Building Transparency & Accountability for Gulf Coast Communities

8th Annual Restore America’s Estuaries
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New Orleans, Louisiana

Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy

@GCCLPLA
#LouisianaRising
About Us:

Mission:
The Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy is a non-profit, public-interest law firm and justice center promoting structural shifts toward climate justice and ecological equity communities of color on the frontline of climate change.

Theory of Change:
(Stabilize) Legal Services
(Build) Community Training & Facilitation
(Support) Local Leadership Development
(Engage) Grassroots/Human Rights Advocacy
Our Work: Ecological Equity

Voting Rights

Economic Justice

Land Sovereignty

Disaster Migrant Rights

Climate Justice
The Gulf coast is ground zero for extreme energy extraction and the climate disasters that result. From Katrina, to the BP oil disaster, to the recent unprecedented flooding in Southern Louisiana - indigenous peoples, historic Black communities, Vietnamese fisherfolk, new immigrant communities, and low-income communities of all ethnicities across the Gulf South are at the intersection of climate catastrophe, economic inequality, and political disenfranchisement.
Defining Discrimination
HUNTING INDIANS IN MASSACHUSETTS: A SCOUTING JOURNAL OF 1758
ROBERT FRANCIS SEYBOLT

In 1757, the Great and General Court of Massachusetts made a new resolution to rid the colony of the “Indian enemy.” The bounty on scalps was increased from £250 to £300, a sum likely to inspire the needy as well as the adventurous. Scalp-hunting was not only a sporting pastime: it was a profitable business.

1 The Acts and Resolves of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay (Boston, 1869-1911), III, 218 (passed October 14, 1744): bounty of £100 for killing and scalping an Indian.

2 Ibid., III, 342 (passed April 21, 1747): £250.

A comparison of professional rewards in money may be of interest. See Boston Record Commissioners’ Reports, XIV, 307-308 (Town meeting, May 10, 1757): “Voted that the Sum of One hundred and twenty Pounds be allowed and paid unto Mr. Peleg Wawall for his Salary as Master of the North Grammar School for the ensuing Year . . . One hundred and twenty Pounds to be allowed and paid unto Mr. John Lovell for his Salary as Master of the South Grammar School the ensuing Year . . . One hundred Pounds to be allowed and paid unto Mr. David Jeffries for his Services as Treasurer of the Town the year past, and for all his Expenses in that Office.”
Structural Discrimination
(Institutionalized Racism)

✓ public policies (laws),
✓ institutional practices,
✓ cultural representations, and
✓ other norms

work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.

It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.

Overt Structural Discrimination + Climate-Based Disaster
Deepwater Horizon Settlement
13 Claim Types

1. Seafood Compensation Program
2. Individual Economic Loss
3. Individual Periodic Vendor or Festival Vendor Economic Loss
4. Business Economic Loss
5. Start-up Business Economic Loss
6. Failed Business Economic Loss
7. Coastal Real Property Damage
8. Wetlands Real Property Damage
9. Real Property Sales Loss
10. Subsistence Loss
11. VoO Charter Payment
12. Vessel Physical Damage
13. Medical Claims
Southeast Louisiana Economic Loss Zones
Case Study: 2010 BP/ Transocean/ Halliburton Oil Release

- Oil release not admitted for several days. 5 million barrels of heavy crude released into the Gulf of Mexico.
- Prison labor used in clean-up without proper training or safety gear (MS/LA).
- Required Hazmat training offered free and unannounced to public in majority white Parishes (St. Tammany/ Jefferson).
- Vietnamese-Americans not hired for clean-up work (class action pending).
- State Tribes not allowed to negotiate clean-up of traditional lands.
- Oil soaked material placed in municipal landfills (near poor people; not in toxic landfill).
BP'S BILL
What BP owes the Gulf South

Loss to one Oysterman's Business in Terrebonne Parish: $9,000,000.00
Injury and death of birds: $9,385,000.00
Injury and death of endangered Gulf Turtles, Kemp's Ridley & Kemp: $16,029,000.00
Injury and death of marine mammals: $27,400,000.00
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries five-year testing and marketing program for seafood: $173,000,000.00
Cleanup cost beyond what BP committed to pay: $2,009,000,000.00
Decline in real estate value: $1,320,000,000.00
Restoration/repair of Louisiana Coastal wetlands: $6,336,000,000.00
Injury and damage to human health: $20,000,000,000.00
Decline in tourism: $23,000,000,000.00
Damage and loss of fisheries: $30,000,000,000.00
Clean Water Act Oil and Gas Fines: $30,500,000,000.00
Oil Pollution Act Fines (NEPA): $62,320,000,000.00
Total: $179,702,714,000.00

Gulf Communities deserve industries that make communities stronger.
Ensuring Justice in the NEXT Disaster

✓ Training on unconscious race bias and structural discrimination.
✓ Get to know/support the community-based organizations organizing residents for a democratic response.
✓ Connect your work to promoting justice in disaster.
✓ Remedy/Rebuild community WITH community. Build People Power.
✓ Don’t maintain/build back the social imbalance. Courageously dismantle it.
If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

- Desmond Tutu
If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.
Contact Us

Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy

620 Oak Harbor Blvd., Ste. 203
Slidell, Louisiana 70458
985.643.6186 (phone)
info@gccllp.org (e-mail)
www.gccllp.org (web)

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