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HST 195 – Assignment 1

Due 10/9/2010 by 9:00 pm

Assignment 1

Part One

After reading the stories in part one of Patriots – The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides, by Christian Appy, the story that seemed to stick with me was the narration given by Tran Thi Gung. I found it to be the most memorable simply because it was a story from a woman fighting for the Viet Cong. Most of the history of the Vietnam War I have seen portrayed in text books and American cinema focus mainly on the point of view of the American G.I. Every once in awhile I have found something written from the point of view of the American woman doing something to contribute to the war effort or possibly even the point of view of a male Viet Cong soldier (And usually the Viet Cong soldier is feeling sympathetic to the American G.I.) Never had I thought about the fact that Vietnamese women must have fought during the war, probably for both sides, a thought that seems so blatantly obvious now.

If I had to venture a guess as to the reliability and trustworthiness of the speaker, I would find her to be both reliable and trustworthy. I would find her story to be reliable because she uses language to

describe her engagements that is pretty vague and general. I know that we don't usually think about vague as being reliable but I like that she didn't try to give a detailed chronology of the events. She simply tells what she remembers and she lays out the overall order of events, limiting specifics to when discussing events that directly involved her. She does not try to fill the rest of her story with details that she couldn't possibly know or details that could easily be confused and forgotten. As to her trustworthiness, I would trust her because of what she says during the last paragraph of text. In answer to an implied question of her guilt she says, "But I never felt guilty about the killing I did. It was war. Wouldn't you shoot me if you saw me holding a weapon and pointing it at you?" (Page 19) I would say that, due to the fact that she does not feel guilt about her actions, she would feel no reason to lie while she recounts her stories.

As to her credibility, I would take that with a grain of salt. I believe that she believes that everything she says is true, but she is coming from a very subjective place. At the beginning of her story lists her reasons for why she became a guerilla soldier for the Viet Cong. She was doing it for revenge for her father and to stop the brutality, poverty, and deprivation she experienced in her neighborhood growing up. Also, due to some of the language she uses to describe situations, I would say that she still feels a lot of anger toward the people she was fighting against during the war.

Part Two

The story that was most disappointing for me was Le Lieu Browne's story. I was mainly disappointed because of the amount of

censoring they had her doing of all written materials. They had her go as far as to censor an English-to-French dictionary because it included the word Communism. I read this part of her story and had images of Nazi Germany burning books and then flashes of our own countries current bi-partisan media and it stuck in my mind.

Also, Lieu referenced the Buddhist crisis in 1963 which I had not heard of before. I did a little more research into this and learned of the injustice's the Buddhist's had faced during this time. I just recently visited Thailand with a friend whose family is Buddhist and learned about what a peaceful people they are. Since it is fresh in my mind it stuck with me when I read it.

I found positive lessons in the narrative written by Ngo Vinh Long. This was a man who was born into nothing. He was educated by his father, both of whom learned how to speak English with an English-to-French dictionary and Charles Dickens novels, but only after walking one hundred miles to Saigon to obtain the material. At the age of sixteen and with home-schooled education, he took the national high school graduation exam and had the highest score in South Vietnam. He then went to Harvard and later was an advisor to U.S. government official. I find it very inspiring that, even in the midst of war and poverty, that he was able to accomplish so much.

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