



Noble Savages: My Life Among Two Dangerous Tribes -- the Yanomamo and the Anthropologists

Napoleon A. Chagnon

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“One of history’s greatest anthropologists—and a rip-roaring storyteller—recounts his life with an endangered Amazonian tribe and the mind-boggling controversies his work ignited” (Steven Pinker, author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature*).

Napoleon Chagnon’s *Noble Savages* is the remarkable memoir of a life dedicated to science—and a revealing account of the clash between science and political activism.

When Napoleon Chagnon arrived in Venezuela’s Amazon region in 1964 to study the Yanomamö Indians, he expected to find Rousseau’s “noble savage.” Instead he found a shockingly violent society. He spent years living among the Yanomamö, observing their often tyrannical headmen, learning to survive under primitive and dangerous conditions. When he published his observations, a firestorm of controversy swept through anthropology departments. Chagnon was vilified by other anthropologists, condemned by his professional association (which subsequently rescinded its reprimand), and ultimately forced to give up his fieldwork. Throughout his ordeal, he never wavered in his defense of science. In 2012 he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences.

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