Suffering Escalated by Oil Companies

Contributed by Culture Change
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The human cost of oil addiction becomes ever more heinous as stories of massacres, beatings, tortures, shootings, killings, toxic pollution, destruction of habitats and livelihoods come in from around the globe. The pathology of corporate activities continues to be ruinously exploitative of people and the environment: ChevWrong, reported by the San Francisco Bay Guardian, Gwich'in Steering Committee from Canada to Alaska, and the Shell Guilty Campaign from Friends of the Earth, Oil Change International and Remember Saro-Wiwa. Isn't it time we ended oil addiction that leads to such crimes?

The drivers of automobiles manufactured by Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Jeep, Mercedes, Mercury, Mitsubishi, Mini, Volvo, Saturn, Volkswagon, BMW, Acura, Audi, Buick, Suzuki, Chevrolet, Lexus, Saab, Pontiac, Subaru, Toyota, Honda, and others might think deeper about the implications of their oil consumption and catastrophic climate disruption. Consider other lifestyles and redesign our world with ecocities and ecovillages, bicycling, local food production, living in climates suitable to primates to eliminate the waste of energy on heating, and sustainable energy production and usage. A serious problem with industrial manufacturing and corporate media is the undesirable outcome of mass production of defective or destructive technologies or behaviors. In too many cases, the damage far exceeds the benefits. Time for a recall.

Links to the three campaigns:

ChevWrong ... ShellGuilty ... Gwich'in Arctic 'Message from the North'

ChevWrong: Chevron earns record profits -- but isn't reporting the inhuman costs of its global enterprise

The San Francisco Bay Guardian's new article by Sarah Phelan covers recent activities by people opposed to the abuses of Chevron around the world.

The True Cost of Chevron is a new report revealing for Chevron shareholders and the public details of Chevron's activities and the communities that are adversely affected by them. It was presented by representatives from Nigeria, Ecuador, Richmond and the Philippines, and people representing communities from Burma, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Alberta.

Chevron's CEO David O'Reilly, who said that he had heard of the report, sent a clear message to Chevron affected communities around the world, telling them that their grievances with the oil giant "are an insult to Chevron employees, and should be thrown in the trash."

Mitch Anderson, corporate accountability campaigner with Amazon Watch:

"Chevron is trying to paper-over its widespread human rights and environmental problems across the world by spending millions to propagate insulting lies," he continued. "From its disaster in Ecuador to its hiring of global warming deniers as lobbyists, this company has shown complete disregard for the environment, human rights, and yes, wisdom. Chevron is on the wrong side of history. Just as there can be no social justice on a dead planet, Chevron should know that you can't profit off a dead planet either."

While Chevron reports to its shareholders the highest profits in its history, there are many hidden stories of their abuses. For instance, there are a number lawsuits in which the report claims "potential liabilities in excess of Chevron's total revenue
from 2008, posing a material threat to shareholder value and the
company's bottom line."

A number of ChevWrong Inhumane Energy ads appeared in downtown San Francisco in response to the deceptive greenwash campaign by Chevron. The Bay Guardian's Sarah Phelan summarizes a few of the subversive themes:

"I will not complain about my asthma," states one such subversive ad, which depicts a beautiful but non-smiling young black man beside the claim that "Chevron's refinery in Richmond, Calif. poisons the community." The ad is accompanied by a retooled logo that says "ChevWrong."

"I will try not to get cancer," states another that hot glue artists had affixed to Sandra Bullocks' buttocks — or at least a life-sized depiction of the actress featured on a Market Street billboard promoting The Proposal.

"I will suffer in silence" states another, alongside the claim that Chevron props up Burma's military dictatorship.

An ad reading "I will give my baby contaminated water" portrayed a smiling Nigerian woman alongside the claim that Chevron refuses to clean up its mess in Nigeria.

From the CrudeAccountability.org site:

"When presented with the factual evidence of people suffering in Kazakhstan as a result of a Chevron's operations, O'Reilly ignored the issues and hid instead behind hurt personal feelings," stated Michelle Kinman of Crude Accountability.

"Chevron chose to turn a deaf ear to the communities who bear the crippling consequences of its operations," said Paul Donowitz of EarthRights International. "Chevron's complicity in human rights abuses in Burma, the billions in project revenues flowing to the brutal Burmese military junta who use these profits to oppress their own people are more evidence that this is a company that cares for only one thing – its bottom line."

"Chevron's management is burying its head in the sand on the company's environmental liability in Ecuador while Chevron's board is shirking its fiduciary duty to shareholders," said Atossa Soltani of Amazon Watch. "The board is asleep at the wheel and allowing Chevron management to mishandle this case."

From TrueCostOfChevron.com:

For over three decades, Chevron chose profit over people.

While drilling in the Ecuadorian Amazon from 1964 to 1990, Texaco – which merged with Chevron in 2001 – deliberately dumped more than 18 billion gallons of toxic wastewater, spilled roughly 17 million gallons of crude oil, and left hazardous waste in hundreds of open pits dug out of the forest floor. To save money, Texaco chose to use environmental practices that were obsolete, did not meet industry standards, and were illegal in Ecuador and the United States.

The result was, and continues to be, one of the worst environmental disasters on the planet. Contamination of soil, groundwater, and surface streams has caused local indigenous and campesino people to suffer a wave of mouth, stomach and uterine cancer, birth defects, and spontaneous miscarriages. Chevron has never cleaned up the mess it inherited, and its oil wastes continue to poison the rainforest ecosystem.

The mayor of Richmond [California, USA], Gayle McLaughlin, has observed that the children in Richmond who suffer from asthma "are hospitalized for this condition at twice the rate of children throughout Contra Costa County," in which Richmond is located. "Time and again," she writes, "the Richmond City Council has heard testimony from residents about the impact of [Chevron] refinery emissions on their lives: Burning eyes, shortness of breath, foul smells, residues on cars and windows. One senior citizen from Atchison Village talked about entire days when she is unable to leave her home, even to work in her garden, because of the noxious fumes that permeate the air in her neighborhood."

Read the complete San Francisco Bay Guardian article at: www.sfbg.com

Links:

truecostofchevron.com

chevrontoxico.com

crudeaccountability.org

The Shell Guilty Campaign

In Manhattan, New York, May 27, 2009, a courthouse rally was held marking the opening of a landmark human rights trial, Wiwa v. Shell, and international experts spoke about oil company Shell's complicity in torture and murder of environmental activists in Nigeria. The ShellGuilty Campaign is a coalition effort of Friends of the Earth U.S. and Friends of the Earth International, Oil Change International and PLATFORM's Remember Saro-Wiwa project, with support from environmental and human rights groups in Nigeria, North America, and Europe.

Ongoing gas flaring by Shell in the Niger Delta is the cause of numerous severe health problems. The practice poisons communities, emits huge amounts of greenhouse gases, and wastes approximately USD 2.5 billion of natural gas annually.

From ShellGuilty.com:

In May 2009, multinational oil giant Shell will stand trial in United States federal court to answer to charges that it conspired in horrific human rights abuses in Nigeria in the 1990s.

The lawsuit, Wiwa v. Shell, charges Shell with requesting, financing, and assisting the Nigerian military which used deadly force to repress opposition to Shell's operations in the Ogoni region of the Niger Delta. The lawsuit also charges Shell with conspiring with the Nigerian military dictatorship in the prosecution of the leaders of this movement – the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). Shell bribed witnesses to give false testimony, ultimately leading to a death sentence for nine men, including acclaimed author, activist, and leader of MOSOP Ken Saro-Wiwa. On November 10th, 1995, Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders were hanged.

But Shell's crimes didn't end there.
For over fifty years, Shell's operations in the Niger Delta have caused environmental devastation and human suffering. And for fifty years, the associated gas produced with Nigeria's oil has been burned off in huge roaring flares rather than being either re-injected or used commercially. This gas flaring poisons the land and air with a toxic cocktail of pollutants, including sulphur and nitrogen dioxides, benzene, xylene and dioxins. Devastating to the local environment and to the health of surrounding communities, Shell's gas flaring was one of the abuses that Ken Saro-Wiwa and many other Ogoni people died seeking to end.

Shell's gas flaring in Nigeria is a climate crime too. Gas flaring in Nigeria emits more greenhouse gases in sub-Saharan Africa than all other sources combined. In addition to harming the local environment and human health in Nigeria, Shell's gas flaring is significantly contributing to global warming, adding to the peril the planet faces.

Shell must come clean:
Stop gas flaring in Nigeria, a practice devastating to the environment and human health, and a significant contributor to global warming.
Disclose its role in the abuses committed against the Ogoni people in Nigeria, including the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 9.

From a press release about the rally:

... troops broke up peaceful
protests in Nigeria today, where activists from Ogoni and other
communities were barred from solidarity rallies and some arrested by
soldiers attached to the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Rivers State.
Most of those arrested are women (in 5 buses) were on their way to Ken
Saro-Wiwa's village for a rally to protest the complicity of Shell and
the Nigerian government in the Ogoni murders in advance of the opening
of the trial in New York. ...

After more than thirteen years, multinational oil giant Royal Dutch
Shell must finally answer to charges that it conspired with the
Nigerian military to bring about the execution of Nigerian human
rights and environmental leader Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his
colleagues. The November 10, 1995 executions of the 'Ogoni 9' caused
global outrage, and a massive backlash against the company.

Shell also faces charges for arming, financing, and transporting the Nigerian military, which conducted raids on villages that resulted in beatings, torture, shootings, and killings of innocent people in the Ogoni region of the Niger Delta. The plaintiffs, including Saro-Wiwa's family, charge Shell with colluding with the military to suppress nonviolent opposition to its operations in the oil-rich Delta region.

The historic trial will open in the wake of recent raids by the Nigerian military in the Niger Delta, which local people have said resulted in massacres of civilians. The military has said its operations intended to root out armed groups that are opposed to the exploitation of oil resources by foreign multinationals.

Links:

www.ShellGuilty.com

remembersarowiwa.com

wiwavshell.org

Gwich'in Arctic 'Message from the North' to World Leaders on Climate

Gwich'in Nation's Groups Call For Permanent Protection Of Arctic Refuge and Urgent Action To Address Climate Change

Gwich'in Steering Committee (www.gwichinsteeringcommittee.org)

tck tck tck (www.tcktcktck.org)

350.org (www.350.org)

Human Voices Now (www.humanvoicesnow.com) (www.SpectralQ.com)

For Release: Monday, June 1, 2009

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For photos go to humanvoicesnow.blogspot.com

Great Visuals/Photo Opportunity/Photos & Interviews Available

Gwich'in People Create Human Aerial "Message From The North" To World Leaders at Bonn Climate Negotiations

Groups Call For Permanent Protection Of Arctic Refuge and Urgent Action To Address Climate Change

Weekend of Activities Celebrates Protection of Refuge from Oil Drilling, But Cautions Over Impacts of Climate Change That Threaten Survival of the Region

Arctic Village, Alaska - The Gwich'in Nation laid their bodies on the tundra Saturday night to form a giant "Message from the North" to the world, and especially to leaders at the Bonn Climate negotiations, which start up today. The human aerial image, created with aerial artist John Quigley, spelled out "SAVE THE ARCTIC" and featured people arranged into the shape of a caribou on the Arctic Village landscape.

The message was a call for permanent protection of the Arctic Refuge and urgent action to address climate change. Gathering in their homeland, in what is one of the most central and compelling landscapes in the climate change debate, the Gwich'in and their allies challenged leaders to follow science and not politics, and to push for strong carbon emissions reduction targets.

The event is part of a weekend long 'Celebration of Land and Life', marking 20 years of holding a line in the sand, protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil drilling. Ironically though, the threat of rising temperatures and a global climate crisis has become another critical threat to the region, and though no drilling has occurred there, the area is seeing some of the most extreme impacts of climate change and global warming.

Sarah James, spokeswoman for the Gwich'in Nation, declared, "The people of the North are among the first to be experiencing the devastation of climate change. We are calling for permanent protection of the Arctic Refuge, to immediately address the impacts of climate change, and to respect the human rights of our people."

Robby Romero, UN Ambassador for the Environment and founder of the Native rock band Red Thunder who performed at the event, emphasized, "Indigenous peoples live at the point of impact and are among the first to experience the catastrophic effects of climate change - the

wisdom Indigenous peoples offer is crucial to the survival of all life," and adds: "Everything new is hidden in the past - It will take traditional Indigenous wisdom and modern technology working together to lead us on a path of healing."

Artist John Quigley (www.SpectralQ.com) created the aerial image in collaboration with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and 350 (www.350.org) as part of the launch of the global "tck tck tck" campaign (www.tcktcktck.org), and Human Voices Now Campaign (www.humanvoicesnow.com).

Quigley said, "We must act to support the Gwich'in so that they don't end up one of the human rights casualties of climate change. The Arctic Refuge and the people and animals who live here are the canaries in the coal mine of the climate crisis and it is critical that we act quickly to stem overall emissions worldwide to address the impacts of climate change and rising temperatures in their region."

Plans are underway to deliver this "Message from the North" to the world leaders gathering in Bonn for a round of preparatory talks in the lead up to the heavily anticipated UN Climate Negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

The Gwich'in have joined in an unprecedented partnership with the new 'tck tck tck' campaign, which brings together an unprecedented alliance of faith groups, NGOs, trade unions and individuals at this crucial time to call for a new international treaty that will save the planet from the dangerous effects caused by climate change. As world leaders prepare to strike a climate deal in Copenhagen in December, 'tck tck tck' will harness the voices of the people to demand an ambitious, fair and binding new international agreement that reflects the latest science.

Background:

Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been a major debate over the last twenty years. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has been described as part of America's last great wilderness. The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge contains the most biological diversity of the entire circumpolar north. Birds from all 50 states and 6 continents migrate there for nesting and staging. This area is the last portion of the North Slope of Alaska that is currently unavailable to oil and gas development. Gwich'in experts and caribou biologists have concluded that allowing drilling in the Arctic Refuge coastal plain will detrimentally impact the Porcupine Caribou Herd. The caribou instinctually migrate up to 3,000 miles to the coastal plain safe from the predators in the foothills of the Brooks Range, where they can graze on highly nutritional vegetation and the ocean provides vital insect relief. Protecting the calving and nursery grounds is a human rights issue for the people of the Gwich'in Nation, a right guaranteed by the International Covenant on Human Rights that states, "In no case may a people be deprived of their own means of subsistence."

Links:

gwichinsteeringcommittee.org

tcktcktck.org

www.350.org

humanvoicesnow.com

oilwatch.org