

## RÉSUMÉ

### La guerre du pétrole des femmes au Nigéria

Terisa E. Turner et Leigh S. Brownhill

*Cette étude examine la guerre menée actuellement par les femmes contre les sociétés pétrolières au Nigéria. En faisant appel aux travaux de Dyer-Witheford et à la perspective de subsistance de Bennholdt-Thomsen et Mies, l'étude porte sur des luttes menées non seulement par les producteurs et les consommateurs, mais aussi par ceux qui sont impliqués dans « la reproduction sociale », la défense et la restitution de la nature. La guerre pour « le contrôle de la ressource » est examinée à travers trois périodes. La première période se situe entre juillet 2002 et février 2003; les organisations de femmes se sont alors emparées du terminal d'exportation ainsi que de plusieurs installations de ChevronTexaco. Les occupations ont inspiré des protestations globales contre la guerre et les sociétés pétrolières. Pendant la deuxième période, entre janvier et juillet 2003, les hommes-travailleurs nigériens ont joint le mouvement des femmes paysannes contre l'industrie pétrolière en organisant des grèves. Cette mobilisation a mené à une grève générale nationale de huit jours. La troisième période s'étend de juillet 2003 à janvier 2004; suite au sabotage de la grève générale par des bureaucrates syndicaux, les femmes et leurs alliés ont encore fait cesser les activités des compagnies pétrolières. Les forces militaires nigériennes sont intervenues suite aux demandes de la compagnie pétrolière. L'étude conclut avec une analyse de la construction endogène (ou par le bas) d'une certaine unité, des racines du pouvoir insurgé et des négociations directes sur le pétrole.*

## Women's Oil Wars in Nigeria

Terisa Turner and Leigh S. Brownhill<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In 2002-2003 popular movements shut down much of Nigeria's huge oil industry<sup>2</sup> and faced military intervention. At the forefront were women whose actions produced strategic connections with social movement activists worldwide. The insurgency was motivated by the devastation of the commons by the oil industry<sup>3</sup>. In a 2003 report on oil in Nigeria, the International

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<sup>1</sup> Terisa E. Turner is associate professor of sociology and anthropology at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. Leigh S. Brownhill is a Ph.D candidate at the University of Toronto. They are co-founders of First Woman: The East and Southern African Women's Oral History and Indigenous Knowledge Network. First Woman's central activity is the recording of the life stories of elderly Mau Mau women in Kenya. Terisa Turner and Leigh Brownhill are co-directors of the International Oil Working Group, a non-governmental organization registered with the Department of Public Information at the United Nations Secretariat in New York. In 2001 they co-edited *Gender, Feminism and the Civil Commons*, published as a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*.

<sup>2</sup> The major oil companies active in Nigeria and their share of crude oil production are Shell, 40%; Mobil (now ExxonMobil), 25%; Gulf (now ChevronTexaco), 21% and Agip (now TotalFinaElf), 12%. Two per cent of production was shared by Ashland (of the USA), Deminex (Germany), Pan Ocean (Switzerland), British Gas, Sun Oil (USA), Conoco (USA), Statoil (Norway), Conoil (Nigeria) and Dubril Oil (Nigeria). The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) had a 55-60% joint venture interest in the majors' operations. The United States took about 40% of Nigeria's exports. The remainder was exported to Spain, South Korea, India, France, Japan, China, Taiwan, the Philippines and Thailand (Frynas, 2000: 16, 246-247; Okonta and Douglas, 2001: 54).

<sup>3</sup> For information on the historical precedents to the current Niger Delta women's uprisings, see Turner *et al*, 2001 and the appendix in Turner and Brownhill, 2003.

Monetary Fund revealed that “between 1970 and 2000, the poverty rate ... increased from close to 36 per cent to just under 70 per cent ... to a staggering 90 million in 2000.... [T]he discovery of oil ... could actually have contributed to a decline in the standard of living.” The report floated the prescription that oil revenues be paid not to the corrupt government but to “adult women only” (Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian: 4, 20).

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented global uprising of the exploited. We examine this uprising through the lens of global gendered class struggle in the Nigerian and world oil industries. We argue, first, that insurgents’ power was rooted in subsistence and corporate organization; and second, that global producer-consumer strikes moved insurgents towards a transformation of global social relations. Aspects of these emerging relations are direct producer-consumer deals.

Elsewhere we looked into the question of why women are at war with the oil companies in Nigeria. This study also focussed on coordinated producer strikes and consumer boycotts (Turner and Brownhill, 2004). Here we expand this analysis to include not only producers and consumers, but also those engaged in ‘social reproduction’ and in the defence and restoration of nature. In doing so, we incorporate all four of what Dyer-Witheford (1999) calls the ‘circuits of capital and circuits of struggle.’ These are the four integrated sites at which capital extracts profits and exploited people resist: production, consumption, social reproduction and nature. In the present analysis we focus in greater depth on Nigerians’ defence of subsistence and the social anatomy of the struggle in Nigeria and in the world. In considering the social anatomy of the struggle we focus on relationships between different ethnicized and gendered echelons of the ‘hierarchy of labour powers’ at both the national and international levels.

Our study considers the July 2002 to January 2004 period of subsistence wars against the oil companies in Nigeria in three parts. Part one examines the period July 2002 to February 2003. Nigerian women occupied oil terminals and flow stations and inspired global protests against war and oil companies. Part two considers widespread workers’ strikes in the period February to July 2003. These included work stoppages in transport, the oil industry and the public service; a two-week seizure by oil workers of four Transocean deep-sea platforms and an eight-day general

strike against increases in the price of petroleum products. Part three analyses the July 2003 to January 2004 period. From 10 July 2003 peasant women occupied oil facilities throughout the Delta. As official government all but collapsed, village and clan-based organizations assumed more of the responsibilities for the administration of their own communities. By September 2003 insurgents shut down some 40 per cent of Nigerian crude oil production capacity. For several weeks, villagers denied oil companies all physical access to the western Delta. Chevron/Texaco, Shell, other majors and their contractors evacuated their Warri headquarters. The autonomous village organizations, linked to each other through regional solidarity networks, coordinated pan-Delta defence against US-supported counterinsurgency by the Nigerian military.

We examine the internal social anatomy of gendered class struggle in the oil industry using a theoretical framework called 'gendered class analysis,' which includes four central concepts: the male deal, commodification, subsistence and gendered class alliance.

Gendered class analysis gives particular attention to the ways in which class relations are gendered and ethnicized. Central here is the recognition that capital's profits rely not only on 'nature,' but also on both (a) unpaid work of employees and (b) unpaid work of people, mainly women, who produce and service the employees. Men are structured into a hierarchy of labour powers to be directly exploited by capital but also, through the '*male deal*,' to discipline and organize the exploitation of subordinated women. In this way, exploited men (a) are encouraged to accept their own subordination to their employers in exchange for the power they are allowed and required to exercise over women and (b) in a practical way channel the products of women's labour upward to capital, thus enhancing profits (Turner, 1994: 20-21). Local male dealers are those who buy into the deal by involving themselves in capitalist production and disciplining the labour of others, especially the unwaged labour of women, children, indigenous people and peasants.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gendered, ethnicized class analysis leads to the characterization of a very wide range of resistance to exploitation as class struggle. Refusal by unwaged workers, whether women in the household or peasant producers, to work within these relationships is class struggle which undermines capital's profits. Transformative action

*Commodification* is the complex of social processes through which all aspects of life's continuation, including production, exchange, consumption and the preservation of the natural world which had previously taken place in communal subsistence-focused social arrangements are restructured and given market value. Capitalists operating nationally and internationally directly contribute to the destruction of the subsistence realm as they construct commodified social relations and sanction their violent enforcement in ex-colonies.<sup>5</sup>

In the *commodified political economy*, life sustaining activities are supplanted by profiteering and speculation – the turning of money demand into more money demand (McMurtry, 2002). Commodification is inherently global and enforces an extreme division of labour. It structures a 'hierarchy of labour powers' and inflames divisions amongst labourers.<sup>6</sup> Bennholdt-Thompson and Mies (1999: 20-21) note that within the commodified political economy, "life is, so to speak, only a coincidental side-effect. It is typical of the capitalist industrial system that it declares everything that it wants to exploit free of charge to be part of nature, a natural resource. To this belongs the housework of women as well as the work of peasants in the Third World, but also the productivity of all of nature."

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by the unwaged, such as defense of the environment by indigenous peoples, can be understood as action to build subsistence or what McMurtry (2001) calls the civil commons: "any social construct which enables universal access of members of a community to a life good."

<sup>5</sup> With respect to the enforcement of the imposition of commodified social relations, US business professor Seavoy (2000: 113) wrote that "Contrary to what most scholars teach, investments in armed forces are one of the most productive investments that governments of peasant nations can make. ... all police and soldiers ... must be prepared to enforce commercial policies on peasants with the maximum amount of violence if necessary."

<sup>6</sup> Marx observed that "in place of the artificially produced distinctions between the specialized workers, [in skilled craft manufacture] it is natural differences of age and sex that predominate" in the automated factory (Marx, (1867) 1976: 420). Selma James noted, with respect to Marx's observation, "that the hierarchical wedge, first inserted between men and men, dividing them from each other on the basis of skill, is now also inserted between men and women and children. Biological differences become social divisions. Capital was able to divide the single workplace in that way, and then whole branches of industry in that way, and eventually the whole world in that way. In capital's hands, *the division of labour is first and foremost the division of labourers, on an international scale*" (James, (1973) 1994: 17).

The *subsistence political economy* is historically a life economy centred on ‘commoning.’<sup>7</sup> It is focused on the production of life. It is the source of the culture of connectedness and community against the culture of capitalism which defies possessive individualism. Subsistence at its fullest includes not only food production for local consumption and regional trade, but also a host of activities and sets of social networks whose main aim is to support and enhance human existence. Subsistence production, or what we alternatively refer to as the subsistence political economy, “includes all work that is expended in the creation, re-creation and maintenance of immediate life and which has no other purpose” (Bennholdt-Thompson and Mies, 1999: 20).

Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies point out that subsistence is *not* ‘tradition’ or bare survival: “The concept of self-provisioning is, in our opinion, far too limiting because it refers only to the economical dimension. Subsistence encompasses concepts like moral economy, a new way of life in all its dimensions: economy, culture, society, politics, language etcetera, dimensions which can no longer be separated from each other” (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies, 1999: 19). Subsistence as used here is rooted in the local while also being global, future-oriented and hybrid in that it merges selected aspects of pre- and post-capitalist social relations of commoning.

Subsistence includes the increasingly global orientation of social movements as they develop international alliances and linkages aimed at articulating alternatives to corporate globalization. The double process of the globalization of capital and of labour produces the internationalization of social forces from above and from below. One consequence of corporate concentration is greater unity of peoples and markets along with closer ties

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<sup>7</sup> The publication of Bennholdt-Thompson and Mies’ *The Subsistence Perspective* (1999) and Linebaugh and Redicker’s *Many-Headed Hydra* (2000) ignited an explosion of interest in ‘commoning’ including re-readings of Marx and the Magna Carta. “There is, I posit,” writes Linebaugh, “a narrow, conservative interpretation of the Magna Carta and a more radical one that concerns individual citizens and commoners. The former, inscribed on a granite plinth by the American Bar Association, stresses “*freedom* under law” (my italics); the latter stresses *authority* under law - it extends beyond protections from state power and, deeply rooted in the experiences of working people, offers rights of subsistence to the poor” (Linebaugh, 2003: 10).

amongst those directly and indirectly employed by giant firms. Corporate merging itself fosters globalization of subsistence from below.<sup>8</sup>

Male deals operate against subsistence production by divesting women agricultural and domestic workers of land and other crucial resources while constricting women's freedom to associate, express cultural practices, develop indigenous knowledges and organize their own labour processes. Women and the poor more generally suffer from cash crop exploitation or the loss of viable farmland and water systems. Women experience the impacts of such enclosures first and most. The male deal between husbands or chiefs and capitalists consequently contributes to impelling transformative activities by women. A gendered class analysis is distinctive in that it encompasses the breakup of the cross-class male deal and the forging of cross-gender alliances amongst the exploited, against class antagonists, aimed at creating new, humane, subsistence social relations. It is such '*gendered class alliances*' which confront male deals and the commercial triangles<sup>9</sup> which link the deals into the international system of corporate exploitation. In challenging corruption and resource extraction, new policies are advocated by people in gendered class alliances in a process of counterplanning from the commons.

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<sup>8</sup> One of Marx's most famous conceptions is that of 'the internationale' formed by the exploited in response to the growth of global capital and resisters' own evolving class consciousness as a result of class struggle. *The Communist Manifesto* (1847) contains the famous call: "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains." How, according to Marx, would this 'globalization from below' be constructed and emerge? It emerges, writes Marx in *Capital I*, in concert with globalization from above. In brief, the "centralization of the means of production" brings about the "socialization of labour." Marx ties the centralization of capital in a few global corporations to the expansion and revolt of the global exploited class, members of which are "disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself" (Marx, (original 1867) 1976: 763). The global class that is disciplined, united and organised is, at the same time, divided by gendered and ethnicized relations of class power as Selma James points out via her treatment of Marx's conception of the "hierarchy of labour powers" (James, (1973) 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Within the neo-colonial state the usually dominant *comprador commercial faction* of the dependent bourgeoisie establishes multiple links with *local middlemen* and *international commercial agents* to form 'commercial triangles' which operate in the mutual profit of their three constituent parties. In 'rentier states,' (those which receive most revenue from mineral rents, such as oil money, instead of from taxes on the citizenry and their production), all three groups seeking to establish commercial

**Part 1: July 2002 to February 2003:  
“Chevron is on our land.”**

On 8 July 2002, after ChevronTexaco ignored their June correspondence, some 600 women occupied the US oil giant’s 450,000 barrels a day (b/d) Escravos export terminal and tankyard. In their ten-day take over, the Itsekiri women negotiated 26 demands with corporate management. However, the most fundamental demand, that ChevronTexaco must go, was not countenanced by the company negotiators. As Queen Uwara, deputy chairperson of the Escravos Women Coalition stated, “Chevron brought soldiers and police to threaten us when we were at Chevron yard. If Chevron wants to kill us, we are no longer afraid. We women have taken over the yard. But we are not afraid because Chevron is on our land. All we want is for Chevron to leave our land” (Environmental Rights Action, hereafter ERA, 13 July 2002). Nigerian women threatened to use the curse of nakedness to expel the oil companies from the Delta.

In an ultimatum published worldwide, 4,000 women demonstrators who had been attacked by Shell Police on 8 August 2002 gave the Anglo-Dutch giant ten days to pay their hospital bills. The women confronted Shell with the curse of nakedness (Adebayo, 2002). They threatened to expose their naked bodies, and most particularly their vaginas, to impose on oil company male dealers ‘social death’ through ostracization which was widely believed to lead to actual demise. In much of Africa, women throw off their clothes in an ultimate protest to say ‘this is where life comes from. I hereby revoke your life.’ Nakedness by elderly women, in particular, is used in extreme and life-threatening situations. Women wielding the weapon of the exposed vagina could be killed or raped. It is therefore with knowledge of the act’s life and death implications that women enter into such protest. Women who go naked implicitly state that they will get their demands met or die in the process of trying. Many men subjected

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triangles compete for access to the state, its virtually audit-free revenues and its jurisdiction over ‘nature,’ especially local mineral wealth. In this competition, ethnic ties between private sector middlemen and compradors in the state apparatus are vital, a fact which goes some distance towards explaining ethnic tensions and frequent coups (Turner, 1976, 1980). This analysis helps us understand the ease by which oil companies and other capitalists can turn up the heat on ethnic tensions when their accumulation of power strategy calls for divide-and-rule.



to this 'social execution' believe they will actually die when exposed to such a serious threat. According to one Nigerian source, "In a lot of the rural communities here, the practice of throwing off the wrapper is a common [form of censure, given the] belief among the women folks here that it goes with some magical powers to inflict curses ranging from death to madness on its foes. In the 1980s it was very prevalent among the Gokana people of Ogoni" (International Oil Working Group, hereafter IOWG, 2 August 2003). In 2003, the 1993 Ogoni declaration that Shell is 'persona non grata' in Ogoniland remained in force (Mitee, 2002).

Speaking of the women's war against ChevronTexaco, in September 2002 Kate Ajagbawa told Environmental Rights Action that:

The youths and elders have protested. The women's protest [at the Escravos Chevron terminal] is the climax of all. The women decided to protest and they said 'we don't mind to be killed.' The Ijaw women are complaining they (Chevron) may please the government; they may please other people, but we want the international community to know that the Ijaws, Itsekiris and other peoples of the Niger Delta have been oppressed seriously. The Ugborodu people are suffering, we the Ijaws are in perpetual slavery. Apartheid is in Ogborodu community [Escravos], apartheid is in the whole Delta State. Our condition as Itsekiri people is growing worse every second. We visit other places and we see development. We have (crude oil) what it takes for development but we are despised. We cannot even train our children in school, we have been experiencing different kinds of ailment never known to us. Sickness and premature death is sweeping our land because [of] frequent oil spills, gas flares and other activities related to oil exploration. These are the reasons why the women are provoked; no water, good roads, nothing at all. We the women have decided to die at Chevron and Shell's gate instead to die installmentally from gas flares and frequent oil spills. Women numbering about 3,000 stormed their premises on a peaceful protest. We have now decided that we are going there with our husband and children so that the elimination process will be easier for them. (ERA, n.d. [September 2002?]).

The women's bold strike at the Escravos export terminal immediately inspired at least twelve additional takeovers. Even

before the Escravos group concluded negotiations, well over 1,000 women occupied six ChevronTexaco flow stations including Abiteye, Makaraba, Otuana and Olera Creek (Wamala, 2002: 38). On 22 July 2002 a spokeswoman for occupiers of the Abiteye flow station, Felicia Itsero, 67, told ERA researchers that “Before the 1970s, when we were here without Chevron, life was natural and sweet, we were happy. When we go to the rivers for fishing or forest for hunting, we used to catch all sorts of fishes and bush animals. Today, the experience is sad. I am suggesting that they should leave our community completely and never come back again” (ERA, 22 July 2002). The positive results of the women’s takeovers encouraged youth to occupy six Shell flow stations in western Niger Delta on 20 September 2002 (International Oil Daily, hereafter IOD, 23 September 2002).

The demands of the villagers ranged from incremental reforms such as roads, electricity, running water, loans and jobs, to the potentially transformational demand that the oil companies leave and never return. The Nigerian government has failed to provide services to the Niger Delta population despite the massive incomes it receives from Niger Delta oil. Therefore people have demanded these services directly from the companies themselves. While all call for ‘resource control’, in practice, Niger Delta oil activists articulate a range of demands. Some want the oil companies to be better ‘corporate citizens’ and engage in ‘good oilfield practices,’ while others want to expel the companies altogether. Some want them to clean up and continue producing oil; others want them to clean up, pay reparations and get out. Some, such as the Niger Delta Women For Justice, call for a ten year moratorium ([www.ndwj.kabissa.org](http://www.ndwj.kabissa.org), 2000). In the process of expelling the companies, some settle for the provision of limited amenities and jobs ‘in the meantime,’ because of absolute need. The need arises because corporate environmental devastation is closing off the commons. Villagers reason that the oil companies should employ locals because the indigenes are the ‘hosts’ whose commoning has been undercut by big oil. Furthermore, local oil workers are less likely to perpetrate depredation and more likely than outsiders to inform the community of potentially dangerous developments.

Women’s use of the curse of nakedness signals their willingness to fight to the finish. Many Nigerian women warriors are

ready to die in the struggle to expel the corporations. Ogoni women have declared their readiness to die before allowing Shell or any other oil company to return. They have witnessed the slow return of soil fertility in their farms. They have enjoyed a reduction in damage from gas flares and oil spills for ten years. For the Ogoni women, there is no question of allowing the oil companies to return ‘if they provide jobs’ or ‘if they provide micro-credit for chicken farms.’ They are ensconced on their common land and are adamant that Shell remain *persona non grata* despite the oil companies’ attempts to entice particular Ogoni men into ‘male deals’ allowing the companies to return (Ekine, 2001: 62-63).<sup>10</sup>

In September 2002, during a speech to oil industry executives gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the 17<sup>th</sup> World Petroleum Congress, ChevronTexaco’s chairman and chief executive officer David O’Reilly made reference to the Nigerian village women’s seven occupations. In contrast to Queen Uwara’s testimony that “Chevron brought soldiers and police to threaten us when we were at Chevron yard” (ERA, 13 July 2002), O’Reilly stated that the oil company’s Nigerian representatives had handled the situation “with great sensitivity” and that he was “proud of their efforts” to reach an understanding with the women (IOD, 5 September 2002). On 15 October 2003 in Washington D.C., US Secretary of State Colin Powell presented to ChevronTexaco the Award for Corporate Excellence for the oil company’s alleged “outstanding corporate citizenship” in Nigeria. In presenting the award to ChevronTexaco which has Chevron Nigeria Ltd as its affiliate, Powell said the company had demonstrated best international business practices and good corporate citizenship in Nigeria.

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<sup>10</sup> An international representative of the Niger Delta Women For Justice, Sokari Ekine, published the following statement by a member of the Federation of Ogoni Women’s Associations (FOWA), part of the MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People), founded by Ken Saro-Wiwa. The spokeswoman expressed the total opposition of Ogoni women to the ‘male deal’ alleged between the compromised head of MOSOP (Movement For the Survival of the Ogoni People) and Shell: “Ledum Mitee is making plans so that Shell should come back to Ogoni. But Babbe Kingdom FOWA says no to Shell and if you are away [abroad] and you hear that the Ogoni women are dying again know very well it is because we don’t want Shell any longer in Ogoni, that whenever Ledum Mitee brings back Shell or calls any of the companies back to Ogoniland you can be sure that the women are ready to die. Shell should never never come back to our lives again” (Ekine, 2001: 62).

Environmental Rights Action (ERA) condemned the award: "Powell's applause for Chevron is a vintage expression of corporations being the fingers behind governments," said Nnimmo Bassey, ERA Executive Director. "The fingers of the US government officials are both dipped in oil and blood of the Niger Delta. It is not just a question of short sight or lack of knowledge, it is the case of cash blocking every other consideration" (Ola, 25 October 2003).

Both direct action against the oil companies and the weapon of the curse of nakedness used in Nigeria then appeared on the international stage in the form of boycotts and naked protests. At the moment that Nigerian women were shutting down oil production, international anti-war activists were shutting down oil consumption. In 2002-2003 there were at least three simultaneous campaigns to boycott the petroleum companies at the pump.

First was the million-strong UK-based 'StopE\$\$O' boycott against ExxonMobil, which connected consumer action with the resistance of oil-producing communities in several countries. In 2002 the UK polling firm, MORI Social Research, revealed that "the StopE\$\$O campaign is working. In the last year [2001], one quarter of Esso's customers have stopped buying from Esso. One million motorists say they're boycotting Esso because of its stance on global warming.... In July 2002, 5 per cent of car drivers told MORI they were already boycotting the company while 47 per cent claimed they would join the boycott if they were asked to by environmental groups." Greenpeace campaigner Rob Gueterbock observed that "The chickens are coming home to roost for the world's number one climate villain. For years Esso has sabotaged every meaningful effort to tackle global warming, including this week's attempt to strike a deal at Johannesburg [where the UN Rio Plus 10 conference on environmental sustainability met in September 2002]. But now a million motorists in Britain are punishing Esso at the pumps. If we are going to stop Bush [from invading Iraq] we have to stop Esso. Now everyone can do their bit by joining the growing boycott'" ([www.stopesso.org](http://www.stopesso.org)). Esso objected in the courts to the campaigners' replacement of the 'SS' in Esso with dollar signs, \$\$ in their "StopE\$\$O" logo. The oil giant claimed that the doctored letters resemble the symbol of the Nazi shock troops, the 'SS.' On appeal, Esso lost their case against the activists.

The second oil boycott began on 26 September 2002 when Nigeria's Environmental Rights Action, Project Underground and the Ecuadorian affiliate of OilWatch International called for a boycott against ChevronTexaco:

...to punish this company for the environmental damages and the human rights abuses committed during its operations in Nigeria and Ecuador. Chevron-Texaco will face trials for its impacts in Nigeria and Ecuador. These countries' organizations use boycott as an instrument of pressure against the company, to make it remember that whatever is polluted MUST be cleaned up. At times when transnational companies frame up regimes of impunity for themselves, we must join efforts to punish companies with our protest, and our vow of censorship by not consuming these companies' products. This campaign will provide a precedent to avoid other oil companies' impunity, that in the same ways cause destruction and death (Osouka, Martnez and Salazar, 2002).

Project Underground stated that:

ChevronTexaco is infamous in the [Niger] Delta for inadequate clean-up. Though ChevronTexaco profits heavily from its unwelcome operations in the Delta and has provided both dollars and infrastructure to the Nigerian military, which uses those resources to suppress resistance and kill activists, ChevronTexaco claims no responsibility for environmental or human rights problems. While all meaningful quality of life measures continue to indicate that the plight of the indigenous people of the Niger Delta gets worse and worse, the corporation continues to claim that their operations promote democracy and development, all the while reaping greater profits (Project Underground, 2002).

By 12 November 2002 the movement against corporate globalization expanded dramatically to oppose the impending US military attack on Iraq. Women in California were explicitly inspired by how the Nigerian women who captured Escravos "shamed the men and won their cause" (Ivan, 2002). They introduced a new anti-war tactic. With their naked bodies they wrote gigantic letters to spell "Peace," photographs of which circulated the globe via the internet and print media to instigate still more nude demonstrators to enact variations (Rosen, 2003). In the weeks that followed, naked protests proliferated. Organizers sent

photos of their demonstrations to the California women's website. Naked anti-war protestors marched in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 1 March 2003. By this date the Nigeria-inspired anti-oil naked protests had taken place on all seven continents ([www.baringwitness.org](http://www.baringwitness.org)). On 3 March 2003 versions of *Lysistrata*, Aristophane's 2,400 year old feminist anti-war drama, were staged in 1,029 venues in 59 countries. In the play, prostitutes and wives withheld sex and other domestic services from all men in the warring states until peace was negotiated. The organizers described the Lysistrata Project as "the first-ever worldwide theatrical act of dissent" ([www.lysistrataproject.org](http://www.lysistrataproject.org)). Naked protests and the *Lysistrata* play focussed attention on the fact that women give life. In these naked acts of dissent, women used their power over the production and sustenance of life as a weapon in the struggle against death and war. These mobilizations culminated on 15 February 2003 when 50 million people marched against Bush's attack on Iraq in the largest-ever global anti-war demonstration.

Boycott organizers continued to connect oil and war. A third boycott campaign involved direct actions to close down petrol stations. On 26 March 2003, Members of the European Parliament joined activists to blockade Esso and Texaco stations in Belgium with banners reading "No money for the war - Boycott the US." Belgian and other European activists shut down Esso and Texaco again on 2 April and 15 April 2003. On 14 June 2003, new boycott actions closed Esso and Texaco petrol stations in most Belgian provinces. The boycott responded to Paul Wolfowitz's open acknowledgement that oil was the main reason for the military operation in Iraq. In June 2003 Pol D'Huyvetter of For Mother Earth, one of the organizing groups, declared that:

There is blood of thousands of innocent victims on the logos of Esso and Texaco. Both US multinationals – who together donated 2 million US dollars to the 2000 Bush election campaign – are driving forces behind the policies of the Bush administration. As Bush ignored the UN and the international public opinion, today the boycott is the most effective model of action we can offer to any citizen. Everybody can easily register his or her opposition to the US foreign policy by boycotting our list of US products, or all US products. Money is the language which was used by the US to coerce nations into their coalition. The boycott is a language they understand in Washington (For Mother Earth, 2003).

By the end of 2003 a Co-operative Bank study estimated that boycotts of petrol station in UK alone “cost the boycotted brands £454m this year” (Murray-West, 9 December 2003).

As oil companies continued their predations of the Nigerian environment and society, Nigerian women and their allies fought back. Their struggles were internationalized through the global peace and anti-war movements. Key organizational strategies were production-consumption strikes and naked protests. Women’s nakedness and control over life was explicitly opposed to oil companies’ war on subsistence and life itself. Anti-corporate oil activists defended the earth, commoners’ rights, and relations of reciprocity, cooperation, autonomy and solidarity. Their resistance to big oil grew out of and elaborated subsistence social relations and a subsistence life economy.

In Nigeria the opening created by women’s takeovers of oil facilities was seized by largely male trade unionists to launch a series of strikes. This extension of insurgency by the unwaged majority to the 30 per cent of the population that makes up the wage-earning workforce is the focus of part two.

## **Part 2: January to July 2003: ‘Power was rolling around in the streets’**

Between January and July 2003 waged Nigerian men joined the peasant women’s shutdown of the oil industry by organizing strikes and other actions against the oil companies and the Nigerian government. The press reported that by March 2003 Nigeria was “on the verge of collapse due to strikes” by the Academic Staff Union of Universities, the Department of Petroleum Resources, the Nigerian Union of Railway men, workers of the University College Hospital, Ibadan and the Central Working Committee of Freight Forwarders of Nigeria (Ajaero, 2003). Oil workers at TotalFinalElf struck for ten days in March.

Human Rights Watch reported that

On March 3 [2003], the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), an organization of youth militants with its support base among the Delta State Ijaw, issued an ultimatum giving the Nigerian government seven days to meet a series of demands – including the redrawing of electoral wards in Warri South West local government area, troop with-

drawal from Ijaw communities, reversal of the April 2002 Supreme Court ruling that offshore oil revenue belongs to the Nigerian federal government and is not subject to the constitutional requirement that a 13 percent share be returned to the state of derivation, and withdrawal of expatriate oil company staff – or face “mass action” to “reclaim” the creeks of the riverine areas. FNDIC advised the international oil companies to leave the area until the government met their demands (Human Rights Watch, hereafter HRW, 2003: 6).

In Warri, oil communities lost over 100 people in March 2003 in struggles to take over oil facilities, expel oil contractors and protest unequal political representation. Shell and ChevronTexaco shut in a total of 817,500 b/d (about 40% of total production) and by 25 March had evacuated most of their expatriate staff (Nzeshi, 25 March 2003). As community protests continued, oil workers took over four off-shore oil platforms operated by the US giant Transocean, under contract to Halliburton and the majors. On 16 April, oilworkers on board the rig MG Hulme staged a wildcat (but then union-supported) strike after Transocean fired five union officers who were organizing against the firm’s racist practice of transporting Nigerian workers to distant off-shore platforms in boats (thereby making them vulnerable to community wrath) versus expatriates in helicopters. On 19 April workers took over Transocean’s three other deepsea oil platforms in solidarity (Oyawiri, 14 May 2003). Striking workers held the platforms and over 200 foreign and Nigerian oil workers employed by Halliburton, Schlumberger, TotalFinaElf and Shell. The strike ended on 2 May, just as British mercenaries and the Nigerian navy were warned by oil unionists not to end the siege by force, under penalty of a retaliatory industry-wide shut-down (Vidal, 3 May 2003).

In June, President Obasanjo, under pressure from the World Bank, announced a 55 per cent increase in the price of oil products. The National Labour Congress called a general strike for 30 June 2003 to reverse the price increase. On 2 July, the third day of the strike, “Ijaw and other pro-Niger Delta activists” announced their intention to “close down all the oil flow stations in the Niger Delta and sack all the oil companies operating in the area [and] target the oil terminals in Forcados and Bonny” (Ebonugwo, 2 July 2003).



The *Vanguard* (10 July 2003) called market women “heroines” who “played a significant role in the strike.” The highly organized market women and traders kept the markets closed for nine days. Millions of urban residents without refrigeration began to run out of food after three days. From day four, hunger and anger increased exponentially. By Monday, day eight, the government’s power was severely compromised: markets remained closed, sections of the police (and army?) were on the side of the general strikers, while those remaining loyal to the government were being trounced by ‘area boys’ and were unable to contain civil disobedience. Obasanjo may have been reluctant to test the disposition and capacities of his armed forces. Activists across the Niger Delta were mobilizing to shut down flow stations, occupy the oil export terminals and “sack” the oil companies. George Bush was scheduled to arrive in the country four days later, on Friday 11 July. Part of his purpose was to open ChevronTexaco’s giant deepwater Osun field.

By 8 July, day 9 of the strike, as power was rolling around in the streets, union officials broke the strike and urged people to return to work. Nigerian Labour Congress leaders opted for the maintenance of ‘corporate rule’ democracy and quickly settled with Obasanjo on a gasoline price of N34 per litre (a 31 per cent hike). Headlines in the international oil trade press saluted Obasanjo’s macho ‘toughness.’

As the national mobilization of the general strike wound down, the Delta insurgency intensified. Labour aristocrats in the oil unions had refused to endorse the general strike. The women of the Delta countered this betrayal by forcing oil workers off the job with new direct actions against oil installations.

The social anatomy of class struggle within Nigeria in 2002 and 2003 revealed two patterns which were apparent in the insurgency of a decade earlier. First, in 1993, Ogoni women’s action against Shell and other oil companies in Ogoniland led into a ten week general strike in 1994 (Turner, 1997). The unwaged moved and the waged joined them on the basis of peasant women’s demands. In 2002 it was rural women’s occupations of oil facilities which were later supported by waged workers in waves of strikes culminating in an eight day general strike in 2003. Here again the movement of the unwaged women spurred allied action by the waged men. The second repeated pattern involved the inter-

nationalization of these Nigerian struggles. In 1994 international activists had mobilized a massive campaign against Shell in solidarity with the Ogoni, Ken Saro-Wiwa's MOSOP and other indigenous people of the Niger Delta. The globalization of resistance following the Niger Delta women's actions of 2002 was even more dramatic. This time, action in solidarity with Nigerian women merged with the global anti-war movement and with expanded campaigns against big oil which had begun a decade earlier. This culmination of a year of growing insurgency is the focus of part three.

**Part 3: July 2003 to January 2004:  
"It's all about the price of oil."**

On 10 July 2003, the day before US President Bush's arrival in Nigeria, women took over many petroleum companies' facilities in the Niger Delta including Amukpe, Sapele West and Imogu-Rumuekpe. Shell security men were responsible for the beating of Nwonodi, a 70 year old woman protestor at Imogu-Rumuekpe. The women's July 2003 take over of Shell's Rumuekpe flow station was provoked by a year of combatting a devastating Shell oil spill (ERA, 10 September 2002; ERA, 5 January 2004; Turner, 2001). Some 80 unarmed peasant women, ranging in age from 25 to 60, drove oil workers out of the Amukpe flow station, took possession of all vehicles, changed the facility's locks, installed their cooking equipment, made their infants and toddlers comfortable and began "running shifts" of several dozen women each. The women demanded that Shell keep promises made earlier, employ local people, provide domestic amenities including water and electricity and remove a recently-installed chain-link fence that impeded their agricultural product processing. Finally, they said Amukpe would be a "no-go zone for oil companies" if Shell failed to honour past and present demands. Though several similar women's anti-oil actions took place in Delta State, Port Harcourt and elsewhere, they remained largely unreported (IOWG, 1 August 2003).

What were the implications for oil profits of the Nigerian and international struggles? In his famous 2003 anti-war song UK artist Billy Bragg asks of the attack on Saddam Hussein, "why him, why here, why now?" He answers "It's all about the price of oil." Bichler and Nitzan agree: the oil majors made war at this

point in time primarily to increase their profits which had fallen precipitously from 19 to three per cent of total global corporate profits between 1980 and 2000 (2003a, 2003b). Popular insurgency in Nigeria, the US military attack on Iraq and the US-supported failed coup and oil industry lock-out in Venezuela and delivered a ‘perceived supply risk’ to the oil market (Spiegel, 2003). Prices escalated to \$35/b in late 2002 and early 2003. The oil majors scored stupendous profits as consumers charged them with “gouging customers” (Kopytoff, 3 May 2003). Historic highs were announced for the first quarter of 2003 by Shell, ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco. “Exxon, the world’s largest oil group, reported the *biggest quarterly corporate profits in history* at \$7bn...” (Gow, 2003). On the one hand, Nigerian women and their allies, by expelling the majors from the Delta, cut out of the world market some 800,000 b/d or about one percent. They thereby raised prices and the overall take of the majors and OPEC governments (which in effect levied a tax on the world). On the other hand, on a *national* basis, insurgents forced net losses on Shell, ChevronTexaco, the other international subsidiaries and the Nigerian government. According to our estimate, the Niger Delta oilfield takeovers in the last ten months of 2003 alone reduced government oil income (including windfalls from higher prices) by 19 per cent (Turner and Brownhill, 2003). The takeovers reduced the oil companies’ income by 25 per cent. Villagers’ actions from March to December 2003 denied the government an estimated US\$11 million a day and cost the oil companies an estimated minimum of US\$2.5 million a day in foregone profits alone.

The oil companies demanded military intervention. In July 2003 the Washington D.C. based Institute for Policy Studies reported that the Pentagon planned “to move between 5,000 and 6,500 troops from bases in Germany to various countries in Africa with the express purpose of protecting US oil interests in Nigeria.” Furthermore, “according to the *Wall Street Journal*, US officials claim that a key mission for US forces [in Africa] would be to ensure that Nigeria’s oil fields are secure” (Nuri, 9 July 2003). In contrast the US Embassy in Abuja denied plans for US military intervention (HRW, 2003). Nigerian civil society organizations in an open letter to Bush, opposed US troop involvement. The broad coalition, including Niger Delta Women for Justice, told Bush that

“The corporations have been flaring death-dispensing gas into the atmosphere of local communities, mangling fishing waters and farmlands with oil from old and broken pipelines they have refused to maintain and repair, cutting down forests and abolishing fresh water sources. We have seen them march alongside Nigerian soldiers they pay with blood money, into villages and hamlets killing, maiming and raping young men and women whose only crime is that they dared raise their voice to protest the wanton destruction of their lives and sources of livelihood” (ERA, 11 July 2003).

### **Conclusion: “Stand up now”**

*“I call upon the Ogoni people, the peoples of the Niger Delta, and the oppressed minorities of Nigeria to stand up now and fight fearlessly and peacefully for their rights. History is on their side, God is on their side. For the Holy Quran says in Sura 42, verse 41: ‘All those who fight when oppressed incur no guilt, but Allah shall punish the oppressor.’ Come the day.”*

– Ken Saro-Wiwa

Pre-Conviction Statement prior to his hanging by the Abacha military regime on 10 November 1995

Three themes are considered in this conclusion: (1) the unity arising from the global intersection of four circuits of gendered class struggle in production, consumption, social reproduction and nature; (2) the roots of insurgent power and finally (3) the potential for direct deals in oil.

In 1983 Selma James theorized and advocated the need for unity with exploited but unwaged people at the very bottom of what Marx called the “hierarchy of labour powers.” (Marx, 1867; James, (1973) 1994). In the 1980s, the British women’s vigil at the Greenham Commons military base inspired global solidarity to end the Cold War nuclear escalation. By pinning baby clothes to the fence the ‘Greenham Commoners’ dramatized the fact that women produce life and refuse its destruction in a nuclear holocaust. Global solidarity was mobilized again twenty years later on a much more massive scale. It too took the form of initiatives by the least powerful in the hierarchy: unwaged, rural African women. These initiatives against oil company violence were supported by more powerful echelons of the exploited in a

fundamental strike for peace and popular power. This is the unity that was practised on an international scale during the anti-war, anti-oil production-consumption strike of 2002-2003.

African women's war against big oil reinvigorated pre-existing women's global peace networks. Nigerian women's use of the curse of nakedness underlined the truths that life comes from women and food comes from the land. International women's anti-war networks adopted the nakedness tactic. Through nude demonstrations and performances of the play, *Lysistrata*, they commanded media coverage for the message that women as sustainers of life refused oil companies' death. In a dramatic transformation of consciousness, social forces worldwide united with those at the bottom on the basis of *their demands*: "No To Shell! No Blood For Oil! Chevron we no go 'gree'!"

In 2003 Epstein (116) argued that it is only by "draw[ing] out the connections between production and consumption under capitalism" that the global anti-war movement can gain "staying power, the capacity for its different elements to coalesce, and a meaningful political praxis." The historical conjuncture of Nigerian peasant women's shut-down of oil production and anti-war activists' boycott of gasoline consumption involved *more* than a simultaneous strike by 'producers and consumers.' The women were unwaged peasants, not oil workers with a wage. With the 1998 "Operation Climate Change" they consciously gave a "gift to humanity" by extinguishing gas flares which constitute the world's single largest civilian source of ozone depleting gases. The global consumers who boycotted did so as environmentalists and anti-war activists who were in solidarity with the exploited of oil producing societies. The actors who shut down oil wells and the parties who boycotted companies at the pump both acted to affirm all life.

In July 2002 during the build-up to the war on Iraq organized by oilmen for the purpose of driving up prices and grabbing 250 billion barrels of petroleum reserves, Niger Delta women made clear to the world that the oil industry operates in a criminally negligent, life- and planet-destructive manner. By November 2002, the global women's peace movement united with the Nigerian women in their naked protests against the all-inclusive attack on life being launched by oil company executives. Nigerian women's gift of naked resistance circulated around the world

through many networks, especially those of the women's peace movements. In just over 100 days, anti-war activists on every continent had taken up the naked protest tactic. At the same time that women and men were getting naked against the war for oil, millions of gasoline users turned their power of consumption against the oil companies. What is the social anatomy of this global production-consumption strike, which was a vast experiment in 'unity with those at the bottom of the hierarchy of labour powers'? What organizational mechanisms allowed for and facilitated that unity?

To answer these questions we turn to Dyer-Witheford's four circuits of struggle which depict all the world's people as exploited resisters within a vast social factory. Demonstration effects produce solidarity at two levels. First, resistance at a particular site of corporate exploitation of 'nature,' for instance, stimulates and strengthens resistance at other sites where capital is commodifying 'nature.' Second, all defence of 'nature' contributes to resistance at the other three sites of exploitation: production, consumption and social reproduction.

We begin with struggles at the site of oil *production*. In the early twenty-first century, Nigerian insurgents imposed oscillating shut-downs of up to 40% of oil production amounting to some 800,000 barrels a day. A decade earlier in 1994 Nigerian oil workers struck for ten weeks. Not only did they cut production but, in alliance with students and communities, they imposed total control over distribution of oil products thereby immobilizing the forces of state repression. This control was broken only when a U.S. oil company airlifted in petroleum products for military use. The historic 1994 strike followed immediately upon the Ogoni people's expulsion of Shell from Ogoniland near Port Harcourt in the eastern Delta. African women led this struggle (Turner, 1997). This success spurred other Niger Delta communities to demand that the oil companies get out. The Ogoni were among the first to suffer the counterinsurgency of the military and police. This state terrorism has escalated to engulf the whole Delta. It has spurred the expansion of resistance. In the decade to 2004 struggles at the point of production in Nigeria have circulated along two axes: (1) community after community has joined in attempts to wrest oil from corporate control while (2) the physical infrastructure specific to each distinct stage of the integrated industry has

been seized by insurgents. The result is that ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, Shell and the other operators no longer assert secure control over the physical infrastructure of exploration and production of oil and gas. The companies cannot control sites of gas flaring or oil export terminals. They are impeded in piping oil to tankers offshore and to refineries on land. Their equipment yards, flow stations, tankfarms, headoffices, residential compounds, sports clubs, offshore platforms, airports and helipads, launches, barges, pipeline routes, roads, rivers and seaways are regularly occupied by insurgents. Oil production workers, both Nigerian and expatriate, are increasingly 'disloyal,' victims of kidnapping, engaged in litigation against oil management or otherwise dissonant and dissident.

A second site of struggle is energy *consumption*. Nigerians' nine-day general strike of July 2003 was at the same time a general boycott of oil consumption. Strikers denied oil to the police. Workers stayed home to protest and reverse the rise of oil product prices. Citizens refused to drive or board public transport. The 2003 strike involved a national popular take over of pumps, pipelines and distribution of strategic kerosene and petrol. When oil workers' union executives declined to strike, oil communities closed down many production facilities.

At the international level, the StopE\$\$O campaign in the UK had been growing for a year when, in September 2002, Environmental Rights Action and OilWatch Ecuador called for a global boycott of ChevronTexaco for the environmental devastation caused by the company in Nigeria and Ecuador. Several other initiatives to boycott US corporations were launched in protest against the US invasion of Iraq. The oil industry press reported, for both Europe and North America, unexpected, unseasonal and unexplained slumps in gasoline consumption in the months surrounding the March 2003 US attack on Iraq. Slogans in the anti-oil campaign in 2004 included "Kick the Oil Addiction," "Just Say No," "Stop the Pushers," and "It's Time for an Oil Change" (Institute for Policy Studies, January 2004).

The third site of struggles is *social reproduction*, including the household, community, schools and other social facilities. Niger Delta women took over oil installations because oil activities are killing people and the earth. Women feared ecocide. They shut

down production and spurred boycotts. They defended the prerequisites of social reproduction. How could they farm, forage, fish or hunt if the oil companies destroyed the land and water? How could they raise children, maintain themselves and provide for their elders if there was inadequate food, unclean water, polluted air, no social amenities and the destruction of the subsistence political economy?

Women's bold takeovers and threats of naked retaliation were also based in the defense of their own bodies, sexualities, fertilities and health. Delta women have been subjected to 'divide-and-rule', military occupation, death through HIV-AIDS, gang rape and worse. Many women have declared their readiness to die to expel the oil companies.

Education, a crucial site of struggles over the terms of social reproduction, was massively defunded in Nigeria under World Bank structural adjustment conditions. Repeated student uprisings have been quelled by military and police massacres. When the current 'elected' ruler, Obasanjo, was Nigeria's dictator in power by coup, he ordered the army to violently suppress the 1977-1978 student uprisings. University students and professors struck for six months in 2002 and joined the general strike of 2003. Informal education of children by parents was disrupted in the Delta by the oil companies' destruction of farming, fishing and hence food processing opportunities. Degradation of biodiversity profoundly undermined the availability of plants essential for medical and spiritual practices. Training the next generation of indigenous health practitioners was virtually ruled out. Just as illness and social disintegration increased, indigenous and state-sponsored social services decreased.

Under these dire circumstances, elders are in crisis because they cannot count on their children or grandchildren to take care of them. The destruction of nature and consequently of livelihoods has put the very survival of the elderly in question. One of the central demands won by the women who occupied Chevron Texaco's Escravos terminal in July 2002 was a small monthly cash stipend for some of the elderly.

'*Nature*' is the fourth site of struggle. Nigerian women's uprisings resist the destruction of the earthly commons, recognized by all as the basis for human social reproduction. For many



who practice indigenous religions, pollution of the land and water constitutes an abomination. There is widespread awareness in the Delta that the ten year moratorium on Shell's activities in Ogoniland has led to higher soil fertility and fewer hungry people. International campaigns against big oil defend the environment which is under attack by global warming, deforestation, oil spills, gas flares and destruction at every stage from production to transport, consumption and waste disposal.

The social anatomy of the gendered class struggle in Nigeria and abroad was constituted by two integrated sets of relationships. One involved the solidarity of waged workers with the interests, actions and demands of unwaged peasants. The second involved the circulation of Niger Delta struggles through the global circuits of production, consumption, social reproduction and nature. The oil companies themselves provided part of the organizational mechanism for resistance because they draw the world's people ever more tightly into the network of the capitalist energy system. In the 2002-2003 period, exploited people used this global network to resist and transcend corporate power. Activists on all continents and across the four circuits of struggle unified to overcome the petrodollar-weapondollar alliance.

What were the *sources* of insurgent power? Power arose from defending the social relations of subsistence and attacking the social relations of commodification. The two foundations of insurgent peasant power were subsistence itself and the organization bequeathed by the transnational oil corporations. Both groundings were at once national and international.

First, the unwaged, including peasants, indigenous people and women are sustained by social relations of commoning. Subsistence life goods and life grounds provided the means through which to satisfy most life needs. These are the same grounds, relations and commons that capital sought to enclose, commodify and destroy. The commons, then, were both a site of struggle and a crucial source of the power for Escravos and all Niger Delta communities in their war against the oil transnationals. Central to the continued existence of the commons in the Niger Delta are the village, trade and clan-based organizations which prosecuted the insurgency. Over the past decade, through processes of direct democracy, each 'nationality' formulated dec-

larations which contain demands and programs.<sup>11</sup> A fundamental universal demand is 'resource control.' More recently coalitions of these clan-based organizations have been formed and are calling for 'a national sovereignty conference' to remake the Nigerian political economy. Autonomous village organizations, linked to each other through regional solidarity networks, coordinated pan-Delta defence against Nigerian and US military counterinsurgency and took over some of the administration and much of the defence of their own communities.

The subsistence political economy supported the unwaged majority. As all were reminded during the general strike, rural women controlled strategic urban food sources. In the highly-developed subsistence political economy of Nigeria, the threat of women's naked protests had a Hydra-like power to force men to stop and flee in fear (Linebaugh and Rediker: 327-354). When women made international connections and took naked protests to the global stage, their aim was precisely to break down the bonds of the global male deals that were driving Bush's neoconservative Imperial America toward new oil wars. This astonishing projection of power arises from the double positioning of Delta women who are at the very bottom of the hierarchy of labour powers constructed by capital in the form of a global commodified political economy and who at the same time are grounded in subsistence relations. Delta women and their allies marshalled substantial power against big oil because their subsistence relations enabled them to stand against the forces of commodification and thereby strengthen global fightback against oil company war.

This brings us to the second source of the power of the emergent global gendered class alliances against the oil-war machine: the corporations themselves. Insurgents in Nigeria's oil war built links with other national and international actors in three integrated arenas: the parallel market, boycotts and the coordinated assertion of community control over petroleum resources.

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<sup>11</sup> These declarations - the Ogoni Bill of Rights of 1990, the Kaiama Declaration of 1998, the Resolutions of the First Urhobo Economic Summit in 1998, Aklaka Declaration of the Egi people of 1999, the 1999 Oron Bill of Rights, the Warri Accord of 1999 and the 1999 Ikerrwe Charter - share a similar analysis of the history of oil exploitation and a commitment to pan-Delta solidarity against the oil corporations and corrupt government officials.

As oil companies consolidated and militarized their global control over oil resources, they bound more closely the interests, capacities and experiences of people in all parts of the world (*Other Shell Report 2002, 2003*).<sup>12</sup>

Direct deals are alternatives to market control by the majors.<sup>13</sup> In Nigeria were barrels shut in and then sold on the international and national markets? Was the buoyancy of the parallel market in Nigerian oil a central motivation for US military intervention?

The crucial gendered and ethnicized class unity demonstrated in producer-consumer joint actions is a precondition for going beyond oil production shutdowns. If Nigerian oil workers, indigenous communities and other democratic organizations in the future move beyond shutdowns to running the oil industry on their own, the widely articulated goals of reparations for the environmental debt owed Nigeria, pollution cleanup and wise use of petroleum and petroleum wealth could be realized. A kind of reparations would be won to the extent that oil workers and indigenous organizations were able to sell or barter oil directly. Direct deals could enable a Nigerian 'sovereign national convention' to use the proceeds to support life, and stop the current practices of revenue theft and the use of foreign exchange from oil sales to pay for repression and to service ever-increasing levels of International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Paris Club debt. The future of the oil component of this new set of subsistence social relations lies in the elaboration of direct deals between producers and consumers who have a track record of coordination in wresting resource control from oil corporations.

International social movement solidarity with Delta commoners goes deep, reaching back to pro-Biafra campaigns in the 1960s, anti-apartheid networks in the 1970s, cooperation to

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<sup>12</sup> The *Other Shell Report 2002* demanded that Shell "send skilled and experienced international officials to meet with representatives at the sites where people living nearest to Shell are experiencing difficulties, and resolve these [environmental and health] problems." The report called for Shell to "support national and international laws that allow affected communities to hold companies like Shell accountable for their negative impacts" (*Other Shell Report 2002, 2003*: 5).

<sup>13</sup> In 2001, the noted oil economist Michael Tanzer encouraged direct deals via multi-state oil barter: "By developing a multilateral barter exchange system for Third World commodities, such a strategy could secure reliable revenues for the oil-exporting countries, while providing the oil-importing countries with a steady flow of oil, and with export outlets at fair prices for their own commodities" (2001: 24).

stop oil exports to the racist regime in South Africa in the 1980s, boycott Shell mobilizations to support the Ogoni struggle in the 1990s and in the 2000s, and the groundswell of anti-war nude militancy after women seized ChevronTexaco's Escravos oil terminal in 2002. Beyond international solidarity is the deepening of relations fundamental to global alternatives to corporate rule. Direct producer-consumer oil deals are central to these alternatives. Nigerian insurgents may already be fashioning direct deals. Since 1985 Nigerians have organized oil barter or 'countertrades.' Supplies of Nigerian crude could make possible popular, ecological-sound, citizens' control of refineries in Trinidad and Tobago, in South Africa, in Cuba and elsewhere. These visions of the future increasingly inform the strategizing of commons environmentalists and 'resource control' activists.

This study has treated the genesis, successes and possible futures of these global gendered class alliances – between exploited women and men – by relating them to the defence and re-invention of a subsistence political economy (Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies: 144). In sum, the women's peace movement in the 1980s at Greenham Common did show that unity between those 'at the bottom' and those above them on the hierarchy is possible and necessary. That unity was expanded by the anti-oil anti-war movement which coalesced in 2002 and 2003 coincident with the Niger Delta women's takeovers of oil facilities. A unified 'No' to US invasion of Iraq was voiced by 50 million demonstrators on 15 February 2003. This refusal was concretized seven months later on 14 September 2003 with the WTO's collapse at Cancun and in November 2003 with the FTAA's meltdown in Miami. Nigerian women's refusal to die for oil reverberated around the globe through the circuits of struggle at the sites of production, consumption, social reproduction and nature. The multitudes voiced one "No" and many "Yeses": no blood for oil and yes to the reinvention of the commons, North and South.

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