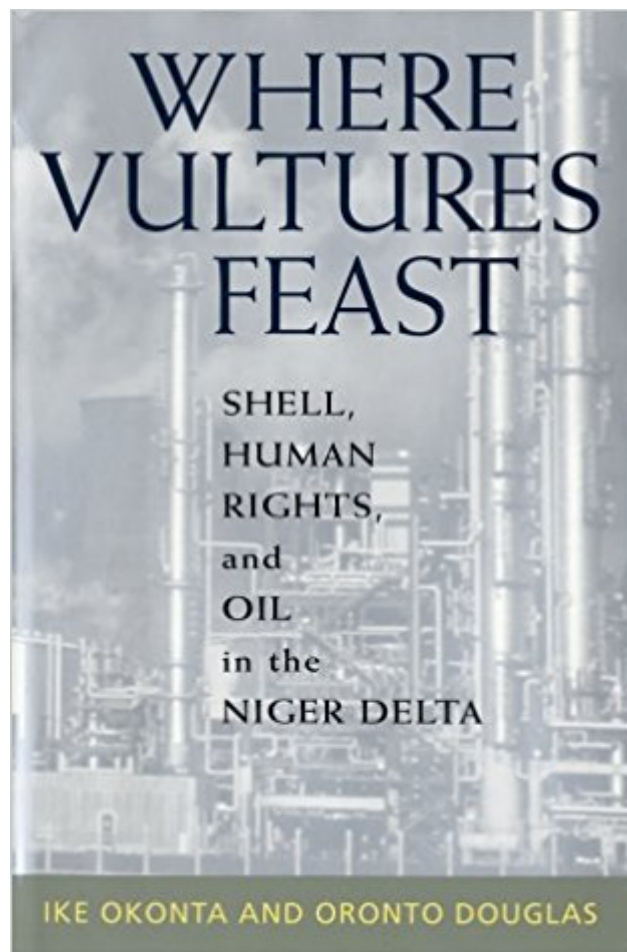




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Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, And Oil In The Niger Delta



Synopsis

On February 22, 1895, a naval force laid siege to Brass, the chief city of the Ijo people of Nembe in Nigeria's Niger Delta. After severe fighting, the city was razed. More than two thousand people perished in the attack. A hundred years later, the world was shocked by the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a writer, political activist, and leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. Again the people of Nembe were locked in a grim life-and-death struggle to safeguard their livelihood from two forces: a series of corrupt and repressive Nigerian governments and the giant multinational Royal Dutch Shell. Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas present a devastating case against the world's largest oil company, demonstrating how (in contrast to Shell's public profile) irresponsible practices have degraded agricultural land and left a people destitute. The plunder of the Niger Delta has turned full circle as crude oil has taken the place of palm oil, but the dramatis personae remain the same: a powerful multinational company bent on extracting the last drop of blood from the richly endowed Niger Delta, and a courageous people determined to resist.

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Customer Reviews

"Okonta and Douglas provide a vivid and relentless account of human tragedy since oil was discovered in the Niger Delta in 1956." --Carl Hand "This passionate book should be read by all those interested in the links between oil and oppression. The authors,, both from Nigeria's oil producing Niger Delta, bring equal depth of knowledge and outrage at

the injustices wrought against their homeland by Nigeria's governments – colonial, military and civilian – and by the oil companies, first among them Shell. •Bronwen Manby --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ike Okonta is a scholar currently working at Oxford University. Oronto Douglas is a former attorney for the late Ken Saro-Wiwa.

This book provides an insightful history of how the Royal Shell Corporation and other oil companies have destroyed the environment and societies of the Niger Delta. The book starts with a short history of Western colonialism from the 1600s to the WWII. Starting with the discovery of oil post WWII, Shell Oil, along with Mobil, Texaco, Agip, BP and Chevron have replaced western governments as the de facto rulers of this region. The oil companies obtain oil from the Niger Delta, sell it, and use some of the profits to pay Nigerian government officials to safeguard their pipelines and oilwells in the country. The latter often includes torturing and killing locals who protest the pollution from oil drilling, flaring, and oil spills. All of this is glossed over by a multi-million dollar PR campaign by the Shell and the other oil companies. The authors of this book document the history of environmental pollution in this area by citing specific oil spills, gas flares, and pipeline breaks. The authors also give a detailed history of the actions committed by Shell and its henchmen within the Nigerian government in order to suppress the natives of the Niger Delta. These include outright lies to the local people, stalling action by forming committees, intimidation of local leaders, etc...Overall, this book shows the worst of corporate greed within the 20th century. The book is well argued and easy to read with lots of references. I highly recommend it.

The one good thing I will say is that this is essentially the only source of information about Shell and the conflict in Nigeria. Unfortunately, it comes across as agenda-driven and biased. The authors make Shell employees out to be the evil landlords in the 1920s movies who twirl their mustaches and tie orphans to railroad tracks. Everyone knows that Shell has taken advantage of a corrupt, rent-seeking government and they have been dangerously irresponsible with the environment that was entrusted to them. Everyone knows that they are making money, corrupt politicians are making money and overall, Shell being in Nigeria is not helping average Nigerians much. This book takes those problems and pushes their intent, criminal culpability and predisposition to evil past the limits of believability. The authors have vested interests in the power struggles and they are not in any way

objective, nor do they try to be so. Their agenda is pushed hard from page one. In addition to a cartoonish view of Shell and their employees as evil vampires, the native Ogoni people are made out to be the exalted Noble Savages found in 19th century literature. When you read this book, then read the newspaper, something doesn't connect. The people who are fighting Shell are simply local and regional gangland-style powerbrokers who are most likely a bigger threat to the Ogoni than Shell could ever hope to be, even at their mustache-twirling worst. It is hard to reconcile the author's view of the anti-Shell movements as being non-violent (a term constantly used to describe indigenous reaction) when some of these groups kidnap toddlers and hold them for ransom. On the positive side, I learned more about Ken Saro-Wiwa from reading this book, which was good, but not much else in the book helped. Outside of learning the names of some of the groups and getting dates to research further, this book is a waste of time.

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