



InterConnection

NETWORK
PEOPLE LOBBYING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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www.networklobby.org

Dear *Connection* Reader:

As we send out this new issue of *InterConnection*, Tropical Storm Lee threatens our nation's Gulf Coast. Coming so soon after saturation news coverage of the East Coast earthquake and hurricane (and during a holiday weekend), some may be tempted to pay little attention to what happens. However, justice demands that we not turn our backs to this region.

The Gulf Coast has faced enormous ecological dangers in the past few years. This issue of *InterConnection* is designed to fill you in on some of what has happened there in the six years since Hurricane Katrina (including last year's oil spill)—and how we must step up efforts to help the region heal. Below you will find a brief introduction by NETWORK Lobbyist Marge Clark, BVM, followed by links to four compelling articles about work to address Gulf Coast needs.

Also, as we mark Labor Day 2011, we hope you give thought to all workers who have been put in harm's way because of various disasters—both natural and human-generated. (And never forget the millions of people in our nation who still struggle to find jobs. Work with us to make that happen!)

And as always, we ask you to consider making a [donation](#) to our work so we can continue to seek justice. We need you now more than ever!

We are deeply grateful for your continuing support.

Peace,
Stephanie Niedringhaus, NETWORK Communications Coordinator

P.S. We will be looking at the design of the *InterConnection* in the coming weeks. Our goal is to make sure that it serves your needs. We will send out a survey soon. In the meantime, please feel free to share your thoughts with us at connection@networklobby.org

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Gulf Coast Recovery Efforts After Katrina and Last Year's Oil Spill

By Marge Clark, BVM, NETWORK Lobbyist

It has been six years since disastrous hurricanes rampaged across the Gulf Coast area. More than a

thousand human lives were lost, as were hundreds of thousands of other gifts of God to our earth. Estuaries (the breeding grounds to replenish much of the life) were washed away and left in ruins. Cultures which rely on the gifts of the sea were devastated: shrimp boats and other small vessels were destroyed, waters were in turmoil, and stocks of fish and other wildlife diminished. So many people lost their livelihoods as well as their homes and many of their friends and family members.

Recovery from that devastation was far from complete when another —human-made—disaster tore apart many of the same lives and environments. Recovery from that disaster is far from complete. Health issues, including mental health, continue for those who worked the clean-up—and many who live in the area, breathe the air, drink the water and eat the products of the sea. Even more jobs disappeared, and people already suffering from lack of resources are denied even more of what they need to live in dignity.

There has been some progress, but far less than is necessary. Assistance requested in legislation after Katrina and Rita and the other hurricanes never happened—including a proposal for a cadre of young people to be educated about the delicate ecosystems where land meets water, about rehabilitation of estuaries, and about care of organisms. When the BP Oil Disaster occurred, that is exactly what was needed: a large number of people who had learned to care for that particular set of ecosystems. Had that been funded after Katrina, much of the clean-up from the BP disaster would have been more timely and with better prepared people—and many people who had been out of work since Katrina would have been gainfully employed. We make many short-sighted choices in our nation. Perhaps from this we might learn.

Below are reflections of one colleague and three coalition partners on what we face in this troubled region.

LINKS TO ARTICLES

On the Gulf Coast Vietnamese community from Mary Ellen Lacy, DC, NETWORK Lobbyist: *"The Vietnamese social network, familial cohesiveness and cultural dignity strongly depended upon the thriving, communal relationship to the waters and the seafood industry. The near-fatal wound delivered by the BP Oil Spill to the seafood industry threatens to sacrifice the Vietnamese culture in Bayou La Batre, Alabama. Loss of one's cultural dignity is a deplorable casualty of big business."* [Click here to learn more.](#)

On continuing health problems since last year's oil spill from Mary Beth Gallagher, Salvador Sarmiento and Lisa Lederberger of the [Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights](#): *"Gulf Communities are reporting numerous cases of sickness related to the BP oil drilling disaster, but lack access to appropriate diagnosis or treatment."* [Click here to learn more.](#)

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On what Congress could do to address Gulf Coast problems from Rachel Cohen, Sustainability Program Coordinator for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: *"There's an axiom in Washington that when disaster strikes, Congress responds. But in the case of the BP Gulf oil spill—the worst environmental disaster of our time—this axiom has failed, at least to date. The House passed legislation last summer but the Senate failed to follow suit, and when Congress returned this year, the media had moved on and political prospects for making*

restoring the Gulf or making drilling safer were dimmer than ever." [Click here to learn more.](#)

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On Gulf Coast community organizing from Sharon Gauthe, Executive Director of BISCO (Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing): "There is certainly no lack of critical issues facing the people of the bayous today. Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing (BISCO) is one of the organizations taking a leading role in seeking opportunities to change the systems that have led to the dissolving precipice upon which we stand." [Click here to learn more.](#)

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NETWORK's ministry of justice is funded through the generosity of our members. To **donate to NETWORK:**

<http://www.networklobby.org/donate>

Thank you for your activism, your prayers, your financial support and your solidarity with our mission of economic and social transformation.

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