

## A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST ECO-ACTIVISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN SELECTED NIGER DELTA NOVELS

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### **Abstract**

*Environmental degradation remains the most potent threat to the people, most especially women in the Niger Delta. This has led women to be at the forefront for the struggle for the preservation of the environment because of their deeper affinity with the natural environment and the metaphoric link between women and the natural environment. Various studies on the impact of environmental crisis in the Niger Delta have portrayed women as victims of such crisis without attention to the efforts of women in the struggle to preserve and restore the natural environment. This study, therefore, addresses this gap and investigates the role of women in eco-activism to highlight women's efforts in the preservation of the Niger Delta environment. According to Carole Boyce Davies' 'The social and historical realities of African women's lives must be considered in any meaningful examination of women in African literature' (561). To this end, African feminism becomes a fitting theoretical framework for this paper. As a brand of feminism, this theoretical school of thought combines African concerns with world-wide feminist concerns. African feminism places emphasis on nature over culture. Ecofeminism is applied in the textual analysis of two selected literary texts. It is an eco-critical model whose theme is a link between domination of nature and that of women, and women are urged to take responsibility to end domination over both. Vincent Egbuson's *Love My Planet* and May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery* are purposely selected owing to how deeply they expose environmental degradation in the region, while capturing vividly the roles played by women in the struggle to preserve the natural environment of the Niger Delta. The texts were subjected to critical literary analysis. The study concludes that women are not just victims of an environmental crisis. They play significant roles in the struggle to preserve the environment of the Niger Delta in the two novels. Women have transcended from docility and emotional entrapment to resilience in the struggle to restore the degraded environment.*

**Key words:** Eco-activism, Environmental degradation, Ecofeminism, Resilience.

## **Introduction**

Several studies have been carried out on the literature of the Niger Delta concerning its region's affiliation with ecocritical issues. Researchers have given special attention to the impact of environmental degradation on the region. Such studies include Samuel Aghalino (2011) who explores the effects of environmental crisis on the region from cultural perspective. He argues that it has led to the mutation of indigenous culture and displacement of the people. Religious crisis, ethnic conflict and prostitution have also emanated from it. Enajite Ojaruega (2013) and Charles Feghabo (2013) examine the effects of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta from a socio-economic angle. It causes economic crisis, which leads to other vices like prostitution, armed robbery, abduction, unrest, stealing and others. While the efforts made by the men in the struggle against environmental degradation are illustrated, the place of the women in such struggle is left out. This leaves a gap in their studies.

Women especially in literary texts are usually portrayed as victims. Such an image is perhaps incontestable due to the societal vices and environmental decadence which principally affect women, especially in developing countries of the world. These societal deformities include various forms of abuse, human trafficking, sexual harassment, verbal assault, violence of all kinds and intimidation, among others. Irrespective of increasing awareness of gender equality, many women across the world are still regarded as victims of discrimination, inequality and abuse (Farzana Nasrim, 2012). Poverty and illiteracy remain widespread and women are continually victims of such negative experiences, especially in the male-dominated societies.

Recent developments, such as the increasing dependency of third world countries on western monetary economy, technological advancement in agriculture, the sharpening worldwide division of labour and religious fundamentalism, have all brought extra problems upon women (Nasrin, 2012). Among the foregoing, environmental degradation remains the most potent threat to women. In recent times, climate changes poses threat to the existence of human and non-human entities. This has attracted global attention such that environmental regeneration has become urgent and paramount. As a result, every field of study now deems it necessary to participate in the creation of awareness on the need to care for the environment if planet earth must continue to exist meaningfully. Linguistics is not left out in this mission to save the earth. Literary artists engage literature towards achieving this goal. Since women suffer victimization most in times of environmental crisis, literary artists deploy their artistry to interrogate the women concerning championing the cause of the environment. In the late 1960s, women awareness and their connection with the environment were initiated, primarily by Esther Boserup (1970) in "Women's Role in Economic Development". She argues that the role of women in terms of environmental development is significantly undermined. From time immemorial, women have had a deeper affinity with natural environment. This is because they depend on it for a

meaningful existence. For this reason, they make effort to preserve and care for it more than anyone else. Women are closer to nature than men and this makes them perfect managers of eco-system. They try to preserve the natural environment because their survival is tied to a healthy eco-system. The rural women for instance, largely depend on the forest to meet her daily needs of water, food, fuel, fruit, condiment, medicinal herbs, and the like. Women's involvement in agricultural occupation is also on the rise. The attitude and perspective of women to the environment is different from the men's. Women on the other hand, view the environment as an important resource for survival. As a result, there is an immediate instinct towards preserving and regenerating the environment for sustainability. Rodda Annabel (1991) affirms that in India, rural women collect dead woods in the forest for fuel rather cut down live trees. This preservative instinct is also common in many rural as well as urban communities in Africa. The dependence on nature and the environment for survival is common among third world women ( Bina Agarwal, 1997). As a result, they play essential roles in the preservation and management of natural resources such as soil, trees, forests, water bodies and others. Literature is being used to capture this reality. This study, therefore, explores how literature portrays the role that women play in the sustainability of the Niger Delta.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This is a qualitative literary analysis of texts. The selected novels: Vincent Egbuson's *Love my Planet* and May Ifeoma Nwoye's *Oil Cemetery* will be subjected to critical analysis. The novels are selected owing to their reflection of environmental degradation and they are set in the Niger Delta. African feminism formed the major theoretical framework of this paper as it recognizes the fact that African women are different from other women in other parts of the world not in terms of their anatomy but in the challenges they face on the continent. The tenets of ecofeminism are deployed to interrogate the interphase between the environment and the role of women in its preservation. Ecofeminism was coined by Francoise d' Eaubonne in 1974 to describe women's conscious efforts to preserve the natural environment. According to Cherryll Glotfelty( 1996: xxiv), ecofeminism is a "hybrid label to describe a theoretical discourse whose theme is the link between the oppression of women and the domination of nature." In the same vein, Greta Gaard (1993) postulates that ecofeminism is a movement that cuts across a whole gamut of feminist disciplines, activisms and advocacy platforms like peace and anti-nuclear activism, feminist spirituality, animal liberation, environmentalism and antitoxic movements. Eaton (2005:11) opines that ecofeminism is "a convergence of the ecological and feminist analyses and movements." He further stresses that it represents varieties of theoretical, practical and critical efforts to understand and resist the interrelated dominations of women and nature."

### **The Impact of Environmental Degradation in *LOVE MY PLANET***

The extent of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta cannot be over-emphasized. Oil spillage and gas flaring that occur in the process of oil exploration and exploitation as well as the activities of militants and oil pilferers has brought untold hardship to the Niger Delta. Other effects of degradation of the environment of Niger Delta are poverty, hunger, malnutrition, diseases and unemployment. These further breed armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, rape, restiveness, insecurity, and even death. The rate of unemployment is very high as farming and fishing activities are made less rewarding and unattractive by environmental pollution. This has often forced many people, especially the youth, into many unwholesome activities like armed robbery, kidnapping, and oil theft as means of earning their livelihood.

With the description of ostentatious oil cities in Ogazza and Balazza and the pathetic condition of people in the poverty-stricken villages in the region, Egbuson satirically exposes the causes of women victimization in *Love my Planet*. The oil city is described thus, Oil City where most of Ogazza's simple girls and a few house wives were bedazzled by the oil workers' mint-fresh money, well-fed looks and intriguing bedroom perversions." (Egbuson: 160) This is in sharp contrast to poor living condition of Maria's family which is "imprisoned in poverty, hunger and disease." (88) With the use of paradox, he draws a sharp contrast between the oil rich nation and the economic austerity of the people of the communities where the lucrative resource is located and exploited.

In Daglobe, Delta women bear the greatest brunt of environmental degradation. They suffer sexual abuse from the oil workers who take their financial advantages to lure women into sexual atrocities. It is not only that they face domestic violence as in the case of Maria, they are also exploited by oil workers who use them to assuage their voracious sexual desire as seen in the character of Yiba, Sally, Akidi, Rareh, Silverline, and others. These women and many more are victims of fun-seeking oil workers at one time or another for either financial gains or material benefits.

Armed robbery has become one of the daily activities in Daglobe. The indigenous men resort to crime as a result of being occupationally displaced. In Ogbo state, for instance, some robbers attack a family, threaten them to open or get killed if they failed to do so in five minutes. When the family failed to heed the warning, the robbers make a big hole in a wall and force their way in, rape and kill the single mother and her three daughters, and rob the house freely (Egbuson:6). In another case, armed robbers who disguise in military uniform waylay people on Yeila-Yama Road, rob them of their belongings and those that do not have property to surrender to them, pay with their lives (Egbuson: 7). In a similar experience, armed robbery attack is recorded in Ministry of Housing Estate. Following the armed robbery attack, a huge amount of money and lives are lost. Araba, Alhaji Maika, Atakora, Azama and Rareh's families are victims of armed robbery attacks (Egbuson:

17,19, 33, 38) on different occasions. Women bear the most demoralising part of this invasion. Aloe-Vera (Miss Daglobe), Hajia Mariama as well as her two daughters and many married women are victims of rape in the text (Egbuson: 14,17). Aloe-Vera who is traumatised by such an ordeal drinks 'kill me kwik' rat poison and dies(45).

Considering the suffering that women are subjected to as a result of the degradation of the natural environment in the texts, ecofeminism becomes the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study. Unemployment, sexual abuse, poverty, hardship, sickness, domestic violence, insecurity and the likes suffered by the women in the text are caused by destruction of the natural environment. This validates the view that abuse of nature and oppression of women have a close link as the ecofeminists argue.

### **A Woman as an Eco-activist in *LOVE MY PLANET***

Egbuson in *Love my Planet* creates a female protagonist who is equipped with education as a veritable tool for assertiveness, determination and courage required to champion environmental activism. In keeping with the mandate of the ecofeminists that women should rise and end domination of nature and oppression of women, Toundi embarks on a project that brings restorative healing to the environment and put an end to the oppression of women in the society. She achieves this by setting up a Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO) called 'Clean Daglobe' (Egbuson;308). Through the NGO, she plants trees to restore lush vegetation in her country. Clean Daglobe comprises trade and literacy centres where vocational, moral and literacy training were inculcated in the people. Interested persons are admitted to learn various vocations in the trade centre while the literacy centre takes care of the people's need for learning. In the literacy centre, sixty percent admission is reserved for women and forty percent men because of Toundi, " there was a need to release the vast majority of women from the cage of illiteracy and poverty and let them fly to the heights they wanted, wherever they wanted." (Egbuson:91).

Toundi's passion to save the environment from destruction is demonstrated in the way she uses every opportunity to create awareness for its preservation. On one of such occasions, she produces catchy write ups about caring for the environment in flyers and shares them to people during the Dabaka African Festival of Arts and Culture, an occasion she has an opportunity to sensitise the people on the need to care for the environment. This is evident in the title of the flyers which is: "I CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT." (Egbuson,334).

Toundi equally demonstrates deeper passion for the preservation of the 'place earth' by bringing this awareness to anyone that comes around her. The first thing that captures the attention of every visitor in her office at Clean Daglobe Centre is ' a laminated piece of cardboard on the wall painting of the globe captioned 'LOVE MY PLANET', listing thirty-three ways humans can take care of the earth, concluding with a resolute statement, 'I shall do all these and more because I love my planet.' (344) It is the first thing that attracts Madi's



attention in Toundi's office. The manager of Daglobe Coastal Bank also has an experience similar to that of Madi. The first thing that attracts his attention is the cardboard showing the globe painted in green. He could not resist asking, 'Why is this painting in green?' Toundi explains that it is a symbol of the second phase of the 'Clean Daglobe Project.' She further explains that the first phase is 'Educate Daglobe'. After it has been firmly established, we will start 'Green Daglobe' (364). Toundi's efforts are aimed at bringing to the consciousness of every human being that the most urgent need of the earth is care of the environment if it must continue to support lives. Apart from Port Lander, Clean Daglobe project is also carried out in other parts of Daglobe like Aranarak, Bandella as well as other villages. It is also extended to the northern part of Daglobe where tree planting is embarked upon in order to reforest the area(384).

Considering the activities of the militants which further degrade the environment, there is a need to dissuade them to desist from such acts. No one has adopted an approach that could effectively dissuade them from such destructive activity like frequent blowing up of crude oil pipelines but Toundi dares to intervene through her NGO, Clean Daglobe. She decides to "write an appeal in some newspapers to Simple Justice (SJ) and other militant organisations to stop breaking crude oil pipes", because they are polluting and managing the environment they said they are partly fighting for." (334) This indicates her commitment to championing the cause of environmental preservation which in a way would lead to the healing of her society.

Besides, Toundi demonstrates her commitment to preservation of the environment by embarking on the herculean task of collection of data on the problem of gas flaring in Daglobe Delta. This is the intention to create awareness on its effects through the publication of such occurrences in pamphlets (348). She goes to two oil companies, Oyster Petroleum Development Company (OPDC) and Alcheringa Gaia International Petroleum (AGIP) for the collection of the data. The responses of the companies appear as delay tactics to discourage her but she refuses to yield to such discouragement. She goes to her alma mater, Institute of Pollution Studies where enough data on gas flaring are provided for her. After studying the documents meticulously, she goes to the Akawai community to verify some of the institute's findings. This shows a woman who can go to any length to source information about the environment to fight against its destruction and this qualifies her as an environmental advocate.

The image of Daglobe especially that of the Daglobe Delta can best be described as a wounded nation with sores all over her body. Despite the occupation of the strategic place of leadership by men (from traditional to political positions), the people are still subjected to untold hardship, oppression, and all forms of injustice. But with the intervention of a woman, Taoundi, there is hope for the common man in Daglobe. With the establishment of rehabilitation centre and the initiation of programmes that would take the people through

the process of healing. It would give healing to the morally decent society. The testimony of Daglobe Coatal Bank manager lends credence to this transformation. He testifies that "last week one of your students who was paid DS 50,000 instead of DS 5000 returned the money after discovering the error at home." She admits that her character has been shaped by civics and moral studies taught at the centre (363).

There is no doubt that the activities of 'Clean Daglobe' have given healing to the psychologically disturbed individuals who embrace better ways of life and now have confidence to engage in activities that would portray integrity and dignity, and by extension lead to the healing of their society, and more remarkably ends the abuse of womanhood. Wenni, Toundi's father, agrees that the 'Clean Daglobe' project in Bendella would help to reduce the trafficking of girls to Europe for prostitution (384). Toundi becomes irresistibly admirable to the reader who comes to terms with the ecofeminist mandates achieved by her.

### **Struggle against Environmental Degradation: Women's Eco-activism in *OIL CEMETERY***

Nwoye consciously creates a female protagonist in *Oil Cemetery* who is imbued with determined, assertive and inquisitive spirit needed to champion environmental activism, which positively changes the history of her society. With the attainment of education, Rita is well equipped to source information to prepare herself for eco-activism in Ubolu in the fictional Niger Delta in the novel. Rita's interest to move forward is seen in the diligence she displays not only in her domestic duties but also in her commitment to her educational career. Besides she helps her guardian, Uncle Steve, to collect documents or read through his speeches (Nwoye, 59). This earns her the trust of Uncle Steve who out of confidence instructs her to go to the study room and bring an important document during one of the oil workers' union meetings. She locates and takes it to him without wasting time because she has always been to the room reading through those documents. This avails Rita the opportunity to make inspiring comments in the union meeting for the first time. She uses the opportunity to react to the unjust treatment meted against the natives who work in the oil companies as well as the numerous environmental problems that the oil business has caused in the oil communities.

Through stream of consciousness, the reader is brought into the world of the protagonist who through research equips himself with enough information needed to champion environmental activism. By equipping the female protagonist with an education that places her above docility and emotional entrapment and allows her to respond to the call of the ecofeminists to rise to overthrow the patriarchal structure that exerts domination over women and nature, the author proposes that education is a veritable tool for women's emancipation. As against the opinion of some of the men in the workers' meeting, "It's a woman! What does she know?" (Nwoye,62), Rita's comment is quite inspiring and it

positively spur the men into the right action. The high level of brilliance and eloquence she displays baffles all the men; this gives her acceptance among the men who now insist that she must be included in the decision-making body of the workers' union (Nwoye,64). Rita's speech makes the workers to discover themselves and realise how much they have been unjustly treated; they go on strike. Rita's comment creates a problem for the oil companies (Nwoye 65). This compels the oil companies to call for an emergency meeting to discuss the union demands and their strike.

By employing the third person point of view as a narrative technique, the reader is allowed to observe the events as they unfold and see how they contribute to the development of the plot and characters in the novel. The narrator reveals that Rita is a reservoir of information as far as matters of the environment are concerned. With this, the reader sees how Rita develops from being an observant child to a prudent adult psychologically and emotionally mature to champion a cause that brings positive change to her society. After the news of the fuel disaster that occurs in Ubolu community. Rita's sense of activism is fired. She "told herself it was time she got involved in matters that affected the welfare of her people, especially since her father was a victim of the injustice of the oil companies."(Nwoye,122)

She travels home in the company of Angela and Timi to make inquiry about the recent disastrous explosion that has led to the death of a family- Mama Boy, her son and her husband. Rita's father, Izundu, takes them to the place where both husband and wife are buried near the disaster ground. The community names the place "OIL CEMETERY, because it harboured the bodies of their sons and daughters brought down by the greed for oil."(Nwoye,126) This allows her to address her people on the impact of the oil business on the community. She spurs them to take action against such injustice in the following words:

"Our environment is totally polluted. Our water is contaminated. Go down to the creeks and see: the rivers look like rivers of death. The fish are disappearing for lack of oxygen. When it rains, our surroundings are coated- not with raindrops- but with oil residue. Our livestock are dying. Our schools are dilapidated...Our people are dying in great numbers; there are no hospitals...What then will be our best line of action? What can we do to reclaim our heritage? There is urgent need for action. What we are saying is we are tired! Enough is enough! We have a right to be heard, they must listen to us...the time is now" (Nwoye,143).

After the meeting, Rita files a case against the Zebulon Oil Company. The effort (especially huge financial offer) made by the oil company to make her drop the struggle proves abortive. By filing a case against the oil companies for the numerous environmental havocs their oil exploitation has caused in the various communities in the Niger Delta especially Ubolu, Rita takes a giant step stride towards achieving emancipation for both humans (women especially) and non-human /nature elements



which the ecofeminists advocate. At the court, Rita exposes without reservation the environmental woes that oil business has caused her people. Silence fell in the courtroom as she finishes her touchy testimony during the hearing. While some persons feel compassion for the exploited, some feel guilt for their wickedness against the host communities.

While the case is still in court, the workers have not been the same since the demise of their former able leader, Comrade Steve. It has developed rancour. This leads to two factions emerging in their leadership, the Abbas-led group and the Josiah-led group. Even more tension has risen since the recent litigation between the Ubolu community and Zebulon Oil Company. The Abbas-led group has made it a point of duty to make at least one new demand every week. After one of those meetings, the news of the latest pipeline explosion which kills an Ubolu woman and her daughter become a point of discussion at every joint. This raises more concern among the workers. While a hot argument ensued between two members of the different groups in one of those joints, the traitorous act of the Men of Alphabet is brought to the limelight. That caused the Abbas-led group to begin to sing war songs. They go on protests, breaking off tree branches as they make their way into the troubled community of Ubolu. They unleash mayhem on the homes of the Men of the Alphabet. On hearing this, the villagers join them in the protest.

The older women who can no longer bear the agony of the tragic incidence of oil exploration begin to tear their clothes in protest. Despite the fact that most of their tobacco stained teeth have fallen off, they still sing ancient sorrowful songs in unison. The men become unsettled at the sight of those nude old women, as a result, leave the scene. The women take over the protest to fully express their anger against the oil companies for the numerous problems their activities have caused in the communities; also, for the unjust treatment given to the women in sharing of compensation paid by the oil companies. Widows are hardest hit. They have no man to speak on their behalf. Women are totally cheated out of their entitlements and out of any inheritance. To worsen it all, farming and fishing the only occupations through which they would have fended for themselves are no longer productive due to environmental degradation caused by the oil business.

Against the backdrop of the injustice in Ubolu community, the women take a decisive stance to end domination on nature and women as the ecofeminists propose. The younger women who had earlier been inspired by Rita's stirring speech have also joined their elders, tearing off their clothes. They are all eager to assert themselves in support of what the grey-haired women have initiated. They engaged in protest by occupying all sites of the oil companies and decide that there would be no work unless their demands are met. The leader of the women speaks out:

*"Today, the women have spoken! They have taken control! No more drilling, no more gas flaring, no more extraction until all our demands are met. No form of work for gas workers. No further activity on our*

*land...Everything must stop! We must secure the future of our children- it's now or never!"(Nwoye,192)*

The people of the neighbouring communities get wind of this protest and this event is replicated in all other communities where oil exploration is carried out. The sites of the oil companies are overrun by women. They refuse to go back to their houses. They occupy the companies' sites to ensure that no work takes place. The impact of the women's nudity strategy is reflected in the reduction of the companies' daily production. Following the peaceful protest of the women, no activity takes place in the oil sites. The oil companies become worried because they are losing huge amounts of money every hour (Nwoye, 198). The representatives of the oil companies visit Freedom Bench ( the law firm that handles Ubolu's case) for intervention. They make it known that they are ready to negotiate with the women. They asked for the intervention of Rita to plead with the women to cover their nakedness and leave their sites. Rita leads the representatives to Freedom Bench to Ubolu community to discuss the terms of the negotiation. When the delegates pay a visit to the traditional ruler of the community, he commends the courage and intervention of the women thus, " the exploitation of our land has troubled us men for many years, but nothing had come out of it. Why? Because of selfishness and greed! *But now, the women have taken control and the oil companies are on their knees.*"(Nwoye,201).

After Rita and her colleagues have addressed the crowd concerning their mission, one of the women, Mama Timi in response thanks the women for their unity and force. She reveals this in the following excerpt:

*"The time is past when people can come to our communities and continue to exploit us by causing division among us. We have suffered all kinds of hardships, all kinds of humiliation. The days are gone when decisions concerning our welfare are made for us at some big office. The days are gone when others will tell us what we will need and like"* (Nwoye, 202).

She goes on to elucidate that in as much as they want peace to reign in their communities, certain demands must be met by the oil companies. Immediately, the women began to list their needs as follow: hospitals, good roads, clean water, stop gas flaring, schools, jobs for the youth, allowance for the elderly, safe bridges, compensation for widows and orphans, turn swampy areas into farmland and reclaiming the rivers for fishing (Nwoye,202-203). The women conclude their demands with a warning that they will not allow the oil companies to work unless their demands are met. All the people including the men chorused in agreement. The companies' businesses have been shut down for close to a week. The Freedom Bench and the representatives of the oil companies convene a meeting to discuss the demands of the women. In the meeting, the companies' representatives made it known that they have been losing millions of dollars following the

rampage by the women. In fact, the periods of violence have taken a toll on their companies' operations. As a result, they are ready to commence projects as demanded by the women.

After the meeting, the companies' representatives sit back to review what has transpired at the just concluded meeting. It is at this point they express their worry over the strict demands of the women. Bill has a different opinion about the whole issue. He opines that if the money they have spent on the middlemen and their chiefs were channelled towards the projects demanded by the women, it could have yielded a better result. He quips, "Trust the women!....It is from my mother that I learned to respect womenfolk." (Nwoye,208). One of his colleagues agrees with him; he opines that, "the women are thinking of what will benefit the entire community. All the money the women have collected from us, they have used to marry new wives and take ridiculous titles." (Nwoye,208).

What is of importance to the oil companies is the issue of resumption of work because millions of naira had gone down the drain since operations ceased at their sites a few weeks ago because of the protest of the women. For them, anything that is needed to be done should be done to regain their ability to operate. After consultation with their different parties, the community team and the oil companies' representatives reconvene to continue their negotiation. The oil companies agree to comply with the demands of the women. They agree to commence developmental projects in the oil region and most importantly reclaim the land and rivers to revitalize farming and fishing activities. At Ubolu village square, there is excitement at the success of the women in such a task, one of the men commends the women's effort thus: "the women have succeeded where we have failed! Is that not a shame?" (Nwoye,213). Rita's father, Izundu could not hold back his joy. He addresses the people thus, "our women have done us proud by the challenge they posed to the oil companies. They spoke and were granted an audience; they made demands and were answered. We must.....appreciate them." (Nwoye, 214).

While works on the project sites according to the demands of the women are going on, the legal battle between the Ubolu community and Zebulon Oil Company is also going on. At the end, the case is won by the Ubolu community through Rita's effort. Concerning the project, the oil companies provide schools, hospitals, good roads, bridges, and portable water among others for the community. During the commissioning of the projects, the representative of the companies makes it known that in as much as the demands of the women are concerned; the oil companies are willing to comply. This is evident in the promise to reclaim the swampy areas which is caused by oil exploitation. (Nwoye, 240-241) The completion of the developmental projects championed by the women has not only brought peace, harmony and joy to the Ubolu community, the patriarchal structure appear to have been subdued by the women as the men learnt to accept their women as important partners who can contribute meaningfully to the progress of their society. By

this, the women fit into resilient personalities whom the ecofeminists charge with the responsibility to end all form of domination over nature and women. This suggests that for women to gain victory over the oppression of any kind, unity of purpose is necessary. They must articulate their demands in unison and win their struggle through collectivism. With the remarkable roles played by the women in the struggle against the degradation of the environment in Ubolu which yields a desired result, they have complied with the postulation of the ecofeminists to end domination over nature and women.

### **Conclusion**

Egbuson and Nwoye in *Love My Planet* and *Oil Cemetery* respectively have presumed that ecofeminist ideas if appropriately applied to the Niger Delta would solve the multifaceted problems caused by environmental degradation. The propagandists (females) alongside other female characters in the novels through individual and collective efforts engage in eco-activism that exerts restorative influence on the environment and the emancipation of the women. The attainment of certain levels of education which exposes them to informational sources, the protagonists take giant strides in environmental advocacy. Education becomes a metaphor for the empowerment of the woman for her emancipation. Egbuson in *Love My Planet* argues that the problem of the Niger Delta can neither be solved by violent struggle as adopted by the men in various militant groups nor by the intransigence of the government in the matter of despoliation of the Niger Delta environment.

To him, the intervention of women is required for the realization of a society conducive enough for men and women to fulfil their destinies. An instance is seen in the involvement of the protagonist, Toundi, in various projects that bring restoration to Daglobe Delta. She establishes an NGO through which some people are trained in various vocations following which they become financially independent, and as a result, desist from the vandalization of oil pipeline that would have further destroyed the environment. Through it, she also fights against women abuse in any form. She maximizes any opportunity of her life to fight for the preservation of the environment. This is demonstrated by getting people enlightened on the need to care for the environment through her various write ups with the titles like 'I care for the environment' and 'Love My Planet.' One of the projects she accomplishes through the NGO is the planting of trees in some parts of Daglobe. When Arab asks her, "Besides Clean Daglobe, what else are you doing? She responds thus, "It is a full occupation." (Egbuson 403) Her response is indicative of a woman who wants to spend the rest of her life in preserving the environment. Using her NGO to engage in the struggle against the oppression of women and the destruction of the natural environment qualifies Toundi as an eco-feminist.

Also in *Oil Cemetery*, the women of Ubolu through their individual and collective efforts engage in activism against the destruction of their environment, and the desired result is

achieved. Rita, the protagonist sued the Zebulon Oil Company for the environmental havocs it has caused in the Ubolu community. She wins the case. Also, the solidarity women group through their protest prevents the activities of the oil companies; this compels the oil companies to commence developmental projects to restore the degraded environment. By their resolution to engage in a protest against the destruction of the natural environment and oppression of women, the women of Ubolu have lived up to the responsibility of ending all forms of domination of nature and oppression of women which the ecofeminists propose.

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