

Youth On Climate Change Frontlines

by **MARKESHIA RICKS** | Oct 30, 2018 7:49 am

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MARKESHIA RICKS PHOTO

Rally organizer Paul Rink on the steps of the federal courthouse.

Environmentalists gathered at the New Haven federal courthouse on Church Street to defend what they called our fundamental right to an earth that is capable of sustaining life.

They held a rally Monday afternoon outside the U.S. District Courthouse on Church Street as part of a series of similar rallies nationwide in a support of a [landmark climate lawsuit](#) filed by 21 young people ranging in age from 11 to 22. That case, *Juliana v. U.S.*, was scheduled to go to trial Monday.

The lawsuit was filed against the federal government in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon in 2015. About 35 people here who have been following the case closely gathered on Church Street court steps to show their support.

The rally
was



New Haven environmentalist showed their support.

organized by Paul Rink, a Yale Law School and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Science student who worked on the case during this past summer as an intern.

The suit asserts that the federal government is responsible for the damage being caused by climate change because it has known, at least as far back as the 1960s, about the threat and did nothing to stop the perpetuation and use of fossil fuels. Instead, in the face of climate change science, the government still issued permits to polluting companies and gave them access to federal lands.

“This is not a case about what the government didn’t do but a case about what the government did,” Rink said.

Rink said he’s been interested in environmental justice for some time and hopes to build a career fighting for it. He said this case is particularly important because it speaks directly to the harm of climate change.

“Not only will it impact everyone in the future, but it’s going to impact the people least responsible for the problem — the youth and people living in the least developed part of the world — the most,” he said of climate change.

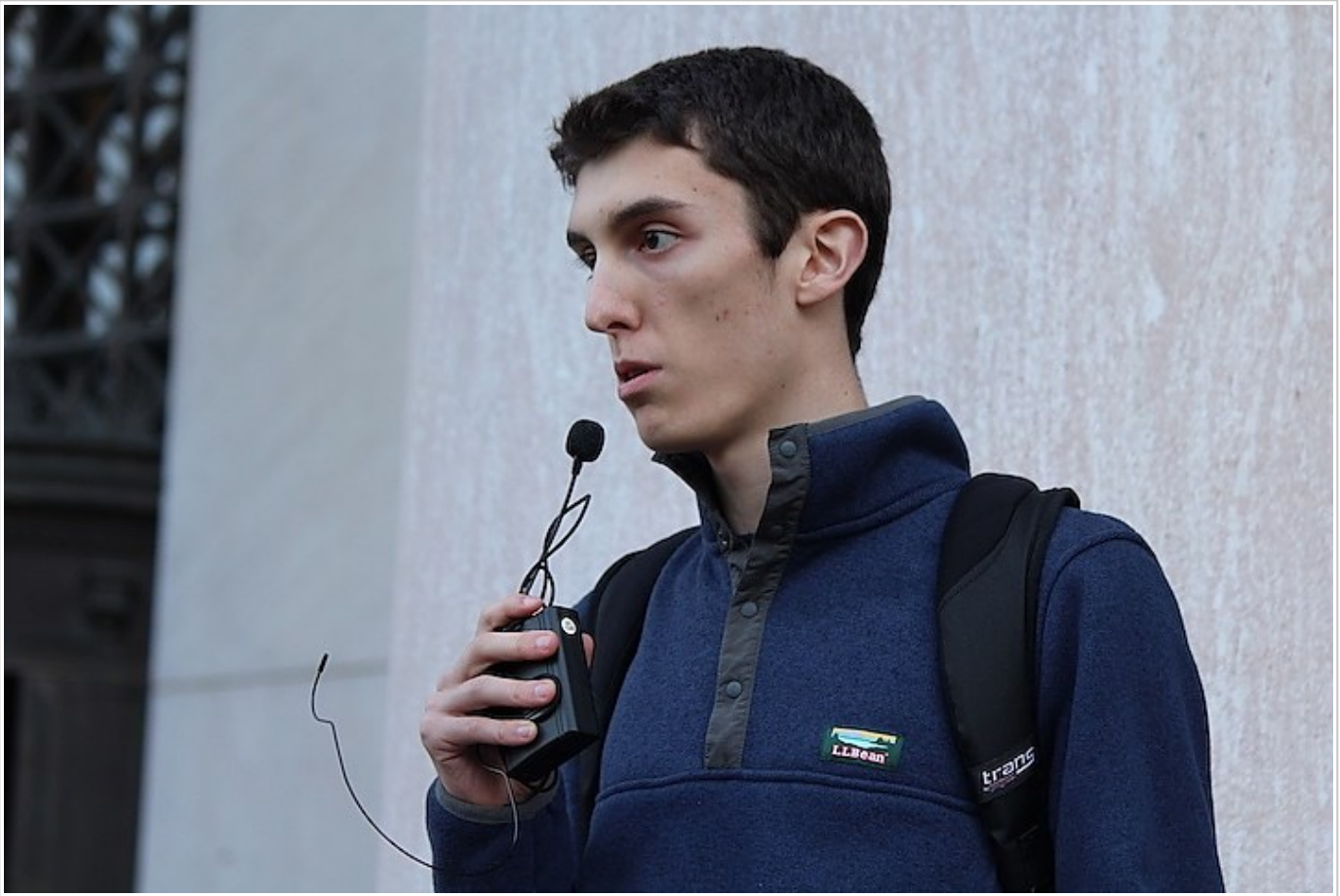
A judge has denied the federal



Metro student Adara Huq ...

[government's request](#) to dismiss the case. The case has been stayed by the U.S. Supreme Court, whose newest member is Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who is believed to have conservative views on climate change. Still, supporters of the suit remain optimistic.

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... and Yale College student Nick Famularo brought the youth voice to the rally.

Business Academy student Adara Huq, 16, was one of the young people who spoke out in support of her fellow youth at Monday's rally.

"Climate change does and will affect us more in the future," she said. "What about us? What about our future families? Why are we sweeping our responsibilities under the carpet when it is more important than ever to save our planet."

She told those gathered that the world is already 1-degree Celsius warmer than pre-industrial levels and climate change impacts are showing up in devastating hurricanes, record droughts, and forest fires.

"Climate change is already happening, and every bit of additional warming will worsen impacts," Adara said.

Yale
College
student
Nick



Famularo urged those gathered to make their voices heard in the Nov. 6 elections.

“Climate change is the single greatest threat facing our planet today,” he said. “For decades our country has failed to implement common-sense solutions despite the warnings of the scientific community. The fact that young people have to sue their own government for its inaction against climate change is immoral and absurd.

“By definition, a government is meant to protect and provide for its citizens but seems our elected officials today care more about short-term profits than the long-term health and well being of our planet.”

Environmental activist Melinda Tuhus said she was encouraged to see young people taking the lead in holding the government responsible but also was a bit heartbroken for their plight.

“I’m not going to see the very worst aspects of this because I’m not going to be around much longer, but they will,” she said.

Click on the Facebook Live video below to catch some of the rally.