The origins of the River Road Resistance Cocktail

By Laura Murphy

I grew up in rural California's gold country. My family ran a flying business, 24/7! We rarely sat down for a meal and conversation. But I learned to see from the air and to read a landscape.

After college, I joined Volunteers In Asia, and earnestly set off with my first passport, my Nikon, and some practice building stoves...

…which weren't useful on Java. But I found a feast of flavors and festive food! Eating together to build consensus—I value that lesson from my environmentalist colleagues.

MANY YEARS LATER

Fast forward many years…more meals, passports, trips, studies, work, and research in Ecuador, Brazil, Guatemala, and Kenya.

I am a professor. We talk about the bad news of failed aid, poverty, & waste in class—but also powerful ideas...

Ideas such as: that the poor in this Kenyan village where I have been working might devise their own solutions,

with their tools and seeds and ingenuity.

And that good ideas can come out of Africa, such as from these coders at a recent Pizza Friday in iHub, Nairobi.

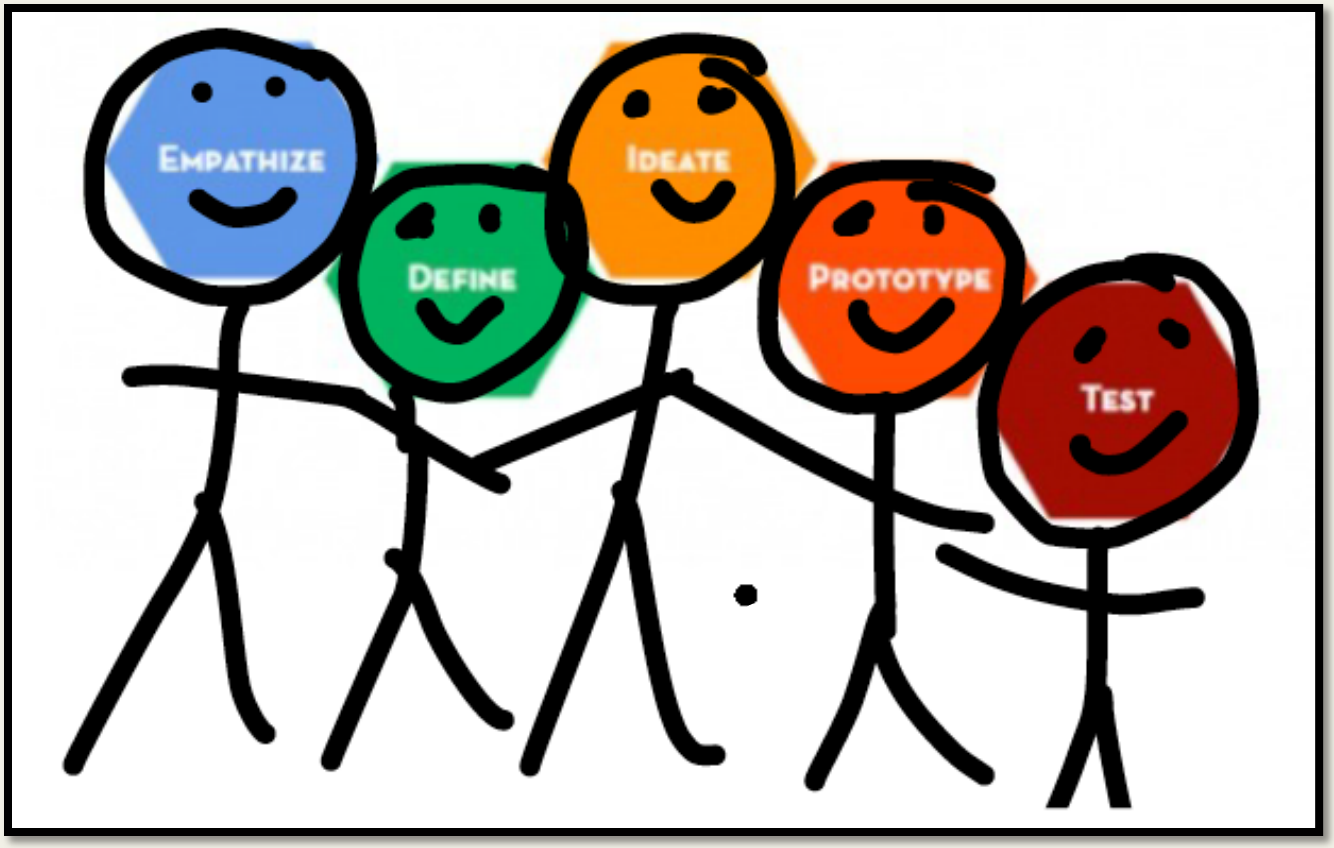
That inspired conversations and good food...

...and magical celebrations—can revive us!

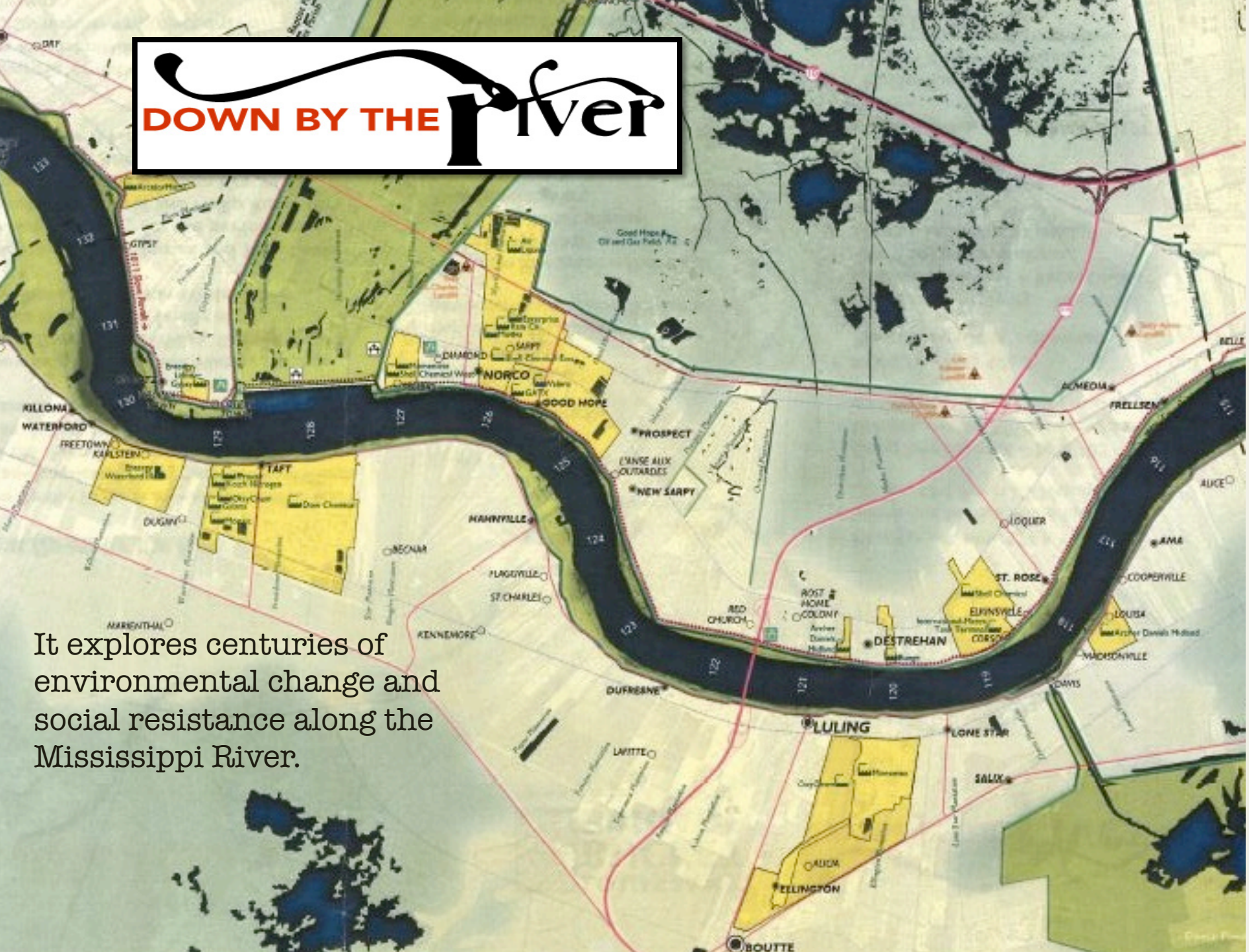
This image source: circleofblue.org

...and help solve “wicked” problems of oil pollution in the Amazon and the Gulf, plastic on Indian Ocean beaches. These are all connected to us every day.

Design Conversations[CC]



That we can **design better conversations** to find solutions to complex problems! My friends at the environmental justice group, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, heard me speak last year, and asked for help on their *Down By The River* project.


DOWN BY THE River
It explores centuries of environmental change and social resistance along the Mississippi River.
NORCO
GOOD HOPE
PROSPECT
NEW SARPY
TAFT
DESTREHAN
ST. ROSE
LULING
LONE STAR
SALIX
DUFRESNE
BOUTTE
RESTON
LAPLACE
KENNER
METAIRIE
GRETNA
HARVEY
ALGIERS
CHALMETTE
ARABI
VIOLET
POYDRAS
PORT SULPHUR
BELLE CHASSE
PLAQUEMINES
VENICE
BURAS
HOLLY BEACH
CAMERON
CREOLE
GRAND CHENIER
LAKE CHARLES
SULPHUR
WESTLAKE
GIBSTLAND
MORGAN CITY
BERWICK
PATTERSON
FRANKLIN
JEANERETTE
NEW IBERIA
LAFAYETTE
OPELOUSAS
EUNICE
CROWLEY
RAYNE
ABBEVILLE
KAPLAN
GUEYDAN
LAKE ARTHUR
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ABBEVILLE
KAPLAN
GUEYDAN
LAKE ARTHUR
JENNINGS

Modern chemical plants have replaced sugar plantations, keeping residents poor and sick, polluting the air and land, and tying all of us to an unhealthy, global petrochemical complex.

My friends were launching an alternative bike tour along the river road to raise money –

it had to sell!

A design challenge emerged: What might be the **meal experience** for our riders cycling through this landscape and this history? Our Design Krewe immersed ourselves in transport and logistics and looked for inspiration!

We sourced ingredients, drafted menus, tested portable refreshments for the day. Solutions had to be low-cost, sustaining, and evocative.

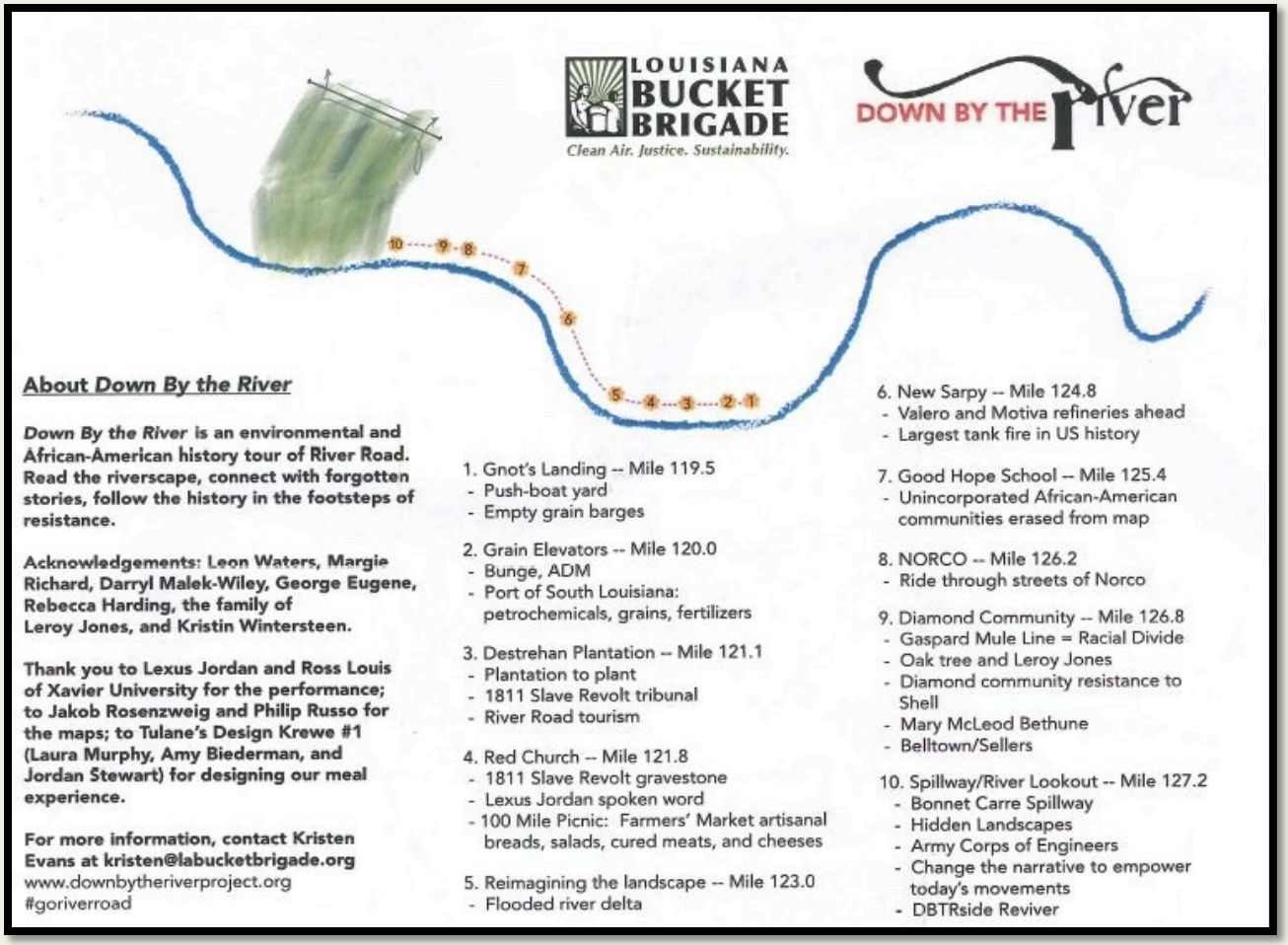
Our team pulled long shifts to meet the deadline, while river refineries burned our midnight oil.

The first bike tour launched with paying customers! Visitors cycled the levee under the sun and stopped for a picnic. They inhaled noxious odors spewing from industrial plants and wafting over homes. They heard stories of the 1811 slave revolt—the largest in US history!

River Road Resistance Cocktail

1 part Old New Orleans Rum
1/3 part Steen's Cane Sugar Syrup
1 part Cold Brew Coffee
2 parts Brown's Dairy ½ & ½
Serve it up on ice.

We designed the **River Road Resistance Cocktail** for just this moment and place. Hot and tired riders pulled in at the Bonnet Carre Spillway and relaxed into chairs on the levee built by slave labor. They gazed out over the river that once carried rum, sugar, and coffee beans as they sipped our reviving concoction of local production.



With the riders refreshed, conversation flowed again; and tales of resistance "down by the river" will be remembered!

THE END.