On Mother's Day this Sunday, my 12-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son won't be making me breakfast in bed. Instead, they'll be marching in the streets. Instead of signing greeting cards, they've been printing banners and signs. And rather than plotting a secret shopping trip, they've been talking with lawyers about a series of suits they helped file against the federal government this week.

In other words, this year my children are celebrating my "special day" in a way that is far more meaningful to all of us: they're taking action to confront climate change, the most urgent crisis faced by their entire generation. They have realized that their voices matter, that their futures are at risk, and that their mom's generation unfortunately has dropped the ball in regards to their futures. That's why, last Wednesday, the first of a series of lawsuits was filed to compel U.S. officials to protect the atmosphere as a public trust. Each of the suits has young people as plaintiffs. Scientists warn that the planet our children will inherit is in danger. Our reliance on fossil fuels has driven up atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions to the point that if we don't reverse course dramatically, and soon, our kids will grow up in a world consumed by sea-level rise, fierce storms, droughts, and murderous heat waves.

It won't have mattered, then, that we made sure to fix their teeth, goaded them to practice piano, or found someone to help with their algebra homework when we didn't understand it. It won't have mattered, then, that we recycled each day, or chose paper over plastic, or bought organic carrots, or used fluorescent light bulbs.

What will matter is a moment, in 2011, when a radical change began to shift our entire culture and way of life -- a shift in our value system where we, as a society, begin to value our children's futures as much as our own convenience, profits, and power. And to do that, in the words of my 16-year-old son, a climate change activist since he was 12: I need to live
NOW as if their future matters. My children and I, and thousands of other mothers and kids, will join one of more than 100 marches this weekend planned in more than 27 countries worldwide. The iMatter March is the result of nearly two years worth of hard work, frustration, and joy for my family and so many others, and it makes my mother's heart proud that my son put all of this in motion, beginning when he was 12, and after weeping as he watched Al Gore's movie, An Inconvenient Truth, and realized what it meant for his future.

The lawsuits and the march may be radical acts, but the problem clearly deserves a radical response. Nor is this the first time that mothers have taken strong political action to confront a threat to our children.

It's a relatively obscure fact that the holiday we'll celebrate on Sunday was initially intended less to honor mothers than to bring them together to work for change. During the Civil War years, Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis, a West Virginia teacher and homemaker, organized what she called Mothers' Work Days to improve local sanitary conditions. Several years later, Julia Ward Howe, a mother of six who wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" lobbied for a mothers' day she hoped would be dedicated to peace in her country, torn up by civil war. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson finally declared a national Mother's Day holiday to occur on the second Sunday in May.

The day has since been shamelessly exploited by florists and card-makers. But that hasn't stopped mothers from uniting and fighting to protect our children's interests. Consider the power of "Another Mother for Peace," which drew attention to the deaths of thousands of young men during the Vietnam War, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which has helped raise awareness and change laws throughout the world.

In words that sound eerily appropriate today, as we demand that our governments end their reliance on dangerous fossil fuels, Howe wrote: "From the bosom of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with our own. It says "Disarm! Disarm!"

I am proud that my children, and tens of thousands of young people around the world will be celebrating this Mother's Day in a new way this year, by raising their voices for an even more devastated Earth: "Live," they will shout, "Live as if our future matters."

Mothers and Fathers, listen as your children challenge you to live in new ways. There is no greater maternal calling than to make simple sacrifices now that will benefit your children's future. March with us.

Victoria Loorz is the co-founder, with her 16-year-old son Alec, of the non-profit Kids Vs. Global Warming, and the iMatter Campaign, committed to educating and empowering young people to lead in creating a sustainable and just world.