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I have chose to write about convictions. Specifically, people's sacrifices to uphold their convictions. By putting their beliefs above themselves, many people are able to commit their lives selflessly to their cause. This magnetic pull to do what they feel is needed through self sacrifice is heroic and courageous and makes me question my commitments to my convictions in my own life. Would I have what it takes to 'put my money where my mouth is' if needed? The people I have selected to write about did and I find all of their dedications inspiring.

Vu Thi Vinh was only a child of fifteen when she felt prepared to sacrifice for her country. She entered the Volunteer Youth Corps, even against her parents wishes in order to demonstrate her patriotism. By willingly exposing herself to constant danger, health risks and savage living conditions she proved that her convictions were stronger than any of these obstacles. As she describes the 'superhuman' tasks that were asked of these young women, I know that my faith in my patriotism would have been washed away during the flood season. Imagine the sheer will for a teenager to believe in her efforts so whole-heartedly that she found eating moss and fungus to be 'good' because she was so hungry. By not only exposing herself willingly to these physical hardships but by also maintaining her will and spirit during these intense trials, her convictions to support her country are given immeasurable weight.

Le Cao Dai also strongly believed in his passion of healing his country men, even up to his death. His life's work began in the French War but my focus is on his sacrifices during the Vietnam War. I can only imagine the driving force needed to compel this man and his team to travel by foot, carrying all of their own equipment, for two months to set up a very rudimentary and semi-functional medical facility in the middle of the jungle. Le Cao Dai was so dedicated to his work that he time and time again was willing to dismantle, relocate and rebuild his make-shift hospital to stay one step ahead of the US attacks. Not only risking his own personal health in the path of Agent Orange, he also was working on the 'front' where the most action was taking place and his life was in constant danger. This is where he was most needed so instead of establishing his clinic on the safer outskirts, he chose to deliberately move his hospital as close as he could, where he knew it would do the most good. This is a man who was trained to help people, to heal people, now selflessly placing himself in a war-zone

in order to help others. With limited supplies, horrible work conditions and even more devastating fatality odds, he gave what he had to offer and didn't give in until it was over.

Randy Kehler surprised me the most with his story of selflessness and determination. Coming from a very privileged life, his sacrifice could be seen as greater as he had more comforts to lose. He could have lived a comfortable life by continuing on with his education and becoming a member of his upper-class society. The war in Vietnam did not directly impact him. He wasn't at great risk to be drafted due to his I-Y status, he could have let that be the end of the war's impact on his life. Instead, he chose to take a moral stand against the war simply because he thought it was wrong. There was no direct personal gain for him, in fact, just the opposite. Opposing the war would create nothing but risk for Kehler. He left school, risked societal disapproval and eventually had his freedom taken when he was sentenced to prison all in the sake of protesting a war he did not believe in. I am not sure I would be willing to give up my freedom, my family or my comforts for two long and torturous years for something I believed in. To hold a conviction so strongly, with everything in him, Kehler proved that he was willing to sacrifice it all, even his freedom in order to do what he thought was right. By drawing attention to his cause by signing petitions, helping AWOLs, protesting and writing for the press, he placed his cause before his own life. This is the ultimate sacrifice for a conviction.

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