

FREE!

# THE RAGING PELICAN

JOURNAL OF GULF COAST RESISTANCE



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Raging Pelican, a free, all-volunteer Gulf South newspaper telling the truths that sell-out media & compromised “non-profits” won’t touch. The informal theme for this issue is “Whose Gulf?”

To whom do the lands, waters and resources of our region belong? Do they belong to our communities, the fishers, hunters, trappers and others who’ve lived here for generations, or to the industrial despoilers, backed by the violence of the state? Who reaps the benefits of our coast’s natural bounties... and how is that decided?

Do those decisions rest with the government, whose “law” some treat as God’s word, but which is really just a made-up system devised by powerful men to keep themselves in power? That “Law” enacted by murderous police, judges with hidden agendas, and politicians in the pocket of the oil & gas industry? The same Law that protects BP while locking up poor people for profit? The same Law that steals prairie lands to build toxic pipelines? The same majestic Law that “legalizes” war, genocide & enslavement? That Law? Is that what gets to decide?

We along the coast have seen the government’s law. It’s why we’re in this position: sinking, flooding, poisoned, and dispossessed. Desperate, dying, and denied legal recourse-- for the Law belongs always to lawmakers, and serves those who purchase them.

The Law had its chance. Its hour has passed.

## CATCHING FOG IN A NET

BY KASANDRA LARSEN

We're too tired to be polite, bound, tied to oily ground, unlike bright clouds. My mouth is full of frogs. You're thirsty, fishing for honesty, not sentiment. When quiet, lost fog comes to visit

under skin. Try this: lift your head and listen. Stay civil. Lean into the joke, know serendipity puts out high fire even when there's already smoke, diffused through a dry throat,

rolling in tight spirals to fill a sighing sky. Last night, we shot flaming epithets, hit our clear targets, ignited hopes of rain that wasn't on the way. Instead, bumping us suddenly with a grey

glow, morning and some memory knows -- cumulus will come down to touch us, creep through the weeds. Cirrus might still be between galaxies, too far for stretched skin, miles of webbing

to catch and save. We hope to blow fresh promises into pelicans’ gullets, orphans’ coastal mouths, to swallow more than whispers, breathe liquid made of new waves rippling out.

## THEIR FAILURES NEED TO MAKE US WORRIED

BY IZZY ONEIRIC

It’s still there  
In the water

On sediment  
On seafloor

Being eaten

Dispersant waves

What we don’t have  
Is the light.

I was sent to read a letter  
To make sure they knew  
We knew why this happened.

Stick a stick into the sand.  
It’s still there.

Dispersant burned upon the ocean’s surface.

Talk about your journey  
And all that you have found:

11 dead. People fighting oil  
Made sick, exhausted.  
Money—care—claims—legislation—  
Not there. Suffering under  
Glut of oil and chemicals

Inedible fish.

*This poem is an "erasure"-- a poem created by removing words. The original text this poem is an erasure" of can be found at <http://bit.ly/YpjGOg>*

## FEEDBACK? SUBMISSIONS? \$\$\$ DONATIONS?

We want your reports of resistance, or just your grievances that big media won’t touch... from the big cities to the small towns, anywhere in the greater Gulf Coast. What are you seeing and hearing? What difficulties are you facing? Drop us a line. We also would love your black-and-white art!!

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# NORCO

BY D. ACOSTA

In the predawn morning of May 5th, 1988, the catalytic cracking unit went boom at the Shell Oil Refinery in Norco, Louisiana. The shockwave blossomed out in a twenty-mile radius. The intensity of the blast was 1/20th the size of the atomic bomb dropped over Nagasaki. My family's home was five blocks away from the industrial fence line. It blew out all our windows. I was three years old and slept through the whole thing. My dad gingerly picked the glass off me, woke me up, and led my family through the lights and sirens of the evacuation zone to my grandma's house ten miles up Airline Highway.

The blast presaged my childhood fascination with the neighboring oil refinery. I was 7 at the time that I first remember stopping and admiring it. I was playing for the St. Charles Parish junior basketball team. The refinery immediately surrounded our small gym on three sides. I would linger by the door before practice, admiring the neighboring architecture, the little particles of infrastructure that hung in an almost delicate unity. Smoke and wire, halogen and steel. It was the first vertical skyline I ever knew in that chronically flat Louisiana delta.

Observing the refinery became a frequent pastime of mine as I grew older. I spent many

nights with friends on the roof of my parents' house watching the flares pulse. We sat for hours drinking at the railroad line that led into the refinery. Teetering along pipelines, we'd balance ourselves over the bank of the Mississippi River. To me, oil infrastructure was esoteric, beautiful, and alive. I was awed as much by its aesthetic as its destructive potential.

My childhood fascination continued into adulthood. I began collecting and acquiring data on the oil industry in Norco and across the Gulf Coast. In graduate school, I aggregated all the spatial data of oil infrastructure in Louisiana on my hard drive into a single map. Pipelines, extraction sites, injection wells, abandoned barges and rigs, heliports, highways, shipping facilities, buffer zones. The map that this produced was a complex, frenetic crosshatch of information. It confirmed the sensation that I'd felt deep in my bones since I was a child: that oil infrastructure was embedded throughout the landscape of my life. It was not simply a fixture of the landscape; it formed the landscape, created and destroyed it.

The direct, concrete spatial influence of the petrochemical industry was nowhere more apparent to me than in a small quadrant of Norco called Diamond. My close childhood friend

Chris grew up there. We used to give him rides to and from basketball practice. The Shell Chemical facility was located a couple blocks from Chris' porch. If you walked half a block up, you'd run into the armored levee of the Mississippi River. If you turned around and walked a couple blocks down, you'd hit the Illinois Central Railroad. Turn right, and you'd intersect a linear thicket of undeveloped land called the Gaspard Line. Those were the square boundaries of Diamond: a chemical plant, a railroad, a levee, and some woods. I knew from visiting Chris that everyone within those boundaries was black and that nearly everyone beyond it was white. I didn't understand the significance of that fact until years later.

Plantations in the region were historically located on the high ground of the Mississippi River. Freed slaves often settled on or near these same plantations to continue laboring as sharecroppers. When the petrochemical industry moved in, they required large swaths of cheap land beyond the flood zone with barge access to Gulf oil fields. Because plantation land met these criteria perfectly, the petrochemical plants became extravagant neighbors of the sharecropping communities that remained. Diamond is but one of many poor black "fence line" communities in the river parishes.





Following increasing pressure by Diamond residents and their environmental justice allies, Shell entered into a negotiated buyout process, purchasing properties from fence line residents in Diamond and elsewhere in Norco. Through these buyouts, Shell acquired 70 acres of residential land. Most of that was located along the high ground natural levee of the Mississippi River. Chris's house was once nested in a rich streetscape of old Creole cottages. Children played in the yards; you could hear the church choir singing on weekends from a few doors down. Now his house is one of the last ones standing. Today the porch looks out on a vacant buffer zone that gives way to the jagged skyline of Shell Chemical.

By buying out Diamond residents, Shell further expanded its footprint in the "500-year floodplain"—a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designation for the most elevated and least vulnerable real estate in the region. Half of all Norco property belongs to the petrochemical industry, and it accounts for 73% of all property within the 500-year flood plain. The acquisition of the most secure and least environmentally precarious land in the region was a hallmark of the industry from the beginning.

The Shell Chemical refinery first surrounded the Diamond community, creating inhospitable conditions for residents. The residents campaigned for home buyouts, and eventually got them. Now that neighborhood is gone, subsumed into refinery infrastructure, and the oil industry has further monopolized the high ground real estate of Norco. Over the course of my lifetime, I have watched an entire region of my hometown disappear due to the spatial logic of the petrochemical machine.

The oil industry can sometimes seem abstract. As urban residents, we rely on hidden infrastructure to conduct our daily routines—sewerage and water, electricity, wireless networks, etc. Oil and gas infrastructure is no different. But in Norco, that infrastructure is visible everywhere. It rises to the surface. It towers above the community, literally, with so much monolithic verticality that it's impossible to ignore. The sadness, difficulty, danger, and surreal beauty that the industry brings become as much a fact of the physical landscape as the wind and the rain.

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# CREOLE TOMATOES

BY GEOFF MUNSTERMAN

Ripped from the vine once its color comes  
delightfully close to rosy, it's sent north to

flourish or rot—chambers never stiffening.  
Fat & thin-skinned, the basin silt filters

a natural spiciness to the ripened fruit.  
You'd like to think it some seed-spun

nothing, some frivolous ingredient  
thickening your lettuce-ravaged salad.

You like to think it's some blood-colored  
fool for your amusement fattening

your listlessly scribbled grocery list.  
But one bite in, with its juices dribbling

your chin you'll know even if you won't  
admit it that the creole tomato suffers

its fools & spends its precious ripeness  
trying to feed folks its flesh instead of

proving its bruises. Tastes like home  
& home never needs dashes of salt

to be stomached. You could cut it  
into quarters or core it like an apple,

sliver into slices, dice, or stew. Use it  
how you want it, or don't want it.

Pretty simple as a matter of fact.  
It's the Mississippi River as it drains

a continent forming more continent  
for fur trappers hungering a better life

to camp out on as they hunt muskrat  
snacking on basin-flavored weeds.

Trappers that'd rather capsized boats  
instead of letting provincial weasels

pry what little joy a hard life gives.  
Politicians rip the land from farmers

carving open oysters for the world—  
what's left produces citrus sweeter

than the golden state's or Florida's  
and pops its crops in spite of floods,

boll weevils, crap grass, or any evils.  
Roots too deep to ever waver, it lives

through even basin drifting into Gulf  
in parcels large as football fields at a rate

of one per thirty-eight minutes. Exists  
tenuous at best, yet produces huge fruit

too good to not get acid-sick ingesting.  
A crop that takes nothing but sunrise

serious—its survival making it delicious.

# LOOKING SOUTH

BY T. MAYHEART DARDAR

Economic crashes, global climate change, resource wars, and political instability are just some of the complex challenges facing the world's peoples in these early years of the twenty-first century. As the governments of the world profess a desire to find solutions, we need to look beyond their rhetoric to their underlying philosophies to determine the sincerity of those professions. The theology of dominion came to our shores with the Columbian landfall in 1492. Armed with Papal decrees that subjected the lands under his footfall to his Christian King, Columbus established the pattern for devouring the peoples and resources of the land. For Indigenous Peoples the struggle over the centuries has been to reconcile this world view with their own and to define their position in a world that saw the increasing ascension of European man and the increasing subjugation of the native world.

As the original peoples of the Gulf Coast, how do we survive as Indigenous communities in the face of the decades of wholesale destruction brought about the unchecked economic exploitation that European dominion has brought? As we still deal with the aftereffects of the BP spill and the ongoing challenge of coastal land loss, on what will we build the foundation for our path to the future?

In the early years of the nineteenth century this conflict of values and identity would surface in the southeast within the Creek Nation. Inspired by the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh, the Red Sticks from the Upper Creek towns attempted to draw a line between themselves and the assimilated Lower Creek towns. The Red Sticks sought a return to traditional culture and values while the Lower towns pursued an alliance with the growing American empire. This conflict quickly escalated into a full scale civil war. The Americans, using this as a pretext, sided with those assimilated Lower towns led by William McIntosh, seeking to ensure the ascendancy of a compliant Creek government.

In 1814 the alliance of U.S. forces, Lower Creeks and pro-American Choctaws defeated the Red Stick efforts at Horseshoe Bend, but the cultural, spiritual and social conflict at the heart of the struggle continues to this very day here along the Gulf Coast.

half hour of face time with the President for a handful of selected native politicians. These were, for the most part, representatives of successful gaming tribes who had contributed handsomely to the cause of the Democratic Party. You can rest assured that the conversation was more about the security of tribal "economic development" than

**"YOU HAVE GIVEN HIM DOMINION OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, ALL SHEEP AND OXEN, AND ALSO THE BEAST OF THE FIELD, THE BIRDS OF THE HEAVENS, AND THE FISH OF THE SEA, WHATEVER PASSES ALONG THE PATHS OF THE SEAS."**

## **- PSALM 8:6-8, ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION**

The treaty that marked the Red Stick defeat and the land concessions granted to the United States (What was essentially a Creek civil war produced an American victor) was signed at Fort Jackson adjacent to the Hickory Grounds, the capital of the Creek Nation. This was the social and sacred heart of the people and the resting place for the bones of their ancestors. Today the site is owned by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, the cultural if not genealogical heirs of William McIntosh. The Poarch have decided their path to the future is dependent on building a multi-million dollar hotel/casino complex atop the graves of the old ones. The theology of domination has come full circle, now infesting the hearts of indigenous societies that it failed to totally destroy.

Much was made of the meetings between tribal leaders and the now re-elected President of the United States. There was much pomp and circumstance surrounding what amounted to a

any human rights discourse. The tendency of tribal leadership is to look "north" towards the marble edifices of Washington D.C. for direction, hoping to secure the crumbs that fall from the empire's table. It would seem that a nod or handshake from President Obama is of greater value than any substantial move towards genuine sovereignty.

For the Indigenous Peoples of the Gulf Coast, recovering from oil spills and hurricanes and facing rising tides and a shrinking land base, the choice is clear. Do we commit our precious resources to the quest for recognition by the government that has marginalized and ignored us, or do we look for another path towards the future?

If we listen, we can hear the voices of our Indigenous brothers and sisters rising with the songs of the Red Sticks. From the mountains

of southern Mexico to the tundra of northwest Canada they are singing the same song. They are indeed “Idle No More,” and they are determined to lay hold of the vision of sovereignty and self-determination that the words of Tecumseh have carried across the centuries.

If we are to resist assimilation and survive as the free, self-determined people we were destined to be, we have to seek out the embers that burned at Horseshoe Bend and re-light the fires of our people. We must dedicate ourselves to our survival as a People; this is not the struggle of the individual.

Only in the mind of western man do you prepare for the apocalypse by hoarding can goods and weapons and pretending to be “John Wayne.” If we are to survive we must do so as a tribe, as a Nation. Our strength and tenacity has always been anchored in our collective ties to one another and to the land that has always sustained us.

If the Indigenous Peoples of the Gulf Coast are to survive, we must look away from the path of assimilation. We must look “south” for a fresh vision and a firm foundation for ourselves and the generations that will follow us.

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“Tecumseh’s goal was to clear space on the ground for the free and unfettered existence of Onkwehonwe. His goal was not to live without white government, culture, and society, but to live against them. To do this today, Onkwehonwe warriors will need to engage the colonizer in a rebellion of truth, redefine the meaning of our renewed world in a mystic vision of struggle and justice, and force a reckoning with our regenerated and unified Onkwehonwe power through rites of resurgence. This is the warrior’s path of spiritual self-determination that has been laid before us by the ancestors and the Brothers and Sisters who share our values and vision”.

- Taiaiake Alfred, Wasáse

**“WE MUST PROTECT THE FOREST FOR OUR CHILDREN, GRAND-CHILDREN AND CHILDREN YET TO BE BORN. WE MUST PROTECT THE FORESTS FOR THOSE WHO CAN’T SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES SUCH AS THE BIRDS, ANIMALS, FISH AND TREES.”**

**- QWATSINAS, NUXALK NATION**



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# AN INTRODUCTION TO TILT- DEATH IN THE AGE OF PETROCHEMICALS

BY PAULINE M. ALVAR

No one has treated as many patients exposed to the oil products in the wake of the BP spill as Dr. Michael Robichaux. Among his successes, Dr. Mike (as his patients affectionately call him) has helped some of those suffering health problems caused by the chemicals in oil and dispersants by using a detox program originally devised to treat a group with similar symptoms: veterans returning from the first Gulf War.

It took 15 years for the US Government to acknowledge that the multi-system health issues of thousands of soldiers were not imaginary; this acknowledgement does not mean they've received the care they need. "Gulf War Syndrome" is the shorthand name for a pattern of acute and chronic symptoms including memory loss, gastrointestinal and respiratory issues, as well as fatigue, pain, and an overall increased sensitivity to exposure to chemicals. While it has been studied and treated (with some success), it has not been acknowledged within a larger context. Gulf War Syndrome is actually a syndrome of petrochemical exposure, leading to a disease process still not fully understood by the medical community: Toxic-Induced Loss of Tolerance, or TILT.

## MORE AND MORE OF US WILL SEE AND EXPERIENCE THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO PETROCHEMICALS.

Although large scale processing of petroleum began in the late 1800s, petrochemical production really took off just after World War II. Our understanding of how these chemicals impact human health is limited because humans have only received this kind of high or ongoing exposure in recent decades. There is no test to diagnose TILT; this may be because the symptoms are so varying and multi-system, or, perhaps more importantly, because there is such a massive disincentive for us to fully understand this disease process: it is caused by the most economically powerful industry in the history of the world.

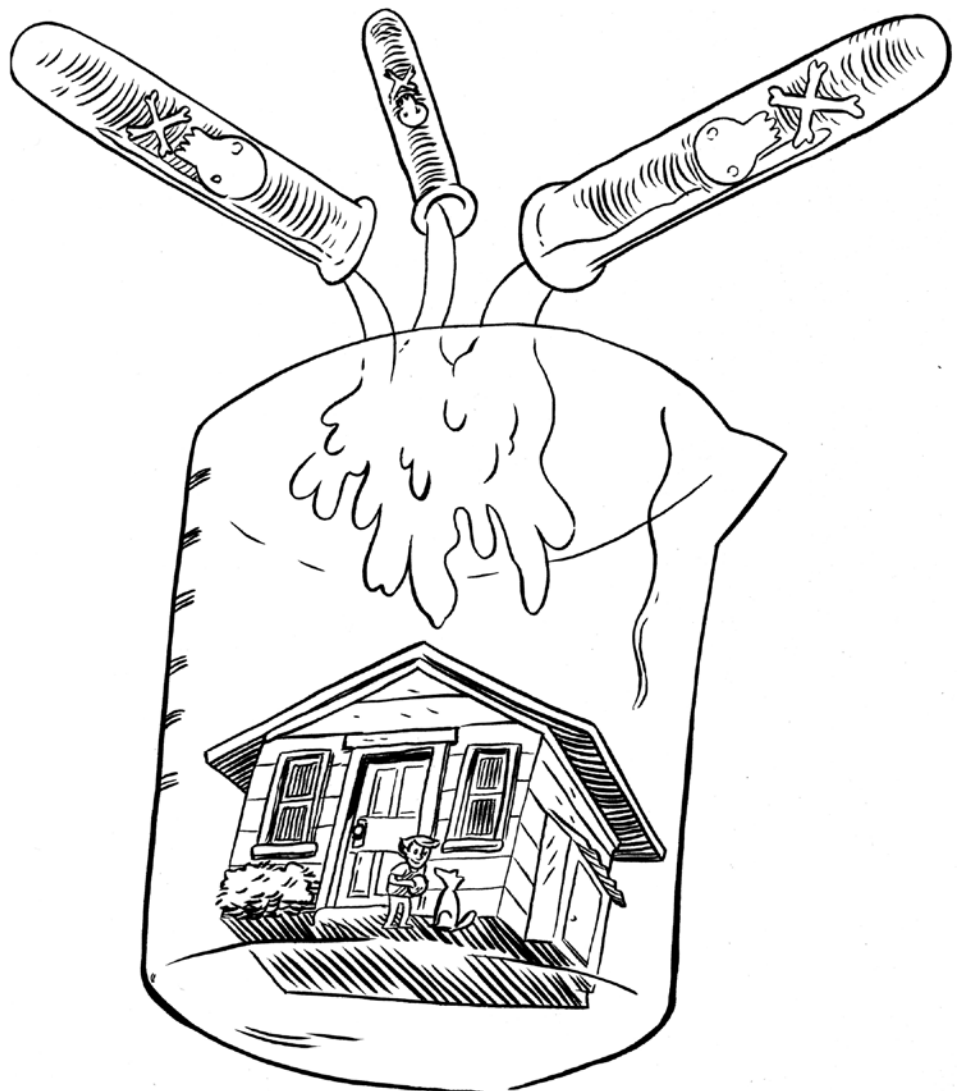
TILT is not limited to those impacted by the Gulf Coast BP Oil Spill or Gulf War Vets. The nationwide spread of hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas production (note that the chemicals used for fracturing are similar to petroleum-based dispersants like Corexit) has moved this level of chemical exposure to nearly every state in the union. The must-see film "Gasland" shows rural folk suffering symptoms remarkably similar to those experienced by Gulf Coast residents exposed to crude and dispersants. Livestock may be our canary in the coal mine in fracking exposure: in 2009, in Caddo Parish, Louisiana, 19 cows died after a mere hour's exposure to hydrofracking chemicals. Necropsy showed respiratory failure as the cause of death.

Perhaps it will be argued those cows had some pre-existing condition-- that they were exposed to cigarette smoke or that some of them had

asthma, or bronchitis as calves. Perhaps it's only a coincidence that they dropped dead after sixty minutes of exposure to fracking chemicals.

More and more of us will see and experience the effects, fatal and otherwise, of exposure to petrochemicals. We will see it due to industrial "accidents" like the Exxon Valdez and BP spills, business-as-usual hydrofracking, and the corporate-directed U.S. war machine which treats our troops as expendable livestock. We must begin connecting these medical dots between what the oil and gas industry wants us to believe are isolated incidents or illnesses unrelated to chemical exposure.

Corporate influence reaches deep, even into the supposedly objective worlds of science and medicine. Does their money talk loud enough to drown out our suffering?



# Naw

BY GEOFF MUNSTERMAN

1

Descending through the perfect  
dark gulf water  
of the childhood where weekends  
bait & schoolmates drowned  
when the adults weren't watching,  
I learned my skill for catching with nets  
angered stars starving on gases  
asphyxiating algaed memories.

Like a hook that scratches past  
a night-crawler's belly  
snags guts as it punctures,  
I punched myself a life inside  
weaved tendrils  
as the blood squeezed from  
whatever excavated relics  
my past manages  
releases & eases  
in its tangled wake.

4

Some years back the net catches my father.  
We spread him where the waves  
wander best since his life was spent  
sawing boards to dust & knocking  
six-packs back in flatboats.  
As ash he gets to wander  
while his life was ordered  
like a weaving pattern—  
the net not intricate enough  
to catch his essence anymore.

Same goes for my Uncle—  
bagged ash that can't tell you  
how to navigate the river  
no matter how nice you ask it.  
Poured from his zipper  
& the ashes dash upstream  
past river towns the ships  
he captained pass through.

2

The trawl net is a shimmering sea-creature,  
a hair-matted swamp beagle,  
a shivering angel clutching shoreline  
like a life-preserver.  
In cypress trees above us  
a net of silver moss grows.  
Its serrated braids blaze limbs  
redolent as flame-charred hog skin  
hit with spices as bonfires roil.

Whatever spools emptied  
when the net was made  
spin infinite in the minds of its weavers—  
& when nets wither with neglect,  
the ministry of redwing blackbirds  
sifted from the sky shuffle their  
blood-mimicking wings  
& trickle droplets of feathers  
over overgrown orange groves.

5

Sometimes a 90-proof hymn  
isn't strong enough  
to get your sins sober.  
When Death casts his net  
you are your own salvation's  
groomsman & the gold ring  
tickling your suit's breast pocket  
isn't fished until the bride's veil  
is lifted & her eyes writhe  
the parish church's prised lights  
& the only uttered vow  
is a jukebox psalm categorized as  
a folk/country disco-teching, punk rock contemporary, abstract expressionism, bluegrassin'  
zombie-movie, levee-billy, dirty boogie, jesus-ain't-want-me-for-a-sunbeamin', resurrection stomp.

Tunes too good for Death  
to not tap his bruised boots to.  
Might even flirt with settling down.  
If Death asks you be his groomsman,  
you tell him Naw.

3

Death kicks his habit out like jams,  
settles for tossing nets  
for shrimp where pay enough for  
smokes & longnecks costs you  
your back & the shirt off it.  
And Death knows this place  
because his brothers moved here  
during Prohibition when rum-runners  
sucked scum from bullet wounds  
to keep the Quarter jazz joints boozed.

His brothers' houses rust  
the river-bends of towns  
submerged & vanished  
like a dropped knife shimmering  
as it falls through Mississippi River chop—  
knives that come back  
when tide drives them up  
like filaments of iron drawn by magnets.



# BLOCK THE FLOWS- DEFEATING TAR SANDS OIL IN THE US & CANADA

BY ANONYMOUS

Across North America, people are mobilizing to choke off the flow of Tar Sands oil, a disastrous project that aims to consolidate massive State and corporate power. Recently the US presidential election was used to pressure Obama into temporarily halting the Keystone XL pipeline, which would transport Tar Sands oil from Canada to refineries and ports in the Gulf of Mexico. Nevertheless, a permit is all that's preventing this pipeline from crossing the border, and it appears Obama, corporate lackey that he is, will soon capitulate.<sup>1</sup> We must urgently reinforce the blockades and material bases, our greatest defense against the Tar Sands project.

This is an opportunity for us to act in solidarity with the Indigenous-led resistance to the Northern Gateway pipeline in British Columbia as well as those fighting the Eastern Gateway in Quebec, Ontario and Maine. Effective resistance against Tar Sands pipelines in the US will be decisive in stopping the overall project, while also helping create the models and movements needed to confront dangerous infrastructure projects in the future. What follows are more details and context for the largest proposed US Tar Sands oil pipeline, the Keystone XL.



make a byproduct known as “dilbit”, a cocktail of corrosive chemicals that regularly ruptures pipelines, the most recent case being last month outside of Little Rock, Arkansas when an Exxon pipeline flooded a suburban community with hundreds of thousands of gallons of this mess. Spills such as these contaminate soil and waterways, and when ingested causes the same permanent respiratory problems suffered by so many who lived or worked near BP’s oil spill.

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The Tar Sands “Gigaproject” is the largest industrial project in human history and possibly the most destructive. The impact of Tar Sands’ strip-mining procedures on the environment alone is staggering: By releasing at least three times the CO2 emissions as regular oil production, it is slated to become the single largest North American contributor to climate change.<sup>2</sup> For the uninitiated, climate change—more appropriately known as climate catastrophe—will make life on earth untenable in the coming decades due to rising waters and rampant desertification.

In Alberta, where the Tar Sands are located, companies have already seized and begun strip-mining lands the Canadian government had previously guaranteed to First Nations communities. Altogether the area slated for mining is a landmass the size of Florida. In order for these companies to develop it all, however, the glut of tar sands oil must be able to reach ports so it can be sold on the global market. To this end, a sinister conglomerate of corporations are working on three vast pipeline routes to transport their product east, west and south (these pipelines effectively function as bottlenecks to the entire project, a point I’ll return to later). Completed, the pipelines would pass through the lands of yet more First Nations tribes as well as many farming communities.

What will be in these pipelines? Not oil, but something even worse: bitumen, a dense, grainy material that needs substantial further treatment at refineries to become oil. To transport it through pipelines, bitumen is mixed with dilutants—not so different from those BP recklessly dumped in the Gulf three years ago to cover up their oil disaster. Bitumen and dilutants combined

Fear of such spills is what’s motivating many farmers in Nebraska to oppose the Keystone XL, which TransCanada originally proposed would cross their water supply. While pro-pipeline PR scum shamelessly promote “job creation”, these farmers have pointed out the multitudinous threat to people’s ways of life posed by the contamination of the Ogallala aquifer. Yielding 30 percent of the water needed for all US agriculture and most of the drinking water in the High Plains region, contamination of this water source is a sweeping concern for nearly everyone—except of course the ruling class.

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As mentioned before, the Tar Sands pipelines are bottlenecks to the consolidation of power. Thus the task is simple: “If we can shut in the oil, we can bankrupt the mines.”<sup>3</sup> Case in point is the Northern Gateway’s Pacific Trails pipeline: Intended to transport bitumen across the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean, it met an impassable wall of First Nations communities united under the Yinka-Dene Alliance. This alliance has stated bitumen will not cross First Nations territory, effectively crippling a huge portion of the Tar Sands operation and sending companies scrambling to push through the Eastern and Southern Gateways in hopes of saving the project.

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<sup>1</sup> The State Department, TransCanada’s last hurdle before the president, has already reapproved the pipeline, calling it “environmentally sound”. As if this wasn’t bullshit enough, it was recently discovered that the actual writing of the report was outsourced to a private contractor who is also in the pay of TransCanada.

<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensive list of the myriad the ways Tar Sands is a threat to people’s lives and the earth, check out [oilsandstruth.org](http://oilsandstruth.org).

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<sup>3</sup> Quote taken from an anonymously written essay on [anarchistnews.com](http://anarchistnews.com) titled “Tar Sands Pipelines as Bottle-necks against the Consolidation of Power in Canada”. With a focus on Southern Ontario’s Line 9 Reversal, this essay provides a detailed analysis of the Tar Sands project and the strategic value of blocking pipelines.



To better understand the Tar Sands project, it helps to put it in the context of Canada's broader plan for resource extraction. In hopes of repositioning Canada in the global economy, President Stephen Harper is leading an open season on resource-rich First Nations lands through massive legislative packages that weaken environmental laws, making possible projects like Tar Sands and Quebec's hyper-exploitative Plan Nord. The subsequent toxic waterways, poverty and community destruction will require the very public services that recent legislation has cut. What will become of the displaced? The state has increased funding for only one sector: prisons.

In the largest show of resistance to Harper's legislation and resource extraction projects, Indigenous peoples across North America and their allies<sup>4</sup> are coming together under the banner of Idle No More. Beginning in November 2012, Idle No More went straight for the arteries of capital by blockading major Canadian highways and railways, which native peoples rightly view as oppressive for their role in transporting resources stolen from First Nations territories. Since the first blockades, dozens of traditional Round Dance flash mobs have been used to disrupt consumerism in its cathedrals, flooding shopping centers with people and noise. Countless Idle No More actions of this sort have happened throughout Canada as well as in the United States-- in South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, Minnesota, Louisiana, Texas and Oklahoma among others.

The US saw its first pipeline blockade back in March 2012, immediately after Obama gave TransCanada the go-ahead to build the Keystone XL pipeline through East Texas. From the start, the Tar Sands Blockade (TSB), a coalition of radicals and residential Texans, was tree-sitting, locking down to machinery, calling for large mobilizations and generally disrupting pipeline construction. Those first actions spurred anti-Tar Sands direct action elsewhere, including Houston, where there have been protests and lockdowns against Tar Sands refineries, and in other states, including Montana and Idaho where oversized shipments called megaloads were blocked from transporting huge Tar Sands extraction equipment.

Unfortunately, the TSB encampments were broken-up last November by Texas police and judges and since then there has been little action in the region. But where TSB left off, the struggle in Oklahoma is escalating thanks to a promising coalition known as the Great Plains Tar Sands Resistance (GPTSR). Though most of my knowledge about this organization is limited to what they have on their website, I'm recommending them to those who want to get involved in the blockades for a few reasons:

**1. GPTSR is taking direct action against the Keystone XL's construction.** Rather than wasting time appealing to the ruling class' nonexistent conscience, GPTSR is discovering the only way to prevent these bastards from destroying the earth: blocking the flow of capital directly.

**2. GPTSR states its explicit support for Indigenous Peoples**—on the other hand they don't seem to have much interest in the predominantly liberal mainstream movement. From this point we may deduce a couple of things: they have a strong analysis of Tar Sands development's inherent racism, and they've placed a premium on autonomy.

**3. GPTSR states they do not condemn any form of resistance**—this is a refreshing change from Tar Sands Blockade's policy, which they unfortunately adopted from "Occupy Spring", a Democratic Party front-group established by MoveOn.org to co-opt the Occupy movement. While TSB did a great job of igniting Keystone XL resistance, their "non-violence" policy hindered the movement by refusing solidarity to anyone using even slightly confrontational methods of resistance. It is foolish for a struggle that aims to stop pipeline to reject tactics such as waving survey stakes to ward off hostile sheriffs or pouring sugar into the tanks of construction equipment. GPTSR is far better off without this absurd rulebook, which in this case was literally written by liberals.

<sup>4</sup> In Vancouver in January 2013, anarchists used defensive black bloc tactics to keep police at bay during a march against private hearings for pipeline company Enbridge

**4. They could use your support.** And judging by their points of unity they deserve it. Again I don't know a whole lot about this group, but they're trying to blockade, something that with a few dozen determined folks could make a tangible impact on the outcome of the movement.

Finally, some mention of the protests in DC. These increasingly large mobilizations meant to pressure Obama are one of the defining features of the movement. Unfortunately their true potential has been limited to playing the futile games the State provides: sanctioned marches, choreographed mass arrests, truth-to-power speeches, etc. In doing so they're missing invaluable opportunities for gaining mass appeal via literal disruptions of DC, which, as the political heart of America's global tyranny, everyone wants to see in turmoil.

The last of the DC mobilizations in February 2013 saw an unprecedented 50,000 people marching against the Keystone XL, toxic colonialism, capitalism and climate change. The crowd was a mixture of anarchists, environmental socialists and students rallied by Bill McKibben's scientific 350.org campaign, among others. Even those at the corrupt Sierra Club<sup>5</sup> miraculously recovered use of their spines for the event, embracing civil disobedience tactics for the first time in their 120-year career.

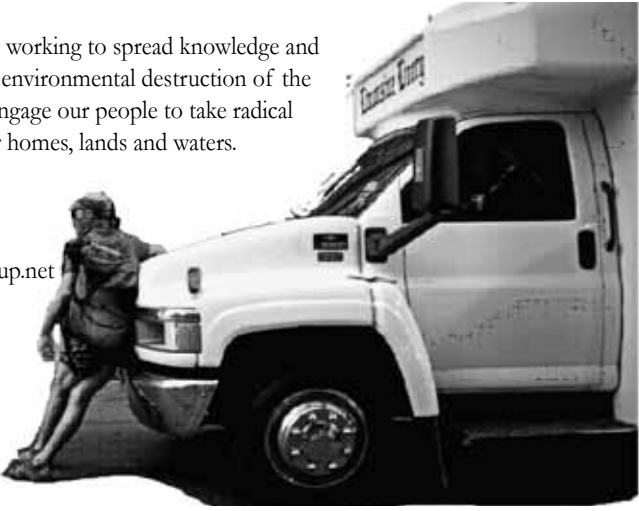
Nevertheless the DC mobilizations' only audible voices continue to be those of the movement managers with their peaceful appeals to and quiet demands of their beloved, ill-disposed president. Were this disconnect between the severity of the situation and the movement's unwarranted peacefulness to be subverted everything would undoubtedly take a huge turn for the better. The conditions already exist for a disruption of DC; now it's only a matter of small but determined autonomous groups intervening in the situation with their own plan of action to tip the scales.

In terms of numbers the Tar Sands movement has massive support. What it needs now is to intensify and strengthen its marches and blockades, not to mention the completely untapped cyber front, e.g. hacking corporate and state websites and databases. Now is the time to support the movement via greater autonomous organization and attack. The compromised organizational practices so prevalent in D.C. simply won't suffice to stop Tar Sands, much less help set the stage for a broader struggle against capitalist ecocide. As we've seen with the Idle No More Movement and to some extent the blockade in East Texas, a solidarity that encompasses "diversity of tactics" is the best chance at building effective resistance and halting altogether the contemptible Tar Sands project.

<sup>5</sup> The Sierra Club's most recent double-dealings involved them partnering with and accepted tens of millions of dollars from the fossil fuels industry, New York's tyrannical billionaire Mayor Bloomberg, and Bank of America in exchange for "greenwashing" these institutions & individuals' public images.

River Delta Resist! is working to spread knowledge and awareness about the environmental destruction of the Gulf South and to engage our people to take radical action to protect our homes, lands and waters.

River Delta Resist!  
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# FROM BHOPAL TO THE BAYOUS

BY UMANG KUMAR

In 2010, we watched with disbelief the British Petroleum (BP) Deepwater Horizon oil-leak disaster unfold before our eyes in the Gulf of Mexico. We saw how BP tried to minimize any negative coverage of the incident and how the media continually carried their reports. We saw the emotions of the Gulf Coast residents weighing the effects of oil washing to their shores. In light of the pollution caused by BP, it seemed more restrictive regulations were being contemplated on the oil economy which undergirds much of that area.

But not to worry-- despite some speculation as to whether BP might “go under” because of the incident, it reported \$7.7 billion in profit for the fourth quarter of 2011, a 38 percent increase from a year earlier. While ordinary people are often cast onto the streets when some disaster strikes them – a storm, an illness, a foreclosure or business loss – corporations seem to know the logic of survival and flourishing much better than we ordinary folk.

A similar story of industrial negligence, evasion of responsibility, a campaign of disinformation and an exercise of corporate power has been the experience of the survivors of the Bhopal gas disaster in central India since 1984. The question is, how does one keep re-framing what happened 28-years ago and has continued happening since? How does one keep bringing up, even to oneself, the question of Bhopal?

On the 2nd of December 1984, over 40 tons of Methyl Isocyanate gas (MIC) leaked from a plant owned by the multinational corporation Union Carbide, in Bhopal in central India. Some call it an “accident,” others the inevitable result of a culture of negligence, an entirely preventable tragedy. That night several thousand people perished, most in a very painful manner, poisoned, frothing at the mouth, with burning eyes and with no idea what was happening to them.

The gas leak killed over 10,000 people in the three days following the disaster. Survivors exposed to the gas on that day continue to be plagued with health problems like respiratory issues, cancers and congenital malformations in their children.

It is an ongoing disaster. The site has not been cleaned up, which has resulted in contamination of the ground water, the only source of drinking water for several communities close to the area. The victims of the disaster are yet to receive just compensation from Union Carbide or the current owner, Dow Chemical Corporation. For the survivors, the Bhopal disaster did not end that night, but has been a continuing nightmare for the last 28 years.

I think it will be fit to reproduce what the website of a clinic set up for survivors - the Bhopal Medical Appeal site which chronicles the activities of the Sambhavana Clinic in Bhopal - has to say about the continuing tragedy in Bhopal:

“Many are unaware that the disaster in Bhopal continues to this day. An estimated 120,000–150,000 survivors of the disaster are still chronically ill. Over 25,000 have died of exposure-related illnesses and more are dying still. Tens of thousands of children born after the disaster suffer from growth problems and many women suffer from menstrual and gynecological disorders. TB is several times more prevalent in the gas-affected population and many forms of cancers are on the rise.”

What is also a fact, often under-reported, is that a majority of the victims and survivors were from the lowest rungs of the society. Just as many find

themselves living in the shadows of Louisiana’s refineries and chemical plants, those most immediately affected by the Bhopal gas were those living in slums around the factory. As the editorial in the *Bhopal Marathon* e-magazine titled “The Bhopal Marathon: An ordeal of pain measured not in miles but in years,” puts it, “For almost thirty years now, some of the poorest people on earth...have been fighting for their lives and fundamental human rights against a multinational giant backed by governments and economic elites of two powerful nations.”

In contrast to the multinational giant and its resources, the editorial goes on to characterize the survivors as the “nothing people,” who “have literally nothing.” It is perhaps not insignificant that these “nothing people” are literally those whose lives can be ignored and kept at the margins – and left to fend for themselves for 28 years now.

In a convoluted and devious case of chicanery, financial sleight-of-hand and legalese, the corporations which have been players in this tragedy – the U.S.-based Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) and its Indian subsidiary, Union Carbide of India Limited (UCIL) and then Dow Chemical Corporation which took over UCC in 2001 – have tried various ways to avoid any responsibility.

Some of their tactics of deceit and delay are not unlike those used by Exxon to avoid responsibility for the Exxon Valdez spill: dragging out legal proceedings for decades until those affected have given up in despair or died. This shirking of responsibility and the efforts to disassociate themselves from the incident fall in line with how corporations – and the systems of government power they are in symbiotic relationships with – shield one another and find ways to wiggle out of any culpability. In addition, there is no attempt at remorse, at detailed failure-analysis, at a transparent sharing of information to find ways at remediation. Instead, what one observes are all manner of attempts at secrecy and the hiding of information.

In the Bhopal case, there was evidence of poor design, cutting corners in plant maintenance and lower safety-standards in the UCC plant in Bhopal much before the leak. After the gas leak, UCC tried to pin the blame on “saboteurs,” but was never able to name any one person. More seriously, in the immediate aftermath of the incident, UCC refused to release the formula of MIC, which could have helped the doctors in coming up with antidotes – it cited trademark concerns! We see this echoed in Nalco’s refusal to publicize the recipe of the toxic dispersant “Corexit” used in the Gulf.

The struggle for compensation to all Bhopal survivors and the dead was another case-in-point of a corporation strong-arming its way through fair proceedings. As recent investigations have revealed, UCC, the perpetrator itself, decided on injury categories and compensation amounts for the survivors. It used Indian Railway Act tables to determine compensation for the deceased. As a result, “[i]ts definition of temporary injury covered 94% of the victims, nearly all of whom were people with injuries that lasted all their lives. They were to be awarded \$494.” In court, UCC’s lawyer argued that some of the victims had prior conditions of TB and other lung diseases and thus “[e]ach individual history has to be examined...”

Is this not similar to how BP hired Kenneth Feinberg to decide who of those affected deserved settlements or payouts, and how BP denies and puts off responsibilities for the many ill health effects of the oil and dispersants? The quotes could as easily have come from BP’s lawyers.

Not just that, but after agreeing to have the case adjudicated in India, UCC refused the court summons when criminal proceedings were re-instituted against them in 1991 by the Indian Supreme Court. The subsequent sale of UCC's nearly 51% stock as parent company in the factory to an Indian company in 1994, and later its being bought by Dow Chemical Corporation in 2001, have only served to further obfuscate matters behind contrived legal frameworks.

Dow seems to think it has moved past this ongoing tragedy, much as BP's advertising tries to say the clean-up of the Gulf is done and complete. The distancing effected by the procedures of sale of companies is supposed to be so watertight that Andrew Liveris, the current CEO of Dow almost touchingly observed, "the notion that you acquire a company where... the liability that was settled way beyond your time, and to hook you into that event, it's beyond belief that people are still trying."

To the survivors of the Bhopal incident and their supporters, culpability has never been a contentious issue. They have seen how at every step the deep-pocketed corporations have sought to shirk their responsibility and have resorted to endless tactics to stonewall any proceedings towards a fair outcome. The survivors have meanwhile persisted in their efforts, never giving up hope and taking every opportunity to oppose the propaganda by the guilty-- the recent effort to oppose Dow Chemical's sponsorship at the London Olympics was an example. Earlier in 2011, survivors marched on foot all 470 miles from Bhopal to the capital New Delhi to press their demands: the creation of a national commission with adequate local representation and funds to provide needed healthcare facilities, formation of a CBI special cell (like the FBI) for speedy prosecution of UCC's chief Warren Anderson and other accused in the criminal case, and a scientific assessment of the depth and spread of toxic contamination due to chemical waste stored at the factory premises.

In their long-drawn out struggle, the Bhopalis (a shorthand here to refer to the people of Bhopal struggle) have acutely been aware of solidarity with several other struggles around the world. The BP oil-leak saga was keenly followed as another battle between common people and a giant corporation that has been involved in "green-washing" activities for a long time.

The sheer clout of BP, the ambiguity of the stance of the U.S. government all along, despite the pretending to hold BP responsible, and the way the people affected were treated as almost irrelevant-- none of this was lost on the Bhopalis. To their minds, this has been an instance which suggests solidarity and joining forces, to carry on the struggle against these injustices, long after so-called disasters are "sealed" and "closed" by some token compensations or settlements.

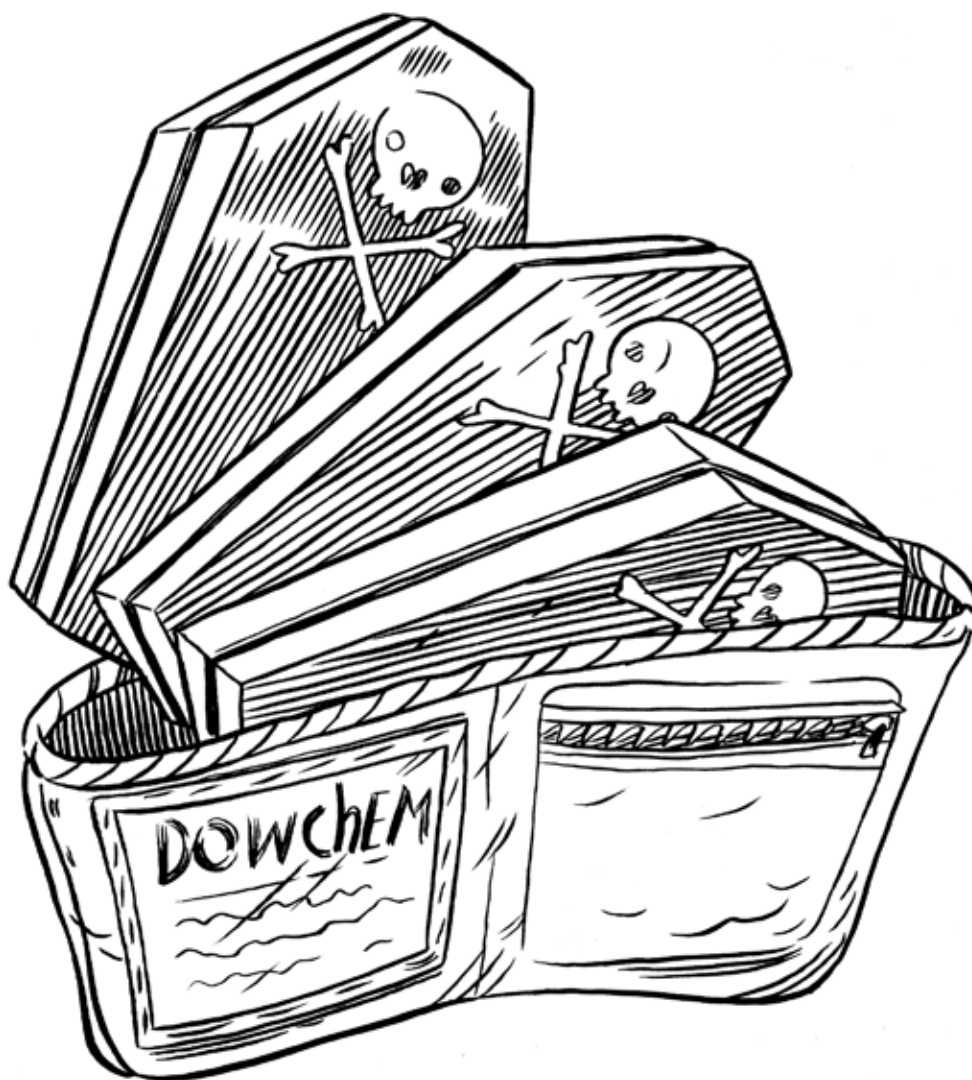
The two struggles can exchange information on medical symptoms and analysis of harmful chemical effects that the mainstream channels will not acknowledge in incidents like these – the Sambhavana clinic in Bhopal has been a model institution providing free treatment to survivors of Bhopal

and also carrying out its own analysis of the ailments that persist long-term. The two struggles should also join hands in corporate boycotts and in blowing the lid off all efforts at disinformation, especially the projection of angelic fronts by means of green-washing. For instance, the efforts of the "Yes Men" films in exploding myths of the corporations involved in the Bhopal case has had wide appeal and impact. E-mails obtained by Wikileaks last year show that Dow paid great sums to investigative companies to carefully monitor and track even the most minute actions of Bhopal activists, including the Yes Men. There is no reason to think BP would not do likewise.

Speaking tours by affected people also can create greater common understandings, and help those not directly affected understand that they could as easily be mistreated. In the end, we should recognize that across oceans and landmasses, across cultural and geographic distances that separate our struggles, what we are up against has much in

common. For our own good we must learn from each other, and look to one another, locally and globally, for needed strength and inspiration.

*Umang Kumar is a volunteer with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB).*





# INTERVIEW WITH A TAR SANDS BLOCKADER

BY R. SHOALGRASS

*RP: Tell us about yourself and why you're resisting the Keystone XL pipeline.*

I'm a long-time resident of the great city of New Orleans. I've left my city for the time being after being inspired by the actions I witnessed going on around the Tar Sands Blockade in Northeast Texas. As a New Orleanian, I've always taken serious issue with the destruction caused by the oil industry, and it is hard not to feel called to action after learning about the dangers of the Keystone XL pipeline.



## IN JANUARY 2013, OVER 100 PEOPLE OCCUPY TRANSCANADA'S OFFICES IN HOUSTON AND FILL THE LOBBY WITH TAR BALLS

*RP: Tell us what a day at the action camp looks like. What is the social and physical environment of the camp?*

This campaign has become my new family and new home, wherever we might happen to be. I feel closer to many folks here than people I've known back in New Orleans for years. We've been through many a triumph, struggle and sleepless night. Our days start fairly early, with a communal breakfast and a morning circle where we each express our excitement about whatever we plan to work on for the day. Then we get to work. There are various "working groups" to meet the different needs of the campaign - art & media, scouting, building, legal & jail support, outreach, fundraising.

Up until a couple of months ago, we were operating as invited guests on privately-owned land the pipeline is slated to cut through, and which is home to our now well-known blockade tree village. The tables have turned, however, because the landowner was sued by TransCanada, the multibillion dollar corporation constructing the pipeline. The landowner was forced to claim a position against the blockade, evicting our camp from the land with which we'd developed such a strong connection. Since then, with the help of various landowners near the pipeline route, the campaign camp has lived in a few different places, relocating for mass action trainings and moving along with the pipeline's construction. Small groups are breaking away from the main camp to organize resistance in other regions as well.

*RP: How did this blockade come to be? How was it organized and how is it being maintained?*

The major impetus was Obama's speech in March when he gave an executive order expediting the construction of pipeline, which was basically a call for action in Texas. The blockade grew in East Texas due to the existing resistance and grassroots community organizing that was going on in the Denton area in particular.



## BLOCKADERS STOP CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT IN EAST TEXAS

David Daniel, the landowner of the original tree site, was an outspoken and often-quoted opponent of the Keystone Pipeline. He had spent years raising awareness about dangers of pipeline, so when organizers in Texas wanted to do something to stop it, he was a natural ally.

At present there is a decent-sized crew of folks working full-time fulfilling different roles supporting the blockade, from a stellar media team to skilled riggers to rad legal advisors.

*RP: I noticed many people involved in the fight are actually natives of Texas, which isn't always the case with environmentally focused direct action campaigns. Was this intentional? How has this aided the campaign?*

This was especially true during the early stages of the campaign, but since the tree blockade action has gone live, awareness of Tar Sands Blockade has grown exponentially, and in recent months we have attracted a wide variety of rad people from all around the country, including a lot of folks with experience from the RAMPS campaign and Earth First! endeavors. Still, the initial strength in local organizing was what gave the campaign its strong footing.

*RP: Have you experienced hostility or support from people in the communities where you're organizing?*

There is an interesting conflict of traditional values in this state: private property ownership and land rights are often in opposition to Texas' ties to the oil and gas industry. Many conservative folks are lining up with the blockade in order to defend their land from seizure by TransCanada. We've actually had a great amount of local support from some wonderful East Texans.

*RP: What kind of support have you received?*

All sorts! From food donations to showers and places to stay to local legal representation to awareness bicycle rides. Many were willing to stand in front of the bulldozers along TransCanada's path. One landowner, a great-grandmother, got arrested while defending her own land against the pipeline. Most local media has been fairly sympathetic and fair.

*RP: What has your engagement with workers building the pipeline and clearing the area been like? What are your approaches for these interactions?*

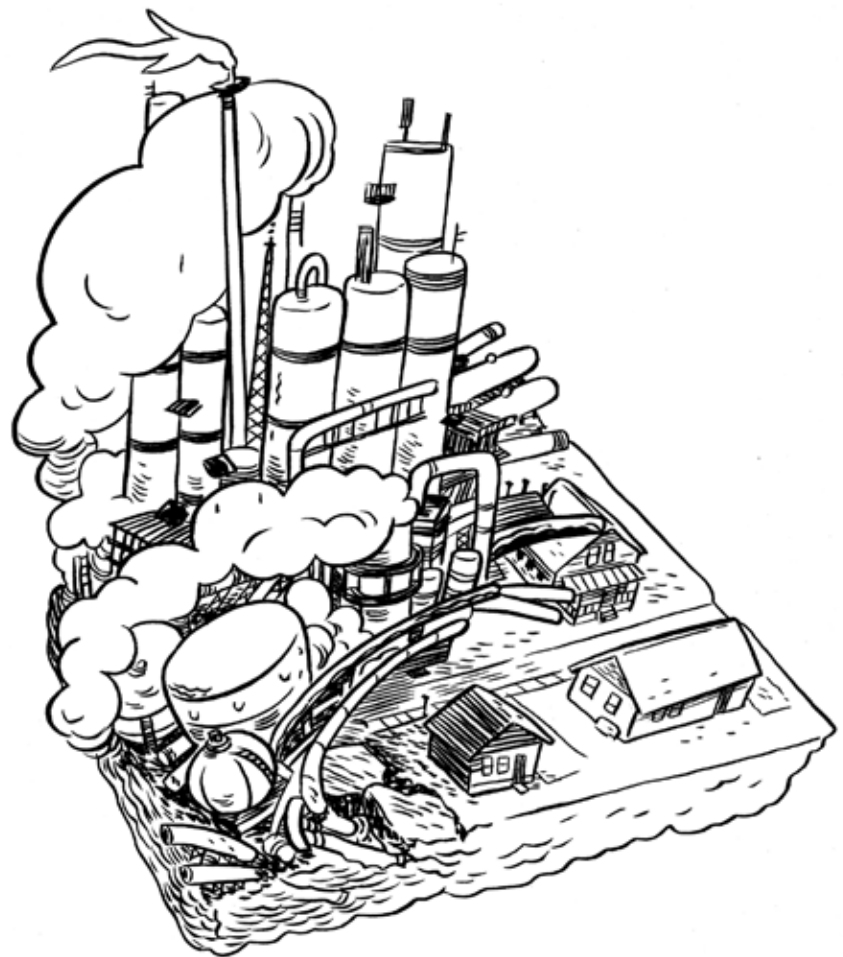
TransCanada workers are not a target of this campaign, though as the campaign goes on, it is more and more apparent that TransCanada is giving commands to the local police on how to deal with us. Workers have been trained to be stand-offish, and almost all of the workers we encounter are from out of state. Few local Texas jobs are resulting from this pipeline; at the Saltillo action only 1 vehicle out of 9 had Texas license plates.

*RP: What other organizations, people, or movements are working on this issue, and how are you relating to them?*

A letter of solidarity with our actions has been signed by thirty different environmental justice groups, including the Sierra Club, RAMPS, Greenpeace, Indigenous Environmental Network, Rising Tide, the Rainforest Action Network and many others. Websites like 350.org and Democracy! Now have given us a lot of coverage, and we've had celebrities such as Daryl Hannah and Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein spend jail time in support of our actions.

*RP: How does the Pipeline threaten the Gulf specifically?*

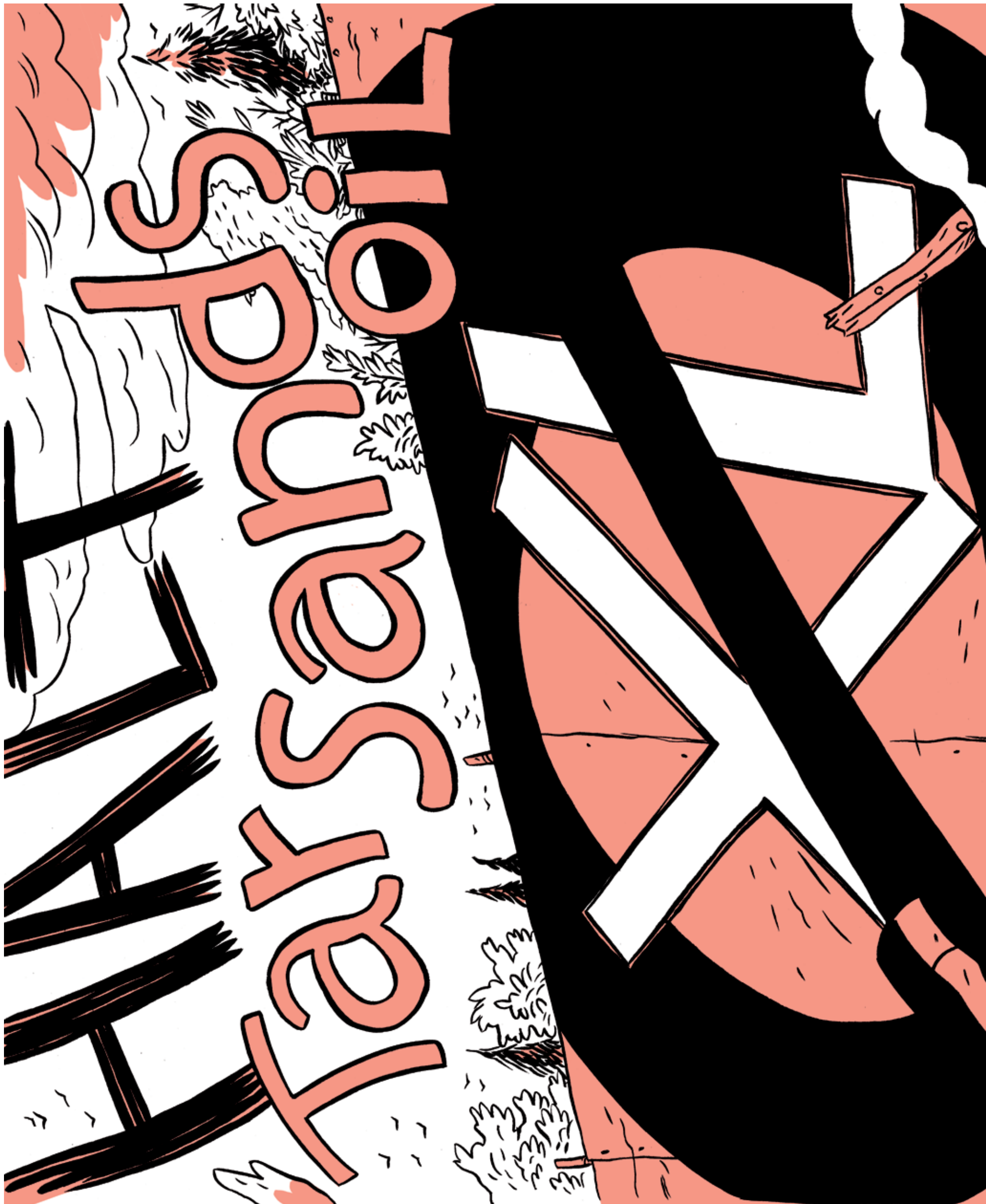
Many of the materials being shipped from Asia to construct the pipeline are actually coming through the port of New Orleans. Tar sands oil will end up in refineries around the Gulf, a lot of it around the Houston area, where many folks, especially minorities, are already having to deal with the terrible consequences of living in the shadow of a refinery.



Spending time in the Manchester neighborhood there, where tar sands oil is already being refined at a Valero facility, I felt sick after just a few hours. I saw trees dying that were healthy in other parts of the city. Tar sands has 9 times the sulfur content of conventional crude, and the slurry in this pipeline is extremely high in carcinogens that will eventually leak and get into the water. The tar sands pipeline represents the largest expansion of oil into the Gulf in recent history. We are also facing threats from other pipelines currently being constructed, such as the Parkway Pipeline set to go through Lake Ponchartrain.

*RP: Why take direct actions, and not other actions such as legislative action or electing anti-Pipeline politicians?*

Everything possible has been done to stop the pipeline using the institutions you mention. Politicians have been petitioned; the people impacted have still been ignored. Direct action is all we have left.









# RESTORATION AND REALITY

BY ANTOINE SCHLUMBERGER

## OUR WEALTH, THEIR RESTORATION

Three years later, we continue to hear that the effects of BP's gusher aren't a problem. The Coast Guard has stopped looking for oil from BP's bottomless blowout, despite the tar balls that continue to wash ashore in Pensacola and Alabama, despite the fresh mats of mud-mixed oil that have shown up in Louisiana's labyrinthine marshes along Barataria Bay. Fresh sheen is spotted above the rusting rig, but it's not a problem. The billion-dollar machinery that was shattered in its attempt to harvest the pressurized oil of the deep lies littering the Macondo valley, but BP is allowed to leave their expensive trash there, lest cleaning their mess affect their profit margin.

Three years later, the endless oil impacts are boring and ignored, and the rhetoric of **RESTORATION** is nigh.

The U.S. Congress has passed the RESTORE Act, which dedicates 80% of the penalties BP will pay for polluting US waters to restoration projects --restoration of the natural resources of the Gulf, but also restoration of the economies of the Gulf states. Despite the cries of advocates, the recommendations of presidentially appointed experts and the endless proof of a general failure to govern industry, this act was passed free of any funding for a citizen-led accountability group, or RCAC, as was won for Prince William Sound after the Valdez disaster. The States and Federal Agencies have held BP to a "landmark, unprecedented" 1 billion "early restoration" agreement for which BP has ponied up only \$50 million so far.

At this rate, early restoration will take 20 years.

How can human beings conceive of "restoring" a Gulf ecosystem whose smallest animals were destroyed and mutated?

Three years later, the Justice Department has settled for 11 counts of manslaughter and a \$4.5 billion payment for BP's criminal charges, and three low-level scapegoats that face ongoing trials. BP's stock shot up after the criminal settlement.

Three years later, the first large wave of independent scientific studies have rolled in, and they have documented that top-to-bottom, every link in the food chain has been hit. Besides the turtles and dolphins, besides the enigmatic pelicans or the charismatic plovers that we can watch from land, deep sea corals, floating plankton, menhaden, red snapper and lemon sharks, whale sharks, sperm whales, Orca, Bryde's and Sei whales have all been injured. Do these injuries matter in the shrouded negotiations of the Justice Department as they move to settle civil charges?

To see how the restoration of the Gulf might proceed, we can look to the ongoing failures of the restoration of Louisiana, whose marshes the industry has destroyed over a few decades, and where much of the effort to restore North America's interior sea will be focused.

## WHAT RESTORATION LOOKS LIKE

Let's look at the MRGO restoration. The Mississippi-Gulf Outlet Canal (MRGO) was dug in 1927 as a shipping shortcut between the Gulf of Mexico and the Industrial Canal that separates the Upper & Lower Ninth Wards of New Orleans. It brought in salt water that killed off the South Louisiana cypress forests, and when the cypress died, their roots no longer

hold the soil in place. The area around MRGO simply washed away. Six hundred thousand acres of coastal ecosystem were damaged by the MRGO, and over 27,000 acres of Louisiana marsh were destroyed.

Despite the massive scale and cost of the project-- more earth was dredged in the digging of the MRGO than in the digging of the Panama Canal-- the MRGO never got much use, and was hugely expensive to maintain. It was so expensive that the Army Corps of Engineers didn't bother. In 2009, U.S. District Court for Eastern Louisiana ruled that the post-Katrina flooding of St. Bernard Parish and the New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward were directly caused by the Army Corps of Engineers' criminal negligence in maintaining MRGO.

MRGO was finally closed to shipping in 2010, not as a result of the destruction it caused, but because completion of the Inner Harbor Navigational Canal lock meant that shipping & industrial companies no longer had use for the massive canal. Now the Army Corps of Engineers' "restoration" of the areas affected by MRGO will begin.

The Corps will spend a lot of money to place rocks which have never naturally existed in Southern Louisiana around marshes it seeks to protect from further erosion. The Violet Canal is proposed to be connected to the Mississippi River via gates. For the "marsh creation via mechanical dredging" in the plan, the Corps will dredge the bottom of Lake Borgne... the same Lake Borgne where the storm waves that the MRGO channeled up into New Orleans were bor(g)n(e). Deepening Lake Borgne will aggravate any future storm surges.

At one of the public hearings on this plan, a local trapper bemoaned the Corps' ignorance of marshes. From his time following the tracks of muskrat and nutria, he knew that to support plant and animal life, marshes must be able to drain. There was no consideration of this complicated need for drainage in the Corps' plan to create new marsh. The man testified against the entire project: taking into consideration the rock armoring of shoreline and the deepening of Lake Borgne and the Violet Canal, the trapper proclaimed the whole plan to be another shipping channel, disguised as a marsh restoration project.

That trapper should have an Environmental Studies degree. Although the Corps individually may not have intended it, collectively, the biologists and engineers employed by the Corps and its numerous obscure "subcontractors" have approached the entire project of restoration with a material and logistical understanding derived from decades of experience building nothing but flood protection and shipping channels (such as MRGO) in the New Orleans district--the exact same projects that have done so much to cripple the ecological engine of our coast.

Similarly, we can count on the state's engineers, especially those employed by the behemoth Shaw corporation (and whatever shadowy acronym has purchased Shaw in the wake of the Department of Justice's \$4.5 billion BP settlement) to design and to create restoration projects that look like roads or fill for commercial development, rather than attempting to mimic natural services, functions, and process.

Read the ecological reviews of other restoration projects. Although the



What does "restoration" even mean when the Gulf, swollen with the heat of a planet burdened with fossil fuel pollution, rises to swamp every bit of marsh created by mechanical pumping? To understand what "restoration" means in the State of Louisiana, you can read the glossy pages of the State's majestic Master Plan and meditate on its promises. You can consider the history of the state, ever hell-bent on selling its natural resources on the cheap, at the expense of the people who continue to hold on to living on this trembling land.

Reading the Master Plan, the first thing that strikes you is that officials in the state of Louisiana are overeager to blame the federal government. To be sure, the Army Corps of Engineers views the Mississippi River as either its shipping channel or its drainage ditch. The river which has borne this land and sustains it is, to them, either the conduit by which the Monsanto-bred corn of the U.S. breadbasket is shipped around the world (to keep poorer countries dependent on American aid) or else a convenient drainage for industrial waste and flood waters.

So, to hell with Uncle Sam. But nowhere in the Master Plan is any acknowledgment or analysis of the damages caused by our state's dearest industry, oil and gas. Louisiana Oil and Gas, which stocked the American war machine into Germany and over the Himalayas. Louisiana Oil and Gas, which fueled the post-war boom that allowed the US to dominate the world economy... until Louisiana's marshes dried out. By the end of the 1980's, the industry had destroyed 400,000 acres of marshland, creating new "bays" named by their oilfields and setting Louisiana up for the current chronic exodus from the coastal parishes.

purpose of these projects is supposedly to "create marsh," the percentage of plant cover usually "fails stated targets" ...the massive, sterile sand boxes created by the earth movers remain unplanted. The actual replanting of "marsh restoration" projects is always the first item to be cut.

Wetlands science is very clear that wetlands are defined by a triad of water, plants, and soil. Most restoration projects assume plants will just somehow appear. Water flow is an afterthought, and soil is hardly ever mentioned. The actual organic soils that do the biogeochemical heavy lifting in marsh environments have no place in the engineering realm of digging trenches and pouring gravel.

### WHAT RESTORATION IS POSSIBLE?

Back to BP. 12 billion, 25 billion, 100 billion dollars. How much will it cost to restore the delta lands of the Mississippi River?

Even if we get the money, and don't just end up just funding Alabama's next thru-way instead, who or what will be "restored"? Who will be destroyed? Who will be forced to make terrible choices, and who will profit in storm and in clear skies?

No state-run "restoration" will be allowed to impede or inconvenience those forces that led to the oil disaster in the first place. The restoration will be limited.

It will be limited technically, by the fact that the Gulf is such an unknown place, requiring the limits of human machinery to observe and affect. It will be limited scientifically, by our ignorance of the system by which the living pieces fit together-- it took the BP disaster for us to learn some of those very important pieces (as large as Bryde's whales) even existed in the Gulf. It will be limited by the fact that the beating heart of the Gulf of Mexico, the Deltaic marshes of the Mississippi River that feed and shelter the millions of Gulf creatures, this ecological pump that exports food and nutrients into the deeper waters, are in such an advanced state of destruction that most of the money will be sunk into those marshes.

Of course, the restoration is already limited politically, by the dominance of an industry immune from actual criminal prosecution. One hundred billion dollars won't be enough to restore what has been destroyed over decades by the fossil fuel industry.

Learn the lessons of Louisiana: until the back of the fossil fuel industry is broken, the Gulf will remain unrestored.

# A LAND CALLED LOUISIANA, PART II- UNDERMINING SLAVERY FROM THE CYPRESS SWAMPS

BY M.G. HOUZEAU

In Louisiana's rich, mysterious cypress swamps, there is an abundance of fish and game. Indigenous tribes prior to and during early colonization of the area combined a self-sufficient hunting ethic with an agricultural diet of corns, roots, beans and squash-- in some ways not unlike many Cajuns and Isleño communities through the present day.

Beyond foodways, however, these swamps exist physically as mazes, difficult terrain for humans to navigate, trace, and document. Their intricate water systems and lush, sprawling vegetation restrict both movement and long-distance eyesight. Thus, these lower Mississippi Valley cypress swamps, known in French colonial times as cipriere, provided a haven, if not quite a heaven, for maroons.

Maroons were enslaved people who'd successfully escaped their "owners." The term came from marronage, a French word for the act of running away. The tactic of marronage existed along a spectrum: Petit marronage was a short-term leave, usually a few days or a week, that an enslaved person might take, for example to visit a relative at another plantation, while grand marronage meant a permanent attempt at escape, usually to set up a new, free life elsewhere.

In the 18th century a rare confluence of conditions aided maroons in the Louisiana territory, especially near New Orleans. Out on the frontier of imperial power, the colony's lack of governmental resources allowed people to move about with less official surveillance. Most French land grants on the Mississippi were made in "arpents," slender river-to-swamp rectangles ensuring river access to every plantation settler. This setup provided enslaved people with a direct route to swamp waterways-- the proverbial back door. Over decades, the plain cabin residences along the back cypress swamp sections of many plantations became nodes of a solidarity network between enslaved people, maroons and free people of color in New Orleans.

This network was strengthened through the tangible acts of trading goods, intermarriage and family relations, as well as work exchanges-- maroons might do the plantation work of cutting wood while the enslaved would share vegetable produce from their subsistence garden plots. But it was also strengthened through the intangible aspects of empathy, racial solidarity, and creating resistance to authoritarian oppression. Enslaved

.....  
• *They chased, they hunted him with dogs*  
• *They fired a rifle at him.*  
• *They dragged him from the cypress swamp,*  
• *His arms tied behind his back...*  
• *They dragged him up into the town,*  
• *Before those grand Cabildo men.*  
• *They charged that he had made a plot*  
• *To Cut the throats of all the whites.*  
• *They asked him who his comrades were.*  
• *Poor Saint Malo said not a word!*  
.....

-- Creole Slave Song  
Translation by George Washington Cable

Africans in the first few decades of French settlement learned about the swamps' hidden passages and waterways, first from early enslaved indigenous peoples and then from those free indigenous communities that harbored maroons.

Elements of the French and Spanish settler colonial systems provide a further understanding of how maroons and their supporters could create such a strong and vibrant network under imperial noses. While the Code Noir, the French colonial enslavement code, outlawed any sexual relationships with enslaved Africans or Afro-creoles, many French settlers ignored that provision. From these "unions"-- the rape of the enslaved by the enslaver-- there emerged a growing group of free people of color: not white, but not enslaved.

## CONSEQUENCES OF A COLONIAL HAND-OFF

In the 1760s, new Spanish rule took over from the local French slave-owning elite and intervened to roll back some of the worst excesses of the French towards enslaved people. Spanish law eased restrictions on movement and, since plantation owners often demanded the enslaved hunt game animals, lightened the laws against enslaved people carrying firearms. The number of free people of color increased due to a broader allowance of manumission, the process by which an enslaved person could pay his or her purchase price in exchange for freedom. Enslaved people were able to save money by doing external contract work once their other work commitments were met, though they could only keep a portion of the proceeds; their "owners" of course took a cut.

The Spanish administration even allowed enslaved people to travel to New Orleans and file claims of abuse against their "owners" in court. In New Orleans, the wide-ranging, regular mobility of people of color, both free and enslaved, made it difficult for authorities to determine who had the right to be where, providing some cover to maroons who had run away from harsh plantation conditions.

Maroon communities were not isolated in the swamps; they played an active part in the Louisiana market economy. Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's extensive research on Afro-Creoles during the colonial era led her to the conclusion that fewer maroons "continued to raid plantations and kill cattle... [instead] there was a move toward production and trade for economic survival." (Hall, 203)

During the mid-eighteenth century, the plant-based dye indigo became increasingly popular, increasing demand for the cypress-wood troughs and vats used in its production and export. Maroons in Louisiana occupied an advantageous and unique position: they had access to and familiarity with the cypress swamps as well as experience chopping down cypress trees to build homes. Lumber mills along the east bank of the Mississippi downriver from New Orleans, today's St. Bernard Parish, intentionally ignored the legal status of their piecework laborers: the drive for profit outweighed loyalty to colonial law.

By the early 1780s, mill operations and maroon communities had a mutually beneficial (if imbalanced) relationship organized around resource exploitation. Maroons were paid per piece of sawed cypress log delivered behind the lumber mill.

This cash economy helped solidify relations between maroons, enslaved people on plantations and those who sold and bought crafts and food at the markets in New Orleans. Spanish authorities began to worry about the "runaways" downriver establishing more permanent maroon settlements like those already in the mountains of Jamaica, Haiti (then St. Domingue), Brazil and Santo Domingo. The colonial powers were deeply concerned by the increasing organization of Louisiana's maroon communities, and the maroons' gradual unification behind a leader they called Saint Malo.



## THE ENIGMATIC SAINT MALO

*The name St. Malo is interesting. Malo means bad in Spanish...Malo means shame in Bambara and refers to the charismatic leader who defies the social order, whose special powers and means to act may have beneficial consequences for all his people when social conventions paralyze others.*

– Gwendolyn Midlo Hall,  
Africans in Colonial Louisiana

The maroon leader Saint Malo, known as Juan Malo while enslaved, was widely respected even among enslaved creoles who stayed in their homes and did not brave life in the swamps. Those who wrote the official histories of that time didn't include his voice; we know of his existence only through statements in colonial archives made by captured maroons, folk stories in Afro-Creole communities, and a highly suspect "confession" attributed to him.

When slave trade to Louisiana experienced a resurgence in the 1780s, slave control became a top colonial priority, and funding went towards immediately curtailing the dangerous autonomy of maroon communities. Plans and raids directed from the highest Spanish authorities began in 1781. Though the general area of St. Malo's hiding place in the cypress swamps was known to Spanish authorities by 1782, it proved difficult to locate precisely.

Unable themselves to find St. Malo in the labyrinthine swamps, colonial authorities changed tactics and sent a trusted enslaved Afro-creole as a spy to infiltrate the maroons. The spy reported back that Saint Malo's basecamp, a small settlement of a few wooden cabins, would be nearly impossible to raid successfully because the narrow, intricate backwaters leading to it prevented one from using boats of any kind. Instead, the militia would have to wade in chest-deep water, holding their guns over their heads. While St. Malo lived mostly at a farther settlement at Chef Menteur, he had always moved freely among various settlements to keep up relations among maroons and organize their defense. When a colonial raiding party finally made it to the purported settlement in 1783, most of the maroons escaped-- only one died and twelve were taken alive.

Through the arrest of other maroons, the Spanish authorities found a strong family and relational network of free and enslaved peoples of color. To divide these ties and increase the pressure on maroons' access to resources, the Spanish Governor proclaimed in May 1784 that all free people of color would be held responsible for the "crimes" perpetrated by the maroons-- theft of food surely, but mainly the maroons' "thefts" of themselves and their labor from their "owners." This proclamation heavily restricted the movement of enslaved people and banned trade of any kind with the enslaved, and added restrictions on hunting to prevent the enslaved from being armed.

This pressure had an impact on the maroon communities. A dispute between formerly symbiotic enslaved and maroon groups along one of the plantations downriver of New Orleans escalated, ending with the plantation's enslaved people turning in a maroon to Spanish authorities. St. Malo and his band, cut off from essential information and supplies, reacted by retreating deeper into the swamps. The Spanish increased the rewards for breaking solidarity: bringing in a maroon or giving information leading to a maroon's capture guaranteed the snitch his or her own freedom and a significant monetary reward.

By early June 1784 a raiding party of ninety soldiers was established to both pursue St. Malo and cover his potential escape routes along the edge of the bayou near Lake Borgne. In most militias, including the force which put down the indigenous revolt at Natchez in 1730, the troops were a mix of free blacks, enslaved people and white working-class soldiers, and the commanding officers were ruling-class whites. That was true of this raiding party as well, with the exception of Captain Bautista Hugon, a free man of color-- the man who captured St. Malo.

On June 14, 1784, the militia captured forty maroon men and women, including a wounded St. Malo. Without even a pretense of trial, he was hanged five days later along with many of his fellow resistance leaders. Although St. Malo's supposed "confession" of a plan to overthrow the colony was accepted in private by a colonial judge, no evidence of it ever surfaced. If it existed, such a plan would necessarily been by word of mouth, and most maroons, as St. Malo in the song, said "not a word."

## THE LIMITS OF DEFENSIVE RESISTANCE

There has been long historical debate about the revolutionary potential of maroon communities. Part of the debate has rested on historians' racist assumptions when reading the documentary evidence. Until recently, historians rarely considered the power dynamics at work between the colonial administrators, the maroons and the authoritative construction of an official public text. Historians of slavery imbued maroons only with enough agency to escape from servitude and establish new settlements, but not with the conscious exploration of further resistance to bring down the institutional system of slavery. This lack of explicit revolutionary fervor on the part of maroons was described in, for instance, Brazil and Jamaica, where long-term, stable maroon communities existed in the 18th and into the 19th century.

The Haitian Revolution (1791-1803) put to rest any notions of slavery's inevitability or invincibility. Just seven years after St. Malo's murder, enslaved Africans with the assistance of hundreds-strong guerrilla maroon communities from the mountains began targeted riots and a military overthrow of the French colonial system in St. Domingue (today's Haiti).

In a historical wink, a coincidence perhaps, one of the injured leaders associated with St. Malo in the 1784 destruction of the maroon community was turned over and resold to an unsuspecting slave owner in St. Domingue. What happened to this driven, passionate leader? St. Domingue was so brutal that the average enslaved African there survived only seven years; did this veteran live to see the revolution?

For Louisiana's history, questions such as these reflect the transnational nature of early New Orleans culture. With the success of both the French and Haitian Revolutions, new radical influences came into circulation. These revolutionary ideas of attaining freedom via a violent restructuring of society are in sharp contrast to the violence of 1780s Louisiana, which flowed solely downhill-- from white plantation owners and colonial authorities to the enslaved and free people of color.

Despite their causing disruptions to the economic profitability of the slave system, Louisiana's maroon communities never attacked Louisiana colonists. Any violent confrontations had been "almost entirely defensive" from the maroons' standpoint. (Hall, 226-227)

This failure of defensive resistance and the successes of revolutions elsewhere made an impression on our region's enslaved and maroon Afro-Creole organizers heading into the 19th century. Instead of shedding their chains for subsistence and seeking autonomous lives in the swamp, Louisiana's movements of resistance began to look toward the more direct and confrontational action of revolt.

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*Cable, George Washington. Cajuns and Creoles: Stories of Old Louisiana. Doubleday, 1959.*

*Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. Africans in Colonial Louisiana: the Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century. Louisiana State University Press, 1992.*

*Note: much of the historical material--rather than analytical material--come from Hall's incredible work. Other sources were also considered, including:*

*Din, Gilbert C. Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves: The Spanish Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763-1803. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999.*

*Powell, Lawrence N. The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012.*

# FUCKED EITHER WAY- THE DOUBLE-BIND OF SEAFOOD SAFETY

BY HANX CLAWMACHINE

Another friend has quit the seafood business: he doesn't eat it and won't sell it. Not only has he seen firsthand the damage done by millions of barrels of BP oil and the unprecedented two million (and counting) gallons of toxic Corexit used to conceal that oil, but he's been reading the scientific reports that are beginning to emerge. For instance, a November 2012 study by Georgia Tech and Mexico's Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes demonstrated that the dispersant Corexit actually made the spilled oil 52 times more toxic to aquatic life... Fifty fucking two times!

The reason Corexit is being used-- and those who live near the Coast continue to see and hear dispersant-spewing planes even now-- is to keep the oil from showing up on the surface of the water. Out of sight, out of financial accountability. Corexit, banned in the UK, has been used to conceal the BP disaster in never-before-tried volumes and methods, including via being pumped in directly at the leaking wellhead.

We don't know exactly what's in Corexit or in what quantities. Nalco, who sells it, won't tell us, and the U.S. Government won't make them. What we do know is that it contains stuff that's terrible for human beings in many, many ways that probably won't be fully accounted for any time soon. A group of researchers from Florida State University and Utrecht University in the Netherlands found that Corexit 9500A allows "polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons," one of crude oil's most dangerous components, to sink deeper, faster into sand, threatening groundwater supplies in the longer term. Thus, even beyond its own toxicity & possible mutagenic properties, Corexit can bring the more dangerous aspects of the BP oil into contact with our drinking water.

Me, I'm not big on science. I copy-and-pasted the phrase "polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons." I don't know about molecules or blood chemistry or ozone. To me, the photographs of sore-covered, eyeless, mutated and disfigured sea life coming out of the Gulf are more powerful than any scientific study. I go by what those I trust see, witness, and experience-- the dolphin die-offs, coastal residents' and clean-up workers' respiratory difficulties, the sores on people's arms and legs after going in the Gulf, an ever-rising rate of miscarried pregnancies-- coupled with the already-documented ways BP and our government have lied, lied, lied from the very beginning.

Just as many people find "climate change" difficult to believe regardless of what science says, I find it hard to believe that the shrimp and oysters I crave are dangerous to my health. That isn't based on science-- in fact, my wanting to believe the seafood is safe directly contradicts both science and what the people most knowledgeable about seafood are saying. I basically refuse to believe that the seafood is unsafe because I just can't conceive of such a thing-- I can't conceive of what that would mean to all of us along the Gulf Coast, in communities from the Cajuns to the Choctaw who've lived off that seafood for generations.



I'm in denial.

And either way, BP, and our corrupt, useless government win. That's the hell of it-- it's a double bind.

If the seafood is unsafe, we're all fucked, and our whole region's way of life is over. Living off the land and the bounty of the mothering Gulf as people along the Coast have for centuries is no longer possible, and we can now only survive via buying all our food from Walmart. We can no longer make a living catching and selling seafood, let alone feed our families with it. With our ability to sustain ourselves and feed ourselves destroyed, we're now entirely dependent on government and industry... we must just eat what they sell us, or allot to us each month.

If the seafood is okay, then BP is off the hook. When people like me say, okay, we'll still eat the seafood, then BP can proudly say, look at all these happy Southerners eatin' their seafood! Everything's okay! BP can stick us in their commercials as proof that the oil disaster wasn't so bad after all.

Local governments want the seafood to still be okay-- they NEED the seafood to still be okay, because otherwise their economies, the tax base that supports them, will collapse entirely. For local governments and for those whose livings are tied to the seafood industry, there is immense pressure to believe and say that the seafood is still safe to eat. They want to believe, and it's understandable: the alternative is impossible to contemplate. When BP offers to pay for billboards proclaiming how safe Gulf seafood is, who could say no?

And so, in just one more way, the oil industry, with the collusion of government, fucks us over, poisons us, and sets it up so that if we want to continue living, to continue being able to support our families, we have to smile through the pain and say we aren't poisoned-- we have to lie, to deny science and what we know and suspect in our hearts. Our choice is between starvation and capitulation.

That's why this is such a heinous crime, not only against the health and wellbeing of the people of the Gulf Coast, but against the truth. It's a crime against the integrity of fisherfolk who take pride in their product. That's what the industry-government partnership that dominates our region wants: to make us into liars, to force us to defend their misdeeds.

It's a horrendous crime, and it's a crime that ought to be avenged.

# PELICAN BRIEFS

INSPIRING ACTIONS FROM ALL OVER THE GLOBE



## FEBRUARY 2012 -

### MEND REBELS ATTACK OIL PIPELINE

Rebels from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta attacked and disabled an oil pipeline in their continued struggle for local control of resources. Since 2004, the coalition of various local militant groups has been attacking infrastructure and equipment used by oil companies to exploit the region.

## MAY 2012 -

### ASTURIAN MINERS STRIKE

Miners in Spain began striking in late May 2012. The strike has included attacks on police and offices of the ruling People's Party. Miners have attacked police with rockets, stones, nuts and bolts; and have blocked up to 60 roads a day, including 16 main roads and motorways and two railway lines. Miners have also erected barricades made from burning tires and occupied a mine shaft.

## JUNE 2012 -

### INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FIGHT MONTE BELO DAM PROJECT

Protestors opposing the construction of a massive hydroelectric dam in Brazil staged sit-ins and sabotage. The dam, which was approved by the government in 2005, would destroy vast swaths of indigenous land and resources. Actions have included the destruction of building equipment and the breaching of dam infrastructure.

## JANUARY 2013 -

### ZADISTS SABOTAGE HIGH-POWER LINE

Anarchists in France from the Zone a Défendre (ZAD) used hacksaws to disable power-line infrastructure. The ZAD is an autonomous zone established to support the decades long struggle against the construction of an airport in Notre Dames des Landes. Clashes between police and defenders of the zone have been ongoing for months.

## FEBRUARY 2013 -

### ANARCHISTS TORCH GOLD MINING EQUIPMENT

Fifty masked anarchists armed with Molotov cocktails stormed the Skouries Gold Mine in northern Greece. After torching bulldozers, trucks, and portacabins belonging to Canadian mining company El Dorado and its Greek subsidiary Hellenic Gold, the group used tree trunks to block police and firefighters from reaching the site.

## FEBRUARY 2013 - CONFRONTATIONS AT CONFERENCE FOR CANADIAN MEGA-DEVELOPMENT

A major gathering of corporations at the Palais des Congrès de Montreal was disrupted two days in a row when protesters sabotaged police cars, broke windows and shot flares into the building. The conference was convened to discuss Plan Nord, a mega-project coordinating resource extraction throughout northern Quebec. The proposal for Plan Nord would destroy land, poison water systems, and displace multiple First Nations groups.

## MARCH 2013 -

### ANARCHISTS SET FIRE TO "GREEN" DEVELOPMENT

In opposition to green-washed urban gentrification, anarchists in Seattle set fire to the construction site of a so-called "sustainable" housing development.

## MARCH 2013 -

### NEW ORLEANIANS DROP BANNER, LIBERATE BILLBOARDS

In solidarity with the Tar Sands Blockades and against the destruction of the Gulf by BP, some New Orleans anarchists dropped an anti-fracking banner from an overpass and corrected two billboards.



# OVER THE DOME

BY JULES BENTLEY



One afternoon in November 1980, placid, shallow Lake Peigneur in New Iberia, Louisiana changed first into a great, swirling whirlpool of mud and then into a terrifying 150-foot waterfall. In only three hours, two-and-a-half billion gallons of fresh water disappeared into the salt dome below the lake. The fresh water washed away the salt as it went, creating a widening vortex that swallowed aquatic life, lakeside homes, and acres of land as well as most of Jefferson Island.

This vortex was powerful enough to reverse the flow of the Delcambre canal connecting Lake Peigneur with the Gulf of Mexico's Vermillion Bay. Fully-loaded barges were sucked out of the canal and into the whirlpool where they disappeared below ground. Over the next few days, water from the Gulf continued flowing

upriver into Lake Peigneur, eventually replacing an average 6-foot-deep body of fresh water with a pool of saltwater over a thousand feet deep.

Drilling caused this disaster. The drill of a Texaco oil rig searching for tiny pockets of petroleum around the salt dome punctured tunnels dug inside the dome by the Diamond Crystal Salt Company. Miraculously, the dozens of miners working below the lake at the time escaped with their lives. Texaco blamed the subcontractor who'd been operating the rig, much as BP seeks to blame subcontractors for the 2010 destruction of the Gulf. Although it was clear what had happened, no "official" cause or explanation for the disaster was ever determined. The Diamond Crystal Salt Company got out of the mining business altogether, a process no doubt eased by

a private \$45 million settlement they got from Texaco and its drilling subcontractor-- Texaco paid liberally to avoid an actual trial and any legal designation of blame.

One local fisherman interviewed for a TV report on the disaster wore an "I survived Lake Peigneur" cap. After his near-death experience on the lake, he explained, he'd given up fishing; he now got his fish at a grocery store.

Fishermen might have been scared off (and the freshwater fish killed), but in Louisiana no disaster is ever so daunting that the big boys of oil & gas won't go back if there's money to be made. After all, who's going to stop them? So relentless is the quest for profit that in 1994, the remaining salt caverns below Lake Peigneur



became home to JISH, Jefferson Island Storage & Hub, where empty areas of the vast salt dome are filled with billions of cubic feet of natural gas and 16 miles of pipelines. The current owner of JISH is Atlanta-based AGL Resources. While AGL is new-ish to natural gas storage, its engineering company, TKE, has experience; in 2002 TKE built salt dome natural gas storage in Moss Bluff, TX. In 2004, that facility exploded, prompting evacuation of a three-mile radius around the facility. Six billion cubic feet of natural gas burned for six days.

Forty or so miles away from Lake Peigneur in Assumption Parish is the Napoleonville salt dome, a (slightly) more famous salt dome that another company, Texas Brine, was using for similar purposes. The 2012 collapse of an underground salt dome storage cavern there has created something astonishing in Bayou Corne: a leviathan sinkhole, thirteen acres big at press time and steadily growing, day by day and week by week swallowing trees, land and wildlife, releasing methane, oil and other harmful substances into the environment. Though the storage company repeatedly denied responsibility, there's no longer any doubt that, in the words of Smithsonian magazine, "mining activities conducted by the oil and gas service company Texas Brine opened up this apparent pit to hell."

The Napoleonville salt dome storage that created the Bayou Corne sinkhole didn't just contain butane and natural gas. In 1995, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources let Texas Brine "dispose" of radioactive material-- a drilling byproduct called "scale"-- by putting it into the Napoleonville dome and another cavern over in Lafourche Parish. As the sinkhole yawns ever wider, hundreds in Assumption Parish have already been evacuated, and many nearby have experienced health problems. Tests of the waterways around Bayou Corne now show signs of toxic contamination.

There's a lot more natural gas to store these days, thanks in large part thanks to the fracking of "shale plays," including since 2008 the massive Haynesville Shale that runs beneath northwestern Louisiana. While the fracking companies have enjoyed big Louisiana tax breaks, the people of Louisiana have enjoyed the benefits of fracking itself:

- In 2009, in Desoto Parish, a one person was killed, several hospitalized (including first responders), and neighborhoods within a two mile radius of a fracking site were evacuated while a blowout spewed methane into the air.

- A little farther north in Caddo Parish that same year, 19 cattle died of respiratory failure after drinking a "mysterious fluid" that was seeping near a fracking rig.

- Less than a year later, hundreds were evacuated after another blowout contaminated the Caddo drinking water aquifer. Parish residents were denied any information about the specific contaminants, but were told even washing their clothes in the water from their faucets was dangerous.

- On March 31, 2012, one worker was killed and another injured in Lafayette Parish by an explosion at a gas well run by fracking company Hilcorp... and the beat goes on.

Storing oil and gas under salt domes isn't a popular idea with the people of Louisiana just recently, but the people of Louisiana don't get much say in these matters. Storing oil and gas in salt domes is profitable, so AGL is expanding its natural gas storage in the salt dome below Lake Peigneur. The original application to construct two additional storage caverns was stalled in 2006 when then-governor Blanco demanded an environmental study of the project, but the company responded with a lawsuit, which has now been settled. The expansion is rolling forward, and no environmental study of its possible effects will be required. On March 23, 2013, Louisiana's Department of Natural Resources granted AGL the first permit of three the company will need to begin doubling capacity at JISH.

Recently, there are worrying signs that the Jefferson Island salt dome beneath Lake Peigneur may not be stable. The lake has begun bubbling. According to Nara Crowley of the New Iberia group Save Lake Peigneur, the bubbling resembles "a pot of spaghetti water boiling over," similar to the bubbling reported in Bayou Corne in spring 2012, a few months before the tremors hit and the sinkhole opened up there.

The region around Lake Peigneur is far more heavily populated than Bayou Corne or Moss Bluff, TX. There are over 4,000 residents within a mile of JISH, most of them families who've been there for generations. Louis M. Ackal, the sheriff of Iberia Parish, wrote Governor Jindal what he termed a "desperate plea" to prevent AGL adding additional storage beneath Lake Peigneur. Invoking the disaster of thirty years ago, Sheriff Ackal wrote: "I was Captain of Louisiana State Police Troop I when the emergency call came in regarding the Jefferson Island Salt Mine collapse. As the earth trembled like an earthquake, I could not believe what I was seeing — the drilling platform, tugboats, barges, and over 65 acres of

land were washed into the Jefferson Island Salt Mine. The water was rushing into the mine so fast that it displaced air and caused geysers over 400 feet high. I was deathly afraid for life and property."

He cited specific structural concerns, warned of a Bayou-Corne-like collapse, and explained, "the leaching of the two new salt caverns will yield a by-product called 'brine,' which is super-saturated salt water. AGL will pump the brine by-product through a disposal pipe into the sediment below the Chicot Aquifer. If there is breach in the disposal pipe (science proves that salt water corrodes metal) brine water could leak out into the Chicot Aquifer, contaminating the drinking water supply for our area.

"An engineering miscalculation caused millions of dollars in damage that ill-fated day. Are we so complacent that we think this can never happen again? The cries of residents from Delcambre, New Iberia and along Lake Peigneur have fallen on deaf ears... I cannot express how distressed I am over the future of Lake Peigneur and the residents of Iberia Parish." As of press time, the Governor's office hadn't bothered to respond.

New Iberia's state senator, Fred Mills, is another staunch opponent of the expansion. "This lake, this region, these resources have sacrificed enough," he told Louisiana's Department of Natural Resources, roughly a month before they approved the first permit.

The protests of residents, politicians, law enforcement, a Delcambre city resolution signed by the mayor, the unanimous opposition of the Iberia Parish Council and the water-quality concerns of the director of the local utility company... all mean nothing. When the energy industry wants something in Louisiana, it becomes clear who really holds the cards.

According to Senator Mills and others, the drinking water around Lake Peigneur has become worse every year since the salt dome storage began; once among the cleanest in the nation, it now requires extensive chemical treatment. Arsenic levels are steadily rising. So, whether or not Lake Peigneur experiences another spectacular, news-making collapse, people in Assumption, Iberia and St. Martin parishes are already being poisoned. In a late 2012 interview, Mills pulled no punches when discussing the effects of the oil and gas industry on Cajun country. "This is genocide," he said.

# HOROSCOPES

BY MARIKA MAYPOP

## ARIES • MARCH 21-APRIL 19

2012 was pretty shitty for you, & you've entered 2013 with hopes of increased understanding & unlimited prospects. You're so good at going at it alone that you sometimes feel entirely self-sufficient, but as last year taught you, you must utilize the perspectives that helpful comrades bring to the potluck of your consciousness. There are still difficulties to dodge or, by effort, to circumvent.

## TAURUS • APRIL 20-MAY 20

Your worldview is continuing to radically transform, & the chance to access opportunities for growth is there for you to take, but you must leave something behind in the process. Stop skipping town or failing to bottom-line the tasks you said you would as your crafty mind places the blame on others. Saturn in your relationship sector has its hardships, maybe a sense of isolation, but there are lessons in self-reliance coming your way. See your pals as mentors who support your innate determination.

## GEMINI • MAY 21-JUNE 20

Respecting diversity of tactics is a vital ethos, and in this time of illusions and ideals concerning the way you interact with others, it's a good ethos to follow as you discover the deepest layers of your personality. Mercury in your sector of intimacy & personal evolution and Jupiter residing in your identity & self-concept sector mean your personal agenda prioritizes a conscious decision-making process and unintended exploration. This won't be without fear but despite it, through determination & by any means possible.

## CANCER • JUNE 21-JULY 22

You are called to inner contemplation, the kind where you find yourself at a vacant dive bar with your hoodie up, feeling somewhat stuck in your self-expression. Reaching out to active partnerships in your life for support and sustenance is vital, but don't over-rely on connections that could result in a loss of self-focus. Give yourself some space without feeling guilty. Like a collective project in a sore spot, the biggest mistake would be to give in to discouragement and not try, perpetually adjusting for the long haul.

## LEO • JULY 23-AUGUST 22

Like a swarm-style demonstration, you've taken to wrestling with the cops inside your head with a multi-pronged approach. The struggle continues, but you're endowed with the optimism and starry-eyed potential of what might turn out to be a brave new world, free from bigoted self-policing. There's a good dose of hard-nosed practical thinking, & with Saturn in your home & family sector, you're reassessing and renewing bonds, or perhaps tearing down the withering walls, literally & figuratively, in your living space.

## VIRGO • AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22

Allies will help you overcome the painful carryovers from the past and enter a more wide-open future. There's an emotional instability that seems scary, but with hearty self-care you'll be in a better position to kick some habits to the curb. Communication & connection with your comrades is feeling stuck, but it could be the very changes happening within you are preventing you from connecting in the same old ways. Find new outlets to express yourself & show solidarity. Now's a great time to start a penpalship with someone behind bars.

## LIBRA • SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22

The krewe/tribe/companer@s/family area of your solar chart is loaded, meaning that improvement of one kind or another is on your mind and in your heart. When these folks are positive in your life, there's a surplus of security, which makes dealing with everything a little easier during this complex & fraught historical period. There's some spaciousness here that doesn't correspond to traditional arrangements, so now's the time for a new thoughtful examination of the right to love whom you want, how you want, and as many as you want.

## SCORPIO • OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21

You're feeling real serious about your commitment to your personal goals & that involves a lot of inner work to battle with those demons of the past -- demons that come in the form of old patterns of behavior stemming from early wounding. Don't fret & become introverted, but rather open up to vulnerable communication with friends who will undoubtedly help you better understand yourself and hold you accountable for your dealings with others. With a pragmatic point of view you can best tackle this new year with a 'beginner' mind, in which everything is negotiable and nothing seems impossible.

## SAGITTARIUS • NOV 22-DECEMBER 21

I ain't trying to get too woo-woo here, but with Saturn emphasized in your twelfth sector of dreamwork and profound unconscious process, you're super invested in unraveling spiritual anarchism while making a serious commitment to deeper meaning through the bullshit. Pluto's meddling in your values & resources, including paper money, so you may be forced to examine what your values and sense of physical security really entail. You'll realize even more that property is a joke, but meaningful correlations that parade as coincidences are to be cherished.

## CAPRICORN • DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19

You've been in a giant Food Not Bombs-style pressure cooker of transformation for a minute, and are beginning to recognize the signposts of your journey forward. Like hitching through Appalachia, new vistas emerge as you gain each ridge, and a new viewpoint enables you to see still more upward reaches that you might yet achieve. Your work is in creating an affinity group that more closely lines up with your current purpose, which also means you should spend some time redrafting your inner mission statement.

## AQUARIUS • JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18

You've been displaying a lot more enthusiasm than normal as the latest new moon clearly illuminated all those plans you have for the future. You are ready to make your more "professional" pursuits count for something you deeply believe in. Saturn acts as a double-edged sword for you right now by placing blockades in front of you which, even as they vex you, prove to be formative. Be careful: don't be unnecessarily aggressive, but rather engage in inquiry through dialogue. Creative skill and self-expression will help you build the bridge from who you were to who you might become.

## PISCES • FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 20

You've been harnessing your own energy to make some serious shifts in the way you relate to the mechanical gears of society. Now's the time to throw your own unique version of a crescent wrench into the works. There's a tug of war within you between private and public concerns, and with Saturn in the sector of higher mind, it looks like teaching and learning, as well as traveling are particularly important for you right now. Teach or take a free school class, then spend time in an unsettled circumstance, which will help you learn to fully accept yourself, even those dark shadowy parts.

# THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL- AID AND COMFORT TO LOUISIANA'S ENEMIES

BY JUSTIN OTHA LONGFELLOW



Ever since New Orleans' Roosevelt Hotel re-opened in 2009, an endless series of big-oil executives have been meeting there. This is especially frustrating because the Roosevelt Hotel was the historical hangout of Huey P. Long, our beloved outlaw Governor "who took on the Standard Oil men / And whipped their ass / Just like he promised he'd do" (as sung by Randy Newman).

It's frustrating, but it's not surprising. These days, the Roosevelt is owned by the NYC-based Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts, itself a subsidiary of Hilton Worldwide which is in turn owned by the Blackstone Group, a private equity firm founded by the former chairman of Lehman Brothers. As readers of the now-defunct Times-Picayune recently discovered, the history and legacy of our region's local institutions don't mean shit to the money-mad Manhattanites who own them.

During a Roosevelt-hosted oil executive conference in January 2012, a flash mob of a couple dozen people dressed as Huey Long convened outside the Roosevelt and serenaded the hotel's unimpressed doorstaff. It was gentle theater, perhaps fun for the participants, and harmless in every sense of the word. On November 15 of that year, however, a group of activists organized around Keystone XL went inside one of the hotel's ballrooms and held up protest signs in the middle of a Joint Energy Industry Association luncheon.

When they were asked to leave the hotel, they did so, but an overzealous undercover state police officer who'd been posing as hotel staff chased after them. He jumped in front of the car two of the activists were in, preventing them leaving, and detaining them-- under dubious legal pretense-- until NOPD showed up. Once NOPD finally arrived, this bellhop bad-ass badgered the reluctant local police into arresting not just the two detained protesters but also two journalists recording the protesters' arrests! The four were charged with criminal trespass, jailed, and then had their charges dropped, but not before their pictures were sent to the FBI. That's how this fucked-up system works. One of the arrestees, a member of New Orleans' Occupy and

a dedicated Livestreamer, livestreamed her own arrest-- her videos and her own written account can be seen on the web at [bit.ly/Uakpj](http://bit.ly/Uakpj)

While the arrests are unfortunate, the November action was an encouraging sign of escalation: the year began with activists singing & speechifying on the sidewalk and wound down with activists inside the Hotel's ballroom, disrupting an oil industry luncheon.

On March 17, 2013, a group called River Delta Resist! took it to another level. The Roosevelt yet again hosted oil industry scumbags, this time the Howard Weil Energy Conference, "one of the premier investor conferences in the energy industry." This time, the vehicle-blocking shrimp boot was on the other foot: right outside the Roosevelt, River Delta Resist! blockaded the vehicles that were transporting the murderous, greedy executives of Transocean and other big oil corporations to dinner, shutting down the street for nearly half an hour before the police arrived... at which point the road blockers, attired in festive St. Patrick's Day green, melted back into the crowd like Robin Hood vanishing into Sherwood Forest. And River Delta Resist! wasn't done-- once the various executives finally got to their dinner destinations, the restaurants themselves were invaded. The enemies of the people can no longer hide.

On this most recent occasion, there were no arrests. Clearly, the Roosevelt's corporate ownership can expect increasing tactical sophistication and increasingly daring disruptions of oil-industry events going forward. Big Oil has long ago worn out its welcome in Louisiana. If the Roosevelt's owners foolishly insist on continuing to dishonor the Roosevelt's legacy and the legacy of Huey Long, if they continue to shelter the enemies of Louisiana in their bosom, they will find out, to quote Newman again, that "what has happened down here is the winds have changed..."

# HOW TO BUILD A SKATEPARK- BIG BEVERAGE VS. DIY IN NEW ORLEANS

BY NATHAN TEMPEY

It's a windy, cold Saturday in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans. Joe Billizon and Abanobi Lawes are at their local skateboard park, skating to stay warm. They take turns riding their boards up a cement ramp, each trying to balance his board on the top and roll back down without catching the front wheels on the lip. The trick, called a rock & roll, is proving difficult.

"If they hadn't built this here I might not still be skating," Lawes says between attempts. Despite the whipping wind, there is a healthy crowd present. Billings and Lawes share the concrete expanse with fifteen other skaters, half of whom are lined up waiting for a turn at the same ramp. The steel canopy of Interstate 610 looms overhead.

Lawes explains the sport's appeal: "You're independent. Learning a trick, it's up to you to try and try until you get it. You might fall but when you do get the trick, you own it. And it feels so good."

A few feet from the action, Joey O'Mahoney is tearing plywood from the side of a cement embankment with a crowbar. Elsewhere on the slab, others are busy smashing cinderblocks, sawing two-by-fours, and picking up litter. Saturday is a work day and the crew is preparing for another big concrete pour.

Named "Parisite" for its proximity to Paris Avenue, this park was constructed without permission on state-owned land. Its concrete structures are the product of hundreds of hours of volunteer labor and thousands of dollars raised through punk shows, t-shirt sales, and donations. By building it themselves, O'Mahoney and a handful of others have galvanized their community and inadvertently challenged the government and marketing forces behind two other stalled New Orleans skatepark projects.

## SPOHNSORED

One stalled skatepark arrived by barge in October 2011. Sponsored by the energy drink company Red Bull, the barge carried a set of concrete ramps on a month-long promotional float down the Mississippi River, hosting onboard skate contests along the way. After a final event docked alongside the French Quarter levee, Red Bull donated the ramps to the City of New Orleans. City contractors trucked the ramps to a municipal warehouse along the Lafitte Greenway, a former rail corridor that is slated to become a three-mile

linear park. There they remain, sitting on trailers.

The greenway was chosen over two other locations as the site for the Red Bull skatepark in January 2012 after a series of public meetings, but pollution concerns have halted the redevelopment of the site. Greenway construction cannot begin until summer 2013. Eager to unload the Red Bull ramps, the city is eyeing Parisite as an alternative location.

Nothing is finalized and city employees are mum about a next step, but New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu has green-lighted a proposal which gives control of the space beneath I-610 to the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC). That plan is awaiting final state and federal approval. Vincent Smith, the city's Capital Projects director, has made repeated visits to Parisite, telling the skaters he is concerned about the structural integrity of their ramps and that they should expect city surveyors to visit soon.

The surveyors' engineering tests could include core samples, which Parisite's builders worry would render the park unusable and require elaborate repair. A bigger concern is whether Parisite will be bulldozed entirely ahead of the installation of the Red Bull ramps. O'Mahoney is frustrated with the city's plans. "You have an entire city. Why put the Red Bull ramps right where we're building?"

So far, the surveyors have stayed away. Meanwhile, the tight-knit group of skaters behind Parisite has set about getting its house in order. They have brought in a structural engineer and professional skatepark builders to vouch for their work. They're photographing every step of construction to prove that it is being done to code. At a NORDC meeting in early December, they announced the formation of a new non-profit called Transitional Spaces.

At that same meeting, NORDC Chairman Roy Glapion praised the Parisite project and encouraged his fellow commissioners to visit. He was less glowing in an interview nine days later: "We would never have looked at that site if kids weren't skating there," he said. "But why would you keep a hand-built skatepark when you've got a brand new, state-of-the-art one?"

The artist Skylar Fein has taken on the role of government liaison for the DIY skatepark, making the case for Parisite amnesty to several bodies of

city government. He is cautious in responding to Glapion. "Those statements aren't carved in stone," Fein said, explaining that New Orleans politicians are going through a crash course in the needs of the skateboard community. Still, he argued, those officials know that the demolition of a community-built skatepark "would be a political disaster."

Red Bull employees declined to discuss the situation, but Aaron Spohn, the owner of the company which built the Red Bull ramps is upset and vocal about it. "It makes you wonder what's going on with the local scene that things get donated and they can't even get installed," Spohn said. "You don't bite the hand that feeds you." Spohn says he has offered to go beyond his original design pledge by rendering a park where Parisite and Red Bull coexist, but he doesn't think the city is interested.

Peter Whitley is program director for the Tony Hawk Foundation, a skateboarding advocacy group, and has informally advised each of the three skatepark projects over the past two years. The foundation estimates that some 1,500 New Orleanians go skateboarding at least once a week. "I don't think that those Red Bull ramps will fill the need," Whitley said. "But it'll be nice to get those out of the story so that the community can finally be heard again. They've really disrupted the conversation—kind of like having a famous rap star come to town and build a skatepark."

## THE BIG DEWEEZY

The other stalled New Orleans skatepark arrived under the glare of camera flashes. It was built in the name of the city's most famous living son, platinum-selling rapper Li'l Wayne. The Cash Money artist has put his newfound zeal for skateboarding front and center recently, attracting the interest of the soda company Mountain Dew in the form of a multi-million dollar endorsement deal. In the summer of 2012, Mountain Dew agreed to finance the construction of a skatepark in a Lower Ninth Ward community center in tandem with a "DEWEEZY" marketing campaign overseen by marketing agency Glu.

Ward "Mack" McLendon took the beverage giant up on its offer to house the skatepark in the Lower 9th Ward Village, his warehouse-turned-community center. The former telephone technician became an activist after Hurricane Katrina but has seen national attention to the Lower Ninth Ward fade in recent years. "You



couldn't ask to be dealt a better card than a skateboard park," he said. "It brings the light back to the community that has been forgotten."

At the ribbon cutting in September 2012, the park played host to a few dozen preselected ticket holders and media members while hundreds of young skaters massed outside. In a Mountain Dew YouTube video documenting the event Li'l Wayne recalls the scene, saying, "I looked out the window and there was a bunch of kids with skateboards saying, 'Can we come in?'"

Except for one day in November, they have been locked out ever since. In the fall, McLendon told a local TV news crew that the cost of insurance stood as the main hurdle to opening. By December, he said that Glu had secured insurance and that he was busy addressing building code concerns with the help of architects and general contractors. McLendon said he is "taking the bullets" of negative publicity. Glu did not respond to repeated interview requests.

## BACK AT THE SLAB

Across town, the builders of Parisite are building their own base of support. O'Mahoney is handling online outreach and park design. Marvin Hirsch, a carpenter and musician, is organizing a series of winter benefit concerts. Four shows in, he has raised close to \$5,000. An organizing team meets bi-weekly in Skylar Fein's wood shop. A documentary is in the works.

Busy and tired of discussing the stalled beverage company skateparks, O'Mahoney and the two friends with whom he started building, Mark Steuer and Ally Bruser, spoke of simpler times. Before Parisite, there was the Peach Orchard, a DIY skatepark tucked between train tracks and a grove of trees not far from Parisite. The three began building there in April 2010 with a wheelbarrow, shovels, and a few bags of quick-dry concrete. Their first small ramps came out rough, developing cracks and pockmarks where gravel poked through, but they kept at it, tearing down and paving over. By spring 2012, the Peach Orchard had become a full-blown skatepark and

a destination for skateboarders from around the Gulf South. On certain nights, gas generators powered live musical performances. The curved concrete surfaces bore a constantly morphing skin of graffiti art.

Then, in May, the backhoes came. Sent by Norfolk Southern, the railroad company that owns the right-of-way that included the skatepark, they destroyed two years of work in less than an hour, leaving New Orleans once again a city without a skatepark. Support poured in quickly from around the country, and within 11 days those behind the Peach Orchard began building Parisite. "The Peach Orchard was a utopia," O'Mahoney said. "Now, there's no graffiti and your board might

In an email exchange with the City's office of Capital Projects Administration in mid-January, Skylar Fein wrote:

*I realize this is not how things work. They tried doing it the right way—visiting their Councilmember's office, going to NORD meetings. They were laughed out the door! We are now talking about a skatepark at that location only because they didn't follow the "correct" procedures. After a half century of skateboarding, half a century in a city with no skatepark, they forced the city's hand. As a community member... I admire them for that. And I'm not the only one.*

## UPDATE, APRIL 2013-

At its February meeting, NORDC unanimously approved designating 57,000 square feet under I-610, an area that includes Parisite, for use as a skatepark. In conjunction, the NORD Foundation committed to raising \$150,000 which will go toward installing the Red Bull ramps and smoothing the existing slab under the interstate. Spohn Ranch will donate design services and money left over will go toward building additional elements.

Two and a half weeks after the announcement, skaters finished work on the first section of the DIY park. The mood is optimistic and skater-builder attention has turned to drafting legal documents to formalize

permission for DIY building within the new skatepark "There's no shortage of space," Joey O'Mahoney says. "It's not like [with the Red Bull ramps in place] we can't build crazy unique stuff."

Across the Industrial Canal, the Lower 9th Ward Village skatepark opened its doors after being rewired to meet city building code, but the facility remains dependent on volunteer staffing and has allowed skaters in only sporadically since. A Glu Agency spokesperson told the Associated Press that a shift to full-time staff is "around the corner."



get stolen, but the ramps are good. In no way is it worse, but the vibe has suffered."

The organization has become larger and more complex too. "The city is watching us," explained Ally Bruser, one of the original builders. "Being out there [working] on Saturdays is only a small part of what we do now."

Despite all the changes, Parisite's strength remains its physical presence. "We have to keep building because the rules that everyone else plays by-- nothing ever happens," Bruser said. "The only way to get skateparks built is to build skateparks."

# ANARCHIST ALL ALONG

BY PAT HUFF

Anarchy is not a utopian goal to aspire to but rather a reality to be recognized and honed. It is a basic aspect of the human condition that manifests in our daily lives and our relations with other people. That's the premise of a recent book by James C. Scott, Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play (Princeton University Press, 2012).

At 169 pages, including notes, acknowledgments and an index, and written in a breezy conversational style, the book makes for a relaxing Sunday afternoon read. It consists of 29 short essays on subjects ranging from the Civil Rights movement to playground instruction to traffic rules in Holland to peasant resistance.

Through extensive field research among peasant communities and in-depth historical analysis of social struggles, Scott has come to recognize anarchy simply as "cooperation without hierarchy or state rule." Scott is not particularly interested in contemporary anarchist political groups or social movements. He leans toward what he identifies as anarchy's "infrapolitics," or the anarchy of daily life. Scott juxtaposes what he calls the "vernacular order" with the "official order." By the term vernacular order, Scott refers to a social order embedded in a particular place, with particular practices and knowledge rooted in local history.

The state's official order, by contrast, relies on reductive (over-simplified) generalizations: complex lived experiences and local knowledge are reduced to only those features of interest to elite planners. These reductions take familiar forms: official maps, legal titles, standardized paperwork, the imposition of an official language.

Through these reductive projects, elite planners construct what Scott calls a "synoptic view" of society. For example, planners can learn the facts important to them by glancing at a table or chart detailing a region's annual oil production, but this view will say little about working conditions on off-shore rigs, environmental damage resulting

from decades of leaks and spills, decreases in local quality of life, or daily struggles to make a living in an increasingly limited job market.

Through the imposition of official order and its being valued over vernacular orders, society becomes increasingly oriented toward the service of elite interests and concerns. "It is no exaggeration," Scott says, "to view the past three

centuries as the triumph of standardized official landscapes of control and appropriation over the vernacular order." (p. 35)

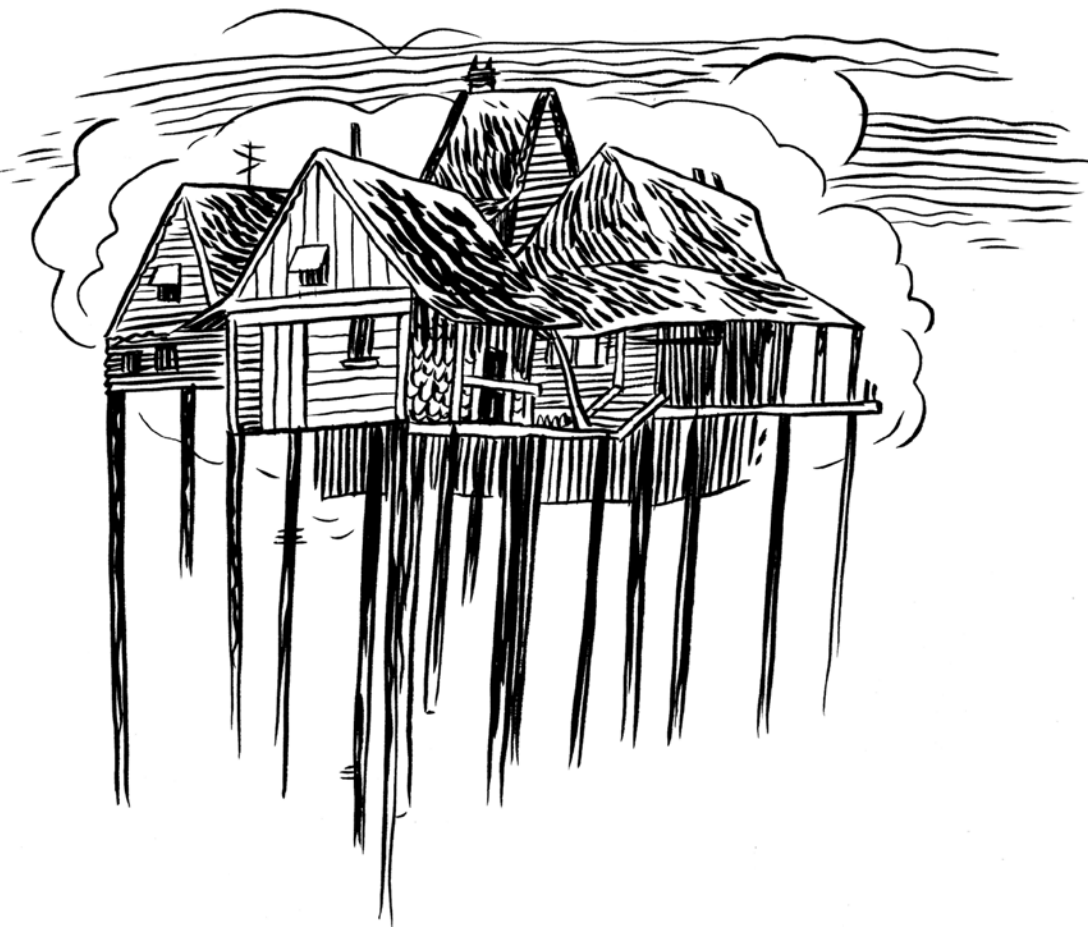
collectively decide to obey to the letter every single code and regulation that they'd usually (and necessarily) ignore in the course of regular work. As demonstrated time and again, once this happens the work process begins to stutter and stall. This proves Scott's point that even in the most highly formal conditions, informality must necessarily persist.

What does all this have to do with radical struggle in Louisiana and the larger Gulf Coast? Scott points to existing substrata of history and social reality that are always already anarchist. We might call this implicit anarchy. Based on this, we can find a potential organizing strategy for anarchists of the more explicit variety.

For a research project I recently interviewed a number of explicit (meaning self-declared) anarchists living in New Orleans. A subset of those interviews provided some grounds for the messages I take from the work of Scott and others: those I spoke to with life histories within New Orleans' African American community reflected on the anarchy of daily life within New Orleans' black

communities. This is hardly surprising given the history of the black working class's efforts at organizing mutual aid and self-help societies. The self-organization within and across communities during Katrina is another powerful example of implicit anarchy that has shaped the city in recent years.

It's no secret that explicitly anarchist communities can be somewhat off-putting for folks not already in the "scene." I would argue that if the explicit anarchist community in New Orleans or any other locale wishes to expand beyond a pre-selected aesthetic and cultural niche, the challenge will be to figure out how to respectfully and genuinely engage with the currents of implicit anarchy that already exist in their communities. This is a strategy of movement building. The task is not to create something totally new, but rather to organize and expand what already exists.



centuries as the triumph of standardized official landscapes of control and appropriation over the vernacular order." (p. 35)

This "triumph" has hardly been total, however, and may be compared to the "triumph" of a parasite in maintaining a relation to its living host. Just because elite planners wish and need to view reality through reductive glasses does not mean that reality is ever totally reduced to synoptic representation. As Scott points out, "[t]he more highly planned, regulated, and formal a social or economic order is, the more likely it is to be parasitic on informal processes that the formal scheme does not recognize and without which it could not continue to exist..." (p. 45)

Organized workers who make use of the "work-to-rule" tactic understand this point well. To employ the "work-to-rule" tactic means that workers



*new orleans community kitchen is a volunteer-run project that brings together those who love to grow, gather, cook, and serve food, so that we may build solidarity with those marginalized by capitalism and the industrial food system. we serve a free meal every tuesday 3-5pm at various street corners in the CBD starting at duncan plaza. come eat!*

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# FROM SPACE, WE STILL LOOK BLUE

BY KASANDRA LARSEN

In Louisiana, an expert: we're not seeing catastrophic impacts.  
In China, a submerged fireman can't move:

he's pulled from toxic soup,  
dripping ooze. I don't drive, but I'm surrounded

by plastic, so I'm sucking up my share of crude, too. We're pigs  
wallowing in goo. In Canada, a pipeline rupture

sends a warning shot, a letter across the border;  
in the news, we see strangely camouflaged geese, silent,

dark as eclipsed sky. Down south, fortunate pelicans still fly;  
we count the ones that die

while searching for some secluded bit of planet  
where black gold hasn't reached: maybe some icy beach

in the Arctic? But no, Shell's there already. At the opposite pole,  
sludge frequently flows from cruise ships that have crashed

or sunk. We're drunk  
on fuel, folks, distilling destruction, acting globally

as only humans can. We can agree, at least, that hope  
is not a plan. For most, though,

hope's the closest thing they have.  
Denial drips from its practitioners  
in black.

