

LOUISIANA BUCKET BRIGADE

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

**Address by Anne Rolfes at the 25th Anniversary Louisiana Bucket Brigade Birthday Bash
October 9, 2025**

There is a Star in the Sky

A critic might come into this room tonight and say, “The petrochemical and gas industry is more powerful than ever. What have you really done?”

I can list specifics, all of which have been accomplished in collaboration with people in the room.

Installing air monitors, pressuring EPA to conduct inspections, protecting our state from expansions of tank farms, pipelines, plastics plants, and refineries. We have stood toe to toe with some of the world’s most powerful corporations and our own government, and we have won.

But my answer is more than this list: we have provided a vision that is different from the narrative that claims industry is good for us.

The truth is that industry brings destruction masquerading as economic development. Relentless industrial expansion threatens the soul of our Louisiana culture and the very things that should be centered as our economic engine. Our vision is to protect and build upon what makes Louisiana world famous.

It’s not benzene coming from refineries that makes Louisiana famous, it’s our boudin.

It’s not tank farms, it’s our oak trees,

It’s not chemicals, it’s our crawfish and our catfish, our shrimpers and our fishermen. It’s our history – the churches and burial sites along River Road.

But industry threatens to destroy all of this forever. We have to fight to protect every blade of grass. And we have. We can measure our power by our opponents’ response.

In 2016, we stormed the Superdome and took over the federal government’s auction of drilling leases in the Gulf of Mexico. Many of you were there.

If we weren’t powerful our opponents, afterward, would not have passed federal legislation to move those auctions on line and prevent us from attending ever again.

In 2018, we stood up to protect St. James Parish from the Bayou Bridge pipeline and physically got in the way of the back hoe laying the pipe. I have to tell you that is an exhilarating feeling, to stand in the way of a back hoe.

If we weren't powerful the Louisiana legislature would not have passed a law afterward making it a felony to be at a pipeline.

If we weren't powerful, the legislature would not have outlawed sharing of community air monitoring data

And to my dear friends from Ascension Parish, if we weren't powerful, the current Governor would not be returning to the scene of his desired crime – forcing a steel plant and two ammonia plants on top of Donaldsonville and Modeste. He would not be returning there again and again if he were not desperate to project an air of inevitability.

We are powerful

And what will we do with our power? We are going to achieve our vision. It is hard to simultaneously fight off these plants while building the future. But it is happening. Twila Collins from Modeste can tell you the type of development that should happen in her home. It's not the destruction of Hyundai and Exxon but preserving the history and putting in shops and services that are good for us all.

The foundational principle of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade is this: people are experts about where they live, and they know the solutions. What we have tried to do all these years is to lend muscle to realize a vision of shared prosperity.

I have to credit the Ogoni people who set me on this path. The Ogoni are a minority ethnic group in Nigeria. They have oil on their land, and Regina and Dumle – two of our heroes – can tell you how they were forced to leave their country because they dared to protect their home. Their own government tried to kill them. I met them in 1998 when they were in a refugee camp in Benin, West Africa. Shell Oil was the problem.

After my work with Regina and Dumle, when I moved home to Louisiana, one of the first people I met was Margie Richard in Norco. And there was Shell again, making her historic community unlivable.

When I arrived in Norco, I was 30 years old and still on fire from what Shell had done to the Ogoni people. And Margie – who had also traveled to Nigeria – gave me the chance to continue to set my sights on Shell.

While working with Margie, I met Dorothy Jenkins and Shonda Lee in neighboring New Sarpy. Ken Ford then called from Chalmette, then on down through all of our heroes,

including Travis and Nicole Dardar who sent a fateful Facebook message. Through all this time, those of us who share this vision have been able to find each other.

And we will need each other now. I have no doubt that in the coming months we will be targeted by our own government for our work to protect the people and the culture of Louisiana. Tonight is a reminder of our collective power, no matter the threat.

And here is my closing.

There is line from Ogoni writing that I find so moving, even 30 years after first hearing it. This is the line:

There is an Ogoni star in the sky.

I believe that there is.

And there are other stars, too.

There is Modeste Star in the sky. There is a Wallace Star in the sky. There is a Smoke Bend Star in the sky. There is a Sellers, a Belltown, a Reserve, a Mt. Airy, a New Sarpy, an Isle de Jean Charles, and a Union star in the sky. There is a Chalmette, a Sunrise, a Romeville, a Convent, a Moonshine, a Mossville and a Cameron star in the sky.

It is our sacred work, together, to keep those stars burning.

Thank you.