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Continuing the Discussion

by Joe Escobar - Sunday, October 16, 2016, 2:21 PM

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misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese

by Leslie Stockton - Tuesday, October 18, 2016, 11:39 PM

The biggest discrepancy I found between the PBS Documentary, and the AIM and Losers and Pirates videos was the way the North and South Vietnamese and the American soldier are portrayed. The glaring similarities that I found between Losers and Pirates and the AIM video was disheartening. I found it much easier to believe these sources rather than the PBS documentary. As Losers and Pirates states a former prisoner of war, Robinson Risner, was interviewed for the PBS documentary and was told that he would be able to view his segment before airing. He never heard from the producers again and after the awful way he was portrayed in the documentary, no wonder he didn't. Losers and Pirates also points out how the South Vietnamese were looked at like thieves and whores. Where the AIM video points out this also. Nguyen Ngoc Bich believe that the South Vietnamese people looked like passive puppets and the North as revolutionary. PBS shows a clear racist view on the south and never a kind word is spoken about them.

Former Senator John McCain who spent 6 years as a POW states that there is not one documented case of brutality on North Vietnamese people. That such cases were isolated incidents that happened in the field. He find this tragic but to be part of war. Yet as he goes on to talk about how the North had a clear calculated program to exploit the South Vietnamese and American prisoners for propaganda and negotiations. As Minh stated in 1965, the war would not be won on Vietnam soil but in the streets of American cities through media.

Dan Cragg, Army Magazine and Nat'l Vietnam Veteran Review, says PBS did a terrible thing misrepresenting the American and South people. He says that the documentary "Portrays the American soldier in Vietnam as a drug addict, racial bigot and a man who murdered his officers and CO's almost at will". I find this quite disturbing. The PBS documentary shows a clear bias of anti-war and anti-military. Which knowing the Vietnam Veterans that I do, I find this morally reprehensible

Sources:

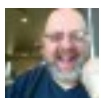
PBS documentary

http://media.lanecc.edu/users/escobarj/195/forums/week4/Losers_are_Pirates_editec

http://media.lanecc.edu/users/escobarj/195/forums/week4/Part_2.mp4

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Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese

by Scott Woods - Friday, October 21, 2016, 8:36 PM

Hey Leslie,

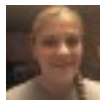
I agree that the PBS documentary is a cold depiction of the war of Vietnam. It shows the American soldier as a bit of a tyrant from the attack of villages (VaTHE4 26:00-38:00) to the scene of a soldier pushing down a Vietnamese prisoner under water (VaTHE 17:11-17:23). Without these depictions we can't formulate a clear picture of what happened there. Does it do a disservice to the people who fought in the war? I don't think so. I think it gives a piece to the puzzle that we need.

You argue "He (Dan Cragg) says that the documentary 'Portrays the American soldier in Vietnam as a drug addict, racial bigot and a man who murdered his officers and CO's almost at will' " Yet a fair amount of American soldiers were. Corruption had started spreading throughout the South Vietnam area. The ALW chapters talk about how prostitution, land deals, even opiates were becoming big industry through all the confusion in 1965-67.

I would argue that the information that we are getting from all of our sources are relevant, giving us a bigger picture of the goings on in Vietnam; no matter how slanted they are.

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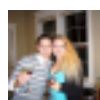
Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese

by Leslie Stockton - Friday, October 21, 2016, 11:38 PM

I definitely agree that ALL sources are important to see both views. And I can also agree that some, not all, soldiers became dependant on drugs. As my father told me, he went in as a fresh faced 18 year old Mormon kid, didn't drink and didn't do drugs, after the atrocities he participated in and witnessed he also took to drugs. Opium was rampant, Vietnamese prostitutes were everywhere and yes even corruption. This was a poor country full of naive young men. Our society is so desensitized to violence in today's day and age than it was back then.

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Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 3:07 AM

Wow! I grew up a mormon. My father was a young mormon when he left for Vietnam. He didn't drink, smoke, or do drugs. He wasn't the father I knew when he came back. He drank alcohol, smoked, and did whatever drugs he could get his hands on to try and forget what he saw and what he did. So I can relate. I agree that our society is desensitized by violence. It is sad.

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**Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese**

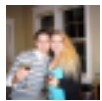
by Jennifer Wilson - Friday, October 21, 2016, 10:49 PM

This is exactly what I became aware of. Also, I detected some defensiveness while some of the veterans were recounting their actions. Although, they offered no apologies for their actions, they were sure to say things like "It was war" and assure viewers that they did what they had to do. And I can understand that they feel that have to defend their actions, we weren't there living through the hell they were.

On the other hand, the AIM video portrayed Americans in an almost hero-like light. While I also understand that some were heroes, it seems somewhat unfair to label one side as good and one side as bad. This is why I am taking a middle road of what to believe. There are good and bad on each side of almost every conflict.

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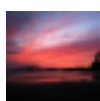
**Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese**

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 1:43 AM

Hi Jennifer. I have the same opinion as you do. I had a father who was in Vietnam. He was never the same and took his life when I was thirteen. I wanted to understand what happened to him. Several years ago I interviewed 22 brave men who were in the Vietnam war. All but 4 of them told me horrible stories of the abuse they saw their comrades commit on the Vietnamese people. Most of the horrors they said they saw were committed when they first captured prisoners. Of the 22 men I interviewed only 4 were comfortable giving their last names. I heard the phrase over and over about "how it was war". Most of the men I talked to didn't even want to be there. They did live through hell. It broke my heart listening to what they went through. It also helped me to understand the pain my father had gone through. I think you're right that the AIM video portrays Americans like they were heroes. There were many, but if they had a choice most of them wouldn't have been there. It does seem like it's portrayed as heroes against villains. I don't see it that way either. People have to see and do the most horrendous things in war and try and come home and live normal lives. From reading the Appy book it seems that the Vietnamese went through hell as well. I feel bad for both sides and what they had to go through.

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**Re: misrepresenting the American soldier and the S. Vietnamese**

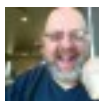
by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 4:38 PM

I am so sorry that you lost your father at such a young age, and that your father had to experience a war that was more than he could handle. It is all too common, unfortunately, as many soldiers, then and now, feel there is no escape. I lost my grandfather to suicide almost a year ago. It's heartbreaking.

Finger-pointing when it comes to war is a tricky thing. "Good guys" and "bad guys" exist in all conflicts. One important note you made was that they didn't want to be there. There were over 600,000 draftees in the Vietnam War. I am certain most of them would rather have stayed home. And it may be easy for some to sit back and say "what you did was horrible" but we were not there, we did not see the things that changed them. The things that survival may have forced them to do. It is a sad story for all.

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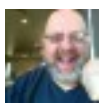
Helping a country, or hurting it?

by Scott Woods - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 2:47 PM

America by 1964-1967 increased it's involvement in the war for Vietnam at an almost alarming rate. At one point spending 1.4 billion in 1966 (ALW pg. 205). John Roche would say that year that the American presence as, "just Unbelievable, the Holy Roman Empire going to war" (ALW pg. 205). With the influx of troops, civilian advisers, as well as money, Vietnam was thrown into a whirlwind of not only advancement but social and economical change. Inflation caused by this increased prices by 170 percent and started up new towns such as Long Binh just north of Saigon. Of course corruption increased as well, from land price being jacked up to required bribes for drivers license and other official government documents. Yet, United States officials just shrugged it off. "Ky candidly commented, 'most of the generals are corrupt. Most of the senior officials in the provinces are corrupt.' But, he would add calmly, 'corruption exists everywhere, and people can live with some of it. You live with it in Chicago and New York'" (ALW pg 207). As I read this I was shocked, not only at the idea that we spent so much money on this war, but the way it was handled from the beginning. American officials seemed to only want to win the war and not worry about the individuals that had to deal with it day to day in Vietnam. It left me with more questions then I had answers. Almost all speculative such as, "Could we have been more organized and better with our money in Vietnam then what we actually did?" Yet, I know that more is to come as the years pass on.

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Re: Helping a country, or hurting it?

by Scott Woods - Friday, October 21, 2016, 7:30 PM

This is an addition to my original post because I misunderstood the assignment.

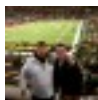
In the end, which source gets your “approval” or “endorsement” (on which SPECIFIC historical issue) as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation of the facts?

My approval will always be information that is given to us. I feel an argument that starts with, “This person/program/ect, misrepresented the information because...” is always a terrible way to start an argument. The AIM video part 2 and the Losers and Pirates article start off almost exactly like that. There is no information in this statement that I couldn’t get without my own forward thinking. I was actually getting mad at the AIM video because once it started talking about something interesting like Kenneth Moorefield. “The quality of the fighting man in Vietnam was high or higher as we have in our behalf in any previous war,” he said. (AIM 6:58) Then they jump in to talking with William Jayne about PBS episode “Legacy.”

That being said, I think the best information I’ve found so far is in the information from America’s Longest War. My last two posts, the one about and the one last week were both the most fascinating bits I found out about of last week. Now granted because of my misinformation on the assignment, which was my fault, I didn’t see part one of the AIM video.

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American troops: Misunderstood

by Mason Fisher - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 6:12 PM

Hello all,

Personally, it is mind blowing how many different discrepancies there are between all of these different “sources” presented to us throughout this class. I feel as though this goes to show that you cannot always trust a source and further research can be required. It is astonishing how PBS and AIM view the same exact war and how they go about explaining what they feel happened.

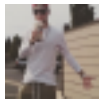
Based off part #2 of the AIM video and after reading the article provided I feel as though one of the biggest things that caught my attention was how PBS portrays US soldiers that served in Vietnam. Coming to this conclusion can very well be biased from my personal opinion but based off what we have read in the Herring book,

stories from the Appy book and the videos (PBS and AIM). In the AIM video they explain how there were atrocities and terrible things that happened on both sides during this horrific war, specifically mentioned is the treatment of POW's. There are no documented cases of the US doing anything to harm to POW's, on the other hand the Vietnamese had specific outlines on how to torture (John McCain AIM video).

Throughout the PBS documentary the producers use a lot of pro communist propaganda which is very biased, the AIM video and the "Losers are Pirates" article points this out (page ii). "Persons who defend US involvement in Vietnam get very little attention in the program, while critics are portrayed so generously that one can almost see haloes shimmering over their heads" I think this is an interesting quote from the same article and can be attributed to the point that American troops are looked at as "racial bigots, drug addicts and murderers" (AIM video).

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

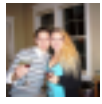
by Zachery Brown - Friday, October 21, 2016, 7:47 PM

I absolutely agree with you here, Mason. It is quite shocking, and almost appalling, that two documentaries based on the exact same war and chain of events, can differ so much, as well as have so many subjects to disagree and debate. I find it just absolutely freakishly weird, that a war that ended not even 50 years ago can be so unclear. But yet, even though yes there is room to debate certain battles and happenings of the war, I personally feel that WWII is much more clearly depicted as well as agreed upon. And WWII ended roughly 10 years before the Vietnam War had even begun in 1954. Therefore you have a war with a certainly higher number of technological advances, and an entire decade after, as well as the appearance of actual reporters and journalists on the field for the first time. But none the less you have much more faded, twisted, and bent reliable documentation. So yes; as I stated earlier in the post, the fact that two documentaries on the exact same turn of events can be so unclear. And, well, almost to say opposite from one another, it absolutely astonishes me.

The only reasoning that I can even begin to understand why this could possibly be okay. Is the length of the wars. Vietnam of course our longest war being a total of 19-21 years total. As WWII, only being a total of 6 years. So looking at it this way, its a little bit easier for me to realize that yes, a war that was pretty much 4X the amount of total years would most likely have a more grey area of events and reliable documentation then the other.

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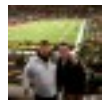
Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:45 AM

Hi Zachary. It does seem pretty crazy that both movies seem to have so much confliction. Even though the Vietnam war was long, I still have a hard time understanding how we still can't seem to get the real story and the real truth about what happened. Why are there so many conflicting stories? It sickens me that our country still doesn't have a clear and honest picture of what happened. Don't we at least owe that to our Vets who died in war, lived with PTSD everyday, and were never the same again?

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

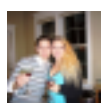
by Mason Fisher - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 7:14 PM

Zachary & Meadow:

Thank you for both replying to my post and I agree with both of you. The last two weeks we have been talking about the discrepancies between different sources and it really is mind blowing how all of these sources, and others that are out there are so different on an event that happened in history. I cannot wrap my head around the fact that there were millions of people involved and yet we still have conflicting stories, even to this day? I know it sounds like we are beating a dead horse but I want to know why this is such a sided topic? What ulterior motives do these people have to produce false information, if theirs is indeed false. Since last week my eyes have been opened to how carefully you have to dissect sources and make sure what you are interpreting and grasping from a source is indeed correct.

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 9:30 PM

Hi Mason. I agree that it is really confusing and you have to really pay attention to what people are saying to try and get to the real truth. It is bizarre that so many people have so many opinions on what happened and didn't in Vietnam. Sometimes I think it makes it hard for Veterans to speak out against discrepancies in the war because our soldiers are so programmed to be so patriotic and they feel that speaking against the war

is somehow disrespecting a certain brotherhood that they shared over there. Sometimes I feel they hold back sharing their stories because they differ from what The United States says happened. That is why I have so much respect for these men and women. It doesn't help us get to the truth any easier, but they are some of the most loyal men I have ever met.

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After reading this thread

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 11:39 PM

Hello everyone,

Mason in your last response to Zachary and Meadow the way you exclaimed your realization of how carefully you are going to dissect the sources really stood out to me. I know Zachary, Meadow and yourself are astounded with how many conflicting pieces of information there can be. I am also a victim of the run around we have all been going through between all 4 of these sources over the past 2 weeks. (AIM & PBS videos, Appy & Herring Books) The importance of comparing them and dissecting them intently seems to be the pressure of success when understanding this war. With this being said I can't justify one publication over the next quite yet when it comes to PBS or AIM. Considering I have only seen 4 episodes of the 13 part of the PBS publication and still have half of the Herring novel to complete I just can not choose one or the other. The quote, "The war and its legacy must be looked at boldly and with a critical eye neglecting no facet of its complicated form." speaks so true to my stance during Week 4. (Pirates, Pg. 9) I believe that at this point we must embrace the complicated aspect of these sources and appreciate the teachers choice to bring them all to our attention and now use that as we come to our final conclusions on the Vietnam War during the second half of our term.

-Treva

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Scott Woods - Friday, October 21, 2016, 8:44 PM

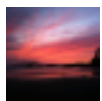
Hey Mason,

I agree with your first paragraph and here is why. I feel that we can look at any historical time before the internet age and find information for "source" that depict events in history such as the Vietnam War, and see if we can pull the important information out of it.

There are graphic scenes in the PBS documentary that go on to talk about the brutality of the American troops man handling prisoners even the in the AIM video Senator John McCain goes on to say there were no mistreatment of Vietnam POWs. The whole section of the video at 17:12-17:23 is pretty glaring to the aspect.

There is a lot of information out there that contradicts each other, but with enough diligence we can actually find the truth.

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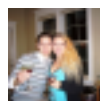


Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Jennifer Wilson - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 10:45 PM

One thing I would like to mention about John McCain's comments about POWs. How certain can he be that he states there was NO mistreatment of POWs? It is hard for me to believe that he could know without a doubt that there was absolutely no mistreatment. I felt his statement somewhat reckless especially with the evidence shown in the video.

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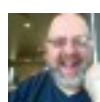


Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 3:19 AM

I absolutely agree. How would he know that? I have talked to some of our Veterans who have told me stories of how they mistreated the prisoners of war they caught. I was told a story about a man who just lost it over there and all he wanted to do was be violent. He took it out on every Vietnamese person he saw. I don't believe for one second with how and what our men went through over there, that there wasn't some kind of abuse going on by us. It wasn't right what they did, but I believe it happened.

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Scott Woods - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:33 PM

I was actually thinking about this after I woke up. For some reason the McCain comments in the AIM video struck me wrong. Not only does he not have the knowledge of those camps because he doesn't say he visited them or anything like that. He was also a fighter pilot. That's totally different than your boots on the ground G.I.s. So I'm finding it hard to believe his statements in the video not that I think about it more.

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Jennifer Wilson - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 4:43 PM

These are excellent points to make. John McCain may be unhappy with the PBS version of the Vietnam War, and be a little extra defensive of our presence over there. I understand that he doesn't want the US to be painted in a bad light, but facts are facts. I am not saying all were bad, but like I said in my main post, there has to be somewhere in the middle where truth meets.

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Re: American troops: Misunderstood

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 7:17 PM

This stood out to me in the video as well and now I am starting to really question it as you all point it out to me. Yes Mr. McCain served in Vietnam which is amazing and I am thankful for his service but how can he be so sure that he knows how every POW situation was handled on the US side? Since he was a POW he obviously knows how they handled American troops so I believe that information to be extremely credible. Thank you guys for pointing that out, my interpretation of what he said was a bit off.

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Zachery Brown - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 7:43 PM

I think that one of the most stand out issues that I got from the AIM video, and the Losers are Pirates reading, was the failure to mention, or mention correctly of the POW camps. This, to me; is a big issue. I feel as though this PBS documentary, so far at least, has mentioned everything except the following two subjects; The mistreatment of the American POW's, and the fact that North Vietnamese and Vietcong were not at all mistreated one in the American Prisoner

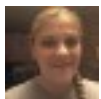
camps. As John McCain in the AIM video states, "The PBS Series established, I think a very unfortunate juxtaposition on, the treatment of the American POW's in North Vietnam and the treatment by the Vietnamese and or the Americans, of the Vietcong or North Vietnamese prisoners. Cause I think there is a very dramatic difference. Indeed there were tragic situations of brutality inflicted by the South Vietnamese and the American Soldiers on prisoners. That is a tragedy of every war that has ever taken place in history. But they were isolated, unfortunate instances that took place in the field. There is not one single documented case of mistreatment of a Vietcong or a North Vietnamese prisoner, once they were in the prison compound. The North Vietnamese on the other had a calculated program of mistreatment, psychological and physical in order to exploit the POW's for propaganda." This is about 3:55 seconds into the AIM video.

Also, on the New York Times article, page 2, it states, "The series makes Ho Chi Minh into a nationalist rather than a Communist; it ignores the role of the South Vietnamese Army; it minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war; it slights the actual conduct of military operations."

This subject has really stood out to me. It has this entire term thus far. Even after episode 1 of the PBS documentary. POW's in the Vietnam war are one of the most controversial topics, especially in movies, books, and new articles, etc. So it had amazed me how little or even not at all that the PBS documentary had spoke of this. Im starting to feel as though the PBS documentary's goal was to completely put down the US. Especially the fact that the treatment of the North Vietnamese by the Americans, was so much, a world apart, more civilized then the treatment of the Americans by the North Vietnamese.

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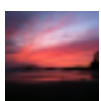
Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Leslie Stockton - Friday, October 21, 2016, 10:07 PM

I too found it hard to listen to the way the N. Vietnamese and the U.S P.O.W camps were portrayed. I too think that PBS's goal was to make the US look awful. They definitely did a good job at that. While we were holding captives they were using us for propaganda to help win the war. Some people being held captive for years, starved and diseased from lack of nutrition or medical care. Speculation continues that POW's still exist in Vietnam today, yet you don't hear that the US is still holding N. Vietnam POW's. Not even in speculation.

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Jennifer Wilson - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 10:54 PM

When the AIM video mentioned the treatment of POWs, I assumed they were discussing further episodes. I have not witnessed much to the account of what they were speaking of. And just because there is "not one single documented case of mistreatment" (John McCain, AIM video), does not mean that it did not happen. I am sure there are many things that occurred that were not documented or shared. It is quite frustrating at this point because of the conflicting information, and being "green" when it comes to this subject, doesn't help me decide which version to believe.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Hello Zachary.

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 10:27 PM

Although, I can understand why you feel that PBS failed you so strongly in terms of how to portray America's stance in this war because of the lack of the coverage on the POW camps. I feel that there still may be substance to the things they did cover. It seems even with the supportive information in the AIM video, that is accounted for by John McCain, is still being questioned by our other fellow classmates. At this point in the term it seems we have so many conflicting pieces even the contradicting pieces are starting to be doubted. However, with my open view on what the true outcome of this war can turn into I feel as though AIM should still be acknowledged for the questions they do pose in their piece when evaluating this war. Such as the controversy over the coverage of the POW camps. Like John Corry expresses in his article, maybe these men in the AIM video are simply expressing their opinions, but these opinions are created from very important political questions that need to be answered. (NYT article, pg 2) The Vietnam War in a total evaluation must be looked at carefully. In the most general sense; not so much on what "he" didn't say or "she" did say but when both are compared what stands true in the end.

-Treva

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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American Portrayal in Vietnam

by Trever Neal - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 7:58 PM

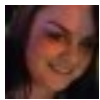
After reading the materials and watching the videos I think that one of the biggest contradictions to me is the PBS's portrayal of the American soldier's in Vietnam. The PBS series shows them as violent murderers who did not care who was on the receiving end of their weapons. They were seen as, "a drug addict, a racial bigot, and

a man who murdered his officers and NCO's almost at will," Dan Cragg (6 min). There may have been a few American soldiers who fit that description, but the vast majority were brave, honorable, and fought with dignity. John McCain who was a navy flyer that spent six years in a North Vietnamese prison camp says, "There is not one single documented case of mistreatment of a Viet Cong or a North Vietnamese prisoner once they were in the prison compound" (3 min). The North Vietnamese used "Hotel Hanoi" to torture and interrogate American P.O.W.'s for propaganda purposes. The excerpt *Losers are Pirates* by James Banerian also contradicts what is said in the PBS series, which would lead me to believe the AIM documentary Television's Vietnam: The Real Story is more factual than the PBS series.

(Dan Cragg AIM)(John McCain AIM)

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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A Different Perspective

by Beth Gaines - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 8:53 PM

The major significances I see in the *Losers are Pirates* excerpt is it appears to be the first time someone actually questions the way the Vietnam War is being presented in the PBS documentary and as an educational tool. The author, James Banerian, even states, "Some critics responded to the PBS series in articles and commentaries, not all of which are given as wide a circulation as the favorable reviews..." I just don't understand how something that is claimed to be a "educational documentary, with instructional guides, audio materials and production manuals accompanying the film" (*Losers are Pirates*, P.4) can be so completely biased. I personally would never rely on anything PBS produced for accurate, fair, and unbiased reporting on an educational matter. The AIM video seems to offer a more accurate telling of history, even the ugly and less than honorable parts. With that said, I would never rely on either to support my stance on the Vietnam war in an argument. PBS was one sided and AIM was desperately trying to prove how skewed the PBS documentary was. Facts were provided in both videos but again, based on what they were trying to prove.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: A Different Perspective

by Trevor Neal - Friday, October 21, 2016, 9:57 PM

Hey Beth, I think you bring up a good point in your post. I tend to believe the AIM documentary more because of the contradictory information, but the fact that AIM was trying so hard to prove how skewed the PBS series was is something I had

not thought of. It makes me wonder if they are stretching the truth just to prove the PBS series wrong. The more information we have, the better we can figure out what really happened in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Middle of the road.

by Jennifer Wilson - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 11:06 PM

One of the key differences that I see in *The Real Story: Part 2*, and *Vietnam: A Television History*, are the accounts of events that occurred.

In *The Real Story: Part 2*, the storytelling leans towards the American's being the heroes of the Vietnamese, and that their removal had tragic consequences. That the media played a huge part in "losing" the war, by misrepresenting America's role in the war, and purposely not covering the support for the soldiers in Vietnam, and only broadcasting protests and propaganda.

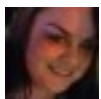
In *Vietnam: A Television History*, American soldiers are portrayed as inexperienced, killing tools for the government. (Not all, but some) Showing soldiers openly asking themselves if they weren't the "good guys", and questioning why they are fighting in the war. And even pondering desertion, just to get out of it. It shows soldiers recalling horrific instances of killing women and children, and not even knowing if they were Viet Cong or Vietnamese, because they "all looked the same". And soldiers that really showed no emotion when speaking of these killings.

What I wonder is if these two episodes are just right and left versions of the events? Where is the truth in either of these arguments? I struggle believing one or the other is completely factual. The political undertones that I detect, pull me from committing to one or the other. I am completely split over this, and choose a "middle road" and feel there is truth to both programs. For now.

"It was war." -Private Jack Hill

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Middle of the road.

by Beth Gaines - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 9:09 PM

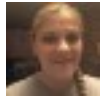
Hi Jennifer,

I could not agree more with your statement, "I struggle believing one or the other is completely factual." I actually made a similar statement in my answer. The glaring contradictions in each video make it nearly impossible to rely on either for the "truth" It would be a nice twist if the class included a completely different series that was more factual rather than political.

Beth

Sum of ratings: (1)

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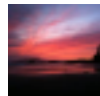
Re: Middle of the road.

by Leslie Stockton - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 11:44 PM

I agree that it seems a lot of the information we are viewing and reading is seemingly very politically slanted. I'm starting to believe that we are reading "telephone " the game we played as kids. The more the story is retold the more the story changes. I even think the no amount of reading is going to come down to real truth. Everyone's perspective is different.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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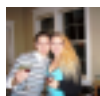
Re: Middle of the road.

by Jennifer Wilson - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 10:59 PM

That is a very interesting way to describe what we are watching! I love the comparison because it really is what I was thinking also. We used to do this activity in grade school; one person would whisper in another students ear, and then that student would then repeat the same to the next person, and so on. By the time it reached the teacher, it was not at all what it started as. Definitely a great example of how things are misconstrued through communication.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Middle of the road.

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:01 AM

Hi Beth. I had a hard time as well with all the conflicting information. I think the answers are somewhere in the middle. It is hard for me to choose what facts I think are right and wrong. I can't believe that the PBS video is the one that a lot of instructors have used to teach for many years about the history of the Vietnam war. I find the PBS series very boring. Probably because I feel it is very biased compared to the other movies we have watched. I would just like to know what the truth is. It is sad that all these years later we still don't have all the answers about what and why things happened the way they did. I think our Veterans deserve to have the real truth told. Whatever that may be.

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Sum of ratings: (1)



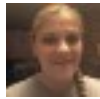
Re: Middle of the road.

by Trevor Neal - Friday, October 21, 2016, 10:02 PM

I tend to believe the AIM documentary over the PBS series, but you bring up a good point. They contradict each other so much, maybe neither is 100% factual. If this is the case then how do we know what to believe?

Sum of ratings: (1)

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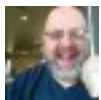
Re: Middle of the road.

by Leslie Stockton - Friday, October 21, 2016, 11:48 PM

I also tend to feel the AIM video would appear to be more accurate. It's moments like this we can be thankful for the internet. We have thousands of references at our finger tips. We have a way to compare information, analyze data and make an informed decision on who to believe. Unfortunately all people had in the 60's, 70's and 80's was news broadcasts and documentaries like the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Middle of the road.

by Scott Woods - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:44 PM

“Showing soldiers openly asking themselves if they weren’t the “good guys”, and questioning why they are fighting in the war.”

I think this is the biggest question of the whole war is what you point at here. Even today we ask this question. It’s why we study World War II, Korean, and the Vietnam Wars so much is that it’s a question of why we did these things. We say that we went into WWII to beat an evil dictator, but at the time we didn’t know about the treatment of the Jewish population. Yet it is a more thought out plan, planning with our allies, were able to win that war. Korea and Vietnam we went it to stop the spread of Communism. From the videos just on Vietnam it looks like our planning was ok, but not 100 percent certain.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What was the essence of our American Army?

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 11:23 PM

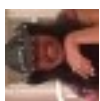
The strength or lack thereof when it came to our military seemed to be very contradicting. For example, during the opening of the PBS episode 4 there are commercials expressing the ability to “help” America. Then the video transitions to an opening statement from Captain Ted Danielson explaining an abundance of support to our troops over seas from states all across our nation mailing them letters as distraction and support. (PBS video, 2 mins.) I believe they used these select opening pieces to make the viewers feel like the PBS company is on the common Americans side and trustworthy at that.

The video continues to depict how Americans were dealing with combat and the local civilians as a gruesome and confused tactic. Captain Edward Banks and Private Jack Hill validate their actions when it came to a 2 company operation in 1967 where they were forced to commit atrocities after withstanding 36 hours of being held down into a corner by the Viet Cong. (PBS video, 27 mins.) It is so obvious that this battle was troublesome for Americans but they continue to explain they had to do what they had to do because telling the enemies apart was too hard and they had to shoot first and ask questions later. Private Jack Hill even exclaims that the 3rd day of live fire combat the Americans had “such success”. To me I do not understand how a 36 hour hold down from the Viet Cong and then invading the village to simply destroy EVERYTHING is a military success but it seems PBS had the words from the right people to make it seem like the Viet Cong's fault for not being more identifiable. (PBS video, 27 mins) Even though it seems like PBS was telling an honest truth about the combats that took place it was in a very obscure way that gave our Americans a look of irrational impulsive angry soldiers who were willing to do what they needed to survive their tour.

However, in the AIM video Dan Cragg and Kenneth Moorefield both vouch for the American soldiers and their credibility in a strong statement against the way PBS portrayed them. As Kenneth says, “I couldn’t have received more support from my men, they were brave, young, showed initiative, and courage..”. (AIM video, 7 mins) It is sad to me that the very image of our soldiers has been brought into question to the point that it is a topic of conflict between these videos.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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PBS vs AIM: The Portrayals of the Soldiers in Vietnam

by Sohni Maan-Davie - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 11:44 PM

The significance in *Losers are Pirates* and the AIM video is that both mentioned that besides soldiers that served in the war are outraged that the PBS show misrepresented the soldiers. Dan Cragg said that the injustice in the film portrays the American soldiers, “as drug addict, a racial bigot, and a man who murdered his officers and NCOs almost at will” (AIM Video). In *Losers are Pirates* it mentions that soldiers, government officials, and many others have been taken to concentration

camps and that they have been tortured, starved, and mistreated. In the AIM video, one other person mentions of the concentration camps, and that is John McCain. McCain said, "The PBS series established a, I think, very unfortunate juxtaposition between the treatment of the American POWs and North Vietnam, and the treatment by the Vietnamese and or the Americans of Viet-Cong or North Vietnamese prisons...there is not one single documented case of mistreatment of a Viet-Cong or North Vietnamese prisoner once they were in the prison compound, the North Vietnamese, on the other hand, had a calculated program of mistreatment, psychological and physical in order to exploit the POWs for propaganda purposes"(AIM Video). AIM gets my approval because they aren't misrepresenting the soldiers who fought in the war. William Jayne says that PBS last episode, Legacy, gives the image that the veterans are losers, victims, and that "PBS didn't give the other side of the picture". These soldiers gave their lives for this war, and then PBS, in my opinion, dishonors these soldiers by misrepresenting them.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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did we lose the vietnam war?

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 11:44 PM

Another conflict that stood out to me was the interview with Reed Irvine at the end of the AIM video. He claims that the loss of the Vietnam war was a media imposed label and not an actual depiction of what took place. Specifically stating, "For the first time in our history the victory that our men had won on the field of battle had been transmuted into a defeat by our own media." (Aim video, 24 mins.) He says the the victory was a great military accomplishment and the vietcong suffered severe setbacks that they were never able to come back from. Blaming the label of defeat on the media seems like an easy attack to justify that the american military wasn't as bad as they seem. The strategy in Vietnam was very much disorganized and not designed well at all. (Herring, ph. 178) Although some battles were great success to americans I do not believe it is an injustice to claim this war as a defeat when considering the specifics. The U.S paid a very heavy price for what we invested in this war I am intrigued to see if any other students noticed this and have thoughts on whether this can be justified as a military victory or a media played loss.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

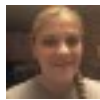
by Scott Woods - Friday, October 21, 2016, 9:04 PM

Hey Treva,

I like your point of view on the war. The question of did we win the war militarily or did the media bury the war for us is kind of a hard one to answer. On one hand a military victory would have never been us pulling out of the south and running out of Saigon. We would have wanted at least the south to have been a stable country or overtaken the North. Yet, the media at that time was more non-bias then what we have today. Back then they reported actual news, not opinion pieces. Integrity meant something to reporters and field agents. I would rather get the information that was truthful, then someone like FOX NEWS or CNN to spin the information to their own agenda. So do I think that the media helped the Viet Cong win the war? Not really. It could be swung either way.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

by Leslie Stockton - Friday, October 21, 2016, 11:24 PM

Hi Scott

While I agree that our news today is extremely biased especially ones like Fox and CNN but I also found the PBS documentary beyond biased I found it to be just straight lies. When you have someone like John McCain who was actually a POW explain the difference in our imprisonment camps was heart wrenching. Like he said our camps between the north and south were very different than that which was portrayed in the documentary. Publications like PBS can be just as biased as any other source. But I completely agree that we could not simply walk away.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 4:34 PM

Hello Scott and Leslie,

Now I understand that the interview by Richard Irvine was in direct reference to the Tet Offensive that was a N. Vietnamese strategic attack on S.Vietnam and not based on the outcome of the entire vietnam war. With that said though the manner of american media on this event was still extremely biased. I agree with Leslie that the PBS publication can be just as biased as any news source today. It wasn't just the accounts of John McCain on the lack of attention to the North's tactics of torture or Richard Irvine's bold exclaim at the end about the Tet Offensive. (AIM video) These accounts also directly correlate with personal explanations from the Appy book, furthermore proving the facts behind these accusations by these men. I believe when two or more accounts can line up that are not published or produced by the same people will have a stronger

sense of truth then one that is purely based off editing and correlation of same stance accusations. For example, like Trever mentioned in his response to my post Commander John Singlaub recounts in the Appy book that the americans slaughtered the North during the Tet Offensive contrary to what the media portrayed. This two-faced type of media greatly affected our soldiers and shouldn't be underestimated in comparison today's media at all.

-Treva

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

by Trever Neal - Friday, October 21, 2016, 10:34 PM

When I first saw the AIM video where they mention how the media portrayed the Tet Offensive as a defeat for the United States when in fact it was considered a victory I thought of a story in the Appy book. In John Singlaub's story on page 93 he says, "I couldn't believe the newspaper clippings my family was sending me after the Tet Offensive. Here in the United States, people thought it had been a great victory for the Communists and a terrible defeat for us." He goes on to explain how they didn't feel it was a defeat and that they "slaughtered them". When I saw that the media had the opportunity to correct their mistake but decided not to I was shocked.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Thank you.

by Treva Thompson-Moore - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 4:53 PM

Hello Trever,

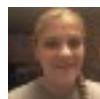
I first off want to say thank you for referencing the story from the Appy book. I seem to have misunderstood exactly what Richard was referring too when he made those bold statements and assumed he was talking about the overall war. When I realized that I failed to make the connection to John's story in the Appy book to what Richard was accusing it all started to make more sense. At the same time it made me realize that the media could have had a larger impact on the war than I had even imagined. Once I looked back over the story it shocked me how PBS never mentioned anything about the rapport the american soldiers were building with the villages and Montagnards during the Tet Offensive attacks that John speaks of towards the end of his story. (Appy book, pg. 94.) It is additionally sad because of the feedback our american soldiers would get

when they would come back home as a result of this coverage. Since american media focused solely on the negative sides of this war the cover on positive american influence was surely swept under the rug. As mentioned in the Losers are Pirates attachment, "Many had felt they were not receiving the support of the folks back home; when they returned to the States, they were often met with coldness or hostility." (Introduction, Pg.9) This just shows the further Isolation of the american soldiers that participated in this war and were able to return. It makes me wonder if this is also a reflection on why america has so many homeless veterans from that era; maybe this media spin was a huge part in how our americans felt once they came home.

-Treva

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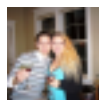
Re: Thank you.

by Leslie Stockton - Saturday, October 22, 2016, 10:25 PM

The way our servicemen and women were treated was appalling. I too wonder if this is some of the cause of a lot of the Vietnam veterans issues after returning. Other soliers in other wars like World War I and World War II came back hero's while the Vietnam vet was spit on, protested against and returned to a whole new outlook on life. The lack of mental health care and ease of access to alcohol and drugs I'm sure played part to the homeless population of Vietnam vets.

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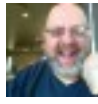


Re: Thank you.

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 3:36 AM

I absolutely agree with you! I am disgusted by how our Veterans were treated when they came home and how they are still treated today. Some people were happy to have them home. But most of them blamed and turned their backs on them for all the deaths and the money problems the country was having. The people were tired and decided to take it out on our Vets. I think it has stuck with people. I believe a lot of people are still angry about the Vietnam war and they look down on the Vets from that era. It is sad. You are right. The lack of care and treatment they get from our country is appalling. So many Vietnam Veterans are homeless and self-medicate to try and forget the hell they went through. Twenty-two veterans kill themselves every day. That is astonishing and they deserve better!

Sum of ratings: (1) Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Thank you.

by Scott Woods - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 3:01 PM

It is indeed terrible that the people who went over to Vietnam were shunned by the people they were protecting. What is more troubling is that they were JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS. Anyone in the lower echelons of the military forces would have taken order from Generals without question because that is how the chain of command works.

My overall thought on both Videos is that they both have an axe to grind. Whereas PBS video was more about the terribleness of "just war;" the AIM video was the trumpet to how well the Veterans were in the armed conflict of Vietnam.

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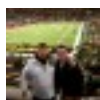


Re: Thank you.

by Trever Neal - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 5:19 PM

Treva, you make a good connection between the media and returning veterans. I had not thought that the negative media of the war could have contributed to so many veterans not receiving the help they needed and deserved when they returned home. I think it could have contributed to why so many veterans turned to drugs, alcohol, and became homeless.

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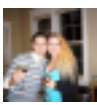
Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

by Mason Fisher - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 10:48 PM

Trever, this exact situation makes me question the media when it comes to anything Vietnam war related. If the media was producing false and inaccurate information right around when the events were taking place then what all does the media have wrong surrounding the US military and the Vietnam war? There can very well be a lot of information out there that is in the media that is historically inaccurate.

Sum of ratings: (1) Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply

Re: did we lose the vietnam war?



by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:34 AM

Hi Treva. I found the statement to be ridiculous. I in no way shape or form see this as some huge military victory. The Herring and Appy book seem to say over and over that we had no idea what we were doing strategy wise. I think we got beat. I think we sent a bunch of unprepared young men who had little training and no idea what war was going to be like to die. The Americans did win some good battles but the Vietnamese were smart. Out of all the stories in the Appy book I have read so far, the most disturbing is the story of Tran Thi Gung. She talks about how they used our strategies and weaknesses against us. "As soon as I fired I killed an American. After he fell, some of his friends came rushing to his aid. This made them sitting ducks. Very easy to shoot. From then on we knew that if we just shot one American soldier others would rush to him and then we could shoot many more." (Appy p.17) It is sad. We had some great men over there who deserved better. But our military was very unprepared and I agree that they were trying to justify that the American military wasn't as bad as they seem to be.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: did we lose the vietnam war?

by Sohni Maan-Davie - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 9:09 PM

Hi Treva,

Knowing if the Vietnam war is a military victory or a media played loss, is a very difficult to determine because American and South Vietnamese soldiers were tortured in the prison camps, one of the prisoners was John McCain, and according to the PBS Television History episode 13, Legacy, they narrators referred to the veterans as being haunted and William Jayne said that the episode Legacy gives the image of veterans being losers and victims. The Vietnam war, in my opinion, is both a military loss and victory. The reason it is a loss is because we pulled out of the war and going into the war, we didn't have anything to gain, but it's a victory because we pulled our troops out and we didn't any more soldiers to a pointless war. The media was non-biased because the news would report what was actually going on in the war, instead of it being opinionated nowadays, one good example is FOX news.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Meadow Benedict - Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 11:55 PM

The conflicting information I found was how many Vietnamese people were actually

killed. My evaluation on the Aim video seems to be more accurate to me. I think the PBS is too biased and I believe they just want to make it look like they did the right thing. The Aim video gets my endorsement on the amount of people who were killed. I think their numbers are more accurate. I also believe The Losers of Pirates gives an accurate account of the amount of Vietnamese people who were killed. “ The international Red Cross estimates 300,000 boat people died.”

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Will Lawhon - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 7:58 PM

Hey meadow, I agree with you here. The PBS documentary has still left out valuable facts about the People murdered or executed during and after the communist overthrow of south Vietnam. Not to mention the terror brought to the Cambodian people after the regime spread to the west. I too favored the Losers are pirates introduction as the author admits his bias opinion but then touches up in detail the definition and result of a communist ruled nation

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The Wrath of Communism

by Will Lawhon - Thursday, October 20, 2016, 9:51 AM

After watching the second half of the AIM program, discuss additional, specific examples of conflicting information you have encountered in the provided class sources (from the Herring book, PBS series, and Part 2 of AIM program.

In the end, which source gets your “approval” or “endorsement” (on which SPECIFIC historical issue) as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation of the facts?

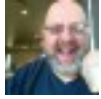
I enjoyed watching this second part of the Aim video because once again the PBS documentary has left out crucial detailed information about the Vietnam war. For example the Tet Offensive thru the United States media was portrayed as defeat for us when in truth it was an outstanding victory for America. The Enemy took heavy losses during the Tet offensive. I found it funny how the communist were able to influence some misguided people using our very own "uncontrolled media" at the time.

During the first few minutes of the Aim video, Nguyen Ngoc Bich brings up a very good argument against the north Vietnamese people. He says that if the south Vietnamese people were truly passive puppets or non humans , why did it take over 30 years to overthrow the south? The one fact that is rather disturbing to me is that

during January of 1973 the case church amendment was passed which meant those could be no American activity in or over Southeast Asia. Senator Steve symms explains how this was the worst thing that we could of possibly been done in our involvement in the war. He said it was like sending a telegraph to north Vietnam saying 'that we were not going to enforce the Paris peace records.' This later resulted in the United States cutting off the air power and ammunition on the ground.

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Re: The Wrath of Communism

by Scott Woods - Friday, October 21, 2016, 8:56 PM

Hey Will,

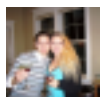
I apparently am being the devil's advocate this week. I liked that you brought up other points in the videos other than the fact that PBS was slanted and that Dan Cragg has pointed out the drug addiction and racist stereo types with the American troops.

You said that Tet Offensive was shown by the media as a defeat and I agree they did show it as that. Yet the thing that caught my attention more is that you said, "The Enemy took heavy losses during the Tet Offensive." Now, I don't remember the numbers off the top of my head, but from study outside this class in other documentary series The Enemy almost always took me losses then the US troops. By and Large, which has become my favorite continued statement through the video series we have been watching, we did more damage to the VC then they did to us. If the war was to be one by the causalities we caused during this war, we would have won with no problem. Yet, the VC was able to replenish the troops not only with more Vietnamese, but also with outside help from China.

We held off the Tet Offensive yes, but in the long wrong we lost ground much worse.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: The Wrath of Communism

by Meadow Benedict - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 2:55 AM

I agree with parts of what you are saying. I think the enemy almost always took more losses than we did. But we lost. They out smarted us and no matter how many we killed or they killed we lost and too many great men died.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: The Wrath of Communism



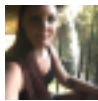
by Mason Fisher - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 10:56 PM

Scott, that is a very interesting and enlightening point you make. It is easy for people to hear "Only war the US lost" and immediately assume that statement is based off of casualties when in fact, like you said, Vietnam and co lost many more people in the war. Based off of one website I found, it is estimated that the US only lost $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{4}$ as many troops as Vietnam.

<http://thevietnamwar.info/how-many-people-died-in-the-vietnam-war/>

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Kim Frey - Sunday, October 23, 2016, 10:10 PM

The conflicting information from the two series we have watched are as usual the writer themselves. The one sided version of the PBS series portrays American's are bad and did nothing good or worth while In Vietnam. They have interviewed families and veterans that were harmed in negative ways. While the Aim tries to show a picture of what we did over there as a more objective point of view. It seemed not to discredit everything about the show on PBS but, it brought to life that people did try to do some good maybe not for the immediate need of the people. War always comes with death of life and that was never disputed in either just the way that Americans's were looked at as the evil enemy in the eyes of the South Vietnamese.

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◀ Continuing the Discussion

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