

The Readers' Corner Forum (formerly *The Readers' Corner Monthly*) is the newsletter for the Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library book club. The club focuses on books about the African World with an emphasis on social justice issues and writers from the African World.

In this issue:

- Abstract of *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* by Peniel E. Joseph
- Abstract of *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil* by John Ghazvinian
- Commentary by Akufuna Sitali Putteho-Ngonda on our last book, *Pirates of the Caribbean- Axis of Hope* by Tariq Ali
- An Evening With Chinua Achebe
- In our next issue...

for equality. Drawing on original archival research and more than sixty original oral histories, Peniel E. Joseph vividly invokes the way in which Black Power redefined black identity and culture and in the process redrew the landscape of American race relations. In a series of character-driven chapters, we witness the rise of Black Power groups such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panthers, and with them, on both coasts of the country, a fundamental change in the way Americans understood the unfinished business of racial equality and integration.

"*Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* traces the history of the Black Power movement, that storied group of men and women who would become American icons of the struggle for racial equality." <http://us.macmillan.com/waitingtilthemidnighthour>

The next regular meeting of the Readers' Corner will be on Sunday, February 8, 2009, 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM, at TransAfrica Forum, 1629 K Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20006 (Nearest Metro Station: Farragut North on the Red Line or Farragut West on the Blue/Orange Lines).

The book is available at [Teaching for Change Bookstore](#) at Busboys and Poets, 2021 14th St. NW, Washington, DC (two blocks from the Cardozo/U Street Metro. Contact: General Manager Don Allen, 202.387.POET.



FEBRUARY 2009 BOOK

WAITING 'TIL THE MIDNIGHT HOUR: A NARRATIVE HISTORY OF BLACK POWER IN AMERICA
BY PENIEL E. JOSEPH

Publisher's description: "With the rallying cry of "Black Power!" in 1966, a group of black activists, including Stokely Carmichael [Kwame Toure] and Huey P. Newton, turned their backs on Martin Luther King's pacifism and, building on Malcolm X's legacy, pioneered a radical new approach to the fight

DECEMBER 2008 BOOK

UNTAPPED: THE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA'S OIL
BY JOHN GHAZVINIAN

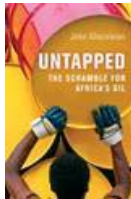
Publisher's description: "Although Africa has long been known to be rich in oil, extracting it hadn't seemed worth the effort and risk until recently. But with the price of Middle Eastern crude oil skyrocketing and advancing technology making

reserves easier to tap, the region has become the scene of a competition between major powers that recalls the nineteenth-century scramble for colonization there. Already the United States imports more of its oil from Africa than from Saudi Arabia, and China, too, looks to the continent for its energy security.

“What does this giddy new oil boom mean—for America, for the world, for Africans themselves? To find out, John Ghazvinian traveled through twelve African countries—from Sudan to Congo to Angola—talking to warlords, industry executives, bandits, activists, priests, missionaries, oil-rig workers, scientists, and ordinary people whose lives have been transformed—not necessarily for the better—by the riches beneath their feet. The result is a high-octane narrative that reveals the challenges, obstacles, reasons for despair, and reasons for hope emerging from the world’s newest energy hot spot.” (<http://www.harcourtbooks.com/bookcatalogs/bookpages/9780151011384.asp>)

Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil was discussed on December 7, 2008 at the TransAfrica Forum’s Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library. Notes from that meeting will be in the next issue of *The Readers’ Corner Forum*.

COMMENTARY BY AKUFUNA SITALI
PUTTEHO-NGONDA:



*PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN—AXIS OF
HOPE*
BY TARIQ ALI

Cutting through the swirl of political hostility and invective from Washington, Tariq Ali’s *Pirates of the Caribbean* examines the compelling emergence of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías and the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. The book analytically contrasts the revolutionary processes of the Cuban and Venezuelan revolutions, and details

the rise of a powerful mass movement in Bolivia and the epochal election of Evo Morales to the country’s presidency.

The book exposes the negative role of U.S. corporate media and its dissemination of inaccurate portrayals of Presidents Chávez and Morales. The histories of Venezuela and Bolivia have shown how corporate interests in the United States have long held binding political-economic sway over South American elites, providing these ruling classes with the means to plan and execute the exploitation and monopolization of resources to the benefit of the despotic few. The saga begins with the dramatic telling of how the Venezuelan people rallied to the support of President Chávez during the failed coup attempt of 2002. The coup was an attempt by Venezuelan oligarchs with tactical assistance from the U.S. government to unseat Chávez. The narrative also reveals the role Fidel Castro played in helping Chávez hold on to power. The failure of the 2002 coup attempt galvanized the consciousness of the working class into collectively gathering their forces to bring about concrete social change.

Thus social movements converged in response to repressive conditions and inequality. In Bolivia the election of Evo Morales as president in 2005 was a striking development. Firstly, it gave ascendancy to an individual who represented a historically maligned indigenous group. Secondly, Morales was carried to power by a mass movement born in the city of Cochabamba in 1999. The central impetus of that struggle was to reverse a plan to privatize water supplies, thereby creating the social conditions required for free elections.

Mr. Ali chronicles the resolute commitment of these South American leaders to the principles of the Cuban Revolution as embodied in the inspirational leadership of Fidel Castro. He acknowledges the positive gains of the revolution while lamenting what he views as the suppression of “artistic freedom”, “public debate” and “criticism”. These assertions are not substantiated with sufficient details, however, nor does the author provide the instruments for his vision of “egalitarian, redistributive, socio-economic strategy”.

The Pirates of the Caribbean deserves to be read for its intricate account of the development of progressive movements in the Americas. But it is

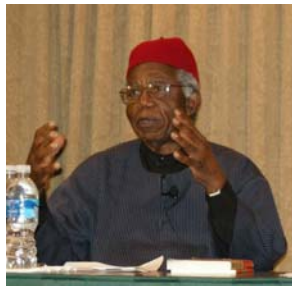
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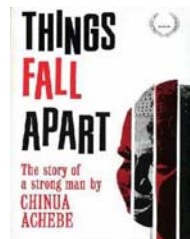
unfortunate, in view of the comprehensive and useful information it provides, that the book does not offer a program for victory in the Venezuelan revolution, or suggest ways to further the movement in Bolivia or the ongoing revolution in Cuba. There are no clarion calls for the ideas of a workers' democracy or a clear articulation of the need for ordinary workers to meaningfully organize and take control of the conditions of their existence. One also misses a polemic regarding the importance of the right to recall elected officials, and the ideal of paying those officials no more than the average worker's wages.

*Akufuna Sitali Putteho-Ngonda, Readers' Corner
Book Club Member*

NOTES FROM AN EVENING WITH CHINUA ACHEBE BY SARAH MOENTER



Chinua Achebe, Nigerian poet, novelist, and critic, was celebrated November 3, 2008 at the Library of Congress, as part of the



TransAfrica Forum's Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library's *Writers' Corner* series. The event was hosted by TransAfrica Forum, the Library of Congress Center for the Book, and the Library of Congress' African and Middle Eastern Division. The event commemorated two special events: the fiftieth anniversary of Achebe's most important work, *Things Fall Apart*, and the author's seventy-eighth birthday. The evening included a reading by Chinua Achebe from *Things Fall Apart*, and a special performance by drummer Joseph Ngwa of Rhaa PaaWaa Drums of Maat. *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's first novel, is the most widely read book in modern African literature, and one of the first African novels to be written in English. The work has sold nearly eleven million copies worldwide, and has been translated into fifty languages. The novel portrays African village life from an African perspective, and depicts both the beauty and destruction which became interwoven with colonialism in Africa. Although the novel is fifty years old, *Things Fall Apart* has enduring value, due to its prescience and Achebe's ability to weave cultural context in his narrative.

"An Evening with Chinua Achebe" presented by TransAfrica Forum, Library of Congress' African and Middle Eastern Division and the Center for the Book, November 3, 2008 is available at http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4467.

*Sarah Moenter, Public Affairs Intern, TransAfrica
Forum (September-December 2008)*

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE NEXT *Readers' Corner Forum*

- Notes from our discussion of *Untapped: The Scramble For Africa's Oil*
- The Book List for 2009
- Schedule for 2009

THE READERS' CORNER SCHEDULE FOR 2009

February 8, and March 15, 2009: *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, by Peniel E. Joseph (2006, Henry Holt and Co.).

May 3, 2009: TBA after books are selected.

July 12, 2009: TBA after books are selected.

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October 4, 2009: TBA after books are selected.

December 4, 2009: TBA after books are selected.

PREVIOUS READERS' CORNER SELECTIONS

December 2008—*Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil*, by John Ghazvinian; *Pirates of the Caribbean: Axis of Hope*, by Tariq Ali; July 2008—*An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President*, by Randall Robinson; May 2008—*The Secret History of the American Empire: Economic Hit Men, Jackals, and the Truth About Global Corruption*, by John Perkins; March 2008—*Unbowed: A Memoir*, by Wangari Maathai; February 2008—*Return to the Source: Selected Speeches*, by Amilcar Cabral; November 2007—*Guns and Gandhi in Africa: Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation In Africa*, by Matt Meyer and Bill Sutherland; September 2007—*The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon; July 2007—*Half of a Yellow Sun*, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; May 2007 discussion—*The Dew Breaker*, by Edwidge Danticat; February and March 2007 discussions—*Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*, by Barbara Ransby; December 2006 discussion—*The Black Mayflower*, by Prince Massala Refell; October 2006 discussion—*Manipulating the Sacred: Yoruba Art, Ritual, and Resistance in Brazilian Condomble*, by Mikel S. Omari-Tunkara; June and August 2006 discussions—*The Covenant with Black America*, edited by Tavis Smiley; April 2006 discussion—*Pax Americana: Exposing the American Empire*, edited by John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney; March 2006 discussion—*Two Thousand Seasons*, by Ayi Kwei Armah; February 2006 discussion—*Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, by John Hope Franklin; December 2005 discussion—*The Farming of Bones*, by Edwidge Danticat; November 2005 discussion—*An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, by Arundhati Roy; September 2005 discussion—*Songs of the Water Saints*, by Nelly Rosario; July 2005 discussion—*They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America*, by Ivan Van Sertima; June 2005 discussion—*Confessions of An Economic Hitman Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, by John Perkins; May 2005 discussion—*When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, by Mahmood Mamdani; April 2005 discussion—*Between Race and Empire: African-Americans and Cuba before the Cuban Revolution*, Lisa Brock and Digna Castaneda Fuertes, Editors; February and March 2005 discussions—*African Civilization Revisited: From Antiquity to Modern Times*, by Basil Davidson; December 2004 discussion—*Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*, by Mimi Sheller; November 2004 discussion—*We Are the Poors: Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, by Ashwin Desai; October 2004 discussion—*Quitting America: The Departure of a Black Man from His Native Land*, by Randall Robinson; September 2004 discussion—*Cultures of the Hispanic Caribbean*, by Dr. Conrad M. James and Dr. John Perivolaris; June and July 2004 discussions—*King Leopold's Ghost*, by Adam Hochschild; May 2004 discussion—*What Next: A Memoir Toward World Peace*, by Walter Mosley; April 2004 discussion—*Hottentot Venus: A Novel*, by Barbara Chase-Riboud; March 2004 discussion—*Women Writing Resistance: Essays from Latin America and the Caribbean*, edited by Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez; February 2004 discussion—*The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, by C.L.R. James; December 2003 discussion—*The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. Du Bois; November 2003 discussion—*Abeng*, by Michelle Cliff; October 2003 discussion—*Waiting for An Angel*, by Helon Habila; September 2003 discussion—*African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*, by Sheila Walker; August 2003 discussion—*From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*, by Eric Williams; and June 2003 discussion—*Precolonial Black Africa*, by Cheikh Anta Diop.

ABOUT THE READERS' CORNER

The purpose of The Readers' Corner is to provide a forum for its members to discuss and gain a better understanding of issues facing the African World.

📖 The Readers' Corner will meet on the first Sunday, bi-monthly, at TransAfrica Forum, from 3:30 to 5:30 pm.

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- 📖 The book selection bi-monthly will focus on a different region - Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas (North, Central and South).
- 📖 Each Readers' Corner member will be expected to read the bi-monthly selection prior to the meeting and attend the meeting prepared to contribute to the discussion.

To join:

If you have questions or are interested in joining *The Readers' Corner*, send an email with the subject *The Readers' Corner* to info@transafricaforum.org (please include your name, your email address and your phone number), or call 202.223.1960 ext. 137.

The Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library is a part of TransAfrica Forum, a research, education, and advocacy center dedicated to global justice for the African World. A center for activism focusing on conditions in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America, the library sponsors seminars, community awareness projects and training programs. The Ashe Library is a respected resource for information about U.S. foreign policies toward these same regions.

Call 202.223.1960 ext. 137 (or send an email to info@transafricaforum.org) to attend programs, to have your name placed on the mailing list, or to ask about future programs and other activities of the Ashe Library, including volunteer opportunities. The website is www.transafricaforum.org. Library hours are 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. **The Library will be closed December 22, 2008 to January 20, 2009.**

Researched and edited by: Interns— Tendai Chinhakwe and Sarah Moenter; Library Volunteer—Alexander Baramki; and The Readers' Corner Research Committee: Volunteers—Akufuna Sitali Putteho-Ngonda, and Mwiza Munthali of TransAfrica Forum's Arthur R. Ashe, Jr. Foreign Policy Library, December 2008.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of TransAfrica Forum.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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