

In response to:

The Fierce anthropologists

Andrew Brown

Daily Telegraph Magazine, 3 March 2001

Chagnon claims that the Yanomami are savage and murderous – and supports this observation with data which many anthropologists consider to be deeply suspect. This is his opinion, but it has unfortunately been presented as scientific fact for over 30 years, and has been used to reinforce a prejudice exploited by those who oppress the Yanomami.

We have, between us, spent over 80 years working with the Yanomami. Most of us speak one or more Yanomami dialect. Not one of us recognises the society portrayed in Chagnon's books, and we deplore his sensationalism and name-calling. The biggest threat the Yanomami face is not internal warfare but the colonisation of their lands. Concerned members of the British public – including readers of this newspaper – have been of major importance in defending the Yanomami and other tribal peoples against such threats since the 1960s. Long may they continue to be so.

Yours faithfully,

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