

Good afternoon, Judge. You have heard from my codefendants about climate science, about the impacts of burning coal, and about the effects of climate change being felt in places like New Mexico and around the world. I want to take a few moments of your time and bring us back to New England, to here, to this May afternoon.

As a New England resident, I have a deep, deep sense of connection to the land here, and I imagine that perhaps you and others in this courtroom share a bit of that sense of place, that feeling of being at home in the world around you.

When I talk about feeling at home, I'm thinking about the feeling that for me, comes from standing with my boots on a rocky mountaintop studded with old-growth spruce and alpine plants, the feeling of the whole world spread in front of you out to the horizon.

I'm thinking about the feeling of absolute crisp stillness when you walk outdoors at night in the winter, trees thick with snow and the sky thick with stars.

Or the particular feel of driving down a dirt road lumpy with frost heaves in mid-March, the fragrant steam of sugarhouses rising through the air and the sunshine hinting at spring to come.

There's the feeling of digging your hands into the gritty, moist soil of your garden, planting peas or pansies or pulling out dandelions.

Or the feeling of biting into a fresh local peach in August, so sticky and sweet that you have to stand over your kitchen sink or outside in your driveway as you eat it and try not to let too much juice fall on your shorts.

And then there is the glory of mid-May days like this past week — before it turned unseasonably, unsettling hot — the feeling of sun on bare skin, the new leaves like tiny bright green surprises unfurling more every day, the world so luxurious and summery that all you want to do is sit in your backyard with friends and drink it in.

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This is the part where I could tell you a lot of facts about the terrible effects of climate change here in New England, small but disastrous effects on these ecosystems that we call home that have deadly consequences for all of us. But I think you've probably heard it all before, from my co-defendants in this courtroom as well as from turning on the news every day.

We also hear a lot about how climate change is caused by humans. This is technically true — but blaming “humankind” in a broad swath for the damages caused by climate change puts responsibility everywhere and nowhere. Humankind at large is not the problem. Very specific humans making very specific choices are the problem. Our communities — especially low-income communities, people of color, and indigenous people — are suffering right now, not because of people like me and my codefendants, but because of lawmakers, governments, and corporate

leaders. These select few people in power choose over and over to prioritize profits and personal gain instead of taking the drastic, rapid action needed to halt the climate catastrophe. Our communities — all of us — our futures are thrown under the bus (or perhaps under the coal train?!), along with our beloved and familiar ecosystems that we call home.

This is where the responsibility lies: with the 100 companies found to be responsible for over 70% of global carbon emissions, with the regulatory bodies that choose to prop up systems and policies that benefit the few instead of the many, with entities like Granite Shore Power, and CSX and PanAm Railways, who continue to burn coal while the world is on fire.

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I don't know about you, but when I hear that the emissions caused by these enormous, far-away entities means that we might lose local peaches and snow-covered winter nights and perfect May days, my first instinct is to curl up in a ball and plug my ears and hope it doesn't happen and realize that it's happening anyway — all the catastrophic weather and the displaced people and the farms struggling to survive and the species driven out of their ecosystems. Our world perhaps damaged beyond repair. Lost. Gone.

But grief is something that I have learned to carry with me. On a personal level, my father died last year from Alzheimer's disease and Lewy body dementia. The discordant loss of no longer having a father after 35 years as a daughter now lives alongside the discordant loss of the familiar rhythms of New England seasons. My heart breaks for lost species, for friends and elders who are no longer with us, for the millions of people denied a basic right to a good life because the folks in power profit from staying afraid of everyone who doesn't have the right gender or skin color or economic class.

Part of what helps me to hold all of that sadness is understanding that in order to grieve something, you have to love it. It's that love of new green leaves, of snow and stars and the granite hills rolling away from me, the love given to me by my father that keeps me going. It is grief *and* love, that inextricable tangle of being alive in this impossibly beautiful world, that propels me to uncurl from my ball and act on my conscience.

There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease. There is a cure for climate change, or at least a treatment — the people who call the shots need to stop burning fossil fuels, right now. I choose to act for that cure. I choose to act for a future that's better for *everyone*, not just a select few, where everyone gets to feel pleasure and joy and belonging. I choose to act so that we might still have maple syrup and garden soil and the wind on mountaintops and the laughter of friends under a budding crabapple tree in May.

It is in that spirit that I ask for an unconditional discharge for myself and my codefendants. Thank you.