

The Faces and Voices of Truth



*Speeches and Letters
on Environmental Justice*

Introduction
Imagine our ancestors looking out at the place where they put in hard labor from the sound of the railroad tracks to the toxic waters of the Mighty Mississippi River. Would they be pleased that the air, water, and soil has been contaminated and pollution is the norm of the day? Would they be pleased that the number of loved ones who have died living in close proximity to industry emitting harmful carcinogenic chemicals and particulate matter (PM2.5)? Would they be pleased with the "New Plantation," especially since industry has desecrated their gravesites?

Introduction

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As we traveled to Washington D.C. and surrounding areas of Louisiana, we had a bird's eye view of systemic racism, police brutality, neighborhoods impoverished by the surrounding chemical plants, voter suppression, legislation passed to take away our protesting and voting rights, and Land Use Plans allowing no safety for residents.

Desperate for an answer to all the injustices that we have faced and seen, we cried out to God as the Psalmist in Psalm 43:3: "Lord send out your lights and your truth; let them guide us." What choice did we have, after all? We were born into this fight, born within census tracts 404 and 405. We are just three Vessels being used to identify with God's Cloud of Witnesses. We have been holding our breaths for a long time, and we are ready to exhale.

In this booklet you will find our collection of speeches and letters to the editor. We write in the name of Truth, and we encourage you too as well.

Myrtle Fells

Gair F. LeBouef

Barbara Washington

In 2018, Wanhua Chemical applied to build a \$1.2 billion plastics plant in Convent, LA. Hundreds of residents petitioned against the plant, and after a year of organizing their communities and raising awareness through letters like this one, residents successfully stopped the plant.

Wanhua: We Can't Take Another Plant

By Myrtle Felton

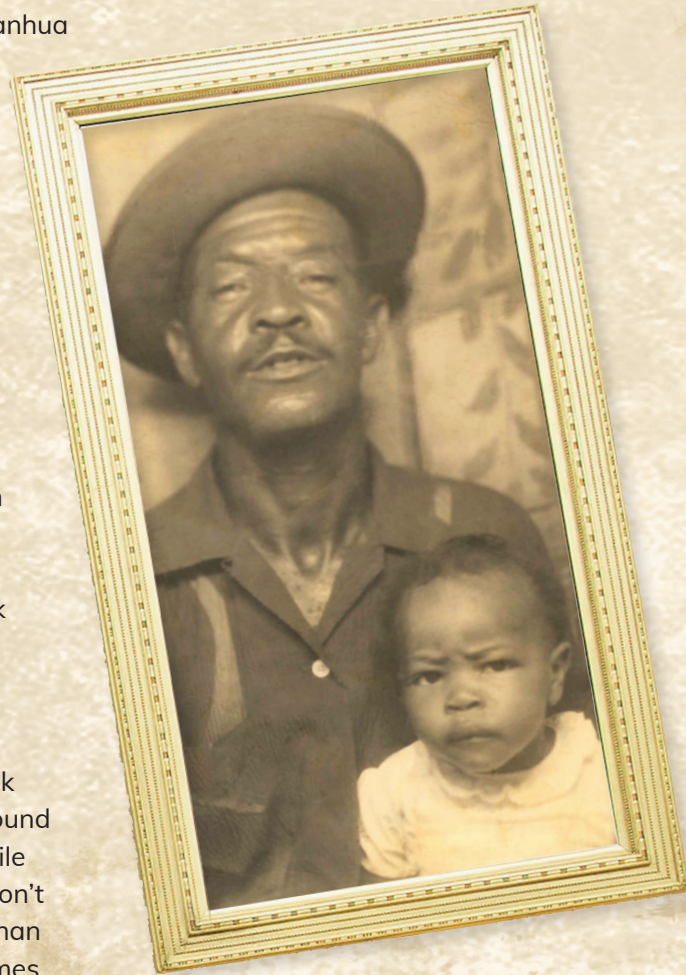
Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, July 11th, 2019

Just a mile from my house, the Chinese company Wanhua is planning to build a MDI plant. But we do not need another chemical plant in this area. We have experienced too many cancer deaths in our families, and they leave our communities devastated. According to Wanhua's Air Permit Application, its St. James plant would release 1,700 pounds of phosgene into the air. At a DuPont plant, a worker died after being exposed to just two pounds of phosgene. How are we supposed to live?

China will not look out for our best interest because they don't even look out for their own people. At a Wanhua MDI plant in China, four workers died in an explosion in 2016 due to "management issues." If they're killing their own, why would they care about us? Wanhua may talk about jobs, but they don't talk about deaths. You can't work if you're dead.

I and many 4th and 5th District residents are surrounded by enough chemical plants. I have two plants already—one in my front door, one in my back door. Wanhua wants to poison the communities around its plant and drive down our property values, all while calling itself a good neighbor. But good neighbors don't kill each other. We can't handle another plant less than a mile from our homes. When will the lives of St. James Parish residents matter more than chemical plants?

Myrtle Felton



Our Health Is Our Wealth: Wanhua Must Go

By Barbara Washington

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, August 22nd, 2019



Wanhua would be the 25th industrial plant in St. James Parish. Though the planning commission approved Wanhua's land use permit, the parish council sent it back to the planning commission in light of Wanhua's Free Trade Zone application, its connection to the Chinese government, and the fact that nearby residents would have no buffer zone.

Hundreds of residents north and south of the proposed Wanhua site live within a one mile radius. Also within that radius is a church and a cemetery that dates back to 1885. Residents living near the existing plants are already sick, suffering, and dying from cancer, respiratory problems, and chronic illnesses, which is why we collected 487 signatures from our immediate area petitioning against Wanhua and other proposed plants.

Wanhua MDI, like all the other chemical plants surrounding our homes, will have no problem polluting the air, water, and land that is the life of our agricultural crops for our community and beyond. Mosaic, for example, which is less than two miles away from the proposed Wanhua site, intended to spray radioactive waste water into our air. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) rejected their request, thank God to Tulane Environmental Law Clinic (TELC), which represents residents in the area. TELC submitted comments to LDEQ about the fan proposal and posed questions about what the group saw as unexpected discrepancies in Mosaic's air modeling.

The United States is in a trade war with China. Whatever business we are doing with Wanhua will be business with communist China, whose citizens are currently holding massive protests against human rights violations. Why should we trust Wanhua to care about our communities?

Though our parish is rich in industry, from the Sunshine Bridge to the Veterans Memorial Bridge, we can't buy a pair of shoes. Fourth District residents cannot endure any more toxic chemical pollution. Our health is our wealth, and we refuse to be poisoned by any more plants.

Barbara Washington

The 2014 Land Use Plan is Permitting the Destruction of Our Communities

By Gail LeBoeuf

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, September 12th, 2019



Our parish government had a do over for Wanhua – or was it just buying time? Whichever, it still remains that our St. James Parish 2014 Land Use Plan is a permit to usher the oil and gas industry into St. James Parish at our own peril.

Wanhua showed us a lot. Not only did Wanhua's Foreign Trade Zone request come into question, but so did our parish's vetting process. These domestic and foreign conglomerate companies are owned by billionaires, and their representatives are total strangers to us. They learn our federal, state, and local laws, and our elected officials let them get out of paying their fair share by any means possible.

A moratorium on industry is imperative in St. James Parish. Our elected officials must stop voting in new oil, gas, and petrochemical plants until the 2014 Land Use Plan can be remodeled to allow for a proper, more stringent vetting process that does not overburden and disenfranchise the 4th and 5th Districts.

Through our democratic process, we can vote officials in and out of office and change laws the same way. Our past elected officials secretly rezoned the 4th and 5th Districts from "residential" to "residential/future industrial," essentially trying to wipe our communities off the map and replace our homes with chemical plants. But we have the power to vote in candidates who will reverse the 2014 Land Use Plan so that all St. James Parish residents are protected.

For over fifty years, St. James Parish has allowed oil and gas companies to create jobs for us and our sisters and brothers throughout the state. But in 2019, it's undeniable that this has come at a high price to our health and our communities. Many residents live near chemical plants with zero buffer zones, allowing plants to pollute our air, water, and soil with deadly carcinogens. It has also caused our property values to plummet.



Home Rule Charter allows elected officials to collect revenues from the billionaires who do not reside here and federal aid from the U.S. government; then they share the wealth with next to nothing going to the 4th and 5th Districts.

We need to stop polluting mother nature and congesting our beautiful, beloved St. James Parish. If we want our parish to grow and thrive, we must elect officials who will return the 4th and 5th Districts to residential zones.

Gail T. LeBoeuf



We Will Not Bow Down

Response to Greg Bowser, president of the Louisiana Chemical Association

By Gail LeBoeuf

**Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, November 7th, 2019**

In response to Greg Bowser's letter published on October 3rd, 2019: This is the only time I will address you, Greg Bowser, or anyone in this manner. All 23,000 residents of St. James Parish deserve equal representation under the St. James Parish Land Use Plan. To deny the 4th and 5th Districts clean air, clean water, and clean soil is to deny them the American dream you so devoutly believe in. If you want to understand the real St. James Parish, you can contact me directly and come see for yourself.

You claim, Mr. Bowser, that "no parish in Louisiana vets a proposed chemical project more extensively than St. James Parish." Yet, based on 2019 EPA data, there are seven polluting plants within three miles of Wanhua Chemical's proposed site. These facilities release approximately 14 million pounds of toxic air pollutants every year in census tract 404, which is 64 percent Black with a veteran population of 8 percent. For these reasons, 487 residents signed a petition against Wanhua and other petrochemical plants trying to move into St. James Parish.

Many of my friends and family live less than two miles from these toxic, climate-changing plants, yet I would not wish one of these plants to exist within two miles of where you – president of Louisiana's Chemical Association – and your neighbors live and breathe.



The Mississippi River is 2,348 miles long, and 22 miles are home to St. James Parish. Most future sites listed by the Port of South Louisiana will be within a 10-mile radius of the already polluted 4th and 5th Districts along the Mississippi.

History teaches that President Abraham Lincoln heroically came down south to free enslaved people, but few people comment on the commercial significance of the Mississippi River to northern interests. Businessmen in Lincoln's party wanted to protect the Mississippi River for their domestic and international imports and exports. In St. James Parish, plantations have become petrochemical plants. And businessmen have been lobbying elected officials and unelected policymakers for decades to allow their bottom lines to take precedence over people's lives, property, and livelihoods.

Under Louisiana's current Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP), these plants don't have to pay 80 percent of their property taxes for 10 years. Maybe that made sense when incoming plants typically brought 300 or so well-paid jobs with good benefits. Now, massive plants provide 100 or fewer jobs, often without retirement packages. And many of these workers are contractors. If the Louisiana at-will law, the right to work (for less money), or minimum wage freeze is utilized, many contract workers will be left to choose bread and butter expenses over health care expenses, assuming Medicaid isn't abolished.

For our community to survive and even thrive, we need a diversity of small and large businesses in our beautiful St. James Parish. The countless dialysis and walk-in clinics that have opened in recent years to address our health issues are appreciated. But we'd also appreciate clothing and shoe stores.

Greg Bowser, I pray the best for you and yours. Nonetheless, though petrochemical plants are overrunning my home, I will not bow down. As in the song "Oh Freedom," "Before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free."

Sair F. LeBour



St. James Residents Deserve Cleaner Air

By Barbara Washington

Published in The Advocate
on Thursday, November 28th, 2019

Last month, I marched from New Orleans to Baton Rouge with CADA, Coalition Against Death Alley, in protest of environmental injustice in communities surrounded by petrochemical plants and toxic industry.

I met and listened to residents in Gordon Plaza and Gert Town whose homes are built on a toxic landfill and radioactive material. I went to Reserve, where 411 students at 5th Ward Elementary are exposed to cancer-causing chloroprene emissions. I visited the graveyard of Plaquemines residents whose loved ones' graves are surrounded by Dow Chemical. Residents from Mossville in Lake Charles joined the march to tell their story of how their community has been decimated by the Sasol petrochemical plant. And as I listened to all these stories, I realized that we all had a common denominator: injustice.



I live in St. James Parish on the East Bank of the Mississippi River in Convent. My home is half a mile from Nucor Steel, 1.7 miles from Zen-Noh Grain Corporation, 1.9 miles from Convent Marine Terminal, 2 miles from Occidental Chemical, 2.5 miles from Millennium Galvanizing, 2.9 miles from Mosaic Fertilizer, and 3 miles from Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. and Motiva Refinery. All of these plants collectively contribute to toxic air pollution that we are forced to breathe daily.

We in St. James Parish have some of the highest rates of cancer risk in the United States. I have witnessed the deaths of so many loved ones, and too many of my friends have cancer and chronic respiratory problems. Industry and pollution never sleep where I live. We hear noise from the train tracks and barges in the Mississippi River. We smell terrible odors.



As we organize to stop more plants from moving next to our homes, we hope to awaken the consciousness of our younger generations. It is their future we are fighting for, and we need their help. Together we can paint a beautiful future instead of leaving an ugly scar.

On the last day of our two-week march, Pastor Gregory Manning of Justice and Beyond was arrested. I applaud Pastor Manning because he stood up against the injustices that we all face in Cancer Alley. We need more pastors like him to speak out. The biblical verse 1 Peter 3:12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." More people are joining us every day to rise up and speak out for our right to clean air, clean water, and clean soil. I truly believe that "the will of God will not take you where the grace of God will not protect you." We will not be silenced.

Barbara Washington

Calling for a Moratorium

Letter to the St. James Parish Council

By Gail LeBoeuf and Sharon Lavigne

September 13th, 2019

Re: Request for Item to be Placed on Council Agenda: A Moratorium

Dear Councilman Cooper and Councilman Patin:

Pursuant to Sec. 2-38 of the St. James Code of Ordinances, as fellow residents and constituents from the Fourth and Fifth Districts, we are writing to request that you place the urgent matter described below on the agenda for the Parish Council's next regular meeting on September 18, 2019.

The Topic: A moratorium on consideration of new land use applications, as well as variances, for all new and existing petrochemical facilities and infrastructure, including pipelines, by the Planning Commission and Parish Council.

The reasons for this request are many. We and many others have repeatedly made this Council aware of the harmful and discriminatory impacts of its land use decisions each time a new facility is considered and approved,



or each time an existing facility is allowed to expand its operations. We have consistently highlighted the many burdens and harms these facilities place on our communities.

We have observed that the only examples in recent history of facilities that have been rejected by the Parish government were those that were proposed for sites that are in communities that are majority white. To be clear, we are glad those facilities were rejected because we don't think any community should be saddled and burdened with these toxic industries. But it is painful to see a land use map that so clearly signals the disregard of our lives and communities – one that assumes that neither we, nor our children or grandchildren, will be on this land in the not-too-distant future, clearing the way for more industry, more pollution, and more harm. It is painful to see and experience this different treatment and have to voice these things at every meeting of the Council and Planning Commission only to have our concerns fall on deaf ears.

We note that while our communities experience the most direct effects, other communities are also affected by the multiple impacts of these facilities on the land, air, and water around us, on our coast, and even our climate. So, we urge this not only for our communities but for all who are impacted by both the immediate and further-reaching effects of these decisions.

We reiterate a few key reasons for this moratorium – and why it should be on the Council's agenda and immediately put into effect:

Our Health and Our Lives. We all know we live in the heart of what has long been known around the world as “Cancer Alley.” True to the name, we have watched our friends and people in our families and communities suffer from and too often succumb to cancer and other illnesses at alarming rates. Illnesses that are associated with the pollution emitted from the facilities that surround us. We have made the council aware of this. Scientists and environmental experts, lawyers, and advocates have made the Council aware of this. Repeatedly and to no avail. This is immoral.

Our Homes and Our Histories. The Council has also been made aware, as if it weren't already, that the Fourth and Fifth districts have borne the painful brunt of these land use and development plans. It is no secret that our districts are majority Black districts – overwhelmingly so with African Americans comprising 64% and 90% of the populations in our districts



respectively. Many of us are descended from people who were enslaved on the plantations that operated in this area, which are more protected by this Parish's land use plans than we are. Many of us were born during the era of Jim Crow. Many of us are privileged to own land that was hard-earned by our ancestors and passed down to us. It has deep meaning for our families. Many of us want to stay here and raise children and grandchildren and pass this land on to them. Because of the placement of these facilities in and near our communities and homes, our land has depreciated in value, in addition to being harmed by the pollution emitted from these facilities, and often unsafe for our children and grandchildren.



Our State Is in Crisis. Louisiana is still losing coastline at alarming rates. Even the State has had to acknowledge that oil and gas infrastructure has contributed to that land loss. St. James Parish is also at a risk of land loss and increased flooding threats, in addition to contributing to the future threats to environmental, coastal and climate crises by allowing more facilities to take what is left and pump millions more pounds of toxic substances into our air, land, and water.

The industry has dictated the agenda for the State for so long and still has many believing that we cannot live without it. Yet, at the same time, while these industries were being touted as good for us and necessary for our economy, Louisiana has consistently ranked at the bottom in education, economy, health, and of course, the environment. The fact is we can no longer live with it. And we are living in a time where there are healthier, life-saving alternatives.

Our communities deserve more than this. Our Parish deserves more than this. We know we can do better. But we must call an urgent time-out and take stock of the path we are on to look for creative, healthy, equitable, just, and sustainable ways to live into our futures.

Sincerely,
Gail T. LeBoeuf
Sharon Lavigne

The End Result is Death

Speech by Myrtle Felton

South Louisiana Permit Hearing
Thursday, November 19th, 2020



“ I've been a resident of St. James Parish all my life. I didn't prepare a paper for saying here tonight, but I said I wasn't coming. I got to watching television, and something said, “Get up. You have to go.” I was scared to be here, because of the Covid crisis, but then I was also afraid not to be here and not be able to let you all know just how I feel, and it's coming from my heart.

We do not need any more plants in this area. We are suffering enough. We have suffered enough. We don't need anymore. I always ask myself the question, “Do I need this, or do I want this?” The plants we do not need, nor do we want anymore because they are very harmful to human beings. And people come and people go, and they say all kinds of things, but the end result is death. It is a death sentence for me. All that Black neighborhoods get from a plant is death.

The money doesn't matter because the Black communities don't get the jobs anyway. You might get two or three who get a job, but the whole community is affected. What affects the 4th District affects the 5th District. What affects the 5th District affects the 4th District. Because pollution travels—it doesn't stay in one place. And I'm here tonight to say we don't need anymore. ”



Rise Against Amendment 5

By Gail LeBoeuf

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, October 8th, 2020

Elections do have consequences, and Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 is not just about electing a president of the United States of America. Louisiana's Amendment 5 of the seven amendments on the ballot could have dire effects on property tax paying citizens. This amendment allows companies, especially oil, gas, and chemical companies, to negotiate with local entities for a permanent resolution on property taxes. Apparently, the current Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP)—which gives industry an 80% property tax exemption for ten years— isn't lucrative enough.

This attempt at permanent Corporate Welfare is a testament to the audacity and greed of the wealthy and powerful among us. Our New Orleans neighbors are experiencing incumbent property tax. In Cameron, Louisiana, residents were hit hard by Hurricane Laura, and rightly need the meager 20% of Cameron LNG's property taxes. YET, during the past session while the rest of Louisiana was dealing with the pandemic, Cameron LNG worked with legislators to put Amendment 5 on the ballot.

St. John the Baptist and St. James Parish have been exercising their rights since the 80-20 ITEP amendment (the 80% property tax exemption for industry). However, the St. James Parish government has realized their right to deny is not so cut and dry. St. James Parish has a special election on December 5, 2020 for three millage renewals; the St. James Parish School Board is seeking approval to borrow money to carry them through the 2020-2021 school year.



Should not our schools, hospitals, and senior and children programs benefit from the revenue St. James Parish is not receiving from industry property taxes? We have businesses that keep getting massive exemptions, and one stands out especially: Nucor, with a 30-year property tax exemption—five more years than the 25 years normally allotted.

There's 382 million people in the United States, and 1% of the population has 35% of the wealth, while the bottom 80% own 14%. This extreme wealth inequality has created the Rich Class and the Poor Class. Louisiana oil and gas resources account for a large amount of the wealth in this country, yet we're last in everything: 51st in education, 49th in health, 47th in high school graduates, 48th in child poverty, 45th in violent crime.

A coalition all across America and abroad is marching for true equality and justice. Louisiana Amendment 5 doesn't just have the potential to disenfranchise some of us, but all of us. We the people will no longer be the silent, expendable, and excluded.

Sail F. LeBouef

Slap in the Face

Speech by Myrtle Felton

March Against Death Alley
Monday, June 3rd, 2019



“ I have two plants—one in my front door, one in my back door—and St. James Parish 4th District is the only place I've ever lived in my life. And it's like a slap in the face from our politicians to come in and just let all these plants come in and take our lives. I have watched too many of my relatives die from cancer. I don't know who has ever been in the position to have to watch their relatives die. It is not a good feeling. And yesterday in Plaquemines, what I saw, I don't think I would survive if I had to ask to go to visit my husband's grave, which is right next to those two plants. I don't know how I would survive it. And I hope it never happens. I pray it never happens. And I want to live as long as God says I have to live, not be diagnosed with some disease that God knows who would be able to cure me with. ”



Formosa: Business As Usual

By Gail LeBoeuf

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, May 21st, 2020

In response to the letter that Janile Parks, Formosa Plastics spokesperson, published in the April 30th newspaper:

We love all 22,000 residents and appreciate every one of our 258 square miles in St. James Parish. We all stand together and deeply thank our essential workers. Most of us live 1.2 miles to five miles from an industrial plant. We certainly do not need Formosa Plastics – which would double toxic air pollution in our parish – or South Louisiana Methanol, which has postponed construction indefinitely. We certainly do not need more climate change, pollution, and particulate matter (PM2.5) that has caused the coronavirus to be more lethal than average for frontline communities (as documented by the Harvard School of Public Health's recent study).



Recent newspaper articles and news programs have reported on Covid-19 and on the U.S. Congress's response to the financial crisis caused by this pandemic. The first allocation of one trillion dollars included qualifications for both large and small business loans. There are 20 million small businesses, yet only 1.2 million received forgivable loans. To add insult to injury, mixed messaging from the White House seemed to be urging governors to reopen their states while ignoring their scientific model and the supply shortages needed by essential workers. In the midst of this crisis, Formosa Plastics began construction on Highway 18 in spite of St. James Parish's no digging ordinance. This is "business as usual."

Formosa Plastics claims that it will increase economic development, but it has already taken over a billion dollars in incentives from the state. Economic development is needed, yes, but it could and should be implemented by our local government, and in ways that will not continue to harm us and kill us. Let's not forget the St. James Parish Land Use Plan; this is a "Plan Without People," or a plan to wipe out people. It was clearly derived without all the people in mind given most of the plant locations are in

the 4th District Convent and 5th District Welcome. It is a plan that divides the people and provides them with a false sense of security, though we are frontline residents.

Formosa Plastics has received \$1.5 billion in tax breaks from the Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP). Residents of St. James Parish can only imagine our government receiving a billion dollars in direct tax revenue that could have helped put at ease the PPE rationing of our local hospital and bought us more than two ventilators when the pandemic began. Also, help could have been extended to our children after the St. James Parish School Board announced suspension of the lunch program due to a teacher testing positive for Covid-19. Plants like Formosa Plastics supposedly generate billions of dollars a year, but do we ever see it?

Ms. Parks says Formosa Plastics invites truth. Here is some truth: Formosa Plastics is not a nice neighbor. Formosa is not allowed to build in Taiwan, its home country, because it pollutes so much. In Texas, Formosa was ruled a "serial offender" for polluting wetlands and bays and settled to pay \$50 million in damages. Now, here in St. James, the company blocked Highway 18 for two days during a pandemic and won't allow us to visit the gravesites of our ancestors located on its property. Formosa Plastics has disrespected our Parish President and Council Members, our Sheriff, and the citizens of St. James Parish.



We extend thanks to the essential workers all around the world. The coronavirus has changed the world forever and has shown us that we cannot go back to "business as usual."

Sair F. LeBouef

Built America and Never Got Paid

Speech by Gail LeBoeuf

St. James Parish Council Meeting
Wednesday, July 8th, 2020



“ Good evening. I am Gail LeBoeuf speaking on behalf of St. James Parish residents and others.

We are here to ask the St. James Parish Government to amend its Land Use Plan with a resolution to include all known, potential, and forgotten slave gravesites throughout St. James Parish's 528 square miles.

It is now known that Formosa Plastics knew about our enslaved ancestors' gravesites when they applied for their permits. A recent statement by Janile Parks, the spokesperson for Formosa, told a local media outlet that it is Formosa's land. This is in reference to denying residents of St. James Parish access to the slave graves. Janile Parks went on to insinuate that Formosa had legally complied with all laws of the U.S. government and the state of Louisiana, but no such legal obligation applied to St. James Parish.

The U.S. government does protect slave graves. However, the U.S. coastal maps missed the identifying symbol of the Holy Cross as early as the end of the 18th century and not at all within the 1940 decade.

The state of Louisiana also protects slave gravesites. But the constitution has a clause in it that potentially allowed a pipeline to desecrate a gravesite on one of the three properties Formosa owns. Both examples amount to a travesty.

Three freelance archaeologists employed a process called cartographic regression analysis. Crosses marking slave graves that were lost for a decade were found. Driven by a moral obligation to society and history, these archeologists gave precise coordinates of other grave sites. These were given to the Louisiana Division of Archeology to be given to Formosa archeologists. Pam Spees, Sharon Lavigne, and myself, Gail LeBoeuf, were present at the meeting.



Judge St. Pierre said on June 18th, 2020 that our communities need to heal. The resolution we're asking for would allow all of us to heal. It is self evident that all our ancestors live within us and through us. These enslaved people and countless others, who were considered a 5th of a person, should be given the respect and gratitude in death they were never ever given in life. After all, they helped build America and never got paid.

We do not expect a resolution tonight. But we do expect one of you to make a motion and another to second the motion to research a resolution and pass a resolution to include the gravesites of enslaved people in the Land Use Plan. ”

The Forgotten People of Cancer Alley

By Barbara Washington

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, February 11th, 2021

Thank God President Biden's Administration has heard the cry of the people in Louisiana. "Cancer Alley is an 85 mile stretch of land that runs alongside the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans." The corridor is home to more than 150 petrochemical plants and refineries. There is an old cliché that says, "it's not what you are called, but what you answer to."

We have been answering to that call of Cancer Alley since 1987, when an abundance of cases of cancer were found in residents in St. Gabriel, Louisiana surrounded by petrochemical plants. For several decades we have been breathing the pollution coming from plants emitting cancer causing chemicals such as chloroprene, benzene, ammonia, methanol, and ethylene oxide.

In November 2019, I visited Washington D.C and stopped by Senator Bill Cassidy's office to speak with him and protest about the proposed construction of Formosa Plastics. A report booklet of "A Plan



Without People" was left for Senator Cassidy to review. In a follow up from the visit I was assured that Senator Cassidy's position was with the construction of Formosa Plastics, a plant that would be the largest new source emitter of greenhouse gases. Formosa Plastics has been cited as a serial offender under the Clean Water Act. Our health is our wealth.

Senator Cassidy, I invite you to take a ride along River Road on the east and west bank of the Mississippi River from the Veterans Memorial Bridge to the Sunshine Bridge. I invite you to smell the stench from all the pollution and see where the plants are located in predominantly low income, poor people of color areas who have died from cancer.

I was the one by my sister's bedside when she took her last breath in 2012. She wasn't obese, she didn't have high blood pressure, she didn't have diabetes, and she didn't smoke, yet she died of lung cancer living along the Mississippi Corridor of "Cancer Alley" for 57 years in Census Tract 404. We refuse to continue to be a sacrifice zone.

Barbara Washington



We Are Full

Speech by Myrtle Felton

Poor People's Campaign Press Conference
Wednesday, October 23rd, 2019



“ The year of 2014 was the worst year I’ve ever lived. On March 11th, my brother-in-law passed away with cancer. February 12th my sister-in-law, who was his wife, passed away. April the 9th my husband passed away. May the 7th my sister’s husband passed away. May the 14th my sister’s husband’s best friend passed away. That was very devastating, something that is taking me a long time to get over because I never thought chemical plants would cause that much damage to a family all at one time. My life has never been the same since. And I just look around and things are getting worse...

I live at least a mile from Nucor, which is in my front door. I live two miles from Mosaic, which is in my back door. I live a mile or half a mile from Occidental Chemical. And I would have been half a mile away from Wanhua. Thank God He fixed it so Wanhua didn’t come in my side door. I don’t know what would have happened if it did. We don’t need anymore chemical plants nowhere in this parish nor other parishes. We are full. We have enough. They promised jobs that our people don’t get. All we get is death, sickness, and anything else other than wealth. ”



In Harm's Way

By Barbara Washington

Published in the News Examiner-Enterprise
on Thursday, July 29th, 2021

I live in a community surrounded by plants. I sit looking out the window at the clouds of chemical vapor released from Nucor Steel. I walk outside and smell the odor of rotten eggs. I watch when the sugar cane is burned, and the air is filled with smoke, soot, and ash. I watch so many of my friends and loved ones going to the doctor for chronic coughs and dying from cancer.



We as residents of the community living near Nucor Steel have never been notified of the incidents and releases in our neighborhood, though Nucor and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) have known full well. Of course, we see Nucor pretending to be a good neighbor, giving turkey and ham to residents for the holidays and funding our Mini Park in Central. But what about our health issues?



Nucor is one of the biggest sources of carbon monoxide emissions in St. James Parish and a major source of several other dangerous pollutants such as hydrogen sulfide and lead. From 2014 to 2018, Nucor released 139.53 tons of hydrogen sulfide, even though it was never permitted by LDEQ to release an ounce of hydrogen sulfide. Nucor also reported that it released 21.26 tons of sulfuric acid mist from 2014 to 2018 despite having zero permitted emissions for sulfuric acid mist.

We know that hydrogen sulfide causes irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, and that it also causes headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, coughing, and difficulty breathing. We know that sulfuric acid is destructive to the skin, eyes, teeth, and lungs, and that for years the community surrounding Nucor Steel has been inhaling all of these chemicals and experiencing many of these symptoms.

In 2015 Nucor Steel also performed three emergency dumps without ever informing the nearby residents. Yet after years of documented violations and industrial accidents, Nucor only faces a potential \$89,760.32 fine from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Yes, the state collects the fees and the people residing next to Nucor get sick and die.

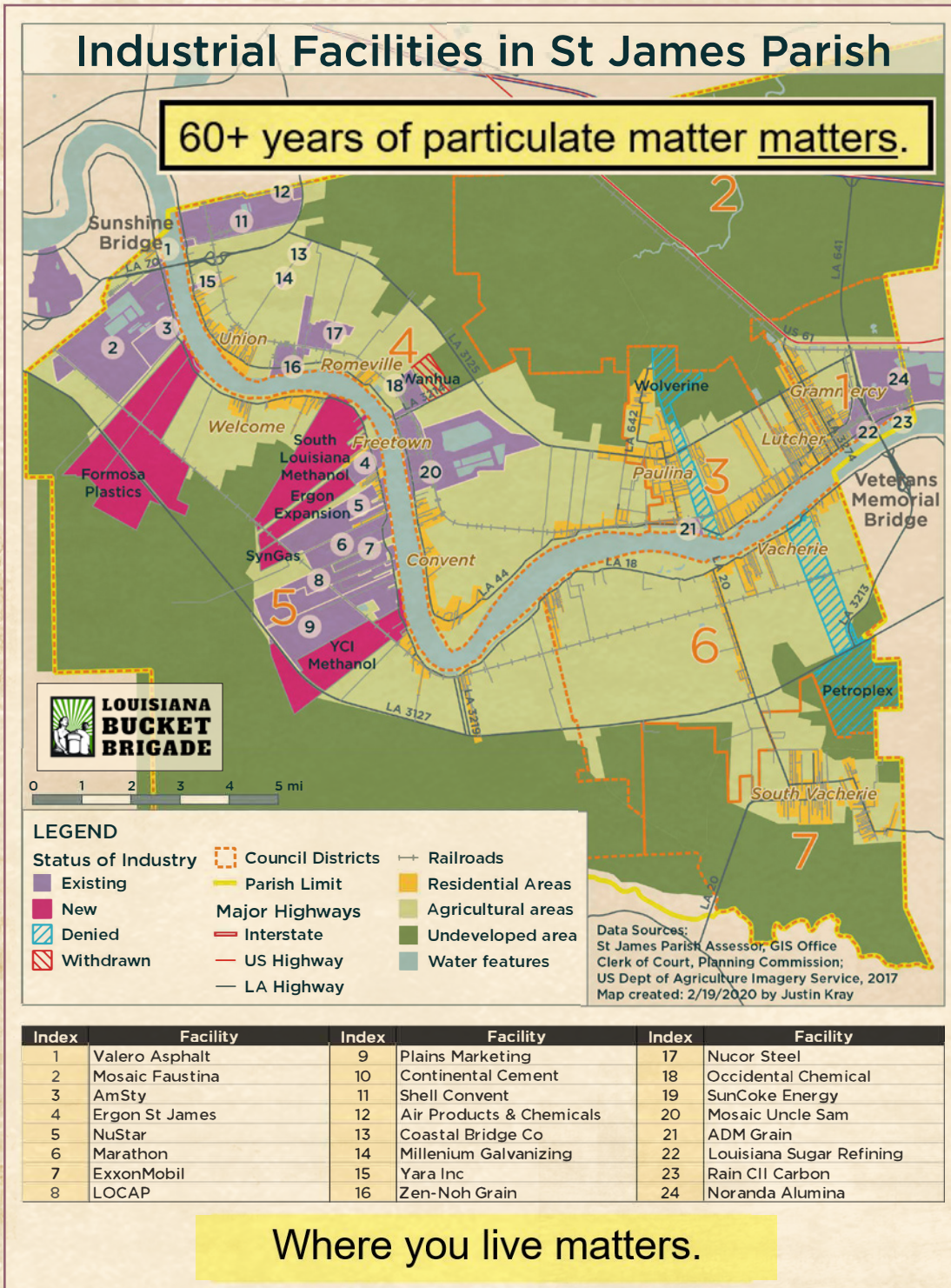
Despite constant violations, Nucor is also seeking to expand and has submitted an air permit application to LDEQ for a pelletizer plant. This proposed plant would be a major source of air emissions, emitting 125 tons per year of Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM 2.5).

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are all in harm's way. We hope you will stand with us against Nucor's proposed expansion so no more chemicals are released into the air we, our children, and our grandchildren breathe.

Barbara Washington

To submit your own letter to the editor, go to the News Examiner-Enterprise website and click "Forms and Submissions." To submit to the Advocate, scroll to the bottom of the Advocate website and under "Services" click "Submission Forms." Then scroll to "Online Services" and click "Letter to the Editor" to submit.

Fine particulate matter (PM2.5) is a type of pollution produced by combustion from plastics manufacturing and other petrochemical processes. Particulate matter has been proven to increase risk of death from Covid-19, cause lung cancer, and worsen asthma and heart disease. Over 60 years of industrial operations has increased particulate matter pollution across the parish. With 24 industrial facilities currently operating in St. James Parish, where you live and breathe matters.





**LOUISIANA
BUCKET
BRIGADE**

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