

Narrator: This podcast is a production of Vermont Law School's Environmental Law Center.

Jeannie Oliver: On September 20th, the Hothouse Earth team together with staff, faculty and students at Vermont Law School walked out of school as part of a massive global strike organized by young people to protest our collective inaction on climate change. Professor Pat Parenteau fronted a teach-in in the library quad about Juliana v. United States. A lawsuit, where a group of young people are suing the US government for their knowing failure to provide a livable future for the next generation.

Pat Parenteau: There's a doctrine embedded in this case. It's an ancient doctrine. It's a doctrine that the government is not supposed to create a danger for people. It's not supposed to knowingly take actions that are putting people's lives and property at risk. That is what the plaintiffs are saying the government is doing. And in my judgment, they're right.

Jeannie Oliver: We also attended the strikes in Montpelier and Burlington, Vermont.

Protestors: (A crowd protests in the background.)

Jeannie Oliver: In this episode, what exactly is the Youth Climate Movement and can it be effective in our struggle against climate change?

Jeannie Oliver: Hello and welcome back to Hothouse Earth, Vermont Law School's podcast about the law and policy behind the most pressing environmental challenges of our time. Today on the show: the Youth Climate Movement. I'm your host, Jeannie Oliver, and with me today is our guest host, Pat Parenteau. Welcome back, Pat.

Pat Parenteau: Good to be with you, Jeannie.

Jeannie Oliver: The reason Pat is with us today is because Mason is actually out on paternity leave because he just became a dad for the first time.

Pat Parenteau: How about we dedicate today's program to Baby Geo-George Overstreet?

Jeannie Oliver: That's a great idea. And to all the future climate leaders.

Jeannie Oliver: For this episode, we interviewed three guests. I interviewed local high schooler, Erik Dorfman and Vermont Law School student, Russell Mendell. And Pat interviewed renowned climate advocate, Gus Speth. You'll be hearing from each of these guests throughout the episode.

Pat Parenteau: So, Jeannie, since we're looking at the youth climate movement, I guess the first question is what exactly is it? And we're gonna be looking at two particular aspects today. The first is the climate strike, which we've just had globally across the nation, millions of not only youth, but adults protesting and demanding climate action. And we're also going to look at some very interesting lawsuits that are being brought in the United States against the federal government for taking actions that are making the climate emergency even more dangerous than it already is.

Jeannie Oliver: To help us understand what the Youth Climate Movement is. We spoke with 17 year old Erik Dorfman. Erik is one of millions of young people taking part in the youth climate movement right now. We first met Erik at a local youth climate panel in Sharon, Vermont, where he recited one of his poems and songs from his upcoming album, "Liberating Gaia."

Pat Parenteau: He's a talented poet and he wrote a special poem about the threats to his future and to the earth and to everybody who lives on the earth. He is a humbling young man but but with a very, very powerful voice.

Erik Dorfman: (Reciting poem)In the name of our mother, we are changing the fate of humanity. We are putting the cannibal giant back to sleep and diverting the patriarchal prophecy. In the name of our mother, we pledge resistance, we shall persist with magic in revolutionary dissidents in the name of our mother, we fight back against the disenchantment of nature. We collaborate. We dream and be free. We are here now in the infinite moment for the great transformation that demands courage, truth and love.

Erik Dorfman: I think activism can take a lot of forms and it's not strictly just being out in the streets. One of the ways that I have taken action is actually using music, art,

poetry and rap to express ideas and concepts of positive change and transformation and building that momentum through music.

Erik Dorfman: (Reciting poem) Take to the streets in protest. Make yourself seen and heard. block the roads, block the airports, occupy the industries, and every Friday go on strike. Disrupt business as usual.

Erik Dorfman: This movement is coming out of this real fear that we might not have a livable future. And all of the real chaos socially that that future entails. It's movement for justice. As a human being, living in this time period, and also being a white male living in the global north, I have a deep moral duty to not be a bystander and a witness and actually be an active tool of change and being like, not on my watch, not in my name and not with my money.

Jeannie Oliver: Young people like Eric are taking to the streets, mobilizing millions across the globe, calling on world leaders to be accountable to the climate and to future generations. For some of you, these strikes might feel like they came out of nowhere really suddenly. But these events are just an illustration or a recent escalation of the Youth Climate Movement, which has actually been simmering away for decades now. And it's not only street protests, for example, young people have been participating in international climate talks from as early on as 1992 with the Rio Earth Summit. They've also been pressuring their schools to divest from fossil fuels and taking direct action against fracking and pipelines. Russell Mendell has been part of the Youth Climate Movement since he was a small child. He's currently a student at Vermont Law School, studying towards a Masters in energy regulation and law. He was formerly the Campaign Director for Earth Guardians, an organization working to uplift the voices of youth climate leaders from around the world. He is a contributing author to the upcoming book *Imaginary Borders* by Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, coming out in the Summer of 2020 as part of Penguin's Pocket Change Collective Series. We asked Russell to help us understand the history of the Youth Climate Movement.

Russell Mendell: The Youth Climate Movement has been one of the driving forces for a long time, although not quite as widely known as it is now. When you go back to the original days of the United Nations Conference of Parties on climate change, the youth delegations were always the strongest delegations. They were the ones that were

calling for the strongest possible action. And they were the ones that were, you know, demonstrating in large ways through direct action and a little bit edgier approaches. The main call to action for our youth climate activism was really divestment, especially focusing on campus divestment, but also looking, you know, at their communities and how do we divest from fossil fuels. That had so much traction. And we've seen massive amounts of money divested from the fossil fuel industry. But at a certain point, they realized that they had sort of achieved what they needed to achieve from that particular mission. And it was time to take the next step. And so these young people that had organized divestment on their campuses decide to take it up into the political arena. And that's where we saw the birth of the sunrise movement. And they decided, well, let's let's use this a massive organizing skills that we've learned and let's bring into the halls of Congress.

Jeannie Oliver: How does the Youth Climate Movement differ to the general climate movement or something we maybe could class as the adult climate movement?

Russell Mendell: Well, I think there's several ways that it differs from what we look at as the, you know, the general climate movement. One thing as Greta Thunberg said this in our interview on The Daily Show with Trevor Noah. She said, "One of the things is that we understand how directly impacted we'll be and that will be more directly impacted than other generations that have come before us." And so, it's personal. It's really deeply personal for young people. And that's led to a different way of looking at the issue. So for one thing, it's been highly partisan when you look at, you know, sort of the general climate movement. When you look at older generations, only about half of Republicans see this as a really serious issue that we need to address, whereas 95 percent of older Democrats see this as a really serious issue to address. When you look at Millennials and Gen-Z, that difference between parties, between Democrats and Republicans, that is basically gone. A recent survey has found that 76 percent of Democrats who are Gen-Z, a millennial find this an urgent issue to address and 77 percent of Republicans. It just shows that there is a different way of relating to this issue. The other element is that this generation is more interconnected than any previous generation. There is more of an understanding of how these issues connect with all these other issues around the world from gender, race, class and income level. They're really looking at how do we support the frontline communities? What does it

mean to stand with those communities? And that understanding has led to more of an integrated approach that young people have taken when they're looking at these issues.

Jeannie Oliver: Pat, you've been involved in the environmental movement for a really long time. How many years?

Pat Parenteau: 45.

Jeannie Oliver: Based on your experience, how does the Youth Climate Movement differ from the original climate movement?

Pat Parenteau: It's really completely different. Back in the '70s when we were putting together all of these environmental laws, going to court to enforce them, it was mostly an inside the beltway kind of movement inside Washington, D.C. and it was a group, a fairly small group of lawyers and activists, and in some cases, scientists and economists. But it didn't involve youth, it didn't involve global perspectives. It was it was focused on the United States. It was tackling the most obvious kinds of pollution problems. And of course, we all thought in those days that we were gonna be able to accomplish all this in a matter of a few decades. Little did we know that we were really going to be facing these enormous, wicked, hard global problems.

Jeannie Oliver: And I guess that's where the Youth Climate Movement comes in. There's a sense, I think, that we have known about the problem for decades, and yet any action we might have tried to take against the problem has been ineffective or at worst, we just haven't taken any action.

Pat Parenteau: True, there were a few in the early days that Rafe Pomerance is one person in particular, and Gus Speth whom we'll be talking to soon is another, who were beginning to see the dangers that climate change was presenting. But it was not a high priority issue for the environmental movement all through the '70s and '80s and well into the '90s. So I think even the community that should have been more on the alert probably wasn't.

Jeannie Oliver: Russell is optimistic about the Youth Climate Movement. He's seen changes in the movement that he thinks will help it be more effective.

Russell Mendell: There are ways that movements in the past have recognized that you need a radical arm and you need a more moderate arm to really affect change. And this was, you know, seen in the civil rights movement. When you talk about Martin Luther King Jr., who was radical, but it was also working more within the system, within the courts. And Malcolm X, who was working more without from outside the system and how those two things can work together really well. And so young people are understanding that--they really are. There's more of an understanding that so many different approaches are needed and couldn't come at a better time.

Jeannie Oliver: We're going to take a closer look at these two strategies: One operating outside the system and one operating within the system. First up: protests.

Protestor and Crowd: Protestor: Tell me what democracy looks like. Crowd: This is what democracy looks like.

Erik Dorfman: Civil disobedience does work. You don't have to look too many too many examples in history to realize that this movement is just beginning. And it won't stop, until we we meet our demands.

Pat Parenteau: Protests and direct action have always been an important part of every sort of social movement, including the youth climate movement, because in many cases it's the only way for young people to be heard. They're not old enough to vote, typically. They don't hold down positions of influence in business or or government. They take a back seat, it seems, in terms of their ability to move the institutions that need to move. So taking to the streets, using their voices, coming together in solidarity, demanding justice is the way they need to go.

Jeannie Oliver: So Pat, do protests work?

Pat Parenteau: Well, some do and some don't. I mean, if you think about the civil rights movement, the Freedom Riders, the sit ins, they very definitely resulted in a change in constitutional law with the Brown v. Board of Education decision, but also the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act--those fundamental changes to American democracy

would not have occurred without those protests and demonstrations and a lot of people getting hurt and killed in the process.

Jeannie Oliver: And I did some research to try and figure out what the characteristics would make a protest or a movement successful. And there's a number of characteristics that seem to be most important. So those were scale: So how many people are mobilized and for how long? The duration seems to be very important. The need for a clear, actionable demand, something that you're really asking for, that people can identify the need to start small, and succeed and then grow from those small successes, using diverse methods to help to sustain a movement. So things like music and poetry and keeping it fun have been really important, but also a diverse set of tactics. So using protest, using direct action, but then also using legal action and then having strong leadership. Leaders really matter. How do you think these compare with what the youth climate movement is facing?

Pat Parenteau: Well, the biggest problem the youth climate faces is time, meaning we don't have much. So all of those characteristics you're talking about, they all have to be accelerated. We're talking about decarbonizing the entire global economy by 2050, if we want to avoid some of the most dangerous tipping points in the climate system. So all of that business of inclusivity and building a movement and building slowly and starting with small successes, that all has to be accelerated in a timeframe we've never faced before.

Jeannie Oliver: But the youth climate movement does have some great strengths. First, it has the benefit of modern technology, which has really helped the youth climate movement to mobilize truly impressive numbers and really quickly. So, I think the media were reporting that seven million people worldwide striked in September. In some countries like New Zealand, for example, the number of people striking has reached the magic 3.5 percent threshold, at which some of our listeners might know to be the number it takes to have a successful revolution. Second, and I think we've touched on this a little, the youth climate movement is becoming more and more inclusive. Young people recognize that this isn't an elite issue that only affects middle class white people. It affects everyone and it affects our minority communities the most. And I think young people really recognize that it's going to take everyone to solve the problem. Erik touched on this.

Erik Dorfman: Our attention needs to go to vulnerable communities, people that are poor, people that have disabilities, the elderly, black and brown people, and people in the global south. There is this great injustice that the ecological crisis has within it. What connects us all behind this movement is it's a defense of life. And whether you're left wing, right wing, Conservative, Liberal, Democratic or Republican, you will be affected by the climate crisis. And it's going to affect us all.

Jeannie Oliver: Erik recognizes that to be truly inclusive requires a shift from the "us against them" dialogue that's so common and adult communications.

Erik Dorfman: So I think in the past, the climate movement hasn't been so inclusive. And I think they did a poor job of not making it into an "us them" kind of thing. We can't view these people that may have different views than us and may have been raised to believe different things by people like their parents who are the most influential figures in their lives. We can't shun them. You know, part of that regenerative life, a regenerative future, also expresses itself culturally. And we can't shun these people. Actually, we need to have a more of a rehabilitative communication and we need to build bridges rather than build up walls.

Jeannie Oliver: I think we're starting to see strong leadership from diverse backgrounds being involved in the youth climate movement. Russell also really emphasized this point of diverse leadership.

Russell Mendell: So I think there is a tendency from the media to focus on one specific person who they say represents the movement. It's easier for the media and maybe a little easier for the general public to follow the issue when it's time for the lens of one person. But it is dangerous and I think young people have been fighting back against that, really. And what we've really seen is all these young leaders emerge. You know, we've seen all these young leaders who are involved with the Julianna case. Kelsey Juliana herself, Vic Barrett, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez. We've also seen young leaders from the Sunrise movement like Vaccinia Prakash. It's a group of young people that are really bringing their voices to the forefront in an incredible way. And then there are, you know, thousands of local heroes that we also need to, you know, lift up their voices.

Jeannie Oliver: I think another important point is that the youth climate movement not only involves youth of diverse backgrounds, but also adults. We saw this with the youth climate strikes in September. It wasn't just young people who showed up. It was all age groups. And so some people have criticized the youth climate movement, saying that the young people involved at just voicing the opinions of their parents. And of course, parents have an influence on what children believe in. But I think the converse is true also. Young people are having an influence on what their parents believe.

Russell Mendell: The impact on adults says one of the great mysteries in terms of how this new young people will impact them and how they view climate change because you know, a lot of studies have been done that show that some of the most influential people in, you know, parents' life is their own children and so as their children are looking at this issue from a different perspective. And we've seen that, you know, a lot more Republican youth are looking at this as a very serious threat than their parents are. How will that impact them and how will they change their perspective? And I think we're only beginning to get there.

Jeannie Oliver: Young people recognize that they need to use diverse and inclusive tactics to make it fun, make it beautiful, make it serious, but make it hopeful. For example, through music and poetry, as we heard from Erik, Russell also reflected on this.

Russell Mendell: We need more people to be involved in the way that connects with them personally in their own way, not more climate activists, because not everyone is going to have the freedom to dedicate their life to this. But there are ways that you can be involved in your own life that will make a difference and will show you care. And that's where you need to start.

Jeannie Oliver: Maybe this is an indication that young people are waking up to the importance of their role in shaping democracy. Typically, young people haven't made a great showing on polling day. I think something less than 50 percent, maybe 2020 will be different.

Erik Dorfman: I will be able to vote in 2020. People that were born in 2002 will be able to vote in the 2020 elections and people in my grade. People who are seniors this year

in high school in the U.S. will be able to vote in the upcoming election. And I think it's essential.

Russell Mendell: When more young people vote, you have elected leaders that are more accountable to young people. And this generation is going to be the largest voting block in the United States. And so, young people have an incredible ability to impact the national discourse on politics. And like I said, we're seeing that in this election, with the way they've changed the political debate.

Jeannie Oliver: So, Pat, we've talked about some of the challenges facing the youth climate movement, and we've also looked at some of the strengths of the movement. Do you think protest is enough?

Pat Parenteau: No. Protest is important, necessary, but not sufficient. Much more has to be done with law and institutions and political will and big point: shifting enormous amounts of money away from the fossil fuel-based economy into the cleaner, greener economy that we all need.

Jeannie Oliver: And I think the youth recognize this and they are using multiple methods to as well as protest to try and achieve this. Now, let's talk a little bit about the youth climate movement working within the system, something that you and I are a bit more familiar with. In this segment, we're going to be talking about Juliana v. United States. That's a constitutional lawsuit brought by twenty-one young people in the U.S. District Court of Oregon. It was brought in 2015. It's still going. Essentially, the plaintiffs (those are the twenty-one young people) arguing that the government has violated and continues to violate their right to life, liberty and property under the US constitution. So Pat, you've been keeping up with what's happening in the courtroom. And recently you had a chance to sit down with Gus Speth to talk about that.

Pat Parenteau: Yes. I mean, it was a fascinating interview with Gus. He's scheduled to be a witness in the trial in the Juliana v. United States case, if it comes to trial. This is a landmark case, an unprecedented case dealing with an unprecedented threat from climate change and seeking nothing less than commitment from the United States government, both the executive branch and the Congress, to number one stop taking actions that's making climate change worse and number two start taking actions that

actually gets us on a path to a safer future. So this case is critical and Gus is one of the critical witnesses in the case.

Jeannie Oliver: Let's hear that interview.

Pat Parenteau: Well, it's a very special welcome to Gus Speth. Our guest, Gus Speth is one of the path breakers in environmental law and policy in the United States. He's held a number of key positions. He was chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, during the Jimmy Carter years. He did a stint with the United Nations Development Program, in the State Department. Also the author of a number of critical books dealing not only was the climate crisis, which we'll be talking about further here, but also really was the crisis in our democracy. Gus, a very warm welcome to Hothouse Earth.

Gus Speth: Thank you, Pat. It's good to be here. Good to be back at the Vermont Law School. And I'm just delighted that you're having this podcast series because it couldn't be more timely.

Pat Parenteau: We have this lawsuit, this very interesting lawsuit brought by twenty-one youth plaintiffs. The title of which is Juliana v. United States. It's being handled by the Our Children's Trust, a group of lawyers and experts. And I understand you've been tabbed to be one of the expert witnesses in this case. Can you tell us something about the case and what you might say if the case actually gets to trial?

Gus Speth: Well, we will only be an expert witness if we get to trial. And so far, the government, the federal government has pulled out all stops to prevent this from going to trial, including going all the way up to the court or to the Court of Appeals like four or five times, the Supreme Court--three times. They don't want the truth to come out. And people to be on the stand under oath to tell the truth. So. And what is the truth? Well, they asked me to do a review of what every administration had done from Carter to Trump and to look at various issues in that. And so I looked at every administration. What did they know about climate science? What was before them? What did they know about alternative paths that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions? And what did they actually do? And what I found was that consistent throughout every administration we've had, we had they were fossil fuel junkies. And the federal government really has been in control, in effect of energy directions through its various

policies and programs. And that's the gist of the lawsuit: that by steering our energy use towards fossil fuels for all this time, the government has created a danger to them, especially the new generation that's coming along, and that that creation of that endangerment is a deprivation of their constitutional right to due process to life, liberty and property.

Pat Parenteau: And you've seen some major social movements in your time. You come from the South, from South Carolina. You were there during the Freedom Rides, during the Civil Rights Movement. You've been through the protests against the Vietnam War and Occupy Wall Street and a number of movements. What do you say to the youth that are gathering this week from New York City to Singapore to every place on the planet? What's your advice to the youth as they launched this climate strike in this climate movement?

Gus Speth: Well, never give up, would be one bit of advice. I think also it's a moment for disrupting the normal operations of society. You know, I think only only when a movement is prepared to really act up--and hopefully in a humorous and funny way, if they can devise it. Are they going to get the kind of attention that can raise consciousness and in the general public? You know, it has to be nonviolent and it has to be it has to be beautiful if you can make it beautiful. And I hope, the demonstrations and marches and and gatherings that we're going to have will be, you know, things of beauty that will inspire people to get busy taking this seriously.

Pat Parenteau: Well, Gus Speth it's been such a pleasure having you on our podcast today, and we wish you all the best and hope that your vision of the future becomes real. Thank you.

Gus Speth: Thank you, Pat.

Jeannie Oliver: So, Pat, when does Juliana stand, today?

Pat Parenteau: So today we're waiting for a ruling from the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which sits in San Francisco, California. They heard arguments in June. The arguments were designed from the Trump administration to have the case dismissed--thrown out of court before there's even a trial on any of these issues. So the Ninth Circuit has to

decide whether they're going to let the case go to trial in Oregon. It would be in the Oregon Federal District Court or not. And regardless of what the Ninth Circuit decides, there is a chance that the United States Supreme Court, of course, will have the final word on this case. And that raises all sorts of concerns about what this particularly conservative leaning court might do with a novel case like this one, seeking to have the government ordered to take meaningful action on climate change. So we're all kind of waiting to see what the Ninth Circuit does and then perhaps what the Supreme Court does.

Jeannie Oliver: Are there other cases like this elsewhere? And what is the basis of those lawsuits, if they exist?

Pat Parenteau: Yes, there's a lot of cases across the globe, really, some of which have been inspired by the Julianna case and the youth movement, if you will. One of the leading cases comes out of the Netherlands. It's the Urgenda case. And in that case, the courts actually ordered the Dutch government to increase the level of action to reduce by a specific amount the carbon emissions that are causing climate change. That's the first time a court anywhere in the world has actually ordered the government to take very specific action by a very specific deadline. In Colombia, a youth-led lawsuit resulted in a landmark decision by the Colombian Supreme Court ordering the Colombian government to develop a plan to phase out deforestation in the Amazon, which, of course, is a critical biological resource, as well as a carbon sink for the world. So we're seeing in other parts of the world courts more open to the idea that government has an obligation to do more than it's doing. That's what we want to see here in the United States. But it is happening in other parts of the world.

Jeannie Oliver: Why have the youth had more success overseas, do you think?

Pat Parenteau: Well, in some of these other legal regimes, like in Europe, there's a doctrine that the courts recognize of inter-generational equity. So the youth plaintiffs in some of these cases in Europe are bringing the action not only on their own behalf, but on the behalf of future generations. And the courts in many parts of the world have no trouble with recognizing that current generations can actually argue for the rights of future generations are caught. Our Supreme Court has not yet adopted that doctrine.

Jeannie Oliver: Do you think we're going to see more lawsuits being filed by young people as part of the youth climate movement, not just on constitutional grounds, but other domestic laws, for example, energy laws?

Pat Parenteau: Oh, I think not only the youth, but everyone who is concerned about the climate crisis is going to be using every tool at their disposal. But here's the thing. Even of all the environmental laws that we have on the books now, both domestically in the United States and globally and other nations, we're all being complied with and all being enforced, it wouldn't be enough to deal with the climate crisis. We need new laws, new institutions, new ways of thinking, new economic models. We really are remaking society. So the existing body of laws is not going to get us there. We're gonna need a whole new regime of law.

Erik Dorfman: (Protestors singing in the background.) Activism can take many forms and we absolutely need the civil disobedience in the streets. But we also need legal action. We also need like political will. We also need agricultural transformations and renewable energy projects. And we need the sciences. We need the urban planners. We need the infrastructure. We need the truth bringers. We need the the people that are making the music and the art. We need all of the bill, though, Bob. Absolutely. And that's really the only way we're going to get out of this mess is if we all take responsibility in our own lives to make a positive change and a positive difference and use our individual abilities and knowledge to move us all towards that common goal of a regenerative and more equitable and peaceful future.

Protestors: (Singing) We are on strike because the waters are rising. We're gonna strike because the waters are rising. We're gonna strike because the people are dying. We're gonna strike because the people are dying. We're gonna strike for life and everything we love. We're gonna strike for life and everything we love. We're gonna strike for you and we're gonna strike for us.

Jeannie Oliver: That wraps up our episode on the youth climate movement. Thanks to our guests Eric, Russell and Gus for sharing their experiences with us today and helping us understand what the youth climate movement is both on the streets and in the courts. Pat, thanks so much for standing in for Mason this month. It's been really fun working with you, and I hope you'll come back and guest host with us again.

Pat Parenteau: Hey, Jeannie, anytime. It's been a real pleasure.

Jeannie Oliver: Stay tuned after the credits for a word from Mason about baby George and what it's like to be a new dad, in this time of climate change and the youth climate movement. This episode of Hothouse Earth was produced by the Environmental Law Center at Vermont Law School. Special thanks to the director of the Environmental Law Center, Jenny Rushlow; Associate Director, Anne Linehan; our patient editor, Emily Potts; and a special thanks to our guests today. If you like what you heard and you want to hear more, check us out at hothouseearthpodcast.com, and on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and wherever you get your podcasts.

Jeannie Oliver: Mason and J.J., thank you so much for bringing Baby George into the studio to visit with us today.

Mason Overstreet: We're glad to be here, Jeannie.

J.J.: Yeah thanks, Jeannie. We're happy to be here.

Jeannie Oliver: It's such a treat. So this month we did an episode on the youth climate movement and Mason, we really missed you, and it's gonna be so great to have you back for the next episode.

Mason Overstreet: I missed you guys, too.

Jeannie Oliver: And we just wanted to ask a couple of questions, because you became parents for the first time during this month that you were gone.

J.J.: We had our first child, George. He was born on September third, and he's now five weeks old.

Jeannie Oliver: He's gorgeous. The first question I want to ask is, what does it mean to you both to become new parents in a time of climate change? Was that a difficult decision to make?

J.J.: It was. I have always wanted to have children, so I didn't hesitate as much. But it was a little challenging talking Mason into having a child just with the work that he does. He's very climate conscious. Climate conscious, yes.

Jeannie Oliver: So, Mason, can you tell us a little about the struggles that you had in deciding to have George?

Mason Overstreet: Oh, gosh. It certainly was scary. You know, for years I've thought about it and I've always wanted to have a child with J.J. But at the same time, I just, I see. I mean, sadly, in the world that you and I live in and what we read every day and what we hear, you know, but I see kind of the destruction of things sometimes right before our eyes. And then at the same time, I do hold on to the cliché thing of hope. And and J.J. and I were talking last night, and I always like to think of hope as a verb with its sleeves rolled up and having a child. It gives me hope for the world and seeing other children as well. It gives me hope for the world as well as the movement right now.

Jeannie Oliver: So what are your hopes and fears for baby George as he grows up in a time of climate change? I know, JJ, we we had spoken before you had George, when you were about to have him and you said, you know, that it's it's really important to you to bring leaders into the world like future climate leaders and also, you know, good male role models into the world.

J.J.: Mm hmm. Yeah. I will say I was a little attached, the idea that he was gonna be a girl. And then I thought, well, we need more sensitive kind males that are going to make a difference in the world as much as women today. I mean, I think based and I have been really intentional in our lives about trying to leave the world a better place. And if he is a part of that and he not that he has pressure to be a superhero or whatever he decides that he wants to do. But I have hope that, you know, hopefully growing up in a loving, caring, thoughtful household, he will go out and also make his difference in the world. So that gives me hope.

Mason Overstreet: One thing that gives me hope, too, is especially with George being so young right now as Vermont's a really wonderful place to live in. And the community has been so supportive. And that is how I one hope that I have for George is that he

always lives in a place and surrounded by community and love. So no matter what, the odds are, more what negative surroundings are.

Jeannie Oliver: So we actually have George's grandmother, Sally in the studio today, too. And we thought we would ask Sally what it means to her to be a grandmother in the time of climate change. What are your hopes for Baby George as he grows up?

Sally: I have a more positive outlook and hope. I think being older gives you a little different perspective from the standpoint. We have parents that have gone through, you know, the war and are grandparents and went through the war. And and I have hope for us, as humanity. I think we hear so much negative. But I think there's so much more positive and hope and work. And you all are the example of the work. You are the living being, expression of the hope itself. And I see that and appreciate that. And I, that's why I feel good. George is going to grow up to be--is a wonderful child in a wonderful world. I am saddened that when I say that from the standpoint of seeing animals and the extinction of animals and playing in the ocean and playing in the streams. So from the standpoint of pollution and animals. I am worried about that. But again, the hope overcomes the worry. But I think it's something that we all have to do. And J.J. and I were talking about this. And to me, it's it's not about one particular child. It is about all the children, all the children in the world, because they are all affected by it--whether they're in Africa or India or here in the States. And I hope as a world and I see as a world. That we are doing better than we were, at least as a normal person who has not been involved in the environmental arena. I do things which ten years ago I would never have done. And I think we all are now starting to do little bits. And my prayer is that it is enough and we have to keep going.

Mason Overstreet: So this is a poem that that J.J. I had read at our wedding and we'd like to dedicate it to George. It's called "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" by Emily Dickinson. "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all. And sweetest in the gale is heard and sore must be the storm that could've bashed the little bird that kept so many warm. I've heard it in the chilliest land and on the strangest sea, yet never an extremity. It asked a crumb of me.