

eco~ INSTIGATOR

A PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

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**Towards attaining
"Transformation" through
Activism**

**Burning the Planet,
one COP at a time**

**Fiddling
at the COP**



The Eco~Instigator is a quarterly publication of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)

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IN THIS ISSUE

Home Run	3
Towards attaining "Transformation" through Activism	4
Feedback from Readers	9
Minerals and Wars at the Great Lakes	10
Don't Hate	12
On the Streets: 'What Does Re-source Democracy Mean to You?'	14
Any hope for Ogoniland on the Horizon?	15
Modern Foods: Taking a Second Look at GMO Food Policies in Nigeria	16
The Food We Want – Report from HS04	18
The Struggle For a Fair Climate Deal	23
Books to Read	25
From the Climate COP	
o Fiddling at the COP	29
o Burning the Planet, one COP at a time	33
Books to Read	37
Films / Documentaries to Watch	
News	38
Announcing Upcoming Events	40



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It is that time of year when magazines and newspapers name their Man/Woman of the Year. Selection of such individuals or things to be honoured never comes easy. Sometimes the choices are spot on; at other times they make you wonder what those who made decisions could have been thinking about. For us at Eco-Instigator it is easy to get the right winners at all times. Who is our Man/Woman of the Year? Our winners are all those in the trenches of struggles against environmental injustices.

2014 has been a memorable year for us at HOMEF. The exciting fronts were the Sustainability Academies and our engagement with communities. We brought you reports of some of those events in Eco-Instigator editions within the year. In our August edition we brought you the report of our third Sustainability Academy focusing on Turmoil in Africa under the filter of conflicts, pollution and climate change. It was also at those sessions that the books *Silence Would be Treason* and *Claim No Easy Victories* were publicly presented. At that Session, Firoze Manji became the fourth Fellow of our Sustainability Academy, adding to our list of incredible instigators and resource persons.

In this last edition for 2014 we serve you a rich menu of exciting articles and reports. The article by Chigbu and Amaefule examines how transformation to sustainability could be attained through activism. It is our hope that this article will get you thinking deeply about how scholarship can inspire action on the streets. The piece by Juan Lopez that we inexplicably left out of our last edition is published here. It reminds us of the roots of the conflicts and bloodshed in the Great Lakes region.

We bring you three articles on the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Mary Lou of the Global Forest Coalition wrote one of the pieces while the other is by yours truly. Read them. Do something to help step up action to halt the slide to further climate chaos. A proposed ALBA summit in Bolivia holds hope just as the one of 2010 helped to reshape focus after the derailment of Copenhagen. We will bring you more information in future editions.

We also bring you the information on our fourth Sustainability Academy as reported by Daramfon and Cadmus.

By 10 November 2015 the world will be marking the 20th Anniversary of the execution of the Ogoni ecological and minorities rights leaders. Our September 2015 edition will be dedicated to mark that anniversary as well as to honour martyrs of environmental justice struggles around the world.

Thanks for keeping faith with us. Keep reading your favourite magazine and do send us your feedback and articles for publication.

Have a fruitful 2015.

Until victory,

Nnimmo Bassey

TOWARDS ATTAINING “TRANSFORMATION TO SUSTAINABILITY” THROUGH ACTIVISM

Uchendu Eugene Chigbu & Chumah Amaefule

The concepts of Transformation and sustainability (T2S) dominated the agenda at a recently concluded Workshop in Potsdam, Germany. The Workshop entitled, Transformative Knowledge Workshop, was the first of a series of annual Transformative Knowledge Workshops funded by the International Social Science Council (ISSC). According to the ISSC, “The overarching aim of the workshop is to lay the foundation for the global Transformations Knowledge Trust” being developed through the ISSC's T2S Programme. It was this Workshop that provoked the thoughts expressed in this very short article.

We believe that the discussions held in that Workshop remains on-going. To even push the discussions further, we want express a viewpoint we hold truly important. That is, the view that the ideas behind issues relating to transformation and sustainability stand at the core of activism. The thinking behind our stand on this issue is a very simple one. Based on the current global development trends. Scenarios,

both transformation and sustainability are major causes for action by humanity. Viewing activism to represent perceptions, ideas or actions carried out on behalf of a cause; we think that the issue of T2S is achievable through activism. Put differently, we believe that activism has a very important role to play in the T2S process. The question that may come to mind now is, what is T2S? Next, we answer this question.

Understanding Transformation To Sustainability(t2s)

To grasp the idea behind T2S, one must first unpack the meanings embedded in its associated terms –transformation and sustainability. We use the word unpack here because the terms mean different things to different people. Most of all, they are very fluid when subjected to the rigours of time and space. So, it has many parts, various versions and are used for embarking on different missions by different people (including organisations and nations) in different places.

But we do not intend to maraud over their meanings here. We, therefore, will attempt to provide meanings that provide the simplest form of understanding for these terms. In this regard, we consider a transformation to mean “a fundamental change”. And we consider sustainability as a concept that represents “fulfilments in the present, as well as the future”. We have provided general ideas here. When one puts these phrases into context, then the terms become more meaningful.

We derive our notion of T2S from the meanings of the two terms. In this regard, we view T2S as a process of influencing an institutionalised status quo in a society towards a radically new or innovative change on the present, as well as the future generations and situation. We consider such a change to be transformative because it leads to different (and new) direction that is usually profound. This usually comprises of different elements –economic, cultural, social, political, environmental or ecological, as well as ideological. It is an all-embracing issue. However, in whichever way one views the issue, activism has a role to play in achieving any form of T2S. Next, we provide our reasons.

Activism Is Human Nature

The difference between many of us (those of us who are renowned “activists”) is that they have the guts to use this natural character in them to the benefit of humanity. Furthermore, they share highly uncompromising or radical concerns on the causes they fight for or against, and dedicate themselves towards eliminating or

improving situations or causes for humanity. Taylor Caldwell, an American author once said, “It is human nature to instinctively rebel at obscurity or ordinariness”. And as late Nigeria's environmental activist, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa (popularly known as Ken Saro-Wiwa), once said, “We all stand before history... We all stand on trial,” and as such should be “dedicated to a cause in which we have total belief and from which we cannot be blackmailed or intimidated.” This statement lays bare the mindset of an activist. Activists understand how to tune up that rebellious instinct in human nature for the benefit of their immediate society

or humanity. In most cases, they dedicate their intellectual and material resources in pursuance of a course they believe in. They are usually persons who answer to the call of nature –that of fighting for a course many others wished they could and bringing solace to society faced with specific challenges. They do this by putting into motion their human, spiritual, intellectual and material energies, and channeling it towards a specific cause. Succinctly put, activists are people that have been able to develop further their

human nature to rebel against situations or conditions they find inhuman.

Although a part of human nature, not all persons have well-developed activist instincts. As in all situations in life, practice makes for perfection. In addition, interests, situations, and conditions can bring out different kind of activism in people. For instance, maybe Ken Saro-Wiwa would probably not have been an activist (just maybe).

“we Consider A Transformation To Mean “a Fundamental Change”. And We Consider Sustainability As A Concept That Represents “fulfilments In The Present, As Well As The Future”.

According to him:

“Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization” (This was one of Saro Wiwa's statement before execution by hanging by the then Nigerian government).

From the above statement, it is clear that what tickled the activist in him was that he was appalled by the denigrating poverty a people who live on a richly endowed land. If not for this situation, maybe, he would have been more of a social or political activist than an environmental one. Maybe he would have simply known as one of those writers or intellectuals who cling to their pens and pipes in the privacy of their rocking chairs. No one knows. Maybe... maybe... we can only speculate at this point. However, what we do know is that the situation of his immediate society (environmental degradation) motivated him and few others to act—that is, activism. Bottom-line! Activism is part of human nature, and people like Ken Saro-Wiwa used that nature in them to try to transform their society. In Nigeria, many others, after him have continued on that route.

Activism Is An Art

Apart from the fact that the art provides one of the best mediums for transmitting activists' actions, activism is in itself art. Why? It is art because it involves the use of expressions, emotions, ideas, imagination and skills towards making constructive criticism or critiquing to influence the status quo for a transformative change to emerge. More so, if one were to view art in its traditional science, activism is fully part of it. It is a creative activity just like music, oratory, painting, literature, drama and dance. It usually involves a part or all of these different aspects of human creativity. The reason being that the arts depend largely on expression or application of human creative skill and imagination—either in visual or nonvisual forms. It is learnable over a period. It can be studied and taught.

The expression element in activism entails the communication of realities, ideas and emotions for transformative change—whether environmental, social, cultural, political, economic, etc. What we are saying here is that, activism is a multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary process. It is also a science. What makes it a unique kind of science is that, even when manifests as a science, it still mixes well with the arts. Salma Hayek, a Mexican and American film actress, once noted that art and activism go together naturally. According to her, “if you are an entertainer, you can have a voice, and if you have a voice, you can make a difference”.

Bottom-line! Activism is art because it presents a form of communication. The communication line and message are, however, shaped by the societal situations of the activist. Other factors that shape the message or style of communication include culture, experiences and techniques of the artist (activist). Hardly will you find an activist in today who is not involved in any of the arts –literature or some form of writing, speaking, organisation of events (e.g. campaign rallies), etc. We consider the organisation and management aspect of activism to be part of art, and art part of activism.

Activism Is A Science

A single concerned individual over a particular societal problem can talk, write, dramatize and make speeches concerning her/his ideas for change. But the support from other members of the society can lead to a transformation brought about by a single individual's ideas. So, is activism merely human nature and art? We disagree. In the way we see it, activism is also a science.

When one critically looks at what activists do (that is, to demand or incite action for achieving transformative change), it becomes clearer that activism goes beyond pure human nature and art. There are examples of activist-led science in the domain of sustainability sciences, particularly in the fields of political ecology and ecological economics. For instance, the concept of ecological debt originated from civil society activism. About three decades ago, civil society activists formulated the concept of the ecological debt due to the pressure being piled on developing countries to paying back their external financial debt. These activists started asking the critical question, “Who owes whom?” From another perspective, they concluded that developed countries have used up their share of global per capita carbon

emissions and have consumed their quota of space for greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. They concluded that developing countries are the creditors and not the debtors. Their reason was that the developed countries depend on natural resources that causes a lot of social and environmental harm in developing countries. The concept and knowledge about ecological debt in itself constitutes a science. Today, it is being promoted at the policy level as a major part of policies on climate change. The science of “ecological debt” which was born out of activism has led to many scientific productions. It is, therefore, worrying that anyone would consider activism not to be a science. Since science is about the production of knowledge, activist knowledge constitutes a genre of science in its right.

And since activism is about social change, science works in producing knowledge for making changes. Science and activism go hand-in-hand. And that is the reason there are scientist-activists and activist-scientists all over the world. Charles Darwin was a scientist-activist who said that “if the misery of the poor be not caused by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.” We consider science part of activism and activism part of science

Applying Activism Towards Transformation To Sustainability (t2s)

If activism is a natural, artistic and scientific affair, then it has the potential for being the driving force towards societal T2S. But before we get to that, two basic questions are: how do we achieve sustainability? How do we attain transformation? One of the ways of achieving sustainability involves reconciling public decisions and human actions concerning social, economic and environmental concerns in ways that will benefit all.

One of the ways for attaining transformation is to speak out or make the voices of those that need the transformation heard. This also includes making the message for transformation loud and understandable to those that should support or make a decision towards transformative change.

Transformations (both violent and non-violent radical social change) have always been part and parcel of human history. At the forefront of any transformation in history have been activists. For example, Karl Marx (a social scientist) was an activist, and his ideology dismantled capitalists' structures in many parts of the world. Famous activists in history include the likes of Marcus Garvey, Dorothy Height, Malcolm X, Mary Bethune, Martin Luther King Jr., Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Bob Marley, Wangari Maathai, John F. Kennedy, Alice Walker, Asra Nomani, Ken Saro Wiwa, Malala Yousafzai, etc. All of these people and thousands of others pushed (and are still pushing) for ideologies that affect (or will affect) all of us in transformative ways.

For instance, the abolition of slavery and apartheid were as result of transformations championed by many concerned activists. Apart from these, technological transformations have played a significant role in making the world the way it is today. In this regard, inventions such as the electric bulb, Internet, telephone and automobile (among many others) have made the world more liveable.

However, transformation is still needed in many other aspects of human living. For instance, there is a need for transformation of gender roles. This will involve changing social structures or revolutionizing categories and conceptions people about each other. Today, activists are still

fighting for transformation in this regard. And in achieving many aspirations for better human living –e.g. equitable distribution of natural resources, better environment, climate change, good governance, etc. So, activists have been one of the drivers of transformation. Hence, the idea of using activism as an instrument of T2S is nothing new. The crucial question that needs answering is, how?

We believe that activists should be incorporated (and be willing to cooperate) with academics and researchers on issues that affect the society. The unique ways in which activists view societal concerns can help make social science investigations (and their results) more human and practical. For instance, on the issue of environment, social scientists (from the academia) tend to see it as a human right issue. Activists on their part, tend to view it as a natural right issue. In this regard, activists would argue that the environment, both in parts and wholeness, constitutes an abundance of a diverse range of natural systems for humans to live in, depend on, experience and enjoy.

Therefore, common sense points to the fact that it is a gift provided by nature to humanity. Meaning that experiencing the environment is a natural right we all should have –therefore, a natural right rather than a mere human right. This sort of thinking is both naturalistic and humanistic. Speaking on this issue in a seminar at the University of Navarra (on 22nd of October 2014), Michael Zuckert (a professor at the University of Notre Dame), noted the reasons why people began to talk of human rights rather than natural rights “was the emergence of a sceptical thought about nature as a source of standards for human beings.”

To him, the difference between human and natural rights is that "When we speak of human rights, we do not have a very clear idea of what their base is and we do not exactly know what they are."

He asserted "human rights are descendants of natural rights". With the divergent, yet very realistic, perspectives activists have about sustainable development issues, incorporating their ideas in social science researches would help create broad, lasting social change that will benefit all. This is what transformation is all about.

Conclusion

Transformation is not always a positive thing. It can be negative. However, in the context of ISSC, UNESCO, Future Earths and all members of the International Science and Technology Alliance for Global Sustainability, it represents a positive idea towards a better world. In the words of ISSC, this means a world where it is necessary "to secure effective, equitable and durable solutions to some of the most urgent problems of global change and sustainability — including climate change, biodiversity loss, water and food security, energy consumption, and poverty and growing inequalities". What we have done in this very short article is to recognise the important role activism can (and should) play in the process of transformation to sustainability, from social science and societal perspectives. We are not by any means implying here that activism do not come with its problems. Activists, in most cases, fail to make compromises in the course of their struggle for a cause. It is important that they recognise the practicality of making compromises in working together with those from the academia because this will help propel the match towards T2S in societies. ♦

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Chumah Amaefule is of the Faculty of Law, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad.

Feedback

"GMOs: A Costly Distraction" was the first issue of Eco-Instigator I read and I find it very informative especially throwing light to the danger of GM. Thank you for making this easily accessible online and for free. I wish sure be looking forward to the next issue.

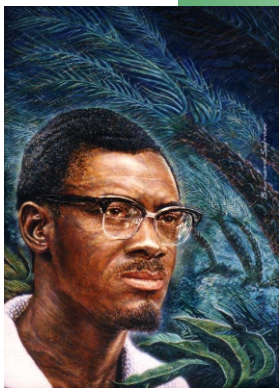
- Seyifunmi Adepitan,
e: mseyifunmi@yahoo.com

I always thought without the intervention of GMO humanity will starve but thanks to your publication I discovered that we had more than sufficient food to feed the world and GMOs is not part of the solution to food democracy.

- Kamar Oladipo,
e: olayemi_oladipo@yahoo.com

I love the "I will not dance to your beat" poem. It spoke truth to authority and echoes the voice lingering in my head for so long. The publication as a whole was engaging, balanced, rich in content and analytical. It gives me new information I couldn't readily get in the mainstream media, essentially it provide a new narrative to what we are been fed daily. Please keep up the great work!

- Ahmed Shopeju
e: shopejuahmed@gmail.com



Minerals & Wars at the Great Lakes

-Wealth, death and massive poverty in the heart of Africa

By Juan Lopez

"Our internal difficulties, tribal war and the nuclei of political opposition seemed to have been accidentally concentrated in the regions with our richest mineral and power resources. We know how all this was organised and, in particular, who supports it today in our house.

Our Katanga because of its uranium, copper and gold, and our Bakwanga in Kasai because of its diamonds have become hotbeds of imperialist intrigues. The object of these intrigues is to recapture economic control of our country.

Patrice Lumumba, speech in Leopoldville in August 25th 1960 "

What Patrice Lumumba saw

Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, gave a speech in 1960 that had been premonitory of the fate of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) until today. Conflict, minerals and "tribal wars" go hand in hand in the DRC history's past decades. Lumumba was planning to get the DRC's related difficulties under control, however, he was executed a few

months after the speech by a firing squad in January 1961. The US, through the CIA, the United Kingdom through the M16 and Belgium were all blamed for their involvement in his death. External meddling and intervention in Congo's affairs by foreign countries is another of the concurrent and repeated situations that continues in recent history of the DRC.

Wars and minerals: peace at last?

...The heart of Africa is bleeding...

Two wars raged in DRC from 1996-1997 and from 1998-2003. Contrary to what some affirm, these were not ethnic conflicts, but resource wars. No coincidence that the country possesses extraordinary mineral wealth with some of the most valuable and strategic minerals on earth such as coltan, diamonds, cobalt, copper, Gold, tin, zinc, manganese, timber and others. The magazine, African Business, estimated in 2009 that "the total mineral wealth of the DRC was estimated to be some \$24 trillion". As Lumumba indicated back in 1960, the same scenario repeated in recent years - minerals and conflicts continue to go hand by hand.

The casualties over those years were overwhelming. While everybody is familiar with the death toll during the genocide in Rwanda, estimated between 500, 000 and 800, 000 people, much less awareness has been provided to the situation in Congo in the past years of conflicts.

The International Rescue Committee has estimated that the Conflict and humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo has taken a death toll of 5.4 million people from 1998 to 2007. A CNN correspondent in trying to give an illustration of the heavy toll, made the following comparative analysis: "The wars in that country have claimed nearly the same number of lives as having a 9/11 every single day for 360 days, the genocide that struck Rwanda in 1994, the ethnic cleansing that overwhelmed Bosnia in the mid-1990s, the genocide that took place in Darfur, the number of people killed in the great tsunami that struck Asia in 2004, and the number of people who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- all combined and then doubled". Rwanda and Uganda were actively involved in the invasion of Congo in both wars.

The second war was known as the Great War of Africa, involving nine countries, and more than 20 armed groups. According to Cynthia Ann McKinney, a Congresswoman from the Democratic Party and an expert on the Great Lakes issues, while invading DRC in the Second Congo War, the US continues providing financial support to the governments of Rwanda and Uganda. How was this allowed? U.S President Bill Clinton was personally in Rwanda in March 1998, only a few months before the Rwandese army invaded Congo. President Clinton was in Africa at that time addressing its presidents including Presidents Kagame and Museveni as leaders of the "African Renaissance," and seeing a bright future for Africa. There, Clinton made an

"The wars in that country have claimed nearly the same number of lives as having a 9/11 every single day for 360 days..."

important call to embrace peace. How was it possible to talk about peace while these allies were engaging in direct war? Moreover, with the experience of the genocide in Rwanda how could it be that foreign powers closely involved in the region, particularly the United States, let this occur again? How did they allow wars and conflicts that killed millions of people? How could they allow what many called another genocide in Congo?

On a positive note at last, in recent months the calls for peace have been growing from many different stakeholders. In May 2014, U.S. Secretary of State Kerry after a meeting with D.R.C. President Kabila stated that "achieving a lasting peace in the DRC is a priority of President Obama". He added: "Now I can't emphasize enough how important that process is in identifying and resolving the root causes of the conflict in the DRC as well as in the entire Great Lakes region". Not a minor task, going to the roots and the causes of those problems in the Great Lakes. Indeed, achieving peace and reconciliation in the Great Lakes Region, in countries that had suffered like DRC, is a difficult and cumbersome task, and making it by finding the "real" root causes can be a very complex and lengthy exercise, taking decades or longer.

Greed for minerals: Everybody wants a piece of Congo.

It is hoped that the commitment of the U.S. Secretary of State Kerry towards peace works better than those of his predecessors. What is at the origin of those wars and instability of the Congo? While there could be diverse factors for conflict, there is one that seems to be always recurrent and is recognized by most authors and by relevant UN reports:

Don't Hate

By Coumba Toure

Listen

Don't hate

Listen

I say don't hate on people, on a whole people
People are people, every people, and all people

They are not moaning rocks

They are not whirling dust

They are not even flesh and bone collected
under skins and rags

They are like you

They are rhythms beating endlessly

They are moving threads of thoughts resting only
once in a while

They are myriads stories unfolding between day's
breaks and sunsets

They are energies flowing through times and
spaces

And my people are people too like every people

We Like you, Like every people

Are people

We are not lemons

We are not jewels

But We like you

Are memories intertwined

We are links growing with new moons

So remember

And don't separate yourself from people

Don't ever look down on people

Don't you push them around!

Don't you hurt their feelings!

Don't you walk on their feet!

Don't you spit your hate on people!

Don't you struck them down to the ground!

Don't you beat them to death!

Don't you cut their throat!

Don't you shoot them fifty times!

Don't you burn them alive!

I said don't start


Remember

Don't separate yourself from people

Don't ever look down on them

Don't spit your hate on a people

When you speak about a people

12 Remember the beautiful words of your people
and be even gentler 

The conflicts that continued after the Second Congo war, like those in Kivu and Ituri provinces are recognized as well to be fuelled by trade in minerals. Along the same lines, Palou underlines the causes of the conflict, by stating that “although from that time until the present day the Rwandan regime has expressed its concern about the security of its border with the then Zaire, objectively the reality is that control over this strategic area –eastern Congo- and its valuable mineral resources has proved to be at the heart of two wars that have left a huge number of victims”.

In conclusion, a 2001 UN report asserted that “the conflict of DRC has become mainly about access, control and trade of five key mineral resources: coltan, diamonds, copper, cobalt and gold. The wealth of the country is appealing and hard to resist in the context of lawlessness and the weakness of the central authority”.

A Congo elite has also profited from this situation as well, and the appalling numbers of the plunder are reflected in the following report from UN:

“The elite network of Congolese and Zimbabwean political, military and commercial interests seeks to maintain its grip on the main mineral resources — diamonds, cobalt, copper, germanium — of the Government-controlled area. This network has transferred ownership of at least US\$ 5 billion of assets from the State mining sector to private

companies under its control in the past three years with no compensation or benefit for the State treasury of the Democratic Republic of the Congo”.

Funds that could have been used for public services have been diverted from the public coffers by fraud or by the excuse of war effort. The Congolese population has paid dearly rough this bleeding process. In terms of human development it is instructive that the UNDP estimated in 2013, that R.D.C. was in the low human development category – positioning the country at 186 out of 187 countries and territories.

The Role of Transnational Corporations (TNCs)

Another of the key sectors involved in the conflict were/are Transnationals. A UN Report, published a few years after the Second Congo War started, affirmed that “the role of the private sector in the exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of the war has been vital”. The report also added that “a number of companies have been involved and have fuelled the war directly, trading arms for natural resources”. Other observers share the view that “western Multinationals have been one group responsible for the pillage and illegal exploitation of Congo mineral resources”.

UN and some other report generally make broad statements about the role of corporations, including citing some of the company names, however they fall short of providing details of the modus operandi of those companies, and in establishing or suggesting concrete measures to stop the conflicts and solve the negative impacts on the DRC population and environment. A 2002 UN Report listed 85 companies considered by the Panel to be in violation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. However, very little action in practice occurred after the UN

report was published.

Despite the opacity of most of the activities of the private sector, some examples have been reported of how TNCs moved closely to the political and military elite in their quest for minerals and other resources. For instance, in May 1997, American Mineral Fields (AMF) cut a \$1 billion deal with Kabila immediately after his forces captured Goma.” The negotiations were led by “Kabila's US-trained finance minister,” who gave “AMF exclusive exploration rights to zinc, copper, and cobalt mines in the area. Mike McMurrough, a friend of US President Bill Clinton, was then the chair of AMF.”

Consider this other example:

“Other corporate beneficiaries include Canada's Heritage Oil and Gas, which “arrived with the Ugandan and Rwandan militaries when they invaded Congo in 1998,” Citibank NY gave a \$5 million loan to “the financial arm of RCD-Goma (the Congolese militia allied with Rwanda),” and, “as Rwanda and Uganda continued to enrich themselves with the plunder, they received praise from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for increasing their gross domestic product.”

War Impacts on the environment

The wars have had devastating impact on the environment. National parks for instance, home of many endangered species, are also affected by the exploitation of minerals. There are numerous reports on the precarious situation of wildlife in the region. instance, between 1995 and 1999, 4000 out of 12000 elephants were killed in the Garamba Park in North-Eastern DRC. The situation was also serious in other parks. For instance, in Kahuzi-Biega Park, a zone rich in coltan only 2 out of 350 elephant families remained in 2000.

Mountain gorillas are also under threat due to continued civil unrest, and the presence of armed militias makes survey and conservation work difficult in the DRC's protected areas.

Deforestation is also one of the common impacts. Worldwatch explains the implication of having refugees population inhabiting RDC deforested forest areas:


"For two years beginning in late 1994, for example, about 720,000 Rwandans inhabited refugee camps on the fringes of Virunga National Park. They all needed wood for cooking fires and for building shelters, and some also earned extra money by manufacturing charcoal. As a result, up to 80,000 people entered the park and carted away up to 1,000 tons of wood every day. By mid-1996, 105 square kilometres of forest had been affected to one degree or another by their activities; 35 square kilometres had been stripped bare".

Conclusions

Greed for minerals is at the heart of the massive death toll and impoverishment of the Congolese people in DRC in recent decades. If

the Eastern part of the DRC would have not sat on huge mineral reserves it would be very difficult to imagine all the conflicts that have occurred in that zone. Nowadays, statements calling for peace have been made at the highest international levels.

This is very positive, but the key now is how the peace would be made if efforts at reconciliation does not uncover and deal with the core causes of the conflict. No truthful peace can be achieved otherwise. In that process, the Congolese people need to be put at the centre of development policies and actions in the country in order to stop the plunder, reverse environmental degradation and fight poverty.

As long as the political, military and corporate elite maintain their control of the natural resources of the country the devastating plunder will continue to the benefit of only the TNCs and a few people in RDC and nearby countries. 

Juan Lopez is an expert/consultant on Biosafety and Renewable Energy Matters. Twitter: @juanlopezvillar

On the Streets: "What Does 'Re-Source Democracy?' Mean to You?"

Wale Fashua, Lagos Nigeria: This is the freedom to choose or utilize whatever resource (both natural and human) available to me in my immediate community for the benefit of myself and society.

Nina Malekia, Dar es Salaam Tanzania: Democracy tends to be an all-inclusive phenomenon that encourages social equality and a resource is an asset. Putting the two together would equal control of an asset through participation of all involved actors to promote an equally beneficial use of this asset.

Suhaib Arogundade, Lagos Nigeria: Re-Source Democracy is a way of managing materials/resources of the generality of humans by humans themselves for their survival. It goes without saying that man lives in a planet with finite resources and these resources has to be efficiently utilised by man himself to ensure equitable distribution that will not only sustain him now but his future generation.

Imi Emuze, Edinburgh UK: This is democracy that deals with effective use, management and distribution of resources to avoid the resource curse.

Dozie Anyanwu, Lagos Nigeria: I would say it is democracy that is driven by a nation's human and natural resources.

Bunmi Ogunjemilusi, Lagos Nigeria: My wild guess is that resource democracy involves sharing resources among states and regions.

Olumide Idowu, Lagos Nigeria: Re-Source Democracy provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights and which enshrines a host of political rights and civil liberties underpinning meaningful democracies.

ANY HOPE FOR OGO NILAND

in the Horizon? — Zaid Shopeju

"If you truly get in touch with a piece of carrot, you get in touch with the soil, the rain, the sunshine. You get in touch with Mother Earth and eating in such a way, you feel in touch with true life, your roots, and that is meditation. If we chew every morsel of our food in that way we become grateful and when you are grateful, you are happy."

- Thich Nhat Hanh

The Ogoni Kingdom has been in existence for centuries before the formation of the Nigeria nation state. The Ogoni people were renowned for their skills, strength and dexterity in fishery and farming – they were truly blessed with a pristine land that was highly fertile and turned up great harvests season after season. Everything changed with the advent of oil extraction in the territory. The story of Ogoniland is almost a story of lost Paradise. It is a land despoiled by oil company activities. These activities have polluted both land and sea. Weak regulations and government oversight, the polluters of Ogoniland have been emboldened to seek to turn the victims into the criminals. One might want to assume that this is a classic case of killing the chicken that laid the golden eggs – unfortunately so, the black gold is not a golden egg for anyone. It is rather a Pandora box of many troubles that has perpetually destroyed our ability to diversify our economy into other sectors such as agriculture.

The human, health and environmental impacts of oil exploitation cannot be overstated. During a workshop training organised by Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) in August 2014 for Ogoni Women Ecological Defenders, Comrade Celestine Akpobari of Ogoni Solidarity Forum (OSF) explained, "if you want to destroy a people, you simply had to destroy their environment and pollute their water. Kill the fish in community ponds and creeks and you have killed the people because they would be left with nothing to live on." He added that sadly "that is what Shell and the Government have done to the Ogoni people." Although the arable land of the Niger Delta is one of the best agricultural lands in Africa, it is sadly threatened by oil spills and industrial wastes which are also impacting both terrestrial and aquatic species in the region. "The Niger Delta is tragically the most severely petroleum-impacted ecosystem I have seen anywhere in the world - and I have seen many. The extraordinary environmental and social damage has continued for over 50 years now, and continues to this day. As has been said by many, Nigeria is an iconic example of the oil curse", said Professor Richard Steiner - a conservation biologist with the Oasis Earth in Anchorage Alaska. A leading environmentalist laureate in Nigeria, Nnimmo Bassey asked "why should anyone have to drink water containing benzene, a known carcinogen, at levels over 900 times above the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline and 1000 times above Nigerian drinking water standards?"

Again, one can be tempted to think there is no hope due to all the negativity, but 2015 might hold a better outlook for campaign and fight for environmental justice – more specifically for land and soil as the 68th Un General Assembly declares 2015 the International Year of Soils. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Global Soil Partnership are set to amplify and raise full awareness among civil society and decision makers around the profound importance of soil for human life and to educate the public about the crucial role soil plays in food security, climate change, poverty alleviation and essential ecosystem protection. The Nigerian government has announced that the clean-up of Ogoniland as demanded by the UNEP report on the assessment of the Ogoni environment will commence in January 2015. That would be three and a half years after the report had been issued. Observers are asking whether this is a true signal that the extreme pollution in the territory would finally be taken care of. They are also wondering if the promise is a political gimmick seeing that elections will hold from mid-February 2015. The people are watching. 🌱



Modern Foods: Taking a Second Look at GMO Food Policies in Nigeria

By Oluwafunmilayo Oyatogun.

Nigeria makes for excellent study in several areas of policy, economics and socio-culture. However, one aspect stands out – biosafety concerns, including especially genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Nigeria has a population of approximately 178 million people - about 2.5 per cent of the world's population. Nigeria's Lagos is one of the world's megacities. Nigeria is already Africa's most populated nation by a long shot. Its prime location between latitudes 4° and 14°N, and longitudes 2° and 15°E, Nigeria offers savannahs, mangrove swamps, tropical rainforests, and dense centres of agricultural productivity.

GMOs in Nigeria are increasingly being portrayed as the solution to poverty and hunger in Nigeria. The country's underperforming agriculture is often cited as a result of lack of modern technologies and high-yielding crop varieties, among other barriers. Historically, crop production was increased in Nigeria by expanding the land under cultivation, mostly for cash crops destined for foreign markets. However, the current focus has been on improving yields per plot of land. It is no surprise therefore that Nigeria is increasingly field-

testing a variety of GMO crops with a view to commercialize them. While the government has shown strong support for introducing GM technology in the Nigerian market, there is a strong resistance to the move and debates on the risks of GM crops to human health and the local environment.

Some international policies on food have an eye on sub-Saharan Africa because of the reported over 180 million undernourished people in the region. There are also questions of land degradation and unsustainable farming practices, which put a strain on the agricultural system on the continent. These internationally derived conclusions are used as constructs to put pressure on countries like Nigeria to embrace modern biotechnology that on the premise that this would minimize land intensity and improve yields per plot.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is the only significant set of guidelines by which the entry of GMOs into Nigeria may be controlled. However, with the generic one-size-fits-all model of many international agreements, the CBD does not address Nigeria's most fundamental agricultural constraints.

In fact, in an HOME F workshop in 2013, some small holder farmers decried the Convention as “too technical to be relevant to those who are most stricken by adversity as a result of GMOs.”

A Nigerian National Biosafety Bill before the National Assembly defines bio-safety as “the range of measures, policies and procedures for minimizing potential risks that modern biotechnology may pose to the environment and human health” (Biosafety Bill 2010). In the case of Nigeria, the modern biotechnological products of concern are GMO foods. One critical concern of environmentalists towards the bill is the lack of provision for public consultation. According to the bill, Part viii, section 6 makes provisions for public display of applications from individuals or corporations intending to import or introduce GMOs into the country. However, section 6(2) of the bill indicates that the announcement of the display of such applications is not mandatory. Also, even though the bill makes provision for fines of up to 5 million Naira (\$28,000), it does not measure up compared to potential damage. While several proponents of the bill argue that it will close the gaps currently penetrated by multinational agencies, opponents are wary of the effectiveness of a “substandard” Biosafety bill.

It is typical for the large corporations and



developers of GMOs – such as Monsanto, DuPont, Dow Chemical and Bayer Crop Science – to be actively lobbying for GMO approval. Opponents to GMOs argue that genetic engineering does not respect the rights of nature as genetically wholesome entities. Rather, they are mere machines for experimentation to facilitate capitalist and supposedly modern ideas of agricultural development. The reductionist principles of GMOs are not compatible with the objectives of sustainable agriculture. Industrialization and globalization of agriculture are at the root of GMO technology, especially in the current Nigerian context.

In portraying inconclusive technologies as a solution, GMOs attempt to solve the problems of agriculture with the same kind of thinking that caused these problems. Ecological “modernization” does not tackle mainstream modernity enough to oppose it; instead it merely adjusts the rules to accommodate ecological considerations. Some, such as Marteen Hajer have described it as a “new form of cultural politics, representing the greening of modernity”. John Barry and Oluf Langhelle have condemned it as a paradoxical attempt to ‘green capitalism’ or ‘deradicalize sustainable



The Food We Want

Report Of Sustainability ACADEMY (HOME SCHOOL) 04

By Daramfon Bassey and Cadmus Atake Enade


Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) in collaboration with The Young Environmentalists Network (TYEN) hosted the fourth Sustainability Academy (HOME School) with a focus on a GMO free Nigeria. TYEN is a network of children in Primary and Secondary Schools aimed at enlightening them on environmental issues from the justice perspective.

This fourth edition had as theme “The Food we want” and dwelt on the need to have wholesome food. Our director, Nnimmo Bassey, was the lead instigator for the session. This session held at the assembly hall of Eghosa Anglican Grammar School in Benin City Edo state on the 25th of November 2014 had 239 participants. The participants included pupils from Ezoti Primary School, Lord Divine Primary School, Ogbe Primary School, Ore-Oghene Primary School, St Paul's Primary School, Alpha High School, Blessed St Paul's Memorial School, Covenant Christian Academy, Eghosa Anglican Grammar School and Uwagboe Demonstration

School.

TYEN coordinators and officials from Edo State government were in attendance, including Sir B. A Isu from the Edo State Ministry of Education and Sir Ijie Felix, Principal of Eghosa Grammar School, the host school. Mr Chris Omoregie and Mr G. I. Ehon represented the Ministry of Environment. During the event the Mr Omoregie representing the Edo State commissioner of Environment promised that any school that plans to beautify its premises will be given free seedlings.

While welcoming everyone to the session, Evelyn Bassey the coordinator of TYEN went down memory lane, informing new members of the history of TYEN. TYEN started as a Conservation Club project of Committee on Vital Environmental Resources (COVER) in 1998 and transformed into TYEN in 2005. COVER believes that women and children have key stakes in ensuring a healthy environment.



There are currently more than 20 schools in the network and all engage in activities such as cleaning exercises, tree planting and yearly variety/quiz programmes. TYEN undertakes field trips and workshops.

The Sustainability Academy began with presentations of poetry, drama and song from the participating schools.

Speaking at the event, Sir B.A. Isu, from Edo State Ministry of Education commended HOMEF/TYEN saying that "What we eat and the way we eat determines how well we grow." He regretted that poverty affects access to wholesome food and encouraged the pupils to always eat nutritious foods.

Speaking on "Nothing but Wholesome food," the instigator began by commending the children on their presentations which all focused on the theme of the Academy. He also stated that the brilliance of the kids was a source of hope for Nigeria. "Being children from primary and secondary schools we can rightly say that you hold out the hope for our nation to overcome her challenges, to produce healthy foods and protect our environment," he said.

Bassey emphasised on "the food we don't want", and went on to explain what GMOs are and how they are made, and how they are harmful to humans and the environment. He spoke of the importance of food and agriculture in our cultural contexts. According to him, agriculture means more to us than merely farming. The farm is almost a school. At the farm we learn about crops, trees and our culture. We learn to know which seeds have to be preserved after harvest for planting at the next season. We see our parents share seeds with neighbours

and also share food. Agriculture and food help to build and unite us in our communities.

On a global scale, food is so important that when the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals were prepared the first goal was the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. It was hoped that between 1990 and 2015 the number of people suffering from hunger would be reduced by fifty per cent

Although some progress has been made in this direction, over 800 million people do not have enough food to live healthy lives. The death of 3.1 million children (or nearly half the number of deaths among children) between ages 1-3 years has been linked to not having wholesome or nutritious food. And many children still go to school hungry everyday.

Global hunger and malnutrition are still key issues in the world as of today.

There are many factors that keep people hungry and most of the hungry people in the world today are farmers, partly because they farmers have to sell their products to meet other pressing needs including payment of school fees for their children, house rents, medical bills and transport and other costs. Hunger can be overcome if we need to look at the root causes and tackle them rather than seeing hunger as an opportunity to manipulate the system and make profits from the misery of the poor.

It was explained that Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are produced in ways that are contrary to normal or usual methods of reproduction. In the development of GMOs genetic materials are moved across species boundaries thus producing organisms that are unknown to nature.

The world saw the first commercialization of GMOs in 1996. Most crops are modified to do either of two things or both:

1. To withstand chemicals (herbicides) that would kill every other plant
2. To kill particular pests that are known to usually attack a plant

So far the major crops that have been genetically modified and are planted in large commercial quantities are: soybeans, corn, cotton and canola or rapeseed. Contrary to biotech industry propaganda there are very few countries that plant GMOs in large quantities in the world today. These include: USA, Brazil, Argentina, India, Canada, China, Paraguay, Pakistan, South Africa, Uruguay, Bolivia, Australia, Philippines, Myanmar, Burkina Faso, Mexico and Spain.

It is often argued that GMOs are healthy for food, by scientists have fed GMO products to rats and guinea pigs and found out it they had some significant defects which can also affect humans. The dependence of GMOs on chemical inputs raises serious concerns also. The chemicals used in spraying these crops kill other crops and non-target insects. Stronger chemicals are deployed as weeds and pests become resistant to them.

GMOs are created essentially for business and profit making, and the main drivers are the pursuit of money and power and not the health of the people.

There are a lot of varieties of crops naturally, but when genetic engineering erodes this natural biological diversity, posing serious risks to the environment as well as instigating loss of benefits derived from natural diversity. Moreover, once GMOs are introduced into the environment they cannot be recalled.

Most of the GMOs introduced in Europe and South America are made for livestock feeds but the major targets in Africa are our staples. Unauthorised GMO rice was found in African markets in 2006/2007 according to market surveys and tests carried out by Friends of the Earth Africa groups led by the Environmental Rights Action (ERA).

Problems with GMOs in Agriculture

Many people think that any fruit that is bigger than the usual ones are GMOs. This is not true. The biggest advantage of GMOs is that they make big farming easier for the farmer mostly through the handling of weeds through the spraying of herbicides



The problems with GMOs include the following:

1. They do not support mixed cropping but support monocultures
2. They are not suited for peasant or small-scale farming
3. They are not good for our agricultural systems as farmers must buy seeds and cannot save, reuse or share them.
4. Some of the crops are engineered to produce infertile seeds including through what is ominously known as “terminator technology>”
5. They contaminate other natural varieties of crops and animals/fish
6. They reduce the varieties of particular crops available and this creates more problems as unexpected diseases can wipe out vast quantities of crops
7. They require the use of large quantities of toxic chemicals some of which are manufactured by the companies that genetically modify the seeds
8. Those engineered to kill particular pests also kill other organisms that were not a threat to the crops
9. They sometimes look like normal crops and can pass undetected making it difficult to control or withdraw them once released into the environment
10. There is no scientific certainty about the safety of genetically modified crops.
11. Even after eating GMOs the waste materials still has live genetic materials, which are dangerous to the environment.

The major global convention governing the production, movement and use of GMOs is the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. This convention has a particular protocol known as the Cartagena Protocol that has an important principle known as the **Precautionary Principle**. This principle requires that nations should exercise precaution whenever there is doubt about the safety of any new organism to be introduced into the environment.

The CBD also requires that countries must put in place measures to regulate, manage or control the risks associated with the release or use of GMOs that are likely to affect natural biodiversity and human health.

It particularly Article 8(j) of the CBD requires that nations put in place measures to “respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation of biological diversity...”

Once contamination occurs it is the company that makes the crop or organism that stands to gain. In fact in some cases governments have been forced to make weak laws to legalize the illegality created by contaminations simply because GMO contaminations are almost irreversible.

The proposition by GMOs advocates that only GMOs can solve the hunger and nutrition challenges in Africa is patently false and hollow. The truth is that GMOs don’t necessarily have higher yields nor are they more nutritious than natural foods. Moreover, GMO seeds are more expensive than natural seeds.

What is happening in Nigeria?

In Nigeria there has been a very serious desire by companies that make GMOs to open up the Nigerian environment for their control and business.

Working with their local and international agents they are making effort to have a weak law in place that would allow introduction of GMOs without any provision for holding them **liable** if there are accidents or contaminations. We believe that Nigeria does not need GMOs. And that what we need is to adequately support our farmers who have been feeding us and keeping our environment healthy.

We also need to make farming attractive to young people, provide rural infrastructure, and create food processing/preservation facilities.

We need more agricultural extension officers and agriculture should not be used as a means of punishment in schools. Government needs to encourage farmers because most of the people that go to bed hungry are farmers, so it is essential for Governments to provide the basics thing they need, society can only move well when basic things are available.❖



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

Unfortunately, a key flaw with the ecological modernization of agricultural systems is the explicit ignoring of growth limits. To what extent can genetic material of food be tampered with in order to achieve efficiency? Does genetic modification of natural organisms alter the ecosystem enough to negate any environmental gains it creates from reduced fertilizers and pesticides? Secondly, it maintains a myopic view of environment. For example GMOs have ripple effects by altering ecosystem cycles. It is well known that adopting GMOs leads to decreased plant biodiversity and this affects the sustainability of ecosystems. Invasive species become increasingly problematic when GMOs lead to new weeds and pests with heightened resistance for pesticides. Moreover, GMOs represent liberalism principles of modernization theories on a micro scale.

With seeds, as with markets, there are no boundaries; therefore open pollination of GMO seeds can lead to wide unintentional spread of new genes. Ecological experts fear that this spread could lead to catastrophic persistence of transgenes within the local agricultural web in Nigeria. The impending Biosafety Bill ignores the Precautionary Principle of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The 'proceed with caution' principle was included to protect environments, agricultural and food systems - especially in African countries. However, Nigeria is playing 'catch-up' with other nations based on incompetent knowledge of GMOs.

GMOs are a problematic solution as they do not consider the holistic nature of the natural food cycles and are an extension of neoliberal principles to ecological spaces.❖





THE STRUGGLE FOR A FAIR CLIMATE DEAL


Babawale Obayanju

Arriving to the warmth of an island somewhere in Latin America brought a desire for home, seeing I have been away from family and friends for quiet sometime. I envisaged that I was on a mission that If successful would better the lives of the ones I missed so dearly so I kept my focus and engaged with the sessions.

Caracas - a city filled with eyes watching intently over the peoples and the visitors alike; a city of high-rise buildings not meant for offices or hotels but residences. Colorful homes fill the landscape on the hills, built with materials affordable to the peoples. The country pays great respect to the revolutionary leadership of Heroes present and past, including Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez. These names resound on the lips, clothes, walls, food packing and in the hearts of many in this land of hopes and dreams of a world devoid of capitalism and its exploitations.

It was a gathering of old friends and a coming together of soon to be allies in the discus of climate change and of ways saving our planet. The Social PreCOP with the theme "Changing the System and not the Climate" was the first of its kind in the history of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC journey to develop a mechanism that would be legally binding and able to secure our climate future. This public Consultation and an initiative put forth by the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela took place in July 15th through 18th, 2014 and November 4th through the 7th 2014.

The meeting had a plan to bring together Governments (represented by Ministers of Environment and chosen country reps) from over 30 countries to sit together with Indigenous Peoples, Social movements and organizations from around the world.



Sadly only two representatives from Africa were present due to issues bothering around logistics at the July and November meetings to set the basis of an alliance between peoples and governments facing the threats that climate change poses to the people's and their climate.

The plan was to create a platform where the people could influence the agenda of the UN in overcoming the prevailing capitalist system of development by outlining analysis and demands for robust climate actions that respond to the prevailing science and the unconditional obligations for justice and equity.

This was in line with the aspirations of Hugo Chavez as stated in the Plan of the Nation #5 that: "to contribute to the creation of a large global movement to contain the causes and to repair the climate change impacts that occurred as a consequence of the predatory capitalist models."

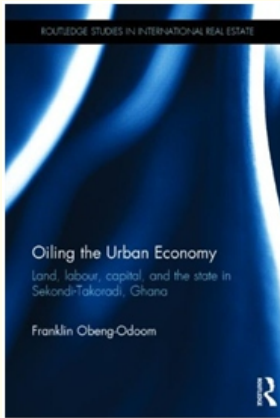
Over 90 CSOs were represented at the July and November editions of the Social PreCOP. The July edition was seen by many CSOs as fulfillment of the dreams of civil society and Chavez to build a movement that can overturn the issues working against a sustainable Mother Earth. The Margarita Declaration was the attesting document.

Many of the points deemed important from the platforms of CSOs came alive in that document. The main issue was seeking ways to get developed countries to pay their climate debt through a globally funded feed-in-tariff that would transform the current energy system giving the over 2 billion people without energy access to energy and to raise their ambition for climate action before 2020, thus creating a global emissions budget to keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees. It was also stressed that this should be treated as urgent as climate change is common to all nations of the world but responsibilities in terms of cause and impacts are different.

"In order to be fair, the effort to share the remaining emissions budget must be based on a consideration of countries' historical responsibilities and capacity" said Asad Rehman of friends of the earth international.

The November Social PreCOP where I participated as the only male representative of Africa in the CSOs space had a singular agenda: to develop key message (from the July document) that would fit into the global climate policy and action and to communicate same with Country reps and ministers that would be present having the decisions that would be made at the COP20 in Lima later in the year in view of the Paris Agreement in 2015.

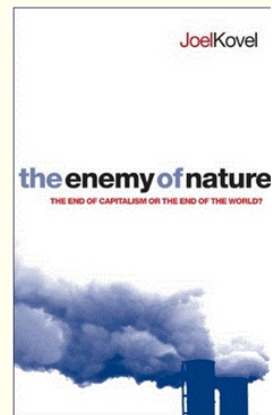
BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ



Franklin Obeng-Odoom's book offers a critical analysis of the 'resource curse' doctrine and a review of the international evidence on oil and urban development to examine the role of oil on property development and rights in West Africa's new oil metropolis - Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana. The wide range of issues tackled includes: In what ways did the city come into existence? What changes to property rights are oil prospecting, explorations, and production introducing in the 21st century? How do the effects vary across different social classes and spectrums? To what extent are local and national institutions able to shape, restrain, and constrain trans-national oil-related accumulation and its effects on property in land, property in housing (residential, leisure, and commercial), and property in labour? How do these processes connect with the entire urban system in Ghana?

This book shows how institutions of varying degrees of power interact to govern land, housing, and labour in the city, and analyses how efficient, sustainable, and equitable the outcomes of these interactions are. It is a comprehensive account of the tensions and contradictions in the main sectors of the urban economy, society, and environment in the booming Oil City and will be of interest to urban economists, development economists, real estate economists, Africanists and urbanists.

Capitalism and its by-products -- imperialism, war, neoliberal globalization, racism, poverty and the destruction of community -- are all playing a part in the destruction of our ecosystem. Only now are we beginning to realize the depth of the crisis and the kind of transformation which will have to occur to ensure our survival. This second, thoroughly updated, edition of *The Enemy of Nature* speaks to this new environmental awareness. Joel Kovel argues against claims that we can achieve a better environment through the current Western "way of being". By suggesting a radical new way forward, an integration of "red" and "green" politics, Joel Kovel offers real hope and vision for a more sustainable future.



Reduce, reuse, recycle," urge environmentalists; in other words, do more with less in order to minimize damage. But as architect William McDonough and chemist Michael Braungart point out in this provocative, visionary book, such an approach only perpetuates the one-way, "cradle to grave" manufacturing model, dating to the Industrial Revolution, that creates such fantastic amounts of waste and pollution in the first place. Why not challenge the belief that human industry must damage the natural world? In fact, why not take nature itself as our model for making things? A tree produces thousands of blossoms in order to create another tree, yet we consider its abundance not wasteful but safe, beautiful, and highly effective.

It was two days of intense debate over process, language and substance. The resulting document was the Chair's summary of the Venezuelan presidency of the Social PreCOP and although many of the points deemed priority by CSOs in the Margarita Declaration were watered down or removed the document was endorsed in principle as a "Living Document" not wanting to thwart the efforts of the Venezuelans and the process.

20 reps were chosen to dialogue with the Ministers present behind closed doors on behalf of the larger group.

Asad Rehman of Friends of the Earth International spoke on the central importance of equity as the fundamental principle guiding our actions in tackling climate change. Paragraph 75 of the chair's summary was evoked, reaffirming our belief that limiting global temperatures to safest levels possible requires us to set a limit to global emissions including historical and future emissions thus

helping to define the maximum global emissions budget.

For me and some allies from the so-called Least Developed Countries the crucial issue was highlighting and seeking for a strong inclusion and emphasis on adaptation, loss and damage. We in Africa and many parts of Asia are most vulnerable to the climate change crisis due to inherent geographical and environmental constraints. We are the least contributors to the cause of climate change but the worst hit by its impacts.

From statistics brought by Prerna Bomzan from LDCwatch group and rightly put in the 2014 State of the LDCs Report by UNCTAD – the UN Conference on Trade and Development, we saw that “from January 2010 to July 2013, two-thirds of the global human casualties associated with climate-related events occurred in the LDCs, although they have just over one-tenth of world population”.



The IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) also stated that LDCs are systematically more vulnerable to climate change than the rest of the world. Africa, home to most of LDCs, as a whole is one of the most vulnerable continents due to its high exposure and low adaptive capacity. Temperatures in Africa are projected to rise faster than the global average increase during the 21st century, particularly in the more arid regions. Even if the increment is by 2°C, this will hit the continent very hard, with limited potential for risk reduction through adaptation measures.

In anticipation of COP20 we insisted that Section II of the chairs summary of the Margaritas' Declaration be Upheld strongly for the benefits of the people, particularly Paragraphs 21-23 which states

21. The lack of mitigation action by developed countries places an adaptation burden on those least responsible for climate change: an adaptation debt. To repair this debt, developed countries must fulfill their legal and moral obligations under the Convention to support the adaptation efforts of developing countries.

22. The 2015 agreement should include a global goal on adaptation, which seeks to guarantee resilient communities through the development and strengthening of social protection and policies and measures to reduce disaster risks in communities.

23. Under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, governments must develop adequate protection mechanisms for peoples displaced by climate impacts.

24. The agreements, strategies and mechanisms designed and implemented under the Convention shall consider and incorporate the necessary provisions, including financing and compensation for loss and damage and to

avoid or minimize the adverse impacts on the developing countries of the response measures to the Climate Change.

And also paragraphs 48-50 which states that;

48. Finance for adaptation must be secured and increased, including for the development and implementation of national adaptation plans and processes.

49. Loss and damage is an issue of justice and human rights. Developed countries responsible for climate change must compensate developing countries for losses and damages suffered from climate impacts.

50. The needs of communities for rehabilitation of damages and compensation for losses, including loss of homes and territory, must be addressed through the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

51. Management and follow up of financing must be performed under the Convention in a transparent process controlled and guided by the Parties, and ensuring the participation of local communities.

Real life experiences were shared of our brothers from Ogoniland who have suffered the negligence and reckless operational activities of transnational companies on their lives, environment and livelihoods. I spoke on their behalf that support to restore their lands, waters and livelihoods be projected in the Lima document.

We also spoke of my brothers from Cross Rivers being cajoled to release their forested lands to "carbon offsetters" from the developed countries, through the REDD scam and other CDM schemes proposed by some protocols from UNFCCC. Adding their voices where colleagues from other LDCs and the global South and supportive groups from the north, who gave reasons why CDM projects like Geoengineering, REDD (Reducing emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation),

The Margaritas' declaration (which could be found here: http://www.precopsocial.org/sites/default/files/archivos/margarita_declaracion_on_climate_change.pdf) from July remains a valid document with points from voices across that will serve as solution to the problem of climate change. Download it, read it and use it. 🇵🇷

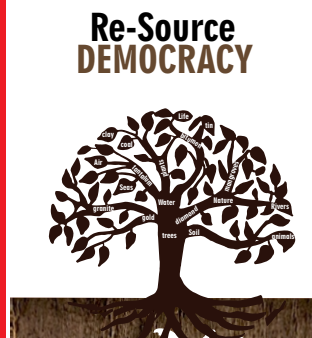
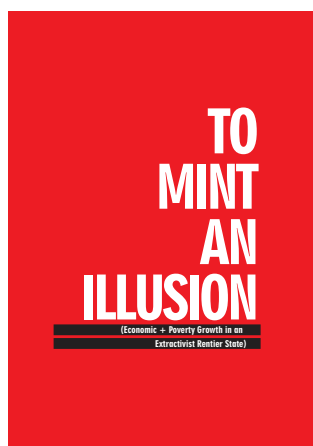


Have You Read?

To MINT an Illusion

Re-Source Democracy

Another publication from HOME, Re-Source Democracy can be downloaded at <http://www.homef.org/publication/re-source-democracy>



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Fiddling at the COP

- Nnimmo Bassey

The mass walkout of the 19th Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at Warsaw by civil society groups and movements rekindled the hope that the Voice of the Streets would find a space in the battle to save the planet from the unfolding global burning. The walkout was an expression of disgust at the way the climate negotiations have become little more than an arena for trading in hot air, a carbon stock exchange. The need for deep emissions cut has been clearly shown by science. It is also known that global warming is not a matter of speculation but a reality. The carbon budget has been calculated and the level of emissions to be cut is known. Still, negotiation arenas remain places for fiddling while Rome burns.

It is also known that to put the planet on a course that would keep global average temperature rise at not more than 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels up to 80 per cent of known fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground. By the way, when we speak of a global average of 2 degrees Celsius for Africa that means 3 degrees. Little wonder Africa is one continent that suffers grave climate change impacts and is still having increasing manifestation of desertification. With the

knowledge that fossil fuels must be kept untapped the frenzy for extreme extraction, including by fracturing nature (also known as fracking) continue unabated.

In addition it is known that deforestation and industrial agriculture are major culprits contributing to the literal choking of the planet. Just as citizens are having their lives snuffed out by brutality of the forces paid to defend them, the Earth is screaming: I cannot breathe! Rather than having a rethink, we are hearing of oxymoron like “sustainable intensification.” With all these knowledge what is happening and what are we hearing from the climate negotiations? Platitudes. Paltry voluntary pledges of money and carbon emissions offsets! The path set by the Kyoto Protocol underscored equity and justice in tackling global warming. It stipulated binding levels of emissions cut that rich, polluting countries had to make. Assigning commitments based on historical responsibility as well as common but differentiated responsibilities are sensible ways to tackle a phenomenon of quantum is scientifically computed. Earlier negotiations were clear about climate finance and transfer of technology.

The COPs since the 15th session held in Copenhagen in 2009 have become arenas for voluntary commitments. Having countries pledging to make emissions cuts according to what is convenient to them does not indicate and understanding of the emergency situation confronting the planet and all life forms on it. This era of voluntarism does nothing to indicate that there is a carbon budget that has to be dealt with. The height of this new strategy could well be what they term the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). This should suggest to us the serious erosion of multilateralism and the enthronement of bilateralism and even an upsurge of unitary actions. This could be why voluntary pledges to a Green Climate Fund that rotates on an axis set in Copenhagen receive applause from some quarters.

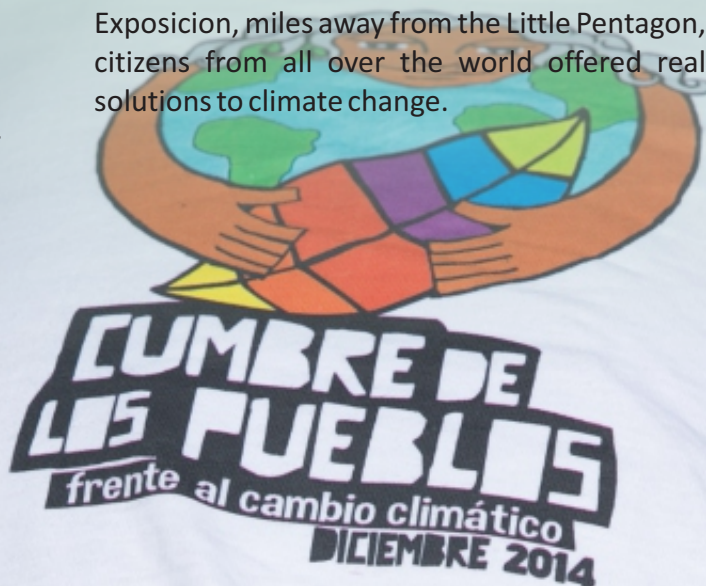
Lest we forget, the world took a major wrong fork on the road to tackling global warming at Copenhagen. Subsequent COPs at Cancun, Durban, Doha and Warsaw have built on stipulates of the Copenhagen Accord. We remind ourselves that we cannot get to the right destination using a wrong map no matter how far we may go. It is always good sense to retrace one's steps when we know we had missed it. Lima locks in those steps, as the Eiffel Tower appears on the horizon.

The COP in Lima takes the cake when it comes to showing utter disdain to the urgent cries for justice and equity in the world today. For one,

the host nation chose to host the world in a military facility that the locals say is tainted with blood of citizens that were tortured or disappeared there. Entering this facility reminds one that there is indeed a very thin line between freedom and repression. The setting itself is a sterile affair with meetings held under tents in the often-sweltering heat that ought to remind negotiators that global warming should not be toyed with.

If the official negotiations are locked in on the path that treats climate change as something over which to make long speeches and then perhaps throw some money at, the mood outside the COP was different. Although before the COP began there were fears that the mobilisation of citizens would be weak, the reality proved otherwise. Waves upon waves of citizens took to the streets denouncing the inaction at the COP, destruction of territories, human rights abuses and demanding the desired seriousness. Corporate kidnapping of the COP was also strongly denounced with activists marching against a meeting of the extractive sector companies, asking that they unhinge their fangs from the veins of the Earth.

At the Peoples' Summit Against Climate Change (Cumbre De Los Pueblos) held in Parque de la Exposición, miles away from the Little Pentagon, citizens from all over the world offered real solutions to climate change.



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From the Climate COP



They underscored the fact that the dominant global capitalist system is the major driver of the crisis and demanded “system change, not climate change.” The demands include an urgent transition from fossil fuels and the support of agro-ecological and peasant agriculture as the assured way of feeding the world and cooling the planet at the same time. At a session on Systemic Alternatives, Pablo Solon stressed the need to get to the root of the problem. “Climate change is not only about greenhouse gases. You cannot limit emissions without cutting extraction,” he said. This is exactly why environmental and social movements around the world are saying it is time to stand up and face the sober truth. It is time to say Yes to Life and No to Mining!

At an event that saw passionate presentations by indigenous women the team of the Global Greengrants Fund, the International Network of Women's Funds and the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network amplified the need for active resourcing of struggles for women's

rights within the climate justice context.

Citizens rose up against Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) and other carbon offset mechanisms in all their manifestations. Groups like the No REDD in Africa Network (NRAN), the Global Alliance Against REDD and the Indigenous Environmental Network stressed that REDD was shown to be mostly a way of giving polluters permit to pollute and to displace poor forest dependent communities. Sadly this may end up being one of the major props for the Paris COP in 2015, according to some observers.

For Mary Louise Malig of the Global Forest Coalition, “carbon offset permits are simply permits to harm nature.” She also sees the so-called climate-smart agriculture as a backdoor way of “introducing carbon markets for soils and for using carbon accounting to direct agricultural policies.”



Two days of sitting of the International Tribunal on the Rights of Nature revealed from submissions of experts and impacted citizens that the view of Nature as an object for exploitation or merchandise and an apparent ignorance of the spiritual and cultural dimensions of nature are some of the root causes of the planetary crisis. The Tribunal admitted all cases presented and found the governments and corporations guilty as charged.

As we depart from Lima, after the COP's official time slot had expired, the negotiators were still huddled in their dens piling up options for Paris in a document that lacks a soul. Three thoughts shared during these past days keep ringing in my mind and we close this piece with them.

"Our relationship with Nature must move from exploitation to respect. We must reject the sacrifice economy where the environment, humans and other species are being sacrificed," said Francois Houtart. And this one from Vishwas Satgar: "We need to humanise power and subject pit to the principles of life." The third thought came from an indigenous brother from Brazil who said: "We are a people of culture, our spirituality and nature works in line with nature."

This last thought inspired me to write this poem:

We Are A People Of Culture

We are a people with culture

We do not destroy nature

***Solidarity, productivity, respect - those we nurture
And we are loving by nature***

We are a people of culture

We live at peace with nature

Our thoughts are intergenerational in structure

For this we detest actions that break and fracture

Believe or not our future is born mature

For we incubate and brood over the picture

Of our desired, dreamed future

Not surprising we internalize our love for nature


We are a people of culture

And we live at one with nature

***We will resist your plots to box us into your
strictures***

Even though we are so loving by nature

Postscript:

COP20 crawled to an end on Sunday 14 December 2014 with a 5-pages Lima Call for Climate Action. At some point during the negotiations the draft text had up to 50 pages loaded with optional texts. Perhaps the greatest success of the COP could be its ability to trim that down to 5 pages. You would be excused if you think that the trimming cut off some flesh. That would be wrong. 50 pages or 5, the document did not deal with emissions cut based on science, neither did it show any real pathway to avoid catastrophic temperature rise. As Climate Justice advocates declared in a statement signed by groups, including Friends of the Earth International, at the end of the COP: No Justice in Lima Outcome. 

Burning the Planet, One Climate COP At A Time

- Mary Lou Malig

For the third year in a row, a typhoon wreaked havoc on the Philippines during a Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In 2012, during the UNFCCC COP 18 in Doha, Qatar, Typhoon Bopha, the strongest ever to hit Mindanao, the southern area of the Philippines, left more than a thousand dead and thousands more homeless. In 2013, during the COP 19 in Warsaw, Poland, Typhoon Haiyan, a super typhoon of levels never seen before in the Philippines, made landfall and devastated millions of families, displaced an estimated 4 million people, and, left in its wake at least 6,100 dead, making it the deadliest typhoon to

ever hit the country. Storm surges brought by the super typhoon violently washed away entire communities. This year, 2014, during the COP 20 in Lima, yet again another super typhoon made its way to the Philippines. Initially a category 5 super typhoon, Typhoon Ruby, weakened to a category 3 once it made landfall. Its path however included the communities still reeling from devastation of Typhoon Haiyan the year before.

Although the Philippines is no stranger to typhoons, seeing 15-20 typhoons a year, the scale of these recent super typhoons hitting the country has inflicted damage never before seen.

Scientists have been making these warnings for several years now, warmer waters and warmer air temperatures are combining to produce more volatile and extreme weather including super typhoons of record-breaking magnitudes. One would think that with the vivid and horrific reality of massive loss and damage in countries like the Philippines, happening exactly at the same time as representatives of 192 governments come together to discuss actions needed to address the crisis of climate change, that these decision-makers would at least be compelled to take genuine action. Instead, it has been the complete opposite.

From Commitments to Pledges to Contributions: downward spiral of emission cuts

Following an acknowledgement of historical responsibility for the contamination of the planet, 37 industrialized countries (known in UNFCCC parlance as Annex 1 countries) ratified the Kyoto Protocol, legally committing to cut emissions – by at least 5 percent below 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008 to 2012. The Kyoto Protocol however had flexibility mechanisms which allowed Annex 1 countries to “offset” – pay developing countries to plant trees in order for them to maintain their polluting ways, or to trade – buy and sell their polluting credits. These mechanisms have allowed Annex 1 countries to continue or even increase emissions at source.

In 2010 however, as negotiations discussed the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, at the COP16 in Cancun, a new concept proposed from the COP 15 in Copenhagen was agreed to replace the legally binding commitments: pledges. Despite protests from developing countries, the Cancun Agreements, which included these new

pledges, were adopted. Pledges would be voluntary and would endeavor to keep the warming of the planet to stay below 2 degrees Celsius. Best efforts would be made to not burn the planet.

At COP17 in Durban, the following year, even more historic changes were made, breaking from the original principles of the Rio Conventions. The Durban Platform stated that the new agreement would be “applicable to all,” which would begin to undermine the principle of common but differentiated responsibility to escape the historical responsibility of developed countries.

Then COP19 in Warsaw, Poland, introduced an even weaker concept replaced pledges: contributions. Technically named Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, this allows countries to decide for themselves, what they think they can contribute to keep to the global target. It didn't seem possible but they found a way to commit even less.

Today, at the COP20, it is clear beyond any doubt, that the historically responsible emitters are not interested in making any emissions cuts, nor the big developing countries well on their way to competing with the industrialized countries in polluting the planet. The options laid on the table for the post 2020-agreement, are even weaker than what was “pledged” in Cancun and Copenhagen.

There also seems to be attempts to change the baseline to 2010 levels instead of 1990 levels, meaning that countries will probably even increase their emissions. Furthermore, with no clear legally binding mechanism to ensure that countries contributions are actually meeting the global goal. Worse, there are even more market mechanisms proposed in addition to those that are already under the Kyoto Protocol. Amongst

the proposals include more carbon markets, including in forests and possibly even agriculture, and subnational, national and regional emissions trading schemes.

Science is very clear: to limit the increase of the temperature to 1.5°C – global emissions should be less than 38 Gt of CO₂e by 2020 (44 Gt of CO₂e for 2°C) – this means legally binding cuts – not pledges or contributions – with no carbon markets. At current business as usual rates, we will reach global emissions of 57 Gt of CO₂e by 2020. Simply put, the current trajectory of the climate negotiations mean that we will not make enough cuts in emissions before 2020 to ensure that we will stay on the path of keeping within the limit of the 1.5 degree centigrade ceiling. The feedback mechanism of the climate guarantees that if this decade is lost, that there will be no going back from climate chaos.

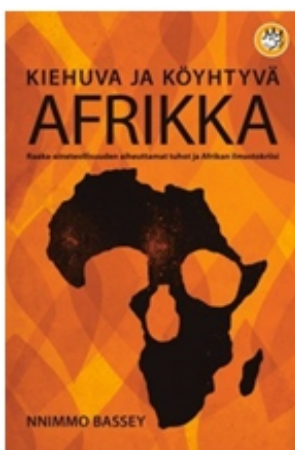
Unfulfilled promises of Finance

Following the principle of historic responsibility, developed countries should be providing finance to developing countries for adaptation and mitigation. In Cancun, long-term finance was promised along with the mechanism of the Green Climate Fund. The promise was 100 billion USD every year by 2020. That may sound like a big number but when compared to what is needed, it is meager. The UN Department of

Economic and Social Affairs' 2009 UN World Economic and Social Survey estimated that 500-600 Billion USD is what is needed every year by developing countries to adapt and mitigate climate change.

The original demand of the developing countries before Copenhagen was that climate finance should be at least 1.5% of Annex 1 countries' GDP by 2020. Looking at 2009 numbers, this amount comes out to 1.5% of 39,881 billion USD, which comes out to 598 billion USD. This is small change compared to what is spent for financial speculators and wars. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's Military Expenditure Database, the US government spent 661 billion USD in 2009 and 616 billion USD in 2008. The US government itself has spent trillions of USD in bailing out Wall Street, the speculators and the banks.

The concept as well of “climate debt” and hence the historical responsibility to pay this debt owed to developing countries, has been completely lost. Instead, promises remain largely unfulfilled. In Lima, celebratory announcements were made of the supposedly groundbreaking achievement that they have reached a meager 10 billion USD out of the 100 billion USD originally promised.



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To reclaim the future, we need to change the present

The urgency of the climate crisis, blatantly ignored by the climate negotiations, is lived daily by social movements, indigenous peoples, and communities all living on the frontlines of climate change. In the streets of Lima, during the COP20, at least 20,000 people marched for Mother Earth, calling for a change in the system, not the climate.

It is the adherence to the capitalist system and the perpetuation of corporate profits after all that drives the climate negotiations – which are promoting false solutions such as REDD (Reduction from Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), Climate Smart Agriculture, and other market based mechanisms to carbon markets to techno-fixes such as geo-engineering, carbon capture and storage, industrial bio-energy and others that do further harm to the planet.

One of the most crucial steps to real and deep emission cuts is to leave more than 80 percent of fossil fuels in the ground, but with the corporate capture of the negotiations by the oil and energy industry, there will never be a break

from business as usual. The seeming insensitivity of the COPs to very real devastation experienced firsthand by countries like the Philippines, is intentional as governments prioritize big business over affected communities.

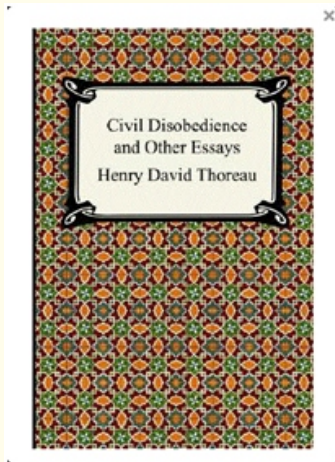
“One of the most crucial steps to real and deep emission cuts is to leave more than 80 percent of fossil fuels in the ground...”

We need to break from the current system of over-exploitation, over-consumption, over-production and extractivism and in its place, let flourish the many different solutions, existing methods and systemic alternatives of peasants, indigenous peoples, women, and communities such as food sovereignty, buen vivir, agroecology, community conservation, deglobalization, rights of nature, and many others.

Changing the system is our only hope to reclaim our future. 🌍

Mary Louise Malig, a trade policy analyst, is Research Associate and Campaigns Coordinator of the Global Forest Coalition.

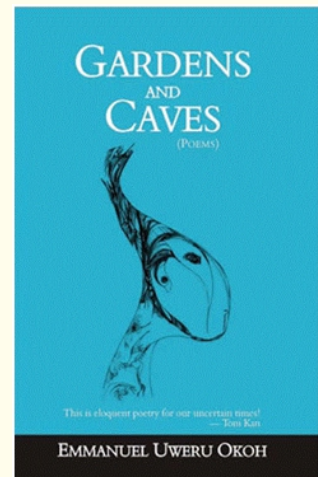
BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ



Civil Disobedience and Other Essays is a collection of some of Henry David Thoreau's most important essays. Contained in this volume are the following essays: *Civil Disobedience*, *Natural History of Massachusetts*, *A Walk to Wachusett*, *The Landlord*, *A Winter Walk*, *The Succession of Forest Trees*, *Walking*, *Autumnal Tints*, *Wild Apples*, *Night and Moonlight*, *Aulus Persius Flaccus*, *Herald of Freedom*, *Life Without Principle*, *Paradise (to be) Regained*, *A Plea for John Brown*, *The Last Days of John Brown*, *After the Death of John Brown*, *The Service*, *Slavery in Massachusetts*, and *Wendell Phillips Before Concord Lyceum*.

Emmanuel's maiden book is a 94-page poetry collection bearing a rare mix of the opposites of life; joy and pain, success and occasional flaws, flights and awkward stumbles and all else that make humans who they are.

The collection includes five sections, namely 'Circle of Inspiration', 'Political Equation', 'Whispers of Nature', 'Living and Hereafter' and 'Haiku'. Each section in this poetry collection presents a stepping stone in the circle of life, as it strings together nature appreciation, inspiration, political power play and family life. The collection concludes with the famed Haiku poetry of the Japanese.



Film to Watch



Already a "Best Documentary" winner at the Berkshire International Film Festival and the "Audience Choice" film of the Yale Environmental Film Festival, *GMO OMG* shows at the Environmental Film Festival at 3 p.m. on March 23. Filmmaker Jeremy Seifert quests to find food that is not genetically modified, talking to farmers, McDonald's employees and even folks in the lobby at billion dollar chemical company 'Monsantos headquarters, where he is kicked out. For more information on this documentary, visit <http://www.gmofilm.com/>.

TRANSCRIPT of FROM SOUTH AMERICA TO AFRICA, "CAPITALIST" SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE SEEN AS PATH TO CATASTROPHE

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

The Full Report could be found at the weblink at the end of this report

NNIMMO BASSEY: Unfortunately, I would like to be hopeful—I'm an incurable optimist—but with regard to the Conference of Parties on climate change, I believe that there was a big derailment right from Copenhagen at COP 15. So, there is no real reason to think there's going to be something that we can say, yes, finally, the world is on track to tackle global warming. We're still seeing situations where nations are haggling and debating over figures, nothing to show that there is an understanding that climate change is something that has been scientifically investigated and that there must be a way to evaluate aggregate actions by different countries that would add up to a result that will tackle the problem.

Right from the arrival of the Copenhagen Accord, everything is moving in terms of the direction of voluntary commitments to reduce emissions. As President Evo Morales said, there's really no indication that the world—the leading nations, the rich nations of this world, are ready to tackle global warming at its source. What is causing global warming? One of the major causes is the dependence on fossil fuels. And all the conservative organizations, like the World Bank, the International

Energy Agency, have all indicated that unless up to two 80 percent of known fossil fuel reserves are left under the ground, we are on track for catastrophic temperature increase. There's no talk about leaving fossil fuels. Everything is about how to offset the pollution, so every mechanism is being developed that would help polluting industry and rich countries to continue with business as usual.

AMY GOODMAN: Nnimmo, can you talk about the effects of climate change on Africa, and particularly Nigeria?

NNIMMO BASSEY: Well, the effect of climate change is real, already being experienced. It's not something for the future.

And Africa is so central in the whole of this because Africa experiences 50 percent more in terms of temperature rise than the global average. So if the global average temperature goes up by two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, in Africa the experience will be three degrees Celsius. If it goes to six degrees, that will be nine degrees. Africa is set to be roasted. We're going to a scenario where we may have Africa without Africans. It's really horrible.

The floods are getting more, the droughts, the desertification. Africa may well be the only continent where the desert is still spreading. And then, with the assault on land grabs and everything, we are really being squeezed. In 2012, we had floods across the continent. In my country, Nigeria, six million people were displaced by flooding in one year. Over 300 lost their lives. We had similar flooding replicated across the continent. We're having also the challenge of sea level rise. Where I come from, the Niger Delta, the land is naturally subsiding. So when you have a combination of sea level rise and land subsidence, you're having a heightened impact.

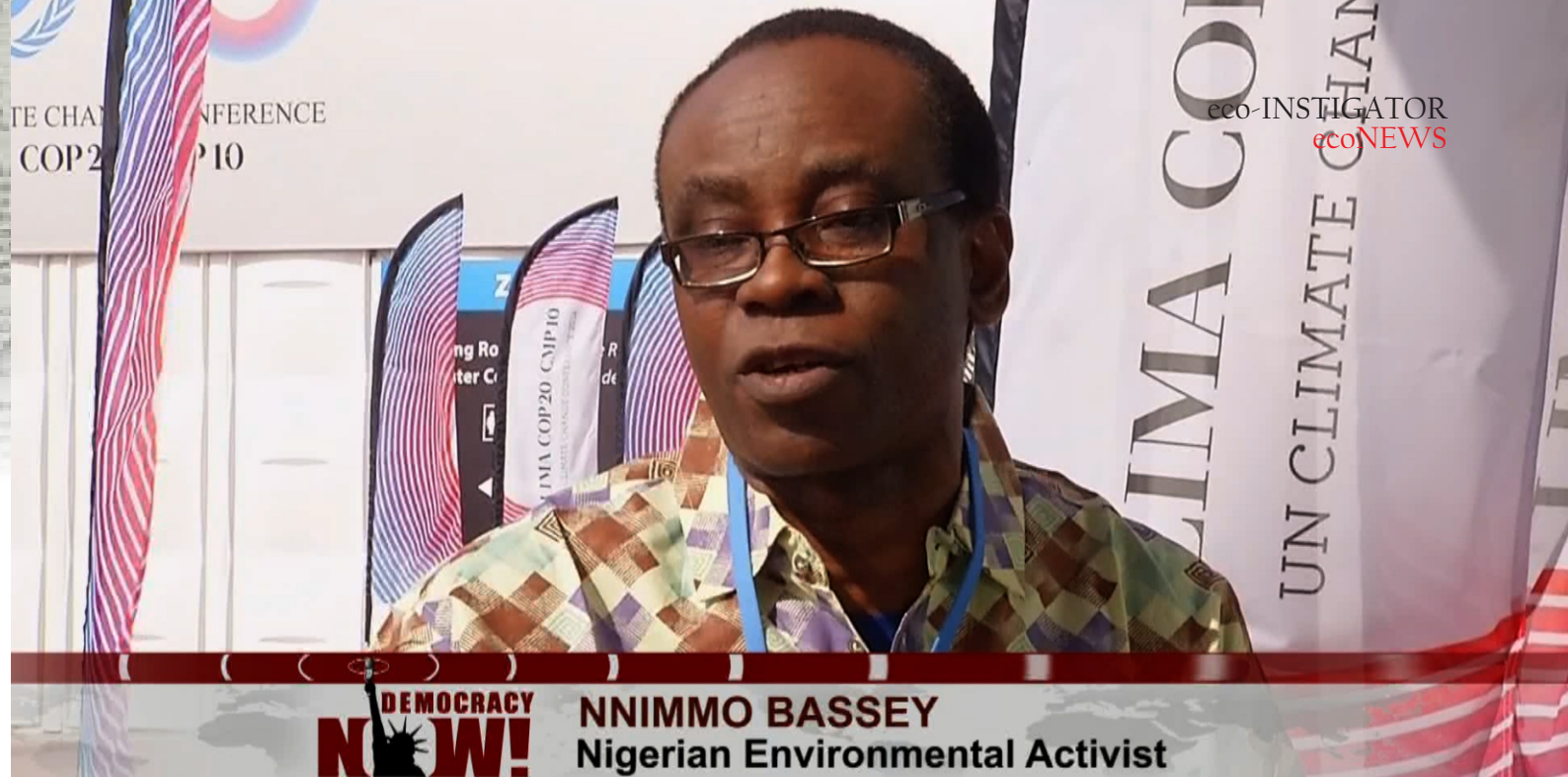
We are seeing a situation also, from research, that if the situation continues the way it's going, by 2050 we may well have more than 50 percent increase in conflicts on the continent. I mean, this is something I don't even want to think about, considering the level of resource conflict, political conflicts and other manifestation of violence on the continent.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you explain what REDD is, what it stands for, and what it means for the African continent?

NNIMMO BASSEY: Well, REDD is the mechanism that has been introduced in the—

AMY GOODMAN: R-E-D-D.

NNIMMO BASSEY: OK, REDD is Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. That's what it's meant to mean. That's what it—I mean, it's a concept that nobody will really oppose, but when you look at the practice on the ground, it's just a carbon market mechanism, where polluting industries and rich nations, instead of stopping pollution at its source, will secure and buy up forests in Africa, in Latin America, somewhere else, and even some forests in the Global North, so as to permit them to pollute. REDD is a mechanism that permits the polluter to continue polluting.



AMY GOODMAN: And so, explain how it works. For example, the state of California can invest in an area in Brazil, which we're going to talk about in a minute, in Acre, and what happens to that area? So then California can pollute further. But what are they doing in Brazil?

NNIMMO BASSEY: Well, what they would do in Brazil is that the forests would be—the forest-dependent communities would now be more or less displaced from having access to the forest, forest resources and also their territories. If I take this back to Africa, right as we speak, the displacement of communities in the Sengwer—of the Sengwer people in Kenya, who have been displaced from their forests because the REDD project is about to set in there. We've had displacement of thousands in Uganda already. In Nigeria, my own country, the Cross River forests, part of it is being secured for REDD projects.

AMY GOODMAN: So people are forced out of their communities?

NNIMMO BASSEY: Essentially, this is happening. People are being forced out with military power, military might, so as to secure carbon. Forest trees are being seen as carbon stocks, not as trees anymore. And the fearful thing is that with the discussions in REDD, this may move on to issues of not just carbon in trees, but carbon in agriculture. So farmers will be farming carbon rather than growing food for people to eat. And unfortunately also for the United Nations, a forest is—a plantation is accepted as a forest. So, REDD is set to kind of accelerate plantations across the tropical world. This would mean more displacement of communities, more displacement of farmers from farming land. And, of course, it's going to compound the food crisis in the region.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, Nnimmo Bassey, I want to thank you for being with us. Nnimmo Bassey is a Nigerian

environmental activist and the director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation. We'll be speaking to him more later in the week. He's the author of *To Cook a Continent: Destructive Extraction and the Climate Crisis in Africa*. As we turn now to the late Nigerian environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was executed in 1995. Before we go, the significance, nine—what, 19 years later, of Ken Saro-Wiwa, who fought for the Ogoni people in Nigeria?

NNIMMO BASSEY: Yes. First of all, let me preface by saying that Ken Saro-Wiwa actually inspired me to become committed to environmental justice activism. So, 20 years down the—almost 20 years down the line since the execution, I'm glad to say that the Ogoni people and the peoples of the Niger Delta, where all this oil degradation has gone on for over 50 years, the people are more resolute than ever, and they're demanding that their lands be cleaned up.

Now, for the Ogoni people, three years ago, the United Nations Environment Program issued an assessment of the Ogoni environment and validated everything Ken Saro-Wiwa stood for and fought for, kind of indicating that what we have in Ogoniland is nothing short of ecocide, destruction of Mother Earth, a kind of destruction that's almost irreversible. Now, UNEP found pollution is on places—many places in Ogoniland that has gone as deep as five meters into the ground, hydrocarbon pollution. The water is found to have benzene, which causes cancer, up to 900 times above World Health Organization standards. But three years after this report, there's been very little movement, unfortunately, by the Nigerian government and by Shell, who has been the major polluter in the region. ●

AMY GOODMAN: Nnimmo Bassey, thanks so much.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/12/10/from_south_america_to_africa_market

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