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Journal: Dispatches From A Vanishing Frontier



Synopsis

A work of literary nonfiction blending reportage, history, anthropology, and personal memoir, *Journal* is a unique and critical look at how cultural differences in the have resulted in incidents ranging from comic misunderstandings to blatant exploitation, environmental disaster, and even genocide. Beginning by revisiting the period in the late 80's when the "save the rainforest" campaign, the indigenous rights movement, and the assassination of Chico Mendes became the focus of a media storm, O'Connor stuck with his story long enough to tell us what happened when the world turned its attention elsewhere. Peopled by a colorful cast of real-life characters, O'Connor's startling narrative is a journey into a contemporary heart of darkness, a compelling and compassionate look at a vanishing people, and a blistering account of the forces of destruction, both human and environmental, at work within the greatest forest on earth.

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Plume; First Edition edition (September 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0452276101

ISBN-13: 978-0452276109

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 2.9 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,860,085 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #93 in Books > Travel > South America > Brazil > #448 in Books > Travel > South America > Brazil > General #579 in Books > History > Americas > South America > Brazil

Customer Reviews

The gold rush taking place in the , writes documentary filmmaker Geoffrey O'Connor, already promises to yield more ore than the Klondike gold rush that took place a century ago. Yet it has been little reported, and the quest for gold has already cost thousands of lives as the Indian nations of the rainforest are overrun. O'Connor brings us grim news, to be sure, but with flair and sometimes even pointed humor, such as when he describes rock star Sting's descent into the jungle to deliver pious sermons about the sanctity of the unbroken forest; Sting can always jet out, O'Connor notes, whereas the Indians, and most of the gold miners, have nowhere else to go. Anyone with an interest in the area will want to read this well-crafted and sometimes alarming book.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This reportage flows from O'Conner's recent camera work in Brazil, which has been edited into a documentary (with the same title) released this year. Although his book is permeated with descriptions of clear-cut swathes of jungle, the biological consequences of the gold and cattle rushes in the are not O'Conner's subject; rather, it is the white-indigenous peoples' conflict, the last chapter in the epic stretching back to Columbus. Visiting villages of the Yanomami and the Kayapo, O'Conner respectfully films their prominent figures and chronicles the disease and violence that are reducing the numbers and territories of the Brazilian Indians. His information is bound to be valued once the forces of development on the Brazilian frontier--the mine entrepreneurs, the road builders, and the ranchers--prevail. The author's prose seems videographic rather than literary, but that will not deter interested readers, who will appreciate O'Conner's accounting of the reality behind the publicity images, promoted by celebrity sympathizers (Sting) and Earth Summiteers, of the Indians' beleaguered way of life. Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

O'Connor's brilliance is that he combines a writing style that simply engages the reader with a the knowledge that he can't and doesn't know all that there is to know about his topic. He brings together several issues and introduces many intriguing characters (Rauni, Kenny Good, Davi, just to name a few). The combination of the political ineptitude of the Indian organizations and the skewed perception of the Religious affiliates in the create an overwhelming amount of obsticals for objective journalism. O'Connor reports what happens from the viewpoint of a jounalist that knows he is part of the problem. I have come into contact with Venezuelan Yanomama and have seen first hand the impact that contact has made. O'Connor's unbias journalism is a releif from all of the news specials, and talk-show trash that seems to abound with the "Save the Rainforest" campaign. Read this book if you want a true report of what is happening to the last remaining independent people in the world. The truth is that contact with "white" people has braught innumerable destruction to this once self-sufficient society and Geoffrey O'Connor is not affraid to tell that side of the story.

This book is fast-paced, and takes you on a journey through the eyes of the author while also providing a rich historical backdrop. His writing rings true and seems to be accurate. As one person puts it, the Natives are the "gardeners of the rainforest" and if they go, the rainforest too will go. The story is sad and revealing through real experiences that the author had with the Natives and people

of the region. Recommended.

Journal is Geoffrey O'Connor's account of the movement to save the indigenous people (or Indians) of the Brazilian . Though I enjoyed the book, I thought that it was overly long and I was happy to come to the end. The best parts of Journal read like a great adventure story. O'Connor met all sorts of desperadoes on one of the world's last frontiers. His stories of flights in and out of the and of the shady gold miners who prospected for gold on Indian land are interesting reading. O'Connor also gives a good account of how the issue attracted interest from celebrities, such as Sting. I cannot rate this book any higher than three stars, however. The biggest problem is that, at 360 pages, the book was "more than I wanted to know" about the . Also, O'Connor makes his living as a filmmaker, not a writer; his narrative has a disjointed quality that makes the book laborious to follow. A final negative is that even though O'Connor goes into exhausting detail about his attempts to film during his visits to Brazil, the book contains not one photo (aside from the cover). I'm glad that I read Journal, but I cannot give it a strong recommendation. It's heading to my local used bookstore.

As an American living in the southern basin, near the Xingu Indian Reserve, I unfortunately can attest to the truth in Mr. O'Conner's writings. He manages to give one a glimpse of what it is like to exist in this lawless, confusing frontier. To capture the flavor of this land of anarchy truly is difficult but the author does a superb job in transforming the vagueness of this bizarre and mystical frontier into words. Mr. O'Conner, thank you for putting my thoughts into print. The grand is under serious attack and , in my region especially, is being leveled at an exponential rate. Someone please do something.

I was quickly bored.

I picked this book up on Granville Island in Vancouver on a clearance/remains table out of interest. For people who wonder what has happened to the rainforests in Brazil after much international coverage during the late eighties and early nineties would find this of interest. Kind of sad.

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