

We will not be saved

by Mitch anderson and Nemonte nenquimo · Language: EN

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Overview

"We Will Not Be Saved" is a profound and urgent call to action co-authored by Nemonte Nenquimo, a leader of Ecuador's Waorani people, and Mitch Anderson, founder of Amazon Frontlines. The book fundamentally challenges the prevailing Western approach to the climate crisis, arguing that solutions cannot come from the same mindset of exploitation and separation from nature that created the problem. Instead, Nenquimo, drawing on millennia of indigenous wisdom, posits that true salvation lies not in technological fixes or external saviors, but in a radical shift in worldview towards interconnectedness, respect for the Earth, and the defense of indigenous territories and ways of life.

The core argument asserts that Western civilization's belief in its own ability to "save" the planet is a dangerous delusion, perpetuating a cycle of control and commodification. Nenquimo's voice offers a powerful counter-narrative, emphasizing that indigenous peoples are not merely victims or beneficiaries of conservation efforts, but possess the deep ecological knowledge and spiritual understanding necessary for humanity's survival. The book serves as both a memoir of Nenquimo's life and her people's struggles against oil extraction, and a manifesto for a different way of relating to the world, urging readers to listen to the Earth and its original guardians before it's too late. It matters because it reframes the environmental crisis as a crisis of perception and relationship, demanding a fundamental re-evaluation of human values and priorities.

Key Takeaways

- The climate crisis is fundamentally a crisis of worldview, stemming from a Western mindset of separation from and domination over nature.
- Indigenous peoples offer vital wisdom and practical solutions for living sustainably, rooted in deep ecological knowledge and interconnectedness.
- True environmental action requires defending indigenous land rights and empowering their self-determination, as they are the most effective guardians of biodiversity.
- Relying solely on technological fixes or "green capitalism" to solve ecological collapse is a dangerous delusion that perpetuates the problem.
- We must reject the notion of external saviors and instead cultivate a radical shift in our relationship with the Earth, recognizing ourselves as part of nature.

- Listening to the Earth and its ancient guardians is paramount for humanity's survival, demanding humility and a willingness to learn.
- The fight for climate justice is inseparable from the fight for indigenous rights and decolonization.

Chapter Summaries

The Waorani Way of Life

This section introduces Nemonte Nenquimo's upbringing within the Waorani community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. It describes their profound spiritual and practical connection to the rainforest, their traditional knowledge systems, and how their culture is intrinsically linked to the health and vitality of their ancestral lands. It highlights a worldview where humans are an integral part of nature, not separate from it.

The Invasion of Oil

This part details the devastating impact of oil extraction on Waorani territory and culture. It covers the historical context of resource exploitation in the Amazon, the broken promises of corporations and governments, and the direct threats posed by drilling, deforestation, and pollution. It illustrates the relentless pressure faced by indigenous communities to defend their lands against powerful external forces.

Critique of Western 'Saving'

Nenquimo and Anderson critically examine how Western environmentalism often falls short. They argue that many mainstream approaches, including carbon markets and technological solutions, operate within the same extractive, human-centric mindset that caused the climate crisis. This section challenges the idea that Western civilization can 'save' the planet without fundamentally altering its own values and systems of power.

Indigenous Resistance and Victory

This chapter recounts the Waorani people's courageous and strategic struggles against oil companies and the Ecuadorian government. It highlights their resilience, unity, and the landmark legal victories they achieved in defending their ancestral lands from further exploitation. It showcases how indigenous self-determination and direct action are powerful forces for environmental protection.

A Call for Radical Interconnectedness

The philosophical core of the book, this section urges a fundamental shift from a human-centric worldview to one of profound interconnectedness with all life. It emphasizes that true solutions to the climate crisis lie in recognizing the Earth as a living being, listening to its wisdom, and understanding that humanity's fate is inextricably linked to the well-being of the natural world.

Beyond Salvation

The concluding message emphasizes that humanity must cease waiting for external saviors or miraculous technological fixes. Instead, it calls for immediate, decisive action rooted in humility, respect, and a willingness to learn from indigenous peoples. It asserts that our collective future depends on abandoning destructive patterns and embracing a reciprocal relationship with the Earth.

Themes

- Indigenous wisdom
- Climate justice
- Decolonization
- Ecological interconnectedness
- Environmental activism

Notable Quotes

- "The Earth is not waiting for you to save it. It is waiting for you to listen to it." — This quote encapsulates the book's central message, challenging the Western savior complex and advocating for humility and indigenous wisdom.
- "We are not going to be saved by anyone. We must save ourselves." — This reflects the book's title and its argument against external solutions, emphasizing self-reliance and a radical shift in human behavior.
- "Our forest is our life. Without it, we cannot exist." — Nenquimo speaks about the Waorani's profound, existential connection to the Amazon rainforest, highlighting its importance beyond mere resources.
- "You think you are saving us, but you are destroying yourselves." — This critical statement addresses the flawed logic of Western 'conservation' efforts that often fail to recognize indigenous sovereignty and the destructive nature of industrial society.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is *We will not be saved* about?

It's about Nemonte Nenquimo's indigenous Waorani perspective on the climate crisis, arguing that Western approaches are flawed. It calls for a radical shift in worldview, emphasizing interconnectedness with nature and the defense of indigenous territories as crucial for humanity's survival.

Is *We will not be saved* worth reading?

Yes, it's highly worth reading for anyone interested in environmental justice, indigenous rights, and a profound critique of modern society's relationship with nature. It offers a vital, non-Western perspective on the climate crisis.

How does *We will not be saved* end?

Spoiler: The book ends not with a promise of salvation, but with a powerful call for humanity to abandon its destructive ways, listen to the Earth, and empower indigenous communities. It emphasizes that the future depends on a radical transformation of our values and actions, not on external saviors.

Who should read *We will not be saved*?

Environmental activists, policymakers, students of indigenous studies, and anyone concerned about the climate crisis who is open to challenging conventional solutions and embracing a deeper, more interconnected understanding of life.

How long does it take to read *We will not be saved*?

It takes approximately 3 to 4 hours to read "We Will Not Be Saved" at an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, given its length of around 160 pages.