

Due date: Saturday, 30 October 2010, 09:05 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 30 October 2010, 01:31 PM (790 words)

The Many Facets of Patriotism

The Vietnam War spanned 25 years starting in 1950 and continuing until 1975. During that time, there were many facets of patriotism. There were many different people showing their love and support of their country in diverse manners. The soldiers fighting the war were not the only ones exhibiting their patriotism. Many weren't directly in the fight, but did what they could to support their country. In *Patriots: the Vietnam War Remembered from all Sides* by Christian G. Appy, are three examples of the many facets of patriotism in part three of the book. The personal stories from Vu Thi Vinh (p. 103-104), Julian Bond (p. 143-145), and Bobbie Keith (p. 179-183) illustrate the many ways one can show their support.

The first story is of a young Vietnamese girl named Vu Thi Vinh. At just 15 years old, she lied about her age in order to volunteer to work on footpaths and roads to keep them in working condition for Vietnamese troops. She worked endlessly to clear the roads and patch them after bombings. She worked hard for her country. Without her work and the work of the other girls, the Vietnamese soldiers wouldn't have been able to get supplies. She often found herself starving and searched the jungle for food, but through all the hardships, she never quit. She never stopped supporting her country. Looking back now as she retells her story she says, "We were so young we didn't know anything, but our patriotism was very high. We went to war willingly (p.103)." I find it incredible that at 15 years old this girl was willing to volunteer to help her country. This girl's patriotism is strong, she wanted so badly to support her country and when she found a way she stuck to it.

The second story is of a young man named Julian Bond. Julian Bond was a black man who was passionate about civil rights. His attention turned to the war when a black veteran was shot in the back when he tried to use a white bathroom. This didn't sit well with Bond and he soon started to speak out against the war. He didn't agree with the United States involvement in Vietnam and was brave enough to let that be known. I believe that Julian Bond showed his patriotism by speaking out against the unjust. We created this country with the understanding that it was a free country and we could speak out. Bond loved his country enough to

speak out against its unjust ways. He wanted his country to stop fighting. He opened the eyes of many Americans as he brought forth evidence of unfair treatment of black soldiers. He states, "I think the civil rights movement was responsible for raising the percentage of Americans opposed to the war...(p. 145)." Although most would say he was unpatriotic, I feel that he was patriotic in speaking out for what he believed in.

The third and final story is of a woman named Bobbie Keith. This young woman of 19 years old started to do a weather show for the troops in Vietnam. Her and her staff always thought of new ways to liven the show up. She spoke of the things she would do such as dress up for Halloween or wear a bikini and she commented, "Another time I rode in on a motorcycle (p.181)." This young woman became an icon and something to look forward to. The soldiers loved her and often wrote her letters. She visited Vietnam a couple times and was always a moral-booster. Keith did all of this out of the goodness of her heart, support, and love of her country. She was never paid anything for what she did. This was her way of supporting her country. While some may think her effort was ridiculous I think what she did was perfect. The conditions in Vietnam were difficult for the soldiers. They needed something to look forward to and get their minds off of their tough situation. She provided them just that. I think her efforts are just as respectable as the efforts of anyone else.

There are many more ways to show patriotism, each as valuable as the other. There are so many different ways to show support and love for your country. Some people may not always agree with what it is that someone may chose to do, but it is about what is important to that person. I enjoyed all of the above stories and felt that they all showed patriotism in their different ways. They all did something to show how they love their country.

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