



April 16, 2024 Contacts:

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Our Children's Trust founder & co-executive director Julia Olson receives Environmental Leadership Award from Berkeley Law

BERKELEY, Calif. - Our Children's Trust founder and co-executive director Julia Olson was honored today with the Environmental Leadership Award at Ecology Law Quarterly's Annual Banquet. Olson delivered the keynote speech at the event, which was organized by the University of California's Berkeley Law Center for Law, Energy, & the Environment.

Julia Olson is renowned for her groundbreaking work in youth-led constitutional climate litigation. As the founder of Our Children's Trust, Olson has spearheaded groundbreaking legal efforts to hold governments accountable for their role in worsening the climate crisis.

"Our founding documents—state and federal—cannot be understood without the fundamental right to a life-sustaining climate. There is no life without air. There is no liberty without water. And, there is no property with land ravaged by climate-driven wildfires or rising seas," Olson said in her address.

Under Olson's leadership, Our Children's Trust has empowered young plaintiffs to demand government action on climate change through strategic legal campaigns. The work has resulted in significant legal victories, including last year's historic win in *Held v. State of Montana*, in which the state's District Court ruled that Montana laws that promote fossil fuels and require turning a blind eye to climate change are unconstitutional.

Olson is also representing youth in two constitutional climate cases against the federal government, *Juliana v. United States* and *Genesis B. v. EPA* as well as youth plaintiffs in *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation* which will head to trial this June and be the first youth-led climate trial in the state's history. On April 29, Olson will argue on

behalf of her 18 young clients against the EPA's motion to dismiss the *Genesis* case in the Central District of California before Judge Michael Fitzgerald.

Olson has spent more than a quarter century in public interest environmental litigation, during which she "has left an indelible mark on the fight against climate change," according to Berkeley Law. She launched Our Children's Trust in 2010.

Olson remarked on how special it was to be recognized by Berkeley's Ecology Law Quarterly, one of the oldest environmental law journals in the world founded by then-law student Bill Chamberlain in 1971, the same year Olson was born. The field of environmental law has evolved tremendously since the first Earth Day. Olson and Chamberlain reminisced about backpacking in the High Sierra and about the late David Brower, who Olson worked with to protect Yosemite Valley and the Merced River corridor from more development in the early years of her career.

During her remarks, Olson quoted David Brower, a past recipient of the Berkeley's Environmental Leadership Award, as a call to action: "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

"It's such an honor to be recognized by my peers in law, who are themselves doing so much to combat climate change," Olson said. "I'm inspired by the young people who are leading these constitutional climate cases and the law students who are working so hard to transform the field of climate law. They are our field's future. They're our world's future."

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Our Children's Trust was founded in 2010 on the idea that courts are vital to democracy and empowered to protect our children and the planet. Without a stable climate system, every natural resource we rely upon to exercise our basic human rights—life, liberty, home, happiness—is under threat. Our work will be achieved when there is universal recognition of children's climate rights by courts around the world and children's fundamental rights to life on this planet are protected. www.ourchildrenstrust.org