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INSTIGATOR

A PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION

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**Agrarian Transformation(s)
in Africa –
What's in it for
Rural African
Women**

**Global
Blackness**

**Environmental
Justice
& Activism**

**The initial
Steps of
Environmental
Justice**

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

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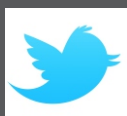
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We welcome you to the seventh edition of Eco-Instigator, and the first in 2015. For us at HOMEF a new year unfolds in March each year. We took our first steps in March 2013 and March 2015 marks our second anniversary. Raise your gourds!

Two years may not be a long time, but the race has been very exhilarating. We are humbled by the tremendous solidarity and goodwill you all have extended to us. We thank the many activists and academics that have either written specially for us or permitted us to reproduce what they had written elsewhere. We are grateful. Pardon us if we ask for more. Indeed we are asking for more!

You will notice that we have a guest editor for this edition. She is Ruth Nyambura, an avowed ecofeminist with outstanding credentials as a fiery Pan Africanist activist. She currently works from Nairobi. We are delighted to have her help in editing this edition. In addition to being the guest editor, she has also contributed an article for this series, "The Question of Agrarian Transformation for Rural African Women"

Celebrated activist intellectuals Analia Penchaszadeh, Hakima Abbas and Firoze Manji, each contribute an article to further build on this ECO-I theme of Environmental Justice Activism. We also bring you a paper by Fidelis Allen, coordinator of the Right Livelihood College campus at the University of Port Harcourt.

The Eco-Instigator package is never complete without a set of recommended books that you should read. Check out the ones recommended here.

The first two Sessions of HOMEF's Sustainability Academies (HSA) will be held in April and July 2015 with Baba Aye and Vandana Shiva as the instigators respectively. They promise to be explosive and empowering. During her visit, Dr. Vandana Shiva will deliver the Right Livelihood Lecture at the University of Port Harcourt.

As promised in our last edition, our Community Dialogues got off to an upbeat start at Erema and Goi communities in the Niger Delta in February with the communities using the newly minted HOMEF Community Dialogues guidelines.

The guidelines are available for free to download on our website and communities are welcome to use it to further enrich their dialogues.

Let the conversations and mobilisations continue.

Until victory!

Nnimmo Bassey

Global Blackness

By Hakima Abbas

My message here today is a message to the Black grassroots [in the U.S]. I share it in the hope that it reaches Black people on a move.*

Plainly, what I want to say is that we, Black people everywhere, see you and we are with you in the struggle.

It has been, for Africans outside of the U.S, significant and joyful to see the movement for Black life and dignity take hold, grow and capture the imagination in this moment there.

The most recent uprisings and mass actions across the U.S have been the culmination, as I see it, of mobilizations and organizing that has been ongoing for decades and that were visible in response to the lack of government action to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, to the case of the Jena 6, of Troy Davis, of Trayvon Martin, and now of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, as well as in the attempts to build viable alternatives as in Cooperation Jackson.

This moment in the movement has been triggered by the revolts in Ferguson but the movement is a movement for Black lives, Black life[i], Black dignity and Black self-determination in the tradition of Black

liberation struggles. Understood in this continuum, it has been wonderful to hear Assata Shakur present in the chants in Ferguson “it is our duty to fight for our freedom, it is our duty to win,” and indeed in this movement we must call out the names and organize to secure the freedom of the political prisoners that remain captive in U.S prisons for also demanding and defending Black life and dignity: Sundiata Acoli, Mutulu Shakur, Robert Seth Hayes, Albert Woodfox, Mumia Abu Jamal, Herman Bell, among many others.

There has been an outpouring of global solidarity for the Black movement in the U.S by Black people in, to name but a few, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Colombia, Brazil, the UK, France and from non-Black people who are also fighting against imperialism the world over, including in Palestine, where the historic solidarity between African and Palestinian peoples continues.

Black people globally are claiming 'we are Ferguson' as an understanding of our linked fate and common oppression and in many cases because the manifestations of global anti-Black violence are so similar.

In South Africa, for example, a booming prison industrial complex and accompanying State and non-State so-called 'security' apparatus is being established to protect capital from economically oppressed Black people (rather than protecting the masses of Black people from the violence of capitalism).

In the U.S., a Black person is killed every 28 hours, and in Brazil approximately 118 Black people are murdered every day in what Afro-Brazilians are calling a silent genocide. One hundred and eighteen Black people are murdered every day!

The outpouring has highlighted not only the linked fate between us but also the asymmetry of how far the cries of indignation of *les damnés* carry. We have heard the cries of Ferguson echo across the globe. And yet, wherever we are we must listen hard to hear the resistance in Burkina Faso, in Guinea, in Colombia, in Sudan, in the DRC. To remix CLR James, the only place where Black people do not revolt is in the pages of the capitalist media. Just as anti-Black oppression is global and takes many forms that are embedded in systems of white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal, ableist, capitalism, resistance by Black people is also global and it is all of our duties to ensure that we are seeing, listening, being inspired by one another and living our solidarity with one another.

In Colombia, Black women have been in permanent assembly in the offices of the Ministry of Interior of Giralda since November 27 as part of their fight to protect their lands and territories from mining, to end the war on their bodies and to resist displacement. In Madagascar, peasants and farmers resisted massive land grabs, their uprisings leading to an overturn of government. However, their gains are being reversed in the name of

liberal democracy.

More broadly, the fight against land grab in Africa is a fight for Black life and survival, for self-determined development and is a global fight for the future that we all need to be paying attention to. With the collaboration of African governments and elites, about 20 million hectares of farmland has been grabbed since 2008, using the all too familiar justification that the land is unoccupied or unused.

The land claims of pastoralists, women, peasants and small-scale farmers are marginalized from formal land rights processes and access to law and institutions by the colonial framework of land ownership that favors markets and businesses. Land use that is non-commercial, including medicinal, spiritual or grazing for pasture, is ignored to make way for large-scale, high-yield 'production.' Biodiversity is being patented, flora and fauna commodified, and water grabbed – this is no longer the prediction of great writers like Octavia Butler but the terrifying reality. Significant public relations efforts, by, amongst others, Bill Gates in partnership with Monsanto, to persuade governments and farmers that GMOs offer the solution to food insecurity are obscuring the market-dependency that this and mono-cropping would create for already market-marginalized small scale farmers on the continent. The sustainable future that global capitalism is envisioning and aggressively creating is one in which technology beats nature to maintain the luxury of a few. Black lives and lands remain commodities and disposable. Despite the threat, communities across Africa have been resisting land grab, and women have been organizing beyond borders to claim 'we are the solution' to sustainable food production.



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HOMEWISE

image:egyptianwomen.info

Globally, women and queer folk are resisting and building alternatives at the intersections of patriarchy and capitalism. In the U.S, I have been dismayed by the erasure of Black cis and trans women's lives even within the Black Lives Matter movement. Where was the mass mobilization when Tanisha Anderson was murdered by the police? Where was the mass mobilization when Deshawnda Bradley was killed? Where is the movement for the sixty four thousand Black women that are missing in the U.S?

On the continent of Africa, we witness the attempt to disappear Black women and queer lives and life from the very narrative of African identity. Armed with imported religious fundamentalisms, the promise of capitalist prosperity and the necessity for diversion and division, an alliance has

formed to enshrine patriarchy, heteropatriarchy and transphobia into the fabric of Africa. It's important that we not fall into the trap of asserting that oppression and oppressive practices are a manifestation of African culture or tradition.

As Amilcar Cabral reminds us, culture is dynamic and perpetually being made. Culture can be used as a tool for liberation or for the purposes of domination: the choice sits with us.

Patriarchy is not my culture even if the system of patriarchy dominates the practices of those around me. I choose the traditions of freedom, respect, love and self-determination that are just as much embedded in the history and practices of my people.

Women and Queer Africans are choosing and creating an Africa outside of the bounds of patriarchy by mobilizing in Soweto for Pride, through hundreds of people taking to the streets of Nairobi in miniskirts when a woman was stripped naked for being indecently dressed and by demanding an end to violence against sex workers under the banner of Black lives matter.

Black people came out globally to 'Bring Back our Girls' after over three hundred children were abducted from school in Chibok, Nigeria in May. The response of the Chibok community and the Nigerian women's movement sounded the alarm and spurred global solidarity from Philadelphia to London, Cairo to Dakar and Johannesburg. But our girls are still missing eight months later and many more Black lives have since been lost to the proxy battlegrounds of a global war that has been raging in a barrage of silence. When the demand rang out that our three hundred abducted Black girls be brought back, the outcome was more U.S troops with 'boots on the ground' in Africa.

When the demand rang out that our three hundred abducted Black girls be brought back, the outcome was more U.S troops with 'boots on the ground' in Africa.

Militarized responses from the U.S are not new, but the humanitarian justification for U.S military infiltration into Africa is nonetheless duplicitous, be it in the response to 'Bring Back our Girls' or to the Ebola epidemic that has taken nearly eight thousand lives in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Ebola became an epidemic in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia and not in Spain, the United States or the UK, where there were also cases, because of systemic and entrenched impoverishment and

inequalities: in other words, the differential effects of Ebola are directly tied to capitalist systems of exploitation. And it is capitalist interests that have maintained the attention of pharmaceutical corporations backed by the U.S military in the Ebola crisis, not human solidarity. Because Black lives matter we must build ways of being that disrupt imperialism, patriarchy, militarism, disrupt the entire system and sustain Black life.



Despite the unprecedented Black presence in the U.S administration, the murder, mass incarceration and impoverishment of Black people continues. Similarly, for the last fifty years, African states have had African administrations that do not serve the interests of African peoples. When there is no justice, there is just us.

In this moment when the attention of so many is on the Black liberation movement in the U.S., there is significant political

mileage in claiming ally-ship with the movement – the woodworks will be full. But genuine solidarity requires 'fighting on different terrains toward the same objectives'[ii], co-conspiracy rather than empty declarations of ally-ship. Co-conspiracy will require long-term commitment, introspection, and practice. It might start with a hashtag or wearing a t-shirt, it certainly can't end there.

I have seen, admittedly with some glee, consternation amongst sections of the Black community in the U.S around the organizing tactics and methods of the mobilizations for Black life and lives. During the uprisings in Tunisia, a communist comrade recounted that every evening he wrote an analysis of what was happening and how it was happening. Every morning he tore up his analysis. In only a few hours, what he understood felt no longer applicable, relevant or even enough to understand what was happening.

The people were creating revolution. Not from a text book, the red book or any other book, but from their own experience and knowledge. Learning in action was the order of the day and a leaderfull[iii] not leaderless, movement was being created in the image of the aspirations of the people involved. It was definitely not a perfect uprising, there have been significant losses over the last four years but revolution is a process and without a doubt the uprisings changed Tunisia, Africa and the rest of the world in significant ways.

The uprisings in the U.S feel similar in that they are grounded on years of organizing and part of a transformative process, they are leaderfull not leaderless and they have swept the old guard to the side to make room for the articulation of the peoples' aspirations. In Tunisia, the call was for 'bread and dignity,' in the U.S it is for Black

lives. Both have clear affirmations and both affirmations challenge the economic, social, and political global order in their demand.

The systems of oppression that we challenge locally are global and we have a global Black village. We have a duty not only to indict the system, to shut it down, but to build new ways of being, doing and sustaining. We must become, in the words of Assata, weapons of mass construction. Indeed, we have nothing to lose but our chains.

[Ifred Moten makes an important distinction here on Black lives and Black life: "We need to understand what the state is defending itself from and I think that in this respect, the particular instances of Michael Brown's murder and Eric Garner's murder are worth paying some attention to. Because what the drone, Darren Wilson, shot into that day was insurgent Black life walking down the street. I don't think he meant to violate the individual personhood of Michael Brown, he was shooting at mobile Black sociality walking down the street in a way that he understood implicitly constituted a threat to the order he represents and that he is sworn to protect. Eric Garner on the every day basis initiated a new alternative kind of market place, another mode of social life. That's what they killed, ok?"

So when we say that Black lives matter I think what we do sometimes is obscure the fact that it's in fact Black life that matters. That insurgent Black social life still constitutes a profound threat to the already existing order of things."

These remarks were read at the Black Life Matters conference in Tucson, Arizona, on January 15, 2015. They were originally published in The Feminist Wire at: <http://thefeministwire.com/2015/01/global-blackness/>



READERS' FEEDBACK

Since its maiden issue in 2013, the publication has grown into one of the most stimulating and informative journals in the Africa on issues that are focused on environmental justice and the general health of our common planet.

The Eco~Instigator is published by the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) – an environmental/ecological think tank and advocacy organization that was founded by the world-renowned Nigerian Environmental Justice Advocate and an Award-Winning Environmental Activist Nnimmo Bassey. Indeed, the current edition of the Eco~Instigator is a must-read for every World Citizen who is passionate about the need to find means to protect our common planet that is being abused and threatened to extinction by the greed of big transnational corporations and other man-made activities.

The issues of global warming and climate change are no longer mere theoretical abstractions; they are now well-established scientific facts.

In 2007, the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported that scientists were more than 90% certain that most of global warming was being caused by increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases produced by human activities. In 2010 that finding was recognized by the national science academies of all major industrialized nations.

In Africa and other less developed parts of the world, these issues are more important

to us as we are the ones that bear the brunt of climate change. Recent floods in Malawi and Mozambique that led to the deaths of over 100 people and displacement of hundreds of thousands of others are just examples of how climate change threatens human existence. Besides the issue of climate change, the Eco~Instigator exposes how the various activities of mining corporations and transnational oil companies destroy people's livelihoods through the destruction of their environment.

The publication also focuses on the issue of food safety and security by promoting safe farming methods and paying close attention to controversial issues surrounding genetically modified foods, genetically modified crops, and genetically modified organisms in general.

After going through the current issue of Eco~Instigator, I can confidently say that it is rich in content and packed with well-written articles that can only help to enrich the reader's grasp of issues that are geared towards human safety and protection of the environment. More importantly, Comrade Nnimmo Bassey brings us a firsthand account of events that took place COP 20 that was held in Lima, Peru in December 2014.

Hilary Ojukwu, Uhuruspirit Journal
<http://www.uhuruspirit.org/news/?x=7475#.VMvgzsZSbka>



READERS' FEEDBACK

Minerals & Wars at the Great Lakes

I found the article brings an extended awareness to the Congo genocide and its root causes. The article uses reliable sources as well. This edition's release coincided with the anniversary of Lumumba assassination, so the publication is speaking straight to the hearts of Congolese who manage to read it. Well done!

This article could be the basis of future deepening debates around the increased export of minerals by Rwanda and Uganda that both do not have but which are widely published in their annual exports. Unfortunately the situation continues till today while UN and DRC armed forces are in the region.

- Marcel Mbuyu, RDC



Where are the Women?

There is much to be said about the displacement of rural African women from productive activity by the expansion of a type of agrarian development rooted largely in projects that destroy the natural resources through which these women's ability to sustain life and livelihoods is based on. Vandana Shiva posits that,

'women in sustenance economies, producing and reproducing wealth with nature, have been experts in their own right of a holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes. But these alternative modes of knowing, which are oriented to social benefits and sustenance needs, are not recognized by the reductionist (development) paradigm, because it fails

AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION(S) IN AFRICA – WHAT'S IN IT FOR RURAL AFRICAN WOMEN?

By Ruth Nyambura

interconnectedness of nature, or the connection of women's lives, work and knowledge with the creation of wealth.' (Shiva 1990)

Access to and Control over Resources

Land rights for women in Africa go beyond property rights but touch on often sensitive issues around different tenure systems (statutory, customary and religious), land-based wealth, power and social relations which give or take away their right to access and control resources and the different ways in which diverse groups of women are affected by their incorporation into a corporate form of agriculture.

This is one of the most important sites of struggle in addressing inequalities and asymmetries of power in gender relations in the agrarian sphere.

Research shows that if women had the same access to productive resources as men do, then there would be a direct increase in yields in the range of between

25-30% which would raise agricultural output in developing countries by between 2.5-4% as well as drastically reduce the number of hungry people in the World by up to 17%.

Land is one of the most important productive resources, in fact it can be argued convincingly that it is impossible to achieve food sovereignty without comprehensive land redistribution and Africa does not fare well in this regard.

While policies like CAADP and investment frameworks such the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition attempt to explore the complex land dimension of food sovereignty; rather than a promotion of land re-distribution from elite landed classes and the state to the landless and working poor there is an overt promotion of re-concentration of land-based wealth and power from the state, community or small family farm holders to landed classes and corporate entities.

Africa has been in the throes of one of the greatest 'land-grabs' in history with many parallels being made between the



'scramble for Africa' that ushered the continent into the age of colonization and this new wave of land acquisition being sponsored by foreign direct investments (FDI) by multi-national agribusiness companies based in the West, Middle-East, a small local elite and even governments in the South. It is estimated that land the size of Western Europe has been given/sold to investors across Africa in the last decade alone.

African women farmers are already disadvantaged with regards to access and control over land based resources even as it is important to acknowledge the different contexts brought about by land tenure systems that different women operate under and this new context is putting further strain on women's abilities to provide food for their families as well as make a living from their land.

attributed to the conversion of productive farmland in the South to grow industrial fuel crops in addition to; the climate crisis, the aggressive promotion of an export-oriented agricultural system that is heavily reliant on chemicals and the rise of commodities markets linked to agriculture which priced millions of poor people out of the food market. In Africa, countries like Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Senegal and Mozambique experienced violent protests owing to the uncontrolled rise in the price of staple foods.

Billions of dollars in investments are going into farmland acquisitions throughout Africa in a move that was initially defined as a way to promote food security within the continent.

The global food crisis of 2006-2008 is largely

Armed with development policies such as CAADP which speak to the condition of land in Africa, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and development agencies like USAID have been pushing for land programmes in Africa which aim to create commercial land markets based on private property titles with hardly any safeguards available to protect the most vulnerable.

The narrative goes, land titles – for women especially – always directly translates to security of tenure, which is a complete fallacy and a reductionist view of the complex land tenure systems and origins of historical injustices around land in Africa.

This is nothing short of the co-option of rural African women into the capitalist project, which rather than address the systemic and structural barriers around access and control over land relies on a 'reform' of the system. It is estimated that up to 90% of land in Sub-Saharan Africa is untitled, forests, farmlands, woodlands and rangelands are often collectively owned by communities for mostly food production and pasture for livestock with rural women being at the forefront of maintaining these activities.

Titling of these lands automatically benefit men, further complicating the existing problems of land for rural women. Patriarchal power structures are inherent in not only customary laws but also modern land laws due to political and economic factors, the only difference is that we can argue that under customary laws it is relatively easier to analyze gendered asymmetries of power in relation to access and control over resources.

The result of this market-based conception of land-rights is that the continent is being carved open for an export-led agricultural model which requires large amounts of land for monoculture production. Africa is now firmly in the era of plantation farming because more often than not, the way farmland is used is heavily influenced by the amount of land one possesses.

When rural agrarian policies encourage taking the most productive farmland away from cultivation for local consumption and converting that land to farming for export, they put local communities in a situation of dependence on a profit-motivated market over which they have absolutely no control over. They also increase the vulnerability and dependence that rural women already face.



Ruth Nyambura, an avowed ecofeminist with outstanding credentials as a fiery Pan Africanist activist. She currently works from Nairobi.

No More Sins to Confess

Contrite, I shuffle to the confessional
And kneel silent at the box
'Cause all evils are accepted as good
I search and scrape my brain
Yet nothing pops up to count as sin
Now I wonder why I wandered here

White and black: hues of same coin
Normal to kill
Normal to waste
Normal to steal
Normal to pollute
Normal to erode
Normal to grab lands, seas and even the
air
Dead fish bop and the stench is loved

Contrite, I look around
A lone penitent before the confessor
'Cause all are out on a ride
Where nothing is sacred and
Boundaries are as thin as a pin
Nothing pops up to count as sin
Now I wonder why I wandered here

Displacing the poor
Deforestation without care
Pushing non-productive seeds
Exporting environmental costs
Using, discarding and trashing stubborn
plastics
Moving boundary lines
Degrading soils, air and water
Hooded market forces hound
The Unheeding into debt traps

Contrite, I recall the days when men
sinned
And saw the edges of hell
'Cause even the big screen turn blank

As sin cannot be captured on tape
Still nothing pops up to count as sin
Now I wonder why I wandered here

Entice and plunge
Folks in debt
Ignite wars, maim, enjoy the sounds of
bombs
As innocents groan under the drools of
drones
War games and video games merged as
blood
Is nothing but blobs on our smart phone
screens
Applause attends every heinous deed
Stunned I wonder what could draw a
wince
A thousand ways to inflict pains yet
unexplored

I snatch foods out of the mouths of the
hungry
I sell orphans for the price of a loaf of
bread
Father's wire and blow up daughters as
advance emissaries to heaven's gate
Good turned bad
Bad turned good
Turning oneself over to the law does no
good
Because I broke no law

Contrite, I shuffled to the confessional
And knelt silent at the box
Before an astonished confessor
Aghast I searched my brain in vain
But nothing popped up to count as sin
I kneel wondering why I wandered there

- Nnimmo Bassey
January 2015



THE BEGINNING: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

BY ANALÍA PENCHASZADEH

The history of environmental justice in the United States is one of local movements merging into a national movement that forges stronger links with activists in other countries to demand global justice. Ten years ago, the First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit launched the Environmental Justice Movement to consolidate the many struggles throughout the US for environmental protection and access to resources.

In 1987, the United Church of Christ published a report demonstrating that hazardous waste disposal facilities were disproportionately sited in African American communities. This was not explained by income or other factors: the authors coined the term "environmental racism" to explain this phenomenon. Numerous publications have since documented the multiple manifestations of environmental racism.

The United Church of Christ report was ground-breaking because it documented what many communities of colour experienced and claimed. However,

communities of colour were waging battles for environmental justice long before the report was published or the summit was convened.

Early Experiences in Environmental Justice

Many of the issues we now identify as environmental racism existed for decades: access to public transportation and parks, and dealing with pollution induced diseases like asthma, among other concerns.

For example, communities throughout the United States have been dealing with childhood lead poisoning as early as the 1930s. Up until the 1950s, lead was a common additive in paint, and most homes were covered in lead paint. Lead is poisonous, and children are particularly susceptible since it affects development. The most susceptible children are those who live in low income housing, where there is little maintenance and peeling paint is everywhere. Children like to eat chipped paint - it tastes sweet. The problem of lead poisoning was widely discussed by the mainstream media.

A 1973 Washington Post editorial explained, "one reason the nation has never mounted a public health campaign against lead paint poisoning is that it affects mostly the poor, the black, the Spanish speaking and others who often must endure miserable housing."

This is the perfect definition of environmental racism.

Although the medical establishment was well aware of the problem, little was done. In 1969 the New Jersey College of Medicine estimated that every year another 200,000 New York City children were lead-poisoned, almost all of them African American or Puerto Rican. Yet there were no programs to screen children's blood, or to demand that landlords remove the lead paint from apartments. The Young Lords, a Puerto Rican political movement, organized volunteers to go door-to-door to take blood samples and inspect homes.

They were able to identify affected children and organize the community to get these children into safe houses. But they were not able to build enough power on their own to stop new cases and get rid of lead paint. It was clear that a broader movement was needed to connect these battles and challenge the assumption that communities of colour don't care about their environment.

Birth of a Movement

Throughout the 1980s, communities of colour and low-income communities throughout the United States organized environmental justice campaigns. In 1987, African American families in Hancock County, Georgia successfully organized against a proposed \$50 million hazardous waste incinerator.

The consciousness they raised through grassroots organizing during that first campaign then helped them stop a 900-acre landfill, which in turn helped the organizers build a vibrant movement in Georgia.

Examples like this are found in thousands of communities: farm workers in rural areas concerned about exposure to pesticides; communities concerned about polluting factories and their impact on workers and residents; examining the siting of hazardous waste facilities, bus depots, sewage treatment plants, nuclear waste storage, and many other threats to the health of people of colour, and particularly children.

When leaders came together in that first summit in 1991, there was an initial realization that our struggles are linked and that people of colour - whether African American, Latino, Native American, or Asian - were facing environmental discrimination throughout the US.

The question became: how do we move beyond environmental racism to a proactive vision of environmental justice?

The first step was to develop a holistic definition of environment, which must include people, communities, and culture. The second step was to undertake a power analysis of environmental racism and its accomplices; corporate greed that exploited people of colour, economically and environmentally, an exclusive environmental movement that did not defend our interests; government environmental and public health agencies that did not respond to the needs of communities of colour.

The Principles of Environmental Justice adopted at the summit embody an understanding that environmental justice is not about keeping environmental threats out of our communities, but rather eliminating those threats from everybody's communities.

Broadening the Movement to Include the 'Third World'

There is a famous World Bank internal memo where the chief economist proposes that they should encourage the movement of dirty industries to the Third World, arguing that "the economic logic of dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable."

Just as the United Church of Christ report had done for US communities, this quote finally documented what people in the Third World had been claiming for many years. Rich countries were dumping their waste in the South, and poor countries had little recourse.



Another key moment for the environmental justice movement was the connection between the struggle to close a sewage treatment plant in the Bronx and the struggle in South America to block the United States from selling its processed sewage as cheap fertilizer.

The breakthrough was the understanding that corporations exploit and poison people of colour in the US and abroad, and that to succeed we have to fight the battle on all fronts.

As corporate-led globalisation wins more ground, the challenge we face is to globalise the environmental justice movement and build power to protect our communities throughout the world.

Analía Penchaszadeh was formerly Director of Community Health and Environment at El Puente, a Latino community-based organisation in Brooklyn, NY. She is currently Development Coordinator at Jobs with Justice, a national campaign for workers' rights based in Washington, DC. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Community Toolbox for Children's Environmental Health.

This article was originally published in Green Pepper in early 2001 and can now be found online at <http://www.risingtide.nl/greenpepper/envracism/beginning.html>

WHITE SAVIORISM, VICTIMIZATION AND VIOLENCE

BY FIROZE MANJI

On October 31, 2014, Blaise Compaoré, the despotic ruler of Burkina Faso, was overthrown by mass uprisings almost exactly 27 years after he had seized power through the assassination, on October 15, 1987, of Thomas Sankara – popularly referred to as the “Che Guevara of Africa”.

Burkina Faso provides an excellent case study for understanding the conditions under which the white savior industry thrives or dies.

The République de Haute-Volta (Upper Volta) as it was once known, and which was once part of the French Union, obtained independence from France in 1960. This tiny impoverished country was grossly underdeveloped, with an illiteracy rate of

90%, the world's highest infant mortality rate (280 deaths for every 1,000 births), inadequate basic social services, one doctor per 50,000 people, and an average yearly income of \$150 per person, and generally unable to feed its population. Highly indebted, its people had been rendered into the perfect image that nourishes the white savior complex, as Walter Rodney described, “A black child with a transparent rib-cage, huge head, bloated stomach, protruding eyes and twigs as arms and legs was the favorite poster of the large British charitable operation known as Oxfam.” Following a series of coups and counter-coups that eventually led Thomas Sankara and his comrades to power in 1983, an extraordinary revolution was launched in the country.

In the space of just four years, the country became self-sufficient in food, its infant mortality rate halved, school attendance doubled, 10 million trees planted to halt desertification, and wheat production was doubled. Land and mineral resources were nationalized, railways and infrastructure constructed, and 2.5 million children immunized against meningitis, yellow fever and measles. Nearly 350 medical dispensaries and schools were constructed across the country by communities. FGM, forced marriages and polygamy were outlawed, and women were actively involved in decision making at all levels. In order to achieve this Sankara did not ask for aid – on the contrary, he shunned it. Moreover, he argued that the debt owed by the country was odious and therefore should not be paid. Cotton production therefore was not directed to export but was used to support a thriving Burkinabé textile industry. The country was marked in particular by the almost complete absence of foreign aid agencies and their local counterparts, the development NGOs.

Sankara's assassination at the hands of Blaise Campaoré, supported and celebrated by France and the rest of the imperial world, was to bring about a reversal of all the gains of that short period. Under Campaoré, the country quickly returned to the conditions of the former République de Haute-Volta.

Cotton was once again grown for export comprising 30% of its GDP of \$1500, making it one of the lowest in the world. Today, Burkina Faso is classified as one of the highly indebted poor countries (HIPC), with more than 80% of its population living on less than \$2 a day, and nearly 50% on less than \$1 a day. Infant mortality rates have been increasing. Literacy levels have fallen back to around 12%, with less than

10% of primary scholars reaching secondary school. In contrast to the program of 'land to the peasant' initiated under Sankara, Campaoré's policies were more like land to the parliamentarians and the president's family! Corruption is deep, with millions allegedly being syphoned off from aid and from handouts from mining companies. A large part of the economy is in fact funded by international aid. Privatization of water and other utilities has been the order of the day. A number of transnational mining corporations have been allowed to excavate gold and other minerals, with almost no benefit to the population at large. And the current regime has not been averse to using violence and assassinations to deal with its opponents.

These were the conditions needed for the flowering of agents of the white savior industry. In contrast to Sankara's time, Campaoré's rule was characterized by the growth in the involvement of the transnational development NGOs and an exponential growth in the number of their local Burkinabé counterparts. Oxfam Québec's involvement in Burkina Faso, for example, escalated after Campaoré took power in 1987.

The number of Burkinabé NGOs are thought to be in the hundreds, each depending on foreign aid, each ready to present Africans as victims, in need of rescue, not least from themselves, as the basis for getting grants. They flourished under a regime that had retrenched from its responsibilities for providing social services, and which has systematically dispossessed its people by privatizing the commons.

The regime actively encouraged this growth of NGOs supported by international aid as the basis for absolving itself of any responsibility for improving the lives of the majority.

For saviors to exist, there must be those in need of 'saving'. Put another way, saviors require victims. Victimization — that is, the process of making other humans victims — is necessarily a fundamental requirement for there to be a savior complex. And by definition, white savior complex is premised on the victimization of the African, the black body. Thus, it has become conventional in the West to describe Africans only in terms of what they are not.

They are considered chaotic not ordered, traditional not modern, tribal not democratic, corrupt not honest, underdeveloped not developed, irrational not rational, lacking in all of those things the West presumes itself to be. White Westerners are still today represented as the bearers of 'civilization', the brokers and arbiters of development, while black, post-colonial 'others' are still seen as uncivilised and unenlightened, destined to be development's exclusive objects.

But to fulfill this image of Africa requires the complicity of the African state and African NGOs, each to carry out its own form of violence.

First, as the case of Burkina Faso illustrates, it requires the violence associated with destroying the emergence of self-worth, self-determination and dignity that was the achievement of the short-lived revolution led by Sankara. That violence is also necessary if the new rulers are to use the state as a source of private accumulation by dispossession for the benefit of a few.

The local NGOs, whose survival is dependent of receiving handouts from the white savior industry, are complicit in nurturing the image of the subservient, incapable, primitive, African, the victim that needs saving. The complicity of African NGOs, and indeed of African leaders, in perpetuating a form of self-hate of the African identity, a modern manifestation of Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*, is a painful and too often unacknowledged form of violence.

Saviors cannot thrive where a people retake control of their destinies, assert their dignity and humanity, create the structures for self determination, organise to produce and make collective decisions, take pride in their own cultures, and seek neither aid, grants or charity. Indeed, the very name of the country, Burkina Faso, "the land of upright people", that Sankara introduced in 1984, is anathema to the white saviour industry.

What Burkina Faso experienced over a period of nearly thirty years has all the hallmarks of the set of neoliberal economic policies imposed with varying degrees of violence across the continent.

The result of these policies has been not only global economic and financial crises, but also crises of credibility of today's rulers, as demonstrated in the rise of a profound discontent amongst the people. That Camporé was deposed through mass mobilizations against his attempt to prolong his rule (and that of his family)



should not have come as a surprise; the set of conditions that has so enraged the Burkinabé are similar to those that led to the mass mobilizations and removal of Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. These are only the first of many uprisings to come in Africa.

And in none of the uprisings to date, and I would venture, in none of those that are to come, will we witness banners proclaiming 'we want more aid' nor 'we want to be rescued by white saviors'.

What these uprisings, whether in Africa or beyond, require is neither rescue nor aid, but rather solidarity. Speaking to popular movements recently, Pope Francis

described the act of solidarity thus:

It is to confront the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced displacements, painful emigrations, the traffic of persons, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called to transform. Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history, and this is what the Popular Movements do.

And in that, everyone everywhere can participate.

Firoze Manji



COMMUNITY DIALOGUES K I C K O F F

Reported by Cadmus Atake Enade

Community Dialogues held at Erema (Egi) and Goi (Ogoni) Communities on the 17-18th February 2015

The first point of call in the series of Health of Mother Earth Foundation's Community Dialogues was Erema (Egi) community in Ahoda East Local Government Area of Rivers state. The community's major sources of livelihood are threatened by pollution from petroleum extractive industries in the community and environs. Their major livelihood activities of farming, fishing and hunting are at the verge of destruction.

Community Dialogues are diagnostic

exercises that provide space for community members to review environmental situations of their communities and to identify needed areas of action to preserve /defend their heritage. The community Dialogue is aimed at discussing issues affecting their environment and drawing up possible action directions.

The Dialogues provide space for local communities to build and share knowledge for wide application in advocacy, networking and other actions.

The Dialogue at Erema

The community Dialogue was moderated by Comrade Morris Alagoa and began with initial introductions of community leaders present.

Community leaders included Comrade Che .I. Ibegwura, Egi Community leader, His Royal Highness (HRH) Eze Joseph D. Obulor, HRH Alexander Odeyi Obiyebe community, Madam Josephine Ned women leader Egi Community, Fynface Aaron and HRH Odeyi Ochoha 1 of Erema community.

Comrade Che Ibegwura welcomed participants and explained that the Dialogue was convened to discuss the environmental issues affecting them in their communities. He stressed the need for everyone to participate fully in the interactive dialogue sessions as the outcomes would help build much needed platforms to bring about positive changes in their environment.

HRH Eze Joseph the Obulor of Obite community thanked Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) for organising the programme and expressed joy about the community dialogue, describing it as a timely intervention. He further stated that for the longest time their communities had been struggling with environmental degradation and was hopeful that the dialogue process would be an opportunity for them to collectively deliberate on the issues and chart a way forward.

Following his words the Director of HOMEF, Nnimmo Bassey gave his opening remarks by thanking the people of Erema Kingdom for the massive turnout for the community dialogue and for welcoming the HOMEF team.

He went further to explain the reasons for the community dialogue, which was to talk about the fundamental environmental challenges affecting the people of the community. He stressed that what is generally referred to as natural resources are actually nature's resources and must be seen as the gifts of nature to humans and other species.

“The Community Dialogue (CD) is a two step- exercise that commences with the identification of environmental “assets” in the community, the concerns and the concerns of the people. The second step includes the identification of areas in which stakeholders need to take action. To ensure community participation in the actions there would be trainings so that members would acquire knowledge /competence in ecological monitoring and defence.”

After the introductions participants broke into five (5) Groups with each group having a facilitator and a recorder to write down the collective responses to the questions and issues deliberated on.

The Groups met for about 2 and a half hours before reconvening in the plenary session to share on the various identified issues and suggested solutions.





Dialogue at Goi, Ogoni

The Dialogue at Goi took place on 18 February 2015 at the Goi Community Hall. This hall is the only building that is still usable in what remains of Goi community after the massive oil spills and fire of 2004. Goi was totally destroyed by the ecological disaster and because the environment is yet to be remediated, the people are currently environmental refugees in other Ogoni communities.

Whereas we expected 200 persons at the Dialogue, about 1000 participants turned up. The hall was filled to capacity 30 minutes before the Dialogue was to commence. Indeed, by the time HOMEF team departed Goi that afternoon more community people were still arriving for

the event. They came on foot, by cars, bicycles and motorbikes. We could not ascertain if some came by boat because it was low tide and the usually wide creek had shrunk into a narrow strip.

It was obvious that the people of Goi have been yearning for a space to examine their problems and find solutions to them. They saw the Dialogue as one of such spaces. The programme began at 10 O'clock with opening prayers from Mene Tomii of Goi community. The Community leaders that welcome us to Goi included Chief Mene Tomii and Chief Eric Dooh, among other community chiefs. Introductory speakers included Nnimmo Bassey and Comrade Celestine Akpobari of Ogoni Solidarity Forum who expressed displeasure at the way the Goi people are being side-lined

in the scheme of things and were not even mentioned in the UNEP report.

In order to effectively manage the burgeoning crowd of participants and with experience from the Dialogue held at Erema, participants were assigned into three groups, each tasked with responding to issues raised in only one section of the Community Dialogue Guidelines. This saved on time and also enabled in-depth dialogue rather than rushed conversations. The groups worked on community ecological defence norms, environmental challenges/hazards and action areas.

Action Areas Identified at EREMA and GOI
The key environmental problems are oil pollution, deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Other problems include a rise in illnesses and a high mortality rate.

- 1) **R e m e d i a t i o n o f l a n d :** Environmental Impact Assessment should be done to assess the degree of risk at the beginning of any project.
- 2) **Need for Community Health Monitoring:** there should be adequate community Health monitoring and requisite healthcare facilities in the communities.
- 3) **Issues that require legal actions:** Illegal land acquisition, oil/gas spillages and flaring (Egi).
- 4) **Issues that require advocacy:** illegal land acquisition, oil spillages, gas flaring (Egi), and refusal to negotiate and to ensure engagement of local communities in jobs and contracts by transnational corporations.
- 5) **Issues that require mobilizing and dialogue:** forceful land acquisition, oil & gas spillages (gas flaring at Egi) and land grabbing.

- 6) **Need for detail study of the situations:** There should be thorough Environmental and Social Impact Assessment to enable communities to ascertain the degree of the effects of the oil/gas exploration and exploitation business in the communities.
- 7) **Experts are needed for samples collection and analysis.**
- 8) **Legal advice is needed to enable communities to decide on the best ways to seek redress for harm caused them.**

Communities would benefit from the following:

- a) Seminars, awareness campaigns, symposia, resource and pollution mapping.
- b) Environmental audits.
- c) Environmental and health monitoring training.
- d) Reforestation work and,
- e) Remediation of polluted sites.

Who will do what?

Community members, individuals, Egi community, Organization, NGOs and CBOs Community Ecological Defence Action Committees (CEDAC). Participants at both Erema and Goi unanimously agreed to set up a Community Ecological Defence Action Committees (CEDAC) in the communities.

A core team of six people was nominated to facilitate the formation of the Committees in Egi communities. At Goi, Ogoni, it was agreed that the communities should further consult and come up with the team that would lead the CEDAC in Goi and its environs. The CEDAC team at Erema has the following members: Madam Josephine Ned, Eze Zun Omekwe, Hon Precious Ugo, Comrade Odurraya Ike , Azuma Ngozi and Pastor Clement Isong.

Environmental rights group conducts community dialogues in Niger Delta oil communities

February 19, 2015 by Arodiegwu Eziukwu

Health of Mother Earth Foundation, an environment-focused non-governmental organisation, Thursday concluded community dialogues in two communities in Rivers.

According to HOMEF, the dialogues were aimed at raising awareness and seeking community driven solutions to existing environmental challenges.

Representatives from communities in Erema, Egi and Goi communities in Rivers, participated in the sessions tagged, Community Dialogues, which ended on Thursday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony at Erema Community, Nnimmo Bassey, Director, HOMEF, noted that the dialogues were planned for community members to review environmental situations of their communities.

He said that HOMEF planned to take the community dialogues to other oil-producing communities across the Niger Delta region.

The interactions, according to him, would also identify needed areas of action to preserve and defend the common heritage of the people of the region.

"Demands for stewardship in relation to how we relate to the gifts of nature are sometimes regarded as affront to political power wielders and corporate entities," he said. "These political power wielders lay claim to ownership of our lands, waters and the several gifts that nature has endowed us with.

"As we approach the rescheduled 2015 elections, the thing that matters most to us, our environment, has been pushed to the backseat by the political players. These political players are concerned with how to grab our votes without telling us what they would do with the very thing that supports our lives and livelihoods. The parties proclaim transformation and/or change. We have seen change. We are living in change.

"Our waters have been changed into polluted and heavily toxic soups. Our air hangs heavy with noxious fumes. Frantz Fanon famously said: "We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe." The truth is that we have got to the point where we can hardly breathe."

Also speaking, Che Ibegwura, a labour activist and community leader in Erema, urged the people to improve their natural habitat which remained their source of life.

He expressed regret that the violent activities against the environment had continued unabated for decades.

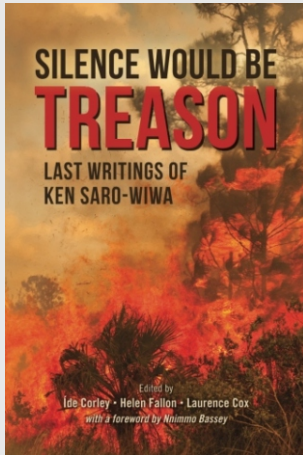
The community leader said that this had resulted in poor yields from farm lands and declining quality of life in oil-bearing communities.

In his speech, Aaron Fyneyface, a resident in the community, commended HOMEF for building the capacity of the people to protect its environmental assets.

He urged the people to apply the knowledge acquired from the sessions in ecological monitoring and defense for the well being of the community.

<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/region/south-south-regional/177150-environmental-rights-group-conducts-community-dialogues-in-niger-delta-oil-communities.html>

BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ

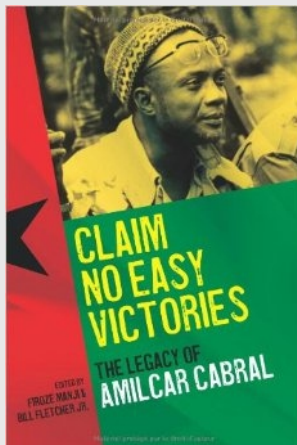


Edited by Ide Corley, Helen Fallon, Laurence Cox

A unique collection of the last writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa that reveals the indomitable mind and spirit of the legendary campaigner for justice in the last months before his execution. The letters and poems collected here are the last writings of a man on trial for his life.

They were smuggled out of military detention in food baskets.. Nigerian author and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, facing execution by the military regime on trumped-up charges, corresponded extensively with Irish nun and solidarity worker Majella McCarron during the last 18 months of his life. Clear and direct, these letters and poems are the last expression of a voice the regime was determined to silence: a voice for indigenous rights, environmental survival and democracy, many of whose battles were won despite his death and whose voice comes alive today again in these extraordinary letters.

Saro-Wiwa was a leading figure in the world of Nigerian and African letters, as novelist, playwright, non-fiction writer, author of children's books and television writer. He was also a major figure in Nigerian politics, when his support for the autonomy of his own, indigenous Ogoni people led to his removal from office. Following this Saro-Wiwa threw himself into business to provide the financial basis for the movement which from 1990 took the shape of MOSOP, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. MOSOP raised not only the issue of indigenous autonomy but also that of environmental survival in the face of massive oil and gas extraction in the Niger Delta and the associated oil leaks, gas flaring and other environmental crises threatening traditional livelihoods in the area. This was a direct challenge to those who benefitted from the situation: the oil and gas multinationals and the Nigerian military government.



co-edited by Firoze Manji, Bill Fletcher Jr 2013 marks the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Amílcar Cabral, revolutionary, poet, liberation philosopher, and leader of the independence movement of Guinea Bissau and Cap Verde. Cabral's influence stretched well beyond the shores of West Africa. He had a profound influence on the pan-Africanist movement and the black liberation movement in the US. In this unique collection of essays contemporary thinkers from across Africa and internationally commemorate the anniversary of Cabral's assassination. They reflect on the legacy of this extraordinary individual and his relevance to contemporary struggles for self-determination and emancipation. The book serves both as an introduction, or reintroduction, to one whom global capitalism would rather see forgotten. Understanding Cabral sheds light on the necessity of grounding radical change in the creation of theory based on the actual conditions within which a movement is attempting to develop. Cabral's theoretical ideas and

revolutionary practice of building popular movements for liberation are assessed by each of the authors as critically relevant today. His well-known phrase "Claim no easy victories" resonates today no less than it did during his lifetime. The volume comprises sections on Cabral's legacy; reflections on the relevance of his ideas; Cabral and the emancipation of women; Cabral and the pan-Africanists; culture and education; and Cabral's contribution to African American struggles. A selected bibliography provides an overview of Cabral's writings and of writings about Cabral.



SPECIAL:
From the Right Livelihood
College

Is It A **CLIMATE** of CONFLICT?

Fidelis Allen

Introduction

Climate of Conflict was the title of Nnimmo Bassey's lecture on November 26, 2014, inside the old Social Science hall for graduate students. He wrote To Cook a Continent, Destructive Extraction and Climate Crisis in Africa. He is Swedish Rights Livelihood Foundation Alternative Nobel Prize recipient. I had invited him to speak to my graduate students in Environment and Conflict at the University of Port Harcourt's Centre for Ethnic and Conflict Studies, where I currently serve as Assistant Director. Bringing Bassey was not a mistake. It would be the second time since signing a memorandum of understanding between his organization, Health of Mother Earth Foundation and the Rights livelihood Foundation (RLF) and the University of Port Harcourt. Since signing the memorandum of understanding, the Faculty of Social Sciences of the university has been one of five Rights Livelihood Colleges (RLC) in the world. The main idea is to promote debate on sustainable development.

The university community in Nigeria seems to have left the debate on climate change to a rather sluggish Nigerian environmental
28 civil society, indisposed political class and

uncritical policymakers. Sluggish in the sense, civil society organizations are as guilty as the university community, for failing to adequately respond to the problem of climate change. Many such organizations sit on the fence. As for the university community, scholars seem uninterested in critical engagement with the false solutions. They seem distances away from analyses that support a climate justice perspective. Yet, the solemnity and implication of global warming require spirited involvement of both students and scholars in evidence-based analyses. The university community is expected to provide leadership when it comes to analyses, research and advocacy.

Bridging the gap between intellectuals and social change

As already implied, existing gaps between the intellectual community and social change is seen in its response to the problem of climate change. The lukewarmness means that policymakers can do without critical analyses of the preferred market solutions. Many promote ideas that simply reflect preferences of a few -- corporations, governments, consultants, and neoliberal civil society groups.



There is no gainsaying that the university community worldwide has to be actively involved in engendering social change through useful knowledge production, analyses, advocacy and policy making. But, the community service portfolio of many academics has remained undischarged.

One tragic reality is the uncritical intellectual dependence on resources, concepts, tools and knowledge generated by western scholarship. This is part of a bigger imperialist or ideological project in which solutions to world's problems are expected to be driven by interests of dominant power centres. As expected, intellectual imperialism has many of its victims within the university community in the developing world. They are expected not only to uncritically accept analyses provided by western scholarship on social problems, they have to follow the pattern of analyses and language used by global dominant intellectual powers without questioning. This was the dream of the modernization logic which downgraded indigenous solutions to social problems. The uncritical receptive disposition of

policy makers and intellectuals in the developing world serve a neocolonial goal. If we apply this theoretical idea to the market approach sold by developed country dominated United Nations, we should easily see its intellectual foundation and interest of dominant powers.

Interestingly, globally, majority scholars have moved away from denial, but actively accepting the false solutions to the climate crisis. A growing lagoon of scientific evidence has broken down initial strongholds which kept a view that climate change was not happening after all. In addition, champions of fossil fuels production, funding numerous research projects and collaborating with neoliberal civil society, with an intention to denounce climate change, have done so in order to promote a doubtful role by human activities. Some developed country scholars peddled this idea though -- climate change is not real. A tiny but unpopular project of continuous denial through research and analyses continue to exist.

Nature of climate change conflict

If the current amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is caused mainly by human activities, it means that such activities must be curtailed to avert the danger lurking. But it cannot be an easy feat to achieve, giving existing conflicting interests. Human quest for comfort, profit and domination are crucial elements in any analyses of the conflictive character of climate change politics. Carbon dioxide is the main and most dangerous toxic influence, causing warming or rise in global temperature. To say that the current level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere owes much to economic activities of corporations and energy systems of nations, means there is already a dangerous conflictive relationship between powerful organizations and nature.

This suggests a complex and simple relationship between climate change and socio-economic and environmental conditions that fuel conflict. Even the US military recently warned that climate change will worsen the risk of global insecurity and war. When UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon mentioned in 2007 that violent conflict in Darfur, Sudan, is the first climate change conflict in Africa, he probably meant that the socio-economic consequences of climate change which include water scarcity and food shortages, would cause war. Variations in temperature increase the risk of violent conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa.

My own reflection and response to Bassey's lecture first flows from this reality. Second, from the growing hypothesis that climate change will not only lead to conditions that fuel conflict, the conflict is driven by interests. Third, those interests and their seeming irreconcilability

represent severe constraint on prospects of finding workable global and national solutions to the climate crisis. Fourth, the world political and policy elites have yet to keep emissions below 2 degrees Celsius. The security and conflict implications, especially for Africa, are worth reflecting upon. Finally, is the crucial role of the academia in developing new coalitions from a climate justice movement perspective?

Climate scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, have consistently argued that climate change is not only happening at a hazardous speed, it is caused by human beings. "Violent conflict and food shortages were also forecast to increase over coming decades during to rising temperatures", notes Danielle Demetriou concerning IPCC 2014 report on global climate change. There are 32 most vulnerable countries in the world, including Nigeria, Ethiopia, India and Philippines. The global fossil fuel industry is mainly responsible, contributing more than 70 percent of total amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Easily, the interest of this sector comes into direct conflict with those of nature and society.

Interests

Global fossil fuels serve different interests, namely, investors, corporations, governments and consumers. These have remained powerful. Not just in the area of productions, but in the social, economic and political spheres that permit their survival at the local and global fronts. Africa and the developing world in general suffer grave consequences of a powerful fossil fuel industry that drives growth and sustains income for politicians against the interest of nature and society.

Africa is not as guilty as the developed countries when it comes to human activities responsible for climate change. The continent has contributed a marginal 3 percent greenhouse gases into the global atmosphere. But we must be careful not to allow this fact build a position that works against the interest of nature ultimately.

It was a key point of conflict between emerging economies and key developed countries at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. South Africa and Nigeria are key sources of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These countries have potential to contribute twenty times more than the havoc the US and China have caused the climate though intensive fossil fuel energy systems. Both have pursued vigorously this path to economic growth.

The US' refusal to sign the Kyoto Protocol was probably in part based on an argument that a country like China, now probably the most polluting country in the world, should not have emissions reductions targets. Japan insisted that the

US and China must sign and pledge emissions reduction targets to merit its own action or decision in that regards.

The industrial revolution in Europe was a function of economic interests. Aggressive search for raw materials in foreign lands and the export of capital in pursuit of profits represent specific interests that would contribute to the destruction of nature. Even colonial political and policy structures, especially in Africa, were all part of the pursuit of interests. Colonialism has long ended officially in Africa, but the interests have continued to manifest in economic, social, technological and political activities of corporations--- main agents of modern capitalism in developing countries. In all, nature's interests, affected by human activities, can be traced to many years of exploration and manufacturing activities of corporations. There are local, national and global policy issues and practices though.

<https://www.pestsecuritybeat.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/darfur-farmer-climate.jpg>





Governments' weak policy position and influence, faulty analyses,, neoliberal civil society activities and risky practices by individuals and communities present fresh challenges. However, the present climate crisis is mainly a result of developed countries' economic activities. In other words, it is a result of existing dominant economic, political and social interests of corporations.

It would appear that the natural resource extractive sector, which started long before independence in most of Africa, is heavily maintained by interests-- growth and profit. Both have stood between citizens' enjoyment of their natural rights to a climate devoid of the unacceptable amount of greenhouse gases. It is worth noting that nature has always had a way of balancing natural processes of emissions in the interest of inhabitants and nature. But growth oriented models of development has put unnecessary pressure on the atmosphere beyond what nature can carry. The consequences such as extreme

weather conditions, flooding, food insecurity, wars and so on, are reflections of revolt by an angry global climate. Scientists argue, the world must keep temperatures below 2 degrees Celsius to appease the global climate and avert sudden and impending doom upon all.

The natural resource extractive industry is crucial in the analysis of relationship between nature and man. The mangroves, for example, which have had a long history of ecosystem service provisioning for small coastal communities in many parts of the world, including the Niger Delta, are depleting very fast with consequences for climate change. Mangrove forests are an important segment of nature for the storage of greenhouse gases. But exploration for oil and gas, for example, in the case of Nigeria's Niger Delta, has contributed immensely to their destruction, leading to heavy losses of this resource and the services it ought to be providing for the climate and humanity.



Illegal oil refining by locals in the creeks of the Niger Delta contribute additional damage to the mangroves, along with over-exploitation by locals. Meanwhile, the mangroves have been acknowledged as the most reliable natural provision for storage of greenhouse gases. United Nations Environment Programme has noted that the world's mangroves have depleted by 50 percent. By implication, more carbon dioxide, responsible for the warming of the earth, will fill the atmosphere. In turn, social and economic conditions of vulnerable people will get worse. As the destruction of mangroves continues, scarcity of basic resources for survival at the level of community will increase.

Struggle for scarce resources as a result of a depleting mangrove system will lead to violent conflict. In other words, a failing mangrove ecosystem service system will increase tension among starving locals, especially among local coastal community people.

The Ogoni people remain an important example. The Bodo area, where I have visited severally, reminds any one of the devastating impact of oil and gas on mangroves. Vast expanse of mangrove forests destroyed by oil spill has denied natives access to ecosystem services. The fact that the community people have not had a chance to seek food, fish, animals, medicines and so on from the mangroves for years since they were first destroyed means much more than an environmental problem. It is a huge climate change problem and a generational disorder caused by oil capitalism. The problems that followed, leading to the death of leaders of the community—Ken Saro Wiwa and others—clearly speaks of how energy interest is fueling conflict and changing the environment against nature and society with huge implications for climate change.

The next level of conflict, seen in efforts by actors at finding workable solutions to climate change, raises a number of questions. False solutions have defined ways the United Nations wants to handle the problem. False, in the sense, that commodification and privatization of pollution can only encouraged more pollution and emissions reductions failure. Making carbon dioxide an asset that can be sold, bought and hedged is unscrupulous.

The conflicting positions taken by the global climate justice movement is instructive. Policymakers need not continue to make capitalism a key player in tackling mitigation when it is not achieving expected results. Capitalism, naturally, survives on profit and inequality. Vulnerable groups, for example, poor rural farmers in coastal communities of Africa, should be directly compensated with direct financial payments for being victims of climate change, they did not cause.

Speculators, consultants, corporations and politicians are instead extracting profits from various market approaches being promoted by the United Nations. This is in direct opposition to a climate justice movement that has consistently called for alternatives approaches or policies to the crisis. Even, the conflict-ridden market strategy and its failure to reduce emissions, alone, call for the discontinuation.

When it comes to carbon trading, expected inflow of profit has suffered severe setbacks globally. The price of carbon has continued to fall. But national political leaders, who gather annually under the platform of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP), have continued to seek new ways of making it work. They have continued to make market strategies an important component of the efforts at resolving the crisis. But, as Patrick Bond has consistently argued, politicians and policy elites suffer severe paralysis in the face of the inverse outcome of the implementation of market policies.

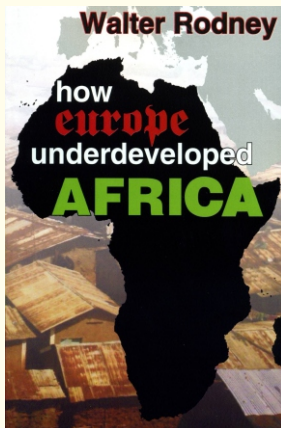
The better people-oriented, commonsense and regulatory approaches have been far less attractive. Moving away from existing wasteful lifestyles of consumerism, as well as from an energy system that depends on fossil fuels, is crucial. A paradigm shift, which majority of the world's leaders representing basically interest of corporations are unwilling to concede in the short and longer term, is required.

When these political leaders meet to discuss climate change and what has been achieved regarding emissions reduction targets, those who denounce the false solutions, who demand genuine solutions, meeting side-by-side, are demonized. The

global civil society—climate justice movement—demand, among others, a decommissioning of market strategies. They demand alternative development models. Although the civil society cannot be said to be monolithic, the climate justice extraction seems consistent with its conviction that it is unethical for world leaders to see capitalism as the main weapon against climate change. Having being in COP17 myself and closely followed stories on decisions and events in subsequent ones, including the most recent in Lima Peru, one can only say that these meetings have been more or less annual congregation of polluters looking for best ways possible to continue to pollute with minimal threat to profit.

Climate change conflict manifests intellectually as well. At the level of analyses, capitalism runs directly in conflict with those that demonstrate alternative solutions and reveal simple and common solutions different from the modern high-profile consumption lifestyles. Manufacturers, especially in the developed world, have continued to support research that lead to the production of commodities in order to increase profit margins. . The World Bank has remained a key global institution, furthering the cause of capitalism. It has remained one of the most supportive and funding institutions of research in various areas of environmental problems, including climate change for the purpose of knowledge production that endorse market solutions. Conflict at this level, more or less, amount to intellectual imperialism. This means an uncritical dependence on external centres of powers for knowledge and tools for solutions to problems in the developing countries.

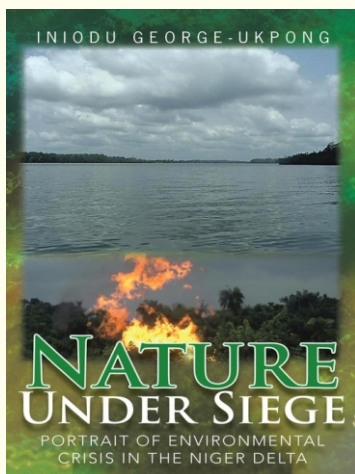
BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ



Before a bomb ended his life in the summer of 1980, Walter Rodney had created a powerful legacy.

This pivotal work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, had already brought a new perspective to the question of underdevelopment in Africa.

His Marxist analysis went far beyond the heretofore accepted approach in the study of Third World underdevelopment. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is an excellent introductory study for the student who wishes to better understand the dynamics of Africa's contemporary relations with the West.



Expressions such as "Environmental terrorism" or "eco-anarchy" may sum up the state of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, in a bid to explain the indiscriminate cutting of pristine forests, terminal scare of wildlife and extinction of biodiversity, loss of soil fertility and fecundity of rivers, acidified atmosphere, corroded roofs, disease, conflicts, militarization, extra-judicial killing, inflation and collapse of traditional economy, poverty, prostitution, rape, death.

But embedded in the clatter of this semantic analysis are the realities of an abused environment, where uncertainty looms in daylight and grief rules the night; for well over five decades that the region has come under intense ravaging by the oil industry, the effect is evident in the physical, biological and socio-economic environments.

Against the background of rich but fragile ecosystems where nature experiments with its components at will; and the picture of a consciously raped ecology, this book examines the lingering environmental crises in Nigeria's oil-rich region. With appropriate use of case studies based on practical field experience, and explicit discourse on remedial measures, the book is fashioned to meet the interest of all classes of persons including students of environmental management, policy makers and stakeholders in the Niger Delta environment.

Claude Ake conveys a more robust view, seeing social science as imperialism, suggesting that, knowledge generated by social scientists and the methods used for the production of such knowledge, are products of western influence or traditions of thought, informed by specific ideological orientation.

This is why an institution like the World Bank, now at the forefront of support for carbon trading, would support research that justifies market fundamentalism. The lack of critical engagement with such knowledge results in slavish implementation of ideas that ultimately favour capitalism and the developed countries, to the detriment or worsening of the climate and welfare of vulnerable groups in the world.

Real solutions

These levels of conflict around the problem of climate change reflect a fundamental flaw with the solutions pursued.

At the national level, for example, in the case of Nigeria, a national policy framework based on proper analyses and consultation with relevant stakeholders is lacking. When such consultations are made, they are usually shabby and devoid of informed critical analyses.

Beside a poorly articulated response by the federal government on the basis of global market approach, is the issue of lack of capacity for analyses.



Have You Read?

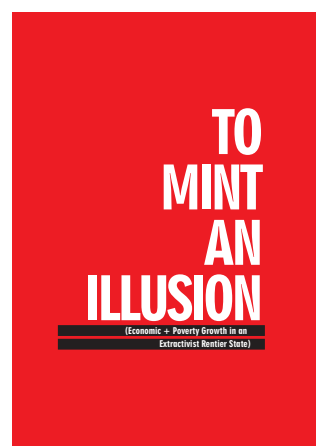
HOMEF just published two booklets that would get you thinking. And YOU can download free copies at www.homef.org.

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This is where the university community and civil society are expected to play a crucial role. Again, there is the problem of failure to detect the ideological goal of marketization and commodification of pollution. As earlier noted, solutions to the climate crisis require a paradigm shift in energy systems. But world leaders are not willing to make this shift. They have rather continued to denounce and undermine it. The deception and hypocrisy following it is at once a factor responsible for the increasing rate of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The biggest threat to the climate is capitalism. Whether in the US, Japan, UK, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria or China, the story is the same. National and global policy leaders are not fatigued when it comes to rejecting or undermining the arguments of the global climate justice movement.

Conclusion

Climate change conflict manifests at different levels, including the initial point of diagnoses, discourses-- solutions, impact-- as well as knowledge generation. In each of these levels, the lesson is, market strategies are conflict-ridden. This credential serves a lesson for the world to quickly move away to an approach that consider the interest of nature and humanity a priority. This requires urgent attention: reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a level below 2 Degrees Celsius. The catastrophic consequences of failure to achieve this need, need not be repeated here. It requires new coalitions with the university community in the developing world playing a critical role in analyses.

No Progress on the GMOs Front

By Juan Lopez

Lamentable record of ISAAA's Two Decades of Serving the Biotech Industry

Every January and for almost two decades GM crop proponents celebrate the arrival of report of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech (ISAAA) on commercialized GM crops. The truth is that nothing has changed since they started issuing these reports. They have been making the same claims since 1996: more GM crops, more countries, and more hectares cultivated. Interestingly this is something that ISAAA and the biotech industry see as the ultimate proof of the benefits those crops have for farmers around the world.

This year ISAAA claimed "18 million farmers in 28 countries planted more than 181 million hectares in 2014, up from 175 million in 27 countries in 2013". When it is said in this manner it would seem that GM crops are infesting the entire planet. However, solid facts indicate that GM crops are still mostly cultivated in a few countries and only a few traits have reached the commercialization stage.



SOYBEAN



COTTON



MAIZE



CANOLA

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network makes a good interpretative summary of the data put forward by ISAAA and as usual the conclusions of ISAAA report are not must be taken with a pinch of salt. The truth remains that after more than two decades of political and commercial pressures, GM crops are grown only by a handful of countries. We present some data on this in box 1.

Where does ISAAA's message come from?

ISAAA is simply doing the job of their donors. A look at their funders is self-explanatory of the reasons why ISAAA is over-optimistic and often unrealistic in their claims about the acceptability of GM crops. Government agencies, academic institutions and private sector companies such as Monsanto and Bayer Cropscience sponsor ISAAA. In understanding the consistent push to place GMOs on our dinning tables it is essential to note that the success of this enterprise (GM crops) is a State matter for the U.S. government.

With those donors it is not difficult to explain why ISAAA very rarely reports any problems with GM crops. If they do at all they simply misreport them. For instance this year ISAAA reports that a drop in

cultivation of GM cotton in China is due to low prices and high food stockpile in China. However Xinhua news media says that "China GM crop planting areas declined in 2014 amid heated discussions over safety concerns".

...What next?

2016 will mark the 20th anniversary of the ISAAA report of GM commercialised crops. However, you can bet that there will be no surprises. They will repeat what they have always claimed: more GM crops, more countries, more hectares, more benefits. They will continue their work of convincing the convinced, and serving the biotech industry. At the same time organizations critics of GMOs will have to continue passing the message with the truth behind GM crops and ISAAA.

While American citizens desire to have GMO labelling grows, paradoxically their money is spent via the US Department of State and other agencies in organizations like ISAAA and similar to ensure that the truth is hidden.

The politics and the pressures behind selling products of doubtful benefits should raise serious concern with governments in Africa and elsewhere.

Scholars and government officials, including ministers in charge of agriculture, should read between the lines in the dubious claims of the biotech industry and their mouthpieces. It is time to call the bluff and tell the ISAAAs of this world that GMOs are not the solution to food production. In this Year of the Soil, we need wholesome food cultivated in agro-ecological ways and not based on toxic chemicals and artificial inputs as promoted by the biotech industry.

BOX 1. Some facts about GM crops in the world that ISAAA does not tell

The world's GM crops are still grown largely by a handful of countries:

The US, Brazil and Argentina still account for 77% of the total global GM crop acreage.

The top 10 countries that grow GM crops still account for 98% of all the GM crops grown.

The list of top 10 countries growing GM crops remains the same (2010-2014).

Of the 28 countries growing GM crops, many grow few GM acres that account for a fraction of global GM area:

19 countries account for less than 1% of total global GM acreage each

This includes countries such as Sudan, Colombia and Spain, which grow approximately 100,000 hectares of GM crops each.

Many of these countries devote only a fraction of their agricultural land to cultivating GM crops. For example, Sudan's GM acreage accounts for 0.9% of its agricultural land, Columbia's 0.2%, Australia's 0.1%, and Spain's 0.3%

GM crops are grown on less than 4% of global agricultural land and 13% of global arable land.

There was a global increase of 6.3 million hectares of GM crops from 2013, an increase of 3.6%.

8 countries had a slightly larger area under GM crops, 4 had less, and the rest had the same as in 2013.

The US and Brazil accounted for much of the total increase. The US grew 3 million more GM hectares than the year before. Brazil grew 1.9 million hectares more.

ISAAA says that the US “maintains [a] leadership role” – this means that the US still grows 40% of all GM crops in the world, the same as in 2013.

Four countries – Argentina, China, South Africa and Australia – reduced their overall acreage, also by a very small amount.

Source: Canadian Biotechnology Action Network

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