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Assignment 1

While reading the first section of this book the selection that most caught my attention was that of Tran Thi Gung. This story I feel had the greatest impact on me due to the how much it opened my eyes that civilians were fighting for their country and honor. Reading about this woman who joined the war to seek revenge for her fathers unjust murder makes you realize why these people were fighting until their death. The way she explains how scared she was the first time she was about to be attacked and killed a soldier is mind boggling. I can't begin to imagine myself at 17 years old facing an oncoming strong army then realizing the easiest ways to kill them. Her recollection of hiding in the tunnels and getting trapped for days at a time shows the commitment and dedication each person had for their country. It would be interesting to see how our country would react in a similar situation with the fight on our home soil. Would our civilians be as ready step out to do whatever it takes to live, or would they rely on our Armed Forces for their protection? I honestly don't think that many Americans, including myself, would have the inner fight and strength to engage in warfare like Tran Thi Gung became accustomed to. I feel Gung is a very trustworthy and believable account of what happened during the war. When showing her emotions about the captured American Soldier allowed us to see there still was humanity in these fighters, they were just doing what they had to in order to protect themselves. Although she may seem a little blunt on her remembering of killings, in her last statement it shows why she had to do what she did under those circumstances it wasn't out of hatred, "I think it was justified. But if i went to America and killed people there, I would feel very sorry and guilty. Since the Americans came to my country, I don't feel guilty."(Appy pg. 19). I am sure many of her country men felt the same as Tran Thi Gung in that the killing of the American soldiers wasn't what they wanted to do but had to in order to survive.

In the second section one of the stories that was disappointing to me was Paul Kattenburg's. I found this selection disappointing in the way he was treated and how he observed our higher ranking officials acting. In his recollection of how ignorant and un-intelligent our officials ,who are supposed to be doing the best for our country, makes it very clear as to why our war strategy wasn't working. Reading that Walt Roscow had actually said, " Whats good for Peru is good for Vietnam" (Appy pg. 82) allows us to see how closed

mindful and unwilling to look at alternative options our government was with this war. With no idea about the Vietnamese cultural heritage Americans were oblivious to the rooted importance just the land was to the native people and how hard they would fight to keep it. It was truly a war of stubborn egos and keeping up appearance. When Kattenburg blurted out idea of backing out of Vietnam he was quickly reprimanded by a higher official saying there is no evidence to do this, and instead of looking at this as a viable intelligent option Vice President Johnson simply stated, "We haven't gone this far with this whole thing to give up now" (Addy pg.82). It should never be just a case of not wanting to give up and admit defeat when it is coming at the cost of humanity. Paul was later relinquished of his position due to his vocalization of wanting to back out, clearly speaking your mind isn't what is supposed to be done in critical situations

For me the readings thus far have been very heavy and impacting. Being in the generation born to the Vietnam veterans and survivors we hear all the stories but I have never been as affected by the stories as I am in this book. When asked to find any good in this book I was first confused on how anyone could find good in something so tragic. The few bits of hope I found in these stories so far is the impact and strength of Nationalism. The fact that the Vietnamese people were so proud and willing to stand up to protect their country, shows the valiance and strength banding together against something can be. With our country at such strong disagreements about whether we should be involved with the war or not lead to such a strong division which made it impossible for us to win. The other bits of hope and compassion was how many times people on both sides said that they didn't want to be doing what they were and eventually knew what they were doing was wrong. With such a gruesome and horribly fought war I would hope that the American government would learn to truly know who they are fighting against, and why the opposition is fighting back rather than use the tactics they used in this war of "shoot now ask later". I also hope this war has taught us that lives are precious and no one should be put into a situation without full knowledge of the reason for them being there like so many confused soldiers were during the Vietnam assignments.

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