



Louisiana Environmental Justice Voices

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Louisiana Environmental Justice Project

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ACTIVISTS LEARN TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

By Steve Roberts

On September 25, over 20 community and Sierra Club activists from Holy Cross, St. James Parish, Chalmette, New Orleans, and Baton Rouge gathered together under the umbrella of the Sierra Club to attend an all day workshop on cross-cultural communication. The workshop was presented at the Holiday Inn in LaPlace. Dr. Lance Hill, adjunct History professor at Tulane University, and Executive Director of the Southern Institute for Education and Research., facilitated.

The goal of the workshop was to enhance our communication skills as community leaders and activists. It is easy for us all to recall listening to that scientist, mathematician, or engineer who is brilliant at his or her craft. But communicating with them can be like listening to the school-teacher from the Peanuts cartoon talk! "Excuse me. I do realize you are educated, but did you

just say 'wah wah wah-wah, wah wah wah-wah?'" Therefore, I submit that the ability to effectively communicate is as important as knowledge itself.

Now before you nod off here, let me say that this in no way was typical of other workshops. This workshop was about the most fun any of us ever had at a meeting. The presenter was absolutely hilarious by offering personal anecdote with a healthy side of deadpan. Indeed I have spent money at comedy clubs on lesser comics.

Hill stressed the importance of active listening in communication and often split us up into diverse groups for different exercises. We practiced one listening exercise where the person speaking had their back to the listener, which made

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MALEK-WILEY EARNS AWARD AT STATE-WIDE CONFERENCE

Darryl Malek-Wiley, the Sierra Club's Louisiana Environmental Justice organizer, received the Ramona Stevens Solidarity Award on October 2nd at the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) conference. The award recognizes exceptional efforts to build alliances between labor and environmental groups. Malek-Wiley was honored for 30 years of activism working with communities along the Mississippi River, helping them fight the causes of toxic pollution in their areas.

LEAN Executive Director.

The award is named after



Darryl Malek-Wiley (middle) receives award from Jerry Speir (left) and Mary Lee Orr (right) of LEAN.

"Darryl has been instrumental in empowering a lot of people over the years. We thought it was only fitting that he should be honored for his long career of service. He has never wavered in his commitment to protecting environmental resources and public health," said Mary Lee Orr,

Ramona Stevens, the wife of a BASF worker who was locked out of his job in the BASF labor struggle. Spurred to fight environmental and social injustice, Ramona went on to work for LEAN as a researcher of environmental permits and a community organizer.

REMINDER: Submit your articles & creative writing for the November Louisiana Environmental Justice Voices by Friday, Nov. 5th!

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Don't forget to Vote on November 2nd!!

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NEWS

On October 6th, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) ordered the installation of monitors that will find ozone-causing compounds at 16 industries in the five parish area. Additionally, six industries in North Baton Rouge were ordered to keep record of all pollutants released, to determine the origin of ozone-causing emissions and amount being released.

The Sierra Club applauds Governor Blanco for this announcement. We would like to see more monitors at facilities along the Chemical Corridor to obtain more accurate information about emissions in our communities. To thank the governor and ask for air monitors in your neighborhood, send a letter to:

Honorable Kathleen Babineaux Blanco
Governor of Louisiana
P. O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH:
American Rhetoric's Top 100 Speeches
[http://www.americanrhetoric.com/
top100speechesall.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html)

Communication *(from page 1)*

communicating effectively very awkward and just plain hard. When we analyzed our experiences in the large group it came to light that the speakers in this exercise felt many of the same frustrating emotions of the disenfranchised.

We learned that listening is an active approach to hearing and it comes as a challenge to most people. Along with listening, it is important for us to consider each other's background, including religion, customs, political alliances, and values. If one can understand a person's background, then he or she can grasp that person's motivation. If one can communicate effectively, dialogue and negotiation become pleasant. If all parties communicate effectively, results are the reward.

Thanks to Lance and the Sierra Club, I feel very strongly in saying that everyone who attended this workshop left as a more polished eco-warrior. We are each a little closer to victory in our many different and worthwhile battles.

UPCOMING EVENTS Election Day

Make your voice heard & **VOTE** on November 2nd!!

Join the Sierra Club for Lunch!

The Sierra Club– Baton Rouge office invites all environmentally minded folks to join us for our monthly brown bag lunch. The next lunch will be on November 9th. Please RSVP to mara.cohen@sierraclub.org or 225-925-8650.