

SYNOPSIS :

# CURSE OF BLACK GOLD

By Ed Kashi

Nigeria, 2006

*Curse of the Black Gold* look at the profound cost of oil exploitation in West Africa

Since oil was discovered in the Niger Delta in 1956, over 400 billion dollars worth has been pumped out of these fertile grounds. The Delta, the third largest wetland in the world, has become the main source of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria yet it remains the least developed area of the country. These images document daily life along the Niger Delta, its inhabitants and the conditions in which they live.

**Oil.** Now one of the major suppliers of U.S. oil, Nigeria is the sixth largest producer of oil in the world. Set against a backdrop of what has been called the scramble for African oil, *Curse of the Black Gold* documents the consequences of a half-century of oil exploration and production in one of the world's foremost centers of biodiversity. This photo essay shows the reality of oil's impact and the absence of sustainable development in its wake, providing a compelling pictorial history of one of the world's great deltaic areas. Kashi's photographs capture local leaders, armed militants, oil workers, and nameless villagers, all of whose fates are inextricably linked. This photo essay bears witness to the ongoing struggles of local communities, illustrating the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty.

**Niger Delta Slaughter.** The Trans Amadi Slaughter is the largest abattior in the Niger Delta. They kill thousands of animals a day, roast them, cut them up and prepare the meat for sale throughout the delta. Nearly all of the workers here, especially the meat handlers, are Muslims from the Hausa and Yoruba tribes of Northern Nigeria. Fish was traditionally the main source of protein in the Delta, but as fish stocks have dwindled due to pollution from oil and over fishing, meat has become more common.