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**Seattle Filmmaker Brings the Niger Delta Crisis to the Screen at SIFF
Congressman Jim McDermott to Join Audience Q&A Session**

Seattle, WA – Seattle International Film Festival audiences will be the first to see a new documentary about Nigeria's Niger Delta. A work-in-progress screening of *Sweet Crude*, by local filmmaker Sandy Cioffi, will premier Friday, June 15th at 7:00 pm and Saturday, June 16th at 11:00 am at the Neptune Theatre in Seattle. The shows will be followed by Q&A with Cioffi and Nigerian Joel Bisina, one of the film's key characters. Special guest Congressman Jim McDermott will join them after Saturday's screening for an interactive session with the audience about what can be done to help effect change in the Niger Delta.

Sweet Crude tells the largely unknown story behind today's increasingly urgent headlines from a volatile region where people are desperate and unrest is growing. Fifty years of crude oil extraction has enriched the oil companies and Nigerian government, but left the residents impoverished in a decimated environment. After decades of nonviolent protest and unfulfilled promises, a growing militancy is kidnapping oil workers and sabotaging pipelines in an effort to be heard. Set against a stunning backdrop of Niger Delta footage, the film gives voice to the region's complicated mix of stakeholders and invites the audience to learn the deeper story.

"We made *Sweet Crude* to show the complexity of this place and the humanity of a people typically represented to the world in highly sensationalized media coverage," says director Cioffi. "The situation is becoming more critical every day. Right now, four Americans are being held hostage in the very area we filmed. This is a movie about issues unfolding as we speak; we hope it will communicate the urgency and inspire action. There's an opportunity in this moment for our government and the international community to pay attention and press for political solutions that could avert war."

Currently more than 10 percent of U.S. oil comes from the Niger Delta, expected to grow to 20 percent. Ongoing destabilization of the region has cut its total oil exports by a quarter. The situation has escalated in recent weeks in response to rampant fraud in the national elections—the first civilian-to-civilian turnover of power in Nigeria's history. With heightened unrest and a strong Nigerian military presence on the waterways, the situation is a powder keg.

In conjunction with the SIFF screening, *Sweet Crude* executive producer Verite Coffee is hosting a photography exhibit of stills taken on location during filming. The show will run from May 24th through June 30th at Verite locations in Ballard, Madrona and West Seattle. Three special event evenings are scheduled at Verite stores with Cioffi, Bisina and others of the *Sweet Crude* team on hand for discussion and a sneak preview of footage. These will be held at 7:00 pm May 29th in Ballard, May 30th in Madrona and May 31st in West Seattle.

To learn more about *Sweet Crude*, visit the film's [web site](#). For more information on the photo exhibit and special events, visit the Verite Coffee [web site](#).

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