

Home ► My courses ► HST 195 F12 (Escobar 26516) ► September 30 - October 6 ► Assignment 1

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Analysis of Christian Appy: Part 1 & 2

The story that held the greatest significance in part one of Christian Appy's book is the memoir of Tran Thi Gun. It held the greatest impact because it was a story from a totally different perspective, a northern Vietnamese perspective, rather than an American one. Her story was passionate, harsh, and you could clearly see why she fought in the war. It was this harshness and brutal honesty that made the story memorable because it allowed her to truly share her convictions, reasons for fighting and to paint a truthful image of the war that most people don't seem to talk about.

Tran Thi Gun's story is reliable, trustworthy, and believable because it is her story. Her tale does not have extended action or seemingly outlandish events and therefore it reads honestly. In addition the fact that she was there makes it hard to challenge the information she provided in her story, which lends to her and her story's credibility. Her story does not seem to be either factual or to subjective. Her story isn't one of facts but personal experience, however she does not let her emotions overwhelm the story. Therefore it doesn't seem that her story suffers from lack of objectivity because of time passing or too much forgotten. It is her personal journey and backstory out of many who fought with the Viet Mh in Vietnam.

The story that was the most disappointing in part two of Appy's book was the story of Malcolm Browne. His story was not disappointing because of his actions or who Browne was, but more because of the events he witnessed. More specifically, the disappointment was directed at the actions of the United States and the Diem government, with both their policies and people. There were five specific events that were huge disappointments. The first began when Browne witnessed American planes leaving with bombs and returning without bombs, during a time when America was not supposed to be at war with Vietnam. It was sad not only because American government was lying to its people, but because it was also being duplicitous in its policies abroad.

The second event that was disappointing that also involved the United States, was when John Wayne was partying with marine officers in Vietnam and harassing Browne. The image cast by Wayne in this instance was one that was self-centered, pig headed, and an overwhelming belief that America could do no wrong. The most offensive thing Wayne said was that "the whole country [Vietnam] was grateful," (Appy 70). It was offensive because it reeked of ignorance and self-importance. It was true that at some time America's policy was to help Vietnam, but within this time period that policy was lost. In addition no country should be grateful because America was forcing aid on their people. Lastly this statement was disappointing because of the ignorance, for one should realize that if Vietnam was grateful then there would be no war.

The third and fourth events that were saddening coincide with each other. These events were the repression of the Buddhist religion by the Diem government and a quote Madame Nhu said about Browne after the beginning of the Buddhist demonstration. It was wrong of the Diem government to be repressing any religion just because the ruling family was Catholic. This act also went against one of the standing principles of American government to have freedom of religion and since the Diem government was essentially started by American policies it would have been more positive for Diem to be open about the fact that he governed a predominately Buddhist nation. In addition his repression of Buddhist religion caused people to die and partly for his government to be overthrown, which isn't good politics. The fourth event was when "Madame Nhu, suggested that I [Browne] had bribed the monks to produce a martyr," (Appy 69). For Madame Nhu to suggest this quote shows her ignorance in how the government's policies are affecting her people and how much she truly believed in what her brother-in-law was doing. Madame Nhu needed to see what was happening and to open her mind to other causes. This is why this event was disappointing because it had potential for people to learn or at least possibly change policies before things got worse.

The last event that was disappointing was when Thich Tri Quang, a monk and friend of Malcolm Brown told him "that the human rights problems under the Communists were as bad as they had been under Diem," (Appy 72). It was an incredibly disappointing end after reading so many troubling events, and knowing how hard the Vietnamese people fought for independence, for despite that independence some Vietnamese people are still repressed. Though every government can improve it was sad to see that some people in Vietnam were just as bad off as they were before Vietnam won its independence.

While Malcolm Browne's story had so many disappointing aspects, it also carried many positive qualities that would benefit from being told. These positive qualities were the general compassion and an understanding of the situation that Browne displayed that you didn't see during that time, but one that you see in today's generation. Browne was an American, but despite many Americans of the time he didn't seem to carry the ego that America is all powerful and just. Browne additionally seemed to carry a compassion for the Vietnamese people and the events that were happening in their nation as it relates to them. He saw that innocent lives were being lost on both sides and actually cared, which was refreshing. Browne's attention to all sides was the opposite of what was seen

from America at that time. For it is one thing to be in a war and carry that war mindset of not caring about the other side, but if you don't show any understanding of the other side, or you forget that those opposing you are fighting for a reason, then your reason for fighting can get lost, which is what happened during the Vietnam war.

Citation

Appy, Christian. Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides. New York: Penguin Books, 2003. Print.

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