



A shot from the "Crude Awakening" series taken on local beaches. JANE FULTON ALT PHOTO

Lake Michigan 'oil spill'

By Brian Cox

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Trying to imagine what a major oil spill might look like in Lake Michigan, Evanston photographer Jane Fulton Alt took pictures of more than a dozen people drenched in black goo and wearing swimsuits while standing on local beaches.

Her photo essay — "Crude Awakening" — is set to music on YouTube and was prompted, she said, by the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I thought, there but for the grace of God it could be here, and in a way it

is here," Fulton Alt said Wednesday. "There are just so many people that are deeply affected by the disaster down there."

The photo essay can be seen at janefultonalt.com and at chicagotribune.com/fultonalt.

Fulton Alt worked temporarily as a clinical social worker in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina and says she can't forget the wrenching photographs of oil-drenched birds.

Fulton Alt said she used a nontoxic oillike substance and asked friends to be in the photographs, which she took in June.

Others also volunteered, she said.

"When I started to photograph, people would come up and ask if they could be involved," she said. "The pictures just flowed."

A photograph that shows an empty lifeguard chair with the sign, "No lifeguard on duty" is a metaphor for the dangers associated with deep-water drilling, she said.

"It means that no one is really guarding life, basically," she said. "We're involved in risky oil drilling practices that threaten everybody and everything that is living."