

Due date: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 09:10 PM

Last edited: Saturday, 9 October 2010, 07:18 PM (974 words)

Part 1

Reading personal perspectives of the Vietnam War allowed me to step into the shoes of many. The story that captivated me the most was that of Tran Thi Gung. A girl, similar in age to myself, fighting in a war: bold. Her decision to join the guerillas fascinated me and her story thereafter engulfed me. Such bravery found at a young age left me wondering what she must have been thinking. The obvious answer I found was that she was driven by vengeance, fueled by the death of her father. Gung was still young when the rebellion started, and losing her father at such a terrifying time most likely made a huge impact on her life. The urgency for revenge makes her story somewhat difficult to trust thoroughly because many can be blinded by such an emotion. Although she could not bring her father back, she seemed desperate to kill anyone who was "the enemy". Is it possible that her reason for killing was not for hate of the opponent but for the love of her father? After all, the first time she captured an American, she did have compassion for him. Nevertheless, this is her story. Whether blinded by revenge or not, her tale has enough of a rough edge to make it believable. The "rough edge" I speak of comes from her blunt viewpoint, along with emotions on her sleeve. Gung had a reason to fight. In fact, it seemed that was all she could think about. She didn't seem at all concerned with whether she lived or died, proven by her courage to participate in even the most dangerous tasks. Gung is objective in her story. Her purpose was to be the best daughter she knew how to be. Fear was not a factor once she realized how easy it was to kill someone. She didn't even think of her enemy as people, but as mere targets. I believe she is satisfied with her efforts to honor her father's early death.

Part 2

With the Vietnam War came disappointments; there is no doubt about that. What I found time and time again to be unacceptable in two of the stories was the lack of knowledge America really had about the country of Vietnam. In Paul Kattenburg's account he brings many pessimistic ideas, but is justified due to the circumstances he had to face. His conversations with the National Security Council (NSC) seemed useless because the Council was set in their ways and saw no place for Kattenburg's idea of withdrawal. The reason why I am upset with such rejection is because the Council, like Kattenburg stated, appeared very ignorant. What good was it of the NSC to say they knew best, when they had never really taken an unbiased look at what Vietnam really needed? Without dedicated time living in several parts of Vietnam, how could they truly know what the Vietnamese were thinking? After all, it

is THEIR country and not ours. Even though I mentioned earlier that Kattenburg's pessimism was justified, I was still frustrated to see that he gave up. With views like his, I was hoping to hear of him fighting for others to see where he was coming from. Another form of ignorance of the Vietnamese people came in the story told by Luyen Nguyen. The lack of knowledge came from the U.S. advisors of the commandos. Nguyen was smart enough to realize that these commandos needed to believe their fight had a cause and their efforts would benefit Vietnam. The downfall was that U.S. advisors had a different idea: to tell them to ignore their people and follow orders. In the end, the statement from the advisors ended in unfaithful commandos. In this story, these advisers show a deep disrespect for the people of Vietnam. How could they expect the commandos to be loyal? If they were told this was all about America, why would they ever want to fight? I find this a huge disgrace because, again, if America truly knew the Vietnamese, they might have kept their mouth shut.

Continuing on with America's portrayed ignorance and lack of true relationships with the Vietnamese, I found two stories that showed a great potential for good in Vietnam. The story of Malcolm Browne, an American journalist, showed me that people in Vietnam were willing to make relationships with Americans. Browne spent time with some of the Buddhists because of his friendliness. The idea that the Buddhists ate lunch with an American at a time when the U.S. was still distrusted showed the potential for relationships to be built. The reason why this story only had a potential for good is because the Buddhist's friendship and hospitality to Browne was probably for media attention. With a journalist close by, they would be seen around the world when their "ritual suicides" took place. Nevertheless, relationships are possible. It is likely that if America took more time learning about the various beliefs of Vietnamese people, we could have created a better plan. Another story that showed potential for good came from Paul Hare, a guy who knew little of Vietnam when sent. Again, I will stress that hope was found in relationships, even if they weren't personal. Hare spent time helping rebuild many structures that had been destroyed. This form of assistance allowed Vietnamese people to see that America was not there with the soul purpose to destroy. I believe that Hare's hopeful associations with the Vietnamese also came from his interest in cockfighting. He was spending time with the people; time that allowed him to see what Vietnamese really needed, to feel that they could trust America. Both stories show that hope was plausible if America took the time to gain trust.

Close this window

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)