

The idea of organizing encounters with ecological and citizen initiatives during our trip came from our current readings and thoughts. Since the beginning of this process, we wanted at least one of these meetings to be with **a zero waste initiative**. It is a subject that concerns us, especially since we started to integrate its 5 principles in our daily life two years ago.



Of course, there were cities on our itinerary known for their involvement in zero waste, as San Francisco. The beautiful Californian was a precursor in this field, and there is a lot of communication around it. However, every city in the USA is not as advanced as San Francisco is in this area. Nevertheless, citizens everywhere, as you and us, get together to talk about their vision and of a transition of their city towards zero waste. It is the case in New Orleans (NOLA). We contacted the association **No Waste NOLA**, created in 2015. After a few email exchanges, we had the chance to meet its president, **Max Ciolino**, around a very cold lemonade.

THE BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT

The association was born from a revelation Max had about plastic bags: *“No Waste NOLA started about 2 years ago. What happens, was I found out that Austin, Texas, just had banned the single use plastic bag, which I didn’t know we could do that. It never occurred to me.”* This idea hit him so much that he decided to launch the same kind of movement in his city. He engaged himself in this adventure with a friend from law school. They started to gather **people wanting to ban plastic bags in NOLA**.

But No Waste NOLA became more than this: *“We were asking ourselves 2 questions at the beginning, which were:*

- *Are we just a plastic bag organization?*
- *Are we just a NOLA organization?*

We decided to advocate for zero-waste policies generally, with the plastic bag being just one of them [...]. But we also are in the process right now of launching No Waste Louisiana. We are working with peoples in Lafayette to set up a charter there right now. We are hoping to have a state level chapter and running some local chapters that are advocating for local level initiatives that will help reduce waste in cities and town of Louisiana. But their idea doesn’t stop here! The day of our meeting with Max, **No Waste Louisiana was launched and a new charter in Lafayette at the same time**. This means that the association is now working at state level to the association with local offices. Obviously, this is an important step proving that their association is growing. And also that a lot more people are getting concerned about zero waste.

TO GET UP AFTER A DEFEAT

Unfortunately, everything did not happen as planned during No Waste NOLA's journey. *'We advocated for [the ban of plastic bags] about a year and a half. We got ordonnance to go to a committee hearing. But we got shut down.* Max explained to us that **South Louisiana's economy is led by the petrochemical industry.** In this context, the association's goal did not please them and the ordonnance was turned down without being submitted to a vote...

"So people were more motivated than ever to try to stop the waste in the city. Just to be smarter, stronger and more effective in how we did it."

"And I, as the president of the organization, was very worried that part of the group would back up and call it a day. But instead when we sat down, we were already thinking about the thing that we could improve to achieve our goal. So we have being building partnership with other organizations through movies screening and presentation, making sure that we get our message out stronger." For a young association such as theirs, to face such a failure could be a **real hard blow.** But the people involved knew to get up, and to recognize their mistakes in order to go forward.

THE ASSOCIATION'S ACTIONS

The actions of the twenty (or so) members of No Waste NOLA are simple, but effective: be present on the associative and cultural scene **to promote zero waste and the arms of disposable plastic.** It goes from tabling in events to screen movies. *"We screen movies about the arm of disposable plastic, especially at organizations around the city. And I think other the past 6 months that really pick up a lot. People call me to come and screen a movie and give a talk to their organization."*

For this, people need to be involved a lot. No one lies about it, **but the goal is to make a maximum of citizens known about the association.** But does this work? Are the New Orleanians sensitive to their actions?

"I don't think we have this tidal of zero waste. We have still got to build that ourselves."

"I can say pretty confidently that many more people know about zero waste initiatives and about the arms of disposal plastic, because we have been involved." Sometimes, progress takes time and we have to face failure. But **small steps allow us to hang on our goal!** Moreover, the environmental context of South Louisiana can upset the life of its citizens and they are aware of it.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION IN NOLA

Max told us that **the situation of NOLA has deteriorated since Katrina in 2005**. Ground protections against severe weather are gone. And we don't know if the city will be able to get up after the next hurricane, when it comes. Moreover, [Louisiana loses a lot of land every day](#). Max is persuaded that citizens are aware of this and ask themselves more and more, *“How are we going to stop climate change from here in NOLA?” So I think it is here where zero waste is appealing. Because it allows us, as citizens, to make a difference. By making, at our scale, a fairly large city the most environmentally friendly possible.* It is an important point that Max raises. Because of their involvement in a cause like zero waste, **citizens feel that they are concretely taking actions** in the fight against climate change.


“So we are contributing in that way, and to have more people be aware as to how our actions are contributing to the loss of our land. And to our own security.”


No Waste NOLA is an inspiring example of what citizen's perseverance and coalition can look like. From a talk about the ban of plastic bags between school mate is born an association which enable inhabitants to be sensibilized.

This initiative promise a lot of beautiful things for New Orleans future.

Soon on our blog : SOLA Food COOP, a cooperative supermarket in South LA.

DEUX ÉVADÉS
ÉCOLOGIE VOYAGE AVENTURE DIALOGUE EQUIPEMENT SPORT

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