

# DEFENDERS OF MOTHER EARTH



## April's Defender of Mother Earth : *Young Americans suing US government over Climate Change*

21 very brave children and young americans sued USA government last August 2015, alleging that approval of fossil fuel development has violated the fundamental right of citizens to be free from government actions that harm life, liberty and property. On April 8th 2016, they celebrated their victory, after U.S. Magistrate Judge Thomas Coffin of the federal District Court in Eugene, OR, decided in favor of 21 young Plaintiffs, and Dr. James Hansen, famed Climatologist and also a plaintiff in this case.



This case is the culmination of a series of lawsuits brought in all 50 states of America since 2011 by various groups of students, and advocated by the Oregon-based nonprofit **Our Children's Trust**, in both domestic and international courts, being more successful than anyone expected. Other groups supporting these suits include the **Earth Guardians**, **Western Environmental Law Center**, **Plant-for-the-Planet**, and **Climate Change for Families**.

Their argument is that the federal government is infringing on the constitutional rights of America's youth and future generations by continuing to allow fossil fuel extraction and consumption, which will be causing dangerous climate change impacts that young people will suffer far more than today's policymakers.

*"Plaintiffs are suing the United States... because the government has known for decades that carbon dioxide (CO2) pollution has been causing catastrophic climate change and has failed to take necessary action to curtail fossil fuel emissions."*



This empowered and brave youngsters have already had some success with their suits across USA, including one case in Washington state, and now their victory in their landmark constitutional climate change case against the federal government.

They've also being involved as allies with Greenpeace opposing Shell's ill-fated attempt to drill in the Arctic.

*inspiring stories:*

*Meet the 21 plaintiffs and check out their*

## **21 young plaintiffs against US gov.**

In August 2015, Our Children's Trust helped twenty-one kids, aged 8 to 19, file a lawsuit against the Obama Administration. Their argument: the fact that the president and a slew of federal agencies have authorized the extraction of fossil fuels, despite the agencies' knowledge of climate science, violates the kids' Constitutional rights.

The EPA did not comment on specifics of the lawsuit but said in a statement that President Barack Obama and the agency have been taking action to "give our kids and grandkids the cleaner, safer future they deserve."

Aji Piper, 15, a Seattle high school sophomore, is a plaintiff in that case and the one in Washington state. "The government isn't doing the best to assure that we have the best quality of life," he said. "It holds more urgency for us. Our future is at hand."



In January 2016, defendant status in this case was granted to three fossil fuel industry trade associations, representing nearly all of the world's largest fossil fuel companies, who called the case "a direct, substantial threat to our businesses."

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## **The Victory**

April 8th, 2106- U.S. Magistrate Judge Thomas Coffin of the Federal District Court in Eugene, Oregon, decided in favor of 21 young plaintiffs in their landmark constitutional climate change case against the federal government. Judge Coffin ruled Friday against the motion to dismiss brought by the fossil fuel industry and federal government.

The **court's ruling** is a major victory for the 21 youth plaintiffs, ages 8-19, from across the U.S. in what Bill McKibben and Naomi Klein call the "most important lawsuit on the planet right now."



These plaintiffs sued the federal government for violating their constitutional rights to life, liberty and property, and their right to essential public trust resources, by permitting, encouraging and otherwise enabling continued exploitation, production and combustion of fossil fuels.

"This decision is one of the most significant in our nation's history," plaintiff's attorney Philip Gregory said. "The court upheld our claims that the federal government intensified the danger to our plaintiffs' lives, liberty and property. Judge Coffin

decided our complaint will move forward and put climate science squarely in front of the federal courts. The next step is for the court to order our government to cease jeopardizing the climate system for present and future generations. The court gave America's youth a fair opportunity to be heard."

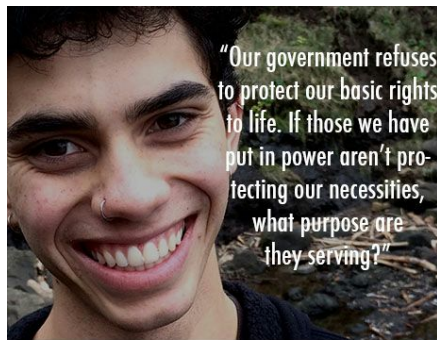
As part of Friday's historic decision, Judge Coffin characterized the case as an "unprecedented lawsuit" addressing "government action and inaction" resulting "in carbon pollution of the atmosphere, climate destabilization and ocean acidification." The next step in this case is a review of Judge Coffin's decision by Judge Ann Aiken, another judge in the same Federal Court [Read More](#)

Read the [Court's Order](#)

Watch [Plaintiffs' interview](#)

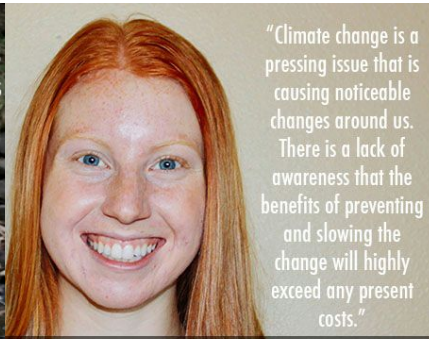


## The youth plaintiffs and their statements.



**Kiran Oommen, 19**  
**Eugene, OR**

"Our government refuses to protect our basic rights to life. If those we have put in power aren't protecting our necessities, what purpose are they serving?"



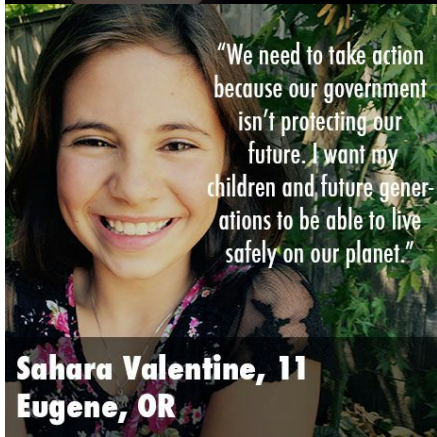
**Tia Hatton, 18**  
**Bend, OR**

"Climate change is a pressing issue that is causing noticeable changes around us. There is a lack of awareness that the benefits of preventing and slowing the change will highly exceed any present costs."



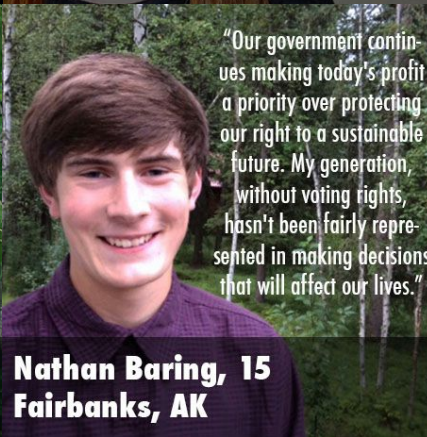
**Alex Loznak, 18**  
**Oakland, OR**

"We need to reduce carbon emissions now in order to avoid the worst impacts global warming. Building new fossil fuel infrastructure is fundamentally inconsistent with that goal."



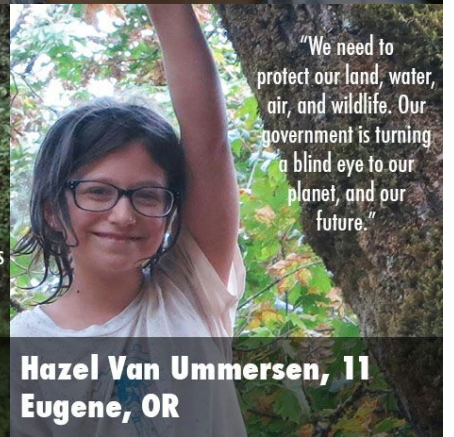
**Sahara Valentine, 11**  
**Eugene, OR**

"We need to take action because our government isn't protecting our future. I want my children and future generations to be able to live safely on our planet."



**Nathan Baring, 15**  
**Fairbanks, AK**

"Our government continues making today's profit a priority over protecting our right to a sustainable future. My generation, without voting rights, hasn't been fairly represented in making decisions that will affect our lives."



**Hazel Van Ummersen, 11**  
**Eugene, OR**

"We need to protect our land, water, air, and wildlife. Our government is turning a blind eye to our planet, and our future."



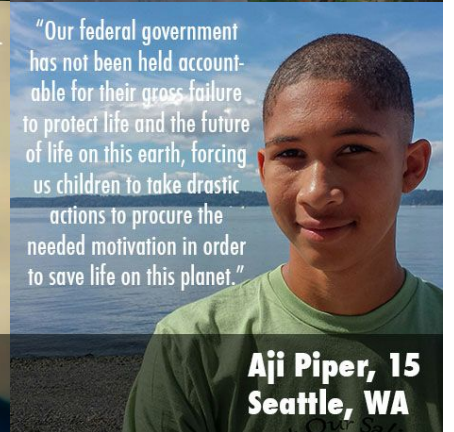
**Jacob Lebel, 18**  
**Roseburg, OR**

"I am telling my government to stop aiding and turning a blind eye to corporations who profit off destroying our resources, climate, and environment- and start acting in the interest of its people. Our lives may depend on it."



**Jaime Butler, 14**  
**Flagstaff, AZ**

"I'm dissappointed in my government. Things are continuing to get worse, with more and more people being impacted by climate change. When will the U.S. government pay attention and stand up for our lives?"



**Aji Piper, 15**  
**Seattle, WA**

"Our federal government has not been held accountable for their gross failure to protect life and the future of life on this earth, forcing us children to take drastic actions to procure the needed motivation in order to save life on this planet."



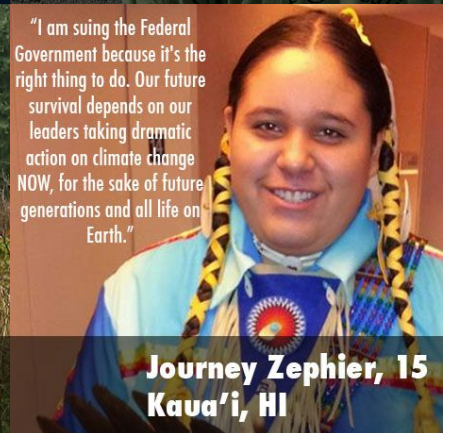
**Victoria Barrett, 16**  
**White Plains, NY**

"Climate change isn't just about temperatures and weather, it's about people. Our earth will be here for millennia, it's up to us to decide if humanity will be too."



**Zealand Bell, 11**  
**Eugene, OR**

"It's important to spread awareness about climate impacts. I'm suing the federal government because they need to be doing a lot more to protect our futures."



**Journey Zephier, 15**  
**Kaua'i, HI**

"I am suing the Federal Government because it's the right thing to do. Our future survival depends on our leaders taking dramatic action on climate change NOW, for the sake of future generations and all life on Earth."





Say **Thank You** to the Defenders of Mother Earth in USA!  
Send your photo or video to [info@climatesstrike.net](mailto:info@climatesstrike.net)