



Four Tuesdays in June: *Mourning the Gulf Stream*

The news on April 20, 2010 was that BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico had exploded and between 11 and 15 out of the 126 crew members were reported missing. The news on April 22, 2010 was that environmental damage would be minimal because Deepwater was an *exploration* rig, not a *production* rig. On April 26 officials tried to call the 1,000 barrels of oil per day that were permeating the sea a *leak* and not a *spill*. So on April 28, they set the sea on fire. April 29 it is revealed that the *leak* is *spewing* 5,000 barrels of oil per day, and that the *slick* had reached the Mississippi Delta. A strong odor *blankets* the Louisiana coast and metro New Orleans: *The Katrina of Smell*. On May 1st independent non-profit organizations started analyzing the radar and satellite imagery and announced that the *leak* was *spewing* 25,000 barrels per day. May 4th, mainstream news sources respond to pro-offshore drilling politicians who want people to question the *spill* and why it is such a "big deal." May 8: Containment dome: *Failure*. May 12: BP releases underwater pictures of the *leak*. Pictures of oil soaked pelicans and dead fish. Protests *spark* around the country. May 14: "Intubate": *Failure*. May 24: Plug with cement and mud called *Top Kill Operation: Failure*. June 3: Dome the leak and siphon the oil to a tank on the surface. Fails to stop the *leak* but does capture 119,000 barrels of oil. June 15: leaking 60,000 barrels per day (that's like the Exxon Valdez, every four days). June 28: Activists, artists, writers dump molasses over the steps of the Tate Modern to protest a party celebrating BP's patronage of the museum. August 5: "Static Kill" operation pumps tons of mud and cement into the drill pipe. Success! Sept. 19: The *leak* is *killed*. The news is stopped. The long-term effects are yet to come:

Considering Options for Controlling the BP Blowout in the Gulf of Mexico

Because the Gulf Stream shoots a strong current into the subtropical gyre

Which circles around the North Equatorial current

And connects the Caribbean current

To the Azores Current which branches into the North Atlantic current to the left

And the Canary Current to the right which flows into the North Equatorial Current to the right

And the Equatorial Counter Current to the left, which swirls around

Returning to the Equatorial Counter Current which flows along the North Brazil Current connecting to the Guyana Current which flows to the Caribbean Current until it reaches the Gulf Stream,

Linking the Subtropical Gyre to the North Atlantic Current,

Intersected by the Subpolar Gyre flowing all the way to the top of the Earth.

Because these currents encircle Subtropical and Subpolar Gyres on either end of the Earth,

Take the ashes of every oil guzzling person

Oilman, poet, shrimper, foreman, and me:

What else will clean these waters but our bones

Made of Calcium, phosphorus, sodium, collagen

And saturated with oil they are

Stronger than any dispersant,

To sweep the interconnected currents,

Clog the oil in the offshore drills,

And return it to where it belongs:

The molten centermost core of the Earth.

Tuesday June 1: Molasses on sunflower. BP Gas station corner of McGuinness Blvd. and Greenpoint Ave. Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

I couldn't take the news any more so instead of turning it off I stood in mourning for two hours with oil drenched sunflower and oil drenched BP logo. Poured molasses over the sunflowers in front of all the people getting gas -- the attendant came out and said "who's going to clean that up?" Irony. Then he called the cops -- but it was just me and one other woman so they couldn't do anything - if there were 3 they could have kicked us off the property. The policeman was very nice and said, "I'm on your side. But could you please just clean the molasses off the sidewalk before you go?"

Jenn McCreary: OK. I guess I just really don't understand how protesting at a small business owned by a local resident who employs others, pays taxes, provides for his/her family, & is NOT owned by BP, is..."sticking it to the man."

Or how it's "ironic" to create a mess to be cleaned up (with water!) by a gas station attendant who is probably making \$9 or \$10 an hour.

It would be "hypocritical" for the gas station attendant to ask who was going to clean up the mess if he were responsible in the first place for the oil spill, or had any power in this situation. Not "ironic."

But he didn't. & he doesn't. & it seems frankly seems both shortsighted & cruel to punish franchise owners of gas stations when your upset is with BP Global.

Or, one could consider, instead, protesting our President, who, while recently discussing the administration's response to the spill, also touted a Senate climate bill that would provide huge financial incentives to states that open their coasts to drilling, making a repeat of the spill more likely.

Kristin Prevallet Thanks for the feedback. The BP logo is stained - forever - and whether locally owned or not it represents environmental genocide. There are many protests (including the President) that all need to happen simultaneously.

Jenn McCreary I completely agree that BP as a brand is...well, the new Exxon, I guess. This type of catastrophe could have just as easily happened to any other corporation engaged in offshore drilling. & Exxon Mobil hangs tough in the top 10 of environmental polluters. Chevron has yet to clean up their Rhode Island-sized catastrophe in the Amazon.

Likewise, it's hard not to feel personally

implicated in this. We own a car which Chris drives to his job, 40 minutes outside of Philly. We take public transportation, which shares the burden, but is hardly clean. Our house is gas heated.

It's hard not feel like a member of a country of junkies, furious that our dealer's meth-lab blew up & burned down the neighborhood...but still want/need the drugs.

Protests, yes. The American Power Act's provisions for expanding offshore drilling are more than a little troubling.

& LA Senator Mary Landrieu just last month: "The risks associated with offshore oil and gas drilling are far outweighed by the benefits."

Seriously?

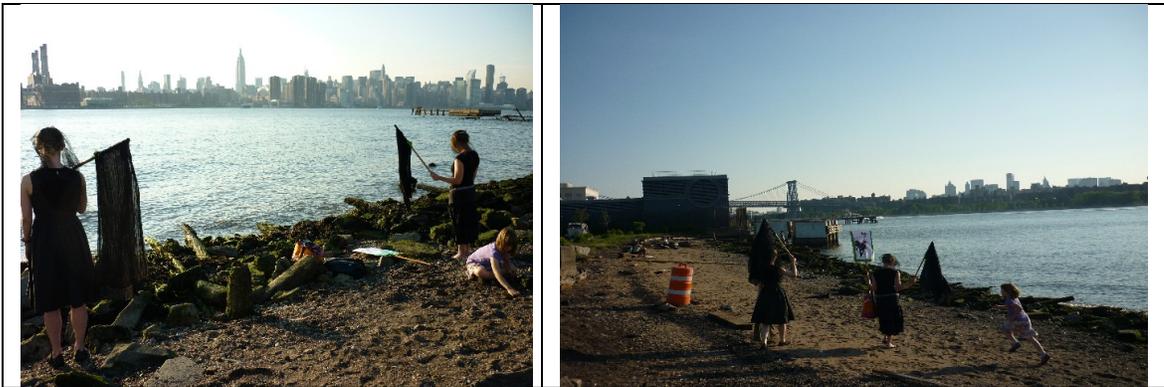
My disconnect with boycotting of individual fuel stations is that the little guy gets f**ked (again, as always). Individuals who sunk their own money into a stand-alone station who have no connection with BP Global other than a franchise contract that requires them to operate under the BP logo. The BP near us has covered most of its signage with Dunkin Donuts banners (it's also a donut shop).

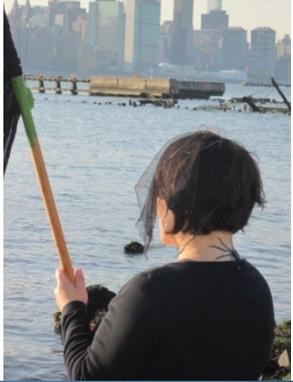
Rachel Levitsky Jenn-I don't read Kristin's performance as a boycott of the station. I read it as bringing the image into the local-ness of our addictions that you speak of. Thinking there is a way that infusing these images on the quotidian things we do without thinking changes the way we do them, adds thinking. Everyone of us is implied, including the owners of small businesses, and all of us tax-payers. And now I just learned, those of us who like our seltzer in a can. BP owning 30% of aluminum can production. Who knew? Either we as a mass reach the point where we refuse and demand

that things are organized differently or the worst way that we are already doing things will continue.

[Kristin Prevallet](#) That's so true - the gas, the donuts, the heat, every f**king plastic thing... we're enGulfed with oil at every level of our existence. bp is but one link in a huge system -- organism -- of dependence. But this current crisis is thanks to the gas company who has the prettiest logo -- which might be a good thing as far as raising consciousness is concerned... but I don't know -- I just don't know what else to do.

Tuesday June 8: Find living waters in Brooklyn. Bushwick Inlet State Park (Williamsburg, Brooklyn)





Excuse me! No Soliciting in a State Park.

We're not soliciting. We're just standing here, in mourning.

But you can't have any signs in a State Park.

Is that a Yankee's cap? Isn't that kind of like a sign?

That's different.

Oh. Just give us 20 minutes?

No. I'm calling the police.

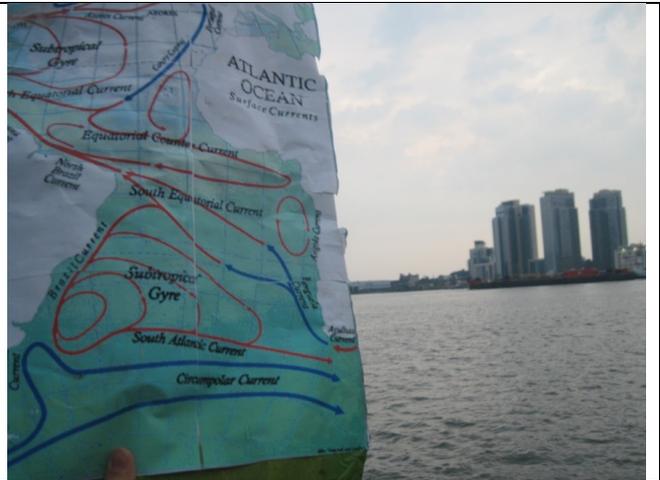
Ok. We'll put down the signs (but not the black flags). And we'll just stand here. Is that ok?

It's ok. But then you need to leave.

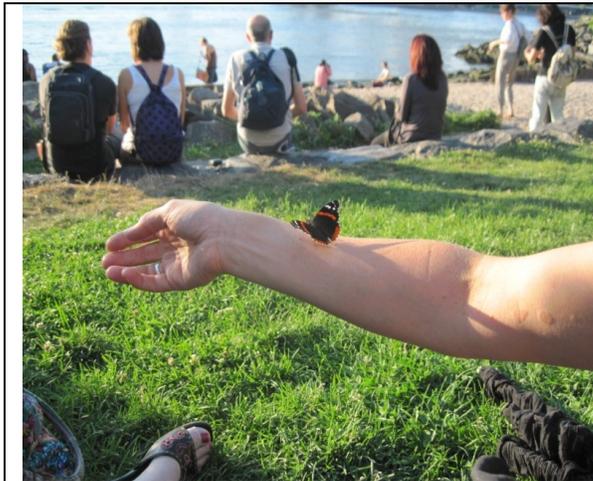
(We stayed, for just a little while.)

Tuesday June 15: Find living waters in Manhattan. East Village Promenade.

The early evening clouds had just started to cool the heat of the day. A few joggers. Lovers making out on a park bench. And us. Standing for 30 minutes in silence before it started to pour down rain. Waters to waters.



Tuesday June 22: Find living waters in Brooklyn. Fulton Ferry Empire State Park.



So, what does it all add up to? An action. And does every action have a reaction? No, it doesn't seem like it. Sometimes an action is just that: stand silently. I mean, the Gulf is so far away. No one in New York stopped eating shrimp. Yea, I think it was more the reminder that there are people still out there who are powerfully effected by these issues, and aren't content to simply talk about it. It is such a catastrophe. But sometimes you have to go and manifest your sadness and frustration. Yes, that feeling of powerlessness. Right. Just do something with that energy, even if it doesn't change the situation. But you don't know. Something might have happened. You don't know what the effects are. True – they don't come back to you as an equal reaction. But it's better than doing nothing. Yea – resist inertia. That feeling – do something with it. Ok right. That's what it felt like.

BIO:

Kristin Prevallet is the author of *I, Afterlife: Essay in Mourning Time* (Essay Press, 2007). This essay documents The Gulf Stream Mourning Action – a weekly convergence of a few people standing in meditation for one hour at different public shores in New York City. The East River may be far away from the BP oil catastrophe and not directly affected by it, but the fact is that all of the Earth's waters are linked by a complex network of currents. And as oil continues to catalyze one tragedy after another (from the Gulf Wars to the Gulf Disaster) this weekly vigil became an emotional reminder to all of us (and, hopefully, to a few passers-by) of the death and destruction (wars and environmental genocide) caused by our cultural addiction to oil. "Please let's rethink oil" is not a slogan – it's a state of mind.

With Laura Elrick, Rachel Levitski, Marcella Durand, Atticus Fierman, Brenda Coultas, Laura Dobbins, and Sophie Prevallet.

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