

# **TERRORS AND HORRORS OF STRUGGLE FOR RESOURCE CONTROL IN THE NIGER DELTA: A STUDY OF HIBBERT'S *BLOOD AND OIL* AND AMATA'S *BLACK NOVEMBER***

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## **Abstract**

Insecurity and terrorism have been one of the cogent factors leading to underdevelopment and overt poverty within the Nigerian space. Since the country gained independence in 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, with exportation and sales of crude oil found mostly in the Niger Delta areas, as one of its major source of generating income, neglecting many other sources and focusing more on exporting the oil at the detriment of the inhabitants of the soil. Despite the amount of wealth generated from the region, its despicable state in terms of physical and economic development has turned it to a theatre of war, terrorism and unrest. Writers, directors and dramatists, through their works, have continued to speak against the terror and injustice created in this region. Many times, they charge the Nigerian government to find a lasting solution to the insurgency and terrorist attacks. Therefore, in an attempt to further give voice to the above call, this study situates itself in the scenario of the region, giving a clearer understanding of the conflict situation through a sociological analysis of Guy Hibbert's *Blood and Oil* and Jeta Amata's *Black November*. It considers how Nigerian filmmakers are as responsive to national and historic issues like their counterparts in other artistic endeavours and examines the portrayal of Nigeria's oil-producing region's crisis in video films, *Blood and Oil* and *Black November* as a case study.

## **Introduction**

The concept of terrorism infringes on African behavioural pattern based on 'battle of supremacy'. Terrorism began as a form of human struggle for and defence of their empires; the same struggle led to the act of slavery. The battle of the Benin Empire, Oyo Empire, Sokoto Caliphate and others in the struggle of supremacy led to merciless shedding of blood and capturing of slaves. Terrorism debased when Africans began to sacrifice their neighbours to 'appease' the gods. Community leaders became terrorists

during colonial era as Kings and other traditional rulers exchange their residents for mirror, sweets, alcohol and other items that freak Africans.

Around the world today, understanding the past has more or less become a universal need that people require to forge ahead in every sphere of human engagement. The foregoing is a manifest of the imperatives thrown up by the connection of the present and the past, and how specific realities of the past have shaped people's sensibilities and a sense of possibility in the overall quest to obtain a peaceable existence and ensure that certain events, such as, the struggle for supremacy do not re-occur to demean and influence actions and relationships considered counter-productive to both individual and collective socio-political and economic development. As no one can tell history the way it happened, since the days of Thespis and his chorus actors, who participated in the festival of Dionysus, during the classical Greek period; to the medieval presentation of religious play, down to the theatre of the gods and goddesses as proposed by Wole Soyinka in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, the theatrical stage has been a place where all human activities are examined and history, no matter how distorted, is given voice to. Through the use of scenic enhancements such as costumes, lights, sounds, props, and so on, the stage recreates the world and presents to the audience the opportunity to analyse and reflect on the impact of their actions on fellow humans and the larger environment.

In particular, following the definitions by the United Nations (UN) and the US Department of Defence, terrorism has been defined as "the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives" (Enders and Sandler 5). From the definition, it is evident that for any activity to be so tagged as terrorism, it must have:

- a) Violence;
- b) Political, ideological, or religious motifs;
- c) Presence of perpetrator(s);
- d) Effect on victim(s); and
- e) Target audience(s).

The above five components seem to be present in almost all the violent activities witnessed in Nigeria since independence. Terrorism, one of the activities is being examined around the globe has, over the years become a subject of concern globally as the increasing number of terrorist groups has become one of the major impediments to world development, global peace and security. In the fifties and sixties, terrorism was a prominent instrument used by both government and the populace in revolutionary or liberation struggles across the globe, be they in Asia, Africa, Middle East or Latin America. For example, the Global Market Institute's (GMI) Poll conducted in 2006 among 8,001 respondents in US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Russia, Japan, showed that the fear of terrorism is the preeminent issues in all G8 countries (Onuoha 296). Terrorism is spreading like wildfire in every part of the world, especially in Nigeria, and its effect beats beyond the actual place of execution. It has become a

fundamental security concern to various countries all over the world and continues (to) remain a serious and on-going threat the mass peace and security.

No region in the world has been spared of terrorist attacks, and Africa has been described as one of the hardest hit, reasons partly due to various developmental issues, which have continued to help foster and intensify the consequences of terrorism (Ogada 283). Although the concept of terrorism is generally considered a recent development in West Africa, however, the 1989 Bilma bomb blast, according to Ogada, involving UTA Flight 779 over Niger, showed the existence of terrorism in a region accustomed to varied forms of threats and insecurities. For Ogada, in 1994, a journalist, Robert Kaplan, wrote an article warning that West Africa's ungoverned spaces, weak borders and impoverished masses had the potential to breed threat not only to individual states, but the African continent as a whole. Kaplan in *The Coming Anarchy* declared that Africans have ignored the dying regions at their own risk (57). Just ten years later, two other writers, Douglas Farah and Richard Shultz, supported Kaplan's argument, and submitted that the West African countries had become terrorist's sanctuary. Three years later, after the 9/11 attacks, these authors, Farah and Shultz, asserted thus:

... weak and corrupt governments, vast, virtually stateless stretches awash in weapons and impoverished, largely Muslim population make the region an ideal sanctuary. The now identifiable presence of Al-Qaeda in other countries show that these once marginal wars and regions matter. We ignore the warnings at our own peril (cited in Ogada 282).

The idea of terrorism had been a virus predominating from hereditarily perspectives in Nigeria through greed. This concept of greed led to divers of corrupt and egocentric leadership that has been in existence before and during slavery.

The Nigerian state, through the perversion of its leadership style, has continued to neglect its responsibilities to the people, vis-a-vis corruption, poor governance, weak and compromised institutions. Although the fire of the militant (terrorist groups) of the Niger Delta, a region covers an area of over 70,000km<sup>2</sup> of the sea borders of the country and constitutes the largest river delta in Africa, seem to be burning low, the effect of the terror created within the area has shown that the realisation of the Nigeria's industrial development will be difficult as long as its economic resource site remains vulnerable to terrorist attacks, recruitment, radicalisation, and penetration. All these threaten not only the nation's political stability and its investment prospects with other countries; they also cast a spectral shroud on government's efforts to respond to the calls for rapid industrialisation and economic growth. Due to the natural endowments of the Niger Delta region, the inhabitants engage more in occupations such as farming, fishing, and have accounted for a large percentage of Nigeria's commercial fisheries industry. The landmass, amazing network of creeks, and an aquatic splendour comprising marine, brackish and freshwater ecosystems, have culminated in the Niger Delta crisis making the area a hot bed of violence, insurgency, kidnapping, hostage-taking, oil pipeline sabotage, crude oil theft, gang wars, internecine struggles and so much else by way of anarchy and chaos.

Therefore, it is on this background that, through a sociological analysis of Guy Hibbert's movie, *Blood and Oil* and Jeta Amata's *Black November*, this paper evaluates and analyses how the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) has contributed to the discourse of terrorism, bringing its horror to both local and international limelight. It observes that playwrights and directors are now more cautious in their movies on violence and terrorism, understanding the infectious effect they have on their society. The paper considers how Nigerian film makers are as responsive to national and historic issues as are their counterparts in other artistic endeavours by examining their portrayals of Nigeria's oil producing Niger Delta crises in video films, *Blood and Oil* and *Black November* as a case study. To support the submissions of the scriptwriter, this research work concludes that until political motifs are removed from every form of agitation, such will continue to be tagged terrorism. Hence, this paper focuses on bringing, once more, to our consciousness, the gloomy and horrible circumstances in which Nigeria, and most especially, Niger-Delta region, sadly, continues to wallow.

### **Conflicts, Terrorism and Ethnicity as Factors for Under-Development**

A sociological analysis of the Nigerian society pinpoints it as the largest petroleum producer in Africa and the seventh largest producer of crude oil among OPEC member countries (Amata's *Black November*). It is the most populated African country and its diversity exists among its several ethnic groups (over 450 ethnic groups) (Amata's *Black November*). While the Southern parts of the country are mostly Christians, the Northerners are majorly, Muslims. Lack of religious tolerance in some parts of the country and its government's neglect of the Niger Delta region have been attributed to be causes of many insurgencies in the country in recent past. Failure to provide basic social and infrastructural amenities such as roads, electricity, potable water, health-care and quality education while which provides for the 90% of its wealth, presented new conflicts in itself. According to the assertions of MEND, the most saddening of the happenings within the country is that while the people of the Niger Delta region continue to wallow in abject poverty, the wealth gotten from their land is constantly used to provide such necessities for other regions of the country. All an aggrieved youth from the Niger Delta region needs, to form themselves into insurgency groups, is a trip to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

Conflict in the Niger Delta began in the early 1990s due to tensions between the foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw in the late 1990s. Since then, ethnic and political unrest has continued and still persists, although, not as elaborate as it used to be. Competition for the control of oil wealth has fuelled violence between innumerable ethnic groups, causing the militarisation of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military and police forces (notably the Nigeria Mobile Police), and growing into terrorism in the region. The regional and ethnic conflicts are so numerous that fully detailing each is impossible and impractical. However, there have been a number of major confrontations that deserve elaboration. As stated in Augustine Ikelegbe, the table below gives an insight to some of the kidnapping exercises in the Niger Delta Region as reported in *Police Record* (208-234).

S/N	Action/date	MNC/OIL Servicing Co.	Youth Group/ Ethnic Group state	Ascertained purpose	Outcome
1	Hostage taking of 10 workers/ April 2002	Shell	Militant Youth Gang, Ekeremor LGA, Ijaw/ Bayelsa State	Ransom demand for N3.1m	Resulted from failure to yield to alleged frivolous demands
2	Kidnap of staff/ June 29-July 2003	Oil servicing Co. working for shell	Ijaw youth militants in Bomadi/ Burutu LGAs/Delta State	Demand for N25.4m	State Govt Intervention/ Negotiated release after 14 days
3	Kidnap of 9 crew and 4 military escorts of oil barges/ 11-13Nov. 2003		Ijaw militants	Ransom/other demands	Released 2 days later after threats by state Govt/ Security Agencies.
4	Kidnap of 14 workers/ November 2003	Chevron Texaco	Militant Ijaw Youths/Bayelsa	Ransom demands	Intervention of State Government
5	Kidnap of 19 oil workers	Nobel Drilling/ Prospecting	Ijaw Militias/Delta State	Ransom demands	Intervention of State Government
6	Kidnap of 7 workers 28Nov.-Dec. 2003	Bredero Shaw Oil servicing Co. (Shell)	Militant Ijaw Youths Delta State	Ransom demands for \$5m	State government intervention/ negotiation
7	Murder of 7 workers & Military personnel/ April 2004	Chevron Texaco	Militant youths along Benin River Area/Delta State	-	-

Source: Ikelegbe 212

In all the above listed cases of kidnapping and other cases of crises undertaken by various Niger Delta militant groups, oil companies usually describe such as purely criminal in purpose, aimed at extorting benefits to which they are not entitled from the oil industry. These same incidents are described by the youths involved as a fight for their rights. Furthermore, Chevron states thus:

In some cases, the youths simply try to extort money from personnel working on barges and drilling rigs without reason or based on some fabricated excuse.... Because of the level of poverty in most of the remote areas, there are... many cases of unscrupulous claims for compensation for damages that cannot be substantiated (cited in HRW 139).

While Chevron identifies the disproportion between the wealth of the oil company and the poverty of the oil producing areas as an important contributor to conflict, it sees the protests that result as criminal only. The youths who make what Chevron describes as ‘unscrupulous’ claims put it differently:

We have committed ourselves to the fight against environmental degradation, social and economic injustice in our land. Chevron pays soldiers to kill us and has bribed the police to keep us away; when we demand our rights, they just send the Mobile Police (cited in HRW 139).

Although the characteristics of terrorism have been changing in recent times, the primary objective is still to impose sufficient political and economic pressure on government so that it can agree to the demands of the terrorists (Enders and Sandler 99). Terrorism, which had been viewed by some publics in the country as a predominantly Western narrative, and supposedly a Western conundrum, had become a Nigerian issue created by some aggrieved Nigerians, as a medium of expression. So fierce was the prosecution of their terror agenda, by the government, that fighting terrorism went straight to the top of the political agenda in the country far ahead poverty, crime, underdevelopment, poor provision of health facilities, lack of power supply, power relations and resource distributions, corruption, ethnicity, and many more, even though these factors have been fingered as partly responsible for the emergence of terrorism itself.

Ethnic agitation in Nigeria’s political history dates as far back as the period before the country’s independence. However, this chapter focuses on the agitation of the people of the Niger Delta, with a particular interest on the Ijaw ethnic grouping. Ethnic nationalism among the Ijaw can be conveniently situated within the context of Joireman’s thesis of a “coincidence of ethnicity and a lack of economic prosperity”:

A history of unequal development in a country in which the regional inequalities coincide with ethnicity can establish the precipitating factors for ethnic conflict. It can give a group of people a legitimate grievance that over time can escalate into ethnic conflict (12).

The above submission by Joireman essentially captures the basis of the conflict in the Niger Delta against the Nigerian state. Successive governments have acquired the oil wealth which the oil companies have helped to unlock, salting it away in foreign bank accounts rather than investing in education, health, and other social sectors, and mismanaging the national economy to the point of collapse. At the community level, the companies are faced with increasing protests directed at their activities and the lack of development in the delta; these have included incidents of hostage taking, closures of flow stations, sabotage, and intimidation of staff. All of these troubles and increasing crises have been used as raw materials for film production by Nigeria’s Nollywood.

## **Nollywood and the Niger Delta Crises**

Reflecting on the horrors and terrors within the region and the despicable state of the Niger Delta region, from a shift in thematic preoccupation of the people being the casualties of the constant struggle for wealth control, between the Nigerian government and the different movements established by the people of the region, to woman analogy; the Nigerian movie industry (Nollywood) over the years has tried to speak against the terror and injustice created in this region. Through various movies produced, such as, *Niger Delta Avengers*, *Liquid Black Gold*, *Black Gold*, and later reappears as *Black November* in 2013; and *Blood and Oil*, as popular expressions of art, film makers have revealed their fears and angers against the crises and also try to re-imagine the politics of oil exploration as it influences the Nigerian society (Niger Delta, especially).

Aggrieved youths of the Niger Delta region have realised that their lacks are not only just as a result of neglect from government, but, also, self-inflicting by their corrupt leaders. These leaders are supposed to be the mouth-piece of the people, but, they rather would work to be in favour of both parties, not conveying the grievances of their people to the government, and blackmailing their people before the government. As the world is developing and globalisation taking proper shape in various parts of the universe, the heightening levels of political and social consciousness have resulted in higher expectations by the people, and consequently, states and societies are coming under pressure from the populace.

As earlier said, Nollywood's involvement in the Niger Delta crises has been a subtle one, as no one wants to have to "bell the cat". While everyone wants to let the world know what is happening in his/her society, individually, we are all conscious of the dangers involved in telling such stories. These dangers are one of the major reasons why writers tend to use fictional elements and producers/directors disclaim resemblances to realities in their movies. *Liquid Black Gold*, produced in 2009, and written and directed by Ikenna Emma Aniekwe, chronicles the activities of some supposed overzealous youths, who decide to fight defensively over the neglect of their community (Niger Delta). The fight soon grew chaotic as it was against the decision maker of their community and before long, the terrors and horrors of the violence are felt on the women, children, sick and old, constantly and daily scream for help as a result of the high rate of death. Both parties (the youth and the decision makers) turned deafening ears to their call for help. The underlining factor, of the terror, is beyond just deprivation but suppression; rather it is a fight for the even distribution of the wealth being made through the sales of the crude oil on their lands. That the land has crude oil, making the environment extremely hot for its inhabitants isn't bad enough, the drilling and exploration of the oil still causes great damage, even to the waters from the land.

### **Synopsis of *Blood and Oil***

Guy Hibbert's movie, *Blood and Oil*, bears a striking resemblance to the events between the shell employees, militants and the Nigerian Joint Task force of 2006; under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo's led administration. Produced by Mat Chaplin and Susie Liggat, and directed by David Attwood, as the movie chronicles the events surrounding one of the darkest activities carried out under this government. It is woven

round unravelling the mystery behind the death of Mark Unwin (Tom Fairfoot), one of the four employees of Krielsen International Oil Company captured by militant group, MEND, whilst they are working in Nigeria. For the efforts of his wife, Claire who flies out with Alice Onuko, a Nigerian-born but British-raised Public Relations Manager for the same oil company, the dead would have been celebrated as a hero and not “the greedy coward” he was. As is the norm for every kidnapping case carried out by MEND, on arrival, the women were told that a ransom had been agreed and MEND had decided to release the men captured.

However, when civil rights’ worker, Keme, acting as go-between, escorts the women to witness the handover as Claire had become anxious to see her husband; they find only the corpses of Mark and his co-workers. Although the death of her husband unsettles her, Claire’s greatest shock came from her knowledge of the fact that her husband had been cheating on her and was planning on bombing his oil company, in order to frame MEND for it. For the Journalist and the events that unfold during the case, Alice would never have doubted the integrity of her father, who happened, as she later discovered, to be just as the same as Ahmed Yerima’s Papa (Don) in *Hard Ground*.

### **Synopsis of *Black November***

*Black November* depicts the devastating effects of corruption in oil-rich region of the Nigeria. The story revolves round corruption and political dysfunction plaguing oil-rich Nigeria. The aggrieved Niger Delta youths, based in Los Angeles, have decided to kidnap Hudson (Mickey Rourke), the CEO of a U.S. oil company, along with several other Americans, in order to secure the release of a young Nigerian woman Ebiere (Mbong Amata), who had been jailed and sentenced to death for her part in leading a local uprising. The movie, according to Amata, in an interview with Africa Report, is based on facts and named after the month when activist Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed in 1995. It is a swift, enraging, exciting and adventure story about greed, brutality and injustice being melted out to the youths and inhabitants of the Niger Delta region.

The movie starts, after a brief introduction to the pathetic situation in the Niger Delta and Nigeria. The Warri Prison, next to reveal actions, introduces the audience to a serious tale of self-sacrifice, as the prison gets ready for an execution. As an ambitious lady, Ebiere (Mbong Amata), gets a scholarship to study abroad, and realises how marginalised her people have been. She never wanted to be part of the struggle, but her yearn for a normal and comfortable life forces her to defend the exploited villagers she grew up with against the same oil company she now works for, after having witnessed the massacre, in form of a gas line explosion, of her entire family by the government officials. She in turn takes to speaking against the government and for her people. Not long, she became the hero the people had long waited and this led to her arrest and further jailing.

### **Conflict and Terrorism in *Blood and Oil* and *Black November***

Depicting a people in their geographical location and how the struggle for survival has given birth to man’s inhumanity to man, these movies project, as their main focus the Niger Delta, their daily occupation, cultural values, beliefs, deprivations and



disillusionment. In these plays, the fearsomeness, hazard and wealth of the people of the Niger Delta are laid bare. The oil-rich region is depicted as unnatural habitat or locale for poverty, restiveness, militancy and neglect as the environment that is naturally supposed to add vibrancy, enthusiasm and pleasure to life suddenly becomes an abode of criminality and viciousness. Guy Hibbert and Jeta Amata dramatically x-ray the socio-political situation of the Niger Delta to portray its history, cultural values, the sources of disintegration and disunity.

Bearing a striking resemblance to real life events in the Delta, and in particular, one of the darkest chapters of the Nation's former president, President Olusegun Obasanjo's repressive rule over Nigeria, as the scholar and author Ike Okonta writes:

20<sup>th</sup> August, 2006. On that afternoon, soldiers of the Joint Task Force, a contingent of the Nigerian Army, Navy and Air Force deployed by the government to enforce its authority on the restive oil-bearing Niger Delta, ambushed fifteen members of the MEND militia in the creeks of western delta and murdered them. The dead men had gone to negotiate the release of a Shell Oil worker kidnapped by youth in Letugbene, a neighbouring community. The Shell staff also died in the massacre. Spokesmen of the Nigerian government had sought to represent the fifteen militias as 'irresponsible hostage-takers' in the wake of the slaughter. But those massed at the hospital that morning spoke only of heroes who had fallen in the battle for 'Ijaw liberation' (<https://www.project-syndicate.org>).

Okonta, in an interview with Oboko Bello, an Ijaw civil society leader who traced the event between Shell and the soldiers who murdered a boatful of MEND insurgents, reveals that the Ijaw youths who were ambushed and murdered by the Nigerian military were not even hostage takers but youths who were after the repair of the broken relationship between the community and shell oil company.

Without mixing words, Hibbert unveils cogent and pathetic issue surrounding the conflict of the movie, corruption and unscrupulous egoism, which are the sources of retrogression, displacement and unhealthy restiveness in the Niger Delta region. In this play, the playwright highlights both the psychological and social minds of the poor or less privileged members of the society to underscore the level of disillusionment, deprivation and disunity in their land. According to Keme Tobodo, the human right activities who acts as an intermediary between the Oil Company and MEND, the community is in total shambles:

**Keme:** ... when corruption becomes so deep in a society, when it is practised by every politician, every government official and every village chief, what then happens to us? (*Blood and Oil*)

This is the root of the violence and terror perpetrated by the youths in this thriller movie. Greed has eaten so deep into the soul of this country so much so, that even a child, like

Alice, who claims to be a Public Relation Officer, expected to communicate with people by reaching into their psychology, does not know her father.

Alice, the naïve girl, believes her father is one of the good Samaritans in the US who has been offering refuge to as many Nigerians as want to be there, simply because he, Justice Onuka (Kole Omotoso) happens to be one of the very few privileged orphans out there. This is revealed by Alice, when she says:

**Alice:** ... giving other the helping hands that he never had himself. (*Round of applause.*)

**Alice:** I have an image of him... 11 years old... there he is, On the road side, in ragged clothes, no father and no mother, and he is selling dry fish with the women to look after his brothers and sisters (*Blood and Oil*).

It was a big disappointment for Alice, when she finds out that the then “11 years old”, whom she now calls a father, happen to be one of the oil barons, recruiting people, towards the destruction of the Niger Delta region. This is reflected in her dialogue with Ed Daly (Paterson Joseph), her company’s representative in Nigeria:

**Ed Daly:** ... all stolen from our pipelines.... This is the real oil bunkering. Tankers filled of it... All of Nigeria’s business is oil bunkering; someone is stealing it for someone.... The Mr. A in this case is your father.

**Alice:** My Father?

**Ed Daly:** It’s a shame it has no meaning. Legitimate or illegitimate, everything is corrupt in this country and therefore, nothing is corrupt (*Blood and Oil*).

Alice tries to defend her father but, at the end, she realises Ed Daly is right. She meets the same man she had found to be responsible for the death of the four staff of her oil company, in the comfort of their home, as a friend of her father.

The causes of violence as depicted in these movies include poverty, exploitation, oppression and injustice. This is stated by Ed Daly, “80 million Nigerians live in abject poverty”. Another cause of violence is the opportunity to have an input into their welfare. Amata's personal interest in the terror and horrors of the Niger Delta is evident, and well-represented by his major character’s soulful performance as an ordinary girl pushed to extreme bravery by standing against the same company she had worked for, all her life, after much of her village dies in a fuel explosion. Even though they were tagged, “a group of terrorist”, in the words of Tamuno Alaibe (Enyinna Nwigwe), the leader of United People’s Front for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta People of Nigeria, the youths who lay siege and take the CEO of Western Oil, Tom Hudson (Mickey Burke) and Kristy Maine (Kim Basinger) ambush “are not bad people” and “do not want to hurt anybody”. Rather, they believe the only way to get the international attention was only by violence, a way they believed “was the only language the west understands” (Amata’s

*Black November*). They had to do this to send a message for the release of Ebiere, who, as seen in the movie, was about to be hanged.

They youths in *Black November* question every authority brought against them in a live feed. The bone of contention is that Ebiere had only stood up for the truth before she was arrested and jailed. Now, since the Western Oil and Nigeria Government are the cause of the affliction she spoke against, the western government should therefore seek for her release, having tried all other means. From the binging of the ambush, one after the other, the youths showed their anger:

**Opuwei:** 50% of our oil comes to the United States.

**Timi:** One out of every five American uses Nigerian Oil.

**Sodi:** We export crude oil to you people, only to import refined oil. Why? Because Western Oil and our corrupt Government won't allow our refineries to work...

**Tamuno:** My people are dying.

**Timi:** Our lands are devastated.

**Opuwei:** Our farmlands, livestock (*Black November*).

Just as we have in the anguish and lamentations above, the youths of *Blood and Oil* also complain of the same pain and anguish. The oil is found on their land, they feel the heat, so why can they not be allowed a little compensation for it? From the very beginning of the movie, the militant youths yelled:

We no go gree, wuruwuru.... Na our land be this, you no go fit take my right, na the thing wey I dey say, all of us must leave in peace (*Blood and Oil*).

The above quotation, which transliterate to “we won't allow to be cheated, this is our land, you can't claim our rights. All we ask is for us to live in peace”, depicts the essence of the conflict in these movies. The fear of being cheated off their land has a direct correlation with the violence being carried out. Another cause of violence as depicted in the movie is revenge or vengeance. To the people, revenge is seen as an act of honour. This is depicted in the dialogue between Clair and the Leader of MEND:

**Ebi:** What are you? A British?

**Claire:** (*Scared*). Yes.

**Ebi:** Am very angry with you, very angry. The British, you are wicked people for conniving with our government ... and waging a 50year war against us. And we are fighting you back (*Blood and Oil*).

While Hudson, *Black November*, believes in he doesn't have a control over the Nigerian government, the youths believe since the government is corrupt, then his money will. Despite being begged to let the hostages go, they insist on keeping them because they want the world to also hear their side of the story. To Tamuno, “Ebiere is dying and

the world knows nothing of her”. Kristy was able to help tell Ebiere’s story and this made the world understand the youths better.

The fact that a white woman was at their doorstep asking questions of them renewed the strength of Hibbert’s youths just as Kristy renewed those of *Black November*. In their pessimism lives the optimism that success awaits them. These conflicting thoughts serve as motivational drives that propel them in the struggle. They value every little success and feel fulfilled with every step that moves them closer to their dreams, despite having lost six of their men. This illusion of success can be inferred from this dialogue by one of the Militant:

**One Militant:** 1). You will localise all control to oil; 2). We will have reparation from the national government for the pollution of our creeks; 3). There will be a total demilitarisation of our land. And no peace for you until these things happen (*Blood and Oil*).

Hibbert made a very clear statement in this scene of the movie. These are the demands of the militants. They did not just take to arms for the fun of killing, according to Ebi: “Why kill the white man if we agreed to return him back?” It pains the militant men that the men had to die after they had taken care of them, fed them and gave them shelter. The only surviving man Lucky, Marks personal bodyguard, who could have told the truth about what happened to the world, was also murdered few minutes out of hideout.

Amidst these conflicts, the real perpetrators, the government, represented by lieutenant commander Tunde Tayo of the Joint Task Force, was busy making all attempts to cover their game up. This was what angered the militants the most. The government perpetrate evil and still blame it on the terrorist group. A reward for terrorism, we must say. According to Ebi, the government killed the White men, blamed the militants for it so that they, the Nigerian government "can get the support of the British and American Government", to come into their lands with their "helicopters, guns, ships, and get plans and every weapon on god's hands". In Hibbert’s words, through Ebi, the leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, the Nigerian Government has finally resorted to sabotage, having tried everything possible to get the militants off the country's record. Lieutenant Tunde Tayo himself confirms this, after killing Lucky, the survivor of the four hostages, who had escaped the massacre. His only dream was to return safely to Port Harcourt, so he could return to his wife and children, when he says:

**Tunde Tayo:** Tell the minister that the fourth hostage has been shot in a fire-fight with the militants (*Blood and Oil*).

The dismay written boldly on the faces of both Alice and Keme was from the fact that they were in the scene of the violence and witnessed that the militants, never had the chance of lifting up arms against the bullets of the Joint Task force; there was absolutely no fire-fight, but massacre.

So, amidst rumours of prostitution rings, Russian mafia, mercenary activities and the unorthodox operation of the oil industry in the region, including oil bunkering on a massive scale, with pilfered oil mainly being sold on eventually, which according to Ed Daly, not on local streets corners from drums or litre sized cans "for 50 cents", but in the global market with tankers full of it, things turn from generally sinister to the personal, when Public Relation Officer, Omuka finds out just how close she is to the corruption; and finally finding she has more in common with the Oyelowo's activist character. Alice returns to Nigeria, with a glimpse of hope that the world must know the truth about the activities in the Niger Delta, not through violence, but by making their demands known to the government themselves and coming together to work for the betterment of their land. As stated by Keme in his first appearance in the movie:

**Keme:** I'm not offering you a gun, am not offering you ammunition.... If you want that, go and join the militants in the creeks. What I offer to you is dignity and pride in yourself as good people. Join with me today, and you will be joining men and women who are strong enough and proud enough to carry respect and to demand respect for the other.... And then we will all change our land together.... And we will win! (*Blood and Oil*)

## **Conclusion**

This research has been able to reveal how Jeta Amata's *Black November* and Guy Hibbert's *Blood and Oil* have contributed to the discourse of terrorism, bringing its horror to both local and international limelight. Using the scenario of these movies, the study observes that playwrights and directors are now more cautious in their movies on violence and terrorism. This they do by trying to make the populace more aware of the truth behind the region's crises and create an understanding of the infectious effect they have on their society. Although the inauguration of amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militant youths by the Federal Government of Nigeria on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2009 is a significant event which has caused a drastic change in the trend of the crises, the programme has not totally resolved the crisis. Despite bringing some relief, as evident in the relative "peace" currently being enjoyed in the Niger Delta region, any breach in contract on the part of the government might be brewing an entirely new pot of terror.

Through their use of language, character, settings, and costume, Guy Hibbert and Jeta Amata in their movies have demonstrated that the Nigerian government and some of the multi-national oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region are to be blame for the incessant violence and terrorism in the region. This, however, is made possible with the collaboration of the sons of the region as represented by Chief Justice Onukwe (Kole Omotoso). Consequently, violence and terrorism in the region are greatly informed by leadership failure, corruption, greed and acquisitive predilection that are rampant in the region and in the nation at large. Hence, through Keme, one concludes that respect, inclusive representation, youth empowerment, sincerity of purpose and good governance are crucial in permanently resolving the Niger Delta crisis for the restoration of peace, unity, stability and progress to the region. Above all, until political motifs are removed from every form of agitation within the country and individuals 'conscientised', the

country still has a long way to go in its fight and constant struggle against terrorism and violence.

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### **Filmography**

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