

PRESS RELEASE

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Artist and author Julian Raven Files Lawsuit Against New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) in Landmark Property Rights Battle

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After over a decade of bureaucratic stonewalling, international artist and civic constitutional activist **Julian Raven** has an OSC (Order to Show Cause) demand lawsuit—**Raven v. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC)**, Index No. 2025-1215, in **New York Supreme Court, Elmira**. The case marks a new front in Raven's redress to government abuse that crosses his path on his American citizen's journey. Raven says his objective is, "...to straighten the crooked, confront and expose institutional corruption and defend citizen rights." This latest action, joins his nationally recognized and ongoing free-speech and trust beneficiary rights battle, *Raven v. Smithsonian Institution*, et al, in Washington, D.C.

The legal conflict centers on the DEC's **September 5, 2025 "Order on Consent"**, which threatens a \$600,000.00 **seizure of soil and property at 714 Baldwin Street, Elmira**, a building Raven purchased in 2014 and has since transformed into his vibrant art studio. Despite decades of industrial contamination from likely adjacent local sources, preceding his ownership, the DEC has repeatedly refused to indemnify him, classifying Raven as a *Potentially Responsible Party* (PRP) for pollution he did not cause.

"The DEC's action amounts to environmental eminent domain based on a faulty conclusion, ultimately violating my due process rights," Raven stated. "They have slow-walked a supposed "significant threat" to the community for 20 years, folded their arms for ten years, ignored my cooperation, and now they want to commandeer my soil by force, leaving me possibly on the hook for the hefty cost. It's arbitrary, capricious, and an abuse of state power."

A Decade of Stonewalling

When Raven first purchased the long-abandoned Baldwin Street property, he did so knowing the site's history as a designated brownfield. His goal was bold yet simple: **redeem a blighted industrial building as a former contractor, also through his art and visionary renewal**, transforming toxicity into beauty, which he did. From the

beginning, Raven sought partnership with the DEC, requesting **indemnification and collaboration**—a model that has revitalized cities across America where artists lead the way in reimagining derelict spaces.

But instead of cooperation, Raven met with bureaucratic obstruction. Rather than recognizing an artist's investment in community regeneration, the DEC treated him as a suspect.

“The DEC could have made Elmira a case study in creative environmental renewal inspiring the same across depressed cities in upstate New York,” Raven said. “Instead, they doubled down like prosecutors, dangling the threat of massive clean up costs over my head.”

The Legal Crossroads

Raven's lawsuit, which the artist filed himself, seeks judicial review and correction of what he calls a “**fundamental misclassification**” of the site's contamination level—“an error that has fueled the DEC's aggressive posture,” he said. Named in the suit are **Governor Kathy Hochul, DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton, Project Attorney Dudley Loew, and Project Manager Kira Bruno**. The case is before **Judge Christopher Baker** at the New York **Supreme Court in Chemung County**. The defendants will be defended by **Assistant Attorney General Mike Danaher** from the New York State **Attorney General Letitia ‘Tish’ James’** office in Binghamton, New York.

At issue: whether the DEC can lawfully seize or disturb soil based on an erroneous misclassification, and long term, whether it can continue to classify a cooperative, non-culpable property owner as a PRP in perpetuity. Raven's position is that the state's actions are **arbitrary, capricious**, and although constitutional questions are not part of the present action, **they are a violation of the 4th, 5th and 14th amendment's unreasonable seizure, due process and equal protection rights**.

From Elmira to Washington: A Pattern of Institutional Corruption

Raven's decade long confrontation with the DEC is not an isolated event—it's the **next chapter in a larger saga**. His parallel litigation, *Raven v. Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery Director Kim Sajet*, (17-cv-01240 TNM & 22-cv-02809 CRC) took on the abusive actions of its director and the **Smithsonian's secret legal structure** and its entanglement with the U.S. Government. That case, now continuing in a new action in D.C. federal court as **Raven v. President Donald Trump/Chancellor John Roberts, Secretary Lonnie Bunch, the U.S. Congress and the Smithsonian Institution**, centers on constitutional and equity questions of **breaches of trust**,

federal trust law, executive overreach, separation of powers and the Smithsonian's legal entity status.(25-cv-02332 TSC(TNM))

“Whether it’s a national museum or a state environmental agency, the pattern is the same,” Raven observed. “Bureaucracies and bureaucrats that forget they exist to serve the public, not rule over them.”

Raven identifies himself as both an artist, author and an activist **beneficiary of the Smithsonian Trust**, standing as what he calls “*the Defender of the Smithsonian Will*.” His litigation against the Smithsonian exposed contradictions in the federal government’s own understanding of the Institution’s legal status—a confusion even **The Washington Post’s Maura Judkis** noted in her June 2025 article, where she wrote that Raven’s lawsuits “*raise a good question that remains unanswered*.”

Raven’s 2022 book “***Odious and Cerberus: An American immigrant’s odyssey and his free-speech legal war against Smithsonian Corruption***,” documents his journey to America and the first seven years of his decade-long Smithsonian legal battle.

Artist as Activist: The Apostolic Model

Raven sees his courtroom battles not merely as legal fights but as **moral and artistic acts of speaking truth to power**—an expression of faith and civic duty. Citing the Apostle Paul’s appeal to Caesar in the Book of Acts, he views litigation as a modern form of righteous protest.

“After an unlawful arrest, Paul used the rights of his Roman citizenship to advance the truth of the Gospel. Martin Luther King Jr. used peaceful protest and litigation to shake the conscience of the nation. If you don’t take a stand when the system fails and falls on you, who will? The courtroom has become my canvas,” Raven says.

Raven describes his philosophy as “**artistic litigation**”—**using the law as a brushstroke on the canvas of public conscience.**”

A Tale of Two Battles: Environmental Truth and Civic Faith

At the heart of both *Raven v. Smithsonian* and *Raven v. NYS DEC* is the same question: **what happens when institutions lose sight of their founding purpose?**

The Smithsonian’s corruption of the Smithsonian Trust parallels, in Raven’s view, the DEC’s distortion of its mission of holistic environmental stewardship into blind prosecution. Both cases reveal systems that punish integrity and reward inertia.

“Government must be of the people, by the people, and for the people,” Raven reminds, echoing Lincoln. “That includes artists, entrepreneurs, and dreamers who step up to rebuild what’s been broken.”

Local Irony: From P-Nut the Squirrel to the Artist’s Soil

Raven’s case also shines a light on another local story, illustrating a pattern of misjudgment by the DEC, which in 2024 drew public ridicule for its outsized **seizure of “P-Nut the Squirrel,”** a beloved rescue animal that had become an internet sensation. That invasive animal seizure prompted ongoing litigation, a public relations fiasco, was widely mocked across social media, and mirrors the agency’s inability to distinguish between a **real environmental threat** and a **symbolic civic opportunity**.

“They couldn’t see the public benefit and great PR in skillfully using the squirrel story to inspire conservation, animal rescue, education and informing about the law. In my case, they have refused my multiple invitations into crafting a positive story of artistic neighborhood/city transformation, by a simple stroke of their pen at no cost to the DEC! It makes me wonder if the NYS DEC has another agenda?” Raven quipped.

An Invitation to Witness Justice

The **Order to Show Cause** hearing in **Raven v. NYS DEC** is scheduled for **November 19, 2025, at 9:30 AM**, in the Supreme Court in the **Hazlett Building, Elmira, NY**. Citizens, journalists, artists and community leaders are invited to attend and witness what promises to be a defining moment in New York’s struggle between bureaucracy and creativity.

More information is available at www.714BaldwinStreet.com, www.smithsoninstitution.com, www.JulianRaven.com, www.facebook.com/julianravenusa and <https://substack.com/@julianraven> and <https://www.ravenartgallery.store>