



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Ogharefe women protest against Pan Ocean oil industry, 1984

Time period notes: *From the sources gathered and analyzed, the campaign by the Ogharefe women seems to have only lasted for one day.*

1984

to:

1984

Country: Nigeria

Location City/State/Province: Ogharefe

Location Description: Pan Ocean's Ogharefe Production Station

Goals:

Payment for land seized and pollution damage, provision of a reliable water well and electricity

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Methods in 4th segment:

- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Methods in 5th segment:

- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Methods in 6th segment:

- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 199. Nonviolent confinement

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 022. Protest disrobings
- 037. Singing

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Environment

Human Rights

National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Ogharefe women
- Ogharefe youth

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Eghweya (Council of Women)

Partners:

Council of Youth

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Council of Youth

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Not known*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Pan Ocean oil industry

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

5 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Pan Ocean met nearly all of the demands put forth by the Ogharefe women. Pan Ocean paid compensation for land taken and assisted in the installation of a reliable water well and electricity. The demand for reimbursement for pollution damage was met, but not as much as the Ogharefe women had wanted. Pan Ocean only paid small amounts for the pollution claims.

Despite the fact that Pan Ocean's managing director was coming to appease the women through negotiations, the women held strongly to their demands and organized the protest disrobing, rejecting negotiations and bringing home their goal for total compliance.

The number of women engaged in this protest was significant, 10,000, and the partnership with the Council of Youths brought even more legitimacy to their cause. The alliance between the male youth and the women made the protest hard to ignore.

The Ogharefe people of Nigeria suffered from the effects of oil pollution and oil exploration. The Ogharefe community was afflicted with a number of health issues, ranging from skin rashes to stomach ailments, from the gas flares and release of "oil production water." Additional damage from oil production included heavy metals in the water, the eroding of iron roofs due to corrosive ash from gas flares, and the decline of productive fishing ponds and farming land.

The Ogharefe people were also denied compensation for the land seized for oil exploration. Pan Ocean, the United States multinational oil company present in the region, rejected most of the community's evaluations of the amount of compensation needed in return for losses as a result of oil exploration. Of the claims that Pan Ocean accepted as legitimate, none were met as Pan Ocean refused to pay the sums. As a result, the Eghweya, or Council of Women, joined the Council of Youths to protest against Pan Ocean.

The young men of the Council of Youths strengthened the women's cause when they publically denounced the secret deals that the older men had made with the oil company. The Council of Youths also offered to join the Council of Women in the protest should the extra assistance be needed.

In 1984, 10,000 women of Ogharefe surrounded Pan Ocean's Ogharefe Production Station. The women barricaded the workers

already inside the station from coming out, and also prevented outside workers from going into the station to relieve those “held in captivity.” The employees inside the station made radio contacts with Pan Ocean’s offices in Warri and Lagos requesting for help. Several hours later, the higher authorities responded to their request; the company’s managing director would be coming with his team to ask the women to come to the negotiation table. The Ogharefe women rejected this offer, saying that what they wanted was not negotiations but compliance. The women threatened to strip naked if the director came appealing for negotiation.

In several countries, including Nigeria, Kenya, Trinidad, and South Africa, the public disrobing of women is thought to bring a serious and irreversible curse to those who see their nakedness. Any foreign man who sees exposed women is considered to lose his credibility in Nigeria as a result of the curse.

When the company’s managing director and his team arrived at the Ogharefe Production Station, they were met with a throng of naked Nigerian women, singing and dancing. This sight, and the threat of the curse, was something that neither the director nor the police could stand. They all fled.

Pan Ocean met the majority of the Ogharefe women’s demands. The oil company reimbursed the Ogharefe community for land taken for the company’s operations, paid most of the compensation for pollution damage, and provided assistance for the installation of water and electricity for the villagers.

Research Notes

Influences:

This protest by the Ogharefe women paved the way for the Ekpan women's uprising (see Nigerian Ekpan women protest against oil company policies, 1986). (2)

Sources:

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Yein Pyo, 02/12/2012

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