

Africa is in the pot! says Nigerian activist

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(GIN) – Author Nnimmo Bassey, one of many African environmental activists at the Copenhagen Climate Conference this week, challenged industrialized countries to pay the debt they owe to Africa – “not a gift, not a loan, not a grant, but a real debt,” he said, “to help Africa develop systems that would make it more resilient to the impacts of global warming, as well as helping Africa to adopt technologies that are more green, that are low carbon intensive.”

Bassey’s forthcoming book is “To Cook a Continent: Destructive Extraction and the Climate Crisis in Africa.” He explained the title in an interview with reporter Amy Goodman of the radio news show Democracy Now.

“Africa has been in the pot for centuries now,” Bassey said. “It’s where everybody goes to extract resources... Our land is being grabbed, torn into plantations, torn into agrofuel farms... It’s the backyard where resources are extracted at the least cost and at a maximum profit. Africa is in the pot, and the fire is being stoked by climate change, more than you could imagine.”

Bassey continued: “Africa is directly at the front line being hit by global warming. And we all know that Africa is the least contributor to the store of carbon in the atmosphere.”

Bassey, founder of Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria also commented on the recent suit by four Nigerian villagers against the oil giant Royal Dutch Shell for polluting their land with oil that gushed from a broken pipeline. “It’s a landmark suit and a welcome development in efforts at getting the oil company to be accountable for irresponsible actions carried out abroad,” he said.

Chima Williams of Friends of the Earth Nigeria, now in the Netherlands on behalf of the victims, stated: “These people have tried in many ways to get Shell to clean up the mess, but they have got nowhere. Now, as a last resort, they are trying to obtain justice at The Hague Civil Court,

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Netherlands."

Shell has denied all responsibility, saying that the Dutch court has no jurisdiction over its Nigerian subsidiary. A demonstration in solidarity with the four Nigerian farmers who filed the suit is being planned.