

Editorial: Niger-Delta  
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On Thursday Aug 10, 2006 I read:

“US govt ready to help tackle crime in Nigeria's volatile Niger Delta: envoy”

Source (*don't bother, it disappeared*):

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060810/pl\\_afp/nigeriaoilunrest\\_060810195920](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060810/pl_afp/nigeriaoilunrest_060810195920)

Here are some excerpts from that article:

*"Nigeria is a friend of the United States. We can help. But we will help at the request of Nigerians," John Campbell said in a televised interview.*

...

*"It is a major concern. Kidnapping is a major criminal behaviour," Campbell (US Envoy) said.*

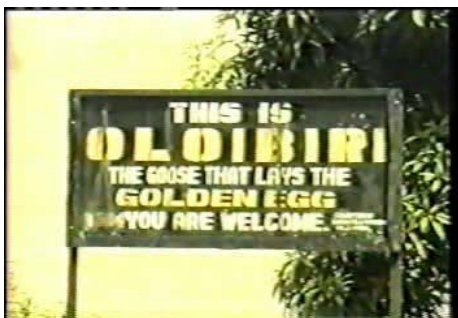
My gut-wrenched reaction was, “Lord God Almighty! Jesus help us. When are we going to learn?”

Diplomat, politician, military strategist, I am none of those. But has it never occurred to these people that attempting to fix the symptom rather than the problem never works?

A very peaceful dog will turn deadly if you back it against the wall – with no means of escape. Violence breeds violence. Irrational thinking produces irrational actions, hence the kidnappings, bombings, etc.

Not everyone in Niger Delta approves of the violence against the oil industry. There is a very silent majority. To help bring the irrational back to the rational realm, a form of mass-therapy is in order. To get here, the problems must be addressed.

**What is the problem?**



Let's talk to the people at Oloibiri. This is where it all began in 1958. These people are not asking for heaven and earth.

This hospital has been in the process of being built 1972. Meantime, people are dying from illnesses that are easily treatable.





The road is a means of transportation. In Oloibiri, produce rot on the ground due to lack of roads to move to market.

Education. Secondary school, if you call it that, is falling apart. No labs. Nothing to stimulate learning in young people.



Once the Oloibiri wells dried up, the oil companies simply packed up and left. Nothing in the community to show that once upon a time, this community oiled the economy of this great nation – Nigeria.

Now, this is just one community. Are the rest of these communities concerned that what happened to Oloibiri will eventually happen to them?

You bet.

Current generation are so frustrated that it takes very little to persuade them that, may be, kidnapping is a way of getting even for the robbery and rape that has been taking place on their land.

President Ronald Reagan (actually my favorite) once talked about Trickle-down Economics as a way to empower corporation (or rich people – same thing). The idea is that such people will use the money to create jobs for the masses.

I don't know of any nation that has implemented Trickle-down Economics that actually "trickled". In so-called third-world countries, it's just a way for foreign corporations to bribe prominent citizens, so they can continue to steal that country's natural resources with ease or less friction.

It does not work.

Simple Solution:

1. All the oil companies that operate in Nigeria should get together and create a non-government organization, an NGO. This NGO will be funded by member companies. There is no shortage of money for this project. If half the money paid in bribes is devoted to this endeavor, there will be no problems today.
2. Hire a US-based accounting firm to handle the funds.
3. This NGO will be headed by a non-Nigerian. By all accounts, this will be a relatively small organization. Staff members have following tasks:
  - Engage Niger-Delta indigenes in a dialog to determine what needs to be done. This will not be an effort to pacify. It will be to validate these people's existence. It will take great effort because at this point, many have lost all hope that all will be well.
  - Draw up a development plan. This is something the government should have been doing. But we all know it will not happen.
  - Rapidly implement this development plan. Again, the money is there, so this can be done.
  - Train indigenes on how to properly setup group or private businesses and put them in a position to be able to bid for oil company projects. They will, then, be able to hire their own people to do the work. This is the real Trickle-down Economics.
  - Give low-interest loans to fishermen so they can afford modern fishing boats. Many now are lost at sea because they have to go farther out into the seas to fish with canoes that are ill-equipped to handle rough waters. They have to go that far out because their local waters are polluted by oil companies.

It's really that simple.

I contacted my Congressman, John Sullivan (Oklahoma) with this information. Over the years John has been kind to respond to all our inquiries. He said he passed it on, hopefully to the Executive Branch and I believe him.

**These kidnapers will have no place to hide if the people are no longer hopeless.**

Question is, what are we going to do?

Are we going to do everything within our power to let the people of Niger-Delta know that their existence matter?

Or, are we going to keep going in there with guns blazing and cutting short innocent lives that have nothing to do with kidnapping criminal elements?

History will judge us.

**Epilogue:**

*A few years ago, I commissioned my younger brother, Felix Obene Harry, to produce a video documentary. The Video Documentary is titled “**Aspects of life in some Niger Delta Areas of Nigeria**”. A few months after the preliminary version was released, my brother, his wife, and two other friends were killed in a car crash in Nigeria, near Port Harcourt. I would like to keep thinking by accident. But my efforts to have this video shown here have met with serious resistance. Incidentally, my brother also ran the Institute of Pollution Studies (IPS) at University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt. But you can get it at: <http://www.defuture.com/video/>*

