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The theme of my paper was kind of hard for me to come up with; I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do for the first couple of days. Then I finally decided that my theme would be on the failure of leadership and how it affected the outcome of the war. The failure of leadership affected the opinions and views of the American people and greatly affected the outcome of the war. The reason I chose this theme for my paper is because it was the thing that stuck out in my mind most of all.

The first story I read that I thought demonstrated my theme was that of Walt Whitman Rostow, one of the leading "hawks" in the Kennedy and Johnson administration and an advocate of American military escalation. Rostow believed that instead of fighting a war of attrition we should have cut off the supply line to the North Vietnamese and taken the city of Vinh hostage by an amphibious attack. Rostow made these recommendations at a meeting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the president Lyndon Johnson. Johnson did not take the advice from Rostow because he was influenced by what happened in the Korean War, when the Chinese entered. In this section of chapter three there are more accounts of Lyndon Johnson refusing advice from many of his top advisers and not taking criticism well at all, to me this is a huge flaw in his leadership and if he was willing to take the criticism better the outcome of the war may have been different. Johnson said right before he died that historians would argue whether he used too much strength against the North or too little and Johnson said "I have come to the conclusion that I used to little."

Fred Branfman told a story that was really astounding to me because he was one of the first westerners to expose the fact that the United States had been secretly bombing Northern Laos since 1964. The main failure of leadership that I believe happened is the fact that so much was kept from the American people. Our leader president Johnson wasn't upfront with the people, so when they would find out that our government had been lying to them they were expectedly upset and couldn't trust in what we were actually fighting for. I don't think that every fact and situation needs to be presented to the people during war times, but when the U.S government is blatantly lying about major military actions then something is very wrong. In this section of the book (pg217) Branfman talks about how he later found out that when Johnson declared the bombing halt over North Vietnam just before the 1968 election in November they simply diverted all the planes into northern Laos. To me this is a clear example of deceit and deception on the American people and is exactly what helped turn the view of the people against the war. And without the backing of the American people the war was unwinnable in my opinion.

The story of Truong My Hoa (pg228) is pretty horrific but amazing at the same time. She had to live through some of the most horrible conditions and

horrible torture that anyone could imagine. Hoa was arrested by the “puppet government” of Ngo Dinh Diem in April of 1964. The Saigon military tribunal accused Hoa of disrupting order and political stability. She was officially sentenced to eighteen months of confinement, but they kept prolonging the sentence and held her in prison for eleven years. The type of torture and captivity that Hoa had to endure was unspeakable; she was kept in a tiger cage for up to a year with no shower or any toilet obviously. And on top of that they would pour powdered limestone onto anyone who was caught talking. That is just some of the awful torture that many of these prisoners had to endure. The so called “puppet government” who was carrying out these atrocities was backed by our U.S government. When an American congressional delegation went to South Vietnam on a fact-finding mission they saw the mistreatment of the prisoners of war with their own eyes. It is amazingly sad to me that a government backed by the United States of America was able to carry out the horrible mistreatments against mankind that they did. We were fighting to stop these kinds of atrocities against mankind. In my opinion if we were going to take on a war we have to make sure that our allies are not carrying out those kinds of crimes against humanity. There should have been leadership to make sure that things like that never happened. As powerful as America is they should not let things like that happen on soil that they are backing and if they do it puts us on the same level as the enemy in my opinion.

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