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The story of Phan Xuan Sinh in *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* by Christian G. Appy is very impactful. Sinh's story is unique in that he was drafted by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. For those that are not scholars of the Vietnam War, this is a viewpoint that is not often heard. The first memory that Sinh shares is heartbreaking. He talks about an ambush that his company was ordered to set up on the beach at Cam Hai. Intelligence had told them that a company of Viet Cong would be landing there by boat. When the boats approached, Sinh's company thought that they saw rifles silhouetted against the sky. After firing on the boats, they realized that they were fishermen, not Viet Cong. It is stories such as this, of innocent civilians that became casualties of war, which carry great impact. It is also the reliability of the storyteller that carries part of the impact. Having been present at the time makes the story more credible. On the other hand, the personal nature of the stories makes it impossible for them to be objective. Sinh has a great amount of credibility in that these are his stories and his past that he lived, but that also means that they cannot be objective. While they are factual, they are clouded by one person's opinion and personal feelings. Another consideration is the passage of time. As the years pass, details of an event tend to fade while emotions and feelings become what are remembered most clearly. So I'm unsure where you end here. Is the story real or not? not necessarily - corroborations?

medium draft

There are two stories from the second part of Christian Appy's book that stand out as disappointing. The first is that of Malcolm Browne. Browne is a journalist who took the famous picture of a Buddhist monk burning himself to death in protest of the anti-Buddhist policies in South Vietnam. One image taken by Browne has become one of the most well known images of the entire Vietnam War. The act of the monk burning himself to death is not the only disappointing part of this story; the lack of knowledge about his reasons is disappointing as well. This image is widely circulated as a monk protesting the Vietnam War. In reality, there is more to the story. According to Browne, there was a deep anti-Diem sentiment throughout South Vietnam. Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic, was the President of South Vietnam. Diem did not allow the Buddhist flag to be flown in a country where a large part of the population was Buddhist. The monk, Thich Quang Duc, was protesting the anti-Buddhist policies of Diem. This is an example of how gross generalizations were made about Vietnam, and still are, without understanding the details. unclear about the gross generalizations here. This was well known.

Another story that is disappointing is that of Paul Kattenburg. Kattenburg was a Vietnam specialist and became head of the State Department's Vietnam Task Force. After returning from Vietnam, Kattenburg attended a meeting of the National Security Council. At this meeting, Kattenburg was struck by the ignorance of those seated at the table with him. He suggested that the US withdraw from Vietnam. Several months later, after returning again from Vietnam, Kattenburg wrote a report stating that the South Vietnamese would lose the war within two years. Rather than choosing to listen to Kattenburg, a man who had spent time in Vietnam and understood the culture and sentiments of the people, he was punished and kicked out of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs. Kattenburg was also excluded from top-level discussions of policy. Again, this story illustrates the lack of knowledge about Vietnam and how a better understanding might have changed the outcome, saving tens of thousands of lives.

Despite how disappointing these stories are, there is a lesson to be learned from them. The story of the monk told by Malcolm Brown demonstrates that there are many layers of motivation that should not, and cannot, be generalized into one idea. Kattenburg illustrates the importance of knowledge and listening to those with knowledge. Vietnam emphasized the importance of understanding the culture of a country and sentiments of its people. Without that understanding, there was no hope of winning the war or winning over the Vietnamese people. This is a lesson that can be carried over to our dealings with other nations in the future, in hopes that we do not make the same mistakes that were made in Vietnam.

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OK
But trying to find positives
in two stories you just
spent time describing the
negatives, can be tricky

Pt 2 better
than Pt 1
as far as
analysis