

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp18 (Escobar 41945)

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Week 10 Forum Legacy of the War

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Legacy of the War

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Sunday, June 3, 2018, 11:20 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Legacy of the War topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Legacy of the War

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The Division of America

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Monday, June 4, 2018, 3:15 PM

The biggest legacy left by the Vietnam War was the division of America. According to Stanley Karnow, the names on the Vietnam Memorial “bear witness to the end of America’s absolute confidence in its moral exclusivity, its military invincibility, its manifest destiny.” (News Hour video, 5:33 minute mark) He says that during the Vietnam War, “the public really doesn’t know very much about what’s going on.” (News Hour, 6:34) Inducing a sort of melancholy reaction, Karnow states that “those were the days when people didn’t ask questions, people had confidence in the government.” (News Hour, 6:42) That just hits home for me. I mean, ouch. We really don’t have confidence in our government anymore. Now, we’re always questioning their decisions. It didn’t occur to me until he said this that the Vietnam War may be the reason for that. That’s very disheartening. When the American people didn’t see any progress in the war and their friends and family just kept getting killed, there formed a “credibility gap between the public statement and the realities on the ground.” (News Hour, 7:15) American citizens began to notice that their leaders were lying to them.





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**Re: The Division of America**by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Thursday, June 7, 2018, 11:50 AM

I get the vibe that the government got an amazing credibility rating following World War II. From the end of World War II to the beginning of the Korean War the US received constant reinforcement that waging a war on another continent was the right course of action to prevent authoritarian regimes from coming to power. The rebuilding of Europe, the proliferation of knowledge about concentration camps, the depths of the Nazi war machine, etc.

It's not like Americans haven't questioned American choices in war. The Civil war was incredibly protested and President Lincoln was burned in effigy. However, post World War II American choices in global actions had so much clout it was hard for them to do wrong.

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**Re: The Division of America**by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 5:04 PM

"the US received constant reinforcement that waging a war on another continent was the right course of action to prevent authoritarian regimes from coming to power."

This got me thinking. World War II had multiple effects on the United States. It sort of gave us big heads, as if we were the heroes of the world (which I suppose we were, as well as the rest of the Allies). From our actions afterward, I think we kind of thought of ourselves as a sort of Justice League, fighting international crime and atrocities (comic theme song plays). We thought we were indestructible.

At the same time, it made us paranoid. We didn't want another evil dictator trying to take over the world to get as close as Hitler did. We saw Nikita Khrushchev.

Leonid Brezhnev, and Mao Zedong as threats of that nature.

So, as indestructible protectors of the world, our duty was to stomp out any flame of spreading Communism. If other countries adopted Communism, they had to report back to the Soviet Union or China, meaning they were under their control. This obviously meant that the Communist leader would want to rule the world. We were the only ones who seemed capable enough to stop him. Except, we weren't.

I am sure that our leaders thought that their cause was noble and justified and that it was the right thing to do. But, when it became undeniably apparent that it wasn't right, we still strove on.

I still can't figure out why. Pride, maybe. Not the good kind, either. I don't think we'll ever know the one, true reason.

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Re: The Division of America

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 12:36 AM

Danielle, I agree with your opinion. Ernest Hemingway pinpointed the essence of the war in his book *A Farewell to Arms*, that a war may mean power, victory for the supreme ruler. However, when it is detailed to individuals, the war has never had a holy aura. Once its horn sounds, it means gun smoke, killing, sacrifice, and charity. Doris point the lesson that people have to learn from this war is that the support from the domestics are the most important thing for the policy maker (Legacy of War video, 9:35). It is true, as you point out, people may not know what is going on during the war, and they became suspicious about their leaders. In the Vietnam War, lots of Americans don't know what the purpose of this war is, and the government didn't convey the current information with their domestics. It is really heartbroken for the families to see their people get killed in the war they have no confidence in. I think that is one of the reason for Doris point out the importance of the domestic support, and your point of the division.

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Re: The Division of America

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 5:12 PM

"It is really heartbroken for the families to see their people get killed in the war they have no confidence in "

they have no conscience in.

Agreed. I cannot imagine how the families at home felt, not able to do a thing as their husbands, sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins died in a seemingly endless war. How horrible to feel so lost and helpless. I do not understand that feeling, but I know the hurt of losing someone close to you for seemingly no reason. Emptiness. Confusion. Fear.

"Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." - Master Yoda

"Mankind must put an end to war before war puts an end to mankind." - John F. Kennedy

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Ain't No Senator's Son, Son

by [Jonathon Gray](#) - Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 5:00 PM

According to Richard Norton Smith "This was a television war and American foreign policy for the past 25 years and in particularly the projection of American military force has been governed in many ways by television pictures" (Legacy of war, 13:12).

To me, this is the single, most significant legacy of the Vietnam war. From the end of the Vietnam war until the last year or so the United States foreign policy changed dramatically. The use of American ground forces would be a hard sell to the American public. From Vietnam forward if you chose to send your children to war. You could watch them die from the comfort of your couch and would have to ask "was it worth it?" to yourself. With the inclusion of the camera it was easier to see the inequities of the draft system. You could see who was sent to war and who had the money to stay home due to deferments. You could see the caskets returned to America and a disproportionate amount of African Americans filled those caskets. You could see in real time billionaires with bone spurs deferring their draft and the less fortunate picking up that same draft card. Lies about US actions could be uncovered by the media. Actions like those entailed in the Pentagon Papers become harder to pull off and by and large the average president was discouraged from wasting assets.

He also mentions the culture war that continued well past the Vietnam war with culture lines being drawn that persist even today. Those cultural lines formed as a sort of domino effect of the Vietnam war. Legalization of marijuana, foreign policy, and civil rights concentered in their alignment on the national stage.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Ain't No Senator's Son, Son**by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 6:46 AM

That's a great point Johnathan, the television did add to how the military was governed, but I think it's part of something larger.

For the first time ever in history, Americans could see war up-close. This in turn created complete outrage because of the horrors of war. The draft depend the resentment toward the government because they were sending young teenagers to fight for a cause that could not be completely understood. For the first time the people of the United states had a voice—a real sense that this country was for the people by the people.

Freedom of the press and television gave America a platform to be enlightened, a way to see how our elected public servants run this country—and how they used American military, some kind of transparency.

This is the reason it is so important to understand politics and keep a watchful eye on those elected public officials.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Culture war still persist according to historian.**by [Paul Geu](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 10:35 PM

When I heard historian Richard Norton Smith mention that there is still a cultural war today I saw that in your post and you can see that in the examples that you made of what people witnessed on the television.

I did also like how Norton Smith mentions that the policy makers had a fascination with Munich and that might have led then to make a hardline stance on the war (News hour video, Norton Smith speaker). After the appeasement of Hitler at the conference in Munich ultimately led to World War 2, the policy makers of Vietnam did not want to make the same mistakes but I feel they made an overcorrection which led to the results we still feel today.

Profession Holloway mentions the real skepticism in our government among the poor and minorities after the treatment they endured with the draft and how was being called up first to fight (News Hour Video, Holloway speaker). Ultimately the

war still have left many wounds that are slowly healing.

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The Legacy

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 8:43 PM

I think the single most significant legacy of the Vietnam War is the amount of public hate for the war and how the American government was acting and treating them. This was the first war where there were nationwide protests done all over by all different types of people. This is because the war and all that came with it were affecting people of all different ethnicities and backgrounds. The legacy of the Vietnam War is its failure to win the war at home. If you ask anyone what they know about Vietnam most people aren't going to talk about Tet or Saigon, but rather they will talk about the chaos at home and most will say that we lost the war at home. This goes to show that the public distrust and dissatisfaction with the war is what it will be remembered for. I feel like the speaker that had the greatest impact on me was Michael Beschloss. This is because of just the facts that he stated and how he pointed them out such as when he said "It was a war that was fought by Americans who were poor that generated a cultural divide when 18 year olds who could not even vote were sent off to fight by a President that was voted in by other people." (legacy,17:45) That statement really hit home for me because I could not imagine not being able to vote, but still being shipped off across the world to fight in a war that I had no part in starting. Earlier in the program he also touches on how people felt deceived and let down by the officials they vote for. He says "A lot of those voting of Richard Nixon thought that he would get us out of the war quickly but if they had any idea that he would have continued the war for four years they never would have voted for him."(legacy 8:30). I think this is true even for todays presidents in which they make all of these campaign promises in order to get elected and then do nothing or even worse the complete opposite of what they said. All of what Michael said really made me think and compare it to current day America and how I would have felt during that time period.

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Re: The Legacy

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 7:09 AM

Tyler, thank you for pointing that out. The draft did lead to some heated debates here at home due to the racial divide. The first realignment in politics happened in 1860's during the civil war—the 1960's provided the landscape for a second

realignment and I think that was largely due to the Vietnam war. The Jim Crow law from the late 1800's was still deeply rooted in the south even into the 1960's. Young black man were fighting for their own rights at home—then when the government sends them a draft card, of course this will raise tension.

This cultural divide still existed in 1969 and the Vietnam war brought it to the forefront, but we must ask ourselves. Did the policies really change—or is racism still ever-present?

If you're not completely sure... I must encourage you to visit the south sometime.

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Re: The Legacy

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:37 PM

I very much agree. I think that Americans from all backgrounds had such a passionate and violent disagreement with their government and engaging in wide-scale protest was much more of a cultural revolution than many people assume. The number of people who lost trust in the American government was exponential. Since Vietnam, I think there has been a lot more scrutiny on public officials in office and on the foreign policy decisions that the United States makes. The huge letdown of the Vietnam war still manifests itself politics today, where many Congresspeople, like John McCain, are veterans of the war and remember first hand both the warfare and the domestic war at home.

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Re: Legacy of the War

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 11:04 PM

Five historians including Stanley Karnow, who seemed to be on the US government's side for going into the war, but still says it was a failure, joined Gwen Ifill in this special video. He said in his book, Vietnam: A History, "The names of the dead recorded on granite record more than lives lost in battle, they represent a sacrifice on a failed crusade, however noble its motives they bare witness to the end of America's invisibility, its manifest destiny" (Ifill, 5:30). He also said maybe the Vietnam war had a silver lining, because now people are more skeptical of the government, which is a great point and probably my choice for the biggest legacy from the war. Jonathan Holloway added on to the saying this was the end of America's innocence and that the new generation grew up with Hollywood movies that depicted it was Apocalypse Now

new generation grew up with Hollywood movies that depicted it was / stereotypes like John Rambo. The legacy is still active today with a more divided two party system where nobody trusts the other side and even typical Americans have doubts about the government whether it's foreign relations or with taxes domestically.

I don't think this is a productive way to talk about the Vietnam War, because these historians, while so-called masters at their work, have their own biases and could cause some problems when it comes to the emotional side of things like being on tv and maybe getting an ideology attacked. This seems like a Fox News or CNN debate, but this it's very one-sided where everyone agrees on the important aspects and don't seem to give much more insight into anything else.

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Re: Legacy of the War

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 7:46 AM

I have to agree Jacob, "people are more skeptical of the government", this to me is America's loss of innocence. No longer were we to stand by and allow our government to perform such atrocities in Americas name.

I'm attaching a couple pages out of one of my art textbooks—pretty interesting in understanding the Vietnam Memorial and the artist.

It comes from Living with Art, the tenth edition written by Mark Getlien.

What Do Artists Do?

In our society, we tend to think of art as something created by specialists, people we call artists, just as medicine is practiced by doctors and bridges are designed by engineers. In other societies, virtually everyone contributes to art in some way. Yet no matter how a society organizes itself, it calls on its art-makers to fulfill similar roles.

First, artists *create places for some human purpose*. Stonehenge, for example, was probably created as a place where a community could gather for rituals. Closer to our own time, Maya Lin created the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as a place for contemplation and remembrance (1.6). One of our most painful national memories, the Vietnam War saw thousands of young men and women lose their lives in a distant conflict that was increasingly questioned and protested at home. By the war's end, the nation was so bitterly divided that returning veterans received virtually no recognition for their services. In this atmosphere of continuing controversy, Lin's task was to create a memorial that honored the human sacrifice of the war while neither glorifying nor condemning the war itself.

At the heart of the memorial is a long, tapering, V-shaped wall of black granite, inscribed with the names of the missing, the captured, and the dead—some 58,000 names in all. Set into the earth exposed by slicing a great wedge from a gently sloping hill, it suggests perhaps a modern entrance to an ancient burial mound, though in fact there is no entrance. Instead, the highly polished surface acts as a mirror, reflecting the surrounding trees, the

nearby Washington Monument, and the visitors themselves as they pass by.

Entering along a walkway from either end, visitors are barely aware at first of the low wall at their feet. The monument begins just as the war itself did, almost unnoticed, a few support troops sent to a small and distant country, a few deaths in the nightly news. As visitors continue their descent along the downward-sloping path, the wall grows taller and taller until it towers overhead, names upon names upon names. Often, people reach out to touch the letters, and as they do, they touch their own reflections reaching back. At the walkway's lowest point, with the wall at its highest, a corner is turned. The path begins to climb upward, and the wall begins to fall away. Drawn by a view of either the Washington Monument (as in the photograph here) or the Lincoln Memorial (along the other axis), visitors leave the war behind.

In a quiet, unobtrusive way, the place that Maya Lin created encourages a kind of ritual, a journey downward into a valley of death, then upward toward hope, healing, and reconciliation. Like Stonehenge, it has served to bring a community together.

1.6 Maya Lin. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C. 1982. Black granite, length 492'.



ARTISTS Maya Lin (b. 1959)



How do Lin's works provide a space for contemplation? Is she an architect or a sculptor? What kind of an artist is Lin?

"Each of my works originates from a simple desire to make people aware of their surroundings, not just the physical world but also the psychological world we live in," Maya Lin has written. "I create places in which to think, without trying to dictate what to think."³

The most famous of Maya Lin's places for thought was also her first, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Lin created the design in response to an open call for proposals for the memorial, and it was selected unanimously from the more than 14,000 entries that flooded in. We can imagine the judges' surprise when they dialed the winner's telephone number and found themselves connected to a dormi-

pure flat surface in the earth with a polished, mirrored surface, much like the surface on a geode when you cut it and polish the edge." Engraved with the names of the dead, the surface "would be an interface, between our world and the quieter, darker, more peaceful world beyond. . . . I never looked at the memorial as a wall, an object, but as an edge to the earth, an opened side." Back at school, Lin gave her idea form in the university dining hall with two decisive cuts in a mound of mashed potatoes.

Maya Lin was born and grew up in Athens, Ohio. Her father, a ceramist, was chair of the fine arts department at the Ohio University, while her mother, a poet, taught in the department of English there. Both parents had immigrated to the United States from China before Maya was born. Lin readily credits the academic atmosphere and her family's everyday involvement with art for the direction her life has taken. Of her father, she writes simply that "his aesthetic sensibility ran throughout our lives." She and her brother spent countless hours after school watching him work with clay in his studio.

Lin admits that it took a long time to put the experience of constructing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial behind her. Although the design had initially met with widespread public approval, it soon sparked an angry backlash that led to verbal, sometimes racist, attacks on her personally. They took a toll. For the next several years, she worked quietly for an architectural firm before returning to Yale to finish her doctoral studies. Since setting up her studio in 1987, she has created such compelling works as the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama; *Wave Field*, an earthwork at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; and the Langston Hughes Library in Clinton, Tennessee.

Critics are often puzzled about whether to clas-

number and found themselves connected to a dormitory at Yale University, where Lin was a twenty-two-year-old undergraduate student in architecture. Like much of Lin's work, the memorial's powerful form was the product of a long period of reading and thinking followed by a moment of intuition. On a trip to Washington to look at the site, she writes, "I had a simple impulse to cut into the earth. I imagined taking a knife and cutting into the earth, opening it up, an initial violence and pain that in time would heal. The grass would grow back, but the initial cut would remain a

sify Lin as an architect or a sculptor. Lin herself insists that one flows into the other. "The best advice I was given was from Frank Gehry (the only architect who has successfully merged sculpture and architecture), who said I shouldn't worry about the distinctions and just make the work," Lin recalls. That is just what she continues to do.

Maya Lin discussing an upcoming project, 2006.

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Loss of Innocence

by [James Alewine](#) - Wednesday, June 6, 2018, 6:09 AM

Jonathan Holloway said it best, "the Vietnam war was the end of American innocence." (NewsHour 11:06). This loss of innocence has had a significant impact on how we, Americans, view the political system. Americans lost faith in the system because of the way Vietnam was handled by our leaders. This to me signifies why we hear those words—not another Vietnam.

Before Vietnam, America trusted those it put in charge—trust is something easy to lose, hard to gain. My fear is that while we are experiencing a political cultural shift in today's climate that we will somehow be persuaded into another debacle. My hope is that with a documentary created by a film maker such as Ken Burns'—it will reignite a debate for the younger generation. We must not forget this troublesome war, and if it can be seen through all lenses, with no bias—it will be the best way to learn about this period in time.

I'm looking forward to watching it!

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Re: Loss of Innocence

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 1:36 AM

James, I agree with you that the Burns's film can be a reignition for the younger generation to remember and understand the history correctly.

When the Vietnam War was just over, the negative influence of the injustice of the Vietnam War on the hearts of the American people was enormous, and it triggered the student protests and numerous anti-war art. With the deduction of time, people gradually forget about the Vietnam War. The new generation of Americans is almost ignorant of the details of the Vietnam War, which is wrong. The effect of the Vietnam War on the United States was in a paradoxical manner, the militarism in the United States has been strengthened, which has greatly reduced the bottom line of the United States' intervention in the affairs of other countries,

From Burn's movie, I learned that from 1962 to 1971, the U.S. military sprayed chemical defoliants on the forests of Vietnam. The defoliants were used to bald and bare the lush forests of Vietnam, which caused the loss of natural hidden barrier of the army of North Vietnam. The defoliant has great harm to the environment. First, the entire ecosystem is endangered due to the destruction of large-scale vegetation; Second, the teratogenic effects of this pesticide will seriously affect human health.

This is a terrible and sad action, and the Vietnamese people still receive the influence of this.

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Re: Loss of Innocence

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:39 PM

There will definitely be a series of documents of today's political climate and have the same conversation about what happened. Everyone on the panel in the special viewed the longest war in American history as a polarizing one and one that set back the nation in more than a couple ways. Not that I wish they had "the other side" on the panel, because that doesn't actually create decent conversation, but known counterarguments should've been stated to create a conversation that would further help the audience gain a better knowledge of the war. Stanley Kasnow stated, "As the war goes and there's no progress and Americans are getting killed and you begin to see is credibly gaps between the public statements and reality on the ground" (7:27).

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Loss of Innocence

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 11:14 PM

Our country is a young one, not even 300 years old yet. I don't believe this country

has ever been innocent, but its population and civilians have been, willing or not. Innocence was lost in a variety of displays. The 60s allowed people to expand their thinking and alter their worldview, in ways that were taboo to the generation before. Exploring teachings beside Judeo-Christianity, experimenting with mind altering drugs, bending gender norms and challenging the status quo were all examples of the counter-culture's involvement in experiencing the "loss" of innocence. Americans of the Greatest Generation were plagued by economic and wartime struggles, and were preoccupied with survival. The generation following, the boomers, were children of a different generation of circumstances, where actions could be analyzed and dissent could be practiced. The nuclear family soon had to start watching televised war, protests, and violence. They watched their president be shot through the head while riding in Dallas, only to watch his brother be slain 5 years later. They watched a peaceful civil rights leader as well as a radical be executed. They saw a silent and calm Buddhist monk be engulfed in consensual and holy flames. They saw the fragility of humanity, and that destroyed whatever innocence the people had left. Though destruction is portrayed negatively, I think this destruction was important. It woke the people up to a different mindset, and woke them up out of their ignorance, whether or not they liked it.

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Credibility gap lost in Vietnam

by [Paul Geu](#) - Thursday, June 7, 2018, 12:22 PM

I believe the single largest takeaway or legacy from this war is one that was mentioned by the speakers in the video. While this war was the first foreign war that America had ever lost, the resulting loss of credibility in our government might be the largest legacy of this war. Author Karnow mentions in his statement that before the war, most Americans did not question our government and only after the people realized the results on the ground did not match what we were being told about the war did Americans lose faith in the government (News Hour Video, Karnow speaker).

Other members of the panel also mentioned the loss of faith in the government as a major legacy of the war. Both historians Beschloss and Goodwin mentioned that if the American people knew what as a country we were getting into, they might have voted differently and if the American people were told the truth, that there was no light at end of tunnel, then the support of the war might have been different and might have led us not to have gotten involved (News Hour Video, Beschloss and Goodwin speakers).

I think that author Karnow did make a good point that there is a silver lining as a result of the loss of credibility. He mentions that people now ask questions of their government and that we understand as employers of our leaders we have the right to

know the truth (News hour video, Karnow speaker). He also mentions that even though we lost the war, the United States is seen as an economical beacon to the world and that is a good thing (News hour video, Karnow speaker).

While the loss of credibility in our government is to say we lost our innocence in the war, I believe that those that gave the ultimate sacrifice did not die in vain, but allowed America to begin to ask the tough questions of ourselves and that might be the main legacy of this war.

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Re: Credibility gap lost in Vietnam

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:45 PM

You were spot on mentioning the notion that if the government was more straight forward with the American people about what was going on there would be some backlash, but this was the first war covered by the media extensively so the backlash came as almost 20/20 hindsight. And yes, Karnow did make a good point saying this war led the American people to be skeptical, which is important when it comes to leaders making decisions for the entire country. The people indirectly vote for their leaders, but they don't have to ask the American people what they think of every major decision, which is tough to reconcile as a citizen with major negative events in our history. I don't believe the silver lining is the legacy, but more about the new found lack of nationalism, maybe, due to the nature of our leaders' past decisions.

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A Fundamental Distrust

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Thursday, June 7, 2018, 6:07 PM

The most significant legacy from the Vietnam era, in my opinion, is the creation and continuance of a mass skepticism within American voters in the political system on all sides of the political spectrum. As Karnow describes in the News Hour video, the "silver lining" of the conflict is that people are critical and skeptical of political leadership and demand transparency as a result of the massive political cover-ups concerning Vietnam. As Beschloss further explains in the video, the murky campaign promises to end the war in Vietnam by presidential candidates who instead escalated the conflict further created a paradigm shift in politics in which many Americans expressed fundamental lack of confidence in both their political leaders and the system in which they operate. Kearnes-Goodwin asserts that one of the central reasons for this

distrust was that Americans were consistently misled about the American military role in Vietnam by political leadership, and that this was one of the fundamental reasons for American failure. A lack of domestic support, according to Kearnes-Goodwin, was caused through a lack of transparency.

Since the Vietnam era, a polarization of politics has grown ever more present, as conservatives and leftists had hugely different reactions to the Vietnam conflict. Both sides have earned a fundamental distrust in the system, many conservatives thinking that the United States did not do enough to end communism in Indochina and that the loss of the war was due to civilian protest and an early withdrawal, and many liberals believing that the war was unwinnable from the beginning. Karnow and Beschloss assert that Americans had a solid amount of faith in politics before Vietnam, and that the lasting legacy of distrust has resulted from American leadership's inability to reconcile with the public and communicate honestly about the conflict, which Kearnes-Goodwin asserts would have been essential for the United States to win.

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Re: A Fundamental Distrust

by [James Alewine](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 10:32 AM

I agree Daisy, this was a turning point in mass skepticism in our political system. For that reason, I unfortunately believe Vietnam was a necessary part of our history. Who knows what might have been if this horrible part of our history didn't happen.

“many conservatives thinking that the United States did not do enough to end communism in Indochina and that the loss of the war was due to civilian protest and an early withdrawal, and many liberals believing that the war was unwinnable from the beginning.”—A great observation, but when will we all understand, that the past cannot change—it is the future we must look at.

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**The purpose of Burns's new documentary film.**

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 7:03 PM



The purpose of Ken Burns of filming this new Vietnam documentary, to me, is to heal the trauma that was resulted by the Vietnam War, not only for American but for the human being as a whole. Burns and Novick indicate that their goal was to tell the story

from all sides of perspectives -- American, South Vietnamese, and North Vietnamese, who were involved in this war. I think it is helpful to tell the story in different points of view because, as Burns said, "... more than one truth happens at the same time (Wilken, 2018)". Lots of people live with their preconception about the so-called truth for their whole life, but if they get to know others' perspective, they would know that they know nothing about it, just as Burns said at the beginning of the video. In this documentary film, he uses interviews with American veterans, Vietnamese-Americans, and former refugees, to tell the different truths happened at the same time. What's more important is they create a safe space for people to tell their stories, which is similar to the "story circle" that is used in the Psychological rehabilitation. This documentary is the most complete display of all the important dimensions of this history, a masterpiece that seeks to restore the truth. Among them are the icy, full of ideologies that we can see in history books or in the biography of various great people. Behind the various gorgeous labels are the decisions of the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and even the Soviet Union and China. There are also stories of real names behind. We can learn and memorize the major historical events or analyze the significance of them and evaluate them with our ideology, but we might forget to see the individual behinds these historical concepts.

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Re: The purpose of Burns's new documentary film.

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 5:29 PM

"The purpose of Ken Burns of filming this new Vietnam documentary, to me, is to heal the trauma that was resulted by the Vietnam War, not only for American but for the human being as a whole."

That is what I determined from their video as well. Burns and Novick had a noble cause for creating their documentary and I really cannot wait to watch it myself.

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Ken Burns Documentary brings fresh prospective to complex issue

by [Paul Geu](#) - Friday, June 8, 2018, 11:52 PM

I have always enjoyed watching Ken Burns documentaries and I was excited to see that he finally tackled this very complex story of the Vietnam War. I thought that his stated purpose of pulling everything back, and starting with a fresh slate on this topic was a good one because in order to truly learn something we need to forget everything that we know so there is no bias to distract us when we learn something new.

I believe that this is a good way to learn about our subject because it allows us to forget what we think about the war, and allows us to process new information without the risk of having past opinions affect our viewing. I also think that Ken Burns is trying to reach new audiences such as the young generations that really have no idea what Vietnam was about.

I think that the legacy that he is trying to convey with his complex narrative is that there were many truths that are intertwined with the story of the war and he states that his film creates a "safe place" for all these opinions to be accepted all at once.

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My takeaway from Burns.

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 12:52 AM

The Vietnam War began in 1955 and ended in 1975. Before and after it lasted for 20 years, there were countless human casualties on almost every day. Those Vietnamese veterans who participated in the war had to leave their homes and become desperados. During the Nixon administration period, the United States gradually withdrew its troops from Vietnam because of the domestic anti-Vietnam war.

The Vietnam War destroyed too many people and alienated too many people. We do not see who the real winner is at the end of it. Because there is no real winner in the war. The history of mankind went through the first battle. After the Second World War, it ushered in a short-lived peace. This peace is pushed up by numerous dead bodies. The price is so painful that we can no longer afford it. We need to profoundly reflect on the war. What Burns did in his new documentary film is to accept different points from different people to restore the truth for all the communities (New Vietnam Documentary video, 1:59).

As a foreigner's point of view, the most significant legacy of this war is not the right or wrong of this war or the policy maker, but to listen to the voice of the people. The biggest victim of any war is the people, then the country. If the policymakers can hear more voice of their people, they can get more support, and may avoid wars, which is the least that people like to see.

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Re: My takeaway from Burns.

by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 10:56 PM

It is good to hear your perspective, as a someone who was not raised in the U.S. In my other posts I also stated that honesty and communication with the public is vital to situations like a war. I think Burns' main methods in creating his documentary, to share all and any sides, perspectives, and impressions of the war is supportive of this. The article that discusses the documentary, *Filmmaker Ken Burns aims for healing with new documentary about Vietnam War*, quotes Burns:

"You can have more than one truth happen at the same time."

"What we tried to do is create a safe space for all these different perspectives."

"Everybody is represented here."

It seems like Burns is aware of the most significant legacy of the war: the results of miscommunication and misunderstanding. He is doing everything he can to tell history by sharing different views with the public: something American leaders did not regularly do while the war was occurring.

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A New Hope.....for History

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 10:39 PM

I am really happy that filmmaker Ken Burns has decided to make this new documentary on the Vietnam War. After viewing and reading all of this contradicting information from a variety of sources that have different political views and agendas. Ken Burns has stated that "What we tried to do is create a safe space for all of these different perspective."(Burns,2:20). This to me really is a key to a successful documentary because the whole point of it is to be educational and tell the whole story which is hard to do if you only include certain kinds of perspectives. You need to take all of the conservative, liberal, moderate and even Vietnamese views of the war and culminate that all together in order to properly begin to paint a proper picture of the Vietnam War. This really does seem like the most productive way to learn and document this war. The legacy that the war seems to be addressing so many years later is that real divide and mixed feelings felt by so many about the Vietnam War. Like Burns touches on in his documentary you have those POW Veterans who feel very strongly for the war and you have those others who were oppose to the war at home. This divide in American feelings can still be felt today when discussing the war even though it has been over 40 years later. People will still have strong feelings over this time period and are not afraid to stand for what they feel. I am actually interested to see some more of the Burns documentary because I think they really are doing the Vietnam War justie by portraying the full picture of the war through the eyes of such a

variety of people.

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"More than one truth"

by [Emilee Russell](#) - Saturday, June 9, 2018, 11:48 PM

I think that the video of the newscast highlighted many of the most important points concerning our legacy of the Vietnam War and the repercussions still being felt decades later. I thought that one very important point that was made was that the very beginnings of our involvement and our legacy go hand in hand, going back to Truman's foreign policy decisions concerning Vietnam that were followed and escalated by his successors. The public was largely unaware of these early dealings in Vietnam, which the experts in the newscast say set the stage for a lingering public opinion of doubt and skepticism for decades to come. Not only was the public, in many regards, in the dark about our real reasoning for being involved, they did not have a sense of how long this conflict would likely continue.

Overall, the historians agreed that a big part of the legacy of the war is the sense of doubt and the deep skepticism in our foreign policy decision-making and uncertainty that our elected officials are representing and reflecting the ideals and opinions of the public when it comes to wartime decisions. One of the comments I found most interesting was when Stanley Karnow proposed that maybe this skepticism is one of the "silver linings" of the war, and that now we are willing to ask questions of our leaders and their motivations, a hard lesson we learned from our involvement in Vietnam. I would agree with that statement, and think that approaching foreign policy with some sense of pause should hopefully lead to better and more informed decision-making, not just taking the words of our leaders for granted but asking questions and requesting information.

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New Ken Burns Documentary

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 10:17 AM

I like the approach that the new Ken Burns doc is taking. It appears to be a completely objective and extremely well researched look at both sides of the war and the impact it had on every side involved in the conflict. That also certainly leads me to also wonder what his narrative is going to be. Most historical interpretations are supposed to be an unbiased examination and presentation of the subject. What have Burns and Lynn Novick done different to, in, Novick's words, "told this story in a way that no one has ever told it." It definitely always feels like the documentaries about Vietnam are almost

ever told it. It definitely always feels like the documentaries about Vietnam are almost apologizing or seeking to correct an error. I cant quite put my finger on it.

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**Re: New Ken Burns Documentary**

by [Tyler Cannon](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 7:10 PM

I think what they plan to do is tell the stories of a whole bunch of different people who have completely different views from one another. They intend to get view points of POWs as well as testimonies from both south and north Vietnamese in order to get the full view of the war. As oppose to PBS and or AIM like we have seen they each carry their own amount of bias and keeping certain things under the rug and emphasizing others for their own gain. These should not be what we document as historical fact because of such bias. With the Burns documentary he does not intend to meet a political agenda or win a certain grant, but rather he wants to be a "safe zone" for people to come and express their feelings about the war in a judge free zone. This allows for us to get the historical record correct for future generations.

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**Re: New Ken Burns Documentary**

by [James Alewine](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 8:22 PM

I do think it will be interesting what this new updated version will be. I also think you are correct in your assessment--it will be interesting to see if there is no bias taking place.

I did find this in my research... a newer version made by American experience.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Ignorance as a Legacy**by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 4:33 PM

I think the biggest legacy of the war to America is the realization of our country's ignorance. Our leaders, as well as the population, were ignorant or misinformed on a lot of subjects. The people's ignorance and naivety led them to believe in the morality and honesty of their government, which in turn allowed our leaders to act in secret without immediate consequences. When you believe in what your leaders are telling you, you're not going to question their actions, which is illustrated in the video when Stanley Karnow comments "Those were the days when people didn't ask questions, people had confidence in the government" (Legacy of the War, 6:43).

There was also ignorance of history. I would imagine most Americans don't know the history of Indochina, let alone where Vietnam is. We invaded a country that had been fighting aggressors for centuries. Our ignorance overestimated as well as underestimated the Vietnamese people. We overestimated the North Vietnamese' connection to our enemies and overestimated and mischaracterized their forces. Our ignorance led us to believe Vietnam could be fought conventionally. In this way, we underestimated the Viet Cong's ability, such as their skill in covert guerrilla warfare, and their dedication to the cause of liberation from colonialism and imperialism.





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**Re: Ignorance as a Legacy**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 10:34 PM

Yes, a lot of ignorance and misunderstandings. Although I wouldn't want to blame the public for misinformed. Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and several other leaders all mislead them. The war was going on for years before it was publicly announced. Even when Johnson did declare war, it was fairly discrete. (PBS episode 3, 43:58) I think that's something we, and hopefully American leaders, can learn from. Deceiving the people, and just general miscommunication, brings opposition and conflict.

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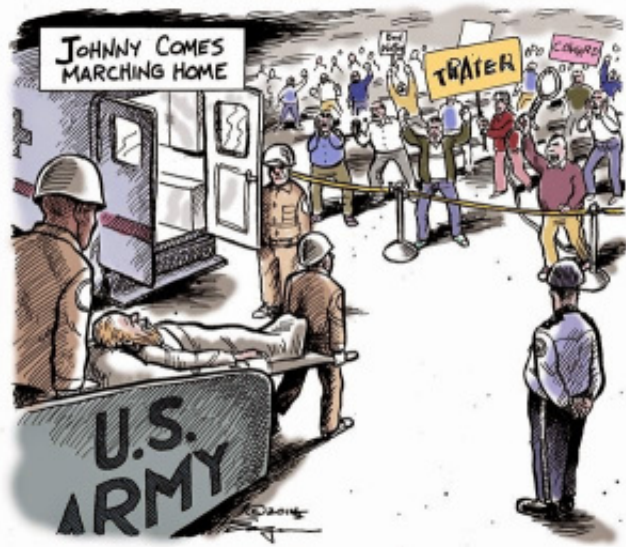
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**Re: Legacy of the War**by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 5:17 PM

I can't recall if I have shared this photo. Just in case I have not, here it is.

My thoughts:

A picture is worth a thousand words, but thinking of some to type for this picture, I have not a one.

I am at a loss. The cat has officially stolen my tongue.



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Re: Legacy of the War

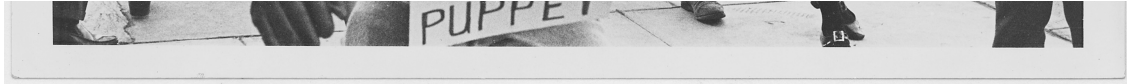
by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 5:27 PM

On a small side note, I do think it's a bit funny that they spelled traitor wrong in their sign.

I wouldn't say that the photo is necessarily accurate about the events that we've read up on. However, none of the accounts that I can recall mentioned anything specific about what exactly the protestors were holding when they spit on homecoming soldiers and called them "baby killers." I did find some pictures online though.







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**Misleading Government**by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 6:28 PM

I would say that the most significant legacy shift of the Vietnam war for the United States was the shift in public trust of the government and the recognition of the clear violation of the Social contract of the governed. As all 5 historians in the Legacy of War video mention, the public was misled by all of the presidents who served during the war, but especially by Richard Nixon. As stated by Jonathan Halloway, "No foreign war can succeed without domestic support". I find this to be very true, and it seems that the USA tried to hide their actions of war in Vietnam from the public at first because they knew there would be backlash; and eventually when the public found out some of the details of what was happening, the government tried to conceal and fight back against their own people. Instances such as what happened at Kent State is evidence of this. As one historian from the Legacy of War video stated, "the war cannot be understood in full, without understanding how we got involved in the first place". For students like us who now understand the war pretty well, we know that our pretty much colonial partnership with France is not innocent at all, and makes our later actions of saying that we cannot allow a free country to be taken over; is very hypocritical.

Overall though the shift to mistrusting and second thinking the actions of our leaders was the biggest legacy of the war. As the historians stated, before Vietnam during WWII the government had the trust of the people, but after the Vietnam war after the public realized how untrustworthy our government was, "Vietnam was the end of our political innocence". The points brought up by all 5 speakers were impactful on me, but what Jonathan Halloway said really struck me. He pointed out how the poor people, and minorities of the USA already had no faith or trust in the USA government, but still fought the war for the rich and powerful. He cited how throughout history black soldiers had faced awful treatment and were literally used by the government. This is quite sad.

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**Miscommunication and Misunderstandings**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 6:57 PM

It is challenging to determine the most important legacy of the Vietnam War, as it was

so complex and different from other wars in the past. However, it seems like throughout this course there has been consistent indications of miscommunication and misunderstanding of others. This is pretty general statement, but it applies to many of the problems of the war. People tried to control others, without bothering to consider their perspectives. The Vietnam War is the result of people trying to control other people. France tried to control Vietnam. The North tried to control the South. U.S. tried to control France, and then South Vietnam (Herring pg 51). All attempts of control were met with resistance. These are just examples of nations controlling other nations. People in the U.S. disapproved of the draft, a coerced enlistment of the military. This led to protests, demonstrations, and overall tension and defiance. The citizens of the U.S. did not want to be controlled by other people, especially over a war they did not understand or support. This takes me to my next point.

The public of the U.S. were not very aware of the details or goals of the war, mostly due to a lack of communication between them and the American leaders. Kennedy and Johnson repeatedly deceived the public about the goals and progress of the war. (Herring 307) Nixon was guilty of this as well. As the Legacy of War - News Hour video suggests(11:42-12:10, this created apprehension, a lack of confidence, and skepticism towards the U.S. government.

After watching the five minute video of Ken Burns, I think his view ties all of this together. Perhaps something that can be passed down from the Vietnam War, and something we can all learn from, is the necessity of honesty, and acknowledging others' perspectives. He states that all feelings and views are valid and acceptable. "...that person who has an experience different from mine, or opinions different from mine, there's a kind of legitimacy to that position."(1:40)



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**control**by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 10:40 PM

I think your comment "The Vietnam War is the result of people trying to control other people" is thought provoking even though it is simple. Control played a huge role in the war, and the resistance it faced. Through means of control the war escalated. American boys were drafted to a foreign land for a foreign cause, soldiers were sent to be the physical enforcers of control whether they liked it or not. Control was also exercised by bombings, an attempt to punish the enemy into submission. Without control, or the necessity of humanity to express it, war wouldn't happen.

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**The legacy of the Vietnam war is that...**by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 8:39 PM

I feel that the true legacy of the war is that there is no single answer that can solve every problem that occurred because of this war. The News hour video provided 5 different points of view on possible legacies from the war, from a loss of innocence in the American people, a loss of trust in our government, to a culture war that still remains today. The legacy of the war is that they are all true, every single one.

It has always been said that we should learn from our mistakes so we do not repeat them and that holds true for government today. We have seen that the government has learned by the laws that were passed to curtail the use of military without approval from congress (Herring, 339). We have seen that we have fixed the mistakes of how our troops were treated when they came back home from humiliation that historian Goodwin mentions in the video, to how our troops have been supported during the war on terror (News hour video, Goodwin speaker).

Historian Karnow mentions that the silver lining from the war is that people are asking questions of their government (News hour video, Karnow speaker). I feel that we have failed to learn the lessons of that war because even though we are questioning more today, we are still not getting involved to change things that we feel are wrong such as running for office, get involved in the political process, and finally vote.

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Re: The legacy of the Vietnam war is that...

 by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:53 PM

I agree about your point about the silver lining. While there is more skepticism, the backlash rarely turns into anything, most likely due to the lack of spine leaders have to rule in favor of his/her citizens and it's something we're trying to cultivate today in our nation. We're still learning lessons about what we should or shouldn't do and our past, but more skepticism will only lead to a more respected and moral nation. Michael Beschloss said "we don't have confidence in our system and a lot of it comes from that period." He goes on to say that people have the right to know if the nation is going to head to war and shouldn't be confidential information. That's something we're trying to figure out today and force our leaders to be honest with the American people, whether it's positive or negative.

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Foreign policy and how we treat troops

 by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:41 PM

To start off with Ken Burns new documentary, I believe the stated purpose is a good one, as the confusion behind the Vietnam war even to this day is still quite jarring. I think it would be of great benefit in terms of patching up old wounds and maybe some new ones, as if you don't learn from history you're doomed to repeat it, and we can't learn from the past if it's clouded in corruption and history. The legacy I think Burns new documentary is addressing is the division and confusion brought on by the cloudy nature of the conflict, such as the constantly changing nature of our foreign policy due to several changes in administration and our lack of a coherent goal. I drew this conclusion from Burns desire to have voices from all sides in his new project. " They said their goal was to tell the story from all sides, American, South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese and to include views from those for and against the war...you can have more than one truth happen at a time" (John Wilkens, San Diego Tribune) " ...That's the only way reconciliation can take place, if you realize the other person has an opinion that's equally valid as yours"(John Wilkens quoting Ken Burns, San Diego Tribune)

As for what I believe the most significant legacy of the Vietnam war for the U.S., I think it was how this war forever changed how America treats our troops, home and away. Sending our troops off to fight a doomed war that, at the time, was the longest war we had ever engaged in, to only have them come back and be spit on and ostracized by their own fellow citizens and be almost entirely forgotten by their government in regards to the governments lack of acceptance of the fact that agent orange was toxic and created long lasting health issues that the V.A. would not cover for quite some

time. " It was my hope the nation could recover from one of the worst mistakes it ever made, its a war we didn't belong in, and if we had belonged there then we should have been in it to win and not ask our troops to go over there and fight but not win, and then, having done that to them, we bring them home and treat them like pariah's, that was a terrible thing to do, America had some of its sole nibbled away in Vietnam" (2nd speaker, legacy of war, 0:51-1:16)

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Burns' Documentary

by [Daisy Burge](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 9:48 PM

So, I have watched more Ken Burns works than I care to admit and his work both interesting and well-developed. There are immense issues with some Vietnam scholarship trying to assign blame of victory or loss on one side or the other, or else trying to claim the moral superiority of one side. I find many issues with the way that these sources present themselves, simply because in my opinion, the purpose of history is not "I told you so." History is meant to engage, entertain, and help people understand the way that our current institutions work. In my opinion, healing through history, while it may not solve all issues, is an important jumping off point. Rooting your political rhetoric within historical fact rather than blind ideology is crucial to understand our government and improve it and its decisions.



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Healing is Deserved

by [Parker Mann](#) - Sunday, June 10, 2018, 11:07 PM

I think the purpose behind the documentary is really great actually. I'm sure a lot of people are like 'what does he mean by healing?', but the trauma of this war can still be

seen all over the streets of America in 2018. In fact today I saw a homeless man on the Streets of Eugene holding a sign that said “Vietnam Vet, anything helps, god bless America”. Even though I did not think it was not too relevant to include a lot of information in the books we read on the backlash against veterans when the immediately returned home from Vietnam, I do think it is important to understand what they went through, and how they were clearly affected by being over there and what they had to do. I believe this is what Ken Burns meant by healing in part, and I think this is very important to cover in the documentary.

I have seen a few Ken Burns projects and documentaries, and I do believe he will/did a great job with this series based on how great his other projects are. I do think it is a productive way to learn about the history of the war, considering our country has strongly felt the impact of the war ever since many families loved ones did not return or came back permanently traumatized. So I am glad that he is trying to heal those so hurt by our country’s awful mistake and they deserve to know why what happened occurred, and who is responsible.

I think the legacy that he is trying to address is all the misunderstood information that the American public thinks they know about the war, and is trying to clear up and give Americans the truth that they deserve. It is a complicated issue but I believe Burn is the one who can clarify the information well if anyone can. I really like how is says ““You can have more than one truth happen at the same time,” Burns said. “What we tried to do is create a safe space for all these different perspectives.” He said that he is also getting information from all perspectives, and hopefully he shows that many different groups were wronged by the war, and that all parties deserve healing.

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