



Yanomami: The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn From It. Borofsky, Robert. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005. 372 pp.

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Robert Borofsky's text is a compilation from numerous sources of information intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the key players and major questions underlying the debate that was generated by accusations published in Patrick Tierney's book, *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* (New York: Norton, 2000). Borofsky's book also situates the controversy in a wider context of more basic issues relating to ethics and the practice of anthropology. Tierney, a journalist, accused two prominent researchers—James Neel, a geneticist, and Napoleon Chagnon, an anthropologist—of unethical behavior while conducting research among the Yanomami Indians. Even before its actual publication, this book elicited strong reactions, both within and outside the discipline of anthropology. The American Anthropological Association's (AAA) subsequent response to the growing debate and the ethics charges exacerbated the controversy.

Borofsky organizes the eleven chapters of the text into two parts. Part I, comprised of seven chapters, introduces the reader to the principal accusations, issues, and individuals involved in the controversy. For example, one chapter provides a detailed chronology of the major events, and another summarizes Chagnon's and Tierney's positions with selected quotes from their own writings. The first half of the book prepares the reader for the expert argumentation presented in a series of papers in Part II. These papers were originally submitted in three rounds to the online "Roundtable Forum" that was convened by the author on the Public Anthropology website in 2001. The six anthropologists who were invited to participate include Bruce Albert, Ray Hames, Kim Hill, Leda Martins, John Peters, and Terry Turner. Each chapter (or round) also includes a section that clarifies the key accusations or issues raised in that particular paper and poses two additional questions for the reader's consideration. The final chapter wraps up the discussion with three assessments of the controversy: an open letter from the Roundtable participants, an appraisal of the Task Force's preliminary and final reports, and a challenge to the reader to "now decide where you stand on the issues raised" (p. 314).

Parts I and II are separated by "a photographic interlude" that begins with four classic photographs by the acclaimed Brazilian photographer and longtime activist for the Yanomami, Claudia Andujar. Unfortunately, her name is misspelled here and throughout the book. Other photos of Yanomami are from the work of Ken Good, Victor Englebert, and John Peters. The final page contains small "head shots" of the Roundtable participants (including the author) and one slightly larger photo of Davi Kopenawa. There are no photographs of James Neel, Napoleon Chagnon, or Patrick Tierney.

A weakness of the book is its limited treatment of the source of the controversy—the Yanomami themselves. Chapter 5 provides a brief discussion of Yanomami perspectives through excerpts of interviews with several Yanomami. The student who is interested in learning more about



them will have to look to the list of references at the end of the book. Students can go online to become actively involved. Although the author clearly states that by purchasing the book students will be “helping the Yanomami” (p. xix), he directs the reader to the Public Anthropology website for further details of how the royalties of the book will be allocated and for specific contact information of NGOs that support the Yanomami. These email addresses and websites are not indicated in the book.

This book makes a very positive, overall contribution to the application of the Yanomami controversy as a case study and teaching tool. One strength of the book is Borofsky’s attempt to present opposing viewpoints on a myriad of issues. His use of direct quotations and excerpts from works published by the protagonists in the debate contributes to the objectivity of the presentation as does the inclusion of the diverse, individual viewpoints in the Roundtable discussions. Another strength is the author’s methodical organization of a considerable body of potentially confusing information. For example, in chapter 6, “You Decide,” Borofsky not only summarizes the central issues for the reader, but he provides questions for each subheading that can be used to stimulate class discussion and to foster critical thinking. Furthermore, these same issues are summarized in a handy appendix that cross-references them by chapter and page number with specific Roundtable participant position statements.

This text is very useful for teachers, both as a balanced and comprehensive reference on the *Darkness in El Dorado* controversy and as an example of how a specific controversy can stimulate discussion of much broader issues within the discipline, such as, in this case, topics related to ethical fieldwork practice. Borofsky makes his intentions clear when he states that the book “is not meant simply to be read. It is meant to foster discussion and, through that discussion, insight into how anthropology reproduces itself as a discipline” (p. xi). This text is specifically designed to engage students in a classroom setting. This goal is highlighted by “A Note to Teachers” and “A Personal Note to Undergraduates” at the beginning of the book and by its dedication to the students who became involved and submitted online comments on the El Dorado Task Force Preliminary Report. Students may enjoy exploring the Public Anthropology website for additional and updated information on the controversy, including the AAA Code of Ethics and the El Dorado Task Force Final Report, over 500 pages in its entirety.

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