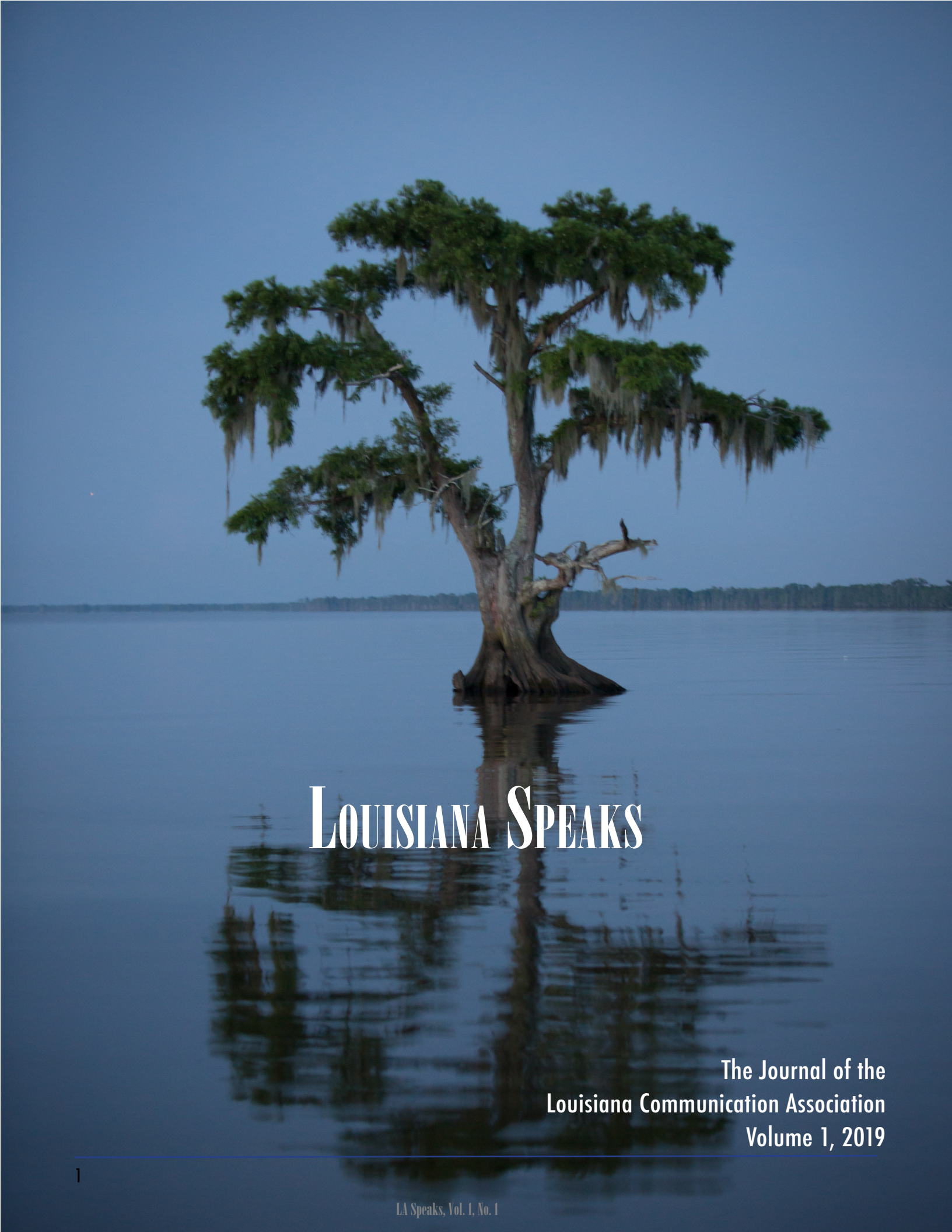

Louisiana Speaks

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Contents

Bee Sting Meditation

Anthony Francis Ramstetter, Jr.

like summertime bees
buzzing to their deaths
i too break off & burn
& crumple downward
with a white swollen face

before my slow succumbing
to tingle-throb dissipation into
orange pomegranate sunlight
while exulting in worship,
“jesus wasn’t built in a day!”
kissing my stings all over
tears melting everywhere into rain

& in this epiphany-decease
my madness is what kills me
my melancholy face, you see,
was stung by this bee & that bee
so i giggle & die uncontrollably.

Shredded Boot Mapping a Vanishing Place

Stephanie Houston Grey

In Louisiana, the past and future collide head-on, with deadly results. On a stagnant, stifling day in New Orleans, beneath the ancient oaks, time itself stills and lingers, as if nothing will, or can, change. Simultaneously, along the Mississippi and near the shores of Lake Charles, industrialism accelerates and expands in the raising of chemical plants on a scale never seen in this state; giants that devour history and subsume the African American settlements founded by free people that ought to be revered as a sacred trust. Thus, Mossville in southwestern Louisiana approaches a vanishing point with St. James on the river between New Orleans and Baton Rouge perhaps next to fall. As a resident told me at a 2019 hearing on the Formosa chemical plant, the so-called "Sunshine Project," that will inevitably be built although no one tied to St. James wants it, "I knew we were in trouble when they took the post office away." This repeating pattern of forced destruction for the sake of a narrow sense of progress is played out on the coast as well, as thousands of square miles of American coast is taken, and with it a culture, history and way of life.

The pieces in the inaugural issue of *Louisiana Speaks* memorialize the losses of Louisiana, environmental, cultural, historical, personal. Yet, as is expected of us in a mythic land of resilience, our contributors look to ind a salvageable life force, in living things, art, or an imaginarily restored land. I am reminded of a poignant event involving a renowned professor of communication in Louisiana, the brilliant and ever dapper Andy King. At a party, Andy and his son performed a dialogue they had written in which Schopenhauer debates Nietzsche. While Schopenhauer (played by the son in a reversal of generations) would not look away from melancholic loss, Nietzsche (the father, Professor King) hoped to affirm. Nietzsche, rendered less a Zarathustra than a figure of pathos, held to hope. And so it is with us in Louisiana, living a history defined as the hope that this place may persist.

This romance of Louisiana as a place apart with a mythic resonance worn like a shield is savaged at every turn by the forces of conquest that would tear us asunder. This predicament is encapsulated in a recent controversy over a map and the familiar outline of the state. Examining this debate will also help us map this issue of *Louisiana Speaks*, as contributors weigh on the consequences and struggle to make a life within a disaster culture that often feels like a place from the future yet remains deeply embedded in a past of violence, tragedy and beauty.

"The Myth"

The outline of the friendly boot is part of the state's bankable identity. Like the fleur-de-lis and pelican, the boot adorns ball caps and beer labels; a popular t-shirt shows the familiar outline with the word "Home." The boot also has a place in an American mythology, in which Louisiana is a "second home" to tourists who find a beguiling attraction, and comfort, in its distinctive mix of consistency and difference. Mardi Gras plays every year, while Fat Tuesday is another anonymous work day in Pittsburgh or Los Angeles, and the Quarter is just as remembered when the CPAs, Baptist ministers or communication professors arrive for their annual conventions. In a world of grinding change, a Louisiana of the mind remains, for many, steadfastly unchanged.

The boot also invokes another aspect of mythic Louisiana, its sturdy, intractable spirit. With the spread of weather disasters, Louisianans have become the connoisseurs and emissaries of resilience. After Hurricane Harvey stuck Houston,

the Cajun Navy was on the scene, in boats hauled from Lafayette, New Iberia or Lake Charles, pulling people from the dark water and telling them that they, too, would survive and rebuild, as we did after Katrina, Rita, Gustav and the countless named and unnamed storms that have flooded the sinking land. Positioned at the bottom of the landform, the boot is the reliable support on which a nation depends. It may be ragged on the sole, having many miles on it, but it is here, like Louisiana, for the long haul.

"The Reality"

Picture the shock to the American imaginary when, in 2014, a rival outline of Louisiana suddenly emerged. The map shown above reveals vanishing Louisiana as a deconstructed boot with chunks missing. Reminiscent of a Rorschach blot or a reversible image of two human profiles, or a chalice, it overturns collective memory of the boot and its mythos of enduring servitude. Instead of offering a shelter from consequence, "a land that care forgot," this updated outline unveils in glaring white the impacts of a century of extraction, exploitation, conquest and degradation. This broken, ragged, dismantled boot, calls into question in dramatic visual form the ability of Louisiana to withstand and support the infinite parade of American mass consumption. Far from content in its role, Louisiana, the map shows, is being destroyed.

While land loss is accentuated by dramatic events such as hurricanes or oil spills, it occurs through the inexorable extended process Rob Nixon terms "slow violence," which happens "gradually and out of sight, a violence of dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (2). While we typically view violence as "immediate in time and explosive in spectacular in space," we also need to attend to violence that is "incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2). While the public focused on the destruction wrought by catastrophic events such as Katrina or Macondo, made for the media pulse, the deeper damage to the land and its people and other life has come from conditions often viewed as "normal," "necessary," or "good for the economy." The celebrated expansion of industry is accompanied by often unheralded destruction of home, habitat and land.

The map of the shredded boot appeared in a story for *Matter* magazine, by Brett Anderson, food critic for the *Times-Picayune* (Anderson). He recounts his preoccupation with the Louisiana boot as beginning with Hurricane Katrina and the discovery that while the storm is still often termed a natural disaster, its effects where largely humanmade. The loss of wetlands reduced the storm buffer while canals and navigation channels, including the infamous "Mr. Go," carried the storm surge inland from the coast and into towns and cities, including New Orleans. The preeminence of the old boot masked the realities of an altered landscape. It is "at best an inaccurate approximation of Louisiana's true shape and, at worst, an irresponsible lie" (Anderson).

Anderson recounts his journey among cartographers and administrators in agencies such as the Coastal Protection and Recovery Authority and the Louisiana Geographic Survey, on the frontline of Louisiana maps and their discontents. Anderson discovers that the current "official" map is legally unchangeable; a manager at the GIS firm ESRI points out to him that the United States Supreme Court permanently affixed the boundaries of Louisiana to a fixed set of coordinates, rendering the coastline "immobilized" (Anderson). This rigidity would make inaccurate any mapping on a dynamic planet, but in Louisiana fixed boundaries seems especially out of place. As John Snead, cartographic manager for the Louisiana Geographic Survey explains, the coastline of Louisiana is so uncertain that it leaves even the term "coastline" problematic. With its wetlands, brackish estuaries and fresh water lakes, Louisiana has a coastal zone that complexly connects waters and land of different types, with edges that shift each day (Anderson).

As John McPhee points out, south Louisiana

is a recent creation, brought into being by the Mississippi River depositing silt across an arc of two hundred miles as it sought new channels to the Gulf, like a jazz pianist playing improvisations on a theme (McPhee). This channel cutting and land building was accomplished through the subtle interplay of land and water "As the mouth advances southward and the river lengthens, the gradient declines, the current slows, and sediment builds up the bed. Eventually, it builds up so much that the river spills to one side." (McPhee). The new route is groped with tentacles of wet dirt. Where land and water mix so fluently, the concept of terra firma, encoded in unchanging lines, is not applicable. Louisiana may instead be accurately, if contradictorily, described as *terra agua*, with large tracts of marsh "land," "navigable" not by automobile, but by airboat or pirogue. It is also *terra mutabilia*, the changing land, and *terra absens,* the land that ceases to be. The geologic/hydrologic gumbo of Louisiana is losing the consistency of its pedigree as rue and turning to an undistinguished, salty broth.

Working with the staff at *Matter,* Anderson produced the ragged boot by reversing the privilege of land over water, firmness over fluid, that sustained the boot. While the old map claimed as land any place that had not always been open water, the new map presents marks in black only traversable ground. If you can walk it, consistently, it is land, if not, it is water. Every transitory spot vanishes into the white. Gone is the boot heel of lower Cameron and Vermillion Parishes. The intricate crow's foot of the Mississippi Delta is gashed. Barataria Bay expands to include Lake Salvador. The productive estuaries of Maurepas, Pontchartrain, and Borgne are now a a single massive inlet of the Gulf, the fresh water overrun by the intrusion of salt (Anderson).

The Anderson/Matter map circulated again after the 2016 flooding in Baton Rouge and Denham Springs, when up to 30 inches of rain fell in three days. The floods killed 13 people, left thousands without homes, and led to media images of flooded streets with water to the rooflines of houses and people rescued in boats. Those interviewed on camera often expressed shock as they believed their neighborhoods to be "flood free." With the flooding occurring in unexpected places, Louisiana appeared to be washing away; nowhere in the southern half of the state could be considered "safe." Frank Jacobs made the connection to the map in a piece published in *Big Think*, in a piece titled "Louisiana Flooding Is This the State's New More Accurate Map?" Meanwhile, others on Facebook and Twitter circulated the map in response to the flooding as the next link in the long chain of disasters by which Louisiana makes news. Citizen-pirate/artists repainted road signs with this image of loss, making a meme of the disaster of their vanishing home (Anderson).

Regardless of its accuracy in conveying the land/water mix, the shredded boot speaks to a spiritual predicament and our new reality. While Louisianans may feel resilient as ever, the place, Louisiana, is not only imperiled but increasingly, lost. As the land disappears, the landscape that remains is increasingly toxic, with vast tracts deeded to industry or saturated with wastes. While the nation and world benefit from the natural resources and industrial might of Louisiana, Louisianans themselves experience costs that include losses of culture and history, as well as the ecosystems of animals and plants on which Louisianans depend. It may be noted that the recent resistance to the construction of the Bayou Bridge pipeline through the Atchafalaya Basin was taken more seriously in the media when crawfish fishers joined the "environmental extremists" and "Native American activists" in opposing another pipe to be neglected, further disrupting an ecosystem under siege. In Louisiana, given a century of industrial violence, we can begin to take a longer, almost archeological view, as in every new incursion we see already the wastes and detritus that will be its legacy.

"The Mistake"

Similarly, while the shredded boot fixes Louisianans in space, it may also open a portal in time. While events such as Katrina or the massive fire on the

Deepwater Horizon transfix the public and shatter veneers of innocence, at the root of "slow violence" we may see quiet, but fateful decisions. In *American Energy, Imperiled Coast*, Jason P. Theriot shows how the development of the oil and gas industry in south Louisiana was justified by a misrecognition of the environment. Theriot recounts the key discovery made by Texas oilmen attempting to extract oil from the salt domes near the coast, that this "landscape" should be approached as if it were water. While building corduroy roads into the "impenetrable" swamp proved futile, drilling from a barge was efficient. With bayous in place and canals relatively easy to dredge in the watery ground, Louisiana, was rapidly opened for drilling, while the construction of pipelines brought oil and gas to the cities of the east, and eventually to the refineries that began to built along the Mississippi South Louisiana (Theriot 31-40). While dredging to support this industrial infrastructure has exacerbated this effect was masked by a misplaced faith in the swamp to regenerate. As Theriot notes, both oilmen and politicians upheld the misnomer that canals would be swallowed by a resurgence of swampland when their utility had passed. Dredged canals could safely be abandoned; there was no need to put the swamp back in place, the swamp would restore itself (Theriot, 69). Nature, in south Louisiana, was conceived as inexhaustible, self-repairing and exotically inscrutable, with a fecundity beyond the limited kin of humans. It took little notice of our nonsensical actions, bided its time until we had moved on and reclaimed the water and land as if we had never torn at them at all. Humans had a free pass; they could do as they liked without a tinge of conscience, enabled by the myth of privilege without consequence.

From this singular misjudgment emanated a long sequence of self-serving decisions that define Louisiana as we know it. The corruption of "populists" from Huey Long to Edwin Edwards; the give-away of oil on land and in the Gulf to corporations and the federal government; the incentives paid to industry to expand the exploitation which are far outside the norm of other states; the failures of state government to bother collecting royalty payments; the actions of the legislature to protect oil companies from lawsuits: all may be said to arise from the purposeful misrecognition of Louisiana as a place where actions have no consequences. In later years, this lie has matured to an anxious "bargain" whereby Louisiana, as place, environment, history or way of life, is to be sacrificed so that someone, likely not us, may prosper. We continue the path set by our forebears of giving away a legacy because we cannot resist a system. The enshrinement of the outline of a fanciful boot in federal law reifies this plight; despite the burdens of knowledge, our actions are already reigned in. Seeking restoration or at least a halt to violence, we are told to stay within artificial lines.

The Journal

As we settle into disaster culture as permanent condition, the voices of *Louisiana Speaks* provide critical viewpoints and seek transformations and redress. The journal was (re)conceived as a multimedia, multi-genre critical expression of the Communication community concerned with Louisiana, writ large. While new scholarship in Communication and allied disciplines remains central to its mission, the journal seeks to place scholarly work in dialogue with equally critical and vital work in arts, science and activism. The inaugural issue establishes the variegated, come as and who you are, presence of a second line parade around the long-running funeral of the Louisiana environment. The contributors mourn for friends and family, trees, birds, fish, the Gulf, the lost heroes of the Deepwater Horizon, pre-Katrina New Orleans, indigenous communities including those left outside the levees, opportunities lost, and promises unfulfilled. Collectively, we mourn Louisiana, the natural, human, historic and unique place that despite its beauty and distinctive persona perhaps never had the opportunity to develop into the full bloom of its marvelous potential. Yet, these distinctive qualities of Louisiana give the place and people their best chance for perseverance and

resurgence. In the wake of these pieces, we imagine robust public participation dedicated to historical and cultural survival and protection of land, water, people and other living beings. While the recent past includes the conquest and sacrifice of Louisiana, the future may begin with public descriptions of Louisiana unconquered, freed to be the place it might have been.

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Photo by Kyle Glenn on Unsplash

Narrating the Aftermath of Katrina Dwelling with Trees—Lost, Beloved, and Mediated

Shruti Desai

Dwelling with Trees A Digital Account

A long decade has elapsed since Hurricane Katrina first stunned the southeastern United States. During this period, legions of words, images, and sounds have surfaced throughout mainstream news and social media in an effort to narrate the grueling aftermath of the storm for Gulf Coast livelihoods. For the countless onlookers geographically removed from the immediate event and its ongoing effects on the environmental, economic, and social systems of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, digital media in particular have served as accessible platforms for following the path of the hurricane and the subsequent rehabilitation of impacted lives, communities, and landscapes.

As a digital onlooker, I am intrigued with how the Internet and new media, from online news articles addressed to no one in particular to tweets among known friends, have depicted the transformation of landscapes post-Katrina. As a testament to the evolving sense of place in the impacted Gulf States, this essay reflects on a single but prominent facet of this digital depiction the relations between humans and trees. The sense of place can be understood in this context as a feeling of belonging to a place born of the meaningfulness of that place to a person or a community of people (Brehm, Eisenhauer & Stedman 523). A place becomes meaningful through how it is inhabited; in this way, it becomes home to "the buildings and things that nurture those ways of dwelling, those ways of life" (Diprose 59). Dwelling, in this sense, means more than taking up residence at a site. It is a relational pact, forging ties among inhabitants and landscapes, for we dwell in a place by virtue of dwelling together (Diprose 62-63). Far from a constellation of coordinates in time and space, dwelling captures a manner of belonging to a specific somewhere; to dwell is to imbue that somewhere with significance, tradition, and experience. To dwell is to feel at home (Harrison 201).

For many Gulf Coast residents, trees make the place feel like home. In writing about the rebuilding of New Orleans by its residents, Roberta Brandes Gratz suggests that the city's live oaks "are, perhaps, a metaphor for the city itself and the strength of its people" (Gratz 2). The fact that live oaks exhibit clustered growth patterns, "spreading roots [to] form a deep network connecting one tree to the next," supports "a human infrastructure that gives strength to the residents and allows them to support each other…" (Gratz 2). On a smaller scale, a single live oak may lend strength to a single human being, as one local resident professes of a cherished tree "Sprawling live oaks stand … as metaphor[s] for the resiliency and strength of people on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Home is a feeling, not a place, and one I always find standing under this gorgeous tree" (Pinterest board, "Hurricane Katrina – My Mississippi Memoir"). Thus, it could be said that the relevance "of trees to human biography, to a sense of life's direction and character" or simply, to a human being's everyday life, constitutes "an important expression of their power" (Perlman 38) to invest a place with significance.

In this essay, I reflect on how trees give purpose and meaning to ways of life for many Gulf Coast residents and communities as conveyed through digital spaces. In so doing, I aim to foreground how places and relations with trees and human others can be experienced and made to matter through the "materials" and "technologies" that now saturate our lives (Heise 55). For those, like myself, who encountered the onslaught of Katrina at a social and spatial distance, digital media provide a crucial means of registering the hurricane's impact. For those more closely situated, digital media offer avenues for narrating the events. In both cases, the technological medium stands to deposit us, newly and distinctively, into the depths of dwelling among and in relation to trees in the Gulf Coast region. For, as Jerry T. Mitchell importantly reminds us, it was "extensive media coverage" that, in a narration both perceptive and persistent, rendered "[t]he oft-neglected power of place…center stage in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina." Media broadcasts furnished the once "'invisible' coast of Mississippi" an unprecedented means to "speak loudly through the apparent [visible] nothingness left behind in the wake of the storm" (Mitchell 181).

By incorporating imagery and commentary from e-news reports, blogs, and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Twitter),[1] this essay traces the storied woodwork of post-Katrina reconstruction as I encountered it, through my dual, interrelated lenses as an environmental researcher and an interested native of Georgia, where many Katrina survivors relocated as either temporary guests or long-term transplants. By *storied woodwork*, I mean the ways in which the reconstruction process can be comprehended in terms of how people's memories, experiences, and conversations about trees before, during, and after Katrina (the 'stories') draw into awareness the material, everyday importance of trees for supporting ways of life in Gulf Coast states (the 'woodwork'). To facilitate my analysis, I worked to retrieve "traces of belonging" (Diprose 59) from social and online news media, dating from August 25, 2005, to December 31, 2015. An example of a trace might be an image of "a dog sailing on top of a door along what used to be a street filled with the sounds of New Orleans jazz" (ibid), among the sights Rosalyn Diprose identifies as residues of belonging following an ecological disaster. Initially, having no such traces in mind, I conducted hashtag and keyword searches by combining the words *hurricane*, *Katrina*, and *trees*, along with the names of Gulf Coast states and cities.

For the purposes of maintaining a manageable focus, I reined in my search to information concerning Louisiana and to a lesser extent, Mississippi. As patterns in the search results began to form, I pursued storylines that seemed to speak to each other, deepening my search by affiliation rather than reliance on general, disconnected search terms. Pursuing redirects from, for example, a tweet, would lead me to a YouTube video, where the comments would mention a phrase (e.g., "art from destruction") or a name (e.g., "Martin Miller") that spurred another cycle of searches on platforms other than where the mentioned phrase or name appeared.

I share here a selection of the eventual traces I found, which compose the woodwork that structures my story of dwelling in a survivor region. I believe the ensuing account, though filtered through my perceptual and interpretive choices, nonetheless imparts a sense of how trees and humans grow together in post-Katrina landscapes. The essay grapples more specifically with a major theme that recurs in the traces—the association of trees with loss of various kinds environmental, economic, psychological, and social. I discuss how the digital narration of loss

1 All source material from online media content are anonymized to conceal private citizens' identities.

may offer a medium for appreciating human-tree relations, showing how feelings and experiences of loss can function as gateways for reorienting human relations with trees and with each other economically, racially, and aesthetically. My account is undoubtedly one of numerous possible accounts, and I share mine in the hope that others, too, will dip into the digital archives, finding their way to stories that help conceive new, responsive and inspired, relations between humans and trees.

Trees as Loss Home Out of Reach

The economic ruin attributed to ecological injury and erasure looms large in digital spaces from "giant trees on the ground" (Tumblr, "My Katrina Story," 8/30/2015) to, in Gulfport Mayor Billy Hewes's words, the reduction of the Mississippi Gulf Coast "to kindling wood" (Brown). At times, commentary on this ruin looks beyond the region, emphasizing a broader perspective on the relationship between environment and economy against the backdrop of the global climate crisis. For instance, one news article states that more than a billion dollars' worth of trees were swiftly and ruthlessly uprooted in Louisiana and Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina. Consequently, the report continues, at least 367 million more tons of carbon dioxide are now roosting in the atmosphere (Maugh II and Kaplan). Here, concern for the death of and damage to trees is represented as a financial burden, as phrases such as "an individual tree valued at >$31,300" and "an estimated $2.4 billion in timber damage" support the argument that tree conservation and replacement are "essential" to facilitating "the recovery effort along the Mississippi-Louisiana Gulf Coast" (Dobbs, Held, and Nebeker 454).

Much of the concern for personal and other costs resulting from the loss of trees inhabits a perspective more intimate than the preceding bird's-eye view. This concern discloses how loss registers beyond, and sometimes also alongside, numerical valuations of trees. Such valuations are often discursively packaged as the sum of dollars irrecoverable or the volume of carbon dioxide emissions unleashed. One news report reflects "…Katrina took much more than money" (Collins-Smith). A tree farmer elaborates that although Katrina took between $132,000 and $160,000 of his tree farm, he can nevertheless place "no value…on the emotional impact that Katrina had" (Collins-Smith). Like the tree farmer, for many individuals and families Katrina registered through assaults from trees on their personal properties "#5yearsago I was woke by a bom [*sic*] noise…from a big huge ass tree falling into my old house #Katrina;" "I remember that tree falling on my house, thanks to #Katrina" (Twitter, 8/29/2010).

Residents communicate the specifically economic effects of tree damage by foregrounding how distinct losses impact their particular lives "7 years ago today, 15 trees came down, many hitting house. After insurance payments, still had over $50K in losses. No Road Home $ #Katrina" (Twitter, 8/29/2012). The 'road home' is the road to economic security. It is also the road to a home with trees, as home is marked by the simple but irreplaceable sight of trees "I miss my fucking trees n [*sic*] my backyard <cactus emoji> #katrina" (Twitter, 3/29/2013).

At other times, the use of Twitter to relay private sentiments acts as an appeal to Twitter audiences more generally to fathom the material and psychosocial currency of loss "Can you imagine losing EVERYTHING you have House, Car, Clothes, Pictures, Trees, Plants, your Job, Family and Friends? #Katrina" (Twitter, 8/30/15). Notice the capitalization of all the lost 'things'. Each thing is one 'every' thing, yet also a particular 'every' thing, whose significance is indicated by a proper noun a special place, an incomparable object, a treasured relationship.

Together, the 'things' exceed the genericity of discrete, identifiable losses and amount, instead, to the 'everything' engulfed by the Gulf Coast storm and its aftereffects. Significantly, "Trees" and "Plants" are singled out from the realm of nonhuman life, implying their non-trivial role in this particular human biography. We may infer that trees build homes in ways no mere built structure can, as Katharine Anderson argues "A building can be reconstructed, but a tree, once killed, will never be replaced during that generation's life span" (Anderson Ch. 5, para. 11).

And yet, a building can be what makes evident the significance of a tree in a person's life. A news report conveys how an innkeeper, her dog, and two of her friends clutched a live oak to survive the flooding, while the oak's life force withdrew in the aftermath "victim to the cleanup, its roots smothered by debris." The innkeeper, who has re-anchored the oak to the ground outside the rebuilt inn's kitchen window, reflects "It's a tree of life, really. And it's a tree of a town, I think, that is so strong. It survived so much and 10 years later is just amazing" (Lee and Mitchell). The innkeeper's remarks plainly express why "…trees are not passive backdrops for human activities, but active participants in the ongoing creation of places and landscapes, as well as personal and cultural identity" (Anderson Ch. 5, para. 3). This claim takes on special meaning for residents who survived the storm, for whom trees in the region are signs of coming home anew. The next three sections highlight how humans are rediscovering a feeling of home by renewing human-tree relations through planting, memories, and art. Coming home, we discover, is a matter of coming home to trees, familiar cohabitants swept away, replanted, standing despite the odds, and refashioned.

Planting Trees to Flourish Together

Through a tweet about a *New York Times* digital feature,[2] we learn of Elysium, Colleen Mullins's photographic installation "chronicling a changing landscape of tree growth" (Twitter, 2/11/2015). For the last 10 years, Mullins, originally from Minnesota, has exhibited her photography on New Orleans's Y-shaped live oak trees, which have endured extensive trimming so that power lines could be made operational after the storm. Describing the experience of photographing her first tree, Mullins marvels,

> …it was amazing. Tragic. That tree led me into the belly of the beast in Gentilly, Midcity, then Lakeview, then out East…that tree led me to commence an annual trip with my students so they could help me voice the scale of the loss in that city—words don't do it… ("Minneapolis Based Photographer and Educator").

She encourages people to cultivate a more caring relationship with urban trees. Taking as an example New Orleans, which lost 70% of its share after Katrina, she predicts "[T]he impact of this loss will be faced by New Orleans residents returning home for years to come. Absent street signs, and often the houses themselves, these trees are frequently the only signifiers to tell me that I've returned to a site to photograph. Imagine if the tree was not a marker for a photograph, but a marker for your home" (Mullins).

The direct hit suffered by trees is among the defining outcomes of storm and response efforts, as one resident quietly captures "9 years ago. Listening to the trees fall. #Katrina" (Twitter, 8/30/2014). The "Dead Hurricane #Katrina trees" (Twitter, 7/28/2015) have inspired a planting movement with many limbs, including the Acorns for Hope campaign, the non-profit

2 http//lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/09/landscapes-after-katrinas-storm/?_r=0.

organization Hike for KaTREEna (now the NOLA Tree Project), and the Caring for the Coast initiative. These and other projects are widely discussed as a means of remembering Katrina and honoring the role of trees in nourishing community networks and life "In memory of #Katrina, next week we will #plant 1K Bald #Cypress Trees in #PassALoutre with/ @CITGO and @LDWF" (@RestoretheEarth Twitter feed, 8/17/2015).[3] Rehabilitating New Orleans is likened to 'planting' it "Help @HikeforKatreena replant New Orleans" (Twitter, 4/9/2014).

The idea of trees as sources of life and therefore, of regional prosperity, was a related, recurring theme, as a NOLA Tree Project Facebook update exclaims (1/12/2015) "Last wednesday, we donated 43 trees to the trees for life project for the children's advocacy center!" This idea is also suggested by the names of organizations developed to orchestrate planting, as in the visual emphasis on the middle syllable TREE in KaTREEna, an organization founded by native New Orleanian Monique Pilie on the promise of planting one tree per each mile she hiked on the Appalachian Trail. The organization's refocused and enlarged mission to plant the 100,000 trees that the city reportedly lost because of Katrina and its slogan, 'Plant a Tree. Grow a Community.', reinforces the importance of trees to community flourishing. The campaign name *Acorns for Hope* brings to mind a consonant link, likening acorn planting to planting a desirable recovery. The campaign endeavors to sustain concern for affected communities by coordinating fundraising and planting efforts in response to the coastal destruction wrought by not only Katrina but also Rita,[4] which struck land less than a month after Katrina and veered more westward, landing near the border between Texas and Louisiana. The geographical spans of the two hurricanes are subsumed under a common message that acorns bode hope, thereby locating planting for both hurricanes within a single "culture of tree planting" (Nixon 137), in other words, a shared pretext and context for planting. This culture of planting is showcased in videos of the campaign's progress and highlights, which appear to the tune of music fit for square dancing, alongside footage of activities centered on community rebuilding and bonding, such as individuals socializing, and cooking, cycling, and planting together (see "Acorns of Hope 2007" and "Acorns of Hope 2008").

Planting at landmark community sites also bolsters the impression, voiced by Gulfport native and poet Natasha Tretheway, that "the trees seem a monument to the very idea of recovery" (Trethewey 55). In the companion blog to the *Times-Picayune,* a ten-photo reel recollects a ceremony held in May 2015 to dedicate ten live oaks to City Park. The photos show the majestic stature of even the newly planted, young live oaks, the labor and celebration of planting, and the active use of the green grounds by local residents (see Duke). According to Keith G. Tidball, such evidence of the symbolism of tree planting for post-Katrina communities communicates the latter's "solidarity, continuity, vitality," and in particular, "resilience" (Tidball 260).[5] As an excerpt from a CBS News report echoes

"Katrina destroyed a city, but built a community," said [one community member].

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3 The parties mentioned here—CITGO corporation, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and Restore the Earth Foundation (REF)—were originally involved in a collaborative undertaking to plant 1000 trees in wetland areas on the 10-year anniversary of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. See http//www.citgocaringforourcoast.com.

4 The campaign aimed to plant 10,000 trees in coastal Louisiana over 5 years (Kato).

5 Tidball's in-depth ethnographic fieldwork, comprising photography and videos, collected images and artifacts, and 30 interviews over a 6-year period with New Orleans residents impacted by Katrina, offers a detailed study of the role of tree symbols and community rehabilitation (see Tidball 274–284).

A community rooted in a common belief.

"You don't plant a tree where there is no hope," said [another community member].

And with thousands of trees now in the ground, hope is flourishing. (Miller)

Further elaborating on demonstrations of 'hope', Gary Rivlin describes how locals "used trees to lift people's spirits," as volunteers "started digging on upper Canal Street, planting live oaks, slash pines, bald cypress" and more. One of the organizers shares the emotional release evoked in passersby "People would honk their horn, they'd raise their fists out of the window. [...] People would stop their car, get out, and cry. It meant a lot" (Rivlin 311).

While the preceding discussion suggests that planting may supply a foundation for reviving a sense of place, no community is set in 'place' so smoothly, or promptly. Michael Perlman writes that witnessing the death of trees "paradoxically presents possibilities of a deepened relationship with them" (Perlman 5). For a region whose history is tied in important ways to the history of trees, such possibilities do not unfold without revisiting previous relationships, both to learn from them and, to the extent necessary, grow out of them. In this spirit of recouping the past to facilitate recovery, the next section touches upon a few of those relationships.

Interlinking the Trees of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

For some, trees that survived Katrina are solemn but gratifying reminders of precisely what Katrina could not seize "#biloxi #katrina #anniversary 10 years ago, katrina swept away so much. These trees still stand" (Twitter, 7/21/2015). An owner of an alligator farm notes that he lost neither an alligator nor a live oak tree. Of the latter 'save', he beams "Every time I see it now, it makes me smile. It still bears the scars of Katrina, but it has managed to go on, putting down new roots and lifting its branches to the sun" (Stroup).

New tree growth can also symbolize a community's renewal and anchoring within the wider ecological and social landscape of the region, as one Twitter user reminds another "remember when we planted Trees by the river bank in NOLA at one yr post #Katrina? #SOBU and what #BlackLivesMatter truly means" (Twitter, 8/27/2015). In such cases, tree planting may shore up ingrained political and socio-economic contradictions that have become the roots, as it were, of a selectively cultivated ecology.

Noticeably, to this point, the racial dimension of planting, honoring, and appropriating trees is dimly lit across social media conversations and online articles.[6] By contrast, Black history lays claim to deep roots within the culture and the economy of Louisiana, especially of New Orleans. These roots are figuratively lashed in a poem by Aaron A. Ammons, "Black Bodies Floating in the Southern Street," which critiques the racial path of New Orleans' levee failures and government responses. Ammons contrasts the lives saved 'by' trees, as humans clutched trunks and branches, with the lives drowned, the lives that trees let die. For Ammons, the ecology of New Orleans is engraved with silent but visible social prejudices that preserve the superiority

6 For a compelling piece on the racial inflections of the path of destruction and post-Katrina recovery, see Klein. For a more focused discussion on the role of race and socioeconomic status in the reconstruction of neighborhoods and the provision of public services, see Barrios, especially Chapter 6 "How to Care? The Contested Affects of Disaster Recovery in the Lower Ninth Ward" (157-176).

of White lives. He exclaims "The administration is the klan/And Katrina revealed her white sheets!", leaving "bloated black bodies/Floating in the Southern streets" (Ammons 42). The poem could be interpreted as an emphatic proclamation of the persistence of racial disparities in living conditions, of the way that the region's divisive racial reality is etched into its very ecology. Anderson shares how the legacy of live oak planting in Louisiana favors affluent communities

> Cultural preferences are cited for this difference, but there are clearly other factors at work. Large low-income housing projects seldom install live oaks (for any trees, for that matter) […] Upkeep of live oaks can get expensive, too. In North Baton Rouge, live oaks that once shaded a middle-class neighborhood were taken down when it became a low-income area. (Anderson Ch. 4, para. 5)

In such cases, socioeconomic barriers are surreptitiously planted and maintained they propagate ecologically, baring themselves on uncommon occasions, such as in investigative pursuits as Anderson's—a genealogy of tree distribution, a query of historic spending on land maintenance—or in Ammons's courageous poetry. Such barriers were not necessarily recently erected. In the 1800s, the culture of slavery in Louisiana bourgeoned through the cultivation of pecan trees (Stuart)"event-place":"E-book","shortTitle":"It happened in louisiana","author":[{ "family":"Stuart","given":"Bonnye"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2015"]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"} . The now-famous and admired wide tree-studded walkways were once the infamous sites of hangings. These and other socially divisive historical traces are worth remembering. If they are not to plague the city's or wider region's rediscovery as a shared home for trees and humans, they must inform it.

It can, for instance, be useful to adopt a more considered stance on comparisons of pre- and post-Katrina landscapes that emerge from observations of sudden green growth. For example, one account characterizes one of the prized areas of Louisiana's Pearl River hunting preserve pre-Katrina as "gorgeous, wide-open forest with mature hardwood trees." Following the storm, the account continues, the preserve awoke to "trunks of once-massive oaks, sweet gums, pecans and other hardwoods" lying prostrate, "in tangles across the forest floor like a massive game of pickup sticks." Amid the wreckage, one hunter is buoyed by the fresh "growth of trees and sticker bushes" taking command of the land once again, "sprouting everywhere" (Shogren).

Regrowth, however suddenly conceived, is a gradual becoming. Social and ecological regrowth based in inclusivity will require carefully weeding out biases toward segregation and greater attentiveness to the histories of sites and communities in need of rehabilitation. Karen Kingsley describes how New Orleans' skyline is imprinted in public memory as "a tangle of telephone and electrical poles with their wires seemingly intertwined with the branches and leaves of the live oak, magnolia, cypress, and crape myrtle trees that line the streets" (Kingsley 720). Though seemingly neutral and apolitical, this skyline tells stories charged with history and struggle. Creating a new tangle of vines and poles will demand a variegated refiguring of the Gulf Coast's treescape, revalued in terms more faithful to the sentiments and disparate experiences of residents. In the next section, I discuss a few creative works that offer inspiration for rebuilding with an appreciation for the past.

Rebuilding with Currencies of Green and Brown

Before the Louisiana Purchase was sealed in 1803, forests were foundational to the

economy of the territory now known as Louisiana. By the time the U.S. received upwards of 820,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River, the French had begun capitalizing on Louisiana's native species of cypress forests. These, along with the later pine forests north of the Lake Pontchartrain estuary in southeastern Louisiana, supplied raw materials for the real estate of budding New Orleans (Kingsley 717).

Today, coastal as well as urban forests embody value for Gulf Coast residents that transcends their worth in logs, timber, and wood chips. In helping to rejuvenate ways of life, trees are infusing the region with renewed color, purpose, and hope. Note Kingsley's memory of the vivid contrasts in the color schemes of New Orleans' tree cover before and after the storm

> The many shades of green have always given special character to the city. But, ochers, browns, and sepias became the city's colors in the months after Katrina. The standing salty water and weeks of posthurricane drought created a gaunt landscape of defoliated trees, many stripped of their branches, or dead altogether. (Kingsley 720)

The absence of much of the canopy recalls Mitchell's earlier remark about the topographical absence of recognizable landmarks following the storm. Their missing presence has left behind "scars [which] are still visible from Highway 90," remarks a *Washington Post* reporter, a highway whose length spans all "the seaside cities of Bay St. Louis, Long Beach, Pass Christian, Gulfport, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, Gautier and Pascagoula." Aghast at the extent of the coastal treeline's devastation, Gulfport Mayor Hewes concludes "Our coast lost its physical history" (Brown).

In the hands of chainsaw artist Marlin Miller, the 'lost' trees are being sculpted into marine-themed sculptures, authoring the next chapter in the coast's physical history. The "dead but standing" (Twitter, 3/18/2011) sculptures hug the coastal line parallel to Highway 90 across Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Encouraged by the scene, a Biloxi resident blogs that "four live oak trees received new life" in this way (Thorne). Setting this new life into the relief of the region's coastal history, Pass Christian, MS Mayor Chipper McDermott proclaims that the trees are "the roots of the coast, …and to have them decorated where they'll still last is a sign of recovery and renewal. So it's good to keep the trees rather than have them cut down" (see "Marlin Miller, Sculptor | Mississippi Road | MPB"). The trees may also be affording another, unexpected economic opportunity. Miller saved a few trees marked for removal by the Department of Transportation by deploying a similar tactic. Of the Hwy 90 sculptures in particular, Miller notes that they "have become the number one tourist attraction down here on the coast, and so we're bringing people off of Interstate 10, and, I guess helping business and all."

Trees have roused a number of other artistic statements of remembering that repurpose leftover material after Katrina. Perhaps the grandest such gesture is The New Orleans Treehouse, which formerly sat behind the NOLA Art House before being the victim of a mandated demolition in June 2014. Scott Pterodactyl, a local installation artist and the visionary behind the project, says he "was inspired by his love for the city and his desire to bring a sense of fun to the place" (Facebook, 12/9/2015).

The Scrap House is another noteworthy effort that emphasizes the idea of living on through art. Erected "in memory of the victims of hurricane Katrina" (Pinterest board, "Tree Houses"), it was assembled entirely from 'scraps' produced and left by the storm.[7] This work

7 For a photo, see https//i.pinimg.com/originals/e4/13/22/e4132278703b93f3a0c563251ba1134c.jpg.

recasts what may otherwise be viewed narrowly as "remnants of Hurricane Katrina still hanging in our trees" (Pinterest board, "Getting the right shot"), fragments of refuse suspended in branches, as 'wood' for the future. The redefinition of human discards as fuel for rebuilding is intimated by tags in a tweet about the Scrap House installation "#Katrina tree. 10th year anniversary #HurricaneKatrina #NewOrleans #NOLA #resolve #rebuld #rejuvenate #love #pride" (Twitter, 7/6/2015). The installation imagines a future in which the remnants are not signs of destruction, such as the corpses of trees, but glimmers of appreciation for the role of trees, both alive and lifeless, in molding landscapes of resilience and hope.

To this end, many social media posts overflow with gratitude for the lives rescued by fallen trees "#Katrina survivors make monument to tree that saved their lives" (Twitter, 8/28/2014). The said survivors, characterized as "gripping the tree for dear life" during the storm, had "vowed to honor" the tree (Hoss). This tree and others have been christened as "angels" and "gifts" (Twitter, 1/8/2014), epitomizing how "[s]o much good came from the worst storm in American history" (Facebook, 7/24/2013). Somberly acknowledging the trees' sacrifice, a comment on Instagram frames the commemoration of a tree's service and death as one might a fellow human's. The comment reads "7 people survived #Katrina by climbing this tree after their house was washed away. The tree died afterwards and this angel was carved in their honor. #heartfelt #survival #stories" (Instagram, 11/2013).

Remaking livelihoods with the currency of green and brown is a commitment to living on in new ways, like the fallen trees. As one individual tweeted "Thoughts on #katrina, six years later. Like cut down trees, we will rise again & be bigger & stronger than ever before" (Twitter). In the final section, I close with a few thoughts on using digital media to help mediate human-tree relations in survivor landscapes.

Surviving the Storm into the Digital Future

In 2010, Louisiana's state tree was rediscovered underwater, where a bald cypress ecosystem lay preserved for an estimated tens of thousands of years near the Alabama coast. It is believed that the forest, formerly covered by sediments, became discoverable when Katrina's titanic winds blew away the seafloor sediments (Stanton). This is an unusual case of survival by a species of tree long accustomed to drier conditions, despite its ability to thrive in swampy conditions. As the trees once submerged in the water dry off, a possibility arises for the memory of the storm to reside in Gulf Coast ecology, akin to the lichen lines on trees that pinpoint the varying heights of flood waters across New Orleans (see McCash). Although digital media are bottomless troves that promise to store and recall such memories at a simple command, they also pose important challenges. Given that these media submerge attention in the right now (e.g., Twitter prompts, "What's happening?"), they can easily compress "how we perceive and inhabit environmental time" (Nixon 277), making events pass too quickly to be digested and learned from. But equally, as the online corpus of traces expands in scope as well as size, digital media may help embrace the contingency of dwelling and appreciate how the sense of place and the feeling for trees and fellow humans change over time.

Nalini Nadkarni reflects "When I place my own strong brown hand on the trunk of a tree, I feel connected to something that deserves my curiosity, care, and protection" (Nadkarni 4). We feel such a connection to trees when we behold them as entities "to cherish and protect,

to preserve and care for" (Heidegger 145). Caring for trees, for the lives they help imagine and materialize, is a way of caring about how we live, and the lives of the tree others we share a home with. Dwelling with trees in survivor landscapes calls for remembering how trees matter and belong to these landscapes we hold dear in memory.

The stories of human-tree relations in the Gulf Coast region are stories of care, love, friendship, and gratitude, as much as they are stories of resilience, survival, and flourishing. For the many who encounter, and the many more likely to acquaint themselves with current events through iPads, cell phones, laptops, and social media (Sylvester xv), digital media may help attune to the plural and shared experiences that shape the meaningfulness of a place. Harnessed with the intention to care about how one dwells in place with human and tree others, digital media may assist with remembering the histories of human-tree relations, carrying them into futures in which they endure, enlivened and robust arms fastened around trunk while branches sway in anticipation overhead—poised to survive the gales of the next storm.

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The Oil Disaster as Event: Rhetorics of Rupture and Emerging Worlds

Kevin Michael DeLuca and Elinor Light

April 20, 2010. A rupture deep underwater and a torrent of blackness from the underworld rushes forth, the black gold that fuels capitalism's Industrial Revolution. The rupture will bleed 2.4 million gallons a day ceaselessly for 87 days, 210 million gallons, creating America's worst environmental disaster. It was a series of ruptures. The Deepwater Horizon's drill ruptured the Earth's crust a mile under the Gulf of Mexico's placid surface. When the pipe ruptured, the resulting black fury ruptured the Gulf of Mexico's ecosystem, its energy industry, its commercial fishery, its tourism, and its image. The BP oil disaster continued to expand, rupturing capitalism's petro-fueled industrialism. The 11 dead bodies and the widely dispersed health effects around the Gulf Coast, especially Louisiana, ruptured the taken-for-granted discourses of humanism. Industrial capitalism and humanism are two dominant yet uneasily allied networks. Humanism provides an embraceable veneer for industrialism and its ever-increasing human sacrifices. The BP oil disaster ruptured that alliance for a moment, bearing witness to the human sacrifices the capital industrial juggernaut demands.

This rupture was an event that disrupted the world as it is and opened space for other possible worlds. Did such worlds emerge? Did the BP oil disaster fundamentally change anything? This essay explores these questions. First, we explore the concept of the event and how it created openings for changing the world. Second, we explore the responses to this event, rhetorical and otherwise. At the national level these responses domesticated the event, erased the rupture, allowed capitalism and industrialism to proceed apace with barely a pause. At the more local level, responses tended to reflexively retreat to a humanism that left capitalism and industrialism untroubled.

Thinking Events

To think the event, we turn to philosopher Alain Badiou's provocative intervention in ontology and ethics. Badiou makes a radical break with both postmodern philosophy and analytic philosophy. This break is marked by his salvaging and transforming of the concept of truth. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou tosses this ontological brick for a foundation: *"There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths."*[1] Thus, "Philosophy, in its very essence, elaborates the means of saying 'Yes!' to the previously unknown thoughts that hesitate to become the truths they are."[2] But Badiou's saving of truth depends on a transformation, "A truth is solely constituted by rupturing with the order which supports it, never as an effect of that order. I have named this type of rupture which opens up truths 'the event.'"[3] Our orientation toward the BP oil disaster deploys events, truths, and the subjects that live them.

As Badiou explains, "Let us say that a subject…needs something to have happened, something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in 'what there is.' Let us call this supplement an event…which compels us to decide a new way of being."[4] Crucially, an event "is committed to chance. It is unpredictable, incalculable. It is beyond what is."[5] Badiou discusses events

and their unfolding in four areas—politics, science, love, and art. Examples include the American Revolution, Einstein's theory of relativity, two people falling in love, Picasso's Cubism, Dogen's writings, and Ikkyu's poetry. Thoreau's essay "On Civil Disobedience" invented a new form of politics based on nonviolence that opened worlds wherein nonviolent political struggles became possible, including Gandhi's, Martin Luther King's, and Vaclav Havel's Velvet Revolution. John Muir's advocacy of preservationism created a politics always shaded by environmentalism and something beyond humanism.

For Badiou, truths emerge in the decision to be faithful to the event: "To be faithful to an event is to move within the situation that this event has supplemented, by *thinking* the situation 'according to' the event. And this, of course—since the event was excluded by all the regular laws of the situation—compels the subject to *invent* a new way of being and acting in the situation."[6] It is also through the decision to be faithful to an event that a human-animal becomes a subject.[7] Truths then mark immanent breaks with the situation as it is, for "what enables the truth-process—the event—meant nothing according to the prevailing language and established knowledge of the situation."[8] A crucial point for Communication scholars, the invention of new ways of being and acting is intimately connected to performing public acts of communication. Truths are created through the articulation of events. That is, what we term evental rhetoric creates the truths of an event. Without evental rhetoric, events fail to change the world. Instead, they are subsumed into the world as it is.[9]

In its deepest respects, the BP oil disaster, as well as petro-fueled industrialism in general, are environmental issues. Environmentalism marks such a break with the established knowledge of the situation, of capitalism/industrialism and humanism. Environmentalism is the generic term that names the truths of numerous events that subjects have been faithful to. Most pointedly, environmentalism is the truth of the events of encounters of subjects with non-human worlds, with wild(er)ness.[10] These events consistently exceed self-interests and merely human worlds. There are numerous famous examples that illustrate the process that Badiou is conceptualizing. The example of Aldo Leopold will suffice to illustrate this point and suggest the fruitfulness of thinking through Badiou's concept of the event when considering the BP oil disaster.

Ecologist Aldo Leopold clearly articulates events with wild(er)ness and the truths that may emerge through the subject's fidelity to the event in his landmark tome *A Sand County Almanac*. In a section that constitutes the heart of the book, "Thinking Like a Mountain," Leopold describes coming upon a family of wolves and reflexively shooting at them: "In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf.... We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view."[11] Leopold goes on to describe how the widespread slaughter of wolves in the name of farming, sport, and safety have wreaked ruin on mountains and ecosystems across the country. Of course, Leopold is illustrating the concepts of ecological balance (dynamic equilibrium) and trophic cascades. Leopold concludes the section musing on the dangers of comfort and safety (a world without predators), for "too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known

among mountains, but seldom perceived among men."[12]

The event of watching the wolf die rips the fabric of conventional forester Leopold's world as it is, and his response to the event, his effort to think like a mountain, leads to the new subject Leopold as ecologist and wilderness advocate. Leopold became the architect of the world's first wilderness area in New Mexico's Gila National Forest and co-founder of The Wilderness Society, a key organizational player in the passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Finally, in creating the truths of the event, Leopold invented a new ethic, the land ethic, that has become a cornerstone of much environmental thought: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[13] Leopold understands himself to be making two key interventions here. First, while ethics has dealt with relations among individuals, relations between the individual and community, and relations among com-munities, he is expanding ethics to consider relations between humans and the non-human. Second, he is expanding the meaning of community "to include soils, waters. Plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."[14] When one is able to interrupt the world as it is and to think like a moun-tain, the hierarchy of being gets toppled: "In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such."[15]

Such events, such engagements with non-human worlds, with wild(er)ness and the truths that emerged through the decisions and acts of subjects, collectively constitute the heart of environmentalism. The articulation of events into truths requires acts, most importantly communication acts. John Muir, Ansel Adams, Ed Abbey, Julia Butterfly Hill, Leopold, and many others, have used books, essays, photographs, video, and spoken testimony to bear witness to these events, to articulate the truths of wild(er)ness. Humanists' attacks on environmentalists for caring for non-human worlds, for wild(er)ness, is an attack on the truth of environmentalism, the truth that makes it matter. For Badiou, such attacks are evil.

An adequate response to our ecological crisis is impossible within the calculations of economic profit and human needs, within capital industrialism and humanism. Engaging the world from the orientation of the event of wild(er)ness is absolutely essential in this moment of myriad crises. As Leopold hopes, "Perhaps such a shift of values can be achieved by reappraising things unnatural, tame, and confined in terms of things natural, wild, and free."[16] To reiterate, an event "brings to pass 'something other' than the situation, opinions, instituted knowledges; the event is a hazardous, unpredictable supplement" which both brings into being and needs a subject to faithfully unfold and rethink the situation from the orientation of the event, to produce the truths of the event.[17] This unfolding and rethinking occurs publicly through acts of communication—evental rhetoric. The ethical moment is one of commitment to and articulation of the event. Leopold remains faithful to their encounter with wild(er)ness by articulating the truths of the event through multiple acts of communication—writing, sketching, speaking. The encounter with wild(er)ness is the event at the heart of environmentalism. Through faithfulness to this event, environmentalists can question the world of industrialism and imagine another world from the imperative and orientation of wild(er)ness.

The BP Oil Disaster as Image Event

On April 20, 2010, the Gulf of Mexico erupted. More precisely, Deepwater Horizon's pipeline draining the Macondo oilfield beneath the Gulf of Mexico for BP oil ruptured. For thirty-six hours, black smoke cut into a blue sky. Images of this event replicated themselves endlessly onto

public screens around the world, causing both fascination and horror. While the watery landscape of the Gulf of Mexico remains beautifully blue, the black oil rising to the surface becomes a metaphor for ideologies that sustain modernist environmental exploitation rising to the surface of our mediated awareness. Fittingly, an April 21, 2010 ABC newscast described the image of the unending explosion as "spectacular and catastrophic."[18] These images captured the attention of citizens, activists, and artists alike, illustrating as Slavoj Žižek writes, that "the boundary that separates beauty from disgust is [. . .] far more unstable than it may seem."[19]

Finally, on Earth Day, the rig began to creak, and with a horrendous groan and multiple explosions, the Deepwater Horizon rig sank into its own reflection. This same day, it was discovered that that rig was bleeding thousands of gallons of oil per day. A live video feed streamed the gushing oil over the Internet 24/7. By June 22nd, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported 724 oiled birds and 957 were found dead by wildlife officials.[20] Images of this death and oil began to circulate and viewers were confronted with the sight of oil-covered blue herons, egrets, pelicans, turtles, crabs, fish, and dolphins either struggling for life or already dead. From above, images of the oil slick continued to cut through the turquoise waters, its massiveness only comprehensible when juxtaposed to the ships sent to stop it. Perhaps what was most forceful about these images, however, was not what was shown, but what remained invisible. While the oil could be seen, the currents soon dispersed it and only the invisible toxicity would remain.

This event was unprecedented, as the inept emergency plan revealed. It was not until September 19, 2010 that the ruptured well was finally sealed.[21] After 87 days and 287 million gallons of oil, one might assume that this image event ruptured our uneasy embrace of petroleum-fueled industrialism. The image of this rupture was indeed initially effective as an image event. According to The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, the mainstream media made the spill one of the top stories for 6 weeks after the disaster and devoted an impressive 38% of its coverage to the spill during the week of May 24-30. Broadcast news, known for focusing on disaster news with high visual impact, devoted even more time, with 50% of their content focused on the spill.[22]

Although the BP oil disaster represented a chance for articulating new energy futures and other possible worlds not sustained by oil, at the national level there was no evental rhetoric up to the task. Instead, BP and the United States in the person of President Obama rendered nearly invisible and domesticated the event of the BP oil disaster, enabling all of us to retreat to the disturbing comfort of our world as it is. This is reflected in the near-disappearance of news coverage over time. In the first full two months after the BP rupture, from May 1, 2010 to June 30, 2010, a ProQuest search yields 1,920 results, an average of over 30 articles a day. The same two months in 2015 totals 98 results, less than two a day. Our reliance on fossil fuels continues unabated, as if the BP oil disaster never happened (see Figures 1 and 2).

BP, a master of the rhetoric of propaganda (PR), formerly known as British Petroleum before deciding that they were "beyond petroleum," fundamentally recognizes the BP oil disaster as a PR problem that required deft rhetorical tactics. BP did the expected, blaming its partners, promising cleanup, restoration, and restitution, and running ads mitigating its responsibility. BP's crucial insight, though, was to recognize the BP disaster as an image event and act accordingly. If an image event cannot be seen, it is not an event. To that end, BP restricted access to the affected beaches and the airspace over the spill, thus limiting damaging images. The masterstroke, however, was a chemical act with rhetorical consequences. BP deployed the dispersant

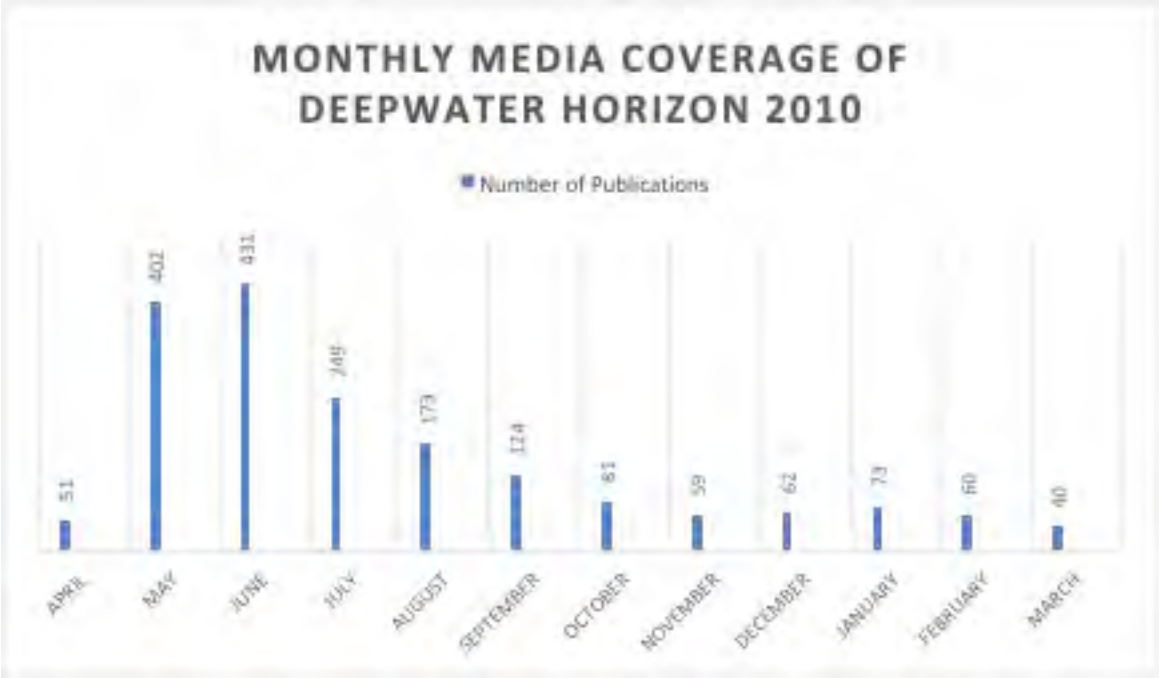

Figure 1: Proquest News and Newspapers Results for Monthly Media Coverage

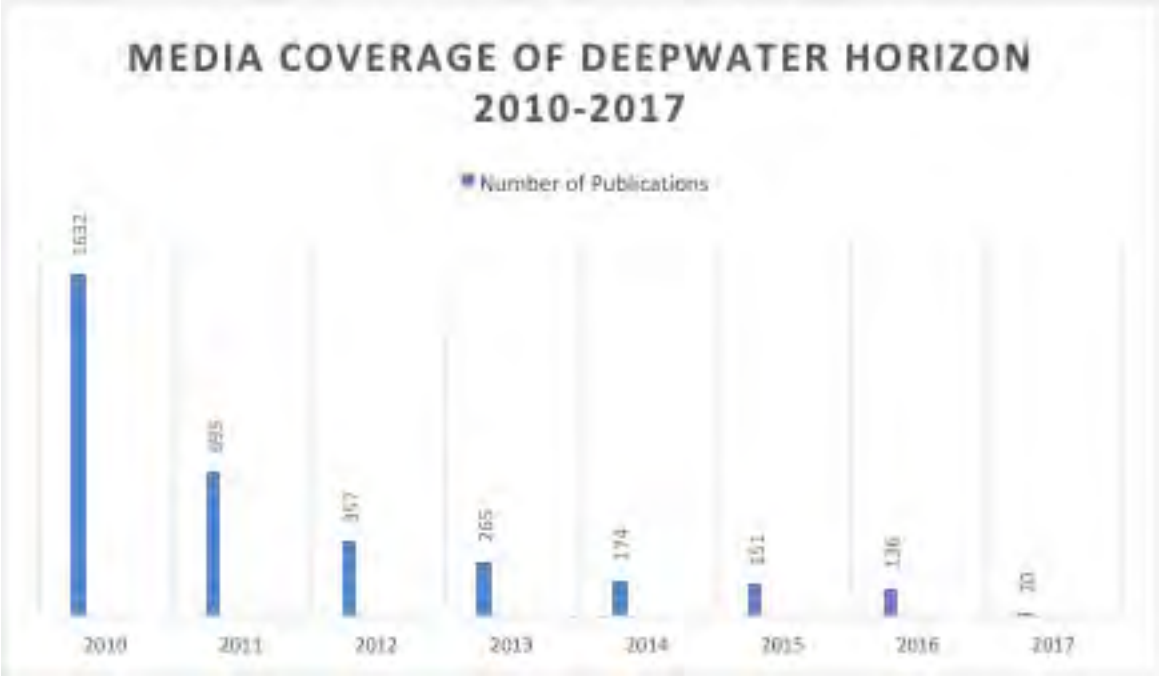

Figure 2: Proquest News and Newspapers Results for Yearly Media Coverage

Corexit to disperse the image event. Corexit broke up and sank much of the oil, preventing the oil spill from reaching the shore and TV cameras, and thus preventing the ceaseless circulation of images of oil-soaked pelicans and other tarnished wildlife. As journalist Mark Heertsgaard concludes, "But the one 1.84 million gallons of Corexit that BP applied during the cleanup also served a public-relations purpose: They made the oil spill all but disappear, at least from TV screens."[23] By late July 2010, the Associated Press and *The New York Times* were questioning whether the spill had been such a big deal after all." While a rousing PR success, Corexit was an invisible ecological catastrophe, leaving the oil in the water and ecosystem while making the oil more toxic: "crude oil becomes 52 times more toxic when combined with Corexit."[24]

In addition, Corexit allowed BP to lie about the magnitude of the event, claiming publicly that 5,000 barrels a day were leaking while internally estimating that 60,000 to 145,000 barrels were gushing: "oil companies have also learned that, in the public mind, out of sight equals out of mind."[25] In dispersing the image event, BP succeeded in reducing the event into an accident that does not disrupt the progress of industrialism.

Although BP had the obvious motives of company survival and profitability to frame the event as not an event that ruptures the world as is, President Obama did not have such motives and at first glance he seemed to recognize the event as an event. After dithering for nearly two months, on June 15th Obama dedicated his first Oval Office address to the nation to dealing with the BP oil disaster. Obama opened with acknowledging the magnitude of the event, noting that "it has tested the limits of human technology" and that "this oil spill is the worst environmental disaster America has ever faced." In the most promising moment of the speech, Obama suggests the need for a new world and a new future:

> And today, as we look to the Gulf, we see an entire way of life being threatened by a menacing cloud of black crude. We cannot consign our children to this future. The tragedy unfolding on our coast is the most painful and powerful reminder yet that the time to embrace a clean energy future is now. Now is the moment for this generation to embark on a national mission to unleash America's innovation and seize control of our own destiny.[26]

At this moment Obama is embracing the challenge of the event with evental rhetoric that articulates a possible new world. The speech is uneven and does not stay at the level of evental rhetoric, instead retreating to conventional war rhetoric: "the battle we are waging against an oil spill that is assaulting our shores and our citizens"; "our battle plan"; "the deployment of over 17,000 National Guard members"; "activate these troops"; and a direct comparison to World War II. Overall, the speech was not well-received, with critics panning it as uninspired: "it's quite possibly the first Obama speech loathed by liberals nearly as much as it was by conservatives"; "At the Daily Beast, Tunku Varadarajan was 'struck by how passionless the president is.'"[27]

The potential of evental rhetoric in Obama's speech soon dissipated, in part due to Obama's own actions. First, sure of the "absolute safety" of offshore drilling, just a few weeks before the BP oil disaster, "Barack Obama took the Republican slogan "drill, baby, drill" as his own today, opening up over 500,000 square miles of US coastal waters to oil and gas exploitation for the first time in over 20 years."[28] Belying the public image of Obama as a climate change crusader, Obama's position was aggressively pro-drilling, a position he returned to later in his presidency despite the event of the BP oil disaster and his early response. In March 2016, the Obama Administration opened up tens of millions of acres to offshore oil drilling in the Pacific, the Arc-

tic, and the Gulf. BP was allowed to participate. Many of these opened areas increase risk: "86 percent of new oil production in the Gulf taking place 1,000 to nearly 5,000 feet deeper than BP was drilling the Macondo."[29] Obama failed the event of the BP oil disaster, returning to business as usual.

LEAN and Local Responses

While the rhetoric at the national level domesticated the event, the local responses framed the event within a largely humanist narrative, rendering the possibility for evental rhetoric nearly impossible. While some local environmental groups, such as Oceana, Ocean Conservancy, and the Gulf Restoration Network, explicitly have a focus on ecological systems, wildlife preservation, or clean air and water, most of the coordinated and visible responses to the oil spill were focused on effects on humans.[30]

Out of many local groups, the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) emerged as a particularly prominent group in the local and national spotlight. According to their website, LEAN has been in operation since 1986 with the goal to "foster cooperation and communication between individual citizens and corporate and government organizations in an effort to assess and mend the environmental problems in Louisiana." They claim over 100 member groups with over 1700 individual members.

One of the first and clearest rhetorical responses to the event from LEAN was the June 7 testimony by Wilma Subra, an award-winning chemist whose who represented both LEAN and the Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper (LMRK), in a hearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Energy and Commerce Committee on the local impact of the spill. In her testimony, Subra told state and federal officials that she was "especially concerned about how dangerous the mixture of crude and Corexit was: 'The short-term health symptoms include acute respiratory problems, skin rashes, cardiovascular impacts, gastrointestinal impacts, and short-term loss of memory [. . .] Long-term impacts include cancer, decreased lung function, liver damage, and kidney damage."[31] By beginning this testimony by focusing on the human health aspects of the spill, this rhetoric elides the deconstructing and rethinking of oil dependence.

In Subra's testimony, she does discuss the tidal shorelines, estuaries, and wetlands and their need of protection against the negative effects of the spill; however, humanism overtakes the need to protect the environment for its own sake. Rather, she argues that that these areas "serve as spawning and nursery grounds for Louisiana seafood that provides or did provide a large portion of the seafood consumed in the United States." Finally, Subra argues that the economy and fishing community was "instantly removed" due to the disaster. By using effects on humans as evidence to support her claim that the spill severely damaged the environment, this potential eventual rhetoric leaves capitalism and industrialization untroubled. BP simply gave fishermen new boats and made settlements to thousands whose lives were disrupted by lack of tourism to the area.[32]

This framing of the event by Subra is consistent with LEAN's continued focus in the aftermath of the disaster. On June 14th of 2010, LEAN published health warnings for the public and on May 24th sent a letter to the EPA demanding that the health issues caused by the spill be addressed by the government (LEAN). In a scientific study published by both Subra and several other LEAN members, they discuss the levels of hydrocarbon contamination in sediment and

seawater only to conclude that the results may help decision makers in the "opening of fisheries, helping to insure seafood safety."[33] In fact, between 2010 and 2017, all but one of LEAN's official responses to the disaster was concerned with impacts on humans.[34]

The fifth-year anniversary of the spill saw some efforts to focus on environmental concerns by groups like Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition and the Ocean Conservancy.[35] However, a continued focus on how the event impacted human life by local groups was dominant. Gulf South Rising, a coalition of environmental groups, from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida organized events like "Come Fish on My Boat" which invited lawmakers and the media to "spend a day fishing with Gulf Coast fisher-folk."[36] Similarly, Community Voices also focused on interviewing people affected by the disaster, focusing on the lives of fisherman and activists in the area. Only Oceana focused its rhetoric on legislation related to drilling, and even so did not advocate not drilling at all, merely on the lack of legislation to drill safely.[37]

The humanist perspective culminated in local protests against continued oil drilling in the Gulf nearly six years later.[38] On March 23rd, the day after World Water Day when thousands of people from primarily Texas, Alabama and New Orleans gathered in the Superdome to protest the largest oil sale of the Obama Presidency.[39] Anne Rolfes, the director of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade argued that "our oysters are dying, our fishermen are out of work. BP has killed our livelihood and our culture but instead of taking responsibility for that harm, the best they can do is churn out glossy PR photos of white sand and blue water."[40] Similarly, Hilton Kelly, founder of the Community in Power and Development Association in an area of Texas known as Cancer Alley, argued, "We're not a sacrifice zone, we are living, breathing people, and enough is enough."[41]

Attention by LEAN and other groups on human health is not unfounded or unreasonable. It responds to chilling dilemmas posed by the spill. BP representatives reportedly told workers to "just mop it like you'd mop any other dirty floor," causing hundreds of workers they had employed to clean up the spill to fall ill in the days and months following the disaster, reporting serious symptoms like swelling of limbs, coughing up blood, and constant headaches.[42]

Although understandable, the humanist framing by activist groups of the initial 2010 rupture through the 2016 oil bid protest prevented a serious re-thinking about reliance on oil production as a larger economic and environmental practice and the effects on non-human lives and ecosystems beyond simply their existence as food or scenery for tourist dollars. Instead of an emerging evental rhetoric that articulated new truths that challenged the modern world structured by fossil fuels, rhetorical responses remained firmly committed to maintaining capitalist and industrially-driven lifestyles and communities dependent on oil production. As with many other traumatic national events, a worthy scapegoat (BP) was found and meekly admonished, which ultimately failed to mobilize any change of the world as it is. Economic and humanist rhetorical responses to this environmentally catastrophic event prevented a subject from unfolding and rethinking capitalism/industrialism and humanism from the orientation of the event. With capital industrialism understood as calculating all issues through the lens of profit and humanism understood as an orientation that measures all issues by the question of how they affect humans, a transformative evental rhetoric cannot pivot on the question of profits or whether people are dying. Despite the rupture of the BP oil disaster, no evental rhetoric emerged to open possibilities for thinking beyond the world as it is.

Endnotes

1 Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II,* trans. Alberto Toscano (New York: Continuum, 2009), 4.

2 Ibid, 3.

3 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (New York, Continuum, 2007), xii. Out of necessity, this essay will not have anything resembling a comprehensive account of Badiou's philosophy. Many of Badiou's shorter books provide exciting exposures to his thought. *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* constitute the two foundational tomes.

4 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil,* trans. Peter Hallward (New York, Verso, 2001), 40-41.

5 Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy* (London, Continuum, 2005), 46.

6 Badiou, *Ethics,* 41-42.

7 Badiou's philosophy is admittedly difficult and nowhere more so then in his conception of the subject. Which is utterly opposed to the dominant "psychological subject." More formally, Badiou writes in *Being and Event*, "I will call *subject* the process itself of liaison between the event (thus the intervention) and the procedure of fidelity (thus its operator of connection)" (239). Though too much to unpack here, this sentence is Badiou's most succinct and startling statement on the subject in *Logics of Worlds*: "We could say that a subject is an operative disposition of the traces of the event and of what they deploy in a world" (33). Badiou evokes the subject on a more poetic register in the concluding chapter of *Logics of Worlds*, "What is it to live?" (507-514).

8 Badiou, *Ethics,* 43.

9 For a more in-depth analysis of Badiou's concept of the event in the context of environmental communication, see Kevin DeLuca, "Truths, Evils, Justice, and the Event of Wild(er)ness: Using Badiou to Think the Ethics of Environmentalism." *The Handbook of Communication Ethics*, Eds. George Cheney, Steve May, and Debashish Munshi. Routledge (2011).

10 We are using the awkward neologism of "wild(er)ness" to express both wilderness the place and wildness the quality and how the two are each other's indispensable supplements. The awkwardness forces a moment of reflection on the term each time one trips over it. For our take on the theoretical issues around the concept of wilderness, see DeLuca, 2007.

11 Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" in *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 130.

12 Ibid, 133.

13 Ibid, 224-25.

14 Ibid, 204.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid, ix.

17 (Badiou, *Ethics,* 67-68.

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30 For a description of what local groups focus on in response to the disaster see http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/205/04/bp_oil_spill_environmental_gro.html

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33 Paul W. Sammarco, Steve R. Kolian, Richard A.F. Warby, Jennifer L. Bouldin, Wilma A. Subra, Scott A. Porter, "Distribution and Concentrations of Petroleum Hydrocarbons Associated with the BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico," *Marine Pollution Bulletin, 73*, 141.

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The Public in Louisiana's Coastal Restoration Public Works Project

Craig E Colten

A cornerstone of environmental management is stakeholder engagement. Engagement, in many different forms, seeks to open communication channels that allow a public dialogue at multiple stages in the planning process. It promises to permit the public to influence public works. This paper reviews public involvement in the evolution of Louisiana's coastal restoration projects which include massive investments in public works. It will trace the role of the public from public hearings, through stakeholder engagement, to more robust public participatory methods.

Engagement of "stakeholders," a term that erupted in the lexicon in the 1980s, seeks to correct shortcomings of the traditional and often legally mandated public hearings, or formal events that allowed comments on plans that for all intents and purposes were final – or nearly so. An adage accompanied this process that highlights another form of public participation. The phrase "plan, announce, hearing, litigate" summarizes the limited and after-the-fact role of the public in such procedures and litigation as the only viable option to modify plans that did not meet public interests. In addition, public hearings often privileged elected officials and already influential businesses while neglecting input from common citizens. An auxiliary component of the public hearing has been public comment. In some recent plans the pages devoted to re-printing public comments exceeds the plans themselves, while the influence of these after-the-fact comments in negligible. Public comments seldom facilitate a dialogue.

Stakeholder engagement deliberately sought to bring multiple constituencies into the planning procedure, often at relatively early stages, to help guide the selection of priorities and ensure public buy in. In both the public hearing and stakeholder engagement procedures, experts controlled the science and engineering underlying planning and implementation of projects. They shaped the technical components of the plans and which served as the basis for ensuing conversations. Task forces and advisory committees, composed of specialists and paid advocates, also play prominent and clearly defined roles. These support groups often by-pass marginalized citizens. Restricting the meaningful phases of plan development to experts limits public understanding and public critique. Technical experts have often called for better science education to address the public's inability to grasp some details, while ignoring their responsibility to communicate effectively to those without their technical backgrounds and to bring them into the planning process more fully.

There is another more recent form of public participation which emerged in the 1990s and includes a variety of techniques known as public participatory methods or collaborative participation (Innes et al. 2004, O'Brien and McIvor 2007, Yang and Callahan 2007, Kindon et al., 2010, and DeLyser and Sui 2014). These methods seek more than mere attendance at public forums, selecting priorities from a suite of options, or comments on draft documents. Higgs, specifically addressing ecological restoration, notes that reliance on technological expertise moves restoration away from collaborative approaches (Higgs 2003). Robust and

fully collaborative, participatory methods strive to bring citizens into the process at the earliest stages of environmental management decision making (before decisions are made), use direct dialogue between specialists and citizen groups to educate the public to the technical nuances of the projects, build institutional capacity for citizen groups, and regard citizen input as crucial to defining the goals and outcomes of public investments in environmental management (Innes et al. 2004). Louisiana's management of its coastal landscapes and its restoration planning has employed all three approaches, although participatory methods have been used only in a minuscule way. Nonetheless, engagement and belatedly participation has expanded over the years.

I will review the principal coastal restoration plans offered over the past thirty years and the supporting documents in order to trace the evolving role of the public in the massive public works projects that constitute the state's most recent Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast (CPRA 2017). In particular, I will document the influence of the general public by tracing the changing terminology used to assign blame for the state's coastal crisis and the evolving administrative structure and the role of powerful economic interests in guiding the process.

Floods, Flood Control, and Public Hearings

The loss of coastal wetlands in Louisiana stems from complex interrelated biophysical process and human activities. Over the last seven and a half millennia, the river built a series of delta lobes. As annual sediment deposition elevated the land surface, the river would shift course and follow a lower path to the Gulf of Mexico and begin building a new delta. Deprived of sediment, the older formation would begin sinking under its own weight. Thus, there was a ongoing, natural process of land renewal a cross the active delta and land loss on the abandoned deltas. After the arrival of the French in the early 1700s, colonial settlers began building levees to protect their property from annual river floods. These levees and subsequent improvements during the 19th and 20th centuries confined the river to its principal channel and eliminated the regular deposition of sediment to the natural levees and backswamps. Consequently, subsidence and erosion exceeded land building due to the elimination of both regular sediment delivery and the periodic realignments of the river to build new deltas (Roberts 1997).

Louisiana officials strongly advocated for federal support to the levee and river management systems built during the last two centuries. At public hearings, political and business leaders and technical experts championed the need for levees to protect the commerce of New Orleans and the Mississippi River basin and to safeguard residents and planters along the lower river (Colten forthcoming). Before 1927 they supported a levees-only system that was far from perfect and permitted all-too-frequent breaches and flooding. After the tragic 1927 flood, they sought a levees and outlets system that would redirect a portion of the risk through the Atchafalaya Basin and the Bonnet Carré spillway while protecting the principal entrepôt of the river and planters along its banks. The hearings for this system did not include the fisherfolk who endured the most direct impacts of the ecological transformation of the lower river system. Public input was greatly restricted, but local elites recast the flood problem from a local to a national issue and secured federal funding for and expanded levee system that had begun under colonial administration, but became more effective and consequently, produced greater ecological impacts, in the later half of the 20th century (Colten forthcoming and Reuss 1998).

After Hurricane Betsy in 1965, the Corps of Engineers launched an expanded hurricane

protection levee system for the New Orleans region. It progressed through the review by state and federal agencies and public hearings with strong support from local officials and agencies. Nonetheless, due to the protracted process, the Corps had to complete an environmental impact statement to meet the requirements of the 1969 National Environmental Protection Act. Here, it encountered staunch opposition from citizen's groups on the northshore of Lake Pontchartrain that filed suits to block the plan to erect barriers across the low isthmus across the eastern end of the lake. This litigation ultimately led to a recalibration of the costs and benefits and the decision to build higher levees along the New Orleans lakefront and elimination of the barrier option (Colten 2009). This sequence of events exemplifies the plan-announce-hearing-litigate process that prevailed at the time.

Public Voice in Early Coastal Restoration Efforts

Although early measurements of coastal land loss by geographers and geologists occurred as early as the 1950s (Morgan and Larimore 1957), geographer Sherwood Gagliano and his collaborators published persuasive accounts of the on-going process in the 1970s and early 1980s (Gagliano et al. 1981). Interest in the process was most acute within the coastal science community particularly at Louisiana State University. As an effort to launch a broader public recognition and to advocate for the preservation of deteriorating coastal wetlands, local advocates recruited a diverse groups of individuals and organizations into an ad hoc group known as the Coalition for the Restoration of Coastal Louisiana and in 1988 it became a formal organization (Hanny 1995 and CRCL 1995). Initially guided by a group of lawyers working on environmental litigation for national NGO's and tapping the expertise of scientists, its initial roster included several national environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and local Audubon Club chapters. Several religious organizations participated, along with a local Native American group, several Louisiana state agencies, fishermen's organizations, and coastal scientists (CRCL 1987). The objective was to build a team of technical experts, experienced environmental advocates, and grassroots representatives. Absent from this group were representatives of the oil and gas industry, shipping, and owners of large wetland territories. As recounted by David Hanny, it sought to deploy science in the service of public policy and to push reluctant state agencies to take more assertive actions to restore the coast (Hanny 1995, 78).

In 1987, the incipient organization released a draft of its goals for coastal restoration and the subtitle clearly asserted that it was "A Citizens' Program for Saving the Mississippi River Delta Region." The draft represented the research and experience of more than two dozen scientists and lay people and had been through a round of comments from "governments, fishermen's associations, research institutions, environmental and conservation clubs, civic clubs, religious organizations, coastal landowners, scientific consulting firms and private businesses and industry" (CRCL 1987). Although presented as a grassroots movement, the authors were primarily experienced, professional environmental advocates working with scientists. Nonetheless, CRCL deliberately involved local constituencies that had been overlooked in more traditional public hearings – namely faith-based groups and fishermens' organizations. The document appeared in a final form in 1989 (CRCL 1989) and indicated, once again, that its contents reflected the input of the same groups noted in the draft, along with "industry." It called for action by the state, the federal government, and citizens. In particular, the document declared that "environmental and civic groups, churches, commercial and sports fishing organizations, hunting and trapping organizations, land owners and coastal businesses, and industry organizations must play a central role in the design and implementation of a comprehensive

and effective state and federal plan" (CRCL 1989, 22). This statement suggests the CRCL sought a collaborative and fully participatory approach, and its origins reflect a bottom-up and more inclusive process that traditional public hearings. Nonetheless, it was an informal process compared to other more recent public engagement procedures (Kemp 2017).

Although the coalition reached out to industry and landowners for comments on its draft and its plan attributed land loss to natural subsidence of the delta, it noted the relatively recent increase in the land loss rate was due to "man-induced" factors. It squarely placed the blame on economic pursuits in the coastal zone, namely navigation, flood control, and oil and gas production. The document identifies two major causes to the existing rate of land loss "dramatic reduction in inputs of Mississippi River sediment into the coastal zone" (due to levees that induce sediment starvation) and the cumulative effect of "the construction of navigation and access canals" which contributed to salt water intrusion, accelerated erosion, and impoundment of marsh land (CRCL 1989, 16). This blunt assignment of culpability to the shipping and mineral industries, and the Corps of Engineers that oversaw the levee system, was a bold statement that reflected almost no input from two leading economic engines in the state. The three core goals of the plan were to use diversions to enhance sediment and freshwater to the coastal zone, use dredged material for repair or restoration of wetlands, and drastically reduce and phase out canal construction or expansion (CRCL 1989, 17). These goals rested on scientific research more than on public opinion, but public acceptance of this science was critical to the influence of the coalition's efforts and subsequent role in advancing legislation.

As the state moved forward with legislation on coastal protection and congressmen pushed legislation at the federal level, the CRCL's influence was obvious, particularly in terms of the causes of coastal damage. In an effort to demonstrate's its commitment to it's the state's perilous situation, the legislature passed the Coastal Wetlands, Conservation, Restoration, and Management Act in 1989 or Act 6. It dedicated state dollars to restoration projects and also made a portion of state funds available for cost-sharing with state/federal restoration projects. In order to support its efforts, the legislature directed a portion of the state's revenue from its oil and gas revenue to a wetlands trust fund, which won popular support as a constitutional amendment in 1989 (Hanny 1995, 119). This was not a new tax or an increase, but a redirection of funds already being collected. Although the tax raised only a modest sum that sharply declined over the ensuing years, the statewide vote in support of the amendment illustrates the effectiveness of the Coalition's experts in educating the public and the persuasiveness of its appeal. It also alerted the oil and gas industry to the prospect that legislators were eyeing mineral revenues to fund the process to correct damage this industry had contributed to. The general population had a powerful voice in the process. Also of note, the legislation created a Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force which opened the door for more direct participation by those accused of creating the problem in the first place oil and gas and shipping interests (Hanny 1995 and Hebert 1997, see 1171-72). The task force's mandated responsibility was to develop a "comprehensive approach to restore and prevent the loss of coastal wetlands in Louisiana" (LWCRTF 1993, v).

Moving beyond the state, Senator John Breaux worked for several years to pass federal legislation that would aid the state's efforts. A core of this strategy was elevating a local problem to a national concern. Testimony by Louisiana's delegation hammered home this theme that recalled the strategy used to garner national support for flood control (O'Neil 2006 and Colten forthcoming). In their congressional testimony, Louisiana's elected officials noted three major causes for wetland loss. Two of them were cast as directly related to the national economy. Both

river management for navigation and flood control and oil and gas development had implications beyond the lower river territory (U. S. House 1990; testimony by Breaux, 3-4, Tauzin, 12-14; Boggs, 6-7). According the Louisiana spokes people, the state was sacrificing its wetlands to advance national economic well-being. The third cause identified by Congressman Tauzin was climate change induced sea-level rise (U.S. House 1990, Tauzin, 12). The elected officials had embraced and articulated the key causes identified by the CRCL. Paul Kemp represented the CRCL in this congressional hearing, and he made the case that Louisiana's wetlands were a "national treasure" – indirectly equating them to the Florida Everglades which had earned designation as a national park (McCally 1999 and Colten 2014b). He also emphasized that wetland restoration was also about preserving lives, livelihoods, and ways of life (U. S. House, 1990, Kemp, 26-27). At this stage, no representatives from shipping, mineral, or landowners testified. Congress passed CWPPRA in 1990 and established a funding stream from non-mineral related sources that complemented the state's dedicated funds. It also established a technical task force that has met regularly since 1991 (USACE 1991-2017). Nationalizing the problem proved effective.

By 1993, the Coastal Conservation and Restoration Task Force had assembled its initial plan with input from the legislated federal agencies (Corps of Engineers, EPA, DoI, DoC, DoAg, and the LA Gov's office). Constituted this way, the primary expertise resided in the federal agencies staffed with scientists and engineers and with a technical expert from the governor's office. In addition, the task force explicitly created a process for "public participation." It provided for involvement of local officials, landowners, farmers, sportsmen, commercial fishermen, oil and gas developers, navigation interests, and environmental organizations (LCWCRTF 1993, 3). Among the groups were the CRCL and its diverse membership, but also on a similar level were two oil and gas associations and two groups representing navigation (LCWCRTF 1993 appendix J, 1). The Citizen Participation group was created to "promote citizen participation and involvement in formulating Priority Project Lists and the restoration plan (LCWCRTF 1993, 3). Several stages of public meetings were conducted during the planning process in locations across the coastal parishes. The 1993 plan touts that the task force held sixty-five public meetings leading to the document's preparation. The public forums allowed seventeen organizations in the Citizen Participation Group to receive briefings on projects developed by the task force, and they helped prioritize projects. The next step enabled more direct public involvement through "scoping meetings" to identify specific wetland problems and to solicit solutions to them. "Nearly all of the ideas presented in those meetings" reportedly were incorporated into the plan (LCWCRTF 1991, App. J, 1-2). Subsequent meetings included intensive 3-day meetings for the task force to formulate a viable plan, and it was in these gatherings that ideas from the scoping meetings were folded into the plan. Still another round of public meetings followed and the task force solicited public comments on the plans. In an era of increasing attention to "stakeholders," the term appears only once in 500-page document even if the organizations that participated were in fact stakeholders. Finally, a formal public hearing was held to review the environmental impact statement prepared for the plan. The plan contents reflect a dominant influence of the technical experts with an intended audience of technical experts. This type of content was essential, but there was no companion document for the general educated population, although the task force assembled a program for on-going public interaction (LCWCRTF 1993, exhibit 2 p 6).

With its federal emphasis and the more prominent role of economic interests, a subtle

shift in land loss culpability emerges. The document presents the economic infrastructure as an important local asset threatened by land loss and as worthy of protection as the ecological resources. Modest mention of cultural resources, mainly as a tourism asset also appears (LCWCRTF 1993, 19-22). The report notes that, "The primary causes of wetland loss in coastal Louisiana have been understood for some time; they include subsidence, global sea level rise, sediment deprivation, and hydrologic alteration" (LCWCRTF 1993, 24). The authors present subsidence and sea level rise as "natural" processes and softened the terminology associated with the diversion of sediment (from starvation to deprivation) and canal building to hydrologic alteration. In its more detailed descriptions, the report points out that there is a natural component to these processes and turns to passive voice to obscure the responsibilities. Specifically, sediment deprivation "is affected [emphasis added] by development of continuous river levee systems that prevent overbank flooding and crevasse development." And hydrologic alteration "is affected [emphasis added] by thousands of miles of dredged channels and associated levees that alter hydrology, sedimentation, and salinity regimes" (LCWCRTF 1993, 25). While acknowledging levees and canals, the reports does not tie particular organizations to these actions.

The next landmark document in the coastal restoration effort was Coast 2050 (LCWCRTF 1998). It reflected growing concern, rising to the level of alarm, with the "catastrophic proportions" of land loss (LCWCRTF 1998, 1). Despite its shrill warning, it takes a less aggressive stance towards oil and gas and shipping. In the opening passages it states that the causes were the "effects of natural processes like subsidence and storms" and reduces "human actions" to secondary status (LCWCRTF 1998, 1). It also presented sea-level rise as less certain "The loss could be greater, especially if worst-case scenario projections of sea-level rise are realized" (LCWCRTF 1998, 1). By asserting there was "no single cause" for land loss it aligned itself with previous studies, but ultimately softened the accusations of earlier reports and congressional testimony. Subsidence receives extensive discussion and frames the core cause as a natural, not human-induced, process. The report acknowledges the natural processes of sediment capture in upstream impoundments and also deprivation of sediment to the marshes due to levees, but does not specify the human actions are the primary and underlying causes. Faulting and sea-level rise appear as related natural processes contributing to subsidence (LCWCRTF 1998, 33-39). Storms appear as separate contributing factor and another "natural" force particularly damaging to barrier islands. Canals, identified in previous plans as a dominant cause, receive the designation of "hydrologic alterations." While a more inclusive term for a host of related human influences, there is very little detailed information on the extent of this factor (LCWCRTF 1998, 40). The issue of canals and navigation remained prominent concerns among advocacy groups, but receded in the official document. This adjustment reflects a major deviation from prior publications and public interests, and suggests rising influence of the oil and gas and shipping interests in framing the issue. By broadening participation to more directly include the major economic interests, the document's language became more general in terms of the primary influences and emphasized natural processes.

The 1993 plan proclaimed to offer a new approach by integrating the numerous efforts and plans that preceded it. At its core, however, it perpetuated an approach dedicated to ecosystem restoration, relying on technical expertise (LCWCRTF 1998, 2). It acknowledged the importance of ecosystems to society, but did not elevate social processes into its planning to the same level as its efforts to manage biophysical processes. It also inserted the term "sustainable"

into the title suggesting human actions to restore the coast would produce a viable, long-term, and self-perpetuating ecology.

The document presented a more fully articulated public engagement process and emphasized the importance of consensus building and the involvement of diverse interests. More than the CRCL document and even more so than the 1993 task force plan, government agencies played a central role in shaping the technical content, and they constituted the Strategic Working Group. Parish and other local organizations made up the Coastal Zone Management Working Group. And there were four Regional Planning Teams to develop plans for different coastal regions. A series of public meetings were offered at different stages of the planning process and mirrored in many respects the early 1990s gatherings. In effect, technical experts shared their understanding of the situation and ongoing processes, and the public helped determine which issues were most important. The public also provided input on the draft plan (LCWCRTF 1998, 11-18). While allowing ample opportunity for public engagement, the planning process centered on ecosystem management - a technical enterprise. With the initial planning housed in government agencies, the process privileged experts and their representations of ecosystem processes. In this round of planning, the mantle of "objectivity" naturalized the processes that were creating the crisis and withdrew the accusing fingers formerly pointed at oil and gas, shipping, and the Corps of Engineers. This discursive adjustment is the most significant change in the communication of the land loss situation at this stage.

Coastal Restoration in the 21st Century

In the early years of 21st century, a deliberate attempt to elevate the coastal crisis to the national level took shape. Louisiana Governor Mike Foster appointed a committee to recommend changes and new approaches to existing restoration methods. Its 2002 report made the explicit case that a comprehensive plan for the entire coast, rather than piecemeal projects, was essential, and implicitly, it provided a rationale for greater involvement by key economic interests in the discussion. It did so by fundamentally re-calibrating which resources were at stake. Although it borrowed the "natural treasure" term used by Paul Kemp in congressional testimony in reference to the state's coastal wetlands, it emphasized the economic value or ecosystem services of the wetlands and the activities that would be sustained by their preservation. In particular the report devoted attention to storm protection, communities and infrastructure, oil and gas networks, transportation networks, water quality, and fisheries before mentioning the "unique ecosystems" (Committee for the Future of Coastal Louisiana 2002). This focus contrasted with prior reports that had fore-grounded wetland ecology.

Following this 2002 report, Louisiana political and business leaders formed a group called America's Wetland Foundation. By re-labeling Louisiana's wetlands as "America's" it made a deliberate statement to frame the coastal land loss issue as one of national significance and present economics as the primary reason for preserving the coast. The foundation's members and partners included a wide array of local booster organizations, environmental organizations, and local communities. It sought to translate the technical science of land loss into economic terms in order to mobilize business and industry support for restoration efforts. Among its most prominent sponsors were oil and gas corporations. Its goal was "to transcend historic and parochial differences for the higher good of saving national environmental and economic assets that support the U.S. economy and provide for domestic energy security" (America's Wetland Foundation 2017). This statement placed saving economic assets on the same plane

as environmental ones. It also sought to expand the discussion of coastal restoration to the other gulf coast states and coined the phrase America's Energy Coast, underscoring the national implications of offshore mineral resources (America's Wetland Foundation 2013)).

Into the early years of this century, each successive stage of restoration planning provided for public input and also sought to consolidate the process. Public input remained a form of stakeholder engagement with the planning largely carried out by technical experts in government agencies with assistance from academic scientists and consulting companies. With the exception of the early 1980s efforts by the CRCL, full participatory efforts were absent. As a follow-up to the Coast 2050 report, a joint Corps of Engineers and Louisiana effort led to the production of the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study (USACE 2004). For more than two years, the agencies charged with preparing the study participated in a multi-phase public engagement process. The process allowed for public scoping meetings, stakeholder roundtable discussions, and comments on the draft report (USACE 2004, 5-1 – 5-3). The report tabulated the public concerns, and the district engineer offered a set of priority projects based on environmental, social, and economic factors (USACE 2004, 6-1).

The devastating impacts of hurricanes Katrina and Rita prompted two important actions that began a shift toward more robust participatory practices. The Louisiana legislature, in response to federal wishes to consolidate coastal restoration and flood control activities, reconfigured the state's Wetland Conservation and Restoration Authority into the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA 2017a). Additionally, a considerable outreach program known as Louisiana Speaks directly engaged the public in a series of more than 100 meetings and assembled the results of thousands of surveys to formulate a recovery plan for the region (Louisiana Recovery Authority 2007). Led by a group of planners the project assembled a several computer-modeled scenarios for future social and ecological conditions. The public engagement allowed "citizens to weigh in on how South Louisiana should approach economic development, which coastal protection and restoration strategies to prioritize, which pattern of future growth and development the region should pursue, and how to balance individual rights with community risk" (LRA 2007, 26). This process allowed them to select among the scenarios projected by the expert teams. In the words of the technical team, citizens were given "clear choices about their future" (LRA 2007, 18). This endeavor represented a considerable expansion of public engagement, but once they received options presented by expert teams. Ultimately, these efforts, along with other studies and reports, contributed to the state's first master plan for a sustainable coast (CPRA 2007).

Creation of the CPRA brought staff from several state agencies who had been involved with restoration efforts under a single administrator. The newly formed state agency received a mandate to prepare a revised comprehensive coastal master plan every five years. Its staff has met that charge with a series of master plans approved by the legislature in 2007, 2012, and 2017 (CPRA 2007, 2012, 2017b). Each contained multiple stages of public input, but like their predecessors no fully participatory methods shaped the plans.

The 2007 master plan casts the causes underlying land loss as a set of human-induced "changes" that provided specific "benefits," but that also had some "tradeoffs" (or costs). In particular, it noted that levees, canals and channels, and wetland drainage provided flood protection, floodplain development, navigational opportunities, and oil and gas exploration and extraction, and expanded territory for agriculture, industry, and cities. In the past, the desire to

boost economic activities justified the changes which produced "unintended effects" (CPRA 2007, 12-13). The tradeoffs were destabilized coastal landscapes, accelerated land loss, and ultimately the shrinking of land area and an increased number of people at risk (p. 13). This framing of the situation withdraws the accusatory finger and suggests a benign set of actions taken to bolster the state's economy without the recognition of the unintended impacts, even though a state scientist had pointed out some of the problems associated with severing the river from the floodplain in the 1920s (Viosca 1928).

In the wake of the massive 2005 hurricanes, flood protection rose dramatically as a justification for the master planning process. The 2007 plan's development began with an integrated planning team consisting of nine agency personnel. It conducted workshops and drafted a report that was subject to review by the Corps of Engineers and was the topic discussed at Louisiana Speaks meetings and fifty stakeholder gatherings (CPRA 2007, 42). Subsequently, a workshop was held with agency partners, science advisors, and NGOs and follow up plan formulation workshops were held. These gatherings led to the composition of a draft plan that underwent public review and comment by technical review panels made up of external academic and government scientists, followed by public hearings. This process was far more thoroughly documented than early public engagement efforts (CPRA 2007, appendices B&H). Comparable, although refined and expanded, methods guided the master planning process for the 2012 and 2017 documents (CPRA 2012 and 2017). In advance of its 2017 plan, CPRA hosted twenty "community conversations," gave 115 briefings to fifty-five advisory groups, which were followed by four public hearings that included opportunity for conversations with attendees. There was a wide array of public participation among the numerous focus groups, including communities, fisheries, landowners, energy, and navigation interests (CPRA 2017, 165-67). Separate focus groups for key businesses outnumbered the representation of communities and fisheries. The 2012 and 2017 plans relied heavily on predictive models to project possible changes in the coast and to identify the most cost effective restoration and protection projects (CPRA 2012 63). Using a modeling approach, it could project changing conditions either with or without the projects. This technique, along with the various technical boards and advisory committees, provided technical rationales for projects and their costs and framed all public discussions (CPRA 2012 and 2017). The 2017 plan asserts it is more community focused (CPRA 2017, 28)

The most recent plan once again relied heavily on expert knowledge to formulate options and to model future conditions. These projections framed the public discussions (see CRPA 2017, appendix B). It also conceded that sustainability was not a true goal, noting that even with its numerous projects, more land would be lost than restored. This reality prompted a shift in the emphasis from wetland restoration to risk reduction. Although there were numerous junctures where public input was possible, true participatory methods were largely absent.

Outsourcing Public Participation

CPRA has accommodated pubic feedback to expert-developed plans. This approach allows for public audiences to respond to carefully assembled documents and selective predictive models. Participation with the experts at the earliest stages has been absent. Despite a reliance on experts for modeling the future, CPRA has outsourced some more direct participatory projects and other organizations have also launched efforts intended to feed into the master planning process.

A group of scholars, applied scientists, and coastal residents participated in a "sci-tek"

(scientific/traditional ecological knowledge) project to integrate local ecological expertise into the coastal restoration process. Funded by CPRA, the technical team worked with local fisherfolk to translate their "traditional ecological knowledge" into a GIS format that would be usable by the state's technical experts. This project sought to address the shortcomings of mere stakeholder engagement. The authors and the local fisherfolk even took the state experts out on their boats to offer what amounted to a floating seminar for the normally office-bound scientists. This process was to enable a direct transfer of local expertise to agency experts and transfer local stakeholders' priorities to government officials (Bethel et al. 2014).

Additional projects include a set of non-structural policy recommendations, developed in part to inform the CPRA process for its 2017 master plan. A critique of the 2012 master plan was its emphasis on structural projects and also marsh building to the detriment of attention given to human habitation and community persistence outside the structural systems. The Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX), a Baton Rouge planning group, secured external funding to solicit options for non-structural projects from coastal residents intended to aid the 2017 planning process. Its report; based on interviews, polls, and focus groups with coastal residents; noted that residents and local leaders wanted greater coordination and alignment between their non-structural efforts and state and federal programs. In other words, they were frustrated with what they saw as an emphasis on structural projects. While not funded by CPRA, this project directly sought to influence the master planning process (CPEX 2015). As CPEX was engaged it its extensive research and community engagement, a team at the independent research institute The Water Institute of the Gulf (TWIG), used CPRA funding to carry out a pair of scenario-building workshops. This effort sought to allow local experts to project future scenarios, rather than using external technical experts and computers. Using a method developed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, TWIG staff assembled groups of citizens, local government officials, business people, landowners, and other stakeholders to lay out what they foresaw as social and economic changes that would unfold with or without coastal restoration projects. These interactions used proposed CPRA restoration projects as the starting point for discussion, but the projects considered biophysical conditions and the publicly developed scenarios focused on future social and economic conditions. A central concern expressed by participants was the desire for local input in restoration planning (Colten 2014a). As with the CPEX effort, this participatory process sought to feed into the CPRA planning process.

Seeking to build on the sci-tek project a Water Institute team conducted a series of community workshops and participatory mapping exercises to enable the dual-directional transfer of technical expertise and traditional knowledge among the different communities. Using a grant from from Louisiana Sea Grant (a NOAA funded entity), the workshops focused on the exchange of ecosystem expertise and the participatory mapping enabled community members to identify places of value (Carruthers et al. 2017). Once again, local participants voiced frustration with absence of local knowledge in the restoration planning process (Carruthers et al. 2017, 43).

Louisiana's CPRA has focused on ecosystem management and has not raised human dimensions to a comparable level in its three plans. Seeking to address this oft- criticized shortcoming, the state Office of Community Development (OCD) has launched an ambitious participatory process aimed at fostering a set of adaptive strategies for the future (LOCD 2017) They refer to it as a "co-design" process. Without pre-determined scenarios, the LA SAFE project is carrying out a multi-stage process to identify local goals, needs and opportunities to achieve those goals, that will be followed by the development of desired outcomes. Each of these elements

will be built on local community input and ultimately will be used to draft long-term strategies for an adaptation plan. While seeking original input, the process uses CPRA maps of land loss and its various projects to guide discussion. OCD seeks to integrate its community-informed efforts with CPRA's three general adaptation strategies flood proofing, elevation, and voluntary acquisition (LOCD 2017). http//lasafe.la.gov/ In doing so, it further inserts the CPRA framing into its activities. Funding, however, is coming from a federal grant, not CPRA. Community participation has been robust and reflects a willingness of citizens to lend their time and expertise to the larger goals. While this process is more complex and time consuming than expert driven stakeholder engagement, it avoids the democratic deficit some describe (Vanclay 2012).

Conclusions

Public engagement has passed through multiple phases in the protracted process of creating and then tending to the state's coastal land-loss crisis. Federally funded river levee projects allowed public hearings that were dominated by leading economic interests, prominent politicians, and technical experts who sought protection for New Orleans. The concerns of fisherfolk were largely absent. Litigation accompanied hurricane protection levee projects as local constituencies sought to force their concerns into the planning process.

The emergence of interest with land loss came out of the scientific community and gave rise to political fears that state oil revenue would suffer as the coast retreated inland in the 1950s. A broader expression of concern with the region's coastal ecology arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It spawned an ad hoc organization, the CRCL, that was participatory in its goals and how it presented itself. Even if guided by coastal scientists and professional environmental advocates, it embraced fishing and faith-based community level groups, and they helped shape its "Citizen's Program" for restoring the coast. It cast oil and gas and shipping as the primary culprits for the problem (CRCL 1989).

Through a series of subsequent steps to advance a more comprehensive plan for coastal protection and restoration, public engagement became a formal and clearly delineated component of the process. Yet, through the Coast 2050 and the CPRA plans, government agency staff, expert teams, and focus groups have framed the options presented to public forums. Technical expertise and computer models offer a range of alternatives for public discussion and deliberation, but planning is not participatory in the use of the term today. Within this phase of public engagement, the major economic interests have gained a prominent voice, and with that voice, assignment of responsibility has become less accusatory. This has led to government funding for the massive projects rather than actions to secure compensation from commercial interests, disregarding several pending lawsuits against oil and gas companies.

A critique of the 2007 and 2012 plans has been their neglect of communities outside the structural plans. The 2017 plan claims to be more community focused. And indeed, CPRA has contributed to several tangential participatory method efforts that sought to foreground the concerns and knowledge of people and communities that have been neglected in the plans. These external efforts, launched in the interest of influencing the planning process, remain external as CPRA continues to focus on its technical objectives.

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Where the Alligators Roam: Art for a Creeping Catastrophe

Mike Stagg and Dawn DeDeaux

Lafayette, Louisiana, radio host Mike Stagg interviews the renowned Louisiana artist Dawn DeDeaux

Mike Stagg A conceptual artist from New Orleans whose work has been to Lafayette and all over the world, Dawn Deveaux had a fabulous installation here in Lafayette at the Acadiana Center for the Arts back in 2014 one of her Mothership installations. She's a native of New Orleans, a Louisiana resident, passionate about her state, her city, her people and the state of our coast and the climate.

Dawn DeDeaux I'm very honored to be on the show and thank you for all the great work you do on behalf of the environment and many other causes.

Mike One of the things that one the recent projects you have is this project called the end of the road a front line journey to the edge of Louisiana's vanishing coast. This was an event that was going to take place at Isle de Jean Charles down in Terrebonne Parish and it was postponed. Isle de Jean Charles has earned the title of North America at the least the United States the first climate refugee community. Why don't you talk about the end of the road project, what your objectives were, and then what happened?

Dawn The project itself was to be staged on Island Road which is between actually Pointe-aux-Chene and Isle de Jean Charles. So it was to get those people together with both of those communities together with people from all over coastal Louisiana. Island Road had been selected because of its durability. The road had recently been strengthened in spite of the rising tide down there. We could stand on the road a large group as many as 500 people. That's what we had hoped for and the island could support that and we would do no wear and tear on the fragile system. We of course did serious outreach to Isle de Jean Charles. We were going to have our post event gathering, social gathering, at the Isle de Jean Charles marina. Do you want me to tell you how the cards kind of fell the wrong way?

Mike What was your objective with the project first?

Dawn The objective with the project. Its good to go ahead and spell this out because the project will continue. The objective is first of all if you can imagine all of these very dramatic aerial photographs we had seen of the vanishing coast, slivers of land, puffs of wetland grass. We've seen these dramatic pictures. We also hear and use the term that we are losing a football field every thirty five to thirty eight minutes. We've seen those pictures. We hear that stat. I thought it would be very important to come up with an iconic image that could be used by everyone that would convey we are not just losing land. We are losing homes and we are losing culture so I thought it would be an impactful project to bring people as many as I could gather. The first objective for Island Road was 500 people. At one o'clock, one pm, and the people who would gather would pick a letter to stand in. I wanted to spell out the word Home H O M E. We had planes, South Wings, is one of our sponsors. We had pilot Tim Kensell and photographers Jonathan Henderson, Paul Costello, people out in boats, Bill Butrian, people photographing from the road. Drone operators from California. We

Dawn DeDeaux Vimeo Profile Picture

had an amazing volunteer team. Between one and one thirty we were going to capture by plane, drone, and blah blah, all of these people coming together in support of coastal restoration and to pay homage to the coastal loss and document this in a variety of ways. It was again to put people into this dramatic landscape to make the point that we losing places where people actually have lived for a couple of centuries in some cases.

Mike Let's talk about the Mothership concept and the series of shows you've done. Your earlier art seemed to be dealing with environment in terms of urban environment, city environment. I think when we talked the other day you said something about race and class. Race and class certainly come in in a broader climate discussion. I think Katrina made that clear. The flood after Katrina made that very clear. It generally wasn't well to do people who drown in the storm, in the flood. Tell us about the Mothership. Doesn't Stephen Hawking play a role in this concept?

Dawn Yes he does. With Mothership, imaging what to do as an artist using my skill sets how can I further public engagement to get involved with the environment issues and become a participant? What can I do through the arts? I just somehow happened upon a video interview with Stephen Hawking and he said we have 100 years left. Not to savor but to lead. To figure out how to lead this was very provocative. That's an interesting thing to wrap my head around also my art around and just bring that the to public. Look at the impact that statement had on me. Maybe this is a good way to call it I don't like fear tactics but it is a plausible outcome. I said this is a good thing to introduce. I didn't realize it would last four going into five years. Mothership is a big subject indeed. I chose the word Mothership because it of course can represent earth itself if we take care of her and can stay but say we blow it. We are going to need some kind of vessel to take us elsewhere. Right now we are at seven point four billion people and in 2045 we will be at nine maybe ten billion people. Going back to how you introduce race and class and the fact that the under class and the poor are usually the ones first to suffer. Just imagine the scenario that we do have to leave and who gets a seat on the bus? Who gets a seat on the bus? I started imagining building many many large vessels to take us beyond the mad mad. I wanted to say that the resources to sustain nine billion people that's why our water quality is so important. That's the new oil, as most of your listeners know so that's going to be a scary commodity in big demand. People are going to have to pay more and more just to have a basic necessity to live. Water. How do we grow? Where is the areas that we can grow food? Scientists have identified those areas and they are not large enough known to meet the demand for food. We have to get more and more inventive and we have to plan. Even though technology got us the bit the abuse of technology in many regards got us into this problem. I think we have to turn again to technology now as a new partner responsible. You could responsibly do the math here how can we make it work on earth for all the people that we expect to have? What was important going into Mothership was accessing the resources here on earth and realizing again that it is plausible we may have to leave.

Mike There's plenty of shared responsibility for everything that's going on in this. Previous global crisis like war and stuff. We've all done our share of creating problems but can we bring ourselves to act? It seems to me that what your work is about is trying to drive home the point that hey it really is a mess. We all share responsibly and we all need to act.

Dawn It's a small gesture. It's a large landscape gesture but just one of so many gestures that we need. It's just something I feel I can do coming out of my combined interests in the visual arts and mass communications and community engagement. The scientists of course are very busy working on plausible

solutions. I use the art. Art does have a role to play in translating the complexity of the data. To translate all that complexity into something that's more tangible for the public to give that data emotional resonance. I think it's a good time for artists to participate in the movement. It's very important.

Mike Why don't you explain the Mothership and the various generations that you've been through?

Dawn Mothership One. The full title is Mothership One Postulations of Myth and Math and that was running claims by Stephen Hawking who we discussed. Running claims by Hawking that we have a 100 years left not to savor but to lead. I did run some of the math but we also touched on is there enough land and will there be enough water? Then as the counterpoint I examined ancient myths and studied the myths of various cultures when they predict the end of time. It was very interesting to find that myth and math were not so dissimilar in their predictions. Mothership One was at the Center for Living Arts in Mobile, AL. They have a new contemporary arts center space there and did a great job. We had a good presentation for One. Then for Mothership Two. Its full title Mothership Two Dreaming of the Future Past. Here I put mankind more into the mix. I had just done a residency at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and was doing a series called Space Clowns. This is what I brought to Lafayette. It had some components of Mothership One but it was the first launch of Two Dreaming of a Future Past. I tell you what a gorgeous exhibit space you have at the Acadiana Center for the Arts. The staff and the director, it was just a joy from start to finish. In that exhibit I also did a kind of grapes of wrath hanging work with discarded farm equipment and dust bowls in addition to the space clowns. Just a note on the clowns, instead of having sterile uniforms to protect one from the environment of either earth or in space. Instead of them being sterile I said we already blew earth we chose the manly men would also be wearing patterns of flowers and flora and fauna because we would be nostalgic for a nature lost. So instead of flags of straight lines, I said from here on out we go into outer space but we will always carry the organic lines of homeland earth. That was what was behind that. Mothership Three is not fully developed. Its a work in progress produced that in New Orleans in affiliation with Tulane University in an outdoor amazing ruin of a site where trees were growing through what had been a former warehouse through the rafters. There instead of doing just two dimensional rings. Oh wait I have to back up a second. Through out of a lot of the two-dimensional works that appeared in One and Two, I keep introducing this large truss ring. It's a ring that was the very first component used to build the zeppelin which to date are the largest airships. Getting back to our discussions of class, this is the ring. The Mothership has to hold a lot of people right? Nine billion people ahead of us. Who gets a seat on board? That's where this ring comes from and every good myth has a ring. So with Three in New Orleans, I had two three-dimensional truss rings. This company gave me fifty-foot rings, thirty-foot rings and I did some pop-ups through the city. The final installation was a place called The Station. I did an imaginary environment. What if we did take off and this is the place we took off from and there were discarded suitcases because nobody gets to bring their suitcase. We got to fit nine billion people on the bus. You can take only one small object.

Mike Like a carry on.

Dawn Yes. One small object so that prompted part of Mothership Three The Station was also the Launch and Souvenirs of Earth. What is the one object? You can't take Michelangelo's the Pieta but you can take a postcard or a little tiny statue of it. It was that kind of a thing. I had actually introduced that on a wall in the Lafayette show too but it's more pronounced

with Mothership Three. Throughout all of this too Mike I was very interested in afrofuturism because I thought it was the last time in recent history that we embraced Utopia that searched out for Utopia. For a place beyond and you can find in the midst of the civil rights movement musicians such as Sun-Ra faces the place in Sun Rise films where he feels that African-Americans are not going to have justice, their due justice and equal rights on earth. So let's leave and lets go find another place. This is a Utopian longing and you have others again on the same wavelength. You've got George Clinton who even introduced a Mothership-Funk of his own. I had really hoped to get George Clinton in an actual space ship. Now my space ship was one of the survival tanks looked like submarines that the oil and gas industry or the oil industry uses. In case of disaster, they drop these pods like survival pods. A friend of mine has a few of them that he is saving. I really wanted George Clinton a year and a half ago to pop out of one of these survival pods. That didn't happen. But do you want the good news or do I have permission to continue?

Mike Absolutely.

Dawn So the good news is this a wonderful, wonderful museum. It's called Mass Moca in North Adams, Massachusetts. It's really is the largest contemporary arts misdeem in the world. They are opening up Building Six. It's a town North Adams used to have a lot of manufacturing so the founders there have been buying up these empty buildings so that's what's going on. In May, they are opening up Building Six and I am extremely honored to be, they've selected my work for exhibition, together with Lonnie Holley who I will tell you about. He's a musician and also a great artist. He will be exhibiting on one side of floor two and I will be exhibiting on the other side of floor two. In the center, they are looking for collaboration. His series has been dubbed Mother Universe and I have been doing the Mothership series. They have brought us together. He has gorgeous really unique music. It's very spacy. He's done some space compositions so I will at last have this great musician in the spaceship so the spaceship goes to Mass Moca along with components of Mothership Four.

Mike In the Mothership shows over here, I was just astonished the range of media that you are working. It's amazing. There are all kinds of pieces in there. Your work with metal that is almost like photo imagery on them. You have all of these elements. How much of this do you actually do yourself? Are you conceptualizing this? How much do you do yourself?

Dawn I'm a performance and conceptual artist. Which means to me my definition of that is I put the idea first. Than I'll chose the media that best conveys that idea. For instance with the flood zone in New Orleans after Katrina there was water at different heights in different neighborhoods in parts of the city. You would hear this when you were standing in the Red Cross line or this line. I said it would be good to encase these waters heights. I did the imagining and then of course I said there's somebody out there who can cast better than I can. So I find the best fabricators and I'll go work with them on that fabrication. On those large landscape pieces you're talking of I'll do all the imagining and I really wanted to print those oversize because the Mothership is a big story right. It's epic. I said in this case I want a couple of really large apocalyptic landscapes. I wanted them to have this fusion or this relationship with technology this ambiguousness. So I printed I wanted them printed on aluminum on stainless steel plates. I have a couple of printers myself. In this case I went out and found a company who I could work with because I'm printing on ten foot panels and some of them are like thirty feet. But I'll do drawings sometimes. I was trained as a painter. Sometimes I have drawings, sometimes there's a call for painting. I'm doing a series right now called Dead Planet for a

show at Arthur Roger Gallery in November. I'm making, it's fun you know I've got the clay out. I'm not the kind of artist that will put the media first. I love it when the idea allows me to be more hands on. It's a joy. I won't let that drive the story.

Mike Why don't you talk about the impact of Katrina on you and your art?

Dawn Before Katrina, I had more of a focus on issues in New Orleans lets say. I spent a lot of time on urban violence and trying to produce some work that could mediate that difficult crossroad and class issues. Not so much gender although I know its is an important issue. Right before Katrina I was doing a lot of digital quilt kind of if you think of a digital quilt but actually I was making very large life size tree portraits. You know doing different things. Right before Katrina, lets say the year before Katrina I was on the computer you know going blind working on these digital images. When Katrina hit I was unplugged right? No electricity, house flooded, no computer. Five members of my extended family lost their homes. We all ended up in coastal, in an area around Fairhope Alabama. I get a little barn to work in but no computer I'm not plugged in. New Orleans as we all know was very disfigured so was the Mississippi Gulf Coast. All of a sudden, I got this driving impulse to make art. The surroundings were so devastating that I think I turned to sculpture. I tried to rebuild some type of three-dimensional encasement. The works right after Katrina of course addressed the storm, the disaster at every level but they were hands on. Certainly three dimensional because you are rebuilding the world that was destroyed I would add that I also lost my studio first to flooding and then to fire. There was also kind of a wipe out. There was no sense of I don't have children so all of my little babies all the stuff that I've made over the years were gone. There was this impulse, a very strong one to make three d stuff. Then there was I think what just put it over the edge then recovering from Katrina you get the BP oil spill. I think that was there was no turning back for me at that point. All of the work addressed environment issues. I think the BP oil spill was even more difficult for me than the Katrina experience. First of all the enormity of the problem, the collective all of this stuff that was going on.

Mike It was never supposed to be able to happen. That wasn't even possible. They had this under control the petroleum company. Hand in hand one hand washed the other. It just blew everything up. All the happy talk went away.

Dawn But damn it, we are not naïve any longer. Our back yard or our front yard is under attack. I think we are no longer backwater Louisiana in spite of some of the stupid things we still do. I think we are really facing the future in a very unique way. We have an opportunity here to become not dropouts or followers but leaders. I think we should embrace that own that. I think it's an important role for Louisiana or coastal Louisiana to play…

In the trajectory certainly it was Katrina and then the BP oil spill. All of a sudden I just started realizing how fragile it all was and then paying attention to the canals that were dug and the salt water that was coming in and just the whole theater. Just the whole damn horrible theater. I just became passionate to work in anyway I could for the cause as an artist and also as a citizen.

Mike I hope to catch your show at Arthur Roger Gallery in November-December.

Dawn You've got a good chance to see a smoking man come out of a spaceship in Lonnie Holley.

Mike Thank you, Dawn.

The Dog at the End of the World

Robert Jewett

The highway ended at Pointe Ecloserie, alongside the Gulf. You could go straight into the parking lot of a marina, turn left along the beach to a pod of houses on stilts, or right into the industrial port that serviced the oil rigs. The jumbled mix of concrete and metal buildings, company signs, and chain link fences that way was less than attractive. *Heradamous*, Gramma Lola would call it, meaning "a junky mess of mismatched items." It was a word Ms. Mom and Mr. Ron liked and continued to use even after checking all possible spelling and variations only to realize it, too, was made-up. They turned the other way and drove down the beach by the houses that resembled an assembly of storks then pulled off next to a red and white striped tent. Mr. Ron let them out then headed back to the Heradamous Zone to see if he could catch up to the plug.

"Who do we see to help with the birds?" Ms. Mom asked inside the tent. A tall, tan woman in a sleeveless light blue denim shirt, khaki pants and boots with braided trim strode toward them. "You can't volunteer," she said in the brusque manner of a person used to being busy. "We have all the shore people we need. We need fewer birds with oil and a thousand boats to find them in the water."

"We came a long way," Ms. Mom said. "I brought my daughter."

"Heart-breaking work," the woman answered. "Not for kids…" her voice trailed off as she glanced at Monty for the first time.

She sized Monty up then looked hard in her eyes. Monty simply returned the look, calm, channeling the silent sage Bubba. Apparently telepathic, the woman looked to Bubba, formed an opinion and smiled coyly. She broke off the inspection and said to Ms. Mom, "I do have a job for you, now that I think about it." She took a hundred dollar bill out of her shirt pocket. "Mind running to the marina, bring lunch for the crew?"

"Our pleasure," Ms. Mom replied.

"We'd appreciate some company, too," She stuck out her right hand. "I'm Maddy."

"Gwen," said Ms. Mom.

The woman turned back to Monty, her hand out again, her smile broad and open this time. "Maddy, my dear."

"Pleased to meet you. Monty. Montgomery. Like the city. In Alabama."

For a moment Maddy looked surprised then processed and nodded as if the name made perfect sense. "I've been there. And this character is?"

"Bubba."

"Good King Bubba. I am honored. The President of the United States did a photo op here last week, but we have yet to have royalty until today."

Mr. Ron met them in line at the lunch counter of the rough-hewn marina, with an old plank floor and a sign that read NO SHELLFISH UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. In the viewfinder of his camera he showed them the photos he'd taken of the plug as it was loaded onto a supply boat by a crane. The crane operator perched in his cab high above, while the men below guided the plug to the deck using lines of black wire.

When they came out to the parking lot with the bags of food, three men were waiting by the SUV. Two were in uniforms that looked like police but bore the insignia of the

oil company. The third wore a Western shirt, sunglasses and a cowboy hat. “Let’s have a look at that camera, friend,” he said, with fake friendliness.

“Have we met?” Mr. Ron said.

“We could do this easy, or hard,” the man said. The guards stepped forward.

“Did I violate a law?”

“You were on private property, and you took unauthorized photographs of an item that doesn’t belong to you.”

The guards were now on either side of Mr. Ron.

Ms. Mom snatched the camera from his hand. “How about a group shot?” she said. “It’s a Red Letter Day the plug on its way to the rig, the beginning of the end of the disaster. Everybody gather in. Monty you hold up Bubba.”

No one moved. Ms. Mom raised the camera to her eye and aimed it at the man in the cowboy hat. He grinned icily as she clicked.

“We don’t mean to trouble you all,” he said. “Once we put this little mishap behind us, come down and I’ll show you around the company yard.”

Under the tent, Monty ate her ham and avocado sandwich, perfect with lemonade with cherries, and lost herself in Maddy’s story. She had come to the Gulf from a country in Africa, ruled by a President who had escaped from prison and armed young boys and girls hardly older than Monty to put himself in power. In a river delta oil spilled from ancient pipelines ate away the marshes and forest, while the sky turned black with burning oil, set by company men travelling with the ragtag army to eliminate the evidence. The acrid smoke made your eyes bleed if you stayed in it and even here beneath a tent in America the taste of soot hung on her palate. It was as if the world was a single calamity with mud and oil covering the land and filling the sea.

After lunch, a bird boat came in. The crew put on protective aprons and gloves and scrambled to meet it at the marina, then proceeded to offload bird after bird. Monty could see the heads and at times the beaks. They flapped their wings but the workers held them securely and loaded them in a van lined with cages.

They took the birds to a warehouse by the old fort on the bayou. It had become a bird cleaning center, a feather salon or spa of sorts, but far from comfortable. It was hot and noisy with ancient ceiling fans turning slowly high above and the birds shrieking, scared to death. Workers in white suits rubbed them with vegetable oil then soaped them with dishwashing liquid, using small brushes to clean each delicate feather. The birds were rinsed with a fine spray and dried under dog grooming dryers, then placed in warm pools where they continued to bathe and clean themselves.

They came in coated in black oil but as they were washed their true colors shone, white with orange legs and beaks, cream with back tufts on the head, a red egret looking alert, a pair of ducks waddling about inspecting the cleaning of the other birds as if perfectly at home. A large pure white bird emerged from the dryer with spiked feathers like a punk rocker and sauntered passed a pink lady with a bill shaped like a spoon. Brown and grey birds, some blonde on top, all with long beaks clumped below their heads like massive chins, lounged in and around a bathing pool. “Brown pelicans,” Maddy said, “The state bird. I am sure they are proud.”

Maddy had Monty put on a suit twice her size and loose rubber gloves so she could clean a bird. It was a loon, Maddy said, that did not belong. “He shouldn’t be here until winter, poor guy, but here he is.” While Maddy held the loon, Monty brushed him gently. The muck began to fall off, and a black and white pattern of squares, nearly a checkerboard, shone. He

regarded Monty with a large orange eye. She cleaned; he blinked then went on watching her. He did not stir or make a sound. A lost but pretty boy, Monty said in her mind. *Jeffrey*, she decided.

She worked each feather carefully, removing bit after bit of oil gunk. She could feel the pressure of the erupting oil at the base of her brain. She imagined it broken into droplets, zillions and zillions, far beyond her ability to calculate, every single one bent on attaching itself to a feather on a bird like this one. They could clean birds for years on end and it would never be done.

That afternoon they left Maddy and drove to a bay sheltered by willow and cypress where the fresh water marshes met the salt of the Gulf. An *estuary*, Mr. Ron called it, a cradle of life, with no sign of oil, yet. Birds streamed overhead; turtles sunned themselves on rocks then plunged into the water once the humans were close.

Monty lifted a flat rock by the water's edge to see what might be underneath. A crawfish began to scamper then stopped, regarding her, working his claws. She went to return the rock and leave him alone at home, but when she shifted her grip her right second finger at the rock's edge came down upon…a slimy slug.

"EEEW!" she said and nearly dropped the rock, but steadied herself and simply moved her hand to the bare surface. She set the rock down careful but quick.

"Look," Mr. Ron said, "Thirty feet out."

"Whoa," Ms. Mom clutched Monty.

Monty didn't see anything. Then, she did yellow eyes looming at the surface.

Alarm bells rang in Monty's head, WAAWAAAWAAAAA.

The eyelids gave him a sly look, as if he was amused. Or about to attack.

"We're on Mr. Gator's property now," Mr. Ron said. "But let me get a few more pictures." Zap, zap, zap.

Riding home, Monty brushed back Bubba's mane and twisted the hair at the end of his tail which was too short to braid. Perhaps the animals would rise up against the invader. She imagined a boat crewed by alligators, with a splendid captain in a blue jacket, laying a long net with magic holes that would not let the oil escape. Then pelicans would come and scoop up the trapped oil, first a pelican air force filling the sky, then a single enormous pelican, white, with rainbow colors at the tips of its wings.

The Great Pelican scooped up a track of oil then flew to shore and dumped it in a tank where it would never be seen again. A squadron of swordfish came and pushed the oil with their swords, and the alligators fired their cannon to mark the occasion as the Pelican circled the last traces of oil. He stood upright hovering in the air then unleashed a fantastic victory squawk.

With the shadows deepening and extending from the oaks, magnolias and palms, a man in a ball cap nearly finished trimming his lawn stopped to empty the grass catcher one last time. He watched the white SUV make the turn and come slowly up the street. It pulled into the driveway of the Unusual House, the cottage set in the midst of the faux mansions. He witnessed the father, the Tall Guy, open the hatch and pull out a cooler, while his wife forged ahead to the door. The Girl Who Was Growing Up Fast, emerged from the back seat, stretching; probably been asleep. She lifted her stuffed animal, a tiger he recalled, high in one hand. The end of a long Saturday of family fun, the neighbor man thought, nothing wrong under their sun.

Monty had heard the word many times, in stories about Gramma Lola on the picket line or Gramma Lola's mother Mrs. Margaret who made ammunition during World War II then in the evening baked pies for the hospitals and even the prison camps. In the distant but still

present past, her ancestors in the North and the South met not as future relatives but mortal enemies in Maryland, Merry-land of all places, where they fought desperately for a modest cornfield that didn't belong to any of them, shooting, killing, trampling the green stalks, gutting their own generation, out of a sense of Duty.

Now she felt the popping in her genes when Ms. Clarice of the Humane Society spoke of the abandoned dogs.

After the hurricane, pets that survived were pulled from the water or found wandering on the empty streets or amidst their ruined houses. Since the oil spill, people desperate for work were moving away, some leaving pets behind. The Humane Society had seen a sizable increase in drop-offs and strays and called for new owners in a better position, who loved dogs, to step forward and help.

"Open your hearts; open your homes," Ms. Clarice said, persuasively. "It's our humane and civic … *Duty*." She drew out the word and ended with a hard stop.

Yes, it was.

Getting Ms. Mom to see it, however, that was the challenge.

The frontal assault seldom worked on that cagey woman. The subject had been signaled. Now it had to permeate, slowly.

Home, they turned their attention to dinner. Monty grated the cheese from a pale white hunk, watching it fall in shavings into a bowl. Ms. Mom poured sauce into the pan and spaced the square noodles. Monty sprinkled on her cheese like fairy dust, and they started on the next layer. They worked in synchronization, each in turn, without a word. The utterance "dog" hung between them, like a charged surface that would shock them if touched.

With the lasagna in the oven, they started on the salad. Monty cut the cucumber and the peppers into perfect small pieces while Ms. Mom concocted her herb dressing, with the signature ingredient, secret unless she was asked, pecan oil.

Still looking down, nonchalant, Ms. Mom broke the silence.

"Aren't you worried about the dog eating Bubba? He is, after all, a *cat*."

That might have suckered a little kid, provided she (more likely, he) was gullible, but would not have worked on Monty at any age. "He is a toy," she stated the obvious fact; besides he was plenty tough, having been laundered many times with no serious ill effects, except for a thinned mane and slightly reduced fuzz that showed character.

Try again, Monty silently told her mother. Get all the diversions out now.

Ms. Mom placed the ice in their glasses. Tink, tink, tunk.

This time, the words came in a torrent from both at once

Ms. Mom: A dog is not something you enter into casually even with the best of intentions as it demands work, real work, and without you having any pet first, not a frog, not a box turtle; now I had rabbits and let me tell you their cage…

Monty: But I really want a dog, it is all I have ever wanted, I have asked for so little for a child, leaving even my birthday and Christmas gifts, largely, to your best judgment (and you have done well) but a dog is what I live for, it is all I see…

Ms. Mom: was a mess! Constantly! And did your grandmother warn me of this? No, she found great pleasure in watching me clean out those…pellets (cringe) and EACH and EVERY Saturday hose out that *sewer*, so if you think I'll have a dog with this new, *newer*, carpet…

Monty: I picture a dog, its exact face, size, and breed still unknown, but here with us, not only me but all of us, because you at some

point wanted a family and this is why I am here then Mr. Ron came and we have taken him as our own, but now…

Mr. Ron strode in, with his camera gear and tripod. He looked them over. They went quiet, sheepish.

Ms. Mom shrugged it off. "We are discussing, again, the dog," she said, falsely sunny, undoubtedly seeking confirmation for her limited, jaded view.

He smiled ever so slightly into the space between them, then nodded, up and down, up and down, his lips stretched in an exaggerated manner, as if demonstrating that he was thinking hard, really ruminating, but was about to bring forth a conclusion like a gift to the universe. "I would walk a dog," he said.

He frequently walked along the lake shore, lingering to photograph turtles and birds, including his favorite, a spindly blue heron he called Malcolm the Watcher.

Ms. Mom turned to him aghast. *Traitor*. "What if we wanted to go to France," she said. "Who would watch the dog then?"

"France?" he said, fingering a cherry tomato from the salad bowl, "Capitol idea! Bully for us! When do we leave?" He popped it in his mouth.

"It's not a laughing matter. You know I've always wanted to go abroad."

He nodded again, another hard thought. "We would board the dog."

"I see. Give our dog to *strangers*."

"That's one way to see it. Or, you could say that we'd be giving our dog to professionals who actually know how to care for dogs."

Monty pictured them in black berets, having just flown in from Paris. The dog would come bounding toward them, happy, drooly, after a wonderful 10 days at Poppy's Pet Ranch where it had been given the red bandana it now wore.

"I just don't know if she is ready, if we are ready to…" Ms. Mom sputtered.

There it was the break, the opening….

"It is no longer a matter of *personal preferences*," Monty said, "or our exact social situation." She tried to speak with authority, but her voice burst high and scratchy, as if she had little practice using it. She cleared her throat. "It is our *DUTY,"* this time the words cracked in the middle then leapt out too loud.

The adults looked at her, unusually attentive.

"*Our Duty*," smooth, confident, a nod.

She explained about the upsurge in stray dogs and the adoption crisis. The spill affected even the animals on shore that once were secure but now in danger.

"Good homes are needed," Monty said. She paused, waited, then

"I believe ours is the best."

Ms. Mom looked at her with a strange mix of bewilderment and pride. "You are so like your grandmother. It's disturbing."

"She's vaguely reminiscent of someone else as well," Mr. Ron added.

He pulled the lasagna out of the oven, closed his eyes and breathed in its aroma, "Mmmmmmm."

He regarded them with his broad knowing smile. "Now it's our *duty* to sit together like civilized people with the best of homes and enjoy."

At the Humane Society, each long cage was teeming with dogs, yapping, howling, barking sharply or standing silent, regarding them as they entered the paved courtyard. It was 10 am Saturday morning, and Ms. Mom and Mr. Ron had their coffee in travel mugs. On the way over, Ms. Mom had repeated that she was still, for the record, undecided. "It will have to be the right dog," she said, "one with some respect."

They were met by a grungy twenty-something with black-rimmed glasses from another era that made him look older than he was.

"If you are actually interested in adopting one of these animals, you'll have to fill out an *application*," he said as if she suspected they unfamiliar with the term. "We screen prospective owners very carefully."

"I don't blame you," Mr. Ron replied.

"Adoption is done on a trial basis. You are required to fulfill certain *obligations*, including securing the next round of *vaccinations*."

He looked at Monty over his glasses, like a severe judge. "Dog ownership is a serious responsibility." His eyes shifted to Bubba's head above her crossed arms.

"She's quite responsible," Ms. Mom intervened. "We all are."

Two rambunctious boys were tearing through the compound, peering into each cage, then running to the next, working the captives into spasms. A gaunt red dog like a coyote smacked into the end of a cage, fell on its hindquarters, and bounced up, wailing.

Everywhere, dogs. Brown dogs, black dogs, yellow dogs, tan dogs, dogs that looked like horses, scrawny piglets, or massive bulls.

As the adults and the shelter worker discussed the merits of a Husky in the hot heat, Monty began to stroll among the cages, contemplating. Which dog was right one? How would she know?

What about this yellow one sitting straight up, peering expectantly, or her larger friend with the wet pug nose and the deep woof, woof, woof who seemed friendly and safe, like a kind lady? Small dogs, big ones, brown eyes, blue eyes, nearly bald, shaggy, older dogs, young pups, barking, yipping, tails quivering, sniffing at her hands to plead for a scritch through the fence, responding with licks, warm tongue, Eeeww.

She fixed on a muddle of black, white and brown in the next pen down. Was that a piece of log? It blended into the shavings on the floor and the trunk of the tree behind the cage so that she could not discern its outline.

A dog, she saw as she approached, and gradually recognized its shape and pattern of subtle colors. The brown was closer to gold on the paws, chest, and neck, while the back was black spots on white, like a cow.

The dog pushed its front paws against the opening in the fence, reaching toward her. Then she saw something that caused her to inhale and hold it, as if releasing the breath would break the spell, letting the wonder before her vanish.

Above a pink tongue, long and dangly, and wet black nose, were the most marvelous eyes she had ever seen, brown on the edge then an inner ring of amber and in the middle a broken star, like a sunburst, only blue, a haunting color, deep and glowing, as if lit by an unseen source, from deep within a cavern.

The dog locked her strange eyes on Monty's and squeaked, an odd, rusty sound, then smiled slyly with her pointed teeth as if she had a secret.

"What are you thinking?" Monty stuck her fingers through the cage and stoked the dog's head. Its fur was soft, but also slightly coarse and wiry. This was a real dog, a living thing, not some museum piece or dog show pretty-prancer.

But oh, those eyes…

Mom… Mom! Monty called but her voice was stuck in her head. She made herself look away, drew a breath and tried again, "Mom! Mr. Ron. *Come see*."

Released in the play area the dog raced, feeling the rush of freedom. Mr. Ron found a stuffed rooster and ran back and forth, with the dog nipping at the toy. When he handed the

rooster over, the dog chewed it for a moment then flopped, tummy up, for him to rub. “She’s a girl,” he said, “And a real doll.”

He turned to Ms. Mom. “Call her over.”

Reluctantly, she squatted and rubbed her thumb against her fingers.

The dog came over, sniffed then lay down beside her, with her head along the ground, respectful. Ms. Mom began stroking. “Hello, sweetheart,” she said.

They watched her undergo a subtle transformation. She ran her hands down the length of the dog’s back, furrowing the fur. Then she looked up and smiled at Mr. Ron then Monty, a broad beaming smile. She looked like a young child, the worry that usually hung on her face replaced by sheer pleasure.

“I see you’ve found our Pearl.” Ms. Clarice, the Executive Director, had come up behind them. She was resplendent in a lavender suit and dangling rose gold jewelry.

Mr. Ron nodded, “She has a luster all right.” He strode up to Ms. Clarice, with his hand extended. Ms. Mom stood up, brushed herself off and came over too.

With the others basking in their collective sense of noble obligation, Monty regarded again the dog. Pearl was still laying on her side, waiting for attention, but as Monty approached her, she stood up. “Come on, Pearl,” Monty said and the dog obliged, joining Monty in a jaunt around the periphery of this contained parade ground, Monty keeping a brisk stride, while the dog stopped, sniffed at grass or a scrap of trash, trotted to catch up, then took up position at Monty’s side but a half step ahead.

“Gracious, it looks like you’ve trained her,” Ms. Clarice called over.

Monty bent over and rubbed the dog’s proud neck, feeling that softy rough fur. “Did she belong to people who lost their jobs?” she asked.

Ms. Clarice was silent a moment. “A man said he found her hanging around a filling station,” she said. “No identification, no one came to claim her. So many of the animals that come here, we don’t know their stories.”

Monty petted different colored parts of her, gold, white and black. The pattern was more complicated that she had first seen; the black spots contained some strands of white, the white was partly a soft grey, the gold held islands of black and brown. And so with the eyes yellow in the amber, pale green in the blue.

Ms. Clarice squatted next to her. “Do you recognize the breed?”

Monty found that she did, “Caca-hootchie.”

For half a moment, Ms. Clarice looked about to chuckle, then caught herself and turned serious. “Correct. Almost. A *Catahoula* hound,” she said pronouncing it carefully Cat-a-hooo-la, so Monty would hear. “But she’s small. And we believe her to be fully grown. There’s something else mixed in.”

Floppy ears, a cut off muzzle, a longing look in those eyes, “A Beagle?”

Ms. Clarice nodded. “May be.”

Monty stroked the dog’s back and side. She could feel the lungs rise and fall; warm breath hit her cheek and filled her nose with a scent that was musky but not overly unpleasant. Ms. Clarice placed her hand on top of Monty’s.

“Darling I know you’ve got a good head on your shoulders, and I suspect your heart is true. But now you’re talking about taking on the obligation of another life. She will look to you for care and protection, just as she gives you without question her loyalty and love. Are you ready? If you tell me you are, I’ll believe you, but you have got to be honest. We’re square with each other, aren’t we my friend?”

Ms. Clarice had her lips together, her

eyes narrowed above her reading glasses, her nose slightly scrunched. She meant business.

"Yes ma'am, we're square," Monty said and looked once more at Pearl.

Monty knew that all the creatures on earth were connected, a tree of many branches with a single thick trunk of living stuff, but now she felt the rugged pulse of life all through her. It was like a binding spirit that drew her to the dog, Ms. Clarice, the bird that sang a few feet away, and Ms. Mom and Mr. Ron who were strolling over hand-in-hand.

They were all part of a pattern, perfectly arranged, right now.

She let her mind quiet for a moment, closed her eyes and saw Pearl.

"I would love this dog," Monty said. "And do my best by her."

Ms. Clarice stood up. "That's all I needed to hear."

The dog's fur felt real and right, her body warm and rippled, and her eyes contained the universe. When you recognized her as the one you could never have foreseen but had always known from before you were born… then you knew:

This was the dog for you.

……

By the time they headed back to the shelter house to pack up, Pearl's pink skin was visible beneath sopping fur. She shook herself, water and sand flying, eyes aglow. Behind her the sun set huge and orange in a panorama of silver and burgundy clouds. Birds flew past and circled, as if on patrol.

"There he is," Mr. Ron said, nodding up the beach. On the pilings next to the pier perched Malcolm the Watcher, the blue heron Mr. Ron often photographed, standing at attention, his neck curved, but head pointed, his beak sharp as slate. He surveyed the water to the horizon.

Miles beyond lay the Gulf soul-wounded, drowned in black toxin and chemicals, it shimmered and stirred, pulsating with a deep determination known only by the truly ancient that rise from the bottom of the earth. Whether it would recover from the reckless acts of humans remained to be seen, but it was not about to surrender. It would persist until it could do so no longer.

Despite so much death, life endured.

At home, Ms. Mom recited one of her famous old sayings, "It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness," as she clicked on the lamp in the window. They sat on the patio and watched darkness fall, still and expectant. It was the type of night that made you believe the time of preparation was over, and a new and better life had just begun. Monty held Bubba on her lap and scratched Pearl's belly with her foot. Pearl reached over and held the foot with her paw.

"Doesn't the air feel rich, like vitamin soup?" Ms. Mom said. "Breathe deep." It was cool, tinged with water, and sweet with the bouquet of flowers.

Above the porch, beyond the trees, the pointed light of the stars entered Pearl's broken jewel eyes. Pale splinters in light shifting patterns displaced the pictures of loss and regret that had dwelled in even her dreams. In the scents that filtered through her, she found once again the trail of trust and felt it linger. The new people went on talking quiet and easy, comforting her with the murmurs of a long-awaited home.

The Watcher, Lake Pontchartrain. Source: Robert Jewett

Topic Scavenging: A Tool for Civic Engagement and Topic Selection in Environmental Communication Courses

Arrington Stoll and Christopher J. E. Anderson

Not everyone can become an enthralling orator like Winston Churchill; one who speaks confidently, in an informational or persuasive context, in front of large groups. It is possible, however, to teach students to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences through the fine art of speaking. Doing so requires that one recognize the importance of choosing an appropriate speech topic for a variety of audiences and purposes. Regardless of instruction, time spent in class discussing the notion of topic appropriateness, and supporting materials offered, instructors of communication classes are still familiar with that one, first question students ask "How can I find the right topic for a speech?"

In this paper we address an experiential learning activity using the four steps to the Experiential Learning Cycle. These are experience, reflection, expansion, and application (The REAL Entrepreneurship Curriculum Guide, 2002). Each of these steps are briefly considered in subsequent sections of the present paper. Overall, we argue that teaching public speaking courses primarily through lectures stultifies students' interest and learning potential. The alternative we present is a scavenger hunt that uses the latest technology platforms and puts students face-to-face with important topics that directly affect their community and the specific audiences to which they desire to speak.

Our teaching tool, the scavenger hunt, is an example of citizen science and it is focused upon the community in which students reside. Citizen science harnesses the power of public interest to assist environmental scientists. By having citizens monitor of environmental conditions, databases are created about the communities wherein they reside. Our teaching tool is an example of such community science in action.

The scavenger hunt sends students into their community using an enhanceable map created by the students with ArcGIS mapping and its analytics platform. Students are tasked with brainstorming potential environmental communication speaking topics and uncovering, through the use of their map, the applicability of the speaking topic and how it impacts their community. This experiential learning approach to creating speech topics links key issues in the environmental communication realm, introduces students to a data collection method through active observation within their community, and demonstrates the importance of choosing a topic that is directly relevant to their community and audience.

Learning Objectives

Students will

- learn how to effectively brainstorm and identify key environmental communication issues on their campus and in their community,

- understand the importance of identifying and narrowing down a broad environmental issue when developing a quality speech topic,
- recognize the connection of their local community to environmental and sustainability issues,
- recognize the impact of their environmental choices upon the communities wherein they reside, and
- compare information in a manner that helps them appreciate its relevance for their audience.

Rationale for Topic Scavenging

Students often find choosing a topic for papers or presentations to be a difficult and complex task. Precious time can be squandered attempting to find the perfect topic, a topic that fits within assignment parameters while yet maintaining the student's attention and interest. For this reason, students frequently succumb to the option of choosing a topic about which they are already knowledgeable as a way to reduce the potential workload rather than pick a novel topic for the advancement of their learning (Wrench, 2011). Uncertainty about topic choice often leads to procrastination, creating unwelcomed stress and leading to poor academic performance.

To avoid the issues inherent in topic selection, it is important for students to pursue a topic that will be novel, interesting to the intended audience, and which will keep the student engaged amidst the learning process. One effective way to engage students in the learning process is to encourage them to apply their learning inside of the classroom to real-world environments in which they function on a day-to-day basis. Moving students from the traditional classroom into the community allows them to learn about local tribulations and meaningful ways to take action in solving those problems (Mendel-Reyes, 1998). This creates a level of civic engagement, or "acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities" (Jacoby, 2009, p. 9) through involving learners a variety of real-world situations such as participating in community problem solving and learning from experts about the environment in order to develop informed opinions on social issues.

Scavenger hunts are a type of experiential learning. The use of such experiential activities in the classroom, including scavenger hunts, has now become a part of active learning research that has been used in a variety of educational contexts (Cairns, 1990; Salih, 2001). This type of classroom activity has become increasingly popular because it results in heightened student satisfaction, largely through transferring their college learning out of the classroom and into their everyday lives (Schaffer, 2001). Previous research has supported the use of scavenger hunt methodology for teaching (Douglas, 1990). In addition, scavenger hunts paired with discussion, brainstorming and projects are reported to have been successfully used in courses (Krishnan & Porter, 1998). Allowing students to take the development of classwork outside the classroom enables students to take the next evolutionary step in their learning by incorporating and applying what they learn through logical, innovative, and experiential work. These types of activities provide students with the opportunity to interact with each other and apply what they have previously learned in the course (Drake, Schoenbachler, and Gordon, 1996; Myers & Jones, 1993; Wright, Bitner, & Zeithaml, 1994).

Utilizing the concept of citizen science inside of the public speaking classroom is a useful way to integrate students, along with members of their campus and surrounding community, into the collection of data. Citizen science can additionally be used as a potential solution to the issue

of topic generation. Citizen science is used to describe projects that individuals who generally do not have training as scientists collect data (Bonney, Phillips, Enck, Shirk, & Trautmann, 2014). Citizen science allows anyone to assume a role in the process of scientific discovery by using creativity and technology. While there are different types of citizen science, this activity focuses on Community Science. Community science is a type of citizen science, and these projects have goals for environmental management (Bonney et al., 2014). The types of community science projects are endless. Previous projects have ranged from the Galaxy Zoo where individuals search satellite images for new galaxies (Galaxy Zoo, 2007) to the Foldit project where individuals play video games to fight diseases (Paradox, 2017). Integrating citizen science, and more specifically community science into the academic setting serves as a bridge between academic research and the community. It allows for the creation of an environment where students are more engaged, knowledgeable and ecologically literate.

One way to bring community science into the classroom in order to meaninginfully engage students in addressing real world issues is through the use of technological scavenger hunts. A scavenger hunt is "a game in which individuals or teams are sent out to accumulate, without purchasing, a series of common, outlandish, or humorous objects, the winner being the person or team returning first with all the items" (Dictionary.com, 2015). Often, the goal is to be the first team to complete the list, or the team that completes the list first. In this activity, the spirit of the scavenger hunt is maintained, but the competitive focus of the game is removed and the use of technology is integrated into "finding items" by creating a sharable map of what the students find in the environment. This will also allow students to generate topics through the use of valuable mapping and spatial analysis skills to see what topic is most applicable for a given audience based on their findings.

In today's society, the growing ownership of cellular phones, tablets, cameras, and laptops provide a number of ways to collect evidence of items from the scavenger hunt. A survey of 777 students at six colleges and universities found that more than 90% of students admit to using digital devices for non-class activities during class times (McCoy, 2013). This assignment provides students the chance to incorporate these items into their learning. Dahlstrom, Walker, and Dziuban, (2013) explain that students are "ready to use their mobile devices more for academics, and they look to institutions and instructors for opportunities and encouragement to do so" (p. 4). Adoption of digital devices into learning can be not only helpful, but also promote positive perception of the coursework.

Description of the Scavenging Activity

Environmental communication courses and/or assignments with strong allusions to environmental issues provide an ideal illustration of the potential usage of integrating community science in the form of a scavenger hunt as a topic generation device and then following the stages of the experiential learning cycle for reflection.

The first stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle is the *experience* of the activity. In the beginning, before explaining any directions, the instructor should discuss with their students the importance of choosing a good topic relevant to their audience. Some items to discuss may be (a) the importance of knowing who your audience is and how a good topic will be one that will peak the audiences interest; (b) understanding why the topic is important to your audience; (c) understanding how the topic will impact your audience; or (d) knowing the level of knowledge the audience has about a topic and presenting sound evidence to show the importance. Next,

the instructor should discuss the importance of choosing a topic that is not only relevant to the audience but also an issue that deeply interests the students.

In this activity, students are asked to brainstorm potential environmental communication presentation topics while thinking about their surrounding community, the applicability, and impact. Brainstorming should allow for students to generate topics that are new, possibly controversial, supported by information from outside sources, and ones that are interesting.

Within the scope of environmental communication, like many higher education subjects, this list can be quite broad. Instructors may choose to provide a list of potential topic ideas or preferably allow the students to broadly define the range of topics of their own accord. If providing topics, the instructor generates a list of potential topics relevant to the spirit of the course they are teaching. For instance, if the course has a community service component then a list of potential topics relating to environmental concerns might include, but not be limited to, the following novel recycling items such as cellular phones, issues with infrastructure and the environment such as deteriorating bridges and dams, indigenous animal habitat destruction, effects of climate change on local agriculture, issues triggered by severe weather, plastics, oil spills, wildfires, to recycling. Students are then given a compiled list of the environmental communication presentation topics and asked to find representations of the topics they are potentially interested in speaking about in and around their community by creating a creating an enhanceable map. In comparison to the traditional scavenger hunt, instead of collecting objects and returning them to the classroom, students will be using the ArcGIS mapping and analytics platform. First, students will make a sharable and enhanceable map of the area and then using the phone/tablet application Collector for ArcGIS, collecting data and recording what they find, given the brainstormed topics, in the environment. The goal is for students to find a topic of interest and one that applies to their community and speaking audience.

After generation of potential environmental communication public speaking topics students will prepare their "data" or potential topics in ArcGIS desktop.[1] Remember that students often need to be oriented to unfamiliar technologies and their uses (Judge & O'Bannon, 2008). Most students will be familiar with digital photography. However, students may be unfamiliar with the method of creating the map, therefore requiring the instructor to create instructions and be prepared to address technical issues.

To begin, students create a geodatabase in order to organize and store the information discovered prior to using the phone application. Once the map has been created, configured properly, customized, and shared for data collection, students can use the Collector for ArcGIS phone application to embark on a journey around their university or community to collect data.[2] The designated area should be choosen by the instructor pior to assigning the activity. Armed with their prepared maps and digital devices, students are instructed to travel around and create new locations on their map while attaching picutres for each location. For example, if a student was passionate about the topic of littering, the student would leave the walls of the classroom to explore the surrounding area while creating a littering map through the pictoral noting of areas on their map where litter was present. This allows the student to use the data they collect to

1 See creating maps using Collector for ArcGIS for more information on how to prepare the map https//doc.arcgis.com/en/collector/ios/create-maps/create-maps.htm

2 See collecting data in the Collector for ArcGIS phone application for more information https//doc.arcgis.com/en/collector/ios/collect-data/collect-tutorial.htm

represent the issue, apply it during speaking presentation, ensuring that the topic is applicable to the audience. As a bonus, the student walks away from the activity with an improved understanding of their local environment.

The second stage of the Experiential Learning Cycle is the *reflection* upon what has been learned from the activity. After gathering data, students return to their classroom to discuss their individual experiences, findings, and compare results. Students should investigate and discuss what they found and identify the specific issue within their community (i.e., more litter around high schools and middle schools than on the college campus leads to the topic of the presentation focusing upon importance of educating the youth on the dangers of littering). The instructor may choose to have the student additionally identify one issue in particular that they feel their community needs to have solved or allow the class to view and comment on the scavenger lists to help the student decide which is the most suitable issue to address.

Activity Debriefing

Previous research has found that the energy within the classroom can be seen through the discussion of the game, and these types of activities challenge students and help them advance their level of understanding (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011). Peer response to the scavenger maps is of great importance, regardless of the student's topics have been finalized. Using ArcGIS in the classroom can encourage critical thinking, promote awareness, introduce students to real-world technology platforms, and expand your curriculum away from the traditional stance. Therefore, debriefing needs to occur in order for the experiential learning activity to be successful (Bartley, Kupritz, & Powers, 2003). Debriefing will allow the students to reflect on what they learned previously and how the scavenger hunt relates to the course objectives. The key for the instructor is to demonstrate the relationship between the activity and the importance of choosing an appropriate topic for their audience.

As presented earlier, the four steps to the Experiential Learning Cycle are experience, reflection, expansion, and application. The environmental communication scavenger hunt experience and the classroom discussion of findings complete the first two steps of *experience* and *reflection*. The *expansion* step occurs when students have had a chance to reflect on the observations and findings made about each other and looking at the group as a whole. In this case, the students are working through each other's findings to see what topics have the greatest impact in their community and their audience. Questions to prompt their thinking and prepare for conversation could include

1. What did you notice about each other's topics?
2. Did anything surprise you about someone's findings? What?
3. What did you learn about another classmate's topic during discussion?
4. What classmates' topics do you have the greatest interest in hearing about during a speech?
5. How do the findings affect you as students and members of the community?

The instructors goal is to get students making thoughtful observations about the overall experience and findings. This is important because it will provide students the opportunity to notice similarities and differences between their findings and those of fellow classmates. It will also encourage reflection on the importance of choosing a topic that is not only interesting but applicable to their audience. Tips for instructors facilitating this process are always ask

open-ended questions, provide students with validation but not judgement, encourage honest observations and discussion, and encourage expansion beyond discussion contributions of classmates.

The final step in the debriefing portion of our scavenger hunt teaching activity is *application*. In this stage the students are thinking about how they can use their findings in a speech and apply it to their audience. They are learning what they can actually do with their findings to support their topic. Potential discussion questions to aid in this last step of discussion include

1. How has your original thinking of the impact of your topic on the community changed since you gathered your findings?
2. Given your topic, what will the specific goal of your speech be?
3. How can you take what you learned today about your topic and apply it back to your audience in order to emphasize the importance and purpose of your speech?
4. How will you effectively communicate with your audience the impact of your topic?

Appraisal of the Scavenging Activity

Students have reported enjoying the scavenger-hunt activity. Identifying real life issues within their community that are often taken for granted or overlooked is eye-opening for students and it provides an excellent opportunity to encourage students to choose topics that are of importance and can provide their audience something to think about and learn. Several students have reported that they enjoyed learning about environmental issues and how they can adequately and thoroughly use their own findings as well as outside sources when speaking in formal contexts. Students have also expressed their newfound awareness of environmental issues they normally wouldn't have considered as a problem within their community. While based on the type of institution, adaptions and additions to this activity can be made.

This activity can be completed through a variety of instructional lenses. The assignment description provided allows for physical and online courses. In the physical course the instructor may choose to relinquish online posting in lieu of oral discussions with the use of a desktop presentation program such as PowerPoint, Keynote, or Prezi. Group work is possible in either scenario so long as guidelines and expectations are clearly articulated to ensure that each student contributes to the project. Based on time, students may also use Blackboard, Canvas, or the class website to display the findings. However, if the class is face-to-face the greatest impact will occur by applying the public speaking component of discussion in the classroom and if it may serve the class all findings are available after online.

It is also important to take into consideration students with disabilities because this activity requires students to walk around their community, campus, or the designated area by the instructor. Remind the students that this scavenger hunt isn't a race, they can walk around together or individually and aid each other along the way.

Finally, do not overlook the civic component of this assignment regardless of whether or not there is an overt instructive component included pointing to this matter. Fresh out of secondary education and often having moved to a new region for higher education, students can be unfamiliar with the needs of their community. This assignment helps students explore and learn about community issues in a way that encourages them to take a more civically engaging approach to education. Instructors may find value assigning a small section on civic issues or

require a brief reflection paper after the completion of the assignment.

This activity brings the components of audience analysis and topic generation combined with environmental issues to the forefront of students' minds. Students will become aware that explaining information alone and not demonstrating its applicability to their audience is insufficient for motivating environmentally responsible behavior. Through this activity, students will be more aware of their surrounds and understand the environmental, practical, and ethical implications impacting their community. Most importantly, the public speaking concepts will become more concrete rather than intimidating because learning is taking place with practical application.

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Grand Isle, Louisiana. Source Shutterstock

In Memoriam Ezra Boyd

Amy Thompson

Dr. Ezra Clay-Kelly Boyd PhD, or Ez, as most knew him, was a true New Orleans native. He loved his home city, but his heart could be found with the wetlands, marshes swamps and estuaries all around New Orleans that protects it from harm. In his final years, Dr. Boyd worked as a Hazard Geographer and was the visionary behind DisasterMap.net whom was a contracted contributor to The Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation's effort to Save Our Coast. Losing his heart was unimaginable, and so he fought to save her until July 2nd, his dying day.

It was hard to tell upon meeting him that Ezra was, in fact, from New Orleans. But just underneath the surface was all the spice that came from him being birthed on the West Bank, going to elementary school in the French Quarter, living in the Marigny until he moved to the Northshore as a teenager. He never missed a Super Sunday and participated in every single Mardi Gras Parade and Jazz Fest. Perhaps it was his years in Illinois that rid him of his N'awlins accent, but then again, I had never spoken to him before he obtained his B.S. in Astrophysics from the University of Chicago (1999), M.A in Political Science from University of New Orleans (2003), and a Ph.D. in Hazard Geography from Louisiana State University (2011). I had the pleasure of meeting him a fully formed man, devoted conviction to saving his neighbors and the land they shared. His educational accomplishments came together in creating in him, a perfect storm of capability and knowledge that allowed him to fulfill what was to be his entire life's work.

Although it seem to some that he merely meandered through the course of his education, I believe destiny, not only Ezra's own desires, led him to return home from Illinois to continue my education and helped me to raise my children while working and earning a degree of my own while rebuilding a home in the Katrina ravaged neighborhood of Gentilly where we lived together for 7 years. In short, I had the honor of watching him for eleven years help his beloved city heal from damage that the rape of its protective wetlands by the oilfield. He also nursed the wounds that the Corp of Engineers made on New Orleans in their manmade effort to protect their own interest from nature.

In life, Ezra gave much to many...but the truest most valuable gift that he gave me was that, through his actions, he taught me and others to love the bayou that birthed us. It is this love of our homeplaces that will truly save us all.

Image from CNN Interview with Ezra Boyd

Contributors

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Dawn DeDeaux pioneered video and electronic art in Louisiana, combining visual and audial forms for cultural expression and critique. Her work includes immersive multimedia installations that use multiple screens or combine architecture, images, and performance, on subjects related to disaster culture and events such as Katrina and the BP Oil Spill.

Kevin Michael DeLuca is professor of Communication at the University of Utah. His research and teaching interests include environmental studies and Asian studies.

Julie Dermansky is a multimedia reporter and artiste covering social justice and climate change. She is based in New Orleans.

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Stephanie Houston Grey is an associate professor of Communication Studies at Louisiana State University. Her research and teaching interests include science and environmental communication.

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Anthony Francis Ramstetter, Jr. is a poet who resides in Oxford, Ohio.

Mike Stagg hosts Where the Alligators Roam and is a political consultant.

Arrington Stoll holds a PhD. and teaches at Central Washington University in the Communication department. She studies interpersonal communication and relationships within the community.

Amy Thompson was the partner of deceased Ezra Boyd.