

Remarks by members of SolaRise: Yusur Jasim, Lucia Daranyi, and Siri Pierce,
2019 NRCM Conservation Leadership Award Recipients
October 16, 2019

Yusur: We would first like to thank the Natural Resources Council of Maine for this honor. We are so grateful and humbled to be here among so many incredible environmental changemakers in our state!

And thank you to all of the youth activists and community leaders who have helped us towards our goal of solarizing our schools!

We would especially like to thank the Portland Climate Action Team, Sarah LaChance, Derek Pierce, Robert Stottard, and Gus Goodwin for all you have done to help turn our vision into a soon to be reality! And thank you to Troy Moon, Doug Sherwood, Steve Stilphin, the Superintendent and the Portland School Board for hearing our voices.

All of the money we raised, which was over \$20,000, came from individual donations and local business contributions. We are beyond thankful for everyone who contributed to our GiveGab campaign. Special thanks to our sponsors including Allagash Brewing Company, Revision Energy, and REVERB. The school board would probably not have even considered our proposal if we hadn't been able to cover the costs of the initial reports and studies with the money we raised.

Lucia: This was an effort driven by youth, but supported by the greater Portland community. We rallied and advocated and sent more emails than we can count, but our city listened, and our school board listened.

Too often, we are overwhelmed by the daunting prospect of combating the climate crisis. And to some extent we should be overwhelmed. We are on the precipice of disaster. And our leaders have failed too often to implement the solutions that are so readily available to us.

Right now, we rely heavily on the small, but mighty grassroots coalitions and organizations like the many represented in this room tonight to create real change in our state and in our world.

But what SolaRISE Portland has taught us is that grassroots organizing matters. And even more importantly grassroots youth organizing matters. Not all adults are ready to listen to us, but many are.

Thanks to legislation passed by our state legislature and Governor Mills, Maine is becoming a frontier for renewable energy development. We must take advantage of this fleeting moment.

Siri: This project started with just a few students sitting at a table imagining solar panels on their high school roof. It grew to a 3.5 megawatt solar array on around 20 acres of land. Now it is a small part of a much larger collaboration between our city and Maine companies and universities to develop an array that could generate as much as 150 megawatts and cover close to 900 acres of land, one of the largest solar arrays in New England. Portland's portion of this project could offset approximately 70-80% of all emissions from city owned buildings and still be only 12% of the entire array.

And we are only one small school district, in one small city, in one large world.

Tonight, students are urging the Portland City Council to approve a city-wide Climate Emergency. Last week, South Portland passed the resolution. Just weeks ago, hundreds of Maine youth left school and to participate in the Climate Strike. We were among millions across the globe. We are only a few kids in a generation of rebellion (not just in the traditional teenage ways), and I am in awe of the change we are going to create.

Thank you again to the Natural Resources Council! We are so honored to be here.