

Deconstructing the Niger-Delta Crises: In Esiaba Irobi's Cemetery Road and Hangmen Also Die

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Abstract : The history of the crises in Niger-Delta is readily traceable to the post-colonial oil boom of the early 70s. Prior to this time, it was widely believed that the people of Niger-Delta; especially those in the present day Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa States enjoyed a peaceful coexistence pretty much as the rest of Nigerians. In the early 70s however, crude oil was discovered in commercial quantities in these areas and tranquility has become a far cry over the years ever since then. First, a number of multi-national oil explorers moved into the Niger-Delta for business, and then certain conditions resulted in sundry instances of oil spillage, which caused a lot of environmental damage, destroying nearly all of the people's sources of livelihood. The result was a multiple chain reaction ranging from incessant agitations from the natives to institutionalized dialogue between the oil business owners, the natives and the government, and then to a proposition of compensation packages for the affected communities. The said compensation, which was meant to bring peace seem to have brought even more crises instead. Corruption and greed crept in, money changed hands, suffering increased and so was the agitation from the people. The whole turn of events gradually snowballed into the formation of various militant groups who are now fingered as responsible for the sundry cases of violence in the Niger-Delta. The oil boom can, therefore, be said to be the immediate cause of the Niger-Delta crises, but there are other remote causes as well; including poverty, neglect and illiteracy to mention but a few. This study is therefore aimed at examining the various reasons behind the seemingly unending crises in the Niger-Delta. It will also take a critical look at the roles played by the various parties in the Niger-Delta crises from the 70s to date; as well as the various human and environmental devastations done in the area with a view to making informed suggestions on how to stop further damage and start fixing that, which is already done. Esiaba Irobi's Cemetery Road and Hangmen Also Die seem to vividly capture the realities of the Niger-Delta situation, and shall, therefore, be reviewed in this study.

Keywords : corruption, Niger-delta, oil boom, post-colonial

Conference Title : ICCTLA 2016 : International Conference on Consciousness, Theatre, Literature and the Arts

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 16-17, 2016