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"We're Still Human"

Through section three in the Appy book, my emotions and thoughts about what we as Americans did to others and how we were treated were all over the charts. Some stories would make me extremely mad about how our troops were treated (either by our government or the Vietnamese), other times I couldn't believe how Americans treated the Vietnamese.

The theme I chose "We're still human" refers to the fact that even during these horrible times, the most influential emotion read was sympathy. Both Americans and Vietnamese showed sympathy toward their own troops but also to the opposing side. A couple stories stuck out to me, especially those who were in the medical field. They would see death or near death everyday and I just can't imagine being put in a situation like so many of those nurses and doctors were. Sylvia Holland was a nurse in Vietnam. In her story she talked about "playing god" on whether someone would live or die, be treated or passed along. Who are we to decide someone's fate? As if that wasn't hard enough for her, I can't imagine being the last individual, (the last female) that many of these men would ever see. How do you take all those emotions in and continue to work?

As for the individuals that were in the field, (soldiers, photographers, etc) how do you continue your mission knowing that any second you could be dead? Duong Phong was a photographer for the Vietnamese. His pictures were a "morale booster and a political weapon." He was with the soldiers, taking pictures of the fighting and whatever also crossed his path. Seeing his own people die because of Americans, you would think a lot of anger would come from him, and that he wouldn't care if Americans died. That wasn't always the case. Phong talked about the first time he saw an American soldier up close; an American had been shot, so another soldier went to go pick him up knowing he was dead, the American was crying. "It occurred to me that the American are like Vietnamese," they have emotions and when death is involved, we're all still human.

Helen Hegelheimer, a female stewardess during the war talked about how soldiers tugged at her heart every time they were dropped off in Vietnam. What do you say to a young man knowing that this more than likely will be the place they will die? She talked about the look on their faces and how hard it was to keep a smile because she may be the last female they ever see. The fewer fuller flights back home, she talked about how touchy these men were and their reactions to the smallest things, like being woken up. Her story made me realize that as humans we do have a limit on how much stress and horror we can take.

Overall these three stories all dealt with the fact that as humans, we do have limits. A war that seems to never end takes a toll on every individual involved, whether you are considered friend or foe. No matter how bad the circumstances, or how much you hate the other side, seeing a human in pain or on the verge of death, sympathy always comes to mind.

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