it

feels that the security of our neighborhood has been compromised. We live in a wonderful, safe neighborhood...but Gregory Teal has stolen that from us as well.

I do hold my breath when I walk outside every morning - I expect to have my window smashed in. I try to park in well lit areas (though that certainly hasn't stopped him before).

I'm very appreciative of the initiative you're taking to have the man responsible charged appropriately.

Please feel free to share my story. **I hope that many people speak up about the breakins and we can remove this man from the streets.**

DG

1500 block of Caroline St., NW

There have been 11 smash and grabs in the last year on Caroline and adjacent 1900 block of 15th. THAT I AM AWARE OF - that is from having someone report them on our list, or (most often) from my seeing the glass on the street. One night last year there were three. Since I don't look for evidence every day, and have been out of town for several of those weeks, the true number is definitely higher.

G.D.

1500 block of Caroline St., NW

I was on the receiving end of a smash and grab in my own backyard at (1500 block of) Caroline Street NW, and I am smart enough not to keep stuff in my car! Now that really annoyed me.

Our morning walks to work should not have to include a daily check to see if there are any new smash and grabs overnight. Caroline Street is a quaint and surprisingly quiet one block street immediately south of the bustling U Street corridor near 16th and U Streets NW. This guy was relentless. I personally witnessed two neighbors dealing with the aftermath of smash and grabs while they were in the process of moving into their residences!

It is not a particularly welcoming message to have to tell new neighbors moving in, or friends visiting, that they should strip their cars clean of contents or risk a smash and grab. More important, they should not have to do this!! The Nation's Capital should not have to erect a warning sign at the borders, just below the "Welcome" sign that says, *do not leave anything in your cars or our smash and grab experts will empty your car.* How welcoming is that?

I now understand why there have not been any recent reports and that the weeks without new smash and grab reports were likely the periods of time Gregory Teal spent in jail following one of his more than 40 arrests. **Your honor, it is time to**

put an end to this and you can do that by a long sentence for this repeat offender.

D.J.
1700 block of 16th Street, NW

I saw your message last night and would like my statement to be submitted in support of the ANC's efforts to get a tougher sentence for Gregory Teal – I totally agree that the frequent car break-ins, although not violent crimes, have a detrimental effect on our neighborhood's value and general well-being.

My car was broken into twice while I was in law school, and although insurance compensated me for the value of the stolen items (including even legal texts!), there was no compensation available for the feelings of violation and unease that **I felt from knowing that someone had violated my property and rifled through my belongings for anything of possible value. I now spend over \$200 a month to rent a parking spot in our gated lot, and that money is spent mostly so that I won't feel that sense of outrage and violation again – and I know that if I parked on the street, it would undoubtedly occur again and again.**

M.B.
2000 block of N Street, NW

Thanks for posting this on the listserv. Probably 3 years ago while I was living at 20th and N St, someone smashed my car's front window and snatched my gym bag from the backseat. The car was parked at 20th and N St across the street from Bread & Brew. I filed a report with the police, but they couldn't do anything about it. While the lost bag, clothes and ipod were probably worth about \$100, the higher cost was getting a replacement window, which was almost \$200 dollars. Learned the hard way to never leave anything visible in the car. Also, while living there I noticed a break in on Sunderland St between 19th and 20th almost once a week.

These types of crimes are very difficult to stop under the current way MPD patrols, but **hopefully a tough sentence will make criminals think twice about damaging and stealing others' property.**

A.P.
2000 block of Hillyer Place, NW

I had my car window broken while parked in my space in alley behind (2000 block of) Hillyer Place. As far as I know, nothing was taken (I didn't have anything of value in my car) but the time and cost associated with cleaning up the broken and having the window repaired was annoying. As it turns out, it is difficult to find

replacement glass for the window that was broken so the repair cost was not small.

D.D.
1700 block of Q st NW

I used to park in the middle of the 1700 block of Q st NW. **But after the 4th or fifth time in one year I leased a very expensive inside parking spot at the Dupont Executive apts.** I was there a year before my car parked on the 2nd level of there basement was broken into...

Washington City Paper article:

CITYDESK

Dupont Residents Rally Against Serial Car Bandit

Posted by **Sarah Kaplan** on Sep. 27, 2013 at 3:46 pm



"If you ever have seen broken car glass in your hoods, Mr. **Gregory Teal** is more than likely the person that committed the crime."

That's what MPD's Second District Commander **Michael Reese** wrote in an email to Dupont Circle residents this July. Teal had just been arrested for the 43rd time for "theft from auto."

Typically Teal's crimes are sentenced as misdemeanors—he was imprisoned for 75 days for a TFA in March. But this time, Dupont residents want Teal put away for much longer. **Kishan Putta** and **Noah Smith**, ANC 2B's public safety liaisons,

are organizing a campaign to submit public impact statements to the U.S Attorney's office in advance of Teal's sentencing on Oct. 28.

"We want the courts to take it seriously this time," Putta says. "This individual won't be deterred by small punishments, and it's pretty clear that letting him on the streets means that he will victimize our community."

Whether a harsher sentence will be a deterrent to Teal or will simply serve as a way of keeping him off the streets, "Either argument points to keeping him in jail for the serial, unmitigated nature of his crime spree," Putta says.

According to Putta, residents are enthusiastic about the campaign, though no impact statements have been filed yet. With 301 incidents reported since Jan. 1, car break-ins are the second most prevalent crime in ANC 2B after normal theft. That's actually an improvement from last year, when 400 TFAs were reported in the same period, but Putta says it's still too high.

"Things like this do deter lower income people from living here, just because you can't afford to pay for off street parking," he says