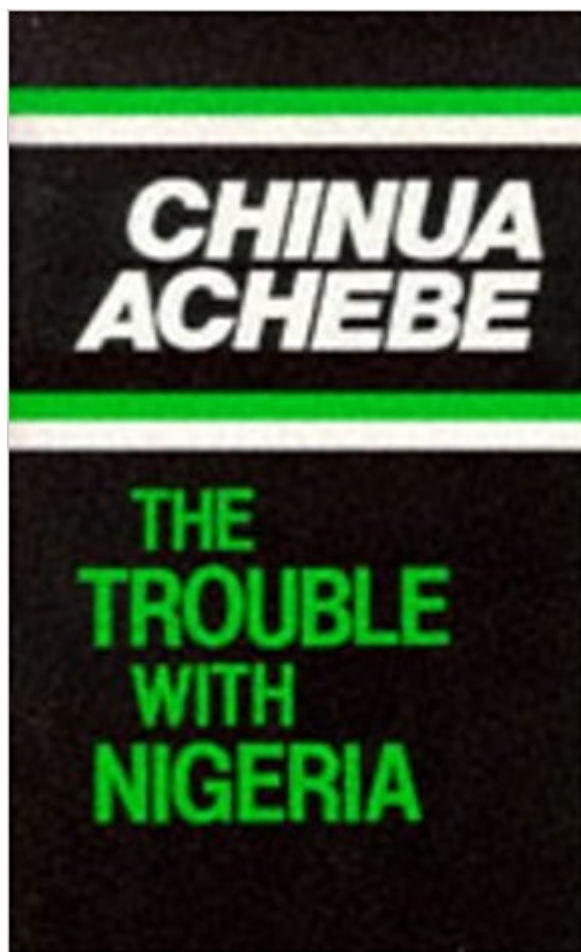


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The Trouble With Nigeria (Heinemann African Writers Series)



Synopsis

"The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership," concludes internationally acclaimed writer Chinua Achebe. In this book Achebe broke his silence about the 1983 Nigerian elections. The style and wit in part cover his deep despair over the direction of change in his home country.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in the village of Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria. After studying medicine and literature at the University of Ibadan, he went to work for the Nigerian broadcasting company in Lagos. *Things Fall Apart*, his first novel was published in 1958. It sold over 2,000,000 copies, and has been translated into 30 languages. It was followed by *No Longer at Ease*, then *Arrow of God* (which won the first New Statesman Jock Campbell Prize), then *A Man of the People* (a novel dealing with post-independence Nigeria). Achebe has also written short stories and children's books, and *Beware Soul Brother*, a book of his poetry, won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1972. Achebe has been at the Universities of Nigeria, Massachusetts and Connecticut, and among the many honours he has received are the award of a Fellowship of the Modern Language Association of America, and doctorates from the Universities of Stirling, Southampton and Kent. He followed Heinrich Boll, the Nobel prizewinner, as the second recipient of the Scottish Art's Council Neil Gunn Fellowship. In 1987, he was recognised in Nigeria with the Nigerian National Merit Award - the country's highest award for intellectual achievement.

Achebe's final book "There was a Country" drew a firestorm of reactions from Nigerians who were mostly acting on tribal impulses - even when a good number of them had not actually read the book. But decades earlier, in this pamphlet, Achebe had laid bare the undiluted truth as well as the palpable hopes he entertained that Nigeria will come of age and outgrow her juvenile delinquencies - will survive and outgrow her delinquent, insatiable and debauched leaders. Almost every page in this concise book is packed with "quotable quotes". Very cutting. Achebe did not spare Awolowo or even the great Zik of Africa in pointing fingers at those who played roles in fermenting the troubles. He also rightly clamps down on meddlesome and ubiquitous Obasanjo among many others - high and low. As was stated in the introduction, Nigerians' small talk is often centered around the trouble with Nigeria, so the title of the book also pokes at Nigerians. Nigerians know all about the trouble but still cannot figure out a solution and Achebe tried to sketch a route past the troubles. But alas, it is no casual "trouble", it is a deeply-seated neurosis. The sad reality is that even over 3 decades later not much has changed in Nigeria - if anything it has changed for the worse in some ways - despite the passing of leadership from the illegitimate military rulers to elected civilians. Nigeria's ruling class treat the country as an all-you-can-eat buffet while unconnected citizens are viewed as destitute serfs outside the gates.

Achebe, the great writer from Nigeria (author of *Things Fall Apart* and others), provides a passionate and smart analysis of the real problems preventing development in Nigeria. This book is a bit political and local, meaning that if you don't know the characters you will not get about 10% of the book. He cites examples and tells stories that are clearly very familiar to locals, but not to outsiders. Such writing makes me believe that the audience aimed is in fact Nigerians rather than outsiders. However, there are important lessons from outsiders, which are condensed into the less than 100 pages of this small book. Issues such as corruption and disrespect for laws are addressed from a very different standpoint than usual economists would. The ideas and concepts from this book are applicable to other countries facing difficulties reaching high standards of living. I, for one, wish someone had written such a book on Brazil. It is a quick read, worth your 2 hours.

A concise and relevant book. Although it was written in the very early 80s, the points covered in the book are totally relevant today (2015). Digesting the material will enable one to understand the plight of Naija.

This is a good little book about Nigeria's problems written by a Nigerian for Nigerians. The edition I read was one of the smallest books I've ever seen - even smaller than some of those Noam Chomsky Real Story tracts - which makes sense since it was published in Nigeria for readers who might not be able to afford paying \$8.50 for a book. Therefore the reader should keep in mind the audience this book is aimed at: Achebe is writing to Nigerians about how they can clean up their country. He is not writing a serious book about the current troubles of Nigeria and how they can be solved on an international as well as domestic front: the lack of the words 'Shell Corporation' is conspicuous throughout the book. That being said, this is a good way for a non-Nigerian to see how Nigeria's problems are perceived internally. Achebe is strong in his condemnation of tribalism, indiscipline and especially corruption and the prejudice against the Igbo people. While condemning most current (this was written in 1983) politicians, he does praise the famous Aminu Kano and other politicians like Bola Ige, Bisi Onabanjo and Ernest Ikoli for putting the nation's interest first, not their own. Achebe looks forward to a time when such politicians would lead Nigerians, not divide them or waste their money needlessly. Unfortunately, good leadership is not the only answer to Nigeria's problems. Nonetheless, this is still a worthy read.

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