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After reading several of the personal accounts in Appy's book I have decided to use the common theme of "Self-Justification." Self justification can range from being happy and content with your life as it is right now; to having an inner-self conflict and deciding which choice would benefit yourself and others the most. This book is loaded with "self-justification" scenarios. Individuals who are battling with choosing right from wrong. people battling with their inner gut feeling and what they are being told by other people. I choose three very specific examples.

The first one being, Jim Soular's story in "Free-fire Zone." In this chapter of the book he explains his up-bringing and reason for being in the war. He then goes on to explain his experiences as a helicopter engineer. The main part of Jim's story that relates to my theme of self-justification happens when he describes one of his troop members and good friend being shot by another U.S. officer. He goes on to explain that he took a trip to visit the dead marine's mother. He goes by telling her the truth of her son's death and not what the U.S. government had told her. This deals with self-justification because Jim didn't feel right about the war in the first place and was unhappy with the way the government was trying to hide the horrible things that were going on in Vietnam. He didn't feel that his soul would be at peace until his friends death was brought into a truthful light.

Another way this book deals with self-justification is explained in James Lafferty's story. He explains how he opened one of the first free draft counseling centers in the nation. This is his form of self-justification because he felt that poorest, most uneducated men were being unfairly picked to be drafted. James felt that it was his duty to give the poor, unfortunate citizens a fair chance. James was struggling with his justifications because for every young man he liberated another young man was thrown into that draft spot by the U.S. government. This form of self-justification is different than Jim Soular's because Lafferty was doing his work on the home front and Soular was over seas. They both however were trying to find fairness, and justice.

My last story of self-justification comes from Quach Van Phong. Phong is not even a soldier although he was in many battles and was even injured in the war. Phong is an artist who did combat sketches for both the North and South Vietnamese. His self-justification wasn't the war itself, but the art he made to boost the soldier's morale. He said that it gave him great fulfillment to see a drawing that he made from only spit and dirt hung so close to a soldier's heart. He said that even though the sketches weren't complete the soldiers treasured them and praised he for it. This sense of achievement made him feel like he was doing a great deal of good in a war which he could not fight in.

All these stories hold a sense of self-fulfillment and self-justification. These people did what they felt they needed to do in a time of war and struggle. These decisions in turn gave themselves a feeling self achievement and justification in time of struggle and hardship.

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