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Assignment 3

In Christian Appy's book Patriots Part Four there is a turning point; this turning point was Larry Colburn's story of the inconceivable death and suffering of the Vietnamese people at the hands of American soldiers. He tells of his time in Vietnam and the horrors he saw along with the lack of humanity left in American soldiers after fighting this "never ending" war. In Part Five there is a clear ending to the war that would be Steve Sherlock's story of going to Vietnam and being discharged for not agreeing with the murder of the communists, he later helped a movement that would end the war in many Americans eyes. He along with hundreds of other Vets threw their war medals away in hopes of ending the war that had killed so many both Americans, Vietminh, and innocent civilians.

The turning point in Vietnam to me was in Larry Colburn's story and the awareness it created. When Americans were slaughtering innocent civilians it became all too clear that our purpose of saving the people of Vietnam was no longer present. We had become worse than the communist in that we were slaughtering innocent civilian Vietnamese, America no longer seemed an ally to them but an enemy. American soldiers fighting in Vietnam had begun to lose their humanity after years of fighting a guerilla war. Some took to killing innocent women, children, and elders with no sense of remorse, even gunning down those who attempted to hide. Thompson, Colburn's crewman landed his helicopter to save 10 civilians from GIs who were opening fire on them; Colburn took multiple trips in attempt to save these civilians lives. I do not wish to portray that these GIs were horrible men or should be looked down upon for their merciless killing, rather that they had spent too much time in a war they could not win. This to me is a major turning point. Eventually, Americans began fighting other Americans to protect the lives of the North Vietnamese. America was getting nowhere in the war; civilians were against the idea of war along with some of the men who had been fighting for far too long. We had adopted a strategy to keep attacking until the enemy gave up, although most knew the Vietminh might never surrender. Soldiers took out their aggression at first with only the Vietminh and eventually began to kill innocents. Colburn states that he found a ditch full of dead civilians and a live baby was inside the trench

completely covered in blood, this to me meant the war had taken a turn for brutality. Had Americans become worse than the Communist we were trying so hard to fight? Could we as Americans still accurately say that we were still trying to free the North? These GIs were not killing men who attacked but them rather anyone who crossed their path. Colburn states, "I've seen the list of dead and there were hundred and twenty some humans under the age of five. I know what its like to seek revenge but we would look for a worth opponent. These were elders, mothers, and children and babies."(pg.348) How had the war taken this turn of unthinkable events? The knowledge of this once leaked to the media would begin disgusting American civilians towards their own soldiers. This was one of the many reasons we began to pull out of Vietnam.

In Steve Sherlock's anti-war ex vet story he shows the ending of the war. This ending consisted around many soldiers throwing their medals away in front of Americans all over the country to make a point of saying "We no longer support this cause, and yes we would know what its like because we have actually been there." Hearing first hand from someone who served at Vietnam and still didn't agree with the war should send a very clear message. This message to me said we are killing innocent people, all they want is their freedom who are we to hold them back? If our own soldiers didn't agree with the war they were fighting why on earth should we? Sherlock sympathized with the enemy even after fighting them and his compassion was strong enough to make him throw away his medals. Sherlock was discharged for being a disgrace and a bad influence. His Colonel said to him, "Your job is to destroy the Communist. I said, "No they're people just like us." He said, "They are no people. They are the enemy and you're the reason were loosing this war. You're a coward and a traitor."(pg.426) The fact that Sherlock was so set against the war makes you wonder, of all the soldiers dying in Vietnam how many of them didn't believe in the war they were dying for. This statement of the soldiers disregarding their medals was further inspiring because they were experienced soldiers not some over privileged college students rioting who saw everything through a television screen. Not just one vet discarded his medal rather hundreds and hundreds of vets ready to saw that this war had no cause. It was very hypocritical for Americans to say they still supported the war after this statement. If you support the war you also support your troops, and you couldn't do both if your troops didn't agree with the war.

The turning point was the mass amounts of cold-blooded murder of women, children and elders that was happening in Vietnam. The

war was becoming too much for American soldiers to deal with and without media coverage and soldiers speaking out this turning point may not have taken place. When it was clear that the government was losing their support they knew they had no choice but to pull out having wasted large sums of money along with their youths lives. American soldiers protesting against our involvement in Vietnam symbolized the end of the war. This statement could not be overlooked because these soldiers had been there and knew exactly what it was like, therefore forcing Americans to see the truth. America had spent far too many years fighting a war that had lost its cause and now had to pull out, after the deaths of hundreds and hundreds of men.

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