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Part 1: Charley Trujillo, pages 366-370

Charley Trujillo was a "Chicano" who lived "on one side of town," with whites being on the opposite. He was familiar with racism and oppression, "we were ashamed of taking our tacos and beans to school because that was "beaner" food. So we would hide behind the backstop where the whites wouldn't see us eating." The racial inequality and opposition through this kind of treatment he felt plagued his "generation of Chicanos," for their lifetimes. Due to the if you can't beat them, might as well join them- mind frame, Charley always wanted "to assimilate into white society," which led him to volunteer prior to being drafted, "it was part of trying to be an American and patriotic and the whole romantic notion of war."

The anti-war protest had been going on for some time at home in the US when Charley was, "an infantryman with the Americal Division in 1970 and there had been a general building, "... resentment and hatred," among the US troops towards the Vietnamese because of the "seeming indifference of many Vietnamese, while Americans were dying in the field," (Herring 200). This was not the only racial tension growing because of the war during this time. The PBS series, "Vietnam: A Television History" talk about the segregation among US troops stationed in Vietnam in episode 6 where they talk about the "racial polarization," being "deeper" and it being extremely segregated between white parts and black parts of town; it would be dangerous for the wrong color of person to walk into the other colored side of town. An African-American veteran on this episode talks about them questioning: why blacks were there fighting a war when they had one at home [the United States] they should be fighting [the Civil Rights Movement] while they were in Vietnam and putting their lives on the line for serving a country (the US) that denied them the same rights as whites. It seems there were many people who questioned, for different reasons, the people who were supposed to be fighting with them based on racial issues.

Charley went to Vietnam to prove his patriotism and "Out in the bush I've never felt such affinity and togetherness with men of other cultures and races as I did in Vietnam. But as soon as we got back to rear areas everything changed again. The blacks and some whites used to call us [chingos]," which was opposite of the

integration and acceptance into white peoples 'worlds' he went there to show he was worthy of. Charley talks about when he went to school and could speak "English Only" and was told while serving in Vietnam by a guy who'd overheard him, "you shouldn't be talking like that cause when I first got here some guys heard it through the bushes and thought it was Vietnamese and killed'em," when he was speaking Spanish. This was what I think led him to a 'turning point' within himself.

In particular there was a paragraph in Charley's account that showed a huge turning point in his view and belief of what was right and wrong, whether he was where he was supposed to be:

--"When we got back to the village the South Vietnamese Popular Forces were playing volleyball and having a grand old time drinking Cokes. They were supposed to be on our side and helping us to fight. Meanwhile, the North Vietnamese were kicking our asses. Then some black soldiers started saying, "This ain't our war. Our war's at home. This is a white man's war." This made me start to think."--

Charley states that "after that, my whole idea of the war started to change," but I believe this shows a turning point for the minorities fighting to have the same Civil Rights as white citizens and how the minorities people were no longer able to justify their participation in a war for someone else, the Vietnamese, to have more than the non-white citizens of the US do in their own country. "...are we really the good guys? What am I doing fighting these guys? This is a gringo army and when I get home I'm just another Mexican, so fuck these people." Charley's approach to the war changed to a "search and avoid" where when he was told where the enemy was he would purposefully "go in the other direction." Having to risk his own life and return to the US being "just another Mexican," displeased him and made him have a completely different outlook and approach to the war. Charley's realization of the way he truly felt about the war and the treatment of Mexicans was a true turning point for him. Many other minorities, like the ones we watched in the PBS series and the Appy book, had moments where they questioned the logic of their existence and participation in the war because of the same reasons as Charley Trujillo.

Part 2: Steve Sherlock, pages 425-429

Steve Sherlock went to Vietnam in October of 1968. He proclaimed that at the time he joined the army, in 1966, he was "a super war supporter." Sherlock's thoughts about the war and why the United States was involved were about fighting communism in another country so we wouldn't have to fight communism at home when he

joined the military. His doubts about the war started in 1968, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and "it just didn't feel right to be there and Vietnam was somehow connected to it." By the end of the time he spent in Vietnam, he was looked at as a "traitor" and was "relieved."

When Steve Sherlock was relieved it was after a very revealing conversation with a captain. Sherlock had a few weeks previously won a medal after fighting where they "had killed seven and had three prisoners," and when he went out and got into a fight with this particular captain, the "killed two or three people." The Captain had reached into pockets and searched the dead and discovered a rosary in one of the dead people's possession and remarked, "Oh my God, how can this guy be a communist and a Catholic?" and Sherlock replied, "Who knows if he's a Communist or a Catholic? Or if he's both, so what?" and continued, "I hope the rest of them got away. I'd like it even better if they didn't run into us and we didn't have any more fights." The Captain said "Your job is to destroy the Communists," but Sherlock continued and said "No, they are just people like us." This argument had continued between the two but this is the part that got him "relieved" because he wouldn't recant, after the Captain asked him a few days later to change his view or otherwise he was to leave. The Captain thought of Sherlock as a traitor and that is understandable to me because Sherlock was in the military and whether you agree with the fight, it is your job and duty to accept your orders. Sherlock was not saying he wouldn't fight but the heart of him was not into the cause or the fight, and that is where I believe that Captain was correct. Although I don't believe you can fight your best fight when your heart is not in it, I morally agree with Sherlock's decision to say what he believed and his opinions. Either way, Sherlock was relieved because he refused to recant his statements.

Sherlock returned home, helped with a small "Veterans for Peace" organization where he had "a very good experience. People were supportive. They understood the value of veterans speaking against the war, that our having served in it gave us some credibility and moral authority." In 1971 he was invited to a demonstration in Washington D.C. Sherlock went to this demonstration knowing that the Veterans including himself were going to throw their medals they'd received in Vietnam for their service away. The point of this was to "turn in our Veteran medals as a strong symbolic statement that they couldn't buy our silence with decorations," and to show that they opposed the war and "it wasn't unpatriotic to be fighting against a wrong and harmful policy," but for Sherlock it seemed like this demonstration and the experience of it, had rid him of his dishonor from being relieved and called a traitor. "I felt the war was

entirely wrong at a political and moral level, and in that sense you could argue that all the symbols of it, including the medals, were meaningless." When the medals were being tossed through the "wire barricade" onto the stairs of the Capitol, "it was a high-energy emotional thing." I believe this was a way for Sherlock to end his embarrassment or shame for opposing the war and trying to do the right thing; he had fought the war and killed people. Getting rid of the medals that he received during a war he thought was wrong and didn't want to fight, was an end to the torment he felt by being considered a "traitor."

I got all information and quotes from Herring, Appy, and the PBS series.

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