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Assignment 1

Of the many interviews and testimonials in the first part of Christian G. Appy's book *Patriots*, one of the stories stood out the most. The interview was from Dang Vu Hiep, a former lieutenant colonel and then eventually a general. Hiep recalled some of the tactics they employed to combat the American forces, noting they had to sometimes fight against airborne units with up to four hundred helicopters. He stated that they had to rely on their creativity when fighting the Americans, and he goes on to detail some of their successes. As a leader, Hiep seems to have a lot of credibility and knowledge of what was going on. Although his battle tactics were interesting, it wasn't what caught my attention the most. Towards the end of the interview he recalls the wartime food shortage and how they had so little rice that they had to mix cassava into their rice. The cassava plant was such an important plant and it tied into their daily operations for everyone. The commanders down to the basic soldiers tended to over five hundred plants just to be able to eat and keep fighting. Wherever they fought they grew the plant so they would have a supply of food. They even had a song they composed about the plant and that was how important the plant was to Hiep and his group of soldiers. This is what really caught my attention the most and brought things into perspective.

In the second chapter of interviews, the story that was most disappointing to me was that of Ngo Vinh Long. It was not necessarily the situation that he went through that bothered me, but more his perspective of the world around him. At the age of twenty, he left his home country and moved to the United States to attend Harvard. This would put him at a very young age during in Vietnam. It is not that his story is fictitious; it is just the age at which these events took place. At such an impressionable age it is easy to be misguided by the world around him. He even said that growing up his father was tortured to the brink of death by the French. So he clearly had no love for the French and early on really liked the American presence. His father told him that the United States was supporting the French. He did not believe his father. Later, he became a public relations person for a mapping outfit to get accurate maps of the country. He traveled all over the country and saw some terrible things which led to leaving for Harvard at the age of twenty. There no question of the validity of the work done at and after Harvard, but before that lacks credibility. It is just hard to believe that a teenager did these things, especially compared to today's teens. The story was interesting in one sense but bugged me in another sense.

On a positive note, there is something good that I got out of this story in particular. Even in a tough situation if someone wants to change their future, they just have to want it. Ngo Vinh Long left Vietnam during a rough era and was able to attend Harvard University. Not only was he able to flee his country but was able to attend a very prestigious school. This may have only been one person's success and certainty not the norm, but I would like to think that everyone could make a better life for themselves if they put the effort in and get out of the bad situation they may be in. Unfortunately only a handful of people were lucky enough to make it out of Vietnam and come to America.

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