



Nolajewishwomen.tulane.edu

Hi

Well, I don't know about you, but March felt like a year. While we are still distancing physically, we can hopefully take the time to come closer to ourselves, our friends and families, our larger community and the natural world. Many of us are Katrina forged and hopefully more able to face uncertainty and pivot. Writer Rebecca Solnit says that there is a way a disaster gives us a kind of, "supersaturated immediacy that also includes a deep sense of connection." Disasters bring about a sense of gratitude and altruism even in the frustration of isolation, or the frustration of being a homeschool teacher, cook, activities director, and WeWork station. I'm grateful for knowing **Reverend William Barnwell** who died Friday of the Virus. William Barnwell is what ministers and priests should be but rarely are, a champion of the dispossessed who lived mutuality and gave voice to the forgotten. I know his wife Corrine, a bit more. Together they were a team fighting for women's rights access to abortion, prison reform, and lately, a friend and voice for the communities of Cancer Alley and RISE St James. I am also grateful for the person making encouraging chalk drawings at Gilmore Park, and Don Vappie playing the banjo on his front porch for all of the

world.

Rebecca Solnit goes on to say that most people reach out during disasters to help others. The ones who act as savages think the world is savage and that everyone is out for themselves. We act on what we believe. Is the world a pit of competition or are we deeply interconnected and present for each other and the natural world? I choose to come down on the side of our deep interconnectedness. Physics confirms this approach as does the richness of friends and communities such as ours.

But, what gets in the way of us realizing our deep sense of community, not just in our personal habits, but in our economic and social systems? We are suddenly living without pollution globally. We are learning that the price of oil in the moment of global scarcity is not going up, but a very volatile market and not one on which to build Louisiana's future. What would help us get back to a more robust middle class and why can't we take care of our vulnerable populations everyday? Can we put people back to work on a Green New Deal? Do we really want to move the present forward? Is that a future?

Louisiana Bucket Brigade/Rise St. James



We are coming upon the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, on April 22. I know that walks are sustaining most of us and New Orleans is truly one of the most visually beautiful cities in the world. We have a soft-focus in nature that is restorative, rather than the hard focus of computers, work concentration, and social media. But, what truly commands our Louisiana economic landscape are petrochemical and plastics plants all around New Orleans. I want to raise up two women who are acting upon the idea that we are deeply interconnected: Anne Rolfes and Sharon Lavigne.

Born in Lafayette Louisiana, a child of the petroleum industry, Anne Rolfes gained awareness of the industry's destruction while working in Benin, West Africa, where she began, "to document the stories of Nigerians who were attacked and made into refugees because of their work for justice from the oil industry". Upon returning home, Rolfes founded the [Louisiana Bucket Brigade](#) with Margie Richard of Norco, Dorothy Jenkins and Shonda Lee of New Sarpy, and has dedicated over 20 years of her life working with Fenceline Communities South and North and around New Orleans.



Sharon Lavigne works closely with Anne Rolfes and the [Louisiana Bucket Brigade](#). A retired school teacher, Lavigne founded [RISE St. James](#) to stop Tawain based Formosa Plastics Corporation and place a moratorium on the



oil and gas industries in St. James Parish. Lavigne commented, *"A lot of the plants that come in here like Formosa want the Riverfront so they can put their filth in the River. We will put a stop to this and, Formosa, you are the stop. You will not come in and destroy what we have."* Since the relaxation of the environmental laws under president Trump, Louisiana is allowing 10 new petrochemical plants to build in the 85 mile stretch between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Another member of [RISE St.James](#), Eve Butler said, *"And we are here at [RISE St.James](#) to tell industry that we are going to fight for our neighborhood. The people that work at the plant and people that come in that don't live here, they don't buy homes here, their children don't go (to school) here, their wives do not shop here. We deserve to be treated just like everybody else."*

Letter to Editor

Title: Formosa Plastics Will Be In Every District

Dear Residents of St. James Parish,

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who came out to the council meeting on January 21st. It was incredible to witness how many residents spent their precious time and energy to come and stand together against Formosa Plastics. St. James Parish is rising, and together with our council members we can work to guarantee that our children and their children are able to live and thrive in St. James Parish for generations.

There is no question, Formosa Plastics is a threat to our entire parish. No district and no resident will be safe from the 800 tons of toxic pollution that Formosa plans to emit every year (4,383 pounds every single day). These known cancer-causing chemicals—ethylene oxide, benzene, formaldehyde, 1,3-butadiene, acetaldehyde—will travel and spread across our parish. They will absorb into the Mississippi River, our only source of drinking water.

An excerpt of Lavigne's February letter to the editor

These modern-day prophets, Louisiana's own, seek the highest good for all and are calling out the greed and destruction embedded in our economy. Their voices, like the voices of the Hebrew prophets, pierce through the logic of Louisiana prosperity politicians and economic development projects. Jewish rabbi and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel said that prophets are often one-octave too high for human ears to hear, and that "the prophets words begin to burn where conscience ends."



Norco, LA, the site of major petrochemical plants

What would our lives look like if we head their words, recommit our lives to the larger

community, and seek new ways to recognize our interconnectedness? I know we are looking right now for comfort from the chaos. Yet the prophets of old did not soothe but sounded the alarm. Rabbi Heschel tells us God rages through the words of the prophets:

*Woe to him who builds a town with blood
And founds a city on iniquity
-Habakkuk 2:6, 9, 11-12*

To read more about Anne and Sharon and recent issues you can go to the [Louisiana Bucket Brigade](#) website. We have made some newsworthy selections for you below. You can also donate through this website. I urge you to find a way to connect to these visionaries and search for real systemic change. The Civil Rights movement began in the South and the environmental movement is making progress in the belly of the petroleum beast where people of color bear the greatest burden for our oil-based lifestyles.

News

- Louisiana Weekly: [Battle Rages on in Fight Against Formosa Plant](#)
- Fox 8: [In Surprise Vote, Westwego city council votes against Wanhua chemical company](#)

Publicity

- [WWL TV Story on Sharon Lavigne and her community](#)
 - [What Could Happen If A 9.4 Billion Dollar Chemical Plant Came To Cancer Alley](#)
 - [Press Release: More Archaeologists Come Forward With Report Indicating More Burial Grounds of Enslaved People Likely Exist on Site Proposed for Controversial Plastics Plant](#)
 - [NPR: New Gas And Chemical Facilities Crowd Louisiana's 'Cancer Alley'](#)
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[Jewish Women's Archive](#)

Since I was not able to teach storytelling at Limmud, I thought I would share some sites that help with storytelling. The Jewish Women's Archive has a wonderful Story Aperature that you can download to your phone. Now is a good time to have a 30-minutes story session or, if alone, record stories for your children and future generations. [Jewish Women's Archive](#) shows you how to get to the app and the record button is right with the questions. Our friends at [StoryCorps](#) have a great site with a number of questions for various situations and topics of discussion also. You can use these questions as prompts and record the old fashioned way or through your phone. You can upload your recording to [JWA](#) from the app or to our website. Write to us at nolajewishwomen@gmail.com and we will help you get started or finished: nolajewishwomen@gmail.com.

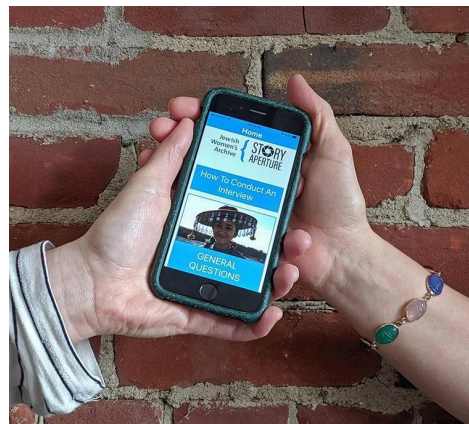




Photo found on Creative Commons: [link](#)

Belonging

by Alla Bozarth

The small plot of ground
on which you were born
cannot be expected
to stay forever
the same.
Earth changes,
and home becomes different
places.
You took flesh
from clay
but the clay
did not come
from just one
place.
To feel alive,
important, and safe,
know your own waters
and hills, but know
more.
You have stars in your bones
and oceans
in blood.
You have opposing
terrain in each eye
you belong to the land
and sky of your first cry,
you belong to infinity.

"Beyond" found in [Stars In Your Bones](#) Emerging Sign Posts on Your Spiritual Journey



Photo of Gilmore Park by Marly Sweeney

From my mother-in-law Marlaina Kreinin who died Friday, March 27. She was a poet and a prophet.

Earth Citizen

I consider myself an Earth Citizen
This allegiance transcends any other,
A life enhancing Earth
Is my transport to every way station.
I see as I embark
On my custodial Journey
A patchwork of beauty and caring
Energized and preserved.
I see also once-proud
Creation...Bludgeoned
Defaced, and Convoluted toward death
The leaf wilting, the branch withering.
The root beginning to atrophy
Pause and tremble
For our children,
The stock of our future,
Our insurance that someone
Will enter the Promised Land.
Listen...the alarm is sounding
More children
Poisoned
Handicapped
Hungry
Abused

Weep for the species that
Does not love Its Mother

Copyright 1990, Marlaina Kreinin

read or listen. I have two Rebecca Solnit cites for you. The first is a podcast, "On Being" with Kritsa Tippit, and another, one of Solnit's many books.

<https://onbeing.org/programs/rebecca-solnit-falling-together/>

Rebecca Solnit. A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster.

I am also very fond of Rachel Naomi Remen's books. She is a Jewish Buddhist.

My Grandfather's Blessing: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging. (New York Riverhead Books, 2000)

Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal. (New York, Riverhead Books, 1996)

Here is the link to [WWOZ](#) to find their live music performances. I highly recommend [Don Vappie](#) on his porch in the morning telling stories and in the early evening playing.

Finally, in case you missed the March posts, here is a brief overview of the amazing Jewish women we highlighted.

Feel free to email or message us through our [Facebook page](#) to ask questions or suggest an organization to highlight. If you want to share a story or photo about the women we feature, go to <http://nolajewishwomen.tulane.edu/tell-a-story/>.



Clara Marx Schwarz, 1908-1976

After World War II, Clara Schwarz ran an important refugee program for the City of New Orleans, the Port and Dock Program, an interdenominational effort that met ships coming into the port with thousands of displaced persons. Women from each denomination met the ships and, after a warm meal or sandwiches, either carried people to the train for their next destination or helped them settle locally. Clara Schwarz organized many Jewish women volunteers who met refugee ships at the port of New Orleans. Sara Stone noted that 5,700 Jewish persons were processed through the Port in the three years of the program

For more information on Clara Schwarz, click below

<http://nolajewishwomen.tulane.edu/social-justice/clara-schwarz/>

Lucille Jacoby Blum, 1904-2007

Do you have a photo of Clara Schwarz or know family members that might have

Lucile Blum lived most of her life in New Orleans, but she never forgot the lesson of the Tensas Parish experience of Mississippi River flooding when she was in her early teens. She claimed this memory as one of the reasons she became a principal actor in providing cultural opportunities for as many people as possible. One of her last efforts was called, “This is Our World, This is Our School” and was modeled on a UNICEF project about children in war zones. In Louisiana, she wanted to give the same attention to children living among violence. To read the full post, click [HERE](#).



Luba Bersadsky Glade, 1922-2009

Born in Romania, Glade came to the U.S. when she was only a year old and considered herself as a lifelong New Orleanian. She was known for her exuberance of spirit and her nurturing of gallery owners such as Arthur Roger and Joshua Paillet. To read the full post, click [HERE](#).

one? We’d love to have one. Upload at to <http://nolajewishwomen.tulane.edu/tell-a-story/>

Help to support community power, and 100% Resilient and Renewable energy for New Orleans.

Call, or email your City Council Members:

Jason Rogers Williams At Large (504) 658-1070 jasonwilliams@nola.gov	Helena Moreno At Large (504) 658-1060 Helena.moreno@nola.gov
District A Joe Giarrusso (504) 658-1010 Joseph.Giarrusso@nola.gov	District B Jay Banks (504) 658-1020 Jay.H.Banks@nola.gov
District C Kristen Palmer (504) 658-1030 Kristin.Palmer@nola.gov	District D Jared Brosset (504) 658-1040 councildistrictd@nola.gov
District C Kristen Palmer (504) 658-1030 Kristin.Palmer@nola.gov	

 learn more at **EFNO.ORG**

Lift Louisiana and the Energy Future New Orleans

In conjunction with our newsletters, we highlight two organizations on the front lines of reproductive and environmental justice work.

[**Lift Louisiana**](#) has provided a resource guide on how Coronavirus is affecting Louisiana women, many of whom are out of work. For more information, click [HERE](#) and pass along this valuable information to those who need it.

[**Energy Future New Orleans \(ENFO\)**](#), pushed the New Orleans City Council's Utility Committee to commit to 100% renewable energy by 2040. The committee failed to pass the Renewable Portfolio Standard put forth by EFNO but declared its intention to achieve renewable energy goals. The work continues - get in touch with your councilperson to support community power and renewable energy. For more information on what a Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard is, click [HERE](#)

We learned of some inaccuracies in last month's post on Jane Buchsbaum. We apologize for those mistakes, here is the corrected profile:



Ruth Shapiro Kullman, b. 1951

Under Kullman's chairmanship, the city's Planned Parenthood organization launched a unique program that delivered women's healthcare to those living in the St. Thomas housing development. In 2002, Kullman used her personal journey to explain her pro-choice/pro-women advocacy in a letter of support for the reelection of United States Senator Mary Landrieu. To read the full post click [HERE](#).



Jane Kessler Buchsbaum, b. 1937

Jane Buchsbaum is a champion of civil rights. As a founding member of the Commission on Racial Cooperation, (CRC) she helped integrate Audubon Park. She was the first woman Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans from 1982 to 1992. She was a founding member of the Coalition Against Racism and Nazism that fought the rise of Louisiana State Senator David Duke. Read the full corrected post [HERE](#).



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

Finally, we welcome [donations](#) as we continue to build out the site and respond to your ideas of how our project can benefit you and the larger New Orleans community.

Thank you for your time in reading this email and for honoring these women! You will, of course, have opportunities to subscribe and unsubscribe to newsletters and posts.

With appreciation,

Rosalind Hinton and Josh Scal

Curator, I'dor, v'dor Exhibition, and Communications Coordinator

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#)



Photo of Gilmore Park by Marly Sweeney