"When Alec saw An Inconvenient Truth four years ago, we had no idea this would consume our lives."

That’s Victoria Loorz, the mother of Alec Loorz, who must be known around the house, on the occasional tough day, as "an inconvenient kid." In his own words, Alec has spent his "entire teenage life traveling around our planet talking to my peers about climate change." And now Alec-along with an impressive pack of lawyers and activists—is suing. Alec writes:

I am 16 years old. This morning I filed a lawsuit against the United States of America, for allowing money to be more powerful than the survival of my generation, and for making decisions that threaten our right to a safe and healthy planet.

Alec and a smattering of his peers and young adults from around the country argue that the federal government has "failed in [its] duty to protect the earth’s atmosphere as a public trust to be guarded for future generations." Legally, observers question whether the public trust doctrine is the right approach to environmental issues. Parallel cases using the public nuisance doctrine to make a similar argument were heard by SCOTUS last month, and the court is expected to issue an opinion later this spring. If it refuses to accept the public nuisance doctrine as a justification for interfering with the regulatory process, suits involving the public trust doctrine will be more likely to fail. The teen plaintiffs don’t affect the legal question. But they do make me wonder what it’s like to parent a kid with that kind of passion.

Alec’s parents were clearly the kind of people who would take their child, at 12, to see a movie about global warming. But what they (or she; only Alec’s mother is linked with him in the media) don’t appear to have been powerful environmental activists, and that’s exactly what Alec has become. Alec created his own environmental slide show and traveled around California with it the same year. He met Al Gore and became one of his presenters, and is now organizing, for next week, a series of youth marches around the world. The motivation seems to come from Alec, but no teenager could accomplish those things without parental support (if nothing else, he doesn’t drive). Alec’s marches are scheduled in honor of Mother’s Day, and as I read about Alec, I find myself thinking more about his mom, the parent who didn’t let a little inconvenience get in the way of helping her kid follow his truth.