



**LOUISIANA  
BUCKET  
BRIGADE**

*Clean Air. Justice. Sustainability.*

**OUR STRATEGIES ARE WORKING.  
NOW IS THE TIME FOR BOLD ACTION.**



**2021 Impact Report**



Meeting at St. James Freetown Hall (left to right Sharon Lavigne, Gail LeBoeuf, and Barbara Washington - leaders in St. James - with Anne Rolfes of Louisiana Bucket Brigade). Photo credit: Louisiana Bucket Brigade

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**T**wenty one years ago we began our work in my home state of Louisiana by collaborating with Margie Richard and the Concerned Citizens of Norco to take on Shell Oil. We are as committed now as we were then, determined to stop petrochemical industries from destroying Louisiana and the planet. The relationships we've built with people who live along Cancer Alley and in other polluted parts of the state have always been the foundation of our work. Together, we work to protect ourselves from the pollution that makes us sick and exacerbates climate change.

Last year I was on a radio show with a journalist who said that consigning polluting industries to Black communities in Louisiana is something that doesn't happen anymore. I had to keep myself from jumping across the table to counter his claim with all too real examples of the historic Black communities that are under threat: Romeville, St. James, Wallace and more. Not only is the fossil fuel and chemical industry resisting the transition to a cleaner economy, they have narrowed their sights on rural Black communities along the Mississippi River as targets for their relentless expansion.

Despite the vast resources of the industry and the challenges of the past year, our strategies are working. The victories we share in this report show that. We hope you are inspired by our year in review. Know that you helped make it possible.

Sincerely,

Anne Rolfes, Executive Director



*Myrtle Felton and Barbara Washington of Inclusive Louisiana lead the March Against Death Alley to protest Formosa Plastics. Photo credit: Coalition Against Death Alley*

## Anatomy of a Victory - Five Key Elements to Stopping Formosa Plastics

In August of 2021, the Army Corps Acting Secretary for Civil Works told Louisiana Bucket Brigade and our community partners in St. James Parish - RISE St. James and Inclusive LA - that the agency would require Formosa Plastics to conduct what should have been required from the start: an Environmental Impact Statement for its project in St. James Parish. This decision creates a delay of up to two years. As we make plans to permanently stop this bad idea, it's important to take a moment to understand how we got here.

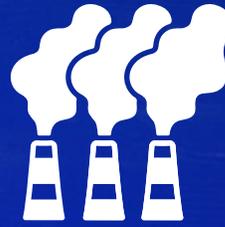
**Here are five important elements of this work:**

### #1 CONFIDENCE

From day one, we were told that Formosa was “a done deal”, “too big to stop”, that “there’s nothing anybody can do.” But we knew better than that because of our work alongside people of great faith.

## Nucor Steel Plant

canceled its expansion plans, preventing 125 additional tons of hazardous particulate matter into the air.



Our work has kept 13 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions from being released each year by **Formosa Plastics.**

Back in 2002, Dorothy Jenkins, President of the Concerned Citizens of New Sarpy said this when a journalist questioned taking on the massive refinery next door: “Don’t you know the Bible says that two can put 10,000 to flight?”

This fundamental faith is why we stand beside RISE St. James and take head on the \$12 billion Formosa Plastics. We know that the seemingly small can beat the mighty.

### #2 RELATIONSHIPS

Five years ago Director Anne Rolfes stood in Mt. Triumph Baptist Church and met Pastor Harry Joseph who had called the Louisiana Bucket Brigade for help in stopping the Bayou Bridge Pipeline. At that time we had never heard of Formosa Plastics, had no idea of the juggernaut angling for St. James.

While we did not win the Bayou Bridge Pipeline battle, that introduction in a tiny church on a Friday afternoon set the scene for our collaborations in St. James Parish and the consequent defeat of Wanhua Chemical, stopping the Nucor expansion and of course, delaying Formosa Plastics.

None of this would have happened if we had packed up and left after the Bayou Bridge defeat.

### #3 TIME

Nobody can stop companies like Formosa Plastics with a weekly Zoom call or a monthly check in. Our staff members are in St. James Parish several times a week and are on the phone with local leaders every day. Since the end of August, we’ve spent weekends doing hurricane relief work in St. James, taking the time to understand the people and the dynamics so that we can best help.



*Bucket Brigade's in-house genealogy team (left to right - Lenora Gobert, Jamaica Hawkins, and Jordan Brewington) reviews historic property and census records for St. James Parish. Photo credit: Camille Lenain.*

#### #4 INVESTING IN COMMUNITY INSIGHTS AND ANALYSIS

Central to our work is putting resources behind community knowledge. When we first began working in St. James, even before he joined RISE, Pastor Joseph told us that the problems in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Districts stemmed from the 2014 Land Use Plan. We recruited an urban planner to dig into the parish records, including parish council minutes, master plans, e-mails between council members and council and land use commission agendas. In doing so we discovered a clear record of the parish council actively protecting the white districts while creating a petrochemical zone in Black communities.

The results of this research are in our 2019 report "**A Plan without People.**" This analysis is foundational to understanding and working in St. James Parish.

Additional examples are the gravesites on the proposed site of Formosa Plastics. From the very beginning, Gail LeBoeuf of Inclusive Louisiana said that there were graves there. We put our urban planner to work again. Center for Constitutional Rights staff discovered emails that showed Formosa Plastics not only knew about the graves for a year and a half, but also kept that information from parish leaders. We used this information to show how Formosa Plastics officials lied to the parish council, thereby making the land use approval null and void. None of this would have happened, however, without building on the local knowledge.

#### #5 SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

The Bucket Brigade doesn't just sit back and wait for the government agencies to make decisions about permits. We take matters

into our own hands, working closely with our community partners to gather powerful allies, identify vulnerabilities in our opposition, and create dramatic moments that garner state and national media attention.

Our work is different from other environmental organizations in that we are closely connected to the community. We purposely and methodically collaborate with our partners to create consistent public pressure.

***Our campaign to stop Formosa Plastics included:***

1. Organizing presentations by legal partners, St. James residents, a Formosa neighbor in Texas, and scientists about Formosa Plastics to create a presence at every parish council meeting;
2. Staging a Plastic Pollution Festival at our Department of Environmental Quality featuring a truckload of evidence (plastic pellet pollution) used at a trial against Formosa Plastics in Texas (partners: Diane Wilson in Texas, Center for Biological Diversity);
3. Creating awareness of the burial sites of enslaved people on Formosa's proposed site with a Juneteenth commemoration (partner: Center for Constitutional Rights) and an All Saints Day service featuring the Catholic Bishop. The relationship with the bishop was cultivated by Sharon Lavigne, President of RISE St. James;
4. Launched an ad **campaign** against Formosa resulting in over 460 articles shared, liked or commented upon 45,000 times by readers;

5. Organized 300 calls opposing Formosa Plastics to Parish Councilmembers;
6. Kept St. James Parish residents informed with regular briefings;
7. Worked with Representative Grijalva, who wrote a letter to President Biden urging him to direct the Army Corps of Engineers to deny Formosa's permit; and
8. Delivered a unanimous passage of resolution opposing Formosa Plastics by the New Orleans City Council (partner: Councilmember Kristin Palmer).

For some of this work, the Bucket Brigade's engagement is obvious and publicly known. For other aspects, we purposely remain behind the scenes in order to give space to other voices and show the power of additional allies.

## Planning Ahead

Now is the time to lay the groundwork for our next victory. We are working with RISE St. James and Inclusive Louisiana to: build the capacity of their organizations (see page 7), sow the seeds for a new economy in the region, and stop the additional facilities being planned for St. James Parish.

Even as Formosa Plastics is on hold, a massive plant called South Louisiana Methanol is slated to begin construction. We are laser focused to stop this facility and advance a legal framework for a larger moratorium on all new petrochemical construction and expansions in the parish.

**“ Power Coalition has always been grateful for our partnership with the Louisiana Bucket Brigade and was thrilled to expand that partnership by supporting and building the capacity of a cohort of Black-led groups doing powerful organizing work along the River Parishes. Working with such amazing leaders has deepened our understanding and created a clear pathway to building more power to move from having to play defense to offense!**

**- Ashley K. Shelton Executive Director,  
The Power Coalition for Equity and Justice**

## Building Power - Launch of Environmental Justice Cohort

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade has ties with Black-led environmental justice groups in the state. Some are new relationships, others are those we've tended since the mid 2000s. Since 2019, we have explicitly devoted staff time to providing organizational development work for our grassroots partners, primarily grant writing and financial management.

Last year we partnered with the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice (PCEJ) to develop an environmental justice cohort for organizational development. The Bucket Brigade's work aligns with PCEJ's mission to organize in impacted communities, educate and turn out voters, and fight for policies that create a more equitable and just system.

Anne Rolfes and PCEJ's Ashley Shelton are Executive Directors with a 20-year relationship. While the Bucket Brigade Director is a white

woman, the Power Coalition is led by Black women. We felt strongly that our cohort would have more power if Black women were leading it. And so, a wonderful partnership has begun, with our groups serving as co-facilitators of the cohort.



*Bucket Brigade staff member, Susan Sakash, shares an update with members of the Environmental Justice cohort.  
Photo credit: Camille Lenain*

The cohort members are: Concerned Citizens of St. John, The Descendants Project, Greater New Orleans Interfaith Climate Coalition, Inclusive Louisiana, Louisiana League of Conscious Voters, Residents for Air Neutralization, RISE St. James, and The Vessel Project.

We see this as a key moment for our local environmental justice movement to take a big step forward. Long-term disenfranchisement and disinvestment have created a scarcity mindset amongst many fenceline groups, but now there are resources available in a way that has never existed before. We are committed to working alongside our partner groups as they determine what success looks like and what level of resourcing is needed to get them there.

The cohort's long-term vision is at least six visible Black-led organizations operating out of the Mississippi River Parishes and in communities like Lake Charles and Shreveport, making it harder for elected officials to claim that petrochemicals are the only business in town.

## RESPONDING TO IDA'S DESTRUCTION

***“The wind was so vicious that the rain was coming through the ceiling, even through the light fixtures in the house. We had pails... trying to catch the water.”*** Gail LeBoeuf, Inclusive Louisiana

The Bucket Brigade works hard to match the courage and vigor of our community partners. Two days after Hurricane Ida hit St. James Parish and devastated St. John Parish, we were there with supplies and hot food. We created and

updated online donation pages so that Inclusive Louisiana, RISE St. James and The Descendants Project could receive direct funding for their relief work.

Given industry and governments' plans to industrialize these historic places, asserting the existence and power of the residents there is more important than ever.

### ***Our post storm work has been threefold:***

1. Stabilize communities with financial resources and hasten the recovery in order for our partners to continue their work.
2. We purchased and delivered 19 generators, 274 tarps and tarped 30 homes. A crucial component of this work is having the response represent the solution. Deep gratitude to The Solutions Project for providing solar generators. We hope to get more of this equipment and distribute it throughout the region for greater community autonomy during future weather events.
3. Our media work prioritizes halting future construction and making the links between climate change, flooding, and ever worsening storms. To achieve this, we work to educate journalists about the threat posed by the proposed petrochemical buildout.

Our state government and industry are collaborating on a plan to build or expand over 100 new facilities. Hurricane Ida came ashore smack dab where one such facility – the Fourchon Liquefied Natural Gas Terminal – is planned. This is a bad idea, and we are working to connect the dots.

**“LABB has provided important connectivity and capacity building support to The Solutions Project and our grassroots environmental justice grantee partners, particularly as we have expanded our work into what is known as the Cancer Alley area of Louisiana. We are deeply grateful for their partnership!”**

**- Sekita Grant, Program Officer, The Solutions Project**

## Recovery and Beyond

Without action, the parish governments of St. James and St. John Parishes will use the opportunity of Hurricane Ida to erase the communities of Welcome, Romeville, and Wallace. As always, we will collaborate with our community partners impacted by the petrochemical industry to:

1. Advocate for hurricane recovery;
2. Expand the acquisition and use of solar chargers, solar generators, and solar power;
3. Continue media briefings to educate the media and Louisiana residents about the scope of the planned petrochemical build out in hurricane zones;
4. Highlight the heightened climate risk as part of the case for a moratorium in St. James;
5. Honor those buried in cemeteries along the Mississippi River with commemorations as part of our strategy to assert a presence in these communities. State and parish officials would be happy for the cemeteries

to become dilapidated and obscured. We know that preserving them and honoring them with events is a crucial component of building power.



*Staff member Crystal Gross at the Pleasant Hill Cemetery community clean up hosted by Inclusive Louisiana, October 2021. Photo credit: Camille Lenain*

Kate McIntosh and Anne Rolfes of Louisiana Bucket Brigade stand with Sharon Lavigne of RISE at the Juneteeth commemoration held at the Buena Vista burial grounds on proposed site of Formosa Plastics. Photo credit: Bron Moyi



“ RISE St. James and Louisiana Bucket Brigade have been learning together and growing together over the past year. And just look at our outcomes and what we have accomplished. Victory is mine! Victory is ours!”

- Sharon Lavigne, founder and director of RISE St. James and 2021 North American Goldman Environmental Award Recipient

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

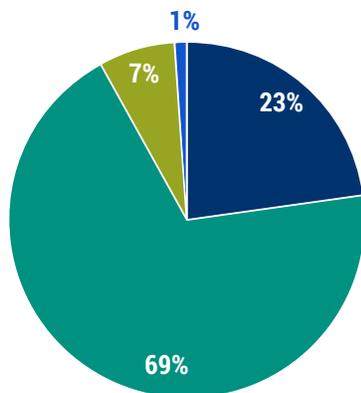
Center for Biological Diversity  
Coalition Against Death Alley  
Earthjustice  
Earthworks  
Green ARMY  
Healthy Gulf

Inclusive Louisiana  
Power Coalition for Equity and Justice  
RISE St. James  
Tulane Environmental Law Clinic  
Together Louisiana

# FOUNDATION SUPPORT (JULY 1, 2020 - JUNE 30, 2021)

- Anonymous Foundation
- The 11th Hour Project/"The Schmidt Family Foundation"
- Ben and Jerry's Foundation
- Cloud Mountain
- The Elizabeth B. & Arthur E. Roswell Foundation
- Ella West Freeman Foundation
- Funder Collaborative on Oil & Gas
- John Merck Fund
- Normandie Foundation
- The Overbrook Foundation
- PRBB Foundation
- Patagonia
- Plastic Solutions Fund
- Grantee Safety & Security Fund, a Proteus Fund Initiative
- Ronald W. Naito MD Foundation
- RosaMary Foundation
- Scherman Foundation
- The Solutions Project
- The Stephen Colbert Americone Dream Fund of Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina
- The Tides Foundation
- Tortuga Foundation
- Unitarian Universalist Fund for a Just Society
- Urgent Action Fund

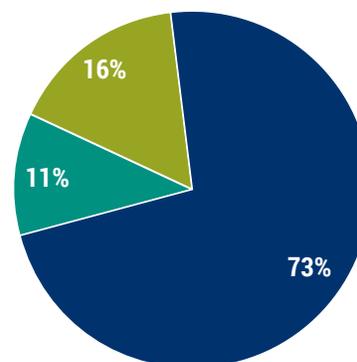
## REVENUE



**Total Revenue: \$867,585**

- Individual Giving \$202,247
- Foundation Support \$592,950\*\*
- Corp Gifts \$63,009
- Other Income \$11,378

## EXPENSES



**Total Expenses: \$745,332**

- Programs \$545,354
- Administration \$81,370
- Fundraising \$119,608

\*\* Bucket Brigade received \$72,500 in foundation support at the end of FY21 for work to be expensed in FY22.



# LOUISIANA BUCKET BRIGADE

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