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Contacts: Celia Alario at 310-721-6517 or celia@riseup.net
Leila Salazar at 310-420-7575 or 202-256-9795



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“CRUDE REFLECTIONS” OPENS IN SAN RAMON

Photography Exhibit Captures Human Impact of ChevronTexaco’s “Rainforest Chernobyl” in Ecuador

Series of 50 Photos Opens National Tour Of Several Cities Near Company Headquarters On Eve Of Shareholder Meeting

(Note to Editors & Reporters: A preview of the Photo Exhibit is online at www.amazonwatch.org; indigenous leaders in traditional dress and exhibit photographers will be at opening of exhibit starting at 5 p.m. Monday (April 25) at Mudd’s Restaurant, 10 Boardwalk, San Ramon. Program begins at 7 p.m. To get to location, take the Crow Canyon Road (West) exit off Highway I-680. Pass San Ramon Valley Blvd., turn left on Park Place and follow signs to Mudd’s/Crow Canyon Gardens.)

San Ramon, CA -- The photo exhibit ***Crude Reflections: ChevronTexaco’s Rainforest Legacy***, documenting the human and environmental impact of what experts believe is the worst oil-related environmental disaster on the planet, opens today just miles from ChevronTexaco’s world headquarters in San Ramon. The exhibit offers the Bay Area public its first up close look at the human impact of ChevronTexaco’s oil pollution in Ecuador’s rainforest region, and the Amazonian communities’ efforts to restore the health of their families and land. Using personal testimonies alongside powerful portraits, two Bay Area photographers, Lou Dematteis and Kayana Szymczak, assisted by journalist Joan Kruckewitt, have captured the physical and emotional reality of those affected by pollution and their struggle for justice.

The exhibit is to be inaugurated by Ecuadorian Amazon leaders Carmen Perez and Humberto Piaguaje. Piaguaje is a member of the Secoya nation, which has seen its population reduced to some 400 members from several thousand since the arrival of Texaco (now ChevronTexaco) three decades ago. “This entire region is living on the edge of an environmental cataclysm because of what Texaco did,” said Piaguaje. “Many adults and children are sick and the levels of cancer are increasing dramatically.”

Over the next year, the exhibit will travel to San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Washington, Quito, and villages in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The entire exhibit will be available online at: www.chevrontoxico.com starting April 25. Exhibited at Mudd’s Restaurant, *Crude Reflections* will run until April 28th and is presented by Amazon Watch and San Ramon Cares with co-sponsors Amnesty International, Sierra Club, the Amazon Defense Coalition, Rainforest Action Network, Global Exchange, Corporate Accountability International, and the Pachamama Alliance.

Szymczak, a Native American with no link to her own tribe, focuses her work on human rights and environmental struggles. She said of her experience in Ecuador: “When I went to the Amazon I was simply unprepared for the level of devastation I encountered— children born with tragic birth defects, toxic oil facilities built in people’s backyards, and indigenous communities facing total cultural loss. I was shocked daily at the depth of the destruction, and became determined to tell the story of those facing it, and resisting it.”

Dematteis, a photojournalist who has spent more than twenty years shooting social upheaval and political conflict around the world, has followed this environmental catastrophe for over a decade. “In 1993, a doctor from Ecuador’s Ministry of Health told me that the region was sitting on a time bomb as a result of the toxic contamination dumped

Main Office: One Haight St., Suite B, San Francisco, CA 94102 Tel: 415.487.9600 Fax: 415.487.9601 www.amazonwatch.org
LA Office: P.O. Box 2421 Malibu, CA 90265 Tel:310-456-9158 Fax:310-456-0388 amazon@amazonwatch.org

and left in the environment by Texaco's oil drilling and production operations," Dematteis said. "When I returned to the region once again in 2003, I found that the bomb had exploded. Everywhere I turned, it seemed, I encountered people with cancers, birth defects and other serious health problems. I was determined to help give voice to the people who are living this tragedy. I hope that the photographs and testimonies in this exhibit help to do that."

The exhibit coincides with the company's annual stockholder meeting to be held on Wednesday, April 27 in San Ramon.

THREE LARGEST PUBLIC PENSION FUNDS PRESSURE COMPANY

Representatives from the three largest public pension funds in the country -- those representing governmental employees in New York State, California, and the California teachers union -- have toured ChevronTexaco's former operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon recently to learn about the environmental disaster firsthand. These funds, who together own approximately \$2 billion worth of company stock, will be supporting a resolution calling on the company to report to shareholders new efforts to address the environmental and human rights concerns of the communities affected by its former operations in Ecuador. Text of this resolution can be found at:

http://www.amazonwatch.org/amazon/EC/toxico/view_news.php?id=868

HISTORIC TRIAL AGAINST CHEVRONTEXACO IN ECUADOR

ChevronTexaco is currently a defendant in a historic trial in Ecuador for having deliberately dumped 18.5 billion gallons of toxic waste directly into the rainforest, threatening the survival of indigenous peoples and leaving behind what is likely the worst oil-related disaster on the planet. The amount of crude dumped was 30 times greater than that spilled during the Exxon Valdez disaster. Brought by five indigenous groups and 80 communities, the lawsuit (Aguinda v. ChevronTexaco) has the potential to set a precedent that could benefit millions of people worldwide victimized by human rights abuses committed by private companies. The case implicates important issues of globalization, indigenous rights, and corporate responsibility. It represents the first time in history that forest dwellers have forced a multinational oil company to submit to jurisdiction in their national courts. This tenacious struggle for justice, which has taken more than two decades, has been documented in photos that encompass the horrific health impacts, the traditional cultural of indigenous nations, and the beginning of a trial in a jungle courthouse attended by more than 1,000 local residents.

BIOGRAPHIES OF ARTISTS

Lou Dematteis has spent more than two decades documenting social and political conflict and their consequences in the United States and around the world. A former staff photographer for Reuters, Dematteis has published two books: *Nicaragua: A Decade of Revolution* (W.W. Norton), an anthology of the Sandinista years in Nicaragua, and *A Portrait of Viet Nam* (W.W. Norton), which documents the social and economic transformation of contemporary Vietnam. He has exhibited extensively in the United States and abroad. Dematteis was based in Nicaragua during the war between the Sandinistas and the Contras. In 1986, his photograph of captured U.S. soldier-of-fortune Eugene Hasenfus being led through the jungle by a Sandinista soldier was named one of the top pictures of the year by *The New York Times*, National Press Photographers Association, and World Press Photo.

Kayana Szymczak is a documentary photographer whose work focuses on human rights and environmental justice issues. After graduating from the University of Illinois with a BA in photography, Kayana launched her first photojournalism project in the fall of 2003, traveling to the Narmada Valley in India to document the impact of the world's second largest dam project on local communities. Soon after, Szymczak was awarded a grant from the Titcomb Foundation to document the impacts of oil development on the communities living in the Ecuadorian Amazon. As a woman of Native American descent with no link to her own tribe, Szymczak strives to be an advocate for endangered indigenous communities around the world who are struggling to preserve their land, culture, language, and right to life. This is the first part of a long-term photographic project documenting the impacts of, and resistance to, oil development in communities around the world.

Joan Kruckewitt is a journalist who lived in Nicaragua and covered the war between there between the Sandinistas and the Contras. She received her B.A. from U.C. Berkeley and her M.A. in Latin American Studies from Stanford University. She has reported from Latin America and Europe for various radio networks, including ABC Radio, the Canadian Broadcasting Company and National Public Radio. She is the author of *The Death of Ben Linder; The Story of a North American in Sandinista Nicaragua* (Seven Stories Press 1999).

To view the complete exhibit online or to learn more about the campaign to clean up the Ecuadorian Amazon, please visit: www.chevrontoxico.com # # #