

88/100

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Although Deirdre English's account of her experience in 1966 was one of the shortest in part one of "Patriots", it was also an important viewpoint of how the war affected those at home, while also showing a great depiction of the awareness and mentality of the American people in the midst of the late 1960's. To millions of Americans the Vietnam War was just coming to light, and most of those who did know of it were not privy to the details of why, or even when we became involved in the war. As Christian Appy wrote, "They found themselves drawn into a war-in-progress, the origins of which seemed distressingly vague and confusing" (Appy 35). And why shouldn't the people have been confused? America's history with Vietnam went back much farther than anyone at the time knew. In the forties America both supported France and helped to train some of Ho Chi Minh's first soldiers, with changing political policy with each new president (Herring 3-13). With all the confusion and no real answers from the government, there is no real surprise that the validity of the war was being protested by millions of Americans in the years that ensued Deirdre's experience at the Chicago museum. Her experience that day seemed to incite her to take an active role in the protests that followed. Of course her involvement as a protestor would have given her a different point of view than someone that supported the war, but her account seemed to be remembered with detail, as if it had happened yesterday. Overall her description seemed to be a factual account of the times that many American people probably experienced during those days of war, and the protests that followed.

Reading through the stories of the people that were actually involved in the Vietnam War it was hard not to feel some sort of emotion with each individual's account. The most disappointing of the stories brought up a large question of, what if? It seems that most of if not all of the years of pain and suffering that came from America's involvement in the war in Vietnam could have been avoided if America had backed Ho Chi Minh's efforts or stayed completely out of Vietnam all those years ago. While reading Henry Prunier's story of how they were sent to train 200 of Ho's guerilla resistance to fight the Japanese invasion of Vietnam during WWII, it was hard not to see the United States as hypocritical and unreliable. Henry says in his account, "One of the greatest disappointments of his life must have been that the United States sided with the French, and then Diem, against him. It should never have happened" (Appy 40). Henry seemed to get a good impression of Ho while he was in his presence, but Ho was under the impression that he had America's support, and it may have been different otherwise. Of course America was so afraid of the communist movement and our own financial gain and world position in Southeast Asia that we had no choice but to get involved.

If we are to learn anything from the Vietnamese people it would have to be their undeniable persistence and fortitude. It seems that nearly every story recorded in the "Patriot" book thus far touches on the resilience of the Vietnamese, which is why they were able to fight off the French and eventually the United States as well. When reading Luyen Nguyen's story all of this fortitude came through in this man's account of torture, loss and his love for his family. Even though he had been locked up for years in solitary confinement he would not admit to being a puppet of the United States to make his time there more bearable. Instead his loyalty stayed with his country and his family. When offered the chance to write his family and notify them that he was indeed still alive, he refused because he did not want to cause his family anymore undo pain. To maintain such personal courage for so many years as a POW is definitely commendable. His ability to keep hope was inspiring. There are not too many people in our entitled culture that would have done the same as this man. This was just one person in a culture of people that overcame many invasions and superpower militaries to fight for their freedom and way of life. For Luyen to tell his story with no real animosity for the United States, who sent him on a failing mission is inspiring onto its self.

I am a bit unclear here.

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Nguyen fought off the fortune of the North Vietnamese communists, who held him in captivity for all of those years. The blame as you express is for the French & U.S., so it is confusing.

Weak analysis of Deirdre English's credibility in part 1. Take the time in Pt 2 to provide clarity to your assertions.