



Never Look an American in the Eye: A Memoir of Flying Turtles, Colonial Ghosts, and the Making of a Nigerian American

Okey Ndibe

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Okey Ndibe's memoir tells of his move from Nigeria to America, where he came to edit the influential—but forever teetering on the verge of insolvency—*African Commentary* magazine. It recounts stories of Ndibe's relationships with Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and other literary figures; examines the differences between Nigerian and American etiquette and politics; recalls an incident of racial profiling just 13 days after he arrived in the US, in which he was mistaken for a bank robber; considers American stereotypes about Africa (and vice-versa); and juxtaposes African folk tales with Wall Street trickery.

Never Look an American in the Eye: A Memoir of Flying Turtles, Colonial Ghosts, and the Making of a Nigerian American Details

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From Reader Review Never Look an American in the Eye: A Memoir of Flying Turtles, Colonial Ghosts, and the Making of a Nigerian American for online ebook

Elissa says

NEVER LOOK AN AMERICAN IN THE EYE is a delightful, absorbing memoir about cultural identity, one man's relentless pursuit of knowledge, and the struggle to honor your roots while also choosing a new life. Okey Ndibe's writing is insightful and poignant while also managing to be funny and self-deprecating, and his memoir—more a collection of essays and anecdotes—provides snippets of growing up in Nigeria, adjusting to the chilly culture of New England, finding love and friendship, developing his voice as a writer, and embracing becoming an American while still recognizing our country's cultural absurdities. An enjoyable, enlightening read.

J.L. Sutton says

I thought that after reading Okey Ndibe's *Never Look an American in the Eye: A Memoir of Flying Turtles, Colonial Ghosts, and the Making of a Nigerian American* I might have a better idea why I've been reading so many great novels by Nigerian writers recently. This was an interesting memoir, but it didn't provide those answers!

What most fascinated about this memoir was the trajectory of Ndibe's debut novel, *Arrows of Rain* (which I plan to read) from its inception to being noticed by acclaimed Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka. How Ndibe came to be a writer in America is all tied up in this novel. Given his background, it's not what readers would have expected and it's not what Ndibe himself expected either. His interaction with Chinua Achebe (a writer idolized in Nigeria) was also interesting and helped Ndibe establish himself as a writer.

There were other incidents recalled in the memoir: how he was mistaken for a bank robber 13 days after arriving in the U.S., his (a Nigerian's) view on Americans and their pets and the differences in etiquette between Nigerians and Americans. However, the best parts (even if they didn't shed light on why there are so many great Nigerian novels) had to do with Ndibe becoming a writer.

3.5 stars

Kristen says

This is a very difficult book to write a review on. First of all, this is a genre that I only dabble in, but I have always been fascinated by the experiences that other people have when they are first part of something that is my "normal." I think it opens one's eyes to how different we all are, and that one person's normal is another person's "completely insane." This is why I felt compelled to grab a book by a writer I'd never heard of, about a transition I'd never go through, to learn about a land I'll likely never be able to visit.

Okey Ndibe is an author who has written a few books, however rather than being a fiction novel, this is a personal series of essays - his own "Coming to America" only without Eddie Murphy and with a little more class. Each of these essays is in itself very well written and thought provoking. Most of the essays are interesting, I personally enjoyed the stories of his still being in Africa the most. Africa is a continent filled with a multitude of cultures, levels of socio-economic development, and various levels of political unrest. I was fortunate enough to have brushed over some African history while in high school, however much of that is now relegated to the back of my mind somewhere between the "I think I heard something about that once" section and "That sounds vaguely familiar." So to get back to the review - I found the essays that took place in Africa to be very interesting, as well as the essays on his father (which included a lot of Nigerian History that I will read more on later). His first experience of winter was also entertaining. Each of these essays is written with love of his new country for all of it's mysteries, strangeness, and different cultures. To the American reader it can be fun to see how things we take for granted as normal life to every one, can be so foreign to others.

Where I found that I could not give this book the 4 or 5 stars that my soul wanted to, was the rather jarring and disjointed flow from one essay to another. Perhaps this was meant to be read a single essay at a time, with time between to soak up the feelings and ideas presented. But I read this from beginning to end on a flight from Detroit to LA, and followed it up with the new Neil Gaimen novel (I should have brought more books for the trip home). It was in the oddness in how the essays flowed that kept jerking me out of the happy reader cloud I was in while reading the actual essays. An example - before he leaves his homeland, his aunt asks him not to marry an American woman - so that they will be able to talk with his wife once he finds one. A few short essays later, he's clearly married and we have no idea where this woman came from or who she is... is she an "American woman?" or did he find someone from his homeland. Who is she? She seems like she should have gotten a little more page time because I assume the dating world in the US might have been a little different and could easily have played into the themes of the book. Then suddenly we get to the end where he meets his wife. Still almost no information about her whatsoever.

Even though the book as a whole felt disjointed - one can't argue with the writing of the individual essays. They are a fascinating look into the experience of becoming an American. And even though I'm giving this book 3 stars (I'm still wavering between 3 and 4) I still think some of the essays (particularly the first one) should be mandatory high school reads.

Monica says

I picked up this book as a task for the Read Harder Challenge 2017: read a book by an immigrant or about the immigrant experience. This book is about both and it is very good. It also helps to fulfill a personal goal which is to read more books by male authors of color.

This was an unexpected pleasure. A view of the immigrant experience through the eyes of a Nigerian born man. It is a collection of vignettes that cover how he came to America, his experiences therein, how Nigerians viewed America and Great Britain, some of the cultural differences growing up etc. His journey has interesting pathways in the publishing, through many acclaimed authors and academics referenced. Ndibe is a great storyteller. He has a very smart yet easy going manner to his writing that I found appealing. Indeed, by reading this memoir I have enhanced my vocabulary with the following words: synecdoche, cynosure, imperturbable, ablution, stentorian, impecunious, parsimonious, abjuration, polyglot and vicissitudes. Thank goodness I had my kindle to look them up; but his writing did not come off as haughty or disconcerting. I was quite comfortable with the way he turns a phrase.

I found his memoir strongest when he is writing about Nigeria and his own perceptions as an immigrant. I loved learning about what his family thought about the world.

In those days, Britain was the country everybody called Obodo Oyibo, the land of the white people. These were the pale people who, years ago, had journeyed by sea from their far-flung land and emerged like ghosts to turn our lives upside down, to conquer and rule us.

He delightfully and playfully describes what his family told him how to protect himself in America:

Americans can't stand any stranger looking them in the face. They take it as an insult. It's something they don't forgive. And every American carries a gun. If they catch you, a stranger, looking them in the face, they will shoot.

With regards to his becoming a naturalized American, I couldn't help be moved by his thoughts and his family:

When I called my mother on the phone and told her about being sworn in as an American, she paused. Her silence was pregnant, suggested a momentary struggle with incomprehension. Then regaining her voice, she asked in an anxious vein, "Why?"

This reaction prompted Ndibe to think on what it all means and responds with some of the most poignant passages in the book:

Why, indeed? I had to ask myself. What did it mean, at bottom, that I had become, on that May morning, an American? Did becoming an American entail an obligation, as my mother no doubt feared, that I had "unbecome" what I had been before--an Igbo, a Nigerian, an African? [sic] Was American citizenship somewhat ersatz, nullifying Nigeria and all that it had meant to me? Did it call for amnesia about America's past history of racial discrimination against Africans, its unresolved legacy of racism, or the turning of a blind eye to the nation's sometimes exasperating foreign policy choices?

He finally decides that American citizens also have a role to play in his citizenship:

Americans have, the partial responsibility to bear, to determine what value and meaning to assign to me as a brethren of theirs, a relative if a distant one. In fellow Americans' eyes, how American was I deemed to be, with my African features, my stories, my accent and all? How much of my Nigerianness would they permit me to bring along with me and what would they insist that I check at the door? What price, in other words, would they expect--require--me to pay in order to authenticate my American identity.

To be fair, though he was naturalized in 1997, but this book was published in 2016. I wonder if the current cultural/political climate had an effect on how he tells the story. But he does not reduce life in Nigeria to nostalgia. He doesn't idealize Nigeria and/or its politics either:

Sadly, Nigeria is also a country conceived in hope but nurtured--primarily by its gluttonous leaders and their global corporate partners in crime--into hopelessness. If Nigerian scams had made themselves felt around the world, it was largely because the country's leaders had

respected no bounds or limits in their egregious grasping, in their culture of self-aggrandizement and illicit enrichment.

Yes, he's talking about Nigeria not [*insert first world country here*].

Near the end of the book Ndibe devotes a long chapter discussing his parents and his father's lifelong friendship and pen pal with a British officer he had met while serving in WWII. Here the long held thoughts about the colonial effects on Nigeria and the treatment of Africans worldwide is discussed in detail. It's a really beautifully done chapter, in my view the best in the book. Of his father's perceptions of war:

As I discussed the war with my father, I came close to grasping a sense of the great psychic toll of World War II had taken on the African combatants. There they were, compelled to fight in a war that was, in the end, the logical culmination of a species of racism Europeans had planted. The same Europeans had used this creed of racial superiority to yoke Africans.

By the end of the book we begin to see that Ndibe internalizes the lessons that his father figures have taught him. He feels the need to speak out more and more against injustice :

that we die, our very humanity slayed, whenever we choose to remain silent in the face of tyranny.

Again I wonder about the effects of current events on his memoir.

The book is also full of humorous situations such as arriving in New York for the first time without a winter coat. He muses "*Winter, I wrote, was akin to living inside a refrigerator.*" Or the numerous misunderstandings that take place because his name is Okey pronounced Okay. He also muses the lack of knowledge of Africa in America when people constantly conflate the continent with a country or village and where one of his students literally asks him how he came to America when there are no airports in Africa. He laughs at the culture clash when he first arrives in America and is invited to lunch but is expected to go Dutch (which has no place in Nigerian culture). I also enjoyed his folktales and his tales of growing up in Nigeria.

I had one big issue with the book. Ndibe devotes very little time or thought to his immediate family, especially his wife. Throughout the book, Ndibe peppers in the fact that he's married with kids. He devotes a chapter to the folktales that he teaches his children but doesn't mention their names. The reader doesn't actually get introduced to his wife until the last half of the last chapter in this short book. And the half a chapter that is devoted to her feels rushed. We also learn his kids' names there, but it's an afterthought. It's as if they had no impact on his life, philosophy, outlook or musings what so ever, especially when compared to the significant number of pages dedicated to his various male role models. Ah the patriarchy. It matters not your country of origin.

I confess that the quotes that stuck out for me are different than the actual tone of the book. While the book is serious, it is also quite playful, positive and for the most part, superficial. My chosen quotes are more about my jaundiced eye that seems to key in on social and cultural things rather than the more humorous, positive and light feel of the book. But honestly, this was a great memoir and I look forward to reading more from this interesting and talented author.

4 Stars

Edited to Add: Read the kindle edition

Carrie Ann says

A delightful book with charming pros and witty anecdotes about living in America for the first time from a Nigerian's perspective. I definitely enjoyed learning about another culture and how silly some of the things are about Americans from a different perspective.

It's a memoir so it's a fractured in structure and not in chronological order. Throughout the second half I kept wondering why he didn't mention more about his wife or kids and at the very end he reveals that he was somewhat of a playboy before getting married; it's as if he did not trust us to accept his character fully until he was able to firmly establish all the good bits first. Which, as I have learned, is a legitimate fear of foreigners entering into a new culture so I don't blame him but it was a bit jarring because it seemed to be an admission out of nowhere at the very end and felt like a rather strange note to end on. I guess, it's important to me how the author ends and what final thoughts I'm left with, and I was left a little unsettled.

DW says

Picked this up randomly because of the funny title, and the first two paragraphs sounded marvelously foreign. Overall, I quite liked it, particularly the stories about his time in Africa and when he first came to the States. The parts about him being in grad school were dull. I also didn't like how he interrupted his interesting story about needing to rush home on Christmas so he could eat chicken and rice, with several boring pages of backstory about important African writers and how he met one of them. Of course the story was needed for the punchline, but it would have been better to do the backstory in advance, or at least limit it to a couple paragraphs at most.

Most interesting stories: hero-worshipping Chinua Achebe for years, finally getting to meet him, interviewing him for three hours as his first assignment and not getting any tape recorded. (He actually went back and did another 1.5 hour interview, with three tape recorders, which is kind of amazing of Achebe.) The fact that he edited the magazine on scanty funds, had to explain to writers why they weren't being paid, and was himself paid only in groceries many weeks, so he had to beg and borrow money from friends to send to his family. Of course the mistaken bank robber story is great (Nigerian cops aren't polite, getting in a police car in Nigeria means you might get "wasted" (shot in some back alley)) mostly because he forgot to tell the kids that he had been cleared of the charge and the prof was arguing with the police that indeed that they had indeed arrested him when he turned up in his office. The one about him lying to the visa officer, being denied, then talking to his friend and getting the visa, was weird. Why couldn't he say just say he was going to edit a magazine? If he got the visa to attend a conference, wouldn't he be overstaying it? His unsuccessful attempt to show Americans that personal space is unnecessary by showing up at their house unannounced (I agree, somehow that doesn't work in America.) His father's letter-writing friendship with the British officer he served under during WWII. The stories about confusion because of his name sounding like "Okay". I doubt that people today would have swallowed his story about riding from Africa on the backs of crocodiles (well, anybody over the age of 5), or that Africans all lived in trees (I think that story was from the 1950's though).

There were a couple stories I wanted to hear the other side of - surely Chinua Achebe wasn't that arbitrary and controlling? And the girl he didn't like because she invited him to lunch and then expected to go Dutch (in Nigeria the inviter pays) ... was it really an "accident" that her whole story of being illegitimate was

printed in the newspaper advert meant to find her father? (That is pretty humiliating to have printed in a newspaper that your abandoned child is seeking you by name).

His writing style was odd, filled with big words - cynosure? esophagi? Really? And after reading about how he is a gregarious and friendly storyteller, I was shocked to see the picture of him unsmiling and annoyed on the dustjacket. Especially after reading about how Nigerians never lack for friends unless they are extremely antisocial. Maybe that is the American thing, we all smile for pictures, but those smiles don't extend to being friends with everybody.

Katherine Varga says

Ndibe clearly loves words and stories. His writing is a bit verbose (I was very amused when he earnestly describes how his MFA program taught him to stop overwriting). Looking back though, I'm impressed by how much ground he covered in 200 pages. The chapters loosely follow him leaving Nigeria and assimilating into American culture, although he meanders through time and topic.

Overall I think the sum of the parts were greater than the whole. Many amusing stories (I LOL'd a lot over the "Are you Okey?" mishaps) and interesting descriptions of cultural shock (don't invite a Nigerian to lunch unless you're planning to treat!). I enjoyed reading this book, but it didn't take me on an emotional journey the way I expect a memoir to. It did pique my interest in his novels, though.

3.5, rounding up because he lives in CT and it was exciting to see shout outs to my hometown!

Jenni V. says

I wasn't sure how to rate this one because I really liked the book but after hearing him speak at the Iowa City Book Festival, where he read a few of these chapters aloud and signed my book, just reading the rest didn't feel like enough. This would be great to listen to as an audiobook.

It was interesting because he made a note in the book that as time has passed since he was stopped by the police because they were looking for a bank robber and he fit the description (basically, a black man), the tone in how he has told the story changed from dread to humor. He told that story in the reading I attended and it's true that he made it light and humorous, as he did other events that must have been very difficult at the time.

Keeping it light doesn't mean he glosses over the struggles. It's the talent of a true writer to make you think without beating you over the head with the lessons he/she wants you learn, and Okey is a phenomenal writer.

A Few Quotes from the Book

"The books and journalism I consumed fueled my desire to write. I needed writing badly, needed it to save me from a career in the corporate world that my studies would sentence me to. Bohemian at heart and by habit, I dreaded the prospect of a regular eight-to-five job."

"I sought to draw attention both to the rampancy of power abuse and to the repercussions of silence. Those who shut their eyes in order to see no evil, to denounce none, those who plug their ears and gag their mouths,

should be under no illusion. They may delude themselves, but they cannot enter a plea of innocence in history's great carnages, its galleries of gore and horrors."

Find all my reviews at: <http://readingatrandom.blogspot.com>

Penny says

A lazy assemblage of essays clearly written for other publications and haphazardly jumbled into one bound volume. Smacks of canned, stale anecdotes pulled out for radio interviews.

Pretentious use of the English language.

I'm glad I didn't buy it.

Michael says

I saw this on the new non-fiction shelves at the public library. On the back cover it notes that Ndibe is the author of "Foreign Gods, Inc." which I had read about and have on a somewhat overly long list of things to read, so with this in hand I decided to give it a try (out of order, sort of - oh well).

This is a pleasant first person memoir of a Nigerian coming to America, eventually becoming a citizen. Becoming a U.S. citizen was not his intent when he arrived - he came to Boston to manage a new magazine, *African Commentary*. (The magazine turns out to be a hopeless endeavor, not because of the writing or topic but because it was underfinanced.) The book gives a good picture of Ndibe's life in Nigeria before coming to the U.S., then anecdotes, some humorous, about different encounters he had after arrival in America.

As an articulate writer, Ndibe provides food for thought on the conflict immigrants must feel between the country and culture they have left (at least nominally) and their feelings for the United States. Some of that discussion or musings in the book are among the most interesting parts.

I am not sure how to characterize English as a language for Ndibe - I'm not sure it is accurate to characterize it as a second language since he grew up reading and speaking English to some extent in Nigeria (if I'm understanding the book correctly). Still, for an easy going narrative memoir like this, sometimes I was alternatively intrigued or amused by Ndibe's word use - sometimes it was with Britishisms, like "cheeky," but also just surprising constructions and word choices - "the doleful sign was writ even more large for me" for example, or "the letter brimmed with resentment and outrage."

As I hoped, I learned more about Nigeria in reading this, or was reminded of things I had known at one point but were not so clearly remembered now.

The book is slightly more than 200 pages and I was drawn in sufficiently to read it from beginning to end without putting it aside because of some distraction (that is, another book).

Carin says

I love memoirs! They take me to places and into situations where I would never be, they're honest, and they

encourage empathy. I haven't read much in the way of fish out of water/international memoirs but I thought this one looked good (what a great title!) and it is a book published by my new company and I will be with the author at NEIBA this fall, so I figured I'd better give it a shot! And it was quite enjoyable.

Okey has a wonderful sense of humor. I doubt I'd have been able to take half the things that happened to him in such stride and with such goodwill as he does. But I'm sure his positive outlook is a big part of what has taken him so far in life. For me, I particularly liked the first half of the book, when he is growing up in Nigeria, and his first few weeks in America. He comes here in order to start up a magazine for Africans and Nigerians specifically, founded by his friend Chinua Achebe. The funding is iffy from the very beginning and once again, his humor and positivity prove a boon as he negotiates with vendors and pleads with writers with long-outstanding invoices. Eventually it does fold, but by then he's gotten a toe-hold in Boston and a friend greases the path for him to enter into a prestigious MFA program right away.

I wasn't as crazy about the rest of the book which was more episodic and not as linear as the first two-thirds. I wish he'd told us how he met his wife and kept along with the "making of a Nigerian-American" theme of him coping with homesickness and culture clashes. He does tell funny stories about misunderstandings (several related to how his first name sounds exactly like "Okay" and therefore mix-ups occur, such as when his ride at a conference asks a stranger, "Are you Okey?" and he hears "Are you okay?" and says yes, when he is not Okey Ndibe.) These were endearing and charming, but lost the narrative thread. That said, he gives a great idea of what it's like to move from Nigeria and land in New York City in January without a coat (his family back home found the concept of "cold" as a weather description so foreign, the only way he could explain it was that it felt like living inside a refrigerator.) And I adored him talking about his first night at a mutual friend's apartment, where he used every single soap and shampoo that he found in the guest bathroom, repeatedly. It felt so gloriously decadent! This was an amusing tale that could have been fraught with terror and horror stories (he was rounded up by police from a bus station his very first week in America because he "fit the description" of a bank robber) but instead, Okey accepts his adopted country with its faults and strengths, and cheerfully gathers up more funny stories for his next cocktail party, and presumably for his next book as well.

Bookworm says

Did I read the same book as everyone else? A couple of years or so ago I had read the author's 'Foreign Gods, Inc.' fiction book. It was a book that really worked for me but I thought the title was interesting and thought I'd give his memoir a go. How could I not consider a book when the title talks about flying turtles, colonial ghosts and the making of a Nigerian American?

Unfortunately the memoir was horribly disjointed and never captured me. As others say, the tone of the book is quite "jovial" which is not necessarily a bad thing but this didn't seem like a nice flowing story of a memoir. Which didn't have to be that way either but I felt like it was more of a mishmash of anecdotes.

Numerically the book is short in length but it was a slog to get through. Perhaps he's just not a good fit for me and I'll skip his other works in the future. But it seems from other reviews that if you liked his 'Foreign Gods, Inc.' it might be a good read (but that's not a consistent pattern).

Cyd says

I should admit upfront that I consider Okey Ndibe to be a friend. I enjoyed both of his novels, *Arrows of Rain* and *Foreign Gods, Inc.* .

I loved this short memoir which tells the story of how Okey came to the United States to edit "African Commentary" magazine at the behest of Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe , and ends ultimately with meeting and marrying his wife. The journey is very much like talking to Okey himself: funny stories about being a new immigrant, some personal and political history, the occasional critique of American/western culture, and a few folktales thrown in.

Peter Certo says

the author is charming and intelligent, and the stories he tells pass by breezily enough. but while many of the stories about his african upbringing and early experiences with chinua achebe paint a fascinating picture of intellectual life at a pivotal time in nigeria, the american sections feel... undercooked. the cultural differences ndibe explores come off feeling superficial, or only mildly interesting, and the storytelling itself needs work. my interest in the book flagged toward the end, save for a fascinating chapter about the authors attempts to trace his fathers unlikely 50-year friendship with an english officer he befriended in world war ii, a relationship that ndibe says transcended racial and colonial restrictions. that would have frankly made for a far more interesting book on its own.

Roger DeBlanck says

Okey Ndibe reveals the depths of his heart in this compulsively engaging memoir. Each of his tales offer illuminating wit and insight about acculturation, colonialism, and the art of writing. Equally impressive is the clarity of the rich language he employs to narrate his experiences. From his childhood upbringing in Nigeria, Ndibe dreamed of leaving behind Africa's primitive backwardness, as it has been negligently portrayed by the colonial powers, and escaping to the magic and mystery of Britain, the USSR, and America.

With the lure of journalism fueling his adventurous dreams, he landed a prized interview with the inimitable Chinua Achebe during his first journalist job. This opportunity later led to an offer from Achebe for him to move to America as editor of the magazine *African Commentary*. Before leaving, his uncle gave him advice: do not look Americans in the eye. For Ndibe, as he set out for America, he had a notion of his uncle's caveat from having watched American movies and seen how provocation between combatants often led to fatal stare downs. It is not hyperbole to claim that Ndibe's marvels as a storyteller are extraordinary in the way he blends compassion and humility with his trademark warmth and humor in order to reflect upon the rigors of acculturation.

For a memoir that is gripping in each of the tales it offers, perhaps its most impressive quality is its inspiring reflections on humanity. As a self-described Nigerian American, it is beautiful to hear Ndibe discuss the "fruitful marriage" of his two countries, a process that he calls a "gain-gain" scenario for him as an American citizen. In fact, he sees cultural norms as neither better nor worse, but rather different in what they represent about human diversity. With sage observation regarding the struggles of outsiders, he shows how those on

the margins of society possess “a richer, more complex, and profoundly more humane imagination.”

But this memoir is much more than a journey replete with fantastic stories about his experiences in America, including the time he was mistaken as a suspect in a bank robbery or the laughable incidents of his first name causing confusion with the expression of “okay.” This is a memoir about perseverance in the face of watching *African Commentary* wither in demise due to financial instability, which sadly never enabled the publication to launch beyond its promising start with receiving many accolades from critics. This is also a memoir in which Ndibe offers his gratitude to those who guided and encouraged his path to writing. It is a joy to read about the reverence he holds for others who gave him the confidence to pursue his own writing endeavors.

When the memoir reaches a point where the stories could not possibly evoke more uplifting emotion, he relays the wondrous anecdote about his grandfather returning from the dead and the subsequent unburying and restoring of his spirit that had to transpire. This leads to an even more beautiful story about Ndibe remembering his own father and wanting to honor his service as a veteran of the Second World War. The retelling of his father's incredible lifelong friendship with Father John Tucker, an English officer his father met during the war, takes Ndibe on a journey where he connects with Tucker in hopes of better knowing his father.

Ever the conscientious mind, Ndibe's memoir serves as activism too. His command of the politics surrounding Africa brings him to the duty of confronting colonial exploitation, misperception, and ignorance. He outlines the challenges Nigeria has endured in its quest to embrace democracy and how he's always admired the fearlessness of Wole Soyinka to stand up to tyranny. He learned from Soyinka that choosing to remain silent is akin to death. What Ndibe leaves me with most is his humanity, his ability to overcome struggle and hardship with the resilience of hope and a smile to go along. His narrative will keep your heart pounding, but moreover he achieves the most important facet of humanity: bringing light to darkness and finding a way to alleviate suffering. The range and craftsmanship of this memoir is impressive, but the size of his heart is even more so.

My review of Ndibe's novel *Foreign Gods, Inc.*:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>
