

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War F14 (Escobar Meta 21179)

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Week 2 - Continuing the Discussion

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 6:24 PM

After reading the NYT article and watching the second half of the AIM program, discuss specific examples of conflicting information you have encountered in the provided class sources (from the Herring book, PBS series, and AIM program).

Another question. Which source gets your "vote", on that specific issue (NOT overall), as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation or reinterpretation?

Do not attempt to answer both of these questions in a single post or reply.

Also, be sure to change the Subject Line to something that properly describes your post. (Do NOT leave the subject at RE: Week 2 - Continuing the Discussion)

Sum of ratings: -

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What they want you to know.

by Arvind Raman - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 8:26 PM

After reading the article, reading the book and watching the program, i find it extremely difficult to rely on one specific source. Through time, some of the best sources were firsthand accounts that were taken as soon as or immediately after an unfortunate aftermath/ situation. When it comes to media, there is always some agenda and purpose that is being conveyed in order to gain an audience or fan base. Even if primary goal is to produce deeming evidence to persuade others to wake up and a get a dose of reality.

After watching the PBS video, i was more confused about what their objective was. I gathered that they wanted to put out a video, give it an offensive theme, and for the cherry on top, give it a gung-ho American, Charlton Heston has the lead actor. Just the purpose of the entire video was so off-putting, that i begin to generalize the intended audience.

If you want to seem fair, you need to entertain both sides of the story, and let the audience come to a conclusion, i think there are enough intellectuals that will be able to identify what is balanced opposed to one-sided argument.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What they want you to know.



by Jimmie Berguin - Thursday, October 23, 2014, 1:58 PM

Arvind you are hitting the nail on the head. What makes a good documentary? Is it by forcing us to see things the filmmakers way? Absolutely not, we the viewers should be presented with the source material, explained both sides of the argument and then we decide which sides we want to go on. It makes us more educated along the way and leaves us better than we were before we started. That's what CNN, Fox News, and filmmakers like Michael Moore can't comprehend. They spout off whatever they see fit, and cut all that they don't want us to know. Not only is this a very mild form of propaganda, this also leads to future questioning against the news providers. After watching the Vietnam program on PBS, finding out it's misinformation, how can we know any other of their programs won't mislead us like this? The only way to keep us informed and educated, we need to stay proactive, question the information we are given, and then make sure we cross reference all materials we're presented with. I think that's what separates us from those people who believe everything we hear.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: What they want you to know.



by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 12:15 PM

I completely agree with the idea on not relying on one specific source, but not exactly for the same reasons. It is true that the media does distort, but at the same time firsthand accounts can be distorted too. Take the interview of both the Marines and Vietnamese villagers in the fourth episode of the PBS series, the Vietnamese saw the aggressive tactics as brutal, but the Marine explained how they were routine and why. There is bound to be hundreds of more sources that we are never going to even begin to touch on during this class.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Source Challenge, what hails as the best?



by Arvind Raman - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 8:43 PM

No sources hold top spot in my view. Granted these men and women try extremely

hard to put out their best works though video, audio and reading, but what is necessary meant for all of us, may not always be what was completely intended. At times it comes from someone higher than them, whether a lead editor, the bylaws of a country prohibit the release of information, as well as a network of people always chiming in on what should be added, or what shouldn't be there, for the sake of the public's reaction. I enjoy reading the Herring and Appy book, based on the accounts and POV. I find it disheartening that these men went to war, not knowing what they were fighting for, let alone now know where Vietnam was. I hope in recent conflicts, there has been an over-hall of military education for these fine men and women. In the Appy book, they mention how the war was a tragedy, I learned through teaching tennis with kids and adults, that you must abstain from negative words, because there is always some good to take, even in a negative situation. You make the best of it, and you learn from it, that was the advice, so freely given to me. From the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, I learned whatever you get yourself into, have an exit strategy, sometime you have to cut your losses, but you need to come an educated decision if it seems negative, to set your pride aside. I am by no means against war, because at times you must do what's right, also I have extremely high regard for women and men who protect and serve this country whether its military, law enforcement, etc, but at times we just don't need to have to go fight against something because its our duty and no one else will take the cause. Sometimes, it seems we have way to many problems on our home front, where that energy could be utilized in a more positive manner.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Source Challenge, what hails as the best?



by Kasey Harmon - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 1:33 PM

I agree with you Arvind that no single source should hold "top spot". They all bring in a different perspective and a different way of teaching. Therefore we learn differently from each source and take bits and pieces here and there. I do believe however that the "Appy book" provides maybe more accurate stories because they are the actual experiences from the veterans themselves. I also agree that it was very tragic to send these men and women to war, not knowing what they were fighting for. The draft was a very cruel tool of raising the enlistment numbers because the soldiers had no passion for the fight. Look at the numbers of enlisted in the armed forces today and that's even without a draft.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Whom do we believe?



by Kasey Harmon - Tuesday, October 21, 2014, 8:39 PM

It is painfully obvious that all three sources have very strong opinions and views in

the matter of the Vietnam War. PBS feels like it has chosen to depict the war from the North Vietnamese and protesters point of view, and not from an impartial standpoint. Furthermore, PBS talks about a lot about crucial points and major events that took place, so did AIM, as well as Herring, but they seem to be one sided, as in they only talk about all the bad things the U.S. military did or didn't do. You never get a view from the other side. For example, they showed quite a few clips of U.S. forces detaining NLF or Viet Cong fighters, and you see how they were treated. You don't here anything about what the NVA were doing to American POW's, and what our men went through in NVA prison camps. That is one of the major facts that stood out to me from the AIM video. Also, in the Herring book in chapter five, on page 185 he says, "Captured U.S. fliers gave Hanoi hostages who would assume increasing importance in the stalemated war," he further states, "...gave the North Vietnamese a propaganda advantage they exploited quite effectively," the Herring book also fails to elaborate further on the matter. In the AIM series, Senator John McCain states, "there were no documented cases of mistreatment of Viet Cong or NFL POW's once they were within the prison compounds." McCain also goes on to say the PBS did not talk about what the North Vietnamese did to our POW's." Which brings up the question, whom do we believe?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Whom do we believe?

by Patrick Figueroa - Saturday, October 25, 2014, 4:42 PM

Kasey, I like how you Mention what all three sources views are and how they vary. I think you hit it spot on with PBS since it is a government funded Broadcasting Service, and their views will be skewed towards their liking and how they saw the war.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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In my personal opinion.

by Kasey Harmon - Tuesday, October 21, 2014, 9:05 PM

As a veteran of the Afghanistan War it is extremely hard for me to believe anything in which the media portrays, because of the fact they stretch the truth too often for their own benefits. I cannot tell you how many times I have read or heard something on the news about our troops and it almost always is a negative depiction. All you see is "body counts this high," or "a soldier has gone MIA in the middle of the war and killed an entire village." The media feels they have to make to their stories look gruesome or horrific in order for the public to pay attention to it, and they know it works; they use false stories to boost their rates. I am not saying everything they say is false, but if a story is missing that hook the readers and viewer wont care, so if they exaggerate the numbers a little people will care and continue to watch. I do not believe the firsthand accounts of what the actual soldier said were false; I do believe

them to be true. But you always have to be mindful of what one person says pertaining to war, because someone else could say something different and in my own experience if they themselves weren't there I don't believe it. I have witnessed to many accounts of guys who never saw combat tell their buddies back home how many guys they killed, or how they got shot, or blown up. But as far as these three opinion are concerned I don't know how to choose who is more truthful they all have pros and cons.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: In my personal opinion.

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 6:14 PM

Kasey, it must be very frustrating for you and those who have served to hear or read how the media portrays our troops in a negative way, often stretching the truth in order to draw popularity among its viewers/listeners in order to make a profit. What is even more pathetic is the public who supports those endeavors. With any event, every spectator or participant will have a different story to tell from his or her own perspective. I try to keep that in mind while reading or watching the videos from class and go into it with eyes wide open. Thank you for the time you served our country in the Afghanistan War.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: In my personal opinion.

by Austin McQuaw - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 11:58 PM

Marquita, you just made me think a bit; It's sad that the media (or whoever) is willing to attack individuals by painting a false picture to get ratings or to push an agenda. They can be willing to tarnish reputations so that an argument can be supported.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: In my personal opinion.

by Bryan Lewis - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 8:42 PM

I feel what you say is true to an extent, yes the media loves to edit stories because they sometimes seem to be competing with regular television shows, trying to become more entertaining. Take Eugene news for example, most people think it's 'boring', but that's because only bad news is ever really exciting. It is one reason I feel that the media might focus more on the negativity, it catches the viewer's attention more. I understand that you might feel that the firsthand accounts to be true, but they true from an individual's point of view

thus non-objective. You even show this when you talk about other people who claim to have seen combat when in fact they hadn't. I feel this emphasizes that you have to take every bit of information with a grain of salt, because most likely the story provided isn't the full one.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: In my personal opinion.



by Austin McQuaw - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 11:53 PM

Kasey, I have similar feelings. With our history shaped so much by the media's filter at that time, it can be hard to trust much information. With interviews of those involved in the war, though they have their own biases, at least we are getting information directly from the source. They can provide information based on the things that they experienced. And they don't have to manufacture something more exciting than truth because they don't have to worry about views and ratings like the media does. The quote from a GI saying that his time in Vietnam was a memory of ignorance was interesting to me. Even those experiencing the reality of the situation are only seeing a part of the picture and have a tough time figuring things out. While what he communicated does not directly support what I'm arguing, it does support the idea that first hand accounts will only illustrate a part of the picture for us. With many first hand accounts, we can be helped to shape our understanding of Vietnam. While some with personal experience may not have entirely accurate information, at least it's an honest attempt to share the that information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Is it really news?



by Patrick Figueroa - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 3:47 PM

The problem with all of these media network stations nowadays is that they are all looking to be the best; they want to stand out from the rest but thats when the viewer becomes the victim. So many of these news stations and other media sources such as textbooks or documentaries show different sides of the stories of what actually happened. So many of the sources stretch the truth in order to gain more viewers and to create a new story that is not there. In the PBS series provided, I believe has some conflicting information because it is the "Public Broadcasting Service," meaning it is Government funded which could be altered to the Governments liking.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Is it really news?



by Clifton Haney - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 8:33 PM



I'm not sure I agree with your suggestion that the PBS series was altered by the government. In 1983 the government was fairly conservative with Regan as president, and a republican senate. PBS has often gone against/been targeted by Republicans for cuts.

Kind of a tangent, but here's Mr. Rogers arguing in favor of PBS in front of the U.S. Senate:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXEuEUQIP3Q>

That said I certainly agree that the series has its' own (intentional or not) bias.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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The Winner is....!

by Patrick Figueroa - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 3:57 PM

The source that gets my vote as having the more accurate interpretation on the the previous specific issue is George Herring's book "America's Longest War," simply because he seems just present the history as it happened and not being biased in any way. He seems to integrate all of the aspects of the war in a brief, clear way that makes it easy to understand.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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The Truth Being

by Jimmie Berguin - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 4:01 PM

Our different sources, some claiming factual, other claiming to be first hand accounts, etc. There is only one guarantee, as I have mentioned before, that there are the variations of the truth. Now with that being said, if I had to "vote" which source had the most accurate interpretation; It would be Herring's book. The PBS program is no longer a strong candidate in my mind for being anything more than a helpful suggestion of the truth. Appy's book offers some first hand depth from specific events each interviewer experienced. But Herrings book cites its references, sources, people, books, and all information it displays within it's pages. In Chapter 5 the section called, "The 'Other War': Nation Building and Pacification", this was telling us the struggle of the Buddhists Crisis in Vietnam. Explaining the increased protests, weakening of the American's stance in vietnam, and the overall decline of moral amongst those first hand affected by the war. There is, without question, a number of cited references within this chapter. Now that doesn't mean that cross referencing events and "interpretations" is no longer necessary. After being first handedly bamboozled by the PBS program, by the AIM hour long episode, it taught us that there is a truth to be left pondering about. Whether it's a conversative truth, liberal

retelling, communist sympathist, the truth is a series of interpretations. Gathering those interpretations and making the cohesiveness of it all come out against the white noise.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Discussion Part 2, continuation

by Arvind Raman - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 5:51 PM

I am getting more and more disgusted with PBS, it seems they wanted to put out form of media that caught an entertainment aspect of the situation. When you read Appy's book there is hard evidence, with detailed interviews and cited sources which give you the straight forward information. Herring's book is good as well but little different, it portrays other struggles that were in conflict, such as in Chapter 5, the problems Buddhists were having in Vietnam. Pacifist vs antagonists it seems like in a nut shell. I guess the purpose is to take various forms, and dissect what is important, each piece holds its significance, but i find the books a lot better, especially Appy.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Discussion Part 2, continuation

by Jimmie Berguin - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 3:11 PM

It makes you feel like you have accountability with the interviews. In my opinion people who served for the U.S. Army or Viet Minh have no real reason to lie or skew their recollections of the war. When you're being interviewed with your experience of the war, that's opportunity for your story to be heard. Regardless of who you fought for, at the end of the day the story will only reflect on the speaker and what they went through. PBS, Herring, Appy all have their variations of truths. I choose to believe that if there were any discrepancies with Appy's book, Joe would have presented us with it or google searches would pull something up.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the Discussion 2nd questions

by Arvind Raman - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 5:58 PM

The best source was reading Appy's book, It has in depth interviews and is broken down between the years of conflict and its factual with detailed sources. No doubt that this was a huge devastation to LBJ presidency, and furthermore solidified reason to not pursue a second a term, but it shows that we need to know when to quit and what is best for our soldiers. You have to salvage what you can so you can prevent

the ship from sinking. I do atleast give credit to John McCain when he states in all wars their has been unnecessary bloodshed, and the mistreatment of POWs. I think 30 years forward people are hearing more of the truth because it up to the public to come up with a well-rounded answer regarding war, and U.S.'s involvement.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Army Brat and Proud of It!

by Marquita Lucier - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 9:51 PM

My dad was a Sergeant in the U.S. Army armed forces enlisting on August 21, 1950 and fought in combat during the Korean Conflict. I grew up listening to his military stories as well as viewing a shoebox full of photos from when he was in Inchon Korea. There were numerous graphic photos of prisoners marching, dead Korean soldiers, U.S. military soldiers and artillery equipment and surrounding terrain. War was a part of the history of my dad and I was always proud that he served my country and never thought anything wrong about what he did or the photos in our home.

The reference material from our class ranging from the PBS series, Aims videos, Herring and the Appy books each in their own rights contribute to the learning process of the Vietnam War. The take away for me comes not from necessarily the differences of each source but from the commonalities, they have. Each one has brought their different viewpoints and in doing so have, either left things out, added things or changed things. In the New York Times Article, they bring up this point of how the PBS series strength was that it offered room for many points of view. I have appreciated the different perspectives and approach each source has taken to try to give us information about the Vietnam War. I am a visual learner so from both of the videos I have been able to pick up some information that I may have missed from the books. The Appy book is an easy read for me, I am able to learn from the people being interview and their firsthand experience, which I like this approach. The Herring book is a little dense and is full of dates, names, places and a whole lot of corruption theories that seem to get me pretty riled up. The aims video is only informative in the sense that they want to express their knowledge and opinions about the disservice that the PBS series brought to the American people of the Vietnam War. I really would not pick one source over the other. I am ok with getting the variety of information and perspectives and formulate my own opinions after weighing all the sources of the Vietnam era. As always, we need to take the media with a grain of salt.

In the PBS series, the fourth video graphically shows the contrast between the soldiers who were being interviewed and their stories and the Vietnamese people who they interviewed how they remembered the same events. The interview with Private Jack Hill had to be the most profound compared to the viewpoint of the young man telling it from his perspective living the same event when he was in the fourth grade. Both stories makes me really stop and think about what is being said and try to see each of their different perspectives as having some truth. In the Aims video

with the John McCain interview, I can appreciate his point of view that PBS did not give the attention that he thought they should have regarding the mistreatment of the U.S. prisoners by the Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. He brought up that the point that the PBS series did not cover how the Americans were manipulated, and that when Ramsey Clark, Jane Fonda and others, when they met with the seven POW's in Hanoi, came back from visiting how they described falsehood, according to McCain disrupted the work in Indochina. The Aim video also pointed out that the war was not lost on the battlefields but on printed page, the television, and it is the media that shapes what we think.

I agree with the closing remarks of Charleton Heston in the AIM video that we were right to fight communism, wrong to fight by military strength and that deception was the deciding factor. I also agree with him when he said, "we need to confront the challenges of our information age".

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Army Sergeant and Proud of It!



by Steven Masone - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 1:57 PM

Good for you Marquita! I was drafted in 1972 but enlisted so I could get specialized combat training. My Grandfather and Grandmother were civilian employees with the Army and I worked summers also at an Army Depot. I also like the Appy book better. Going in at the tail end of the war, I had already been inundated with the media representations, protests, Kent State, the civil rights movement, back to the Kennedy assassinations and all the rest of the tumult of those times. The Jack Hill interview struck me also. Of course I served with many who served in Vietnam and Korea both. The books and video documentaries will never be able to capture those war's effects in the eyes, faces, and voices of men like your father and other hero's who went because it was the right thing for them to do. I remember when "Saving Private Ryan" came out and the V.A. got the movie theaters to post warnings to combat veterans that their watching could be a 'trigger' for P.T.S.D. as the treatment for it was just beginning to have cathartic success. Many had to just stuff their stuff.

"As Frank L. Davis watched the movie Saving Private Ryan, he felt the pain of 54 years being peeled from his life. Suddenly he was 21 again, a sergeant in the 101st Airborne dodging bullets near Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The first time around, he had been too busy fighting to absorb the horrors of battle or to let terror grip him." The reliving was, in its way, worse. http://articles.philly.com/1998-08-06/news/25724660_1_omaha-beach-va-center-nearest-va-facility

The different viewpoints as you pointed out are important for the 5 W's of history and journalism, and you are also absolutely correct in your assessment to take the media with a grain of salt. The media were culpable in my estimation for provoking war protesters to defile and shame soldiers coming home from

Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Army Sergeant and Proud of It!

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 4:31 PM

Steven thanks for sharing your story. The year you enlisted I was ten years old and must have been sheltered somewhat from the media or perhaps my dad did a good job eliminating the things on the television that were contrary to his beliefs because I can't say that I remember hearing much about the Vietnam war. My dad was not much for watching Hollywood war movies in which the actors/actress had never experienced real life war events.

I was talking to my neighbor about his experience in Vietnam earlier today and he said he was in Vietnam between 1966 and 1970. He was in the marines and was stationed at Da Nang during that time working on jet engines. I asked him if he ever experienced being under attack and he said, "OH YA," and that he was close to Marble Mountains and was on the Ho Chi Mihn Trail. He said that you could never tell who was whom as far as the Vietnamese that they all looked the same and dressed in what he called the "black pajamas with the pointy hats." One of the things that he said he would never forget was right after getting to Da Nang one of the military officer's had been shot inside the cockpit of a plane and being at the low end of the totem pole he had to clean the inside of the plane, something he has never forgotten. I know that he has a hard time on the 4th of July when all the fireworks are going off and has expressed how much it bothers him. I think he has done a great job in managing himself and his life since serving in Vietnam.

I love hearing from people's personal experiences and for me it brings a greater respect regardless of their bias or not. There should never be a soldier, when coming home, needing to feel or experience shame, only respect.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Army Sergeant and Proud of It!

by Clifton Haney - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 8:18 PM

Marquita, Steven: Thank you very much for sharing your stories. My father's experiences after returning from Korea were very hard on him. He'd enlisted because his brothers had served during World War 2, and returned heroes. Upon returning he felt that many of his peers resented the war, and placed blame on individual soldiers like himself.

He was just a reservation kid trying to make good, and it just lead to years of alcoholism, P.T.S.D., and the inability to assimilate back into society. He'd very rarely tell me anything about his time there, but when he did it was chilling stuff. To think our society turns their back on soldiers so often breaks my heart.

That said I agree that the McCain interview was very interesting, and I feel that he made some valid points about the PBS series. I do think that, as I mentioned in my post, that the AIM video (not McCain) very shadily attempted to use those wrongs to attack the protest movement. It's still god information, but the presentation was terribly skewed.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Army Sergeant and Proud of It!



by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 9:34 PM

=) Clifton, I often wonder why there is not more focus or attention on the Korean Conflict. My dad shared many stories from his experience in Korea. Mostly growing up he would make sure we were dressed warm and living at the coast one thing that irritated him the most is if we were not dressed warm enough and huddled up trying to stay warm. He always advised us to take plenty of warm clothing largely because when he was in Korea, especially staying up late at night on watch it was bitter cold, and he learned how to dress warm to withstand the cold. My dad drove a military tank and I think that it took a pretty bad "A--" kind of guy to do what he did =)

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Marching, New York vs Washington



by Andrew Schubert - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 11:33 PM

After reading the NTY article, watching more of the PBS special and finishing the second half of the AIM video, one major discord that struck me regards the topic of protesting. Perhaps not the example you were looking for, as they don't directly dispute each other, but there does seem to be a difference in opinion. In the AIM video, issue is given over the PBS specials' neglect at mentioning a 'support-our-troops' march conducted in 1967. Charlton Heston narrates:

"In 1967, the 3rd largest parade in US history was held on NYC's 5th Avenue. A quarter of a million people marched for 9 hours in the support our men in Vietnam parade." (AIM video, 11:03)

Although it's true that the PBS special does not seem to mention this, they do certainly mention anti-war protests, in particular the one in fall of 1969 in which approximately 500,000 protestors marched on Washington (PBS special, part 11).

The question here isn't so much a contradiction in facts, but rather if it is fair to mention one protest without the other. Which is more pertinent?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Marching, New York vs Washington

by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 11:06 PM

Commenting on the specific issue of which publication gets my "vote" regarding the truthfulness/accuracy of its depiction of war and anti-war protests, I have to say that none are the victor. I do have an affinity for the PBS Special, I like the way in which it at least takes steps to remain objective, as opposed to the AIM Video, but in this particular case, perhaps it was lacking.

The PBS Special mentions only the anti-war protest, the AIM video mentions both but fails to do so without strong bias, and the Herring book also seems to only mention that anti-war protest (although I will whole-heartedly admit that perhaps I missed something in there). I can forgive the PBS Special, because although it's quite long, it still doesn't have complete reliability regarding EVERY facet of the time period, how could it? Even the Herring Book, with its larger form factor, is probably guilty of omitting some details in the interest of editing. The AIM Video however, remains completely discreditable in my mind, so although perhaps there is no defining "winner" in this scenario, I could easily pick a "loser".

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Wait... what were we talking about?

by Clifton Haney - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 11:35 PM

This post is a bit disjointed as the second half of the AIM's *Television's Vietnam: The Real Story* video skips ahead of our reading/viewing schedule, but I feel a strong need to bring up the way AIM decided to present the protest movement.

The AIM series chooses to conflate the issues of PBS's *Vietnam: A Television History's* views of American Vietnam Veterans and the protest movement, which is a true disservice to the very veterans that they're claiming to advocate for.

In the AIM series a young John McCain makes a strong argument about the treatment of American P.O.W.s and the treatment of Vietcong prisoners. Differentiating the two McCain defended the U.S. Government's treatment of its

prisoners with “..The North Vietnamese on the other hand had a calculated program of mistreatment - psychological and physical - in order to exploit the P.O.W.s for propaganda purposes.” (AIM, McCain)

McCain then proceeds to accuse Jane Fonda and Ramsey Clark of visiting a select handful of P.O.W.s and spreading falsehoods once they returned to the U.S. The AIM video then goes on to show 30 seconds of slow motion footage of a controversial Jane Fonda visit to Vietnam set to lackadaisical Jazz Tune before continuing to defend the post-war lives of American Vietnam Veterans.

It is less than five minutes later, and with little to no true segway between the two subjects, that the series chooses to attack those who protested the war via an interview with Colonel Harry Summers. “...As now it is no longer fashionable to say that you ran off to Canada, or that you deliberately starved yourself, or that deliberately missed the draft...” (AIM, Summers) Summers’ interview continues, while footage of protesters is set to the same lackadaisical music that rolled with the Fonda footage, attempting to discredit the protesters by accusing them of revisionist history.

What the AIM video fails to address is the U.S. soldiers and statesmen who also protested war, instead choosing to focus on the celebrity and the “hippie” elements while building the valid point of Post-War treatment of Veterans by Americans as a whole. On P. 215 of the Herring book we get a much broader example of who was protesting as Herring describes the ‘Dove’ movement: “It included diverse individuals as the world-famous pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali, actress Jane Fonda, author Norman Mailer, old-line pacifists such as A.J. Muste and new radicals such as Tom Hayden, civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and conservative Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright.” (Herring, P. 215)

As the New York Times article suggest I can not help but feel that the AIM video is arguing opinion rather than fact. In this case the video uses the very true tragedy of America’s responses to its returning veterans to argue that those responsible for its production simply did not care for the “undesirable” element that protested the war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Wait... what were we talking about?



by Clifton Haney - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 11:45 PM

Herring certainly came out on top for me when it came to this particular issue. As others said he seems much less inclined to bias. Though I am certain Herring will have more to say later on, as surely will the PBS series, about the protest movement, it is wholly the AIM video's fault that they lost this me on this issue.

My father was a veteran of the Korean war, and his brothers veterans of WW2 so I consider the way we treat our returning soldiers to be incredibly important. This said I differentiate them very much from those who were in charge of diplomacy and policy at the time. Attempting to mix them in with the protest

movement is an attempt to pull at heart-strings and in bad taste. At least Herring had the decency to explain that some very important and capable people were on the protest side of things without simply blaming it all on revisionism.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Wait... what were we talking about?

by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 5:25 PM

I was excited to hear that your dad was a veteran of the Korean War as well and agree with you that the way we treat our returning soldiers is very important.

In the Herring book (p. 214,215), he talks about the Doves a group who opposed the war and the movement grew in proportion to the escalation of the conflict. The diverse group included individuals like Dr. Benjamin Spock, Muhammad Ali, Jane Fonda, Norman Mailer, A.J. Muste, Tom Hayden and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. whose attack on American foreign policy was vicious and unrelenting. Their movement swept the U.S. challenging the most basic of American values and institutions leaving divisions that would last into the next century. While Aim Video mentions that Ho Chi Min said that, we will win in the streets of San Francisco, Chicago, Detroit and Washington. He knew that causing a division among the American people would help him win the war.

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." Abraham Lincoln, Springfield, Illinois, House Divided Speech, June 16, 1858.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Wait... what were we talking about?

by Andrew Schubert - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 10:51 PM

How refreshing to see someone reaffirming the point I made in my original post, how disheartening to see it done in such a better way! I really appreciate the points you've made in this post and share your sentiment whole-heartedly. I too was struck by the disjointed nature regarding the timelines of what we've learned in the Herring Book/PBS Special and the AIM Video. It's hard to draw meaningful correlations pertaining to contradictory information, when we've yet to absorb the information we're supposed to be commenting on. We both decided to comment on the topic of public protests, and to make my point I even had to look up the transcript of one of the final episodes of the PBS Special.

It would appear that we've both picked up on the AIM videos use of music in their presentation. I was commenting before about their choice of cut-away scenes of Communist gatherings that were put to ominous music, again

assuming that this was a discreditation technique. It's good to see that this method and its purposes do not sway those that aim to keep their objective thinking styles.

I concur that, in both the eyes of myself and the New York Times article, the AIM video is arguing opinion as opposed to fact. I wonder however, do you believe the PBS special was remiss in not mentioning the march in support of the troops in Vietnam? It's debatable whether or not it had a responsibility to do so, but in its absence, was it a deliberate attempt to skew history as the AIM video would suggest?

Also, I'd like to add a name to your list of public figures that protested the war in Vietnam. The "Maverick" Senator Wayne Morse from Oregon got severe flack for his anti-war stance, even so far as to be investigated by the FBI at the (alleged) behest of President Johnson himself. I mention him as a worthy addition to your argument, and not solely because I think about him on my daily ride past his estate.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Wait... what were we talking about?



by Clifton Haney - Monday, October 27, 2014, 1:00 AM

Regarding the pro-Vietnam War Parades I find the AIM video's claim of a quarter of a million people at the May 13, 1967 parade interesting. I decided to look into it, and couldn't dig up much about it. This book claims that the number was actually 70,000 - quite a bit short of AIM's number. Also "third longest" doesn't really explain much either - longest from end to end, longest time running, or...? Is "the media didn't cover it, so there's no record" argument a fallacy or a valid point?

I plan to dig around this week and see if I can find some archived dailies that might have covered the parade to try and figure this out.

I do think the PBS series has (so far) done a rather poor job of covering those who supported the war. Was that intentional? Possibly, but I get the sense that the series is misguided more than malicious. Unlike the AIM video with ominous music and dodgy editing. That said excluding history is still revising it and it begs scrutiny.

Edit: Corrected the number of protesters referred to in the book.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Difficult to have top source





by Austin McQuaw - Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 11:54 PM

I suppose I would have to agree with Arvind. "No sources hold top spot in my view." It is so difficult to trust any sources with political information. Especially when something has so much investment in it to be televised, it's easy to suspect it has an agenda backing it. With text books even, you get more than fact. You get the interpretation of the given cultural perspective and understanding. Obviously, the media produces material with bias of a much greater magnitude. With regard to the AIM program, the information is paired together with a conservative agenda and in rebuttal. So, they openly have an agenda.

All information we have is processed by a person's and/or culture's view. When something is presented with a value on it, it has bias. With that in mind, it's very helpful to have both sides sharing their view on the situation. Especially when studying a historical event, it's important to try and understand not just the event, but the culture and views of the time. I might be remembering incorrectly, but I think the AIM video showed what it called the 3rd greatest parade in U.S. history and was pro war. (I'm tired and really need to recheck that later). When the media had previously shown an overwhelming amount of protest.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Soldiers, Tactics, and The Domino Theory

by Bryan Lewis - Thursday, October 23, 2014, 1:11 PM

I feel that the accusation by Dan Cragg on the AIM program that the PBS series portray American soldiers as "drug-addicts, racial bigots, and murders." is an unfair interpretation of the video. In episode four of the PBS (27:20) series reviews a battle with accounts from individuals on both sides. Yes, the Vietnamese side portrayed the soldiers as apparent murders, but as the U.S. soldiers' interview shows that not all marines contributed to the atrocities explained by the Vietnamese and also how the burning of the huts or slaughter of their livestock was simply procedure.

Military tactics is something I found to be conflicting between the AIM program and the Herring book. Kenneth Moorefield in the AIM program claims how the PBS series misrepresents the effectiveness of U.S. military tactics, though the book seems to support the idea that U.S. military tactics were ineffective. "Despite the extensive damage inflicted on North Vietnam, the bombing did not achieve its goals." (Herring 184) clearly states how the main operation "Rolling Thunder", which attempted to bomb the North into submission, was unsuccessful.

Another contradiction is the Domino Theory, the AIM program seems to support it because of the Soviet's and China's link with Vietnam while the Herring book shows how the Domino Theory might be false. "Nevertheless, along with their increasingly heated rivalry...it permitted Hanoi to play one against the other to get increased aid and prevent either from securing predominant influence." (Herring 182) shows not only North Vietnam's unwillingness to submit to the Soviets or China but

also the conflict between them. Herring also discredits the fear of the Domino Theory with "The Communist defeat in Indonesia and rampant political turmoil within China itself suggested that trends in Asia were now running in favor of the United States." (Herring 225) displaying the changing attitude of the Asian inhabitants.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Herring, a reliable source



by Bryan Lewis - Thursday, October 23, 2014, 1:43 PM

I feel that the Herring book is likely the most accurate interpretation of the Vietnam war. It seems to provide facts which support claims of both the PBS series and the AIM program; such as U.S. public opinion being a war within itself and a major factor in the Vietnam war. As the Herring book calls it "*The War At Home*" was seemingly as difficult as the war in Vietnam because "Vietnam aroused more widespread and passionate opposition than any other U.S. war." (Herring 214) which seems to support the claim of the PBS series. Though a portion of the American population did protest the war in Vietnam, "Antiwar protest did not turn the American people against the war, as some critics have argued." (Herring 219) which supports the claim of the AIM program.

Herring and the AIM program agree that the war was going to be won through the view of the American population. Herring states how LBJ was "Increasing fearful that the war might be lost in the United States" (Herring 228), not because of military defeat. The AIM program clearly states the media is what lost the war for the U.S. in Vietnam, arguing that more public support would have yielded better results. The example they use is the Tet Offensive in which the Vietnamese launched a surprise military attack that sustained heavy losses; though even with Viet Cong losses much greater than U.S. losses the media portrayed it as a loss for the U.S., unwilling to admit it's mistake to the public.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Herring, a reliable source



by Kasey Harmon - Friday, October 24, 2014, 9:20 PM

I also believe that the Herring book is probably the most accurate source for Vietnam history. I did feel however that it maybe didn't back up the PBS series as much as it did the AIM video. I can't recall the PBS series talking about operation cedar falls but the AIM video and the Herring book both do go into detail about it and how it was a major victory for the U.S.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Close...but no cigar!

by Steven Masone - Friday, October 24, 2014, 3:28 AM

Of course all the sources and their correspondents had subjective biases, we all do. It is impossible to be completely objective, at least that is my subjectively tainted viewpoint. Over the years I have seen many books and documentaries , movies, on Vietnam War and even a *one man show* live stage production in "drama therapy" presentation for veterans suffering from P.T.S.D.

The conflicting portrayals of Ho Chi Minh, and other major players was and is inevitable in human storytelling. After watching "The Fog of War" (which I hadn't from bad taste of McNamara's image from media of my era) I found a new viewpoint where I did not demonize McNamara anymore as I had. While I was still wary of his agenda in that documentary to salvage his legacy in history, he did manage to humanize himself enough for me to empathize with his position as a patriot which I never saw him as before.

This also let me see that I have not had the chance to see and hear Ho Chi Minh's own story from his mouth...or Gen. Westmoreland's and many others who have been colored by other's paint-brush without seeing a 'self-portrait' as "Fog of War" made available. My personal experience serving with many U.S. Army veterans who fought in Vietnam and other conflicts, colored my perception towards much of the "Why's, What for's and Who for?"...and it only convoluted it all the more for me.

"The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war." General Douglas MacArthur

While MacArthur has been portrayed by the media as an egomaniac and publicity hound, dismissed by President Truman, it was really because of the mistrust between civilians and military that had more to do with it, in my former *military mind* opinion. His quotation of understanding the "common soldier" endeared him and that ideal to my generation and we did not have a leader like him in Vietnam. MacArthur's standard, colored mine and most military men and women's opinion towards the political and civilian *players* in the Vietnam War. So Westmoreland was not a leader the common soldier trusted. While I realize it was a psychological *construct* for maintaining a sense of sanity, and the ill treatment of returning soldiers, it was 'us against every one else.' Even new recruits and stateside average soldiers knew by 1971 that the politicians were not going to let us (soldiers) win in Vietnam. Walter Cronkite summed up the public sentiment with his statement of "What the hell is going on here? I thought we were winning this war". So for me, while the Herring book covers the "back-story" re history etc...the insight from personal accounts in Appy's book is closest to the combat participant's truth's from both sides that tell another story.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the Discussion

by Ivan Guitron - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 9:36 PM

After all the material that we have been giving to read and watch, whether it is the PBS series, The Herring, and The Appy book , they are all great sources of information that has to do with this discussion. the one that I find to be the best with all this detailed information is still The Appy book, but to be quite honest all the material is all starting to bunch up together that is is getting difficult to keep up with.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the Discussion

by Ivan Guitron - Sunday, October 26, 2014, 9:38 PM

You guys are also a great way to get a good source of information from so thank you all

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(Week 2 - Continuing th...) Next >

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