

# HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp17 (Escobar 42050)

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## Week 4 Forum

### Continuing the Discussion

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#### Continuing the Discussion

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:32 PM

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#### American soldiers have two sides

by Wenxuan Nie - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 12:05 AM

In the Losers are Pirates, the article criticized communist's brutality and mentioned the Legitimacy of America sent soldiers to Vietnam. "We share the pain and anguish of those who suffer under Communism, a system which promotes the destruction of cultures and societies with a policy that expresses disregard for human rights. While millions of people live under conditions of brutal oppression, facing imprisonment, torture, exile, or other forms of abuse by Communist governments, and while citizens of Communist countries are denied the essential freedoms that are the right of all human beings." (Banerian, p. 15) From the Losers are Pirates, America has a good reason to against Vietnam horrible communism.

And in the AIM, the video also support that Americans are supporting for this war. On May 13, 1967, a big troop was held in New York, people hold protests like "victory" and "support our boys in Vietnam" (AIM, 40:32) On the contrary, the PBS's point is lost soldiers, who lost in the war and wonder why they start it. PBS mentioned the destroy to the village for avoiding communist get sources and rest. So I think both opinions have their reasons. Anti-war is for the sympathy of innocent Vietnam people, and support the war is for fear of Soviet and believing America is bringing the peace.

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### **The American soldiers**

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 4:56 PM

In the AIM video, they really stressed the inaccurate portrayal of the American soldiers in Vietnam. I have to admit, even before watching either of the AIM videos, I did notice that there was very little on the American soldiers in the PBS video other than the section in which they talked about getting to know the people better. It seemed odd to me because even though I didn't know much about the Vietnam War coming into this class, I definitely knew that there was an abundance of U.S. soldiers involved. Former U.S. Vice President John McCain spoke about his experiences and his feelings towards the PBS video saying that there were issues with the way in which they portrayed the POW's. "The PBS series established, I think, a very unfortunate juxtaposition between the treatment of the American POW's in North Vietnam and the treatment by the Vietnamese or Americans of the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese prisoners. I think there's a dramatic difference," McCain said (3:05 into AIM video part 2). He goes on to say that there is brutality inflicted upon POW's in every war, but it usually stops once they are taken into the prison area. This was not the case, however, with the North Vietnamese treatment of the American POW's.

I found it interesting that there wasn't a lot of coverage of the American soldiers in the PBS video considering the fact that this video was (I'm assuming, since its distributors were all US based) primarily made for Americans. Granted, it was created to educate all who are curious about the Vietnam war, but the target audience would be Americans if they are featuring it on PBS. With that being said, I feel like if there was going to be any bias, it would be in favor of the American side, don't you think? I definitely feel, based on just the PBS video, that I would be incredibly hurt and possibly angered by the portrayal of the American soldiers had I been one. Kenneth Moorefield with the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Program spoke about the soldiers in Vietnam in the second part of the AIM video saying, "...[in the PBS video] the american fighting man and the american army were not the equal of their adversaries... the quality of the american fighting man was as high as or higher than weve had on our behalf in any previous war... I couldn't have recieved more support from my men. I think they were fantastic" (7:25 into AIM video part 2). He continued by saying they were brave, young, that they showed initiative and courage, and that they possessed all of the qualities you would want from a soldier in combat. I feel as though those qualities were not really portrayed in the PBS video.

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### **Re: The American soldiers**

by Kayla Elliott - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 8:30 PM

You brought up an interesting point that I was also wondering myself, about the bias PBS had and who it's targeted audience was. I thought when I started watching the PBS series that there might be a bias in favor of Americans, however, it was the opposite. This is shown time and time again throughout the PBS series. However, I don't think it is just American soldiers that aren't spoken about enough or when they are it's in an unfavorable way, it is also the same for South Vietnamese and France in the PBS videos. For whatever reason, when making this series, PBS felt like they needed to talk positively about Ho Chi Minh and his cause, while belittling any of the people that fought against him. In the AIM video, Douglas Pike even said that he thought they might be racist towards South Vietnamese because they talked about them so unkindly. Nguyen Ngoc Bich also noticed that the North Vietnamese were portrayed as "revolutionaries" while the South Vietnamese were portrayed as "passive, puppets, and corrupt."

Although we haven't watched the end of the PBS series yet, I also thought it was interesting that in the AIM video they brought up the fact that the PBS series left out what happened after the war, like the boatpeople who were fleeing Communist rule. Nguyen Ngoc Bich mentioned how the Vietnamese just wanted to stay in the country they loved and fought for, but under communism, over a million people fled. For some reason, the PBS series doesn't talk about this. William Jayne, who was interviewed in the AIM video, didn't like how the PBS series described the veterans after the war. He said the PBS series said the veterans are "haunted" and makes them seem like losers instead of talking about how some have come back and tried to make a difference in lives by taking on different leadership roles or getting into politics.

I think this is a central theme throughout the PBS series, which also makes me wonder why they were so bias. What did they have to gain by retelling the events this way? Is this really how they felt the war went? After watching the AIM videos, and reading the New York Times article, and the Loser are Pirates, it is hard for me to trust what the PBS series is saying. I think although most of what they say isn't a straight out lie, they leave out numerous significant facts that it is hard to learn what really happened in the Vietnam War through this documentary.

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### **Re: The American soldiers**

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 2:16 PM

I have to disagree with you when you say that the AIM video was stressed inaccurate portrayal. There were parts of the AIM video that were inaccurate but I would not go as far as to say it stressed inaccurate information. The PBS video had much more inaccurate information. Also, you don't say anything about the readings that were supposed to be incorporated into your response.

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### **Contempt for the South Vietnamese in the PBS series**

by Jerrel Brown - Tuesday, April 25, 2017, 11:52 PM

One of the first piece of conflicting information that I was face with while watching the second half of the AIM documentary was a very good point brought up by Douglas pike in regards to the presentation of the South Vietnamese people in the PBS series, or more specifically the lack thereof. The portrayal of the South Vietnamese in the PBS series is, in Douglas Pike's words, as "...almost racist..." and filled with "Contempt..." He then begins to back up his claims by bringing up some very obvious points that frankly, didn't even occur to me. The first example is the very name of episode 6 of the PBS series, Which is titled "Americas enemy". This is a ridiculous misdirection for a documentary charged with providing the empirical facts about one of the most impactful wars on American society and the world to make. Implying that the Viet Cong was specifically at war with the US totally undermines the actual reasoning for the US even being there, and neglects and trivializes all the hard work and determination that the south Vietnamese put into forming a government where everyone has the right to be an individual. He then speaks about the way the PBS series approaches the 1973 Paris cease fire agreement, remarking that "...America brought in the South Vietnamese as though they didn't have a legitimate voice, they involved really, we just brought them..." They portray the United States as parents sitting in a doctor's office with their young child, answering questions for the physician that the child is to ignorant to comprehend. This of course didn't sit well with the people who lived through and experienced the war first hand. He finishes by remarking upon the palpable contempt towards the Vietnamese people in the PBS series, the constant vilifying of the government and the society, the slandering of the south Vietnamese armed forces, and the absolute lack of sympathy or empathy for the south Vietnamese and all that they lost when we lost the war. What do you all think about this misdirection of information throughout the PBS series?

Sources: Television's Vietnam: The Real Story - Part 2 (AIM) : Vietnam: A Television History (PBS)

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**Re: Contempt for the South Vietnamese in the PBS series**

by Kayla Elliott - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 8:39 PM

I also noticed this wrongful portrayal of the South Vietnamese in the PBS series. The South Vietnamese loved their country and were a proud people, and lost a significant amount in the war in so many ways. That's why people rioted and were really offended by the PBS series. The PBS series basically belittled anyone who fought against Ho Chi Minh, which is hard for me to believe that an educational program meant to give facts to people could be so bias.

At the end of the PBS series, which we obviously haven't gotten to yet, it talks about what happened after the war. It talks about the American soldiers going home and how they adjust being in society again. This is just what I have gathered from the AIM video since I haven't seen the end of the PBS series myself. What I find interesting is that the AIM video mentions that the PBS series never talks about how the Communist rule affected Vietnam and its surrounding countries after the war, or talks about the millions that fled, including the boatpeople. But they also portrayed the American soldiers as coming home as "haunted" and William Jayne felt like they portrayed the soldiers as losers who never really adjusted back into society. He feels offended by this portrayal of the soldiers, as I'm sure many soldiers did, because they don't mention the soldiers that came home and bettered their lives and the lives of those around them by taking on different leadership roles.

I still haven't figured out why PBS favored Ho Chi Minh and talked badly about his adversaries. I'm hoping to find that out later in the class, otherwise I will have to try to do some research on my own.

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### **Re: Contempt for the South Vietnamese in the PBS series**

by Jerrel Brown - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 5:52 PM

Kayla, Thank you for your thoughts on my submission. It is certainly odd coming into this class with very little knowledge about the Vietnam, and discovering these bitter debates over what actually took place over there, why we lost, and what our mission over there actually was. It was a little disorienting to begin with to be perfectly honest, hearing the PBS version of the war and then hearing the angry retort from those who lived through the war and feel they were unjustly represented. Although I cannot give a conclusive argument for any of the 3 questions posed above, I can offer a hypothesis for why the PBS series chose to frame the war the way that they did; Plot structure. That fact of the matter is, war is ugly. War is scarring, confusing, and ultimately not very well formatted for the television screen. Historically we like to pass on knowledge in the form of stories and folk tales, and stories are always written in black and white; Shimmering white knight saves the princess from the big black dragon, there is always the theme of good and evil. War however is not a fairytale. No war ever fought was a battle between black and white, and more of a study of grey. Like the saying goes, one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. Grey does not display well on a television, and it makes for rather confusing and often lackluster story lines. So PBS decided to take matters into their own hands and create what story they deemed the most esthetically pleasing to the viewer, and considering the number of Hollywood starlets and famous athletes who were actively speaking out against the war, they choose to make Ho Chi Mien the

underdog hero, and the US (and by extension the South Vietnamese) the big blundering bad guys. They just took the easy way out in my opinion. Instead of making the series geared in the mind set of studying the various shades of grey that comprise the makeup of the war, they chose to make one side the bad guys and the others were the good and went from there.

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**Re: Contempt for the South Vietnamese in the PBS series**

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 8:51 PM

These thoughts response my confusion somehow, Jerrel. After this week and lost week's discussion, we found that PBS has a single-side point of view, not a neutral historical view. I'm wondering, why a documentary film can be so segmentary and political? You assume is convincing that history's gray are is hard to portray, so they choose a currently more acceptable side for public. When Hollywood and civilians are against the war, it's easier to make the documentary against as well. "The opposition to broadcasting the AIM program suggests that the producers of the Vietnam series and their supporters feel this way about history too. It cannot be reinterpreted unless the reinterpretation has their approval." (John, NY Times) the AIM and PBS both hold single-side of view. One is anti-communist, one is looking problems from America itself. And you need to get approval to publish these two opinions. According to that, I believe the censorship want the PBS showed that way.

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**Re: Contempt for the South Vietnamese in the PBS series**

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 2:18 PM

I too noticed the wrongful portrayal of the south Vietnamese. I like your use of an example from the videos.

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**Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?**

by Jerrel Brown - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 2:16 PM

Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?

John McCain speaks at length in the AIM video *Televisions Vietnam: The Real Story* about the unfair omission of the POW compound conditions and treatment of prisoners on each side of the war in the PBS series. John McCain spent 6 years in a Viet Cong prison camp after his plane had been shot down during the war, and he feels that the PBS series did a serious disservice to their country by glossing over what should be considered a very

important aspect of the war, both for historical significance and to pay tribute to the courage of soldiers who endured the conditions of the POW compounds. In his words “The PBS series established what I think (to be) a very unfortunate juxtaposition. Between the American POWs in North Vietnam and the treatment by the Vietnamese or American of the Viet Cong or North Vietnamese prisoners, and I think there is a dramatic difference.”(AIM; John McCain) He goes on to explain that although there were some very unfortunate atrocities that took place during the war by both South Vietnamese and American soldiers (such as those broadcast to the US in 1972 by Jane Fonda) that those were isolated incidents, and that they took place in the field, going on to say that there isn’t a single record of mistreatment of a Viet Cong or North Vietnamese soldier after being admitted inside of the POW compound. He then reveals that this is not the case of the Viet Cong POW camps. Having experienced the conditions inside the Viet Cong camps, he reveals that POWs held captive by the Viet Cong were subjected to inhumane conditions under a calculated program of mistreatment for propaganda purposes (AIM).

McCain believes that these are very important facts about the war in Vietnam, and it is not right that PBS omitted these distinctions entirely during the series. Not only does it trivialize the efforts and courage of the American and South Vietnamese who lived and died in those POW camps, but also covers up a very important piece to the war, and that was the North Vietnamese attempt to Manipulate America using the POW’s and the American media to achieve the victory in Vietnam that they desired. In McCain’s opinion, they succeeded. What do you guys think?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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### **Re: Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?**

by Kayla Elliott - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 8:47 PM

I believe that this is significant when learning about the Vietnam War. This is just another time that the PBS series failed to mention negative things that the Viet Cong had done. They didn't talk about what Ho Chi Minh did to his own people, like turning them in and murdering them, and they don't talk about how POW's were tortured in their camps.

This is a significant trend in the PBS series of favoring the North Vietnamese and not wanting to show them in a bad light. That's why it is hard to watch the PBS series now and think that I am learning what the Vietnam War was really like, because I feel like it is so one sided. That is why I'm thankful for other materials like the AIM video, the New York Times article, and the Losers are Pirates excerpt because it gives more information about what else was happening.

I do think that 13 episodes probably wasn't enough to cover everything about the Vietnam War because there were so many things that were significant. However, I think the PBS series left out a lot of information, including interviews they did with hundreds of people. They only used the interviews, or edited versions of them, that would help push their own bias. I think them leaving out information about the treatment of POW's is another example of that.

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### **Re: Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?**

by William Wyatt - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 10:34 PM

Hey Jerrel,

I agree, the PBS series has totally overlooked POWs. The series is also lacking information when regarding many of the challenges U.S. soldiers endured. To name a few, extreme environmental conditions, illnesses/ailments, and the mental struggle of fighting such an elusive enemy. I Do agree with McCain when he discusses the PBS series being negligent with regards to POWs. When the PBS series overlooked POWs in many ways they did belittle all of those who lived and died suffering the brutal conditions of the POW camps in Vietnam. It's shocking to me that a documentary was produced by the American government, from an American perspective, that undervalued the service and dedication of veterans.

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### **Re: Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?**

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 2:20 PM

I actually didn't realize this. I like you ruse of what McCain's feelings are toward the issue and the videos.

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### **Re: Were POW camps glossed over or watered down in the PBS series?**

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 9:40 PM

I think the POW camps are ignored in the PBS series, and it's an important part been ignored. In the first part of AIM, PBS portrayed Hu Chi Minh as a decent man who is nationalist rather than communist, in the second part, AIM condemns that the unfair portray of U.S. soldiers. POWs were tortured, and Ho Chi Minh even kills his own people. " He mentions the boat people who fled Vietnam and the mass killings that struck Cambodia." (John, NY Times) We cannot see the refugee's voice or old solder's voice who been tortured in the camps. We see what PBS choose to see. So it's important to not only study PBS but study other resources. I think it will help us to build a full version to judge historical events. Also, your comment reminds me of a video published by Buzzfeed, "Generations Throughout History." In this video, great generation and silent generation both been through

Vietnam war. The Soldiers usually have PTSD, and the people didn't want to fight with the government. So I guess under pressure, people cannot express their political opinion freely, and veterans cannot get fair treatment. The PBS choose to ignore the good quality of U.S soldiers, I think it hurt their feelings and makes people afterward this period feel confused.

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### **Misrepresentation of US soldiers in Vietnam**

by Jerrel Brown - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 3:43 PM

#### Misrepresentation of US soldiers in Vietnam

There have been many voices to shout in protest of inaccuracies riddled throughout the PBS series. This includes Dan Cragg and Kenneth Moorefield, both of which less than appreciated the picture painted by the PBS documentary of the American soldier in the Vietnam War. Dan Cragg speaks in the AIM video of his frustration with the PBS series inaccurate depiction of the American soldier, saying " ...The great unjustness of this film is that it portrays the American soldier in Vietnam as a drug addict, a racial bigot, and a man who murdered his officers and NCO's almost at will." (AIM: Dan Cragg).

In the PBS series, through selective interviewing and video editing, painted a very unattractive, dark image of the American soldier, which is entirely unfair to the American GI's who fought for freedom of choice in Vietnam. He goes on to say that "...The hundreds of thousands of Americans who went to Vietnam and severed honorably and bravely, haven got to be incensed to the terrible, terrible misrepresentation of their bravery and sacrifice on the battlefield." (AIM: Dan Cragg)

The misrepresentation goes even further, as the PBS series suggests through its viewing that the United States soldier was somehow of a lower quality in comparison to their Viet Cong counter parts. Kenneth Moorefield recounts the impressions made on him from the PBS series was that "... The American Fighting man and the American army... Armed services were not the equal of their adversaries." (AIM: Kenneth Moorefield) He states however that the quality of the American fighting man was "...as high as we had fighting on our behalf as we've had in previous wars." He goes on to tell of his tie as a commander in the Vietnam war, stating that he could not have asked for a more dedicated or effective crew. "They were brave, they were young, and they showed initiative and courage. Every quality you could possibly want from a soldier in combat, and they died. And from my point of view they died with dignity and honor." (AIM: Kenneth Moorefield)

So how about you guys? Do you agree with Cragg and Moorefield? How do you feel the PBS series should have presented our Vietnam veterans?

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2

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### **Equal representation**

by Maile Sur - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 8:53 PM

I definitely agree with Cragg and Moorefield. Like I said in my original post, I had noticed that there was very little coverage of the American soldiers, but I hadn't actually noticed what the PBS video said about them. After getting a replay of some clips from the PBS video in the AIM video, I can definitely say I agree with what Cragg and Moorefield had to say. Based off the one episode of the PBS series, I cant say I fully agree with the points Cragg mentioned about being "drug addicts, racial biggots..." (6:00 into AIM video), but I do agree with the fact that the people who fought in the Vietnam War should be upset by the way they were portrayed.

As far as what Moorefield had to say, however, I 100% agree. He spoke with pride when he spoke about the American soldiers in the Vietnam War and I think that thats the way they should have been represented. With that being said, I don't think that means the PBS series needs to omit anything that they have said about the other sides or what not, I just think each side should have been equally and fairly represented.

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2

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### **Re: Misrepresentation of US soldiers in Vietnam**

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 1:25 PM

Hello Jerrel! I agree the PBS documentary showed U.S soldiers in a very bad light. I wish it had shown all the support that had been behind American soldiers from the American people. It seemed to gloss over the march in New York by thousands of citizens that rallied behind soldiers fighting in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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### **Re: Misrepresentation of US soldiers in Vietnam**

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 6:13 PM

Hey Jerrel,

I for sure agree with Cragg and Moorefield, one of the clearest contradictions found between PBS and AIM comes down to the portrayal of US soldiers. As you already said, in part two of the AIM video, the unfairness of the PBS video was that it "portrays the American soldier, in Vietnam, as a drug addict, a racial bigot, and a man who murdered his officers and NCOs almost at will," this is later described as "a terrible misrepresentation." (6:00, AIM speaker, Dan Cragg) This kind of portrayal isn't too difficult to find in the PBS series. In episode 4, in an interview with Vietnam veteran Bill Ehrhart, he describes the

quickly changing views that US soldiers had on the Vietnamese people. “Over a relatively short period of time, you begin to treat all Vietnamese as the enemy, if you can’t tell, you shoot first, ask questions later.” (18:47, PBS Episode 4, Ehrhart) The US soldiers in a way are shown to feel no pain, have no sympathy for those who have to live through the war. The worst thing about this situation is that as a Vietnam veteran, you have no way to really defend yourself from these criticisms, and it’s just unfortunate that many of those who put their life on the line for the US did not get the fair and just treatment that they deserved. To some extent this is a fair judgment, of course, some US soldiers could be more heinous than others, but PBS should’ve done a better job of at least acknowledging that for a lot of troops, they served their country with honor and dignity.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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### **A Biased Report**

by Tyler Ritter - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 6:25 PM

Tyler Ritter

Joe Escobar

April 26, 2017

#### **A Biased Report**

It seems like I was fooled by the PBS documentary, I am dumbfounded that I could be fooled so easily. I took whatever it said as a basic truth to the war and I was wrong in doing so. I found in the second part of the AIM video to clarify a substantial topic of the Vietnam war, that the south was full of useless people, as “Losers and Pirates” said, “ South Vietnam soldiers are shown as puppets, and mercenaries, while the south Vietnamese are presented as thieves and whores. (Losers are Pirates, James Banerian) The AIM videos seem to be more structured around facts and quoting scholars of Vietnam, it seems a lot more trustworthy, if not aggressive towards the misinformation presented in the PBS documentary. Douglas Pike said, “Whatever this thing is, it is not history”, Douglas Pike was the leading historian and scholar on the Vietnam war, and I trust his word more than that of the glaring contradictions that seem to be rampant in the PBS documentary.

This excerpt gives more credibility towards the AIM video while pointing out contradictions in the PBS documentary. I would give my “stamp of approval” on the AIM video, as well as the “Losers are Pirates” excerpt. They both seem to quote scholars and readings when it comes to presenting facts. I think the one historical issue they get my endorsement on was when they corrected the PBS documentary, that said soldiers were “haunted”, while blatantly ignoring the support by hundreds of thousands of people, and the fact that most veterans are in key positions of importance and not all are “haunted”.

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### Re: A Biased Report

by Brandon Dibble - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 9:24 PM

Hey Tyler,

After reading the article from "Losers are Pirates" and watching two parts of the AIM series "Vietnam: The Real Story", I also feel fooled by the PBS series "Vietnam: A Television History" and have a hard time taking anything they say seriously after being presented with all of this information that directly contradicts the PBS series. I feel that the other sources we have been presented (Pirates are Losers and AIM) are more credible in my opinion because we have a lot of information saying that what has been presented to us in the PBS series so far has been not entirely false, but misleading and seemingly bias words the North Vietnamese as well as PBS omitting important information in their series from interviews with soldiers.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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### Re: A Biased Report

by Tyler Ritter - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 4:17 PM

Brandon, I agree. It seems to be difficult now to tell which information to trust. Like I said on another persons forum, i found it really lousy of the PBS documentary to promise that an interviewee was able to watch his interview before it broadcast, but instead didn't show him at all. I think that makes them out to have a very biased agenda.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0



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### Re: A Biased Report

by John Anderson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 9:18 PM

I have to say that while the AIM video was more than willing to attack the PBS series on its weaknesses, they failed in that they used their argument to their own biased ends. I don't think that the Vietnam War is anything short of an emotional topic for many who lived in that era. I also don't think that it should be disregarded that AIM chose a Hollywood star to push their offensive. The most fundamental point that I've seen in all these videos and the readings, however, is that we should not take the information that we have gotten from any of the sources as absolute. Every single person has their own perspective. All are a portion of the truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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### Glaring contradiction

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 6:58 PM

Hey guys,

To me the most glaring contradiction was when Heston states that in the final episode of the PBS series, the viewer is left with an unbalanced perspective. Heston goes on to say, "The basic truth that is overlooked from this balanced perspective is that the mass flight of refugees was a unique event in thousands of years of Indochinese history." (AIM Video part 2, Charlton Heston) So far the PBS series has offered little to no context when regarding the vast immigration of thousands of people who fled Vietnam because they were afraid for their lives.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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### **Proceeding with caution**

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 8:08 PM

After analyzing the Losers are Pirates excerpt and New York Times article, there were many significant topics of war discussed in relation to their initial representations made by PBS in Vietnam: A Television History and their criticisms made by AIM's Television's Vietnam: The Real Story. All in all, a major thing to take from both articles is that there is a good reason to criticize or question these sources, both are being produced with some degree of bias, and although some of the information can be recognized as fact, some of it is skewed or not truthful. By "not truthful," I mean not showing the entire story, or leaving out certain realities of the situation, for example, in Television's Vietnam: The Real Story, AIM criticizes PBS for "a terrible misrepresentation" of US veterans, being portrayed as drug addicts, bigots, and the kind of men who would betray their superiors (6:00 into Television's Vietnam: The Real Story). In reality, there were of course veterans who displayed some of these characteristics, but you can't forget about the hundreds of thousands of Americans who served their country with honor and good character.

The effect this has on my evaluation of both video sources is relatively the same, both the article and excerpt reassure me to try to be aware of the motives behind the production of these video sources. Losers are Pirates also pointed out several complaints with the production of PBS' Vietnam: A Television History, which overall doesn't discredit any claim made by PBS, but it does keep me more cautious when analyzing this source.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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### **Re: Continuing the Discussion**

by Kyle Martinson - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 8:36 PM

One piece of conflicting information I have found was in regards to the support of the troops after the war. PBS refers to the troops as being called losers says that they are haunted by the war. Whereas AIM video shows there was large support for the troops and talks about parades for the troops such as the one in New York at 10 minutes and 40 seconds in on the AIM video. The New York Times article clearly critiques the PBS series. Losers are pirates has critiques of both the AIM video and PBS series. In Losers are Pirates the author says that the two videos were made by two different points of view, Pro-American involvement and against American involvement. Losers are Pirates helped me to

get a better picture of the conflicting information. I agree with the author when he says the information is coming from two sides. When it comes to the post war support I would approve of the PBS video. Yes there were parades in certain areas but overall nationally the troops were put down and haunted. I know this because my late grandfather served in Vietnam. He had told me what he went through after he came back home.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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### **The Portrayal of the South Vietnamese**

by Kayla Elliott - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 8:50 PM

In the first part of the AIM video, it mostly talked about how the PBS series portrayed Ho Chi Minh incorrectly, or at least left out a lot of significant facts. In this second part of the AIM video, I think it focuses a lot on how the South Vietnamese were portrayed in the PBS series. Nguyen Ngoc Bich thought that the South Vietnamese were portrayed as “passive, puppets, and corrupt.” (0:35 AIM Video) Douglas Pike even went as far to say that there might have even been some racism towards the South Vietnamese as if PBS had a contempt for them. (1:00 AIM Video) I agree with their points of view because it seems whenever the PBS series is talking about the South Vietnamese, they make it seem like they are just American puppets, they belittle Diem as a leader, and make it seem like they are not a strong people. There are many examples of this, but there is one in this week’s video of Private Bill Ehrhart, who was being interviewed, who called the South Vietnamese “chicken.” (10:09 PBS Video)

Which brings up another point that the AIM video talked about, which is that the PBS series left out a lot of interviews, or just edited them, and used the ones that would help complement their bias. Because of this bias that has been proven to me through this AIM video, and the readings this week, I am in favor of the AIM video and the facts that it laid out over the PBS video. The readings just helped make this more clear for me because it seems like the PBS video was obviously inaccurate and offensive to many people.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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### **If PBS picked a side...**

by Maile Sur - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 9:09 PM

Not necessarily just for Kayla to answer, but why do you think the PBS series was so biased towards the “opposing” side? I say opposing because you would think that an American production company, who's target audience is most likely Americans, would constitute “their side” to be the American side. With that being said, you would think that they would produce a video that at least equally supported the American soldiers, right? I guess I keep getting stumped with this question that I’m just curious to see what others have to say about it...

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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### **Re: If PBS picked a side...**

by Brandon Dibble - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 6:31 PM

Hey Maile,

I feel that the PBS series was so biased towards North Vietnam because as noted in the "Losers are Pirates" article, "Vietnam veterans objected to the image they were given by a decidedly anti-war and anti-military production staff." The so called "anti-war" style of production in the PBS series really did not seem to sit well with the soldiers that had been interviewed, with only parts of their story being told, disregarding information that the soldiers deemed important to what they were trying to say in the interviews. One thing that stood out to me was the fact PBS told James Banerian (Losers are Pirates) that the language he has used in his protest letters was "loaded", such as terms like "communist". This may help shed some light on the bias of PBS because of them not wanting to refer to North Vietnam as communist when they clearly were. Why would calling the North Vietnamese "communists" be loaded language to them?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**Re: If PBS picked a side...**

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 10:27 PM

Maile, the PBS series published in 1983, eight years Vietnam War ended later. As the recent information I get, the US government control public opinion during the war (many people against). After they failed the war, the control view transforms to sort of "victim blaming" The PBS series approach to blame soldiers made these blood happen. Event though they are just following the orders. " it became apparent that many viewers were troubled by the series. These included Vietnam scholars, former American soldiers who had served in Vietnam, government officials, political commentators, and others. Scholars of the war have cited historical inaccuracies and omissions, biased presentations, and distorted interpretations that crop up throughout the production. The program seemed to be an irregular mixture of cliches and one-sided memories, causing consultant Douglas Pike to conclude; "What ever this thing is, it is not history." (Losers are Pirates) You can see many people disagree with the side PBS try to convey for the young generation. As this is a historic educational documentary.

I remind one Zippo ad during the war. The lighter inscribed with " NAM 71-72. WE THE UNWILLING BED BY THE UNQUALIFIED TO KILL THE UNFORTUNATE DIE FOR THE UNGRATEFUL" So emotional.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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**Re: The Portrayal of the South Vietnamese**

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 1:32 PM

Hello Kayla! I agree that the South Vietnamese where put into a terrible light. "if they where so bad, how'd they continue to fight off the Viet- cong for 30 years?" (AIM video, Part 2) Making them out to be "thieves" and "whores" as Pirates and Losers would put it seems rather harsh and almost racially motivated. As Douglas Pike the leading historian on the Vietnam war said about the PBS documentary, "whatever this is, it is not history"

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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### **Re: The Portrayal of the South Vietnamese**

by William Wyatt - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 1:14 AM

Hey Tyler,

Great point on Vietnamese immigrant Nguyen Ngoc Bich's statement regarding the strength of south Vietnam. Very early in the second AIM video, Nguyen asks if south Vietnam was so feeble how did they resist north Vietnam for over thirty years? Nguyen then argues that such views of south Vietnamese culture represent a double standard. In the PBS series, the viewpoint of the south Vietnamese seems incredibly biased and are a morally unfair representation of who they actually were. The PBS series has given us the perspective that the Vietnam War was primarily conflict between the United States and North Vietnam, but in reality, South Vietnam carried heavy burdens of the war before, during, and after large-scale U.S. involvement.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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### **Re: The Portrayal of the South Vietnamese**

by Jerrel Brown - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 6:43 PM

It's true, the PBS series painted a very bleak picture of the South Vietnamese and US soldiers during the war. Despite the numerous cases of Vietnam Vets who came home and took on leadership positions and really prospered after the war, PBS decided to take the opposite root and paint a post-war Vietnam War vet as a haunted shell of a man. And instead of presenting the South Vietnamese as a people fighting for a free nation, PBS decided to cut them most of the way out of the story entirely, writing them off as puppets or scardy cats. In my opinion PBS did all this for a more compelling story. In order to make the North palatable to the American public, they needed to give the VC a valid cause, ergo the image of the half-hearted American pulling the strings of the incompetent South Vietnamese foolishly fighting because...communism. So the finished product might be a more palatable story, but is it accurate? From the light digging I've done I can deduce that it is...mostly accurate. Event wise at least. It is widely accepted that the PBS series omits some very important facts in regards to the history of the war, but despite those omissions and the biased framing of the war it also provides a valuable source of information when paired with sources that cover and address the inconsistencies the PBS series might have with history.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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### The Unfair Portrayal of our Soldiers

by Brandon Dibble - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 9:13 PM

After watching the second video in the AIM series "Vietnam: The Real Story", the PBS series "Vietnam: A Television History" and reading the additional content provided by the instructor, I can say that another glaring contradiction between these written works and videos is how the American Soldiers were portrayed and treated. I feel that how our media portrayed the war in Vietnam seems to be a huge part of this.

This is the kind of thing that truly bothers me. These Soldiers gave their lives for the freedom and happiness of another culture that was under an oppressive communist takeover. Not only were we fighting for the freedom of these south Vietnamese people, but against the spread of communism that could possibly affect the world over. The medias portrayal of these soldiers is anything but what they deserved. I have personally met a Vietnam War veteran, the father of a lifelong childhood friend, who told me that he received everything but a warm welcome home from the population upon his arrival back into the United States, except from his family. He told me that himself and his fellow soldiers were called murderers and looked down upon in society. I believe the veterans were treated poorly because of the anti-war material that individuals were being subjected to back in the United States while our soldiers were on the battlefield fighting against communism, and for freedom. The PBS series was seen as an anti-war, anti-military production among these soldiers as said by James Banerian during the introduction to his book "Losers are Pirates".

John McCain does a good job painting this picture in the AIM series (Episode 2, 19:25) and states that "The reluctance of the United States (population) to understand that we have vital international security interests throughout the world, and we have an obligation, not to only maintain the freedom of people in the world but to maintain our vital national security interests". He is referring to the anti-war and anti-military groups that do not truly understand our reasoning for helping South Vietnam. McCain is referring to our obligation to help stop the spread of communism over unwilling countries and I believe this is what he means by "vital international security interests". This is what the Soldiers were fighting for, and I feel that they deserve a lot more respect than what was shown to them in the PBS series.

I am curious to see how others feel about this subject. Do you feel that our soldiers were treated unfairly or have anything to add?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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### Re: The Unfair Portrayal of our Soldiers

by Tyler Ritter - Thursday, April 27, 2017, 1:36 PM

Hello Brandon! I agree they where misrepresented, and I would like to add that it almost seemed intentional. When I read Robinson Risner, who was a POW, say that the producers told him he could preview his interview before it was broadcasted, but never contacted him and then broadcast it anyway, I felt like they where intentionally making the people they interviewed look bad.

(Losers are Pirates, James Banerian)

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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### Re: The Unfair Portrayal of our Soldiers

by Daine Taylor - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 12:05 PM

Brandon,

I agree with you that our veterans were treated poorly after coming back from a gruesome war. Now I see what John McCain said as true we do have "vital international security interest" but would you say we forced ourselves into South Vietnamese lands? Was there no other way to fight communism without possible hurting the people who want peace? Many of the anti-war and anti-military group really did not understand why we went to war and gave many veterans hell when they were stateside. What do you believe we could have done to prevent the mistreatment of veterans and prevention of the war or certain parts of the war?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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### Re: The Unfair Portrayal of our Soldiers

by Brandon Dibble - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 1:40 PM

Hey Daine,

You raise some very good questions here! I am not sure we forced ourselves upon South Vietnamese lands because it does seem that they did want our aid against the communist north takeover. I am also unsure there was a different course of action considering our involvement in the war because the North Vietnamese were victorious in their campaign to spread communism over Indochina even with the U.S aiding South Vietnam. I feel that there was no peaceful way of fighting communism. One quote I remember from material in the course, but cannot pinpoint after searching for a source was along the lines of "the opposition of communism will most certainly always result in the loss of lives" (If anyone knows who said this in the course material, I would love to know because I cannot find it at the moment) and I feel that this says a lot about possible peaceful negotiations.

To try and answer your next question, the mistreatment of Vietnam soldiers could only have been prevented if the U.S as a whole were aware of the reasons for the war. With the PBS series being seen as anti-war / anti-military by the soldier who were involved in the war and/or production of the PBS series, this can tell the story of how the media choose to report the war. I think a lot of people seen the war as the U.S going in to destroy the communist party, taking no prisoners and killing villages of people. While there are "isolated incidents" as said by John McCain, I feel that the vast majority of the soldiers were great people, serving their country that was trying to help a less fortunate culture that was being subjected to communist takeover.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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### Re: The Unfair Portrayal of our Soldiers

by Riley Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 5:10 PM

Brandon,

I agree with you that many Vietnam veterans did not receive the fair treatment that they deserved for putting their life on the line for our their country. To add to Daine's second question, "What do you believe we could have done to prevent the mistreatment of veterans and prevention of the war or certain parts of the war?" Sadly I believe there was really nothing that could've been done to prevent their mistreatment. Sure, an organization could start to raise awareness for soldiers, spread the word in an attempt to teach the public, sadly I don't think this would've brought an end to their unfair portrayal. As stated in Part two of the AIM series, "For the first time the outcome of the war wasn't determined on the battlefield, but the printed page and television screen." (22:22 into AIM part two) Before the war ended, many people had already made their minds on US soldiers due to their portrayal in the media. Many different factors can influence how soldiers are negatively portrayed, possibly a quest for ratings as a news network, maybe it's because news networks are aiming to push their political agenda onto their viewers.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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### Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 9:32 PM

My view on the PBS series can conclude that they left out many specific details about the war or gave a misrepresentation of the war itself. While reading Losers are Pirates I see many more flaws in the PBS series. One flaw is that they are very one sided for whom they are trying to please with the series. Since the PBS is a media company they are one of the biggest parts of the controversy that I saw in the AIM part two video. The media only cover what they thought they should cover and gave viewers what they wanted to see. When the third longest parade in America's history was being initiated the media coverage did not show a single bit because it was supporting the war.(10:55 AIM part 2) In today's society I can see that the media in some way, shape or form is bias of what they show or whom they show and how they show it. "More than a few Vietnamese critics of the PBS presentation have suggested that the producers were politically motivated in making the series." (P.12 Losers are Pirates). This shapes another conflict of interest on how media shapes the views of some Americans during this time period and possibly today is that they were politically motivated in making a statement. The statement is that they have people who are telling them to put a certain side of the story on the mainstream media. Everything here shows that the PBS series is partially incorrect and my "approval" has to go with the AIM series.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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### Re: Continuing the Discussion

by Daine Taylor - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 10:04 PM

Some significance of the Losers are Pirates article is that it provides more evidence on how the PBS series isn't providing the full truth of the story. While reading the article I got a grasp on what the PBS was trying to do with the series. My approval is really on which source gave the best of what really happened in the war and how people who fought in the war were thinking. The AIM videos were mostly trying to show how the PBS series were wrong and

trying to correct their mistakes. The AIM video also was trying to show how much the war meant to the United States. They showed how losing the war put a shadow on the Americans that lingered for many years after. "The legacy of Vietnam is with us today. I see it in the halls of congress, I hear it on the floor". (19:30 Rep. John McCain). Now the Losers are Pirates article shows that they are not trying to pick sides on the war or anything of that sort. They are simply trying to put into the minds of the readers what is true and what is false. They want to make sure the people get right answers to their questions they may have and not a one sided opinionated answer.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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### **Re: Continuing the Discussion**

by John Anderson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 9:32 PM

Honestly, Loser are Pirates struck me as the disenfranchised ramblings of someone who had no other outlet for his frustrations. While a few of his points ring true, the author mostly feels content trying to demonize all communists as being just as evil and corrupt as the dictators in Indochina. Honestly the sources this week struck me as toxic. How can one go about history blindly claiming that they're the only ones right and the other people supported what amounts to Hitler in their eyes. It's ludicrous.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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### **Re: Continuing the Discussion**

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 11:39 PM

Hey John,

Although I do see how in the end, this novel reflects in certain amounts a distaste t'words all communists, I do appreciate how the author provides us with the knowledge that it's not the intent to be completely conclusive. One example is, "A document as small as this book cannot pretend to be conclusive Nonetheless, it can provide a viewpoint different from that given by the series and a forum for those who, for one reason or another, were not permitted to speak on the television series." (Pg. 8 Losers are Pirates) I also perceived that some of James Banerian points do indeed pass muster, and should be taken into account when discussing the second Indochinese war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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### **Re: Continuing the Discussion**

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 11:21 PM

Hey Daine,

I agree, what I took from the novel Losers are Pirates, was it's evidence against the PBS series and it's absence of the full truth. Many Americans also felt that the PBS series misrepresented the truth, "As time went on, it became clear that many viewers were troubled. by the series. These included Vietnam scholars, former American soldiers who had served in Vietnam, government officials, political" (Preface Pg.II Losers are Pirates). South Vietnamese refugees also found absence of truth in the PBS series. "Vietnamese refugees found fault with the series' content at numerous points. They felt their people were being presented in a distorted light-the South Vietnamese are shown as thieves and whores, their soldiers are described as "puppets" and mercenaries." (Preface Pg.II Losers Are Pirates).

When both Vietnamese Immigrants and highly reputable Americans, who have first hand experience with the same conflict, agree that a source of information is biased and insufficient, said source should be scrutinized for the whole truth. I also agree with you when you say that another purpose of the losers are pirates article is to shed truth of falsities.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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### **Misrepresentation of the South Vietnamese**

by Kelsey Gilseth - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 11:35 PM

Another discrepancy found in the PBS series that the Accuracy in Media Part 2 video brings to attention is the inaccurate portrayal of the South Vietnamese. Nguygen Ngoc Bich says "the North Vietnamese are always portrayed as saints, revolutionary, as being very dedicated and the South Vietnamese as being rather passive, puppets, corrupted" (AIM, Bich 0:33). It doesn't make logical sense to put these kinds of labels on the South Vietnamese, being that it took the North Vietnamese almost thirty years to finally be victorious in their war efforts. The PBS videos and several of the stories in the Appy book mention how the North Vietnamese were determined to fight to the bitter end, because that was the only way to maintain their freedom. This may be true, but the South Vietnamese definitely weren't less dedicated or "passive" as the PBS series suggests. If that were the case, the Vietnam war would have ended much sooner. However, who is to say that the AIM video is entirely accurate? John Corry says in his article about the PBS series and the AIM video that "And, of course, that's exactly what Mr. Irvine and AIM are doing. They are expressing their opinion on what are essentially political questions." (Corry, New York Times). Perhaps neither program is wrong and they really only have a difference of opinions, not a misrepresentation of the facts.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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### **Re: Misrepresentation of the South Vietnamese**

by Daine Taylor - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 11:47 AM

Kelsey,

After reading your post there are a few things that you said that I found interesting. I found it interesting that you said that both articles could possibly be wrong. It would make sense that they could both be wrong because it really is mostly opinion bases in the AIM video. I would say that I would need to do deeper studying into the Vietnam wars history to truly say whether their opinions are wrong or right. I agree with you when you said that both South and North Vietnamese were dedicated but I think the PBS series was trying to get at was how the North Vietnamese were more dedicated to War and power than just trying to have peace like South Vietnamese.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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### **Pseudo-hitler?**

by John Anderson - Wednesday, April 26, 2017, 11:57 PM

Wow, so where to start? Well, the AIM video is again going off the conservative deep-end. They have thrown all pretense of trying to maintain an unbiased front and have even gone so far as to compare the North Vietnamese to a pseudo-hitler.

Well, as far as conflicting information is concerned, there are a few big ones to pick from. The first one I think is the perception of Vets and acts committed by Vets as interpreted by both PBS and AIM. Firstly, the PBS interview on the subject cites that much of the controversy over behavior of US soldiers during the war was largely overhyped. John McCain actually corroborates this in the AIM video, saying that there were a few "isolated incidents" that are present in all armed conflict and that no POW's were mistreated after being inside the "prison compound." Once McCain finishes his bit however, the AIM video trashes its credibility by featuring, briefly, Dan Cragg. This guy leads with claiming that the PBS series makes all the US soldiers appear to be "Racist Bigots." Not only is this inaccurate in the depiction of servicemen in the PBS video, but it also raises some startling questions.

How do we police what we watch? What are the criteria we use to monitor the resume of these individuals? In both readings, *Losers are Pirates*, and *The New York Times* article from June 1985, we see some possible answers. In LaP the author sites the need to be vocal and voice your distaste for biased media, albeit while he preaches his own bias. It is also important to note that having conflicting points of view can create a discussion to find the truth that might be masked from both.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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### **Re: Pseudo-hitler?**

by William Wyatt - Saturday, April 29, 2017, 9:34 PM

Hey John,

I also found it quite controversial when the AIM video part 2 compares the "mass flight of refugees" in Indochina to Hitler and his command to slaughter the Jewish people and annihilate their entire culture. I think the direct quote was, "It's very much similar to what happened in the second world war, the population of the Jewish people had to run away for their lives. It's as simple as that." (Nguyen Ngoc Bich AIM video Pt. 2). Nguyen, earlier in the AIM video, talks about the unfairness of double standards, but I think he applied a

double standard here with his comparison between the atrocities of Hitler's regime and the mass immigration of Indochinese people due to war in Indochina. I Personally think that the "mass flight of refugees" is an important subject that could have been approached better in the second AIM video.

With so much information, and so many historical perspectives and biases, it's difficult to police and cross-reference all of the information we are receiving. But I agree with you when you state that conflicting information gives cause for discussion that will hopefully lead us to the correct conclusion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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### Re: Psudo-hitler?

by John Anderson - Sunday, April 30, 2017, 9:26 PM

Godwin's law is so applicable that it hurts. But, back to the point. Yes, I think that much of the AIM video attempts to, especially in the second half, make Vietnam out to be the WW3 that we all just gave to a tyrant. Im sure that for some, this may be true. However, the fact remains that they used this bold claim, and even bolder accusations, to lead into how the US needed to have more involvement in South America. Whenever Im told something I've found that it's a good habit to ask: Why am I being told this, and who benefits.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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◀ Continuing the Discussion

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