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Determination, Tenacity, and Honor

The three stories that I chose were first, "The Truong Son jungle gave us life." (p.103) by Vu Thi Vinh, this one was from the section Trails To War. Second, "Man, if we're up against this, it's gonna be a long-ass year." (p.130) by Dennis Deal, from the Central Highlands section. Third, "What would it be like to hide in a cave day after day for five years?" (p.217) by Fred Branfman, from the section Air War.

The theme that came to me from reading these three particular stories is that the Vietnamese people were very motivated. This is how I came up with my title, Determination, Tenacity, and Honor, all of these words mean motivated to me. Let's start off with Vu Thi Vinh story. This story tells us about The Volunteer Youth Corps. The youth wanted to be a part of this war and show that they cared for their fellow countrymen. There is different ages given to when a youth could join, anywhere from sixteen to eighteen, but if a youth was persistent they could join at almost any age. Vu Thi Vinh joined at fifteen, like many of the youth did she lied about her age. This group was formed to repair the "Ho Chi Minh Trail", along with defusing unexploded bombs. They also work mainly through the late night as this is when the trucks would come and they needed to help get them unstuck. They did this even when they did not have food (rice). they would search for crabs or cassava, and when they could not find that they would even eat what they called "aircraft vegetables", or also known as fungus and moss as this is all that was left after air bombings. They were even able to make a broth that was nutritious from the red ginseng trees. Even with all of the trials and tribulations that they went through the were eager to join and help their cause.

Then there is Dennis Deal's story, in this story it tells how the North Vietnamese just kept coming and used tactics that the U.S. was not ready for. The main part in this story that tied it together was towards the end, Deal is telling of a North Vietnamese soldier that he thought was dead as his butt was shoot off and his insides were leaking out from a large hole. What he saw next was amazing this man was so determined that while being so badly wounded, that he was able to take a grenade and booby-trap himself. This is just another showing of honor and determination.

Last there is Fred Branfman story. I liked this story as it is told by a westerner, but it is more about Vietnamese mans story as much as it is his own. He talks about his conversations with a former Pathet Lo soldier named Ngeun. Ngeun was telling him about when they are charging a barbed wire fence how they would have one man lie down across it and the others would use him to get over it. Branfman could not believe it and asked him how they got picked to be the one to do it. Ngeun told him that there were always many volunteers for this as they all wanted to be the first in the battle. There was also the statement that Ngeun said that he wanted to be known as or have someone say is, Ngeun he loved the people. I think this shows how the people were determined to do whatever and endure whatever they had to not only for themselves but for their fellow countrymen.

As I stated above and these stories showed, the Vietnamese people had determination, tenacity, and honor. I can't say that they were right or wrong but if it would have happened here I would like to think that we would have acted with as much determination, tenacity, and honor as they did for their fellow countrymen and their beliefs.

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Tragic Consequences of the Vietnam War:

After reading this week's assignment in *Appy*, I took a moment to reflect on the reading. Though I enjoyed the reading, there were some sections that caught my attention more than others did. Though not all of the stories carried the same tone, overall I feel the carrying opinion through the section was one of dissatisfaction regarding the war and war efforts.

The first story that caught my attention was the story told from James Thomas in the section *You Want Me To Star World War III*. The reason this story caught my attention was simply the lack of attention Thomson paid regarding the documents he was approving. The documents approved missions described as "Armed reconnaissance" with no further questioning allowed soldiers to fly over land masses armed with missiles and fire upon anything that looked out of the ordinary (Appy). The reading never mentioned how many targets were indeed valid targets VS how many targets were invalid. I can only imagine how many civilians were affected by the unguided attempts to bomb suspicious targets. I found this passage disturbing; I was appalled by the lack of further investigation regarding the missions. The reason I chose this section to support my opinion regarding the reading was because of Thomson's response when he learned exactly what he had approved, "I realized I was authorizing quite a bit of killing with no knowledge of what it was all about and it staggered me" (James Thomson). Though I am sure he felt remorse for his actions, in all reality he should have asked further questions to prevent the unnecessary killing of other human beings.

The second story I chose to discuss was from the *Trials of War* section of the reading by Helen Tennant Hegelheimer. I too believe this is an important section of the reading. Hegelheimer discussed how she was a flight attendant on flights of uniqueness. It was her job to make sure soldiers were comfortable on their flights home from Vietnam. She explained how she could tell by the demeanor of the soldiers whether they would be likely to engage in conversation. She explained she often tried to keep the tone on the lighter side, never asking about their experiences of the war. She explained she often had soldiers ask to help them practice their table manners, in a sense it was their way of acclimating from wartime back to civilian life. I chose this section for many reasons. First, Hegelheimer stated that when soldiers would depart the plain she made a special effort to not say good-bye instead saying, "I will see you in twelve months" (Hegelheimer). Hegelheimer claimed she could see fear and even death in the eyes of the soldiers. Knowing that many of the soldiers who departed the plane would not return did not denture her from having a positive attitude. Though she was not directly fighting the war, she was affected with the knowledge that she may have been the last to see them, she stated she had to be their "Wife, their sister, their girlfriend, and for those troops who had no one else...their mother" (Hegelheimer). This job was not any easy role, Hegelheimer often admitted she found herself and fellow flight attendants turning to alcohol to help with the discomfort of saying goodbye to those who will not return and morning those who did not return.

The last section I chose from *Central Highlands* by Dennis Deal. The reason I chose this section was that the detailed description of Deals experience in Vietnam. Deal's first encounter with Vietnam was described as "Peaceful" even describing it as being as beautiful as "A national park", suggesting a softening tone (Deal). A paragraph later, we learn of his horrific experience that goes along with the war. Deal describes

situations many would only experience through DVD's, never first hand. He witnessed his fellow comrades become casualties of war. Deals first impression of Vietnam quickly changed as he ventured through the jungle fearing for his life. He described a situation where he witnessed a soldier gun down, "Horrendous amount of lead coursing through the battle area. I couldn't see who it was through all the battlefield haze and smoke" (Deal). Unfortunately, this is not an isolated story. Many soldiers experienced this type of combat. Hearing from someone who lived through it with great, detail simply solidifies the harsh reality of war like environments.

I enjoyed the reading this week. I am aware there were many political reasons for the United States present in Vietnam. As with any war, there were unfortunate casualties. However, I do believe many decisions were made selfishly with a political agenda. This type of attitude simply cost many soldiers an unnecessary premature death. Though there were many tragic stories that would have supported my opinion, I felt these stories held more influence. My overall opinion regarding the reading was that it was aimed more at the tragic side of the Vietnam War instead focusing on the political aspects. I believe there is a lot that can be learned from this war, not simply tactical strategies, but also the political aspect of how not to make decisions.

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After reading the third section in Christian Appy's book "Patriots," one of the common threads I found was, "sacrifice for duality." The Vietnam conflict to me brought about a lot of separatism in the United States. The United States became split into the "Hawks" and the "Doves." Antiwar protests created a lot of emotional anger towards the United States involvement in Vietnam. Although, at the time, most Americans didn't even know why we were even over there, including the soldiers themselves. The protests seem to escalate people's emotions over the war and I believe that Norman Morrison believed so strongly, that America's actions in Vietnam were of unjust cause, that he ultimately "sacrificed for duality" and immolated his body in front of the Pentagon.

When I can upon the "Ultimate Protest," I found it heartbreaking to see a man like Norman Morrison believe in something so profoundly that he would sacrifice his life for people he never meet, a country he had never traveled, and for American soldiers dying for our own government's cause. I believe that Norman Morrison's immolation had a profound impact on the people in Vietnam, America, perhaps all over the world. So profound, that the Vietnamese people thought Norman gave his life for them (pg. 151 Patriots.) For his family the sacrifice seems a sad way to die. A sad way for his children to grow up and know what he had done to himself. He "sacrificed for duality," and with that he sacrificed being a father to his children and husband to his wife. He gave the ultimate sacrifice for something he believed and although, profound and touching for many, devastating for his family and loved ones.

Other people who were involved in the Vietnam Conflict "sacrificed for duality" in ways other than sacrificing their lives. In some ways the war caused a lot of people to change their duality because of their certain duties that were given to carry out, while on tour or duty. When it came to Triage some nurses and doctor's had to make decisions pertaining to human life. In many circumstances in the United States we do have a value of life system set in place. Children who go to the emergency room usually have priority over other people that are of elder age. In war the value of life falls on nurses and doctor's to make decisions on what life is important in saving first and so on. When reading Sylvia Lutz Holland's story in seemed that there were certain rules and duties that she understood and obeyed. I believe if she would have been a nurse in a hospital in America she never would have left a baby to die in the trash breathing and alive. Her "sacrifice for duality," I believe was for the American soldiers that she posed a duty to. She was a nurse wanting to help as many people has she could, but her obligation first and for most was for the wounded American soldiers. In her mind that meant that if a baby was born premature and needed oxygen, the oxygebwouldn't be available because it was reserved for incoming soldiers. Then if she saved the baby that would be one less oxygen tank for a soldier and he would ultimately die. It saddens me that in war a Vietnamese babies life was discarded so abruptly, when there was a small chance it could have not been premature and didn't even need the oxygen. In America this would be immoral and a hateful act upon humanity, were being in Vietnam she felt she had no other choice. She believed that by sacrificing the baby this meant saving an American soldiers life that was more valuable at the time. Sylvia Holland helped hundreds of American soldiers who had been wounded serving their tour in Vietnam. She also helped many innocent Vietnamese and even Viet Cong. War can change the morals and people end up "sacrificing for duality" because at the time, it is what they honor and believe.

Many Vietnamese were honorable to their nation even as POW's. Truon My Hoa, "sacrificed for duality" by staying devote to her nation by sacrificing her freedom. She was only suppose to be imprisoned for eleven months and instead she was imprisoned for eleven years. With her "sacrifice for duality," came prolonged torture. She was kept in small cages called tiger cages. She wasn't allowed to bathe for a year and was pretty much naked for a good portion of a year. She till held on to her duality after being told that all she had to do was solute our flag or condemn communism.(Patriots, pg 230.) She overcame the torture and life in prison through her sacrifice and helped build a school in the prison. I find it quite profound that Norman Morrison's self immolation had moved her while she was imprisoned. Her prison had dedicated a minute of silence to Norman for his sacrifice. Her own sacrifice I believe gave Norman Morrison's sacrifice so much meaning, because in some ways they both sacrificed duality for the same cause.

All of these stories had one thread in common and it is "sacrifice for duality". Although, some were more drastic then others, they all three sacrificed for what the strongly believed in and all of them sacrificed a part of themselves for a cause that they would die for.

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For my common theme of part 3 in Appy's book, is anti-war protestors and the extent of their actions based on their morals. I can sum up this theme and call it "passionate protestors." The Vietnam war was filled with pro-war and anti-war activists. The polls of how much the population was on one side or the other of this issue was a roller coaster. Many politicians made crucial political decisions solely based on the outcome of the people being in favor for their views on the war. Anti-war activists have gone as far as death in order to provoke others to see their views and reasons for being against the Vietnam war.

For my first account relating to anti-war activists, i chose Seth Tillman. He was a young man with a Ph. D. from Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Tillman was a very active politician and was involved with many acts of Congress and spend a great amount of time persuading the political table to go against the war. Now the difference Tillman had over the other activists, is he chose to end the war by finishing it, not pulling out. He demanded many politicians to get up and speak freely about the war and try to persuade the people, because he wasn't strong enough to do it himself.

In my second account, i chose to look at Fred Branfman and his involvement in trying to prevent the war. Now Fred lived in Laos for many years, and spend a great amount of his time trying to expose the fact that Laos was being secretly bombed by the Americans. He was a great activists in the hope that the people would open their eyes to the illegal aspects America was inflicting on foreign countries. He joined and created many organizations included Project AirWar and the Indochina Resource Center. Both of these organizations were devoted to the end of the Vietnam War. He was also a writer and wrote many short books and essays based on refugees he has interviewed and personal accounts in Laos. All his efforts make him worthy of being a great war protestor and anti-war activist.

For my third and final account of anti-war activists, i decided to take a further look into Nguyen Duy, a Vietnamese poet who served for the North. Now this may not seem like an anti-war activists, but i believe that the heart and soul of a human decides weather or not they are for or against the war. Although he served for the North by cleaning rifles and maintaining war equipment, he was definatly against the war. He hated war and everything about it. He did not want to be in the war. All he wanted was to live in his peaceful village that he grew up in. He states that there is nothing beautiful about war, and to me, this is a firm statment saying that he is against it. It was only his pride for his country and the pressure from the government that kept him cleaning rifles day in and day out. If your heart is not in the war, then you are not in the war.

In conclusion, all these people who were against the war one way or another all had common emotions. They all shared the same feelings of dispare and hatred for the war. War is an ugly concept, and although many people are against it, i still feel war is necessary to live in this world and interact with each other.

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One of the most powerful themes that I picked up in this section was that on military retraction from Vietnam. There were several stories that illustrated the despair and pain different people went through because they felt tied to their moral beliefs. Under "The Ultimate protest", Anne Morrison Welsh tells the story of her husband who was so full of anguish because of the war, he gave in to immolation, because he believed that it was the only way to get through to other Americans. Anne explains that Norman "did all the routine things a person would do to oppose the war. He wrote letters to the editor, he lobbied congressmen, he went to demonstrations, and teach-ins, and vigils" (153). Decades later, Anne had not been able to let go of the action of immolation her husband had taken. I thought it was wonderful for Anne and her two daughters to go to Vietnam, meet some of the people, and plant trees for her husband. One of the most moving things about this story were all the people that knew who Anne's husband was and were touched by his anti-war act. Just one man sacrificing his body reached the ears and hearts of hundreds or thousands of people. Just as Thich Nhat Hanh said, immolation is not a form of suicide. It is sacrificing your body, and showing that you feel so strongly about something that you are willing to suffer, burn, and eventually die for. I believe that Norman Morrison was a man who understood this and believed for fiercely in the removal from Vietnam, he had no other choice then immolation.

Under "Prisoners of War", a man named Randy Kehler tells a long story about how he has journeyed from being a boy who was proud of his country and wanted to fight for it bravely, to a man who saw through all of the propaganda and lies of the government and was able to see some of the truths of the situation in Vietnam. Early in his life, Kehler met and read the story of a man named Max Sandin who had put his principles above everything else in his life. This man had sacrificed his career, his reputation and even his material wellbeing for what he believed in. Kehler, thinking it was a remarkable story didn't really understand that kind of sacrifice until years later. As time went on, Kehler began to see the effects of the war all around him. Some protests were eye-opening, and he was even mistaken for a military officer and almost beaten. As the war went on, Kehler's anti-war feelings were so strong that he was imprisoned for a substantial amount of time. While in prison, Kehler recounts, "a lot of draft resisters talked about whether we should consider ourselves prisoners of war. We were wary of using the term publicly because we knew that whatever hardships we were going through, they didn't compare to what prisoners in war zones were suffering" (237). These other draft resisters that were imprisoned with Kehler were not guilty of anything except believing that their government was making decisions that were morally wrong that would haunt them for decades to come.

Another story, which illustrates a quite different aspect of resisting American involvement in Vietnam is that of Truong My Hoa. She was a southern revolutionary who was imprisoned for eleven years by the American-backed government of South Vietnam. After being arrested in 1964 for supposedly "disrupting order and political stability" (229), Truong My Hoa's sentence of eighteen months was prolonged over and over until eleven years had passed. During the time she was in prison, she was exposed to inhuman conditions in a grotesque environment. Along with other women, she was tortured, beaten, interrogated and abandoned in this prison. Truong's recollections are very vivid and detailed as to some of the specific hardships during this time. The officials that were holding her constantly tried to beat confessions out of her and have her say things that were against her principles. All she wanted was for

the Americans to leave Vietnam so that there was some kind of piece again. Because of the US military involvement in Vietnam, the situation grew to catastrophic levels. Truong explains, "The support of peace-loving people throughout the world, and especially from the American people, was a great source of strength and encouragement to us in our struggle. We were not alone" (230). Just like Kehler and Morrison, Truong just expressed her strong beliefs of peace and the ending of the war in Vietnam. None of these people were alone in their principles and moral beliefs of the war. These are the people that truly fought for what they believed was right. They fought and struggled for peace.

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Patriots Journal Entry #3

One theme that is seen again and again when reading the personal accounts presented in *Patriots* by Christian Appy is that of willful ignorance. Willful ignorance can be defined as "a bad faith decision to avoid becoming informed about something so as to avoid having to make undesirable decisions that such information might prompt" (wikipedia.com). There are many ways that we see this type of ignorance manifested throughout the accounts of those involved in the conflict. What all of these have in common, however, is the fact that willful ignorance was a necessary defense mechanism. On both sides of the conflict those involved were asked to continue to struggle through relentless turmoil. In circumstances such as these, reason and rationality could work against you, and the human brain seemed to need to find a way to cope with the intellectual dissonance that living in this environment created. "In Vietnam I learned about the capacity of the human mind to build a model of experience that screens out even very dramatic and obvious realities." (*Patriots*, pg. 205) This is a quote from the war journalist Jonathan Schell, and it gives us a very clear idea of what it is to be willfully ignorant. He is speaking of how his fellow journalists held on to "a story they had brought with them to Vietnam" of the American efforts being those of "freeing an enslaved people" (*Patriots*, pg. 205). The devastating bombing witnessed by these journalists in Quang Ngai Province should have proven to them otherwise. Instead *The New York Times* article that came out of this was one about marines building a hospital, not of the destruction of over three fourths of the villages of this province. It seems that they simply could not believe what was going on right in front of their eyes.

Sometimes this type of ignorance seemed even more willful than others. This can clearly be seen in the interview with fighter pilot Harlan S. Pinkerton Jr. It is within his account that we can see the most common manifestation of willful ignorance during the Vietnam war: blind patriotism. By following orders and doing exactly what is asked of you as a soldier, unquestioningly, you are by definition being willfully ignorant. "To me, it was my responsibility as an American citizen. I didn't really question it. I had orders. My country had made the decision that we were going to take part in that conflict over there and it was my duty to my country to follow the orders." (*Patriots*, pg. 221) He uses this inherently weak argument to justify to us and, most importantly, to himself the reason why he happily dropped thousands of pounds of bombs on the heads of simple country farmers. The British author Samuel Johnson referred to this reality almost two hundred years earlier with his famous quote: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel".

At other times, however, we see this type of ignorance utilized as a true defense mechanism to shield one's psyche from unspeakable pain. Whereas Pinkerton was willfully ignorant in order to help justify to himself his deeds, Truong Ma Hoa held fast to her belief system in spite of the fact that doing so would subject her to even more horrific torture. She, as well as many of her fellow prisoners of war, had taken to heart the words spoken by the poet To Huu: "I consider myself a half dead person already" (*Patriots*, pg. 230). The most natural instinct for a human being is to do anything it takes to survive. In her case, she defies this instinct by refusing to give any information to her captors. A more existentialist definition of willful ignorance is simply the denying of one's total freedom of will. By considering herself half dead already, while acknowledging "A revolutionary's integrity is sacred" (*Patriots*, pg. 230) we can see very clearly how willful ignorance shaped her experience during the Vietnam war. She went as far as almost dehumanizing herself for her cause.

Willful ignorance has as much to do with reconciliation than anything else. How do I reconcile to myself the fact that I am being tortured; the fact that I am torturing someone else? How do I justify an overall peaceful pursuit (the "liberation" of South Vietnam) by the slaughtering of hundreds of thousands of people? Paul Warnke unknowingly sums up the theme of willful ignorance perfectly with one line: "I don't know whether the war was morally wrong, but it was killing so many people"(Patriots, pg. 280).

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A NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM ?

I think that a person could talk about numerous themes from this section. One thing that stuck with me is "Vietnam", was the north and south divided by ideology? Was there a North and South Vietnam or was the country divided by westerners to suit their needs/desires? I don't think that the average peasant even knew their country was divided. The US should have let Vietnam unify itself before trying to stop the spread of communism. Our tactics turned people who had no williness or want to fight into fighters, or at the very least willing to help the Communist armies in all of its forms.

"They Slept At Our House" (pg.279) Paul Warnke

We fought the war for a separate South Vietnam, but there wasn't any South and there never was one. I think that was our big mistake. We used to talk about nation-building, but no outside force is going to build a nation. There just wasn't a government there in South Vietnam that had had any popular support. We had great difficulty coming to that conclusion. So I had very serious doubts as to whether there was any thing we could do effectively to bring about an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam.

AIR WAR (pg.202) Christian Appy

Almost 75 percent of all American sorties were flown in South Vietnam where four million tons of bombs were dropped, four times the amount dropped on North Vietnam..... The fear and suffering produced by US bombing, far from crushing the Vietnamese will to fight, did as much as any single factor to generate anti-American hostility. When family members died in bombing strikes, Vietnamese did not need Communist propaganda to persuade them that the United States was a foreign aggressor. And in the South, Villagers were often confronted with the contradiction that their land was being bombed by the very people who claimed to be protecting them from external Communist aggression.

Morale Boosters (pg.192) Vu Hy Thieu

We bought our paper from people in strategic hamlets. Every night we infiltrated those hamlets to buy supplies. The strategic hamlet program was designed to isolate the people from us and turn them against us. We had to explain to them why we opposed the program and the crimes of the enemy. Some of us would give political talks while others would buy supplies, and I would draw posters to inform people of the victories won by the Liberation Army or to mobilize people to rise up and overthrow the government.

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The major theme that occurs to me a great deal while reading the contributions from the anti-war activists is that the authors seem to lack a basic understanding of politics and the nature of the cold war. Now, most Americans don't like dealing with the harsh realities of life in general and, in particular, with the especially bare-knuckled arena of international relations and war. What really disturbed me most of all when reading the anti-war activists that, while being more than willing to condemn the United States for its involvement in fighting the totalitarian communist regime of North Vietnam and its puppet guerrilla/terrorist movement in the South, the anti-war types seem to gloss over the fact that the worst mass killings in the whole of the South was the 3,000+ citizens of Hue that were drug out from their homes, shot in the back of the head, and dumped in mass graves when the NVA and VC took the city during Tet of '68; but I digress. My main point of this piece will be to show that anti-war authors had a profound inability to look at or comprehend the hard realities of Communism and the Cold War.

Starting with the submission "The Ultimate Protest" by Norman Morrison's widow we see a total lack of understanding of the basic nature of the war on Mr. Morrison's part. The man burns himself alive to protest a war that then continues to rage on for another ten years, not the most effective means of stopping a war. Going on we can see the total narcissism and irresponsibility of his actions by the fact that he left a his young wife widowed and his three children orphaned. To what effect? Answer: none. My opinion on the subject of Mr. Morrison's death is that if he truly cared about ending the war he could have done a number of things such as write a letters to the editor, get involved politically and elect better leaders, or go to Vietnam with an aid agency to help alleviate some the war's human suffering.

Ms Rothstein's piece about her meeting with Communist officials in Czechoslovakia and her subsequent trip to North Vietnam also bears need for some criticism. Rothstein, without any sort of critical inquiry, accepts from female Vietnamese communist cadres that American GI's are shoving broken Coca Cola bottles up the vagina's of innocent villagers, then makes a recording and plays back hundreds of times to people back state side. Rothstein accepts the cadres' invitation to tour North Vietnam and, upon her arrival, is greeted by Communist Party officials and told how important important their presence is to ending the war. Had she thought about that statement she might have replied that the quickest way to peace would be for Hanoi to order the NVA to return to North Vietnam. It is also interesting to note that Ms Rothstein fails to mention the brutal crushing of the Prague Spring by an invasion of over 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops less than a year after her visit to Czechoslovakia.

While Truong My Hoa was not, technically, an anti-war activist she was deeply opposed to American involvement in the Vietnam War. Her response to Appy's question about the North's imprisonment of former officials of the former South Vietnamese government is indicative of the true nature of Communist regimes that the War protesters in American seem to gloss over. *"Those who worked for the puppet government had to be imprisoned in reeducation camps because they were obviously guilty."* That line alone tells us a great deal about the ideology that the United States was pitted against in South-East Asia.

All told the anti-war types' lack of understanding about the nature of the Vietnam War and the realities of Communist inspired totalitarianism make their protests ring hollow

in my ears. If these people had bothered to present political reasons for opposing the war instead of spouting anti-American propaganda they might have had more success in their endeavor. As it was Nixon and Kissinger ended the war when they felt the political situation suited the United States' best interests, and not a second before.

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FEAR

Trails To War- Helen Tennant Hegelheimer

Central Highlands- Dennis Deal

Air War- Nguyen Quang Sang

In each of these stories I've found that each writer shares a common fear stemming from the war. In Air War Sang talks about the first time he ever saw an American. It was during an air attack when an American helicopter came down so close to the ground that he saw the door gunners face. To this day he still has nightmares that terrify him. He was fighting in an area where there was no jungle to protect him from the air raids, he was surrounded by water. This fed into his fear he had to hope that the Americans in the helicopters would think that they were just common peasants, or when they were firing they would dive as deep as they could in the water until the firing stopped then come up to get another breath. He uses the words nightmarish experience.

Central Highlands, Dennis Deal. He said that he thought of himself as a bad ass and thought that a five foot one hundred pound Asian punk wouldn't be able to hurt him, but he soon found out otherwise. He was a Lieutenant and in 1965 was in the middle of the largest battle that Vietnam had yet produced. He was terrified but felt that he had to show just a millimeter more courage than that of his men for them to be okay. He thought that if he showed how terrified he was that his men would fail. He saw a lot of death but through it all managed to stay courageous for his men and his Country.

Trails To War, Helen Tennant Hegelheimer. She was a Stewardess that brought troops in and out of Vietnam. She landed right there in the middle of gunfire and all to transport our troops back and forth. She also could not show her fear. She had to be strong for the men that were getting ready to risk their lives some ready to die for our Country. She would talk with them and even in the most intimate of conversations could not show the raw emotions that she felt as these men showed their. She comforted them the whole way there and did the hardest thing that the other stewardesses didn't want to do. She ushered the men off of the plane as they descended into the war zone. She said that the other women would cry in the bathroom as she did this, but she was good at it. She never said goodbye but instead goodbye, good luck, see you later and things along those lines. She felt as at that moment she was whoever that soldier needed her to be whether it be his mother, sister, wife, or girlfriend, she resembled home and the end of the ramp was the war. She was scared for these men wondering if they would ever come home, and sometimes they would go home with an empty plane which she thought to mean that there weren't any to bring home. When they would fly in Vietnam air space everyone on the plane was scared. It was a sigh of relief when they were clear.

Although war is a scary thing for anyone that is involved it is a fear that is personal and felt for different reasons and in different ways for each and every person. In this case it's a Soldier from each side and a stewardess who may not be actively fighting in the war but expresses fear for many other reasons.

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“The War of What Ifs”

The Vietnam War was full of *what ifs*, so some people thought we could have ended the war *if* we did this or we could have pulled out *if* we did that. To me the Vietnam War is like a maze, there are a lot of twists and turns and when you don't get the results that you wanted it leaves you wondering *what if* we would have done this or we should have done that. The great thing about history is that you can learn from your mistakes, and I feel that we should have learned a lot from that point in time.

Walt Rostow (p.124, Appy) believed that the U.S. could have won the war if the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff would have taken his advice on how to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail and “shrivel the Communists out of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam”. Rostow also wanted to take the city of Vinh hostage and demand the North Vietnamese to leave the south. I don't think that taking a North Vietnamese city hostage would deter the North, because they were even willing to take bombings to reunify Vietnam so they would probably accept the city of Vinh as a temporary loss.

Another *what if* came from Anne Morrison's account (p.150, Appy). Anne Morrison's husband Norm burned himself to death outside Robert McNamara's office as a protest. In 1995 Anne read McNamara's book in which he said the war was wrong and then wrote him a letter, and then they started talking and she forgave him. Although she forgave him she still wonders *what if* McNamara would have publicly acknowledged that the war was wrong and that we should withdraw, and how many lives could have been saved including her husbands.

The last account that I am going to include is Truong My Hoa (p.228, Appy). Hoa was imprisoned for 11 years because the Saigon Military Tribunal accused her of disrupting order and national security. While in South Vietnam prisons she underwent many horrible things such as torture and was forced to live in a small cage with five other women for a whole year. The prison tried to break their will and get them to reveal secrets about communist organizations but no matter how much they were tortured they always stood strong. They were thinking that if the U.S. public could persuade the policy makers that what was going on there was wrong the war might end. My question is *what if* we would have realized earlier that we couldn't break the will of the Revolutionaries and the North Vietnamese? How many lives could have been saved? I believe that this is one of the major lessons that we should have taken out of this war.

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Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

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One main theme that I found occurring in the readings over and over again was the theme of finding the positive. This theme is something that is a bit personal to me, because, quite ironically, I'm a person that tends to find the negative in a lot of things. So in order to sort of work my way around that bad habit, I tried to find the positive in a lot of the words the people spoke. I think I realized that many of the speakers were doing that for me, hence, why I chose this theme.

The first war account that I found the most positive was that of Vu Thi Vihn. She was a young Vietnamese woman who volunteered to work on the Ho Chi Minh trail. I was astonished to see that she kept mentioning the positives in every thing she did. In this jungle, in which death was around at every corner, she manages to admit that "The tough jungle gave us life" Amidst all of the fighting, death, her everyday struggles against malaria, fatigue, bombing raids, she managed to find happiness in it all.

The second story I found that the speaker had found a positive by accident. Dennis Deal, who retold his story about the battle of the Ia Drang valley, was mostly tactical war story with little feeling. However, at the end of the passage, Appy asks him about the significance of the Ia Drang battle. He immediately responds "It was a tremendous success!" However, he retracts his statement, saying that it in fact was not a success. He mentioned General Westmoreland was rather careless with his soldiers, and how the rest of the general staff tried to cover up the fact that morale was low and that the entire battle was a stalemate. However, I'm fairly sure, that given a chance to rethink his statement, he would have emphasized the success of the soldiers on the ground and not that of the Generals at HQ.

The third story is yet another Vietnamese account of Quach van Phong. He was an artist that served in the South as an artist to boost morale. His jobs included sketches of soldiers (which he would give back to them, and they would treasure them forever) and also sketching the battlefield, sometimes with nothing but spit, dirt, and twigs to draw with. He mentions the fact that many of his superiors found that his job in the army was useless. However, he mentions that he had developed bonds with his comrades, making him feel more important. He mentions that "An artist can be as important in war as a soldier" Also another positive that Phong found was that he could connect with American GI's more than he could with those who were not in the war. Despite being enemies, he says that "it's surprising and ironic that when I talk with American veterans I feel that we have more in common in some ways that I have with Vietnamese who were not in the South." That really struck me as someone who could really put animosities behind him and talk with his enemy. He found something positive in something that could have been a very negative situation. Something that really inspired me to do the same.

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Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

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My theme for this journal assignment comes from one of the title quotes that stood out to me above the others. This quote can be found in one of the poems of Nguyen Duy, a famous Vietnamese poet who cleaned rifles for the Northern Vietnamese soldiers during the Vietnam War. It states: *"In the end, in every war, whoever won, the people always lost."*

To me this concept takes on many different meanings, no matter what side of a war you look at. It can relate to an entire country losing a war, an army losing a battle, or a single soldier losing his life. At the same time it can relate to a country winning a war, yet suffering an immense number of casualties. There is so much to lose apart from the war itself, there are always the personal things such as losing your homeland, your friends and your family. When it comes to war, every sense of victory earned is at the price of a heavy loss.

The Vietnam War is no exception to this, and is perhaps one of the best illustrations of how much negativity and damage can be inflicted on a country during a period of war. With war, no matter what the rate of success is, losing is inevitable. In the end of the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese won, yet the people, both north and south, American and Vietnamese, individually lost.

Jim Soular served in Vietnam as a flight engineer on a Chinook helicopter and he recounts how as a kid he loved the war. He loved the high adrenaline rush of each assault and sense of responsibility he had being in control of a one-and-a-half-million dollar helicopter. But now, as a man in his late fifties he hates the war, because now he understands it. He describes how they would move Vietnamese villagers from their homes because they believed the areas to be in control of the Viet Cong; however, he was not aware of the great loss they were handing these villagers. He exclaims, "We didn't understand that their ancestors were buried there, that it was very important to their culture and religion to be with their ancestors." The vast majority of the villagers who were airlifted from their homelands never made it back and lost their connections with their ancestors, connections that meant everything to them.

Soular not only witnessed the losses of others, he experienced a great personal defeat himself when his best friend David was shot and killed by another GI in a drunken argument. Regarding the same issue he goes on to explain that the loss of a helicopter to the military was worth more than the loss of a human being. A man charged with crashing a helicopter was sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor while the man who killed David was sentenced to five. The loss of an expensive piece of military equipment might have an effect on future operations during the war, but the loss of a life will forever affect family and friends regardless of how many years have passed since the war's conclusion.

The aspect of losing is not limited to the past tense. Many wartime decisions are made as preemptive actions for the fear of losing something, such as in this case, the government's fear of losing its reputation. Lyndon B. Johnson and the United States government did not want to appear soft on communism so to keep their powerful, hardnosed reputation in the eyes of the rest of the world, Johnson used the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to become fully engaged in the Vietnam War.

Seth Tillman's anecdote follows these decisions through the eyes of Senator J. William Fulbright who was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Fullbright initially supported the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution but as the war progressed he privately tried to influence Johnson against escalating the war, stating that the government ought to disengage from Vietnam. Johnson ridiculed this proposal and fueled by his high approval rating he pursued with repeated air strikes over North Vietnam. Tillman says, "Congress could have stopped the war. As Fullbright himself said on a number of occasions, 'If we were willing to take the responsibility, we could stop this war tomorrow.'" Congress was more concerned about maintaining their stance against communism than taking any sort of responsibility, and they were not about to lose their credibility. Little did they know, their decisions would end up costing them so much more than reputation alone.

During a war, the loss of lives is unavoidable and all it takes is one dead soldier to cause extreme sorrow for the countless people around him. Wars are often measured by death, and in the big picture that one dead soldier becomes merely a statistic. But one thing that doesn't show up in the statistics is the loss of freedom; an immeasurable consequence of the unforgiving conditions of war. Freedom is lost when American soldiers constantly have to follow orders and obey commanders. It is lost when Vietnamese peasants are forcibly removed from their homes in large masses at a time. Freedom is especially lost when an innocent country to the west of Vietnam is repeatedly bombed, and its residents are the victims of an overwhelming number of air strikes.

For four years Fred Brenfman lived in Laos, aiding the Third World country educationally and economically for an organization called the International Voluntary Services. He tells about how he would talk with the Laotian peasants who would tell stories of spending half of their lives in dug-out bomb shelters, and watching family members die before their eyes. Brenfman describes his frustration and anger with the fact that the American executive branch had been secretly bombing this country, and not to destroy equipment, but to kill people. The air strikes dropped what they called "pineapple bombs" – bombs specifically designed to increase the number of casualties. Brenfman writes, "You have the United States, the most powerful people in the world, bombing the weakest people in the world." The Laotians had a minimal amount of defense; America had them completely on their heels. The people of Laos were unwillingly dragged into the Vietnam War, and the freedom to carry on their everyday lives was entirely shattered.

No matter what the circumstances are, war will always have a negative side to it, and the number of losses will outweigh the number of victories, whether it is in the big picture or at the personal level. But the wounds at the personal level will be scarred much deeper and much longer; it is the people who take the biggest hits and the individuals who have to endure the biggest sacrifices. Because when it comes to war, the people will always lose.

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Little Things Matter

When you are going to war or are already in war it's the little things that matter to you. I was in the military during a time of war and so I can somewhat relate to authors or stories that I have chosen. I have put in some of the things that happened to me during my military days to try and make it more personable. In the Helen Tennant Hegelheimer (pg 106) she talks about her trips as a flight attendant and the soldiers on the plane with her. Having been the guy on that plane ride I really relate to that trip and the importance of someone to talk to. She talks about never saying good luck or good-bye to the soldiers and that might not seem like something that really matters, but when you get off that plane in a country that you have never been to and you are going to a war zone good luck is the last thing you want to hear. When I got off the plane the flight attendant, knowing that I was in the military, didn't say anything she just smiled because we both knew what was going on here. Just talking to someone that is not military on the plane ride is awesome. When she would try to strike up a conversation with the troops when they were on their way home and just listen or even help them practice talking to non-military is small but when I got out of the military and started talking to non-military members I would still use military abbreviations or terms and having someone to talk to is important even though it seems so small.

Now in the Quach Van Phong (pg 186) Having someone that has a gift, in this case being an artist, can help with morale. Anything that keeps your mind off fighting, whether in the war zone or not, is little but important. Phong writes about how when he left the unit the local soldiers wanted him back, or how the soldiers from commander down would pamper him. When I was in the military and standing watch in the gulf at midnight and freezing my butt off, we had this guy that was really good at telling jokes and freestyle. He would tell some of the funniest jokes, some dirty, or just bust into a freestyle about standing watch. While he did this it kept my mind off standing watch in the gulf where every fishing boat could be the enemy. The picture that Phong would draw would just keep the soldier's mind off the fight and help with their morale. Having an artist or comedian with you seems small, but is one of the most important things when in the war zone.

The last story I want to talk about is the Chi Nguyen story (pg 175) and while it ties into my theme for a completely opposite reason than the first two stories. We all know that medical facilities in war zones are not the prettiest of things and the people that work there deserve some credit not only for what they do, but for what they see. Nguyen writes about amputating a soldier and seeing the soldier's journals. Amputating a man that is now blind might seem like a bad thing but being alive and not having to fight might be worth it. When you are fighting a war that has no end in sight, like the war in Afghanistan or the operation Iraqi Freedom which I was in, you want to do anything to get away from the fighting. I can remember just wanting to fall down a flight of stairs and tear up my knee so I could go home so those little things like getting hurt, whether it be amputation or any injury that would get you home to see or be near your family again is of the most importance.

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Feelings of Rights and Responsibilities

I chose the three I did because they all had a place in my heart. Some good and some not so good. The first I picked was from civil rights to antiwar, the two do not belong together. Second I picked The ultimate protest, makes me sick. Third I picked they slept at our house because i feel the pains of Paul Warnke.

First I will tell how I feel about civil rights to antiwar. I feel the two are separate in nature and do not belong in the same phrase. A lot of black men were given opportunities, and the military did more than any other American institution to desegregate itself. In my opinion people like mlk, Malcolm X and others do more damage in society than good. Just like the phrase "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today" is something you do not say about your own country. Then it brings me to the coward Caccius Clay. Someone who would be the Heavyweight Champion of the World, all the freedoms he had then to change his name, run like a coward, and want the same liberties as all the rest who did not run makes me sick. As I feel sorry for Sammy Younge, the two are separate and dealt with differently. I also would like no one in politics that once fled, dodged or did not fight when called upon and now want to lead is gross. With General Baker JR. running, hiding and doing things in my opinion to implode america, he should go fight! If he was drafted 50,000 angry black protesters would have rioted and caused more pain and anguish for the average American person. Also the NAACP is a racist organization. On a personal note I feel that people who ran and hid, did not fight, but want all the same right as others should feel a little hypocritical and the lives they are living are lies. It was their responsibility to do this.

The second thing I will write about is The Ultimate protest. I feel so sorry for the children of Norman Morrison. I do not like how they use the word sacrifice when it was suicide! Just like when his son Ben had cancer and he died and his widow said "God, Norman why are you not here?" That shows how suicide affected her even as she was remarried, it is not the same. in 1990 or 91, they were finally able to talk about what their father had done. She had to shield them for 25 years that shows what this can do to a family. They were finally able to face what his suicide did to their family. I feel McNamara saying the war was a mistake is only his opinion and nothing more. How could he do anymore to stop it. There was a lot of people ranked above him, and probably would have told him to go away. I cannot get over how Norman did it that day, to take your child, did he sit her down or hand her to someone, and even at one that would be traumatic to witness. I would never do something so selfish. To finish this off I have to say I disagree with Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh saying self-immolation is not suicide, to suffer, burn and to experience the greatest pain one can in order to show how strongly you feel about something so strongly that you are willing to suffer then die. Sorry, it is suicide and selfish!

Finally I chose they slept at our house. I feel like Paul was in the middle ground and did not have a lot of options. It is hard to believe we were fighting for a south that

was really not there. We had to stop the domino effect the Communists would have started. So many other countries would have been affected by us not being there. I could just imagine my daughter and friends being there and so strong on their belief's and I work where they were protesting and mad at. I also agree with Henry Kissinger that this war was bigger than who was fighting in it. The war was not morally wrong, but is unfortunate so many people died. The war was not a mistake, because in my opinion that is slapping all the dead , wounded and ones that never came home in the face.

So for my conclusion Of Feelings of Rights and Responsibilities, All three stories I felt it was either their responsibility not to run, their right to commit suicide, because I do feel it is a right. Paul's story just made me feel good about someone I feel is trustful, patriotic and a good person. I also feel that there are not many facts about war and history. They are mostly opinions depending on who you ask or talk to, and we make educated guesses on these huge decisions when I feel they are all opinions.

Jeff Harmon

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Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

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The theme that I have chosen is perseverance. I believe that the Vietnamese people had shown this quality during the Vietnam War. My first example is that from Duong Thanh Phong from the section Cameras, Books, and Guns. In this section Duong speaks of being a photographer and having to go to the "R Zone". He describes having to be in tunnels to survive. He also describes sleeping as much as possible during the day and moving at night. This was the only time they could move safely, so there was no other option for them. Duong recalls almost being killed numerous times, and also the first time he realized that Americans were human as well. Throughout all of that, Duong and his comrades kept going on. Duong states "The ultimate goal was always national liberation, so we just kept on" (pg 249) This to me totally describes and helps to convey my theme of perseverance.

Another example of perseverance is from Randy Kehler from the Prisoners Of War section. Randy describes how he came to protest the war and avoid being drafted. Randy at one point was not sure how he felt about the Vietnam War, and he believed himself to be a patriotic man, but events in Africa and learning that America had been dropping napalm in Vietnam help sway his opinions. He no longer could stand back and not say or do anything to try to change what injustices he saw from this war. Randy had been arrested several times; he was also threatened and intimidated because of his beliefs and his vocal opposition of the war. Randy was moved from a minimum-custody prison to a medium-security prison. He states that he was put in the hole at La Tuna for thirty days to see if he would change his mind about working. (pg 237) After all of that, in the 1980's Randy still managed to co- found and lead the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. He still tries to persevere and speak of the injustices in the United States.

Finally in the section of Air War the account from Nguyen Quang Sang, I believe helps demonstrate my theme. Nguyen speaks of fighting not only against the Americans, but the French as well. He speaks of being at Dong Thap Muoi and what he went through there. He describes being by only water and having to hide in the water from bombs being dropped from above. "From eight to five I hid in that canal with a lot of other people". (pg 216) Nguyen also states "Often we had to hold our breath and dive as deep as possible". (pg 216) He goes on to say that he is still haunted by nightmares. This last excerpt I think also helps with my theme. To have gone through all of that and not have given up and just folded to either be captured or killed proves to me that my theme of perseverance really existed during the Vietnam War.

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"We're Still Human"

Through section three in the Appy book, my emotions and thoughts about what we as Americans did to others and how we were treated were all over the charts. Some stories would make me extremely mad about how our troops were treated (either by our government or the Vietnamese), other times I couldn't believe how Americans treated the Vietnamese.

The theme I chose "We're still human" refers to the fact that even during these horrible times, the most influential emotion read was sympathy. Both Americans and Vietnamese showed sympathy toward their own troops but also to the opposing side. A couple stories stuck out to me, especially those who were in the medical field. They would see death or near death everyday and I just can't imagine being put in a situation like so many of those nurses and doctors were. Sylvia Holland was a nurse in Vietnam. In her story she talked about "playing god" on whether someone would live or die, be treated or passed along. Who are we to decide someone's fate? As if that wasn't hard enough for her, I can't imagine being the last individual, (the last female) that many of these men would ever see. How do you take all those emotions in and continue to work?

As for the individuals that were in the field, (soldiers, photographers, etc) how do you continue your mission knowing that any second you could be dead? Duong Phong was a photographer for the Vietnamese. His pictures were a "morale booster and a political weapon." He was with the soldiers, taking pictures of the fighting and whatever also crossed his path. Seeing his own people die because of Americans, you would think a lot of anger would come from him, and that he wouldn't care if Americans died. That wasn't always the case. Phong talked about the first time he saw an American soldier up close; an American had been shot, so another soldier went to go pick him up knowing he was dead, the American was crying. "It occurred to me that the American are like Vietnamese," they have emotions and when death is involved, we're all still human.

Helen Hegelheimer, a female stewardess during the war talked about how soldiers tugged at her heart every time they were dropped off in Vietnam. What do you say to a young man knowing that this more than likely will be the place they will die? She talked about the look on their faces and how hard it was to keep a smile because she may be the last female they ever see. The fewer fuller flights back home, she talked about how touchy these men were and their reactions to the smallest things, like being woken up. Her story made me realize that as humans we do have a limit on how much stress and horror we can take.

Overall these three stories all dealt with the fact that as humans, we do have limits. A war that seems to never end takes a toll on every individual involved, whether you are considered friend or foe. No matter how bad the circumstances, or how much you hate the other side, seeing a human in pain or on the verge of death, sympathy always comes to mind.

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There were many topics that I was thinking of explaining with stories from the Patriots book. The theme I have chosen to write about is of the amount of bombing and firepower that was used by the Americans during the war. Although there were many procedures to fight the enemy, aerial bombardment was the most common method to deter the Vietnamese.

The first account I will use to support my subject is from Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy. She worked making new trails in the Quang Binh Province, which is the gateway to the jungles of Truong Son. So many bombs were dropped on the jungle, that she called it the "bombing capital." They were so accustomed to bombs that they knew that they sounded like, as they penetrated the earth. She describes that, "...a cluster bomb lands with a thud. That's because it's a "mother bomb" and doesn't itself cause the destruction. It just opens up and out fly the "baby bombs." Those small bombs are lethal." (Appy 105) Kim Chuy illustrates what she saw from bombing attacks and the things that she and others had to do in order to survive. She recalls one story where they, "...had to withstand seven bombing attacks, while working day and night to fill the craters." She also explains how much death and violence that was witnessed by all those who were there, by recounting a scene in which a bomb dropped into a shelter hole full of girls. "I saw with my own eyes a bomb drop into a shelter hole. Everyone stopped working and rushed there, screaming and crying. We were on our hands and knees clawing at the dirt. Our arms were smeared with blood. There were five people in that shelter. We just divided the parts arbitrarily into four small mounds, gave each one a name, and buried them." (Appy 105) It is clear that Kim Chuy witnessed very gruesome things, as well as the ridiculous amount of weaponry and firepower used against them.

The second account is from James Thomson. From 1964-1966 he was an aide to LBJ's first national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy. Thomson took part in making decisions and planning "armed reconnaissance" missions. He says, "I still thought it was about taking pictures and fire if fired upon." (Appy 116) Thomson thought these missions meant armed, as in if people were firing on you, you could fire back and reconnaissance was misinterpreted as taking pictures. He later realized what he was doing as he explains by saying, "Armed reconnaissance planes basically flew up and down both halves of Vietnam and over Laos, taking pictures and shooting at anything they wanted to." (Appy 116) Thomson also planned much of the "policy options for post election action in Vietnam," after Johnson's landslide victory in 1964. He describes that most, if not all possibilities were ruled out, except for a, "...slow-motion but systematic escalation and the aerial bombardment of enemy positions north and south." (Appy 117) Thomson was approached by Bundy and was asked to report on what his thoughts were on the chosen option to bring about a slow escalation through aerial bombardment to bring the enemy to defeat. He replied that he knew little of weaponry of war, but knew that, "No matter what we do-even if we bomb them back to the Stone Age, push them back into the brush, and destroy everything they've built- they know that someday we'll leave." (Appy 117) He was not supporting this chosen plan and did not want to be more responsible for killing people in Vietnam. It is unfortunate that more people in the American government didn't see things like this, for if they had, things might have turned out a lot differently.

The last account I've chosen to use is from Fred Branfman, who lived in Laos from 1967-1971 as a volunteer for a non-profit organization devoted to education and economic development in Third World countries. Branfman recalls a conversation with a peasant, where he learned that they had been being bombed for 5 years and were forced to hide in caves. "Every single one of these refugees told the same basic story.

The bombing started in May 1964, slowly accelerated, and got really bad in 1968. I later found out that when Johnson declared the bombing halt over North Vietnam just prior to the November '68 election they simply diverted all the planes into northern Laos."(Appy 217) Branfman explains that he was full of emotion after learning about the bombing. "I couldn't believe the American executive branch had been bombing this country without telling anyone. Nobody knew about it. Even Congress didn't know."(Appy 218) He was angry our government was so secrete about the bombing and very sad and enraged at the amount of violence he witnessed, but he was most frustrated at the fact that the bombing was continuing. "You had the United States, the most powerful people in the world, bombing the weakest people in the world"(Appy 218) This bombing should have never spilled over into Laos, but when it did people should have been informed about it.

The amount of bombs and weaponry that was used in Southeast Asia was outrageous and should have never happened in the first place. Even though this bombing happened, it should have never occurred anywhere else, other than the specified area. Northern Laos should have never been disturbed and Vietnam should have been dealt with other than the mass bombardment of the country. There were different methods that could've and should've been used, but hopefully we've learned what are limits are and the difference between mass bombardment and using weaponry to intimidate the enemy.

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Due date: Saturday, 14 November 2009, 10:10 PM

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In reading part three: Escalations of the book *Patriots* by Christian G. Appy there are several different types of stories from both sides of the Vietnam conflict that took place. Most noticeably were the similarities of maturing between the story's; "I was their wife, their sister, their girlfriend", "Sometimes I operated all night while the staff took turns pedaling the bicycle", and the story "A goddamn chopper was worth three times more than David." Events like combat or witnessing death, lost of family members, hard-labor, or long days with struggles will mature anyone involved in such events. But the specific ways that these individuals in the stories were maturing is eye-opening and inspiring to anyone who reads them. A northern Minnesota boy who was only nineteen years old and was in charge of a million dollar Chinook helicopter learned lessons of growing up fast during events while being deployed in Vietnam. During one mission to relocate Vietnamese civilians from a village there were about sixty Vietnamese aboard the young soldier's helicopter along with four Americans when one Vietnamese man stood up and begin yelling. Being afraid that this uprising might inspire a riot aboard the Chinook as it was airborne one of the Americans simply through the man out and he fell to his death. Another instance that shaped this young man into an adult was when he came across a man that had four or five human scalps hanging from his belt as some sort of war trophy. This would put anyone in a reality check and make most realize that they are in a serious situation that would not tolerate anyone but an adult.

A doctor that was involved in the caring and saving of people sprayed by the chemical "Agent Orange" that was used to kill of plant life that was concealing enemy forces and infected with several types disease came across many instances that would make anyone shed any skin and become a hardened person. This story is titled "Sometimes I operated all night while the staff took turns pedaling the bicycle." Having to use operating tools make from exploded bombing shells and forced to hunt elephants, monkeys, and wild pigs for food to survive would be severely challenging and require a enduring spirit/mentality to continue. It is hard for me to imagine the perseverance that it would take to keep attempting to save people with little of any resources and minimal protection from camouflage from enemy attacks.

"I was their wife, their sister, their girlfriend." was a story of a flight attendant for World Airways that had a contract with the government to ferry U.S troops to and from the war zone during Vietnam. The attendants themselves witnessed how much of alteration many U.S troops went through by simply talking with them as they came to and from the combat operations of Vietnam. Young men that had been brought up to be respectful-church going individuals in America came home after experiencing drugs, alcohol, sex, and death nearly on a daily basis which altered everyone's lives forever. Flight attendants lives went from being happy people to becoming sad to watch their distant brothers and sisters go off to combat where likely many

would die or become injured mentally/physically for eternity.

These stories tie into a common thread of development into maturation among men and women both U.S and Vietnamese. The adversity for all of these people to overcome was by no means just difficult it was amazing. They not only saved their own comrades but developed into adults during the time in doing so.

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A Theme Of Politics

What was the Vietnam War really about? Classicism was a dilemma when talking about the draft. It seemed that most draftees were under educated or less privileged social class, and they kept the upper class away from enlisting for various reasons. And then we wonder why we had so many citizens against the war which inhibited an Anti-War movement. This divided the country causing a war on our own turf along with the Vietnam War. During the time of the war there were so many political and ethical issues. We had a lot of racial issues and was afraid if communism was spreading. The draft only enhanced these problems and made it obvious. America was all about capitalism and dividing the working classes.

I think personally, that the draft itself stirred up a discussion in which we felt we had been invaded. We are fighting a war, in which, we really should have withdrawn from and many innocent civilians were being wounded and killed. The draft was based on classicism and this widely disturbed the draftees. If you fled you were called a coward and were not standing up for your country, but the people making the remarks were the upper-class that would not be enlisted due to their status. What made this equal. I thought we are a nation of equal rights, where we have justice. As stated in Triage "The overall effect of the draft was to channel primarily working-class men to Vietnam while encouraging more privileged men to continue their education." Also during the peak of draft quotas the education requirements were lowered.

America knew that if that had not made draft regulations and gave the decision to individuals they would have never met their requirements. There were many people that felt this war was unjust and did not want to have any association with it, but since there were no civil rights this exposed Anti-War.

General Baker Jr states "I believe in fighting And here is a list of just wars. When you decide to go to battle to free Latin America from the United Fruit Company, or when the call is made to free South Africa, or to free the Middle East from standard oil, or when the call is made to free the Mississippi Delta and 12th street here in Detroit, then call me, because these are just causes, and it would be a duty and honor for me to serve. I'll be the first one in line."

Also in the section From Civil Rights To Anti-War he states "As the war dragged on, more and more Americans would ask similar questions of official statements about Vietnam. For example, if the war in Vietnam was for freedom and democracy, as U.S. policy makers claimed, why were those blessings still denied to Americans at home?"

Many people were wondering why? And these questions were not being answered. They were left enlisted in war and they had no reason why. This war seemed to be more politics and America wanting to chalk up a win and to make a statement about communism, but they were missing the following. They did not have the impact to make this statement.

Throughout Part Three in Patriots you hear many individuals stating about their opposition on the War and how it is unethical. These speakers do stand for America but not for the Vietnam War. There was a sense of inflation of capitalism and if you didn't stand for the war then you must be a coward. Truong My Hoa states " the support of peace-loving people through out the world, and especially from the American people, was a great source of strength and encouragement to us in our

struggle. We knew we were not alone. For example, on November 2, 1965, we learned that Norman Morrison had immolated himself right in front of the pentagon to demonstrate his opposition to the American war in Vietnam. We were deeply touched, so we dedicated a minute of silence in our cells to his sacrifice."

Both sides agreed that this war needed to stop, but politics and presidents continued to fight an unjust war. We were not only were fighting in a war but we had another war in are own country that we needed to resolve. This escalated a lot of theories and divided a nation into two. America was fighting but no one was actually listening to the Veterans opposition on the war (majority).

The living room war in which we had the media involved and it seemed like it was never really taking serious. In addition, it was like a couple of kids that were afraid of coodies (communism) and figured fight over flight. I don't know if we stayed in war so we could claim the win, or this was a justified reason.

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After reading several of the personal accounts in Appy's book I have decided to use the common theme of "Self-Justification." Self justification can range from being happy and content with your life as it is right now; to having an inner-self conflict and deciding which choice would benefit yourself and others the most. This book is loaded with "self-justification" scenarios. Individuals who are battling with choosing right from wrong. people battling with their inner gut feeling and what they are being told by other people. I choose three very specific examples.

The first one being, Jim Soular's story in "Free-fire Zone." In this chapter of the book he explains his up-bringing and reason for being in the war. He then goes on to explain his experiences as a helicopter engineer. The main part of Jim's story that relates to my theme of self-justification happens when he describes one of his troop members and good friend being shot by another U.S. officer. He goes on to explain that he took a trip to visit the dead marine's mother. He goes by telling her the truth of her son's death and not what the U.S. government had told her. This deals with self-justification because Jim didn't feel right about the war in the first place and was unhappy with the way the government was trying to hide the horrible things that were going on in Vietnam. He didn't feel that his soul would be at peace until his friends death was brought into a truthful light.

Another way this book deals with self-justification is explained in James Lafferty's story. He explains how he opened one of the first free draft counseling centers in the nation. This is his form of self-justification because he felt that poorest, most uneducated men were being unfairly picked to be drafted. James felt that it was his duty to give the poor, unfortunate citizens a fair chance. James was struggling with his justifications because for every young man he liberated another young man was thrown into that draft spot by the U.S. government. This form of self-justification is different than Jim Soular's because Lafferty was doing his work on the home front and Soular was over seas. They both however were trying to find fairness, and justice.

My last story of self-justification comes from Quach Van Phong. Phong is not even a soldier although he was in many battles and was even injured in the war. Phong is an artist who did combat sketches for both the North and South Vietnamese. His self-justification wasn't the war itself, but the art he made to boost the soldier's morale. He said that it gave him great fulfillment to see a drawing that he made from only spit and dirt hung so close to a soldier's heart. He said that even though the sketches weren't complete the soldiers treasured them and praised he for it. This sense of achievement made him feel like he was doing a great deal of good in a war which he could not fight in.

All these stories hold a sense of self-fulfillment and self-justification. These people did what they felt they needed to do in a time of war and struggle. These decisions in turn gave themselves a feeling self achievement and justification in time of struggle and hardship.

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Brian Hein

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A Difference

While reading through the *Patriots* text there was one thing that first stuck me as strange. Several of the accounts dealt with the inclusion of non-soldiers into the combat troops of the North Vietnamese Army. These non-soldiers were artists, writers, poets and photographers. As I thought about why there would be the need to include such persons in with the regular fighting troops it occurred to me this represented a profound difference between the approach to the war by the United States and the North Vietnamese. The United States saw the war as if it was a job separate from their real life. For the North Vietnamese the war was approached from the perspective it was an integral part of their life.

This is not to diminish the sacrifices the United States troops made in Vietnam. They were not any less committed to the winning of the war. But there was a difference in how each side approached the war. For most of the U.S. service personal it was a war to be fought and then return home, for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong it was a war to win back their country no matter how long it took or the sacrifices made. It was reading about including these non-soldiers with combat troops which exposed the total commitment of North Vietnam to me. These non-soldiers represented an insight of how the North Vietnamese viewed the war. Knowing it may continue for a long time there was still the need to continue on with life even within the limitations of the war.

In *We didn't need a darkroom*, told by Duong Thanh Phong we learn of his account about the use of his pictures to boost morale of the troops of the Viet Cong "When people saw themselves in the pictures they were so excited, it was no longer just political." Even though he came close to being killed several times with his photographic team having "fifteen members and seven were killed" he used his belief that "the noble cause of the revolution and American cruelty" to continue fighting at the front lines. There were two things in his account that struck me as particularly telling of his personal willingness for sacrifice. First, was the statement "once you accepted your own self-sacrifice, your own death, you didn't feel fear anymore." Also, even with this attitude toward his own fate he still managed to marry in the jungle, having to wait an extra two days to find a safe spot away from enemy commandos. He was able to see his new wife sometimes only once a year. Doung Thanh Phong had accepted the war into his life and was willing to see it through to the end. Running away from the draft for the South Vietnamese army to join the Vietcong he spent ten years fighting in the jungle.

Even through the objections of her parents and having to lie about her age to join the Volunteer Youth Corps, Vu Thi Vinh "went to war willingly" to help work on the trails and roads of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In her story, *The Truong Son jungle gave us life*, she tells of the difficulties they encountered, such as having to eat crabs found in the streams and having "to scrape fungus and moss off rocks" to eat and being so hungry it tasted good. A remarkable part of her story related to the need of detonating an unexploded bomb that could have been set off by one of the trucks traveling on a bridge next to it. There were so many volunteers to be a part of the "dare to die" team they were required to "write a short essay to apply."

Staying in the southern battlefield for eight years, and having to move the jungle "hospital" every few months to avoid detection was no small endeavor. With a "staff of four hundred routinely cared for more than a thousand patients" for each group of four or five patients a bomb shelter was dug for protection each time the hospital was moved. Dr. Le Cao Dai in his chronicle, *Sometimes I operated all night*

while the staff took turns pedaling the bicycle, tells of the problems faced with having to deal with shortages of equipment and food. Using shrapnel from exploded bombs and downed U.S. aircraft they crafted equipment to use for the treatment of his patients. And as the title of his story tells, Dr. Dai used the power generated by a bicycle as his lighting to operate with. Performing in terrible conditions he tells his story with pride and no regrets.

The perspective presented here purposely dealt with only one side of the war. I know from these few accounts I may not have a full representational view, but even from these few narratives it can be seen the extent those fighting for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were willing to go. Willing to fight until they were killed or unable to continue, I had the feeling many of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong never considered losing the war, it was truly a battle to the end.

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Pain and suffering.

Reading this section of the book the thing that sticks out the most to me is the violence, and I don't just mean the violence that comes with war. I mean the violence that makes you wonder if you are going to hell for this. There was so much torture going on in this war. In the prisoners of war section we hear stories about how it was to be a prisoner of war. The story that stuck out the most was Truong My Hoa, I guess because I am a women and it was easier for me to associate with. I just can't imagine what it was like to be locked in a small tiger cage and be tortured. The line that really sticks out to me is when she talks about hoe the women would tear their cloths of to make pads for their cycles. These stories show how strong these people were on the inside, and how strong the believed in what they were fighting for. There was so much pain with this war during and after. The pain of the soldiers and the pain of their families are so horrible. In the part of the book on page 162 titled "Triage" we read about David M. Smith (on page 167) who worked in triage and how he would separate out the casualties to determine what needed to be done. I can only imagine being in a room and having to look at all these injured humans and try to decide who was to be seen and who would die. In this book it talks about the antiwar and how people here in the United States were against the war. One man, Tom Engelhardt talks about how this war swallowed everyone up. Everyone was swept up in confusion on how they felt. He found himself defending the Americans decision to the Gulf of Tonkin incident, to the French kids. Then he felt anger because the war was taking so long. There was so much anger and pain associated with this war. There many Americans and Vietnamese that were tortured, many separated from their families. On the American home front there were many who protested the war because so many men were drafted who did not want to fight. This war went on so long that many began to wonder why we were there. There were also so many different stories told and so many different versions of the same situation it is so hard to know what really happened. There were was such prolonged pain there were so many POW's that were there for many years not just days, or months but many many years. It is so sad, I know that war is not a happy thing, but being someone who has never been close to war, I just can't imagine what it must of been like or what it is like for those right now fighting a war for another country again.

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