THE BATTLEGROUND FOR THE AMERICAN PAST: THE INFLUENCE OF THE VIETNAM WAR IN CONTEMPORARY MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

Commemorative programming for historic anniversaries reveals an interpretive and narrative evolution between public memory and history. The divisiveness of the war and the public's ambivalence about its meaning allowed for broader interpretive perspectives compared to earlier war commemorations. Research on the evolving narratives considers how public memory informs identity and affects historical interpretations. Recent museum exhibits, historic sites, and films about the Vietnam War bring into focus the changing narrative of the Vietnam War. Case studies for this research are the Washington, D.C. National Archives and Records Administration *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's plans for an education center, and Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's documentary *The Vietnam War*. The soldier's experience narrative still dominates interpretations, but interpretations have expanded to include the Vietnamese and the protest perspective. The passage of time and the conflict's complexity has opened the way for new perspectives in commemorative programming.

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INTRODUCTION

Commemorative programming reveals the current development between memory and the public understanding of historic narratives. These moments of remembrance come with expectations that reveal the collective historical memory. U.S. wartime collective memory has largely focused on a specific narrative: being on the right side of history. Diverging from this narrative creates public dissonance. The complexity of the Vietnam War, however, has eased this transition of public memory and understanding to include varied perspectives. The fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War is currently being commemorated throughout the country.[1] Contemporary interpretations reveal that the unclear reasoning for the conflict while it happened made the inclusion of newer perspectives during a commemorative time simpler to accomplish. Analysis presented in this thesis examines the evolving interpretations of the Vietnam War programming in a museum, at a historic site, and in a documentary and public reactions to each. Whereas past anniversaries of historic events received pushback for the inclusion of contradicting perspectives, current Vietnam War interpretations are less controversial. For example, the presence of the Vietnamese perspective in interpretations analyzed in this research considers whether the practice received resistance like that of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's *Enola Gay* exhibit in 1995.[2] The interpretive focal points in public history practices, an exhibit, a memorial space, and a documentary, and public reactions during the

[1] President Barack Obama began the national commemorative effort for the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War through a proclamation on May 25, 2012 that would take place from that day forward until November 11, 2025.

[2] The planned interpretation of the *Enola Gay* exhibit was to include the Japanese experience of the atomic bombs dropped on their country by the United States. This effort taking place during the fiftieth anniversary commemorating World War II's end received significant backlash from a public that perceived a critical portrayal of American soldiers. This thesis mentions this exhibit and its relationship with memory and history on pages eight and nine.

Vietnam War's fiftieth anniversary programming reflect the primary interests of American public memory relative to their historical understanding.

The evolution of the Vietnam War narrative during this commemoration also interacts with the collective understanding of American history influenced by American identity through public memory. The collective understanding of American identity forms the public interpretation of a shared history. Scholarly literature focuses on contested histories that analyze the interwoven nature of memory and history through narrative frameworks on the collective level. Collective memory evolves within a social environment through cultural aspects like home, school, and media and act as a source of identity. The move to include visitors' understandings within the interpretation further molded memory into a relationship with history, and eventually grassroots historical interpretation became the norm. Cultural resources are valuable in introducing new historical understandings, but the public perception and readiness for new interpretation remains a factor. Visitors approach history with a selective nature that guides their interpretive process, and the anniversaries of national events add to the emotional understanding of memory and history.

Until 2025, much historical programming in America will focus on commemorative programs or exhibits for the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War. Current reactions to museum exhibits, historic site interpretations, and history through media such as documentaries give insight into the public's readiness for different interpretations. The narrative's development speaks not only to what is remembered, but also shows the selectiveness of history and remembrance when considering silent histories. The dominant interpretive theme historically has been the common soldier narrative, which encouraged a central focus on greatness even in the face of great loss. This narrative helped Americans focus on the soldier's heroism following the

Vietnam War and found solace in supporting the soldier's innocence through victimization. New perspectives challenged this narrative, yet critical analysis of the American government through these interpretations and placing the American soldier in a separate category eased this shift.

Chapter one is the first case study and looks at the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit in Washington, D.C., which opened on November 11, 2017 and remained on display until February 28, 2019. The exhibit looked at 12 moments in political action by the American government just before and during the Vietnam War. *Remembering Vietnam*'s curator Alice Kamps sat down for an interview and shared that the guiding force of the exhibit's interpretation was to expand the perspective of the Vietnam War. Audio-visual additions to the exhibit included interviews with North and South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, American Vietnam veterans, and draft resisters. At the time of the interview, Kamps noted that no contestations to their interpretation had arisen. A critical review of the government's role in the conflict, however, has existed both during the war and after. The inclusion of other perspectives and a consistency with past frameworks of understanding reveal much about the public's expectations and the effect of power dynamics from people and location.

Chapter two details a second case study and discusses the effort for a new building near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) on the National Mall for a planned education center. Since the VVM's opening, visitors have left items that the National Park Service collected and stored. The collection inspired Jan Scruggs, former Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) president and leader behind the VVM's creation, to push for an Education Center at the Wall. Motivation included providing an understanding of the Vietnam War's complexity for the future generations. The inability to determine a central focus and lack of funding hindered the physical

center's future. The challenge to developing a physical center reflects the difficulty which stems from the lack of a clear interpretive force with a difficult history. The VVMF's decision to move the effort toward an online platform removed the interpretive displays from forces on the National Mall, yet this does not remove the narrative from selective forces.

In the final case study, chapter three discusses the Vietnam War in film and demonstrates that popular culture also influences public memories and understanding of the Vietnam War. Movies and documentaries are an increasingly accessible form of interaction between the public and history. During and soon after the Vietnam War's conclusion, movies portrayed stories about the meaning of the conflict. Movies like *The Green Berets*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Platoon* centered on the soldier and pointed the public to the 'soldier' as the primary way to understand the war. The limited images of Vietnamese people, whether soldiers or civilians affected the presence of the Vietnamese in these interpretations. When the Vietnamese people are given more prominent imagery and representation, the public reacts to these choices. Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* is one of the most recent productions focused on the Vietnam War history. As Burns and Novick entered the final production stages of their World War II series near the end of 2006, they soon turned their attention toward the Vietnam War.[3] Their ten episodes aired from September 17, 2018, to September 28, 2018, and studied the years from 1858 to the mid-1970s. Interviewees included American veterans, North and South Vietnamese veterans, American and Vietnamese civilians, and those who protested the war. Reviews published through media outlets and left on the documentary's DVD item on Amazon.com offer a glimpse into the public's perception of the production. Alongside analysis of opinion articles

[3] Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, interview by Terry Gross, "In 'Vietnam War,' Ken Burns Wrestles With The Conflict's Contradictions," NPR, Transcript, September 21, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/552575164>.

published by experienced reviewers, the Amazon reviews allow for greater insight into the public's understanding and memory of the Vietnam War. Their praises and contradictions reflect the generalized interpretations guide the public's interaction with the Vietnam War history.

A different method was used in each chapter to demonstrate how the public interacts with the history and memory of the Vietnam War. Though the methods are different, all three represent forms of the interaction between public memory and the development of historical narratives. The NARA *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit represents museum interpretations and the facilitation of dialogue at such sites. The VVMF's planned physical structure for an Education Center at the Wall reflects the influence of a memorial space on the development of a historical narrative. Movies and television, though less personal, highlight an impactful interaction between the public, history, and memory with imagery and representation through the story's focus. Analysis of the development process which guided historical interpretation and representation in exhibits, at memorial sites, and in film and documentaries, and the public response to them guided this research. Contemporary commemorative programming used the American military narrative framework and the soldier's experience to present the war, but the inclusion of the 'other' perspective has been less contested than the *Enola Gay* exhibit experienced. The divisive nature and critical analysis of the Vietnam War, both as it happened and since, has made it possible to include broader perspectives and new inclusive interpretations. The development process of *Remembering Vietnam*, the Education Center at the Wall, and *The Vietnam War* introduce the presence of different perspectives during the anniversary commemorative programming. Other interpretations of the Vietnam War, like the Vietnamese and protesters, have been included in the narrative and have been significantly less controversial than earlier war narrative changes when a similar method was tried. This is due to the outright

divisiveness of the Vietnam War, but the analysis in this research also reveals a safely navigated path that allowed for the inclusion of new perspectives to the American public. The soldier's experience remains split from criticism of the American government, and this separation has allowed for an easier transition to other perspectives during a commemorative anniversary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anniversaries of past events create a unique opportunity for new interpretations and commemorations. The historical narrative depends on multiple factors including the individual personal experience, power dynamics in the surrounding society, context of the period recalled, and the presentation method of the interpretation. These factors and their relationship to memory and its growth as a subject and source of history influence the development of historical interpretation and remembrance. This review of literature, divided into four categories, focuses on memory, history, and devices for remembering. The first consists of collective memory and the conscious growth of memory as a source for history. The next category analyzes memory and history together, centered on how the public has used memory to inform history. Commemoration forms the third category as public efforts influence both memory and historical interpretation. The fourth category branches into literature related to the study's focus with memory, historical interpretation, and the Vietnam War era. An examination of the scholarship related to theory of collective public memory and the construction of monuments and memorials adds to a critical missing connection between remembrance and its practice. The influence on and development of historical narratives through remembrance at a larger scale are important factors to consider when examining the displays and discussions during commemorations. The commemorative programming of the Vietnam War's fiftieth anniversary has primed the stage for analyzing the relationship between memory as an informative source and subject in historical narratives.

Before the presence of written and printed documents increased in the modern age, memory served as a device for learning from or about the past. Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle pondered the phenomena of memory and how places, events, and people carved a niche

into the human mind for later recollection.[4] Analysis of the link between memory and history, however, is young. Literature on this relationship first developed as a focus on how memory informed human identity.[5] The public uses their memories to understand themselves and the world around them, and this modified with new fields of thought and mnemonic devices.[6]

Collective Memory

Collective memory is defined as a socially constructed framework for remembering and interpreting events that exist beyond personal experience for this study. French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first attributed the term "collective memory" to the occurrence of memories shared within a network of people. Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory* credits collective memory's construction to the always evolving social environment instead of a permanent fixture in public minds.[7] Forces include what professor James V. Wertsch refers to as "cultural tools,"[8] like home life, school, and media, that inform collective memory and historical understanding. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* adds the ideological evolution of nationalism and builds upon the concept of memory as a social construct. For nationalism, the collective memories of different groups used shared basic frameworks, metaphors, and tropes to promote an understanding of heritage or history from those starting points. Anderson focuses on

[4] Scholars Paul Ricouer and Nicolas Russell both discussed the early history of memory analysis through ancient philosophers in their works. Nicolas Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs" *The French Review* 79, no. 4 (March 2006): 794-799, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25480359>; Paul Ricouer, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 7-21.

[5] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 47. Centralized on collective memory as a concept of human identity and its existence as a collective construct within social frameworks.

[6] Merriam-Webster defines mnemonic as "assisting or intended to assist memory." For this study, mnemonic devices will consist of memorials, museums, and historic sites as each place relates to reminding or informing visitors of the past.

[7] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 22-23.

[8] James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 1.

the transcendental connection within nations. Though individuals had never met each other, they formed a brotherhood under nationality. Shared memory, interpretations, and monuments which developed and presented an identity for the community represented an explanation for the phenomena.[9] Shared memories of the past connected the individuals of a nation into a collective body regardless of its state of existence. Memory represented more of an episodic memory, a personal and objective remembrance, instead of abstract information independent of experience.[10] This created a paradox, however, as memory was informed by human identity while simultaneously informing human identity.

Scholars have examined historicity as a part of human identity. Professor Jeffrey Andrew Barash calls this the "*scope* of memory,"[11] an integral part of memory's evolution in the developments of remembrance and self-understanding. Barash notes three key philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and John Locke, in the changing concepts of memory, reminiscence, and human identity. Platonic reminiscence suggests memory recalls the good and beautiful to which objects of perception are referred and looked at the soul for this phenomenon. Plato uses Socrates' final thoughts before death to further this concept. Socrates referred to the soul's capability of reminiscence when near death and figured the phenomenon existed because of the soul's existence before birth and its ensuing perception of life. Aristotle attributed memory to both humans and more developed animal species but added reminiscence as unique to humans.[12] Memory recalled what happened in the past, like cause and effect, but reminiscence associated a feeling or sense of identity to the memory. John Locke and Lockean empiricism brought memory

[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983) 204.

[10] Russell, "Collective Memory before and after Halbwachs," 798.

[11] Jeffrey Andrew Barash, "The Sources of Memory" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 4 (Oct. 1997): 709, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3653967>.

[12] Barash, "The Sources of Memory," 711.

to what Barash found as its decisive point, a clouded self-perspective more defined with understanding achieved through personal experience.[13] Memory and reminiscence created self-understanding which evolved as humans interacted with their environments, and the retention impacted interpretation.

For a phenomenon such as memory to influence the interpretation and understanding of history, there had to exist a development in the collective usage and acceptance of memory as an authentic source. How an individual or group experienced or felt about the past grew into an accepted practice within historical interpretation.

Memory and History

Since museums and historic sites are stewards for artifacts and documents for the public, and always serve the public's interest, people understand these places as an extension of their own knowledge. Historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen conducted a survey in 1994 that focused on the public's active interaction with history to understand the nuance of this relationship. Museums scored highest in the survey, followed closely by personal accounts.[14] This survey modified how public history scholars and practitioners understood the public's interaction with history. Responses showed a preference for grassroots interpretations that had grown in popularity during the mid- to late-twentieth century. Professor Denise Meringolo's *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks* examined what she refers to as a professionalization of public history to facilitate dialogue rather than display information.[15] The 1930s and the New Deal made history more accessible and combatted the overbearing control of scholars'

[13] Barash, "The Sources of Memory," 713.

[14] Roy Rosenzweig & David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 19-21.

[15] Denise D. Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), xxiii.

interpretations at museums and national parks.[16] Both during and after World War II, the middle class's ability to afford time off for vacations increased and historic sites, museums, and national parks were popular destinations. As this development introduced new types of visitors, staff re-evaluated interpretations. In Professor Joan Tumblety's edited volume, *Memory and History*, contributors noted a social change in Western European culture that created an atmosphere where memory informed and represented history. Tumblety refers to a "memory boom" in the mid-twentieth century where memory and recollection saw increased usage as informative historical sources.[17] Memory as a source of history, unlike written documents, developed from its use in legal proceedings. Holocaust survivors' memories were given as testimony during the internationally televised trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in 1961. The court allowed forms of public memory as factual evidence. This reformed the public's understanding of memory, which played into their interactions with history. At historic sites visitors look to connect with the history presented and interlace it with personal and cultural memories.

Success of museums and historic sites depends upon visitors' interest in the space and its history. Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* contains six principles which remain among the first to bring the visitor experience to the forefront of historical interpretation. His methods focus on increasing public interaction at National Park Service (NPS) sites but can also be applied to all museums and historic sites.[18] Tilden advises practitioners to give visitors an active

[16] Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks*, 133-135.

[17] Joan Tumblety, ed., *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 2-3.

[18] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977) 9. These six principles are: any interpretation that does not relate to the visitor's personality or experience will be sterile; information is not interpretation, interpretation is an art which combines many arts; interpretation's aim is not instruction but provocation; interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part of history; and interpretations for children should not be diluted adult interpretations, rather they follow a different approach.

role in interpreting history because the public engages with a history that speaks to them. Instead of telling an audience how to think about a topic, Tilden's method of interpretation asks them to think about how they understood history and what sources they preferred.

Understanding the relationship between memory and history also relied on how the teachers of history developed interpretations. Educational psychologist Sam Wineburg analyzed the effectiveness of how cultural tools like family, schools, museums, and media taught history. Wineburg's *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* looks at the different areas of teaching history that surrounding cultural tools also influence. Public history professionals, try as they might for objectivity, also approach history with their own evolved understandings and interests guided by existing narrative frameworks surrounding them. These differences do not invalidate one or the other, but they do affect the exposure to history and approach of the interpretation.

The generational changes in memory and understanding are factors of interpreting history that interest Wineburg. Near the end of his work he writes about a series of interviews conducted between school-age children and their parents about the Vietnam War era—one generation old enough to have experienced the events, and the other only exposed to its history through family, school, and media. Wineburg classifies these differences as "lived memory" and "learned memory."[19] These two types of memory reveal unique and influential ways the public approaches interpretation. Individual interpretations are dependent upon personal experience during the period. Though participants with lived memory identified themselves as more emotional or nostalgic during discussions, Wineburg found equally strong statements made by

[19] Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 234. *Lived memory* represented the memories developed within the minds of those who physically experienced the history, and *learned memory* consisted of memories originated through hearing or reading interpretations of the event.

the younger generation. Younger participants had filed into their memory banks the understanding and feelings about the Vietnam War era that they were exposed to and deemed authentic from family, friends, and the media. Repeated imagery or explanations affected learned memory, which was reflected in stronger statements regarding the historical past.

The public, whether it be individuals or associations of specific interest groups, actively interact with site interpretations. A constant focus of interest groups is the mission to protect the truth, but their truth is just one perspective of understanding the past. During the 1940s and up to the 1960s, local and state historical societies limited themselves to more patriotic interpretations. Practitioners were not educated in the public history field and believed it was necessary to encourage patriotism in order to gain strong political and financial support from the government.[20] The growth of social history and grassroots interpretations in the 1960s answered the need of a new era. When marginalized groups found their identities and historical understanding excluded, they demanded to hear more voices. The increased consideration for other, non-traditional experiences of an event grew in use. Shared authority became the term for this practice, and historical analysis gave equal authoritative value to intellectual and community interpretations. The concept of shared authority became a central tenet in public history practice because of these developments, and it influenced the 1990s contestations to ownership of the history.

The public's tendency to inform their historical understanding with memory has created high expectations for exhibitions. Professor Susan A. Crane, a medieval Europeanist, contributed to the study of memory and history in museums through an analysis of historical consciousness and its presence when unmet interpretive expectations cause distortion with the existing memory.

[20] Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005) 227.

Professor Michael Frisch, in *A Shared Authority*, examined historical consciousness and concluded that the public is more concerned with how they remember history than what is displayed.[21] When the history presented does not match the visitor's memory, the public faces contradiction in their developed understanding of the museum as a "memory institution."[22] Instead of disagreeing outright with the history displayed, it creates an internal dissonance for the visitor between reality and expectation. The institution challenges the visitor's readiness to handle differing interpretations or viewpoints of that time. Informing visitors of updated knowledge is a valuable role of museums, however, awareness of public perception is paramount. Amateur and professional historical interpretations are all formed by personal experience, education, and feelings that influence these contrasts in interpretation. Just as Halbwachs and Ricoeur acknowledge that identity at the collective level influence memory, so too does this complex relationship play into interpretations of the historical past. To better understand memory and its relationship to history, Frisch suggests historians be aware of the selective nature of memory that drives public self- and collective understanding.[23] Public perceptions of historical events and scholarly historical interpretations of them often conflict. This happens most commonly during anniversary celebrations or when a black-and-white narrative is the end goal.

The contestations which often arose at the anniversaries of American involvement in wars and interpretations at cultural sites threatened the celebratory American historical narrative. Public perception and its effect on historical understanding was a key factor in the dispute about

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[21] Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990) 16.

[22] Susan A. Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum" *History and Theory* 36, no. 4, Theme Issue 36: Producing the Past: Making Histories Inside and Outside the Academy (Dec. 1997): 45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505574>.

[23] Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, 13.

the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum's *Enola Gay* exhibit, and it was also a factor in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The *Enola Gay* conflict occurred when the curators developed exhibit text which focused on the impact of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and explored the Japanese experience of the bombing that coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of World War II's conclusion. Several veterans' groups responded negatively, and the interpretation was scrapped. The constant reference in public history circles to the incident reveals the importance of practicing shared authority—in this case, collaborating with veterans' groups as stakeholders—and analyzing the impact of identity, memory, and historical ownership. In a similar vein, Edward T. Linenthal's *Preserving Memory* provided a case study in how both memory and shared authority impact interpretation. With Egypt's Six Day War threatening the Jewish population in Israel, interested parties began planning an institution to keep the memory of World War II genocide at the forefront of public consciousness.[24] The motivation was not only to "never forget," a motto for the Holocaust Museum, but also to search for a clearer definition of good and evil.[25] For a society disoriented after the Vietnam War, this exhibit highlighted marginalized voices and good defeating evil. The expectation for a feel-good narrative by the American public limited museum exhibitions, like the *Enola Gay* exhibit and the entire Holocaust Memorial Museum, to simple tropes like good versus evil and patriotic versus traitorous.

Grassroots history influenced interpretations at museums and historic sites where the public visited and engaged with their own memories and understandings of the past. The expectations of the displayed history that the public identified with created a sense of distortion

[24] Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 9.

[25] Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 11.

when it was not met. Because America was born through a war victory, our national identity was based on a winning narrative and used repeatedly when elites defined objectives for conflicts. Patriotism and liberation embodied the public's memory of World War II and the Holocaust, and delineation from the "Good War" narrative challenged the national identity. [26] The narrative of America in war centered on defending one's life, the nation's life, and, usually, the success of good over evil. A move away from this exposes the public to the complexity of struggles, suffering, and death that accompany conflict, which is the only way a nation can begin the path to understanding.

Commemoration

The historical past found physical representation outside of memory and written interpretation when the public commemorated and memorialized events. Along with museums and historic sites, mnemonic devices such as monuments and memorials influence public memory and shared interpretations. The act of commemoration and memorialization insinuates a touch of reverence or honor given to the history and memory and avoids critical analysis. Haitian academic and anthropologist Michel Rolph-Trouillot used the phrase "production" to describe efforts from those in power to influence focus of interpretations.[27] Monuments and memorials, museum exhibits, and documentaries all represent various methods to produce history recognized by Trouillot. These physical manifestations and the public perception of them provides the groundwork for studying the relationship between memory and history. Not only do written works contribute to collective memory, but physical monuments and hallowed spaces influence

[26] Studs Turkel, *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War II*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996) 131.

[27] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xxiii.

the historical narrative and the public's understanding. To understand the focus of commemoration and memorialization, scholars must take a step back and consider who performed this action.

The person or people who determine public remembrances and commemoration reveal where power and influence stand in society for that history's recollection. Public history sites reproduce history for visitors, and the production's intent acts as a guide to those viewing or listening.[28] Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* discusses historical production through histories displayed and components of the past that remain silent. For him, silence pertained to the forgotten in a history's development. Twentieth-century French philosopher Paul Ricoeur also examined the concept of forgetting and suggested the efforts are conscious choices. The public chooses what to remember and forget. With the passage of time, what they remembered became authentic history and what they had forgotten vanished. In Ricoeur's analysis, the presence of forgetting negates memory as a reliable source.[29] He notes that because humans cannot recall a memory in its entirety, there exists a "selective dimension."[30] Just as Halbwachs and Anderson recognized memory as a social construct and selective in basic frameworks for collective memory, Ricoeur included the consequence of forgetting. Wineburg, in a similar argument, introduced occlusion as a preferred term in place of forgetting. He argued that memory is not forgotten but blocked. He demonstrated the idea that historical memories shift between lived and learned memory.[31] Ricoeur and Wineburg analyze memory, forgetting, and their effect on history, and even the authors' arguments have weaknesses that are counteracted by the other's. Some histories, which Ricoeur would classify as forgotten are indeed just waiting for the offset

[28] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, xxiii.
[29] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 414.
[30] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 448.
[31] Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 243.

of amnesia. Others are better classified as forgotten due to the length of time, duration of certain narratives, and the slim prospect of other existing evidence. Collective memory and forgetting or occlusion reveal the complexity of the human mind and the effort to remember that plays out in the public history venues. Power dynamics determine and maintain a base outline for these histories and later remembrances. There is a consistent agreement that we must memorialize lives lost during the Holocaust, but the dividing point is on how best to do this. Not only this, but static objects do not remain singular in interpretation regardless of imagery or representation open to debate.

Ambiguous monuments and memorials vaguely reference some value or belief that accommodate multiple interpretations, but also influence the contestation they try to avoid. Any physical structure commemorating a person, group of people, or historical event relies on the public's existing knowledge established through frameworks of imagery and meaning. Interpretations, commemorative statues, and other efforts to remember later events rely upon or adapt to existing narrative structures. The reliance upon public perception has affected the development of history narratives as they happened and later remembered.

The Vietnam War narratives later utilized a similar approach. The Civil War was such a divisive conflict that the public found meaning through remembrance of the soldiers and their sacrifice, which was unquestionable in its ability to reunite a divided country.[32] American historian C. Vann Woodward wrote extensively on the American South's interpretation of history and the Civil War's effects in *The Burden of Southern History*. Southern writers appealed to the collective with their treatment of man not as a lone individual but, as "an inextricable part

[32] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in the Nineteenth-Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1997), 4-5.

of a living history of community."[33] The collective memory took on what Historian David Blight refers to as a reconciliation vision, which sought to accommodate the Northern and Southern interpretations of the Civil War.[34] The challenge faced when remembering and commemorating the Civil War was how to develop an interpretation accepted collectively and avoid the usual narrative that simply lauded victory over defeat. The imagery turned to the celebration of the common soldiers and how they fought to protect their values and created meaning from the large-scale number of dead in the conflict.[35] This framework managed to sustain the narrative of Union victory alongside the South's lost cause and assist the interaction of history and public memory a century later.

As America approached the centennial of the Civil War's end in 1965, the nation found itself facing new conflict and division as minority groups demanded historical recognition for the nation's past during a contested foreign war. Historian John Bodnar analyzed political and cultural actions in twentieth-century America that modified commemoration and public memory. Focusing on the 1960s and 1970s, he discusses how the United States approached the Civil War Centennial and American Revolution Bicentennial and maintained a celebratory narrative during an era of divisiveness. Government officials urged a continuation of the common soldier narrative and encouraged respect for patriots who died for their loyalty to the nation, using the phrase "heroism" that Bodnar emphasizes.[36] The "heroism" narrative developed the same broad relationship that all anniversary planners utilized for public support. Vietnam War narratives

[33] C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), 37.

[34] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Massachusetts and England: The Belknap Press, 2001), 2.

[35] Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 164-165; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 64.

[36] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 206, 208.

relied on myths of national innocence and invincibility as Americans needed reassurance that the values they identified with were still good.[37] Until Vietnam, the United States had been undefeated on the international stage and needed to reassure Americans that the values they identified with were still good. To see the involvement of America in Vietnam as an all-around failure or even a questionable end was labeled un-American because "in the American past ... all wars end in victory and all problems have solutions."[38] The public's emotional reaction to a history that does not coalesce with this understanding is a consequence of the nation's historical narrative and memory. Efforts to reinforce such understandings branched out from museums and into the physical terrain in the shape of monuments.

Washington, D.C.'s National Mall embodies an example of how the physical landscape influences the way history is presented and the collective perception of public memory. Kirk Savage, an architect and author whose research focuses on monuments within the context of collective memory and identity, looked at the historical development of the National Mall and how the landscape and concept of space played into memory and history. The first monument planned for the Mall, an obelisk memorial to George Washington, was an image understood in a different context than what its creators intended.[39] The National Mall's sacred spatial relations developed in conjunction with the monument's symbolism. The site became a hallowed ground of traditional American values and beliefs that the public identified with as a unifying symbol, and any additions made to the site needed to fit within this conceptual framework.

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[37] Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, 219.

[38] Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History*, 217.

[39] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 108, 111. Obelisks were originally associated with Egyptian pharaohs, who had been equated to gods and had been used in the American landscape up to this moment as place markers for where significant death and bloodshed took place.

Alongside space, the physical representation of history affected how the public understood the memorial's meaning. John Bodnar examined how contemporary social and ideological issues influenced definitions of the past. One of his examples was the political expression of patriotism in the 1980s and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall design. Commemoration became what he refers to as a "dogmatic formalism," and any appearance of complex analysis was sacrilegious.[40] If commemoration did not celebrate, those who expected a patriotic narrative contested it. However, this paranoia toward what was unfamiliar and its effect on historical interpretation was not new. The growth of grassroots history and societal discord around the Vietnam War left members of the public feeling imbalanced, and they resorted to their memories to find meaning within a changing world.

People often turn toward past experiences to inform their thinking when confronted with change, and a similar pattern occurs when encountering new historical interpretations. Interested parties clung to an interpretive framework that provided consistency to calm paranoia and soothe the desire for the comfort of the past. The baby boomer generation also believed that generations to follow need to remember what society deemed worthy of remembering. As battles for the American past in public memory continued, the war in Vietnam was the central focus of much debate. In American memory, history, and identity, a war existed in which both government morality and the moral actions of American soldiers came into question, and that was the greatest threat to the established American narrative. A nation birthed from victory in war defined its collective identity from the values and beliefs fought for and won in conflict. Vietnam War interpretation faced the challenging task of a dominate soldier narrative interacting with a more complicated and contested event.

[40] Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13.

Vietnam War

The common soldier narrative molded by American Civil War memory remained a dominant narrative during the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, but recent Vietnam War literature has ventured into new perspectives. Scholars have begun to consider memory and memorialization in other countries and those beyond the US who were affected by this conflict. Other scholars have questioned the memories that seem commonplace in collective memory yet have little to no evidence in paper or media documents. Though uncomfortable for a public accustomed to a generic positive narrative of American accomplishment, new dialogues and ideas lead to a better understanding of a complicated history.

Examining different perspectives of the Vietnam War reveal complexity that some interpretations have tried to tackle. Vietnamese American novelist Viet Thanh Nguyen's analysis dedicated attention to what he called the industrialization of memory. The "industry of memory" includes the material and ideological forces that determined what was remembered.[41] Nguyen's book *Nothing Ever Dies* explores the power dynamics in all facets of film production, memorialization, public exhibits and more. He wants to understand how the Vietnam War memory became weaponized. The influence of power and grassroots activism developed into trusted firsthand accounts and memories, all of which played into the early interpretations of the Vietnam War. The acceptance of eyewitness accounts or ethnicity determining interpretation's authenticity opened the likelihood of repetition amongst various sources.[42] Did every individual or group involved experience the war and its aftermath the same way? No. Histories that had uncanny similarities experienced it at an unexpectedly broad degree. An established narrative

[41] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016) 106-107.

[42] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 210.

with repeated references and imagery led to the adoption of interpretations the public deemed authentic because those who lived through the Vietnam War were portrayed as authentic sources for understanding the conflict.

Vietnam War interpretations and repeated imagery relied on the existing soldiers' narrative framework and strengthened its analytical presence in events following the Vietnam era. Reports that soldiers who were mistreated and spat upon by protesters after their return became common imagery that Americans recall about the war. Sociologist and Vietnam War veteran Jerry Lembcke questioned how this memory developed as a widely experienced incident. He noted there are no physical records of this happening widely. Lembcke argues this memory reappeared after President George H.W. Bush's administration propagated a metaphorical image to drum up support for soldiers before entering the Gulf War. President Bush asked that the public not spit on their soldiers as some had done during the Vietnam conflict, knowing that a nation entered the next war remembering the one which preceded it.[43] Scholars of memory and history recognize that the Vietnam War, like the Civil War, challenged the traditional narrative of American history and identity.[44] Professor David Kieran examined how the Vietnam War challenged the American public to make sense of the conflict within existing and developing narratives. A narrative of self-sacrifice persisted as early as the sesquicentennial of the 1836 siege of Alamo, a battled known to be lost, persisted through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century with the memorial to victims of Flight 93 during the 9/11 terror attacks which equated to that of a military monument. [45] The American public developed new conflict

[43] Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998) 2, 10.

[44] Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War* (New York & England: Oxford University Press, 2000) 140.

[45] David Kieran, *Forever Vietnam: How a Divisive War Changed American Public Memory* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014) 90-93, 173.

interpretations using narrative styles used before to make sense of the Vietnam War, which also resembled that of the Civil War's reconciliation narrative. Considering the way America historical narratives developed, the next logical step is an expansion of slighted interpretations such as the Vietnamese and protesters.

Highlighting the different and complex understandings, experiences, and interpretations of the Vietnam War is the next stage for public history exhibitions. Past exhibition case studies introduced updated interpretations that focused on the evolving social framework that influenced new interpretations and later contestations of these new perspectives. For the public, the shaped history fit within their collective memory in a way that made sense. American identity would not willingly own a losing conflict, so it drew upon the soldier's narrative to put a positive spin on it. Instead of acknowledging defeat, it became the noble self-sacrifice of soldiers to their beliefs, values, and a lost cause that persisted. For the Vietnam War, the first foreign defeat for America, a second lost cause narrative developed. America experienced such divisiveness that families were disrupted, and the interpretive path forward depends on how public memory, perception, and society remember the conflict. The complexity of the Vietnam War and a lack of definitive reasoning during the conflict contributes to the increased presence of perspectives outside of the American soldier's experience. The efforts to commemorate the Vietnam War fiftieth anniversary through monuments, museum exhibits, and documentaries at both the local and federal level expose the public to the memory that has developed and influenced understanding of its history. Commemorative programming on the Vietnam War reveals a unique transition to the inclusion of more perspectives in the historical narrative that allow for critical analysis due to the conflict's complexity and continued desire for understanding.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION-WASHINGTON, DC: *REMEMBERING VIETNAM*

During the American government's commemorative programming efforts for the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approached interpreting the era through new documents.[46] Curators discussed the exhibit's interpretive focus at length and decided on highlighting twelve critical episodes in American international policy relative to the Vietnam War. The *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit, though focused on a more political history of the war, experienced the still high expectation in a focus on the American soldiers and their experience by visitors. NARA's inclusion of the Vietnamese experience was more pronounced and there was no visible or verbal contradiction to this choice experienced when Kamps met for the interview. The process from the exhibit's conception to its opening allows for analysis in memory's presence in history and interpretation.[47] Factors which influenced the big idea of the exhibit, the developmental process, and responses that highlighted public expectations of what the exhibit represented and their responses to the actual exhibit represent how memory and historical narrative intertwine. Concerns on perspective and representation that created difficulty for curators to agree on a focus right away show that the complexity and perceived responses of the public impact of interpretations at public history sights. The expansion into various perspectives during commemorative efforts, and a lack of

[46] President Barack Obama on May 25, 2012, proclaimed a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War that would take place from that day until November 11, 2025. This Presidential Proclamation was reconfirmed by President Donald Trump on November 10, 2017. Both presidents called upon federal, state, and local efforts to enact these programs.

[47] For NARA's *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit, research analyzed an interview with Curator Alice Kamps and media news articles published around the time of the exhibit's opening. The interview gave insight on the narrative's development process and NARA curators' challenges to determine an interpretive focus straight away. Articles revealed what some expectations members of the public had for the exhibit's purpose and representation.

serious critical response, exhibit that the Vietnam War's complexity allowed for an easier transition into new understandings of the history during times of remembrance.

NARA is an independent agency and repository for the United States government. Their legal mandate is to collect all records and materials of the federal government.[48] All federal government branches and agencies maintained their documents until Congress passed the National Archives Act, which was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt June 19, 1934. This act "established the National Archives to oversee Federal record keeping and stipulated the Archivist of the United States," a position requiring appointment by the president and confirmation by the Senate.[49] NARA's mission and vision center on transparency and ease of public access to declassified federal government documents. The National Archives contains multiple physical and digital space exhibits that display documents related to American history to achieve its mission and educate the public. Museum exhibits and their focus also reflect the influence of aspects like their physical location and the public's perception of that location. After President Barack Obama first issued the Vietnam War commemoration proclamation, the National Archive put together an exhibit titled *Remembering Vietnam*. Newly declassified documents and the resulting interpretation in this exhibit reveal one aspect of the public's Vietnam War era memory and the narrative's development.

The Effort to Remember

As part of this commemorative effort, David S. Ferriero, archivist of the United States and a Vietnam War veteran, directed the exhibits department to create an exhibition about the

[48] "What Is the National Archives and Records Administration?" About the National Archives, National Archives, last reviewed October 1, 2018, accessed December 23, 2018, <https://www.archives.gov/about>.

[49] "Historical Timeline," About the National Archives, National Archives, last reviewed: October 17, 2018, accessed December 23, 2018, < https://www.archives.gov/about/history/timeline.html#event-/timeline/item/the-national-archives-is-created>.

war. At least four curators in the department submitted concept ideas and met twice to discuss them. Curator Alice Kamps said they struggled to find a focus for the exhibit.[50] Deciding on a focal point to interpret the difficult terrain of the Vietnam War was a challenge.

The team asked for advice, attended conferences, and developed relationships with stakeholders before finalizing an exhibit plan. In early 2015 the team curators invited American filmmakers Ken Burns and Lynn Novick to discuss their upcoming Vietnam War documentary. The filmmakers shared their experiences and thoughts about presenting the Vietnam War era. Soon after this meeting, Kamps attended a conference at New York University's Academic Center in Washington, D.C. on April 30, 2015, and May 1, 2015, titled "The Vietnam War Then and Now: Assessing the Critical Lessons." Some activists had formed the Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee at the end of 2014 and organized these conferences to cover what they saw as a lack of meaningful discussion about the complexity of the Vietnam War. Organizers were concerned with what they saw as a commemorative effort focused solely on the narrative of the American soldier and a serious lack in discussion of the Vietnam peace movement. They found it necessary "to recall the unlearned lessons of the Vietnam War and emphasize the relevance of those lessons" with increasing intervention in the Middle East.[51] This conference represented efforts to increase the inclusion of other perspectives in a national commemorative effort. After this conference, Kamps wanted to present the war from multiple perspectives through archival documents. She began to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders

[50] Alice Kamps (Curator, National Archives and Records Administration-Washington, D.C.), in discussion with the author, Tablet recording, August 1, 2018. Information relative to the exhibit's internal process came from this interview. Interview provided in Appendix, listed as Appendix A.

[51] Terry Provance and David Cortright, "Commemorating the Vietnam War: Remembering the Unlearned Lessons," Global Campaign for PEACEducation, January 1, 2015, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/commemorating-the-vietnam-war-remembering-the-unlearned-lessons/>.

across the country about their ideas on which of NARA's Vietnam War-related documents to display and why. She also ended up with a list of advisors that included historians, journalists, veterans, and previous North and South Vietnamese civilians, all who helped mold the concept of the exhibition and reviewed its phases.[52]

David Elliott, one of the members in the advisory group, became more involved as the exhibit progressed and suggested an exhibit organized around critical episodes. Elliott, who was also an advisor for Burns and Novick's film, *The Vietnam War*, is a veteran of the Vietnam War, a professor of political science at Pomona College, and widely respected as an academic specialist on the war. His experiences in Vietnam shaped his educational and professional career as he was intent on passing "the painful lessons learned in Vietnam" to generations of students.[53] He says the development of better analytical tools since the Vietnam War helped question conventional wisdom and the assumptions that have often ended in disastrous policies and provided sixteen critical episodes as a starting point.[54] These episodes were:

How it started.

How U.S. involvement deepened.

Did the United States install Ngo Dinh Diem in power?

Was the renewed insurgency "Aggression from the North," Was the War instigated by the Soviet Union as part of Khrushchev's encouragement of "Wars of Liberation?" or by China as part of Mao Zedong's strategy of revolutionary war?

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[52] A list of the advisors was provided by Alice Kamps. See Appendix B.

[53] Patricia Vest, "PBS Series Advisor Professor Emeritus David Elliott Reflects on The Vietnam War," Pomona College, September 25, 2017, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://www.pomona.edu/news/2017/09/25-pbs-series-advisor-professor-emeritus-david-elliott-reflects-vietnam-war>.

[54] Patricia Vest, "PBS Series Advisor Professor Emeritus David Elliott Reflects on The Vietnam War," September 25, 2017.; A list of sixteen episodes was provided by Alice Kamps as they were sent in by David Elliott. See Appendix C.

Crisis of the U.S. Advisory period.

Escalation and Counter Escalation.

The attack on the Pleiku airfield, February 1965.

America sends troops to Vietnam in March 1965 without informing its Saigon allies.

America's direct military intervention in the conflict was not supported by a plan or strategy to win the war. Thus the pros and cons and potential costs of intervention were never fully debated.

Secretary of Defense McNamara concludes by late 1965 that the war is not winnable.

The Tet Offensive.

The Spring Offensive 1972.

The Christmas Bombing and the Paris Accords.

Breakdown of the ceasefire.

The Last Days in Vietnam.[55]

Alice Kamps narrowed these sixteen episodes to twelve for available exhibit space. She also planned to conduct interviews with people who had experience in each of these episodes. From these interviews, two more advisors became increasingly involved in the exhibit's development, Lieutenant Colonel James Willbanks and journalist Arnold Isaacs. Willbanks, who retired from military service in 1992, earned many awards for valor in Vietnam, and he returned intent on documenting his experiences. He became a civilian instructor at Command and General Staff College, where he served as both director and Marshall Chair of the Department of Military

[55] See Appendix C for descriptions of the sixteen episodes provided by Alice Kamps as they were sent in by David Elliott.

History until 2018.[56] Isaacs, whom Alice Kamps would call a peace advocate, is a journalist and writer who has focused much of his career on refugee and immigration issues.[57] He formerly worked as a foreign and national correspondent for the Baltimore Sun in Asia and covered the closing years of the Vietnam War.[58]

The advisory board, including David Elliott, Willbanks, and Isaacs, reviewed drafts in the concept phase, interpretive plan, and final script. As many advisory board members as possible also read the phases and commented on them. NARA contracted an exhibit designer to design a concept package for the exhibit, and the foundation used the resulting visuals for fundraising. The core exhibit team included Kamps, a contracted exhibit designer, and a staff graphic designer who joined later.

As part of public relations for the exhibit, NARA released a press statement in March 2017 with the title, "National Archives Opens Groundbreaking Vietnam Exhibit November 10, 2017." The press release noted that the "complexity of the conflict is still being unraveled" and historians continue to uncover records that provide new insight into this complicated history.[59] The exhibition's intent, as described in the press release, was "to explore the policies and decisions that initiated and then escalated American economic and military aid to South Vietnam."[60] The team wanted to take a step back from examining the war strictly through the

[56] See Appendix B.; "Dr. Jim Willbanks retires after 26 years' service at CGSC," Command and General Staff College Foundation, Inc., May 2, 2019, accessed January 28, 2019, <http://www.cgscfoundation.org/dr-jim-willbanks-retires-after-26-years-service-at-cgsc/>.

[57] Alice Kamps (curator, National Archives and Records Administration). See Appendix A.

[58] See Appendix B.; Arnold Isaacs, last edited: November 15, 2018, http://www.arnoldisaacs.net/, (accessed January 28, 2019).

[59] "National Archives Opens Groundbreaking Vietnam Exhibit November 10, 2017," Press/Journalists, National Archives, published March 30, 2017, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2017/nr-17-36>.

[60] "National Archives Opens Groundbreaking Vietnam Exhibit November 10, 2017," National Archives, published March 30, 2017.

soldier's narrative or military point of view. Instead they wanted to interpret it through the complicated lens of foreign relations and politics. Articles published just before and after the exhibit opened reveal an even more complex understanding of what *Remembering Vietnam*'s interpretation entailed. One article explains the exhibit was "meant to educate visitors on the patriotism, service, and sacrifice of the many that served their country during the Vietnam War era."[61] An article covering the Honor Flights, which bring veterans to Washington, D.C., pro bono, mentions "an invitation for the entire nation to remember and honor the sacrifices of those who gave so much and often returned home only to be met with insults and sneers."[62] This writer focused on Vietnam War veterans' return going unrecognized and treated as unwelcome due to the era's divisiveness and controversy of this conflict. The press coverage of the exhibit demonstrated an expectation from the public that a discussion of the Vietnam War meant a focus on the American soldier, patriotism, and the notion of sacrifice for the country. NARA's promotion of the exhibit never called the public to take a patriotic stand on the war, nor did it remind visitors of the sacrifice. The promotion of the exhibit explained that it was a re-evaluating of the Vietnam War era. NARA's primary objective has always been to educate rather than promote a certain point of view, or to reinforce traditional military narratives of patriotism and sacrifice, although they often use tropes of war history. The difficulty finding a conceptual framework by the curators and the press articles that highlighted public expectations shows how interpreting the Vietnam War era remains complicated.

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[61] Devon L. Suits, "National Archives pays tribute to Vietnam War Veterans," November 13, 2017, accessed July 21, 2018, <https://www.army.mil/article/196748/national_archives_pays_tribute_to_vietnam_war_veterans>.

[62] Sara W. Bock and Nancy S. Lichtman, "'Remembering Vietnam' Honor Flight Veterans Welcomed, Honored at National Archives' Exhibit Opening," *Marine Corps Association & Foundation* 101, issue 1 (January 2018) accessed July 21, 2018, <https://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/2018/01-3>.

Remembering Vietnam

On November 10, 2017, the date for Veterans Day that year, the National Archives in Washington, D.C., opened the *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit in the Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery. The exhibit's purpose was to present "both iconic and recently discovered National Archives records related to twelve critical episodes in the Vietnam War."[63] Brochures at the exhibit's start provided a layout, a quick reference guide for the various acronyms and decision-makers, and three questions that guided the exhibit's focus. They were:

Why did the United States become involved in Vietnam?

Why was the war so long?

Why was it so controversial?

The critical episodes covered in the exhibition act as a framework for visitors to understand these posed questions.[64]

[63] "Remembering Vietnam," National Archives Museum, National Archives, accessed December 30, 2018, <https://museum.archives.gov/remembering-vietnam>.

[64] "Remembering Vietnam: Exhibit Tour," US National Archives, Youtube, published January 12, accessed January 30, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE1peyb7dq4>.

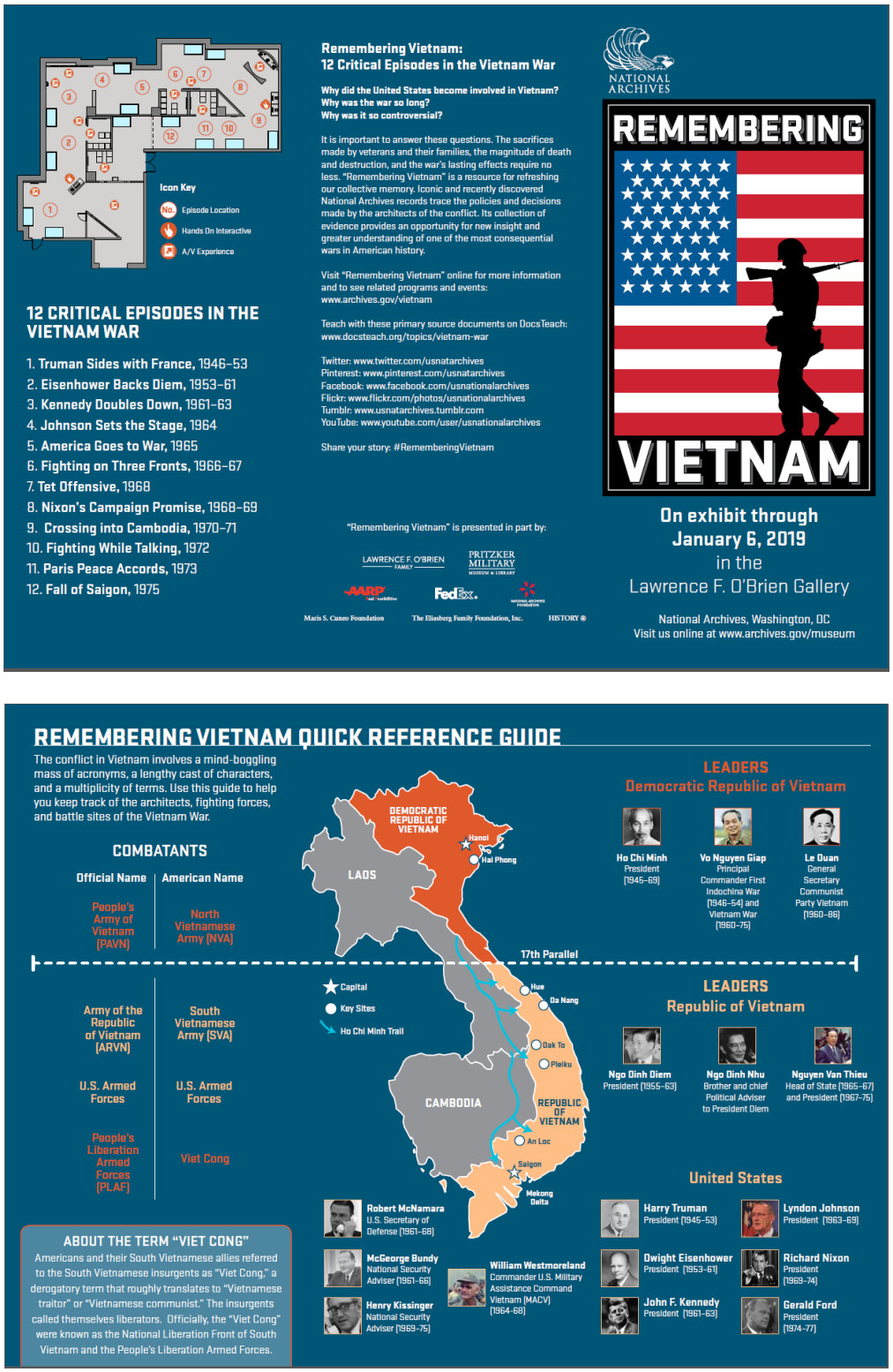

Figure 1. Two-Sided View of the NARA-DC Remembering Vietnam Exhibition Brochure.

Underneath the title at the exhibit entrance, a quote from Viet Thanh Nguyen's work *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* offers wise words: "All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory."[65] The quote is fitting for this exhibit because the institution claims the installation will act to refresh our collective memory, while simultaneously providing new insight and greater understanding. There are two ways in which the term "refresh" can be understood in its use as a verb in this effort. The exhibit acts to jog the public's memory and provide them with new information, thus updating their existing knowledge. The exhibit, and responses to the display, represent the second battle of memory mentioned in Nguyen's quote used at the exhibit's entrance. The overarching focus remains centered on America's experience, and public media outlets relayed this expectation. However, the exhibit began including the Vietnamese community's understanding of this history and faced little to no contestation for this.

The interpretive text in *Remembering Vietnam*'s first panels referenced both the breakout of a Vietnamese civil war in the early 1880s and the rampant paranoia of post-World War II's "Red Scare." These panels discuss the era's pre-war context and highlights the narrative's growth to include a broader historical perspective. The first section, Episode One "Truman Sides with France, 1946-53," noted American interest and involvement in Vietnam for twenty years before the deployment of American combat troops on March 8, 1965. The introductory panels contained a set of key dates along the top. The first episode's key dates recognized two events which led to the conflict's starting point: France's efforts to recolonize Vietnam after World War II to halt Communism's spread and Vietnamese political leader Ho Chi Minh's proclamation of Vietnamese independence. U.S. officials believed the spread of Communism would be aided by

[65] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2016) 4.

Vietnamese independence, and would not give independence the U.S.'s seal of approval. Though the exhibit did not state this directly, this portrayal gave greater context to the start of the war and reflects new efforts to better understand the history.

Episodes three and four covered 1961-1964. Videos about the foreign occupation of Vietnam show how both the Vietnamese and American public understood the conflict. From the American perspective, the text explained that "President Kennedy needed a win" after the failed Bay of Pigs and the formation of the Berlin Wall.[66] The Soviet Union and China appeared to be winning the Cold War and halting Communism's spread into Vietnam became American policy as a result. An artifact in this section, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution Senate Roll Call, had accompanying text that discussed specific thoughts from Congress about the Vietnam War. Because they feared Communism's spread and rushed through the decision to give President Lyndon B. Johnson war powers for "necessary measures to repel any armed attack" until they determined "peace and security of the area is reasonably assured."[67] The use of language like "necessary measures" until peace was "reasonable assured" further complicated actions of the U.S. government in Vietnam. With no clear definition of how to measure success, the American government turned toward a quantitative approach. The number of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces killed, usually inflated to imply success, further complicated reasoning for involvement in the Vietnam War. U.S. Marine veteran Jeff Anthony stated, "You can't do it by body count…You win a war by, you know, making an enemy unable to continue. Not by killing

[66] "Episode 3: Kennedy Doubles Down," Online Exhibits, Episodes 1-4, National Archives, last reviewed June 6, 2019, accessed October 12, 2019, < https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/remembering-vietnam-online-exhibit-episodes-1-4>.

[67] United States Senate, Joint Resolution To promote the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia, S. J. Res. 187 (August 5, 1964) Section 1, Section 3.

their people."[68] Vietnamese author Le Ly Hasylip in the same segment revealed, "Americans see the Vietcong is an enemy, it is an evil. To us, it no, they are the Vietnamese. They are people. They are the villagers."[69] These interviews expose the public to two different, personal perspectives on understanding the Vietnam War. Humans have constantly searched for the meaning and necessity of death at such a large scale, and to use it in measuring success further muddied the conflict's meaning.[70] What added to this sensitive topic of death and the divisiveness of the era was American civilians' ability to watch these actions happen from their living room.

Episode six covered the divisiveness at home and the way television news covered the war. The fact that war appeared on television sets across the country at dinner time as it happened fostered greater debate and contestation and an effort to understand American involvement. Soon, the public began to question the war's purpose, the cost of life, and seeming endlessness of it. This was the beginning of the war at home. Americans who protested the conflict became known as "doves" and those who supported war known as "hawks." The hawks clung to a patriotic historical narrative of the war, and they blamed any homebound struggles on the media coverage.[71] For the hawks, failure to support the war affected the American soldiers. The consequence of this lack of support, they claim, is that soldiers lose their will to fight because their own community did not want or support them there. President Johnson even

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[68] ""Remembering Vietnam: Twelve Critical Episodes in the Vietnam War" Eps 5-8," US National Archives, Youtube, published November 20, 2017, accessed October 14, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vH1GClSgcs>, 7:52.

[69] ""Remembering Vietnam: Twelve Critical Episodes in the Vietnam War" Eps 5-8," Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vH1GClSgcs>, 9:10.

[70] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001) 65.

[71] "Episode 5: America Goes to War," Online Exhibits, Episodes 5-8, National Archives, last reviewed June 6, 2019, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/remembering-vietnam-online-exhibit-episodes-5-8>.

questioned the support America would have received from the public had previous war engagements been televised.[72] Americans were divided from one another. Even though President Nixon tried to foster union, he ultimately segregated groups in his "Silent Majority" speech. He warned that if the vocal minority's cause prevailed "over reason and the will of the majority, this Nation has no future as a free society."[73] The hawks believed that the vocal minority were undemocratic and caused the soldiers to lose their spiritual vigor in battle. This point of view pushed the soldier's narrative as the best way to interpret the war. The hawks' concerns were bad war imagery led to a lack of support and the closest comparison possible is President Trump referring to news critical of him or that he does not agree with as falsified. Negative imagery or critical interpretation cannot be dismissed because it influences a dissonance within people's understanding of an event. It exposes the public to different understandings and, though they may want to disagree at first, the concluding discussions of legacy and lessons force people to further think about the conflict.

The exhibit's final episode, "Episode 12: Fall of Saigon, 1975," ends the discussion of the conflict with the final evacuation of American civilians from Saigon and the eventual victory of Communism in Saigon. Curators chose to end the exhibit's narrative with a discussion of the war's legacy for America. A pair of a Vietnamese orphan's shoes acted as a visual representation of the displacement and struggle of the Vietnamese people to find a new home. This section also featured Jan C. Scrugg's effort to design a memorial and the controversy of Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. The exhibit displayed items that have been left at the

[72] Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus* 111, no. 4, Print Culture and Video Culture (Fall 1982) 157.

[73] "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Speeches, Transcript, accessed January 15, 2020, <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/2018-08/silentmajority_transcript.pdf>.

Wall and a description of the efforts to bring back and identify soldiers' remains. The exhibit moves from the actual combat to the Fall of Saigon and then shifts to a discussion of the war's legacy and lessons. This creates some semblance of closure while simultaneously highlighting the complicated nature of this contested war, while also pleasing the public need to cover the spectrum of "dove" to "hawk" in perception.

Conclusion

The soldier's experience and a military-centric narrative remains at the forefront of the American public's expectations in Vietnam War discussions. I visited the exhibit on August 1, 2018, and heard a visitor mention, "There is nothing in here about the Air Force. Not a thing."[74] This comment confirms the findings of *Presence of the Past* that visitors look for evidence of their personal stories in displayed history.[75] Public comments as I walked through the exhibit or expectations highlighted in articles believed the military branches and the soldier central to the Vietnam War narrative. The persistence of these narratives owes thanks to the myth-making tactics that authors C. Vann Woodward and Jerry Lembcke associated with public remembrance of the era. During the 1960s and early 1970s, the American nation experienced changing beliefs, values, and identity. The atmosphere was ripe for creating and perfecting a myth. Lembcke argues that people searching for something to believe in along with a powerful political regime to fashion symbols and interpretations developed a ripe field for myth construction.[76] Woodward refers to the Vietnam War as ironic due to how the public and historians made sense of the Civil War. When interpretive practice looked to criticize the myth of national innocence as the Civil

[74] I overheard this comment made by a visitor as I walked through *Remembering Vietnam* after I interviewed Alice Kamps on August 1, 2018.

[75] Rosenzweig & Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 37-62.

[76] Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998) 83.

War's understanding, Vietnam War interpretation perpetuated innocence by passing the guilt away from America.[77] However, the development of the exhibit and lack of criticism noted by Alice Kamps shows that the public has experienced little dissonance from the history displayed in *Remembering Vietnam* during a commemorative time. The public still clings to the soldier's experience guiding the historical narrative for the Vietnam War, but remembrance programming has not halted the introduction of Vietnamese or peace protestor perspectives. Just as the Vietnam War's complexity guided the practice of using the soldier's experience to provide understanding, it has assisted in the little to no critical response to other views being included. NARA's *Remembering Vietnam* introduced valuable new understandings by including the Vietnamese viewpoints in recorded interviews, yet the centrality of the public's understanding is also based upon the location. In the nation's capital near a strip of land where America's identity and success are memorialized and celebrated, difficult trails must be navigated in critically analyzing American involvement and action in a failed war.

[77] C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993) 215, 219.

MEMORIALIZATION ON THE NATIONAL MALL: THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL AND THE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE WALL

The large number of objects left every year at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the National Mall in Washington, DC, inspired the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) to raise funds to establish an education center near the monument. The Education Center at the Wall had a primary objective of interpreting the complex Vietnam War era on the national stage of American memory and identity. The proposed location was near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM), and the center's collection would come from objects left at the memorial site stored by the National Park Service (NPS). These objects, left anonymously and representing some cathartic personal experience by the visitor, speak to the evolving meaning of the Vietnam War's narrative to the public. Artifacts taken in are usually military items from veterans or their families, but others are from more recent protests in Washington, D.C. or not directly related to the Vietnam War. A variety of items left at the VVM portray the different perspectives of the Vietnam War's meaning to the public. The complexity of the Vietnam War history in public memory and a search for its meaning leads the public to visit the monument and contributes to the leaving behind meaningful items in remembrance. The proposed education center was destined to experience debates and challenges given the contested history of the Vietnam War. VVMF Senior Collections Curator Jason Bain sat down for an interview to discuss the Education Center at the Wall's developmental process and his views on the evolution of the structure's planned displays and Vietnam War narrative. The Education Center at the Wall's development

reflects the influence of political mandates and the National Mall's spatial resonance over public memory and interpretation.[78]

A memorial's presence on the National Mall's commemorative plane must adhere to specific display guidelines, and the public approaches this mecca with preconceived notions of the history represented. The development of a physical landscape has created a space of reverence for the most sacred aspects of American history and molded an imagined community.[79] This does not mean, however, that monuments faced little contestation. David Kieran's *Forever Vietnam* examines how the Vietnam War and the public efforts of understanding it modified the interpretation of those events before and after the war. Though the public struggled to make sense of the war as it took place, collective American memory's familiarity with a feel-good narrative framework required a modified Vietnam War narrative in order to remain valid. Vietnam War structures and references on the National Mall have experienced criticism and suggested modifications based on how public perceptions change and intermingle with memorialization.

Memorialization on the National Mall

The National Mall in Washington, D.C. grew to become what Americans recognize as a representation of national identity with mnemonic devices that act as memory triggers for the country's narrative. The interpretation and acceptance of monuments ultimately relies upon both

[78] Research on the Education Center at the Wall's relationship between history and memory's development during commemorative programming analyzed the interview with VVMF Senior Collections Curator Jason Bain and language from a review of the center's evolutions at that time. Another source came from the press releases or statements made by those involved with the center, looking at the language for the center's purpose and what it would contribute to the Vietnam War narrative.

[79] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983) 6.

political and social power dynamics.[80] While the designers claim to speak for the collective, the monuments serve as reminders of our national story to the public and evoke visitors' civic feelings regardless of personal experience.[81] This was accomplished by turning the landscape into a space of reverence, like a church, and including monuments that were broad enough that there was room for multiple interpretations. The National Mall's evolution from a bare strip of wet land to a cornucopia of symbols that represent American national identity highlight the relationship between monuments, landscape, and space.

The first monument built was a towering obelisk dedicated to George Washington and needed the landscape to match how the public understood obelisk symbolism at that time. Obelisks acted as place markers for the dead, and as such led the public to recognize them as a sacred spot.[82] The placement of such a monument within this landscape led to a sense of space that became understood as a site where the most honored were recognized. The National Mall's subsequent monuments represented the people and events which embody the characteristics of American identity. Protest marches have started or ended at certain memorials believed central to the perceived meaning of various movements. The Lincoln Memorial is a particularly popular focus. For the most part, the monuments had been understood through the eyes of affluent white men as a testimony to great men who suffered unflinchingly for moral commitment, like martyrs.[83] Yet there are no physical interpretations present at these sites to inform visitors of the monument's intent. The rise of grassroots history during the 1960s and 1970s, and the protest

[80] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1997) 210.

[81] David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 7.

[82] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) 108, 111.

[83] Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 125.

marches during this period changed the perception of these structures and the space in which they reside. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) designed by Maya Lin turned the public's understanding of war memorials to the reconciliation for suffering that obelisks originally represented.[84]

Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Vietnam veteran Jan Scruggs, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's (VVMF) founder, claimed media "began to paint a picture of the stereotypical Vietnam veteran" soon after troops returned.[85] Drug addictions, rampant anger, and the inability to adjust to home life were a few descriptors associated with Vietnam veterans. Scruggs entered Washington, D.C.'s American University graduate program to further study the social and psychological effects of Vietnam on American soldiers. His discoveries included veterans experiencing low self-esteem and supposed alienation from a society they found hard to trust. A memorial would prompt the public to remember the soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War and remind future generations of their sacrifice. Perhaps it would also help the fractured soldiers. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) would, according to Scruggs, "help veterans heal…Our country needed something symbolic to help heal our wounds."[86] Scruggs credited *The Deer Hunter* (1979) with influencing this idea because he could picture his Vietnam buddies, but found it increasingly difficult to recall their names. The goal of the memorial was to heal the divisive wounds left by the Vietnam War era through remembering and honoring the soldier's sacrifice.

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[84] Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars*, 266.

[85] "The vision," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>.

[86] "Getting started," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>.

This language of healing wounds built and relied upon the notion that the era was defined by the soldiers and their experience in Vietnam alone. Never forgetting the dead guided the VVMF's efforts to heal the nation and further illustrated the human belief that the dead want their sacrifices remembered and failing to do so means the dead are forever lost.[87] American historian Thomas Laqueur refers to humanity as living in an "age of necronominalism," or the inability to bear the thought of a body left nameless or a name left bodiless.[88] No knowledge about the afterlife and the fear of being forgotten while alive guided our ritualistic practices regarding naming and remembering the deceased. Not only did the American public join the effort to identify American soldiers killed during the Vietnam War, it became an obsession. It appeared that for the American public to understand the complexity of the Vietnam War, the American soldiers, and their experiences both in country and at home must be remembered.

The VVMF's ambitious timeline relied on the passage of appropriate legislation, intense support from the public, and a design. Organizers connected with then Maryland senator Charles "Mac" Mathias and advocacy reiterated the sense of honor and healing with a memorial's construction.[89] An early spatial suggestion was the National Mall within the Constitution Gardens, located adjacent to the Lincoln Memorial, as an ideal spot.[90] The memorial would stand within the shadow of Lincoln, a monument symbolizing the nation's reconciliation following the

[87] Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015) 62.

[88] Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*, 366.

[89] "Building support," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>.

[90] "The site and the legislation," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>.

Civil War.[91] No doubt VVMF members and supporters hoped the memorial and surrounding space emulated a similar feeling. The process included established partnerships, raucous support from veterans' families, and the eventual approval and signing of legislation. Monuments on the National Mall, however, are subject to strict design regulations set by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC).[92]

VVMF members tossed around some design ideas but later decided to hold a design competition open to any American citizen over 18 years-old and under specific criteria.[93] In the Fall of 1980, the VVMF announced their competition and its criteria to the public with a deadline of March 31, 1981, and they received 1,421 submissions at the contest's conclusion.[94] All submissions underwent a juried evaluation. The jury consisted of architects, sculptors, and, of particular note for the VVMF, four out of the eight members were veterans of a war. After evaluating for five days, the winning design was selected. Yale University architecture undergraduate Maya Lin's obtuse-shaped, black granite design best embodied the criteria for the jury. What Lin described as a "rift in the earth" became a physical representation of a wound that had scarred the nation and symbolized the healing effort which guided the VVMF memorial's

[91] Daphne Berdahl, "Voices at the Wall: Discourses of Self, History and National Identity at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *History and Memory* 6, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 1994): 90, <https:www.jstor.org/stable/25618671>.

[92] The Commission of Fine Arts was established by Congress in 1910 and duties listed in the act include advising upon memorial's locations, the selection of designs, and artists for the project. The National Capital Planning Commission was established by Congress in 1924 and acts as the federal government's planning agency in D.C. region. Their concern surrounds regional development and they provide guidance for design and installation of federal and some local projects.

[93] "The Design Criteria," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>. Design criteria were the memorial must be reflective and contemplative in character, be harmonious with the site and environment, make no political statement about the war, and contain the names of all who died or were missing.

[94] "Launching the competition," History of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/>.

mission.[95] This monument, according to Lin, was meant as a private experience between the visitor and their understanding, but the location and outside influence made that nearly impossible. Lin's design provided an open concept for interpretation, but national healing only seemed possible with a central focus on the soldier.

Not even ten years had passed since America's withdrawal from Vietnam and the effort led by Scruggs and countless others determined that the central focus of Vietnam War interpretations would be the soldiers' experience. The success of their proposed monument had not ended the battle over how to remember the war. American author and journalist Joel L. Swerdlow co-authored "To Heal a Nation" with Jan Scruggs and detailed the VVMF's efforts to gain support for a memorial. Of particular note, the effort to gain support had "survived assaults from those who opposed the winning design."[96] This statement left out the detail that the most outspoken rebuttal of this design were from veterans and members of the public who viewed the memorial as expressing shame instead of celebration. Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Interior, James Watt, even refused to grant a permit for the memorial's construction until opposing problems with the Wall's design were resolved.[97] The resolution took shape in patriotic verbiage added the Wall and Frederick Hart's bronze statue titled The Three Servicemen, located diagonal to the structure. When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial opened to the public, responses highlighted the perception of the Wall as a dedication to the Vietnam War soldiers and the unique relationship between public memory, history, and relationship to the National Mall.

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[95] James Reston, Jr., *A Rift in the Earth: Art, Memory, and the Fight for a Vietnam War Memorial* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2017) xi.

[96] Joel L. Swerdlow, "To Heal a Nation," *Syracuse University Magazine* 2, no. 1, Article 6 (November 1985): 13, <https://surface.syr.edu/sumagazine/vol2/iss1/6/>.

[97] Berdahl, "Voices at the Wall," 93.

Almost immediately after the dedication ceremony opened the memorial to the public in November 1982, visitors began leaving items at the Wall. Some of the items include helmets, dog tags, photos, letters, signs, and much more. Some have clearer reasons behind the object dedication, and others are more open for debate. The practice of leaving dedications at the VVM demonstrates the emotional hold this monument has on public memory and efforts turned toward exhibiting this spectacle.

The Education Center at the Wall

In early 2001, Jan Scruggs proposed a structure to house and interpret the objects left at the wall that the National Park Service (NPS) had collected over the years. This effort coincided with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's (VVMF) belief that more than 40 percent of the annual 4 million visitors are "too young to remember the longest war in America" up to that time.[98] He envisioned an educational center near the Wall, however, the project was recently privatized due to lack of funding.[99] The development and plans demonstrated that those associated still found the soldier's narrative the most important in Vietnam War history. The soldier's experience reigned in the planning of the underground structure's display of items left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM), photos of American casualties in Vietnam, and interpretive panels.

The Education Center at the Wall went through multiple design stages before the final design plan was unveiled as an underground center across from the wall. The original concept allotted 2,000 square feet of space above ground in the form of a lean-to to act as a gathering

[98] *2012 Annual Report*, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 6, accessed March 8, 2020, <https://www.vvmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2012-VVMF-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

[99] I was informed of this decision made by the Board of Directors through email correspondence with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's Senior Collections Curator Jason Bain on September 26, 2018.

point. This expanded to an estimated cost of $40 million and required them to develop an underground structure.[100] The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) made this request as they wished to avoid blocking the site lines between Constitution Avenue and the Lincoln Memorial.[101] Thus meant increased costs and updating plans for the Education Center, which made funding difficult for this project. The greatest challenge came from the contractual requirement that the Center be entirely funded by private donations like the VVM. In 2015, the approved final design placed the projected cost of the Center at $130 million.[102] Ralph Appelbaum Associates (RAA) in New York, a large design firm with a resume that includes the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, developed a design concept. The final design featured two underground levels with clear exhibit cases running down its center to allow a free-floating style of display. The lower level design also contained interactive kiosks for the Vietnam War's timeline, a temporary exhibition space, and the Wall of Faces on a roughly 25' high by 40' wide screen. [103]

[100] "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Changes Direction of Education Center Campaign," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, September 21, 2018, <https://www.vvmf.org/News/Vietnam-Veterans-Memorial-Fund-changes-direction-of-Education-Center-campaign/>; Jason Bain (Senior Collections Curator, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund), in discussion with author, November 1, 2018. See Appendix D. I interviewed VVMF Senior Collections Curator Jason Bain for this project. Information relative to the Education Center's process came from this interview.

[101] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

[102] "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Changes Direction of Education Center Campaign," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, September 21, 2018.

[103] The Wall of Faces represents the collaboration between the VVMF and the public to obtain a picture of each name etched into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. According to Jason Bain, this screen would cycle through a face for each name and would have also included photos for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. See Appendix D.

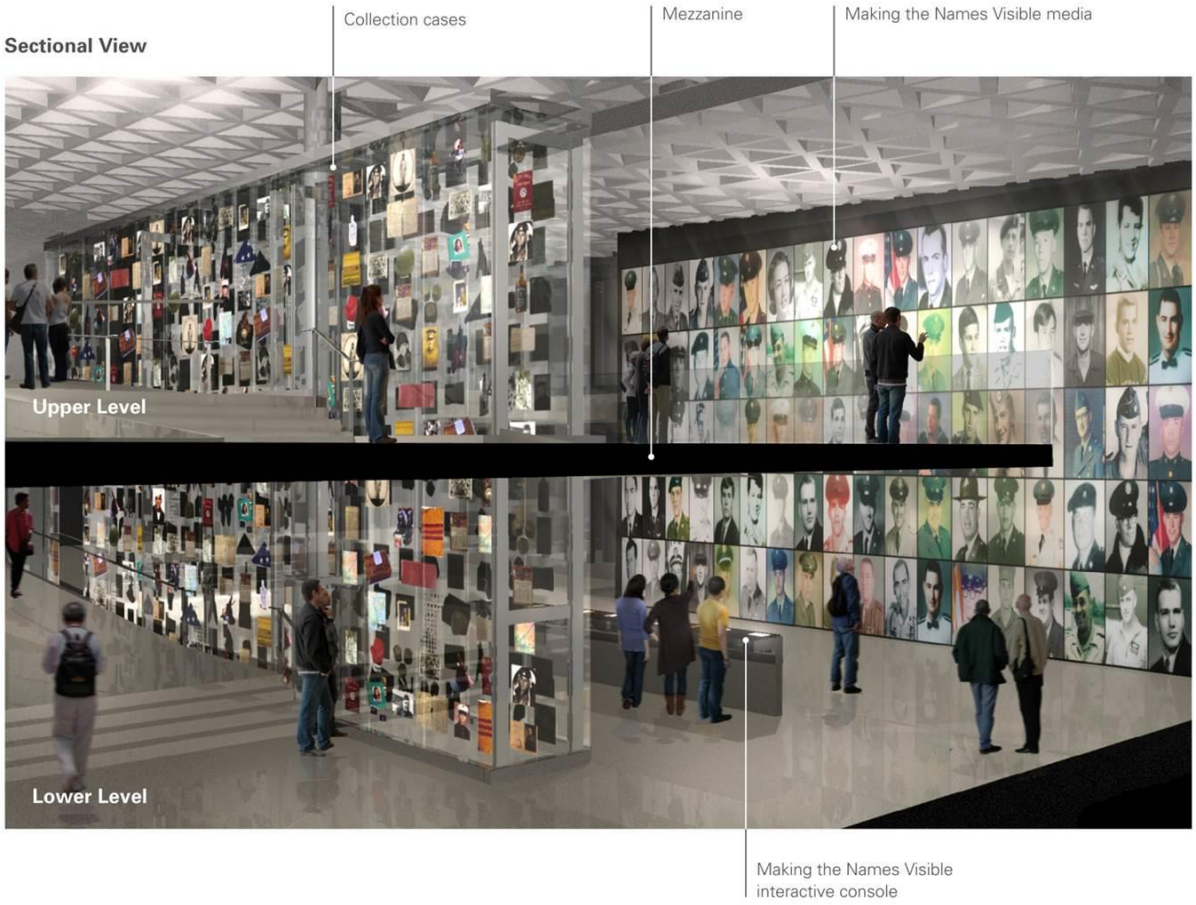

Figure 2. Graphic of the Education Center at the Wall's Design[104]

For the Education Center at the Wall's interpretive panels, the VVMF assembled a Content Advisory Committee (CAC) to assist in the interpretation development. Ten individuals, including historians, journalists, educators, and veterans, were asked to serve on the committee.[105] CAC member Dr. Larry Berman remarked on his involvement as the "opportunity of a lifetime to contribute to the process of honoring, educating and healing for our nation."[106] The word education is included in the title because the efforts to honor and heal is not all they

[104] Jan C. Scruggs, "Working to Build the Education Center," Your Stories. Your Wall., *Wordpress*, August 12, 2013, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://vvmf.wordpress.com/2013/08/12/working-to-build-the-education-center/>.

[105] List of Content Advisory Committee members provided in Appendix E.

[106] *2012 Annual Report*, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, 15.

sought to do with the space. They believed that "to honor and heal" created a gray area and the committee wanted to include educational material coinciding with the effort of honoring and healing. Giving honor implies great respect to the interpretation's focus and healing connotates fixing or making right. Alongside their implications the site's presentation continues the memory process of selecting and struggling over remembering and forgetting.[107] Visitors rarely, if ever, anticipate an interpretation to critically analyze the U.S. American soldiers or their actions, a side-effect of the National Mall's spatial influence and public expectations of represented history. The Mall's educational motives include reminding the public of the nation's honorable actions from the past or to heal from its losses. No figure or monument placed on this stretch of land turns a critical eye to America's history.

The existing narrative framework for American accomplishment required the understanding of the Vietnam War to change shape, and the conflict embodied the identity as America's second lost cause. Associate Professor of History Meredith H. Lair, allowed to only observe discussions related to the Education Center's development, questioned the Center's educational commitment in a review. The interpretation continued along the nationalistic narrative of heroism and do-gooders that developed with the Civil War's reconciliation narrative. Lair notes the curators and fundraisers being challenged to "balance public expectation of an affirming patriotic narrative with professional obligation to share inconvenient and unpleasant truths."[108] As the design and focus progressed, the Center's design relied on mainly an ambiguous nature to influence personal reflection just as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial had.[109]

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[107] Jacob J. Climo and Maria G. Cattell, *Social Memory and History: Anthropological Perspectives* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2002) 164.

[108] Meredith H. Lair, "The Education Center at the Wall and the Rewriting of History," *The Public Historian* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2012.34.1.34>.

[109] Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, "A Space of Loss: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 50, no. 3 (Feb. 1997): 156, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1425468>. This

As vested parties lobbied with individuals and committees to support the center, the site's narrative modified to fit external expectations of the space's meaning. The National Mall's existing "axis of freedom" monuments, defined by Lair as the U.S. Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, and the World War II Memorial, held powerful sway in interpretive development and swayed the Center's Vietnam War narrative. [110] An idea for the Education Center focused on placing the Vietnam War within the broader American continuum of military service.[111] Site plans included the Wall of Faces, a display of photos and biographical information of soldiers listed on the VVM and from both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to broaden perspective. VVMF Senior Collections Manager Jason Bain noted that "the motivations for service" amongst the Vietnam War generation did not differ from those preceding or following this conflict. [112] The Education Center at The Wall would look to rectify the notion that the Vietnam War fell outside of the general framework of American military history's narrative. To further humanize the Vietnam War narrative, the central display planned for the site to embody the unspoken meaning behind objects left behind at the Wall.

The Education Center's Collection

Since the installation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM), or The Wall, in November 1982, more than 400,000 items in remembrance or as tributes have been left by visitors. The National Park Service (NPS) took charge of collecting and preserving these objects with curatorial support from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF).[113] This collection is

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is the guiding argument for Ochsner's published article as he focused on the ambiguity of such a monument and area creating a "space of absence" that needed interaction and relied upon memory and prior knowledge to develop interpretation.

[110] Lair, "The Education Center at The Wall," 35.

[111] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

[112] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

[113] "Items Left at The Wall," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://www.vvmf.org/items/>.

unique to the museum world and NPS staff have classified it as a "tribute collection."[114] As opposed to a Collections Manager, Collections Committee, or Board deciding on what items are added to the collection, NPS Museum Curator Janet Folkerts advised that "we [NPS staff] leave it up to the public to decide what belongs in it."[115] The authority of interpretation with this practice, accepting objects left as tribute and giving the public full control to determine what belongs, is a unique idea that has limitations. Tributary items left in memoriam hold distinct meanings that visitors do not analyze at all, going no further than the respect and honor instilled in our practices regarding the dead. All three aspects, the memorial, the space, and the artifacts left behind, add to the public's understanding of how the Vietnam War history evolves.

The Education Center remained in the range of governing forces for display, though its structure was planned for underground at the National Mall. The plans for display and focus of the Education Center's history gained the most inspiration from the VVM and tokens of remembrance left at the Wall in memoriam. These tokens were collected and dominated the emotional reverence as people remembered those listed "through the objects and notes left for them."[116] Few visitors provided reasons for leaving the items behind and the most discernable motivation is that they represent the donor's connection in some way with the memorial. The lack of artifact provenance left NPS to divide the objects into six categories, which the VVMF narrowed down into five. NPS's six categories classified these artifacts under: personal artifacts, Vietnam military service items, protest, activism, and advocacy materials, public tribute items,

[114] Janet Folkerts, "[EXTERNAL] e-introduction," email correspondence with author, August 6, 2018. See Appendix F. Janet Folkerts, current acting Museum Curator for the National Park Service, responded to an e-mail inquiry from myself and provided some overview of the NPS collection from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

[115] Janet Folkerts, "[EXTERNAL] e-introduction," email correspondence with author. See Appendix G.

[116] Janet Folkerts, "[EXTERNAL] e-introduction," email correspondence with author. See Appendix F; Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

architectural elements, and site history items. The categories established by the NPS guided the collection process, but the collections management within the VVMF developed on the meaning of these objects to either the Vietnam War era or those leaving these objects. The VVMF's themes are close to the loss/scale of sacrifice, bonds between veterans, toll of the war and healing, evolving meaning of the Wall, and shared experience of war.[117] The relativeness of these themes to the Vietnam War or war in some manner is natural, but the "evolving meaning of the Wall" presents opportunity to examine this structure's interpretation beyond the soldier. Just as the Wall became a spot that represented other interests, such as protesting government actions or civil rights, the Education Center faced similar influences. The process of the Education Center alone exhibited the effects of planners, committees, external interest parties, and governing forces of the space. When located in such a public place, especially one that became a representation of national identity, the facets of public understanding play into the structure's progress.

The Future of the Education Center at The Wall

In a press release dated September 21, 2018, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) announced the Board of Directors' decision to not build a physical location and focus their attention toward online interpretation. Board chairman John Dibble provided a full statement from the directors which explained their reasoning. Authorized legislation for the Education Center at The Wall required the VVMF raise the full $130 million amount before beginning construction and prohibited federal funding.[118] Since 2001, the VVMF raised one-third of the needed amount and a strategic review redirected the staff to online resources, other

[117] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

[118] "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Changes Direction of Education Center Campaign," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, September 21, 2018.

technology, education, traveling exhibits, and partnerships.[119] Movement into the digital world also opens up a new avenue for accessibility and management. No longer is the center restricted within a physical and federally controlled place, as Jason Bain mentioned the National Mall's guidelines, restrictions, and legislative regulations strictly manage displays.[120] Management moved within the VVMF's sphere and, being privately owned, has little to no restrictions for website displays. The only foreseeable counterargument to this freedom of control is questioning interpretations based on the concept of shared authority. Dibble stated that regardless of the change, the VVMF remained committed to honoring Vietnam veterans' service, preserving the dead's legacy, and informing generations of the Vietnam War's impact.[121] The Education Center's location on the National Mall near the VVM correlated with the interpretive process favoring the soldier's narrative. The site seemed destined to, once again, place the soldier on the front line of educational and interpretive endeavors of understanding the Vietnam War.

The Education Center's purpose represents more than the Vietnam War's narrative in public memory and opens up the capacity to interpret events that happened before and after the conflict. The attacks on September 11, 2001, and the ensuing war on terrorism, affected the ability to critically analyze America's involvement in international conflicts. VVMF's website explained the center as a place with the photos and stories of the soldiers who were killed in Vietnam and "celebrate the values embodied by American service members in all of our nation's wars."[122] The Education Center, guided by this statement, strayed from the pathway as an

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[119] "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Changes Direction of Education Center Campaign," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, September 21, 2018.

[120] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.

[121] "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Changes Direction of Education Center Campaign," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, September 21, 2018.

[122] "Founder and President Emeritus Jan Scruggs," Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://www.vvmf.org/About-The-Wall/history-of-the-vietnam-veterans-memorial/Jan-Scruggs/>.

educational site and appeared to extend from the existing commemorative memorial for the Vietnam War. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans' inclusion in the Wall of Faces grew from these veterans using the VVM as a parallel memorial for their service, and Education Center organizers sought to remove the Vietnam War as an outlier in the continuum of military history's narrative.[123] Such an idea and inclusion was unpopular among some Vietnam veterans as they felt the recognition they had been denied and yearned for now had to be shared.[124] The shared perspective worked with plans to broaden the understanding of the Vietnam War's context, but faced contestation from external beliefs that the Vietnam veterans should be the main, preferably only, focus.

Bain, speaking on his own behalf, found the Education Center as planned would not have best represented the collection and memorial. The push to include Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in the Wall of Faces and placing the Vietnam War within a broader continuum of service created too many paths for one site to handle. He suggested that had the center remained focused on the memorial, its controversy, and the collection, the core of its focus would have succeeded. The challenge of placing the war within the wider field of American military history highlights how difficult it is to come up with a narrative of the Vietnam War that does not focus solely on the soldier and yet still fits into the memorial framework. For Bain, the focus should have been memorialization and the resulting emotional experience that was strong enough to motivate visitors to leave a physical token behind.[125] Items left at the VVM provide ample opportunity for analysis of humanity's experience with death and our society's response to a sudden loss.[126] The most human response to death in American culture is a permanent structure, whether headstone

[123] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.
[124] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.
[125] Jason Bain, in discussion with author. See Appendix D.
[126] Ochsner, "A Space of Loss," 157.

or monument, to commemorate a person or occurrence. Even the practice of leaving items behind at a grave or memorial site developed and evolved with our history, and what remains accessible to generations is how this practice at national monuments reflects the experience of current events.

Conclusion

An Education Center planned near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial looked to provide younger generations with an interpretation covering the Vietnam War's complexity, and on an arena where the public perceived their national identity proved an ambitious and complicated task. The multiple stages of development and language surrounding the Education Center's purpose revealed a desire for understanding, yet the complexity of the Vietnam War challenged the center and limited it to one perspective. The center's lack of a clear direction or mandate, much like the complexities of the Vietnam War, and its location played into the failure of initiatives. The National Mall represents a large stage for American identity. The histories represented by monuments and other mnemonic devices were never simple constructions; multiple power dynamics and public perception affected their developmental process at every turn. The mission to place the Vietnam War narrative within the broader continuum of military service, along with later inclusions of the more contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans, further increased the interpretive pathways. The exhibit's focus had become muddled from promises to educate on the complexity of the Vietnam War, honoring the sacrifice of soldiers, and bringing current experiences into the mix. This favoring of one perspective over the others defined the site as more of an extension of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial than as an education center. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial came into public dispute when Maya Lin's

design was chosen, yet what some viewed as a metaphorical scar, others saw as a place to leave tokens in reverence of those memorialized.

No expectation of educating younger generations on the complexity of war is achievable when interpretation focuses on a single group's experience. Such an effort may have proved incapable of a physical embodiment on the National Mall, but the ambition lives on through the continued online presence and resources. The current development of the Education Center at the Wall reveals that the facilitated discussion of different understandings can be successful alongside commemoration. The center embodied more of what memorials can accomplish as silent symbols through which the public develops meaning, and this did not mesh with the necessary educational interpretation. The dynamics of space and representation of the Vietnam War era's history may have changed, but public choice and interaction will be present in the digital sphere. The privatization of remembrance proves easier in display management, but interpretation should still explore the various avenues of shared authority. Members of the public choose what interpretations they see, which is another gray area when engaging the public in dialogue about the Vietnam War's complicated history. The unique development of the Education Center revealed that there was a public expectation for guidance and interpretation, and the lack of it stunted the center's progress. The center's development fit with expectations of honoring and remembering soldiers, but the public understands Vietnam War history in a more complex manner. The complicated nature of the Vietnam War narrative influenced these unique relationships in identifying and remembering this history, and the Education Center was challenged in its development by not focusing on these varied perspectives.

THE VIETNAM WAR ERA IN POPULAR CULTURE: *THE VIETNAM WAR: A FILM BY KEN BURNS AND LYNN NOVICK*

Films created during and after the war exposed the public to historical interpretations through their imagery and narrative alongside museums and historic sites. Movies and documentaries lack the opportunity for facilitated dialogue at museums and historic memorial sites, yet their development and focus still reflect public memory's influential effect on the narrative. Commemorative programming uses multiple avenues for interpretation, and documentaries are prominent during these moments. Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* represents one of the first documentaries released during the Vietnam War anniversary years. The documentary's focus and interviews, plus public reviews of the film, highlight the narrative's development when the effect of shared authority is lessened.[127] Whereas museum exhibits and memorials are more influenced by shared authority and public expectation, documentaries reserve a bit more freedom in the interpretive field. The documentary and responses to its focus and representation show a coexistence of new perspectives and expectation for previous narrative styles.

In popular culture, the experiences of American soldiers who served dominated the understanding of the Vietnam War. This was the result, in part, of Hollywood films paving the way for a consolidation of public memory about the war.[128] The lack of a nuanced and detailed

[127] The focus of the episodes and an analysis of the individuals interviewed provided a window for choices made by filmmakers and researchers for the narrative development. Amazon reviews left by customers for the series in DVD format were also utilized in the research analysis. For these reviews, I filtered them on the website. I pulled out five-star, three-star, and one-star reviews. Reviews in these sections that were more focused on the seller, such as the timeliness of delivery or missing product, were removed from the analysis. Reviews left were those that commented on the work in the documentary and what they appreciated or were critical of with the historical narrative and representation.

[128] There are many films about the Vietnam conflict. I chose a specific set of films to illustrate common narrative devices that have influenced our historical perspectives on the war. Other films such as *Deerhunter*, *Hamburger Hill*, *We Were Soldiers*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *The Killing Fields*, *Good Morning*

dominant interpretation of the war resulted in a narrative that focused on the American Vietnam veteran's experience.[129] Common media imagery pointed to a dual nature which allowed the soldier to be protected in memory yet provide the ability to critically analyze American involvement. Movies such as *The Green Berets* (1968) exhibited the media as ignorant and the soldier as a martyr.[130] *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Platoon* (1986) had first-person protagonist soldiers through whom the audience viewed the war and witnessed them overcome challenges to their moral character.[131] The soldier's story became the vehicle for understanding how America fought the good fight in the Vietnam War and remains an interpretation the public struggles to abandon. Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's documentary series, *The Vietnam War,* challenged this dominant narrative by broadening the perspectives on the conflict.[132] Public reviews left for the DVD version on Amazon reveal that the praiseworthy moments lay in the filmmakers' effort to broaden perspectives and address contradictions from the perceived portrayal of American soldiers. Praise and criticism stemmed from the increased perspectives included in the documentary. These responses to a shifted narrative demonstrate that with the ubiquitous presence of film in American culture over the last 50 years, these film sources have significantly influenced the public's understanding of the Vietnam War.

Vietnam, The Fog of War, Born on the 4th of July, and *Forrest Gump* use similar narrative frameworks as the ones outlined in this study.

[129] Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War* (New York & England: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7-8.

[130] John Wayne, Ray Kellog, and Mervyn LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets* (California: Batjac Productions, 1968) DVD.

[131] Francis Ford Coppola, dir., *Apocalypse Now,* (San Francisco, CA: Omni Zoetrope, 1979) DVD; Oliver Stone, dir., *Platoon*, (London & Los Angeles: Hemdale Film Corporation, 1986) DVD.

[132] Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), (New Hampshire: Florentine Films, 2017) Documentary.

Vietnam War in Popular Culture

The Vietnam War resurrected the reconciliation narrative in the way U.S. Civil War histories' aim was reunification after that divisive conflict. A reconciliation narrative is a simple, agreeable interpretation. Ideological reasonings behind the Civil War created a tense atmosphere in the field of remembrance. An easier solution for the narrative became memorializing the soldier's bravery and honoring their sacrifice.[133] This narrative theme reappeared in film productions about the Vietnam War and presented American soldiers in what Professor David Kieran labels the "heroic loser narrative," and historian John Bodnar refers to as common-man heroism."[134] The country lost a war and needed to reassert American strength, according to Kieran, and this influenced the representation.[135]

Vietnam War films looked to attract viewers with a story shrouded in contentious conflict and *The Green Berets* (1968), the ultimate film that was anti-Communist and pro-American-involvement film, catered to supporting the war and arousing patriotic feelings in America.[136] American journalist George Beckworth sees no reasoning for America's involvement in Vietnam. He is portrayed as unenlightened after being asked by Col. Mike Kirby (John Wayne) if he had been to Southeast Asia—he had not. Beckworth achieves true understanding by being in the heart of combat where soldiers were. The film's end highlights the quintessential myth of the American savior as Col. Kirby takes the hand of a young Vietnamese boy worried about his

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[133] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001) 72, 86.

[134] John Bodnar, "Saving Private Ryan and Postwar Memory in America," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 806, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2692325>. The term "common-man heroism" refers to the imagery of the American soldier who reflected the culture of America at wartime. These men were average guys who valued their simple lives in America, had a wife or love-interest waiting for them back home, and they were not in war to kill but to end violence—ironically with violence; David Kieran, *Forever Vietnam: How a Divisive War Changed American Public Memory* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014) 91.

[135] Kieran, *Forever Vietnam*, 91-92.

[136] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD.

future and says, “You let me worry about that, Green Beret. You’re what this thing’s all about.”[137] The child’s autonomy becomes lost and the American soldier becomes the guiding force to any future for the Vietnamese. Though Wayne never served in combat, he never strayed from representing the savior in World War II and embodiment of “us vs. them” in the Wild West’s realm, so his impression on the Vietnam War remained similar. Some films, like *The Green Berets*, extended the narrative of America fighting for good, while others focused on the common soldiers, and the personal battles they faced while at home or abroad represented.[138]

Two representations, American versus American and a complex change of self-understanding by soldiers, led portrayal of the Vietnam War era in popular culture. Some Vietnam War related movies tackled veterans returning to a society unable to find their place within it. The returning soldier’s internal conflict stressed a symbolic burden just out of the grasp of those who never experienced the Vietnam War. Even in movies that focused on soldiers deployed in Vietnam, filmmakers depicted the conflicts of soldiers or former soldiers as those within themselves or with the American government. Col. Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now* (1976) had become “unsound” and Capt. Willard is assigned to terminate him, though officials pitied the decision.[139] Willard and his team face the nearly invisible North Vietnamese and his narration takes viewers on his slow descension into Kurtz’s mindset. Both men’s few moments together include a monologue by Kurtz on how one must accept the horror in life to achieve what is necessary. Kurtz reasons “it’s judgment that defeats us” and that had caused America to lose in Vietnam.[140] Willard accomplishes his mission but chooses not to drop an airstrike on Kurtz’s followers, leaving viewers to see that Willard agreed with Kurtz. The government and military

[137] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD.
[138] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD; Kinney, *Friendly Fire*, 21, 26.
[139] Coppola, dir., *Apocalypse Now*, DVD.
[140] Coppola, dir., *Apocalypse Now*, DVD.

command proved too ignorant and the public too judgmental, which led to a loss of innocence and life in this movie. Similarly, *Platoon* (1989) was the first film about the war written and directed by a Vietnam veteran, Oliver veteran, an Army soldier who earned a Purple Heart with Oak-Leaf Cluster for the two times he was wounded.[141] *Platoon's* purpose stemmed from Stone's disagreement with the story and imagery of *The Green Berets*.[142] *Platoon* spoke more to the struggle between choosing a moral or immoral action that soldiers faced when in a foreign and unfamiliar environment.[143] The duality of good and evil seemed too black and white, however, as the soldiers divided into their separate natures within the camp. Protagonist Chris Taylor, chose service instead of a student deferral and good instead of evil, though, in the end, he lost his innocence in the process. Though stressed, scared, and emotional, Taylor avoids the temptation to commit immoral actions against Vietnamese villagers and classifies American soldiers who did as animals.[144] The soldier narrator once again guides the interpretation of Vietnam in American popular culture. Feature films on the Vietnam War tended to follow similar storytelling arcs, and this repetitive focus on the soldier imprinted itself into America's collective memory about the war in Vietnam War.

Hollywood films have often reflected and created public perceptions about the past. Educational psychologist Sam Wineburg's concept of "learned memory" is drawn from this phenomena and has appeared often in his research.[145] During his interview with participants who responded to images of an American infantryman leaving a battle with children tucked under his arms, a 16-year-old participant found it ironic. The irony was, "… you always hear someone say,

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[141] Stone, dir., *Platoon*, DVD.
[142] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD.
[143] Stone, dir., *Platoon*, DVD.
[144] Stone, dir., *Platoon*, DVD.
[145] Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 234.

'Oh, baby killers'. So here's this guy running out, and he's got these two kids, it's like he's saving them."[146] Further investigation into the source of this memory revealed *Forrest Gump* (1994) as one of his favorite movies. Though the scene makes up a small part of the film, the impact on the16-year old's memory was long lasting. Wineburg's interviews on Vietnam War memory in his book *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* reflected the public's adoption of film representation as complete factual history. Not only this, those who experienced the Vietnam War era turned to film as a cultural tool from which following generations could learn. One father's speculation on teaching his daughter more about the Vietnam War included the solution of a Hollywood produced movie. *The Green Berets*, he believed, cured what he saw as ignorance of the war's history and made her "a little bit more aware of what was going on."[147] He followed up this statement with doubt as to the historical accuracy of a movie, but it accomplished his wish of increasing her curiosity. The older generation feared their experienced past had been forgotten and increased their yearning for later generations to understand the Vietnam War. The answer to such ignorance or misunderstanding found some solace in American films and these films rarely strayed from the American soldier as the sole protagonist.

The American soldier narrative relies upon the extended appropriation of the patriotic myth. Though speaking to the collective imagination of history classrooms as boring, Sam Wineburg highlighted how "sheer media repetition" forms a generally accepted understanding of the past.[148] This results in the development of "imagined communities."[149] An influential

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[146] Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 238.

[147] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD; Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 232.

[148] Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts*, 217.

[149] Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 1998) 8; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London and New York: Verso, 2016) 6.

majority determined the American soldier narrative etches a safer and clearer path for Vietnam War era interpretation. Having experienced a generation of divisiveness, the American public yearned for what they believed was a simple past. The movie industry capitalized on these desires as producers industrialized nostalgia by selling memories to an actively consuming public.[150] What these creations did, though, was further engrave the notion that savagery is found in the war and following treatment of it, not the American soldier fighting it.[151] American soldiers represented martyrs for good, victims of a savage war, and a home which failed to properly welcome them back.. Repeated exposure of this imagery and narrative laid out the interpretive pathways of the Vietnam War in public memory and affected reviews of later works on this history.

The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick

Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* premiered on September 17, 2018, on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).[152] Ten episodes showed over ten days for a total duration of eighteen hours. The filmmakers interviewed veterans, anti-war protesters, reporters, government analysts, and citizens from America, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam. The first episode, "Déjà Vu (1858-1961)" referenced France's conquest of Indochina through the Port of Danang in 1858, providing the context for the European presence in Vietnam before World War II. *The Vietnam War* appears as one of few histories on the Vietnam War that begin the story in the mid-nineteenth century.[153] By beginning with the colonial history of Vietnam, the perspective of the Vietnamese people is much clearer. This inclusive effort is praiseworthy, but this choice risks

[150] Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016) 13.

[151] Bodnar, "Saving Private Ryan and Postwar Memory in America," 805.

[152] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Documentary.

[153] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Documentary.

presenting too much information that needs explanation. The first episode is the only section to cover more than three years, with over 100 years of history presented in the one hour and twenty-two-minute run time. For the filmmakers, the question of where to start is difficult. With such extensive historical coverage, the average viewer could feel overwhelmed by an additional century's worth of history to the already complex Vietnam War history.

The rest of the episodes in the documentary cover events associated with the war from 1945 to 1975. It was a persistent examination of lessons and legacies of the conflict. *The Vietnam War* addressed political maneuvering, the influence of the Cold War's "Red Scare," and the disillusionment of war and existing American narrative.[154] Such prominent themes also address how American military history centers on the definition of success or defeat for Americans and American society. A reference to either legacy or lessons insinuates that there was something to learn from this conflict, as there are with all conflicts. This is best illustrated when Vietnam veteran Max Cleland stated that those who suffered are trying to find meaning.[155] The obsession with lessons, legacies, and exploring the conflict's meaning extended the battle for American memory long after the Vietnam War's end.

In the final episode, "The Weight of Memory (March 1973 – Onward)," opens with Tim O'Brien reading from his book, *The Things They Carried*. To address this allegorical burden, the final episode portrays the need to talk about the Vietnam War and that this helps with the healing people searched for in this war's history. Burns described some of his imagery choices during this episode as hopefully offering "an ultimate reconciliation."[156] Imagery includes President

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[154] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Documentary.

[155] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Season 1, Episode 1 "Déjà vu (1858-1961)," Documentary.

[156] Alyssa Rosenberg, "'The American War': You've watched all 18 hours of 'The Vietnam War.' Here's what Ken Burns wants you to remember." *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2017, accessed March 17, 2020, < https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2017/09/29/the-

Clinton's visit to Vietnam, the first since Nixon, and President Obama declaring the U.S. and Vietnam as partners while in office. Other choices were kids playing in a Huey helicopter, making the war machine a toy, and The Beatles' "Let It Be" plays in the background near the end asking viewers to continue open discussions and not place effort into forgetting.[157] Though the public has openly discussed the legacy and lessons of the Vietnam War, Ken Burns' film embodied a new level of interpretation that looks to reconcile the divided narratives. To see whether Burns and Novick achieved reconciliation in public memory and discussion of the Vietnam War, online reviews provide a unique stage for analyzing public interpretation.

Public Reception of Documentary

The documentary received both praise and backlash. Critiques ranged from focus to interpretive style, according to opinion articles and reviews at the time. *The Washington Post* published a review by television critic Hank Stuever, who said, "Yes, America, PBS's 'The Vietnam War' is required viewing – all 18 hours of it," and lauds Burns and Novick's efforts to explain a large, complex history. Stuever felt the choice to interview and include perspectives from both sides of the war "most striking" as it added a new human frame compared to the usual war narrative.[158] Professor of history Jeffrey Kimball found the documentary less pleasing, and his article "Ken Burns's Vietnam: Great TV. Horrible History" hid no displeasure. Kimball's concerns covered microdetails of history, but his overarching critique was the lack of noting why the U.S. intervened in Vietnam. It lacked what Kimball viewed as a clear truth in the reasoning

american-war-youve-watched-all-18-hours-of-the-vietnam-war-heres-what-ken-burns-wants-you-to-remember/>.

[157] Rosenberg, "'The American War'" September 29, 2017.

[158] Hank Stuever, "Yes, America, PBS's 'The Vietnam War' is required viewing – all 18 hours of it," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2017, accessed: September 3, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/tv/yes-america-pbss-the-vietnam-war-is-required-viewing--all-18-hours-of-it/2017/09/14/c89bd07a-94be-11e7-89fa-bb822a46da5b_story.html>.

for the Vietnam War—the explanation of a worldview that encouraged intervention—and this caused his disappointment.[159] Kimball's concerns, however, represent only the political understanding the Vietnam War, and Burns' and Novick's documentary had worked to include more than just a political history.

The duo spent ten years researching and writing the script, recording interviews, and refining the production before the release, and interviewee's perspectives were the guiding force. Burns appeared on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and mentioned his belief that existing divisions today are rooted in the divisive nature of the Vietnam War era. Their documentary, he explained, was to tell the story from the different perspectives as "more than one truth could happen at the same time."[160] The filmmakers made an effort to broaden the perspective included in their interpretation, yet it depended on the readiness of the American public and their memory to interact with new interpretations.

Just as the published opinion articles offered perspective into one niche of public reception, another outlet presented itself through reviews left on *The Vietnam War* DVD set available on Amazon. A new analytical opportunity to see public memory's response presented itself through online reviews.[161] One-, three-, and five-star reviews were pulled from Amazon.com for comparison of the public's reception of *The Vietnam War*.[162] Whether

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[159] Jeffrey P. Kimball, "Ken Burns's Vietnam: Great TV. Horrible History," *Newsweek*, September 29, 2017, accessed: September 3, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/ken-burnss-vietnam-great-tv-horrible-history-674433>.

[160] "Ken Burns: Today's Divisiveness Has Roots In Vietnam," The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, Youtube, published September 27, 2017, accessed February 25, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPyBjFircWo>.

[161] The thought to use Amazon reviews left on the *The Vietnam War* DVD package listing is an effort to break away from only professional reviews. This method supplies one of the best opportunities to see the more general public's understanding of the Vietnam War history. There was no strict selective process used for which reviews were included. Only commonalities between the starred reviews were the focus.

[162] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Documentary.

compelled to leave praise or criticism, these comments provide details that give direct insight into individual memories and understandings of the Vietnam War. Five-star reviews praised the team for their inclusion of the Vietnamese perspective. Even with the highest ratings, writers' comments contained language such as "I feel compelled to disagree with the premise"[163] and seemed most concerned with the portrayal of American soldiers. One reviewer, however, writes the documentary "told me more than I ever knew about the complete era of [the] Vietnam War," and breaks away from dominating notions that veterans of the war are the sole source of understanding. [164] Burns and Novick's choice to portray as much perspective as possible was regarded by another reviewer as "eminently fair and objective in showing the ruthlessness and savagery of all sides…shows the highs and lows of all participants."[165] Some shared their personal connections, having grown up during that time, served in the war, and so on, and others often referenced the politics of the Vietnam War era. The constant mention of politics and reviewers' impressions of its representation in the documentary highlight the preference of a critical eye turned toward government actions during the Vietnam War era. One remarks, "We see the duplicity, dissembling, lying and betrayals of five American presidential administrations

[163] "Hump the hump," by Ralph H. Goldsen, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published December 5, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

[164] "Best presentation on the Vietnam War I have ever viewed!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" by Gem's Girl, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published January 15, 2020, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_viewopt_fmt?ie=UTF8&filterByStar=five_star&reviewerType=all_reviews&formatType=current_format&pageNumber=1#reviews-filter-bar>.

[165] "HEARTBREAKING, EYE-OPENING, EVOCATIVE" by passionate reviewer, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 14, 2019, accessed January 28, 2020, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=cm_cr_arp_d_viewopt_fmt?ie=UTF8&filterByStar=five_star&reviewerType=all_reviews&formatType=current_format&pageNumber=1#reviews-filter-bar>.

from Truman to Nixon."[166] High reviews appreciated critical analysis of the American government and inclusion of Vietnamese perspective, but what five-star reviews saw as unbiased or inclusive perspective, three- and one-star reviewers saw as a misinformation conspiracy.

To even include the North Vietnamese perspective was the ultimate disrespect to the Vietnam War's history for three- and one-star reviews. For three-out-of-five-star reviews, comments tended to have mixed feelings on the perspectives included and multiple mentions of bias. One review lambasted the North Vietnamese as "fanatics" and easy to discern as they wore "gaudy uniforms."[167] To understand North Vietnamese views of the conflict or why they fought is unachievable without their participation, but it is necessary in fully comprehending the Vietnam War. The reviewer applied the term "fanatic" to a group who believed in their cause, followed a leader without question, and defended their country, views applicable to any side. Reviewers' were concerned with what they saw as bias, believing the filmmakers provided less of the soldiers' interpretations and too much from other perspectives. Of the 79 individuals interviewed by the filmmakers for this documentary, the most were American veterans of the Vietnam War. The number of American veterans included account for 42 percent of the perspective, with the next highest number being veterans of North Vietnamese factions at 20 percent.[168] The reasoning for these filmmaking choices is unclear. Perhaps it is because more American veterans responded, or limitations that were set by interested parties and funders, or the ease of access to Vietnamese veterans, or that it is simply coincidental.

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[166] "HEARTBREAKING, EYE-OPENING, EVOCATIVE" by passionate reviewer, Amazon, Customer Reviews, published October 14, 2019.

[167] "An improvement over past documentaries, but average rather than great" by Mark Bennett, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 14, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

[168] List of interviewees for *The Vietnam War* included as Appendix G.

Inclusion of different interpretations of the Vietnam War introduce new perceptions that some members of the public classified as wrong or biased. One reviewer writes, "The Black Panthers, SDS and protesters come across better than the veterans and that's wrong."[169] Such reviews classified the interpretation as false because the film presents another viewpoint. The complexity of the Vietnam War era and the various experiences of it inform such an array of interpretations, and in best practices no single one should control the narrative. The belief that the Vietnam War is best understood by the American soldiers who served in the war and are the focus of the established cultural imagery and representation comprised as many one-star as three-star reviews.

The most frequent critiques found in the lowest scored reviews on Amazon mentioned political bias and the common image of the spat-upon soldier. Many reviews combined aspects of political agendas and spitting on soldiers were combined in many reviews, establishing a symbiotic relationship. One review declares, "I was spit on by the left once, and now it happens again."[170] Another, after calling the documentary an homage to those who protested the Vietnam War, states this documentary is to those "who SPIT on the returning Soldiers – in spirit if not in deed."[171] These reviews attest to the continued spitting on veterans, whether physically or metaphorically, with the public's memory and understanding of the Vietnam War era. This belief

[169] "Good soundtrack" by Happy Gilmore, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 13, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

[170] "Wrong View" by Bart, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 9, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

[171] "Despicable leftist Bilge by a Gifted Propagandist" by WT Door, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 24, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

also highlights the discord between analyzing a historical event and protecting the image of the soldier. Such an effort continued into reviewers' criticisms of the choices researchers and producers made on what events, pictures, and discussions were included in the documentary.

Reviews upset with portrayal of the Americans versus the Vietnamese embody what Viet Thanh Nguyen referred to as "Vietnam Syndrome." He argues that expressing the belief that our country is perpetually innocent demonstrates the influence of selective memory. [172] Reviewers of *The Vietnam War* documentary who had an issue with the film's interpretation best exhibited this syndrome. One reviewer saw American soldiers taking heavy losses and the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army atrocities minimized. They state the documentary "barely touches on the Hue massacre, but goes into great detail on the My Lai massacre."[173] Another saw *The Vietnam War* as "a one sided [sic] view of the war." [174] Reviewers viewed the solution to the bias was to increase the number of American veterans sharing their experience of the war. Of course, this would be a one-sided view as well. Concern with imagery led one reviewer to discuss three iconic photos in the documentary and added their own contextual explanation for the image's understanding. More concerning was their statement on the video image of the young

[172] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 51.

[173] "A National Embarrassment" by Joshua Welt, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 28, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.; "but goes into great detail on the My Lai massacre" by elbozo123, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published September 21, 2017, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=acr_dpproductdetail_text?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.

[174] "Wrong View," by Bart, Amazon, Customer Reviews, *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*, published October 9, 2017, accessed March 18, 2020, < https://www.amazon.com/product-reviews/B075N2CQM3/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_paging_btm_next_5?ie=UTF8&reviewerType=all_reviews&pageNumber=5&filterByStar=critical#reviews-filter-bar>.

Vietnamese girl who became known as "Napalm Girl."[175] The reviewer includes the information that "she survived" after the description. It appeared that the reviewer was justifying or negating the critical analysis in the film about American bombing tactics during the war. Whether or not they meant this way, the use of such a statement within analysis refuting what they saw as bias has this effect. The feel-good narrative and treatment of the soldiers' story guided the critical reviews' main concerns with the history Burns and Novick presented.

Conclusion

During and immediately following the Vietnam War, the interpretive framework most often used was the heroic American soldier and their experiences. Television and film productions as well as museums and historical sites reflect the evolving interpretations of the Vietnam War in American culture. These productions struggled with American insecurity when discussing and remembering a war United States lost and an era culturally and politically divided with great passion on both perspectives. Productions not only created new imagery and stories that became a part of public memory, they reinforced how public memory and understanding affected historical interpretation. Movies such as *The Green Berets* (1968), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and *Platoon* (1986), represent a few of many films released that highlighted the American soldier in Vietnam with severely limited Vietnamese representation.[176] These cultural limitations affect the memory of the war. Documentaries about the war over the last twenty years usually show an effort to counteract this depiction and are represent primary effort to tell both sides of the story.

[175] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Season 1 Episode 9, "A Disrespectful Loyalty (May 1970-March 1973)," Documentary.

[176] Wayne, Kellog, and LeRoy, dirs., *The Green Berets*, DVD; Coppola, dir., *Apocalypse Now*, DVD; Stone, dir., *Platoon*, DVD.

The Vietnam War produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick introduced interviews with Vietnamese soldiers and civilians and brought this perspective to the forefront alongside existing interpretations.[177] Their effort to go beyond the past fifty years of analysis and myth making about the Vietnam War are commendable. This documentary is by no means an unbiased and complete view of the Vietnam War era as claimed by the five-star reviews, nor is it an American soldier hating, communism loving propaganda film as one-star reviews claimed. The complexity of the Vietnam War history influenced Burns and Novick's inspiration for increased perspective and the mixed reviews. The inclusion of newer perspectives mirrors the choices made by other institutions during commemorative programming, and these efforts were appreciated more than criticized. When and how the public reacts to remembrance at milestones, like anniversaries, demonstrate how memory has influenced and been influenced by the method of exposure to historical interpretations through popular culture and educational films.

[177] Burns and Novick, dirs., *The Vietnam War*, Documentary.

CONCLUSION

It has been fifty years since the United States was engaged in the Vietnam War, and interpreting the conflict continues to be difficult. However, there has been less pushback against the introduction of other perspectives than many earlier military anniversaries. Commemorative efforts related to historic events reflect the changing narratives taking place within public memory. The public approaches historical interpretations focused on commemoration with expectations guided by their memory and understanding of the narrative. Complexity in understanding the Vietnam War while it happened and immediately after its conclusion contributed to the ability of exhibits, historic memorial sites, and documentaries to include more historical perspectives. However, this also played into the significant challenges faced in the development processes of the programming this study analyzed. The Vietnam War programming at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and Education Center through the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), and *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick* comprised this study's analysis of evolving narratives. All three projects interact with the public in a similar fashion. They provide interpretations of history which are meant to expose the public to new understandings and facilitate a dialogue on the history.

Washington, D.C.'s National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approached the interpretation of the Vietnam War through newly declassified documents and increased perspective. Exhibit curator Alice Kamps sat down for an interview and discussed the *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit's process from the brainstorming stage until completion. The most challenging part for the development team was determining a focus. They decided to pursue more perspectives linked with political episodes. *Remembering Vietnam* had brochures at the exhibit's entrance that gave visitors critical questions that guided interpretation. The

questions posed related to the reason for U.S. involvement, the length of the war, and the controversies during and after the war. Interpretive panels mentioned Vietnamese colonial history, but the focused interpretation began right after World War II. The years covered in the exhibit ranged from 1945 to 1975, ending with the fall of Saigon, and then allotting a section at the exhibit's end to discuss the Vietnam War's legacy. NARA's interpretation looked at the various perspectives and understandings of political action taken by the American government during the war. Newspapers articles published around the exhibit's opening in November 2017 often remarked about the exhibit's purpose of honoring the soldier and remembering their sacrifice during the Vietnam War. Along with expectations set by soldier's narrative interpretations, the physical landscape on which NARA stands influences public expectations. The National Mall creates an atmosphere of reverence and embodiment of the nation's greatness that shaped visitor understanding of that space. The anticipation of a feel-good narrative affected the exhibit's development process but not to an excessive extent. Though these expectations existed and were openly visible, the inclusion of Vietnamese and protestor perspectives and understanding remained a pivotal part of the exhibit. No visitor or review revealed a dissonance with the histories displayed and that stemmed from the continuous complexity in understanding the Vietnam War. This complexity in reasoning and how the public remembers this conflict played into the ability of broader perspective to take place during fiftieth anniversary commemorative programming.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) planned for a more permanent exhibit on the Vietnam War, but the challenges to a focus changed plans. Visitors to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) began leaving items behind in memoriam soon after the memorial opened on November 13, 1982. The National Park Service (NPS) collects these items left behind and this

collection influenced the planned Education Center at the Wall. VVMF senior collections curator Jason Bain provided insight on the Education Center at the Wall's development process in a November 2018 interview. The planning for this structure featured a large glass display case through its center which allowed for a free-standing display of artifacts. The accompanying display would only contain identifying information like the item's name and donor. Other displays included a military focused timeline on the lower level and the Wall of Faces to display a photo and biography of each soldier listed on the VVM. The perspective centered on the military experience of the Vietnam War, the dominant narrative used to understand the conflict, but this caused challenges that Bain believed a different focus would have solved.

Initially, the Education Center's purpose was to interpret the complexity of the Vietnam War for future generations, but later comments only mentioned the soldiers. One of the challenges that influenced this evolving plan was the site location on the National Mall in the capital. The public's sees the National Mall as a sacred space and expectations were set for the Education Center. The structure's proximity to a memorial and the choice to display items left at the memorial tested the development of the interpretation. A significant challenge came from their choice to display artifacts left at a memorial with no real interpretation to guide visitors about the significance of the items. Though the efforts to remember the Vietnam War through commemorative programming may insinuate honoring specific parts of history, the complexity of the narrative left a public which desired more interpretive guidance. Without any focus, the center's greatest challenge stemmed from proclaiming a purpose to provide future generations with an understanding of the Vietnam War's complexity but lacking guiding interpretation with all methods of display. Through the interview with Bain, an interpretation on the significance of memorialization for the Vietnam War held the most promise for the Education Center. Even in a

memorial space and taking place during commemorative programming, the experiences of developing this center show that the public's understanding of the complex narrative warrants more perspectives.

The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick premiered for ten episodes on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in September 2017. The years Burns and Novick chose to cover ranged from 1858-1975, with the first episode being the only one to cover more than three years. Beginning with Vietnam's mid-nineteenth experience with colonialism allowed for a clearer Vietnamese perspective. Interviewees for the documentary included American and Vietnamese veterans and civilians. Burns and Novick were quite vocal in their observation that the Vietnam War's complexity required exposure to all perspectives of this history. This broadening of the Vietnam War's perspective, particularly for the Vietnamese, introduced a much different narrative than American viewers had seen before. Reviews by professionals and those left on the documentary's DVD product page on Amazon provides insight to the public's reception of the expanded interpretation. Commenters which gave the top ratings to the DVD praised the effort to broaden the perspectives about the Vietnam War history. Any critical statements in these reviews were either concern for the perceived portrayal of the American soldier or wanting to discuss every small detail of the war. These reviews that gave high scores to the documentary and their concern with the portrayal of the American soldier were shared feelings with those that gave the documentary a lower score. Reviewers who were more critical or disliked the documentary referred to it as enforcing a leftist political agenda. Some even referenced the common image of the spat-upon soldier with this documentary spitting on the memory of the soldier. These comments associated the inclusion of the Vietnamese perspective as damaging to the existing image of the American narrative of the soldier. Regardless, the

development of the documentary and shows that the Vietnam War's complexity assisted in greater interpretive possibilities than others during commemorative programming.

The National Archives and Administration Record's *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's Education Center at The Wall, and Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's *The Vietnam War* all represent methods through which the public interacts with history. These interactions inform public memory and understanding of historical narratives. During commemorative programming for the fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War, the complexity of the war allowed for a quicker and less contested inclusion of differing perspectives. None of the interpretations planned through the three projects tarnished the soldier's image by expanding the perspective. Negative reviews and their feelings are not new to efforts in the American narrative to be more critical in their analysis. The challenge becomes how to intricately balance the public's memory of such a narrative and introduce updated knowledge of our understanding of the war. The immediate use of the soldier's experience as a guiding force for understanding the Vietnam War influenced the public's concern with if the American soldier in commemorative programming. Some were concerned with the lack of American soldiers' presence in exhibits not focused on the military history of the war, and others saw the inclusion of the Vietnamese perspective as damaging to the soldier's image. Of the three case studies, however, only one focused on the soldier, and it failed to come to fruition. This does not negate the importance of the soldier's perspective compared to other views, but it limits the justification that narrative is the solution to all Vietnam War interpretations. Introducing broader perspectives in America's history at an anniversary event succeeded because the public memory was not ingrained with a repetitive feel-good narrative. Other American histories have struggled to add new perspectives to a history the public has come to know intimately with their identity formed through historical

memory, but this progress for the Vietnam War shows it is possible. Historical understanding will always be contested, but the opportunity for multiple methods of interpretation to exist at one time is promising for future commemorative programming in public history.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW ON THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION'S REMEMBERING VIETNAM EXHIBIT

Methodology: A better understanding of the National Archives and Records Administration exhibit *Remembering Vietnam*'s development process, any concerns or challenges faced by curators during the process, and public responses guided the development of questions for this interview. Questions included how the team chose the exhibit's focus, who was involved from staff, advisory boards, and volunteer groups, what any concerns were, and insight on the public's response to the exhibit and its interpretation.

Interview on the National Archives and Records Administration's *Remembering Vietnam* Exhibit
Interviewer: Chelsea Olmsted
Interviewee: National Archives and Records Administration Curator Alice Kamps
Date: August 1, 2018

Chelsea Olmsted: My first question to really start off is if you could describe the exhibit process, sort of from its beginning states to when you first opened it.

Alice Kamps: The very first thing that happened was that the archivist of the United States, who himself is a Vietnam veteran, directed the exhibits department to create an exhibition about the war. So, he basically gave us the assignment. There were maybe four or five curators in our department at the time, and so we were all asked to submit ideas for concepts and we did that and we had two meetings to talk about them, but we struggled with it.Then we invited Ken Burns who's on our foundation [board]—we have a private foundation that raises money for our exhibits and education programs—…to talk to us because we knew that he was putting together a documentary series on the Vietnam War.

CO: Yes.

AK: So he had about a half day meeting with us and he told us about his film and what he'd learned and it was just kind of a download of his experiences and thoughts of the war and how he thought that we should go about it. Sometime after that that I attended a conference that was here in Washington, D.C., I believe it was called "Vietnam: Then and Now," and listened to a number of lectures and came up with the idea of presenting the war from multiple perspectives and inviting historians to submit National Archives documents as candidates for display. So this was a kind of approach that we hadn't really done before, and partly it was designed to help us navigate some of the conflict that was part and parcel of the topic. So it was after that that I started writing and talking to a number of different historians. And I ultimately ended up with a fairly long list of advisors, and I made you a copy of that. They're not all historians, I also spoke to a journalist there. There's a woman whowas living in Northern Vietnam and moved to Southern Vietnam and is now living here. She is one of the people that Ken Burns interviewed as well. I spoke with a man who initially worked for the CIA and later worked in various capacities in Vietnam in the very, very early years of the war. So I had this wonderful group of advisors

who kind of helped in forming the concept and then reviewing different phases of the project. Was that in effect what you're looking for?

CO: Yes, definitely. And so, with this being your advisory group, these also remain kind of developers of the interpretation as well?

AK: I developed the interpretation. One of the advisors was more involved than the others, David Elliott. I think he's retired from Pomona College, and he was the one who suggested that I organize it around critical episodes. He initially suggested 16, and he wrote them out from what he thought were the critical episodes that I should cover. And that eventually got boiled down to the 12 that you see there.

CO: Do you remember any of the four episodes that were kind of cut out, do you remember what they were?

AK: I have, I still have his communications with me that I can show you. I can ask him if it would be OK to share them with you.

CO: Oh perfect, that would work.

AK: Some of them I had to condense. It was mainly a space issue.

CO: OK.

AK: Although certainly simplifying it is better for the audience, too

CO: Yes. Could you describe who was on your exhibit team?

AK: Internally?

CO: Yes, internally, once it was decided to follow the episodes. Describe their experiences and how they contributed also to the development

AK: We hired a contract exhibit designer to work with us to create a concept package to, that the foundation could take to fundraise and help describe what we were planning to do and raise money for it. So he and I initially worked together on the concepts so I knew that I wanted to have 12 episodes, I know that I wanted to screen video of interviews that I planned to do with people who experienced each of those 12 episodes, um and I had some ideas about the designs which he developed. This process was, was partly just looking at exhibits and art gallery shows and came up with the entry experience with the quotes that fade in and out.

CO: Yes

AK: That was based on some artist's work that he saw, so the design started there and eventually evolved to what it looks now. A little bit later in the process, one of our staff, graphic designers came on board, and then she and I and the exhibit designer were kind of the core team that worked on it, but there were other people that came in and out. I worked with social media folks, and I worked with marketing, and other people on a limited basis as we went through the process

CO: Ok, and did you have any Vietnam veterans, well I know that the U.S. Archivist of course is a veteran, or any of the peace protesters become involved after they found out about it, become more involved in a sense beyond like just their interviews

AK: Yeah, so I interviewed a peace protester and a number of veterans. James, it actually should be Lt. Colonel, I'm not good with these military rankings. He is both a historian and a veteran, so, and he was a very active advisor of mine throughout the, the whole process. So I did work with him. Um we, we did go out and meet with folks at, we met with some people at the Pentagon who were doing their own exhibit on the Vietnam War, just to learn what they were doing. We met with the director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial fund, talked about how we could engage those audiences once the exhibit opened. So both Colonel, Lt. Colonel Wilbanks and Arnold Isaacs, who's a journalist and was, you could call him certainly in retrospect, he's definitely a peace advocate, reviewed different phases of the project. So after the concept phase, after I wrote a concept paper that he saw, well all these people saw, it went to an interpretive plan which they also reviewed and commented on, and then the final, the final piece was the script and because it's such a time consuming process to go through and comment on the script. I was only able to get I think three or four of, members of my advisory team to do that. But otherwise everybody kind of saw all the different phases that are involved.

CO: Ok, and so with the exhibit as it is today you provide guided tours along with it being self-guided? Or does it mainly stay self-guided?

AK: It's mainly self-guided. I do tours on request, I've had some veterans groups come and request tours and I'm happy to give those. I really enjoy those, and, in fact, the day that we opened we had a, what are those called, an honor tour? Honor flight, sorry. Do you know what Honor Flights are?

CO: No.

AK: There's a not-for-profit that raises funds and sends veterans to Washington, D.C. On a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the memorials. It started with the WWII veterans, but now it's starting to be more and more Vietnam veterans. So, these are people that can't afford to make the trip on their own and the feeling is, of course, that it's very important for them to be able to do that so we had a group of 100 Vietnam veterans who came for the opening day, and that was, that was very great.

CO: And it did open on an anniver-

AK: Veteran's Day

CO: Yeah Veteran's Day, yeah that's right. So when they do, is it mainly yourself that provides the tours or do you have a team that

AK: It's me

CO: It's you, ok, were there any concerns with facilitating dialogue at all, if you were to facilitate dialogue on providing different aspects for the Vietnam War. So saying, of course, providing the peace protesters' aspects and the North Vietnamese aspect on the war were there

any concerns facilitating that dialogue as well as keeping in the mind the military veterans as well?

AK: Yeah, certainly, I mean certainly I was personally concerned. I had a lot of trepidation about that and it has turned out to be a non-issue. We've gotten very little negative response. In fact on opening, we had an opening party and we invited, of course, all these people and in one of the episodes we cut between interviews with a Vietnam veteran and a peace protester. I don't know if you've had a chance to watch the videos but, and they ended up sitting in the theater next to each another.

CO: Oh yes.

AK: And looking at the screen and looking at each other and realizing, "that's you," "that's you." So that was great because they ended up talking a little and even though in the interview they, I know they both expressed some bitterness toward each other-more the veteran than the protesters- I think it was kind of healing for them to make contact with each other and talk a little

CO: Well that's good, and so to say public perception has been very well. Nobody's had any concerns with what's shown, and do you find that to be a product of this generational difference, the further we get away from the years of the Vietnam War happened, we're more open to seeing different interpretations and seeing different understandings of the war that was experienced

AK: I think that's possible that that's part of it.We can really only speculate, so I don't really know. One thing that, I was very nervous before we showed it to the Vietnam veterans because I thought they would be, possibly some of them could be critical but they expressed, the men that I talked to expressed this feeling of feeling greatly honored just by the fact that we had an exhibit about their war in the National Archives. I think the feeling has been like we honor all these other conflicts, celebrate the heroes, but less so with the Vietnam War. So that seemed to be their kind of overwhelming feeling. They didn't seem to go too deeply into the potential points they could argue, it's also partly because of the nature of the exhibit. I didn't talk a great deal about the veterans or the, the soldiers' experience because this is more, the goal of the exhibit was to help people understand how the U.S. government became involved and became so deeply mired in the situation.

CO: And I would say that probably, I did have a question for later on that was saying what impression do you hope this exhibit makes on the visitors and probably it's one of the, being the goal is to help people understand how the U.S. government became involved, but are there other impressions you hope that people obtain from the exhibit?

AK: Certainly I hope that, and this is sort of the very high level hope, and I'm sure that it doesn't operate on this level for everyone. I would like people to perhaps realize that our leaders, even the most well-meaning among them, are susceptible to making decisions based on personal desires for maintaining their position that can lead to really, really awful consequences for other people. So that's one and I also hope to focus a little bit on some of the people that we ignored in our explorations of the Vietnam War, mainly the Vietnamese, especially the South Vietnamese who were our allies, and those veterans they don't have a wall, they don't even have a country

anymore. And we lost around 58,000 soldiers, but they lost millions of soldiers and civilians, and millions were also displaced so I wanted to pull out what we think about when we think about the war a little bit.

CO: And is this the first time the National Archives has done an exhibit on the Vietnam War?

AK: It is, and we might not have it be our first time (unintelligible) to do it because

CO: So, we could say that the archivist is definitely that

AK: He was the driving force.

CO: The driving force behind the exhibit, that's fascinating. And do you think it was also from personal experience being a veteran, but also with anniversaries coming up, especially Veterans day?

AK: And also the records we have. We can tell a story about the war that can't really be told anywhere else so it's, it would be a glaring omission if we didn't, if we hadn't.

CO: And is there a particular artifact in the exhibit which is one of your favorites or very prominent to the exhibit itself?

AK: Well one of the ones that I think of as being very poignant um is the letter, or the draft of the letter the President Johnson worked on. He was responding to the parents of a young man who had been killed and you can see his struggle, with all the crossing out and re-wording. I feel like it's symbolic of how impossible it was really to justify this to someone who had just lost a son.

CO: And were there any artifacts that were previously in the plan to be included, but then had to be taken out due to space, probably with the four episodes.

AK: Yeah, there always are. Let's see if I can think of any off the top of my head. There's always so many communications and can I get back to you on that one because I can't think of any off the top of my head?

CO: Yes, yes, no of course, I know that's one of the harder one's too. So one of my other questions was how did your team determine or collect artifacts of histories and you said you reached out to many professors to see what they included, but were there any other ways that you determined what to include especially with declassified documents. Because I believe on your, there are some recently declassified-

AK: Yea so in addition to the documents that they, and some were films as well, but that they said were key to understanding the war. What I did was I looked at their recommendations and kind of structured them into the episode and looked at other items that helped to round out the stories in the exhibit. Certainly take visual things into perspective because it's an exhibit, so we can't have an exhibit just full of typewritten documents, it's not very interesting. So we wanted to have a variety and we wanted to tell the story, so that letter for example was not one that was recommended by a historian, it was just something I came across and felt was really moving and felt like it spoke to what was going on. So there were a fair number that were not recommended.

CO: And do you have, when you have school groups, like younger children come in, I know you have the domino theory set-up where kids can do that sort of hands-on, it's great for kids to have hands on activity. If you're providing a tour for younger children, is it harder at any point to create these connections for them to kind of understand the complexity of the war?

AK: I honestly haven't done a tour for kids. I've done them for young adults. And certainly there's a challenge in that this history is completely new to some people so doing it for younger kids would definitely be a challenge because it's so complex. I would really have to spend some time developing that if I were to do that. We don't have a lot of field trips that come here, we get a lot of 8th graders from around the country who come to the as their senior 8th grade trip, but we really don't have a developed school program at the moment.

CO: I did ask about the advisory council, but did everybody on this list act as the advisory council?

AK: Yes, and, as I said, some were more active than others, but yeah they were all helpful throughout the process.

CO: I guess, and right at the beginning a lot of my questions we had answered throughout this. Probably we could go on a walk through the exhibit if you have time to see if there's anything that comes up.

AK: Ok, yeah.

APPENDIX B. LIST OF REMEMBERING VIETNAM EXHIBIT

ADVISORS

A scanned copy of Alice Kamps' list of *Remembering Vietnam* exhibit advisors. She gave me this list during our interview.

Mai Elliott—Author of the *Sacred Willow* and *The Rand Corporation in Vietnam*

Col. James Willbanks—Veteran and professor at the War College

Ronald Spector—Army historian and Vietnam War historian at GWU

Arnold Isaacs—Journalist, witnessed fall of Saigon, local. Author of *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia*

Colonel Greg Daddis—Westmoreland biography, Chapman University

David Elliott: author of "The Vietnamese War," Pomona College

Patrick Hagopian—Author of *The Vietnam War in American Memory*, Lancaster University

George C. Herring—Author of *Pentagon Papers, America's Longest War*, University of Kentucky

Mark Bradley—Author of *Vietnam at War*, University of Chicago

Mark Atwood Lawrence—An International History in Documents, University of Texas at Austin

Marilyn Young—Author of *the Vietnam Wars*, 1945-1990, NYU

Timothy Naftali—Former director of Reagan Library, NYU

Edwin Moise—Author of *Tonkin Gulf*, Clemson University, SC

Lien –Hang Nguyen—Author of *Hanoi's War*, University of Kentucky

Edward G. Miller—Author of "Misalliance" Dartmouth , NH

Jeffrey P. Kimball—Author of "Nixon's Vietnam War," Miami University, OH

Fredrik Logevall—Author of *Embers of War*, Harvard, MA

Johannes Kadura—Author of *The War after the War*, Think Asia Group, Beijing, China

Rufus Phillips—author of *Why Vietnam Matters*: young C.I.A. officer in Saigon in the nineteen-fifties, ran the U.S. civilian counterinsurgency program in the early sixties

Ambassador Bui Diem—Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States

APPENDIX C. SIXTEEN EPISODES SUGGESTED BY DAVID ELLIOTT

A copy of the list of sixteen episodes given to Alice Kamps by David Elliott. She provided me with this list during our interview.

Sixteen critical episodes in the Vietnam War

1. ***How it started***.

The Japanese invasion of Tonkin (Northern French Indochina] in September 1940 triggered a series of U.S. economic sanctions which ultimately led to Pearl Harbor. The question of whether or not the United States should resist this aggression in what later became North Vietnam, was a central focus on the most influential statement of America's Twentieth Century destiny ever written, the Life Magazine editorial in February 1941 by editor-in-chief Henry Luce titled *"The American Century."* [Document no 1. excerpt "Do or die for old Dong Dang" from this editorial - see attachment 1.] Document no. 2 Photo of Japanese forces crossing the border into Northern Vietnam at Dong Dang]

In 1945, the OSS mission with Al Patti in charge had cordial relations with Ho Chi Minh, who aided the OSS in recovering American pilots shot down by the Japanese, and trained the nucleus of what became the People's Army. [Document no. 1 - OSS mission - Patti's memoirs]

2. ***How U.S. involvement deepened.***

In the spring of 1950, just prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States shifted from mild criticism of the French attempt to recolonize Vietnam, to military support for a NATO ally that was now important to American security interests both in Europe and in Asia. [Document no. 2 Pentagon Papers. U.S. decision to provide aid to

3. ***Did the United States install Ngo Dinh Diem in power?***

Many accounts critical of American involvement in Vietnam trace its origins to a supposed American installation of Ngo Dinh Diem as a puppet ruler of South Vietnam, who would be the instrument of American policy there. Recent scholarship has shown that the Diem regime was not a creation of the U.S., though it was highly dependent on Washington (80 percent of its budget was provided by the U.S. [Document no. 3 origins of the Diem regime, Ed Miller, *Misalliance*]

4. ***Was the renewed insurgency it "Aggression from the North?"***

This was the official U.S. position, most comprehensively stated in the 1965 State Department White Paper stated? [Document no. 4 State Department White Paper, 1965]

There is considerable evidence of reluctance on the part of North Vietnamese leaders, including Ho Chi Minh, to give an unqualified "green light" to armed struggle in the South. A prolonged debate in Hanoi from late 1958 through 1960 finally ended with a reluctant endorsement of armed struggle by communist leaders in Hanoi, under pressure from southern insurgents who were being hunted down, killed and imprisoned in the

south. [document no. 5 Le Duan and Tran Van Tra - cited in my book *The Vietnamese War*]

5. *Was the Vietnam War instigated by the Soviet Union as part of Khrushchev's encouragement of "Wars of National Liberation?" - Or by China as part of Mao Zedong's strategy of revolutionary war?*

John F. Kennedy and most of his advisors thought it was part of the Soviet Union's aggressive plans for the Third World, influenced by Maoist theories of revolutionary war. Their concern was more for the global implications of a breakdown in containment and adverse consequences for American credibility than what was actually happening in Vietnam. JFK's decision was heavily based on the domestic political need for some symbolic forceful action to offset his political setbacks in the Bay of Pigs, June 1961 Vienna meeting with Khrushchev, and the Berlin Wall in September 1961. [Document no. 6 excerpt from Fred Logevall, "Embers of War" on importance of American domestic politics in Kennedy's decision making on Vietnam.]

Unfortunately for Vietnam, it's internal crisis appeared on Washington's horizon just at the moment JFK was seeking a place to draw the line. [Document no. 7 "Vietnam's The Place" - Stanley Karnow, *"Vietnam: A War"*].

Russia and China were initially unenthusiastic about supporting Vietnam's southern insurgency. [Document No. 5 Ilya Gaiduk, Document no. 8 "*The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War"*]. [Document no. 9 Chen Jian, "*Mao's China and the Cold War*"].

The incident that convinced both Russia and China that the United States was preparing to intervene militarily in Vietnam, and caused them to switch to active support of the southern insurgency, was the February 1962 U.S. decision to set up a combat command headquarters in Saigon, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam or MACV, to supersede its MAAG, or Military Assistance and Advisory Group (which continued in a much diminished role as an entity subordinate to MACV. [Document No. 10, establishment of MACV, February 1962]. Russia and China both thought that the establishment of MACV indicated an American intention to eventually send combat troops to Vietnam, and concluded that they would have to increase their support for Vietnam's insurgency.

6. Crisis of the U.S. Advisory period

The January1963 battle of Ap Bac. A military setback in the Mekong Delta at the Battle of Ap Bac signified for Hanoi that it had found the answer to the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy, and that it would be difficult for America do defeat the insurgency from the sidelines, providing advice and tactical support. [Document No. 11 Hanoi's Assessment of the Battle of Ap Bac]. The reluctance of the MACV command to acknowledge the setback led to the beginning of what came to be known as the "credibility gap" between reality on the ground in Vietnam and what American officials presented as "progress" to the American public. This gap subsequently became serious enough to undermine public

support for the War [Documents nos. 12 and 13 - U.S. reporters view of deteriorating situation in the Mekong Delta in the summer of 1963, and the U.S. official response].

7. Escalation and Counter Escalation.

Following the U.S.-supportred coup against South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, the South Vietnamese government and armed forces were thrown into confusion. [Document no. 14 Pentagon Papers - U.S. support for the anti-Diem coup]

Hanoi decided to press its advantage and ordered a major escalation of the war in an attempt to crush the Saigon regime before the United States could intervene. [Document no. 15, Central Committee Resolution 9, Hanoi, December 1963]. As the political and security situation in South Vietnam precipitously deteriorated, the U.S. looked for ways to shore up the South Vietnamese government. Harassing North Vietnam, and ultimately a bombing campaign against the North were aimed at shoring up the morale of the South Vietnamese government and interdicting aid from the North. This campaign escalated after the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, which also led to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution [Document 16 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution] Subsequent investigation indicates that the specific incident that triggered this Resolution [the alleged North Vietnamese attack on the destroyer Turner Joy on August 4, 1964] never happened, and that there was evidence of a cover-up within the National Security Agency to conceal this fact. [Document 17 - excerpts from National Security Agency official historian Robert Hanyok's in-house 2003 NSA report on the Gulf of Tonkin incident, "*Skunks, Bogies, Silent Hounds, and the Flying Fish:The Gulf of Tonkin Mystery, 2-4 August 1964*"].

8. The attack on the Pleiku airfield, February 1965.

This attack provided the pretext for launching Operation Rolling Thunder, the sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam begun in early 1965. Despite the American perception that this was an intentional escalatory provocation aimed at the visit of President Johnson's National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy to Vietnam to discuss further assistance to the Saigon government, which was rapidly unraveling, the local Viet Cong commander in Pleiku had never heard of Bundy, and ordered the attack on the airfield for local tactical reasons. [Document 18, account in Bundy biography, Goldstein, *"Lessons in Disaster"*]. Bundy himself, when asked why the Pleiku incident, among many other Viet Cong attacks during this period, should have been singled out as the reason for launching Operation Rolling Thunder, openly stated that it was just a pretext. [Document no. 19 "Pleiku's are like streetcars" he said to some American journalists - *"Lessons in Disaster"*] This meant that one comes along every 15 minutes or so. In other words, if it hadn't been Pleiku, it would have been something else.

9. America sends troops to Vietnam in March 1965 without informing its Saigon allies.

The memoirs of former South Vietnamese Ambassador Bui Diem, who was a close aide to the Prime Minister of South Vietnam in March 1965 when the first American troops were ordered in to protect the Danang airbase, confirms that the Phan Huy Quat

administration did not request American troops, was puzzled that the U.S. should think that the crisis was serious enough to require this escalation, and found out about the American decisions only as the troops were en route to Vietnam. [Document no. 20 excerpt from Ambassador Bui Diem's memoir "*In the Jaws of History*"].

10. America's direct military intervention in the conflict was not supported by a plan or strategy to win the war. Thus the pros and cons and potential costs of intervention were never fully debated.

The discussions in Washington in the Spring of 1965 were almost exclusively centered around "not losing" or losing after putting up token resistance to sustain American credibility in other Cold War arenas. The strategic aim at the outset was not to achieve victory by military means, but to stave off losing for as long as possible. It was based on the assumption that Hanoi would give up if it saw that it couldn't win a decisive victory. Thus the requirements for a winning strategy were never systematically assessed at the point when the decision to intervene was made. [Document no. 21 - largely from McGeorge Bundy's biographies and the Pentagon Papers]. After the Tet Offensive, Henry Kissinger would conclude that in this kind of a conflict "the guerrilla wins if he does not lose." [Document no. 21 Henry Kissinger, *Foreign Affairs* January 1969].

11. Secretary of Defense McNamara concludes by late 1965 that the war is not winnable.

This is based on several biographies of McNamara. [Document no. 22 - excerpts from McNamara biographies]

12. The Tet Offensive.

This remains one of the most controversial episodes of the entire war. Some feel that it was a desperation gamble by Hanoi that failed because of the heavy losses suffered by the attacking Viet Cong troops. Others feel that this was the psychological and political turning point, after which the war was unwinnable for the United States. Hanoi's strategy was not a "go for broke" gamble (as in 1963-64) but a plan that envisaged several outcomes, from optimal (collapse of the Saigon government and withdrawal of American troops) to minimal (forcing the U.S. to realize that the war was stalemated and not winnable militarily. [Document no. 23 top CIA Hanoi analyst George Allen's assessment of Hanoi's intentions in launching the Tet Offensive Allen, *"None So Blind"].* [Document 24 Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford's statement in a Vietnam documentary film that he felt he had been successful in advising LBJ to "stop trying to win the war." - From transcript of PBS documentary on the Vietnam War] After that, with the exception of some episodes in the Nixon administration, America's concern in Vietnam was how to extricate itself with minimum damage to its credibility and interests.

13. The Spring Offensive 1972.

Often portrayed as a military defeat for the Viet Cong and Hanoi, the 1972 "Easter Offensive" was interpreted by Hanoi (and a number of foreign observers) as demonstrating that Nixon's Vietnamization policy had failed. [Document no 25 - North Vietnamese assaults pushed back only with the help of American air power. Arnold Isaacs *"Without Honor"*]. One important effect of the Easter Offensive was to strengthen the guerilla infrastructure in the Mekong Delta that had been seriously weakened in the post-Tet period. [Document no. 26 - Elliott, *"The Vietnamese War"*]

14. The Christmas Bombing and the Paris Accords.

Many accounts of the Vietnam War repeat the contention that President Nixon's Christmas 1972 bombing forced Hanoi to make critical concessions that led an agreement which achieved "peace with honor" and resulted in America's exit from the war. Almost all serious scholars agree that the Agreement signed in January 1973 was almost identical to the abortive agreement of October 1972, and thus Hanoi could not be said to have "capitulated" as a result of the December 1972 American bombing. Most observers agree the main purpose of the bombing was to induce America's Saigon ally, President Nguyen Van Thieu, to sign the agreement. [Document no 27 - Isaacs, "*Without Honor*"].

15. Breakdown of the ceasefire.

Most observers agree that there were massive violations of the agreement by all Vietnamese sides. There is persuasive evidence that the preponderance of these violations came from the South Vietnamese government, who lost the most in agreeing to the cease-fire and was the most reluctant to sign the agreements. [Document no 28 - Elliott, "*The Vietnamese War*," Isaacs, "*Without Honor.*"].

16. The Last Days in Vietnam.

The memorable image of North Vietnamese tanks crashing through the gates of the Independence Palace on April 30, 1975 [Document no. 29 -photo of tanks] have left the impression among many who only know the Vietnam War from the hindsight of history, that this final act supports the "Aggression from the North" thesis [see White Paper reference in point 1]. Rory Kennedy's recent documentary, Last Days in Vietnam has reinforced this view. The preceding points should, at the least, show that this view was oversimplified, and undermined by much contrary evidence. The problem with the Rory Kennedy view, which reflects a large segment of current popular understanding of the Vietnam War is that it was all about Americans and North Vietnamese. It would be unfortunate if this was the impression left by the National Archives exhibit.

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW ON THE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL WALL

Methodology: Understanding the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Education Center at The Wall's development process, changes that took place and an explanation for why, involvement by interest groups in the plans, and insight into the challenges and choices made guided the questions for this interview. Questions included how the idea for a center first developed, staff and interested parties involved, response to the center's meaning, and the greatest challenges in its development and focus.

Interview on the Education Center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall
Interviewer: Chelsea Olmsted
Interviewee: Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) Senior Collections Curator Jason R. Bain
Date: November 1, 2018

CO: We can start out with you just telling me a little about yourself. How you came to work for the VVMF, your position, and kind of, what kind of work you do [currently and just generally for the institution]?

JB: You bet. So, I came to work for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund in 2012. They actually hired me in I want to say March of that year. My background is in Museum Studies. So, I got my Master's in Collections Management and Curatorial Practice from GW [George Washington University] here in DC in 2008. I worked in the field for about 4 years and then found out about this project, had an opportunity to come back to DC from the West Coast, and started with the Fund and began working on the Ed Center Project. Initially I was hired to be the primary liaison, essentially, between the National Park Service and the Fund. It's kind of an interesting triangulation because I was a non-NPS employee working at a Park Service facility for a non-profit and then reporting a lot of my work product to an exhibit designer in New York. So, my role was just kind of coordinating all of those parties, making sure everybody was on the same page in terms of what we were doing with the project, and then doing the primary curation of the collection of artifacts left at the Wall for the eventual display in the Education Center once it was built.

CO: Ok, that's really cool that you were like a primary liaison because that's where, some new questions that I developed were kind of [on] the organizational structure of this site essentially. Because I know from reading that it's kind of this interesting camaraderie between the NPS and the VVMF for these programs and what you're doing with the items that have been left at the wall. So, I just wanted to know if you can kind of tell me how that organizational structure works out, who's at the highest tier [in] like decision-making and kind of making your way downward.

JB: So, the players on the Park Service side have changed in recent years. Truth told I'm not entirely sure at those upper tiers who's holding those positions in the Park Service. For my part, my daily contact has typically been with the Director of the Museum Resource Center here in Hyattsville [MD] with collections stored. For many years that was Bob Sonderman. Bob,

however, retired in July, end of July this year, and his replacement is the head of NAMA. So, NAMA is National Mall and Memorial Parks which is a division of Park Service and it's the division that's actually responsible for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, so the lead Curator for NPS NAMA ended up taking Bob's position here as the head of the Mercy Facility. And it's primarily been those two that I've had most of my interaction with, the Mercy Director from the standpoint of facility, coordinating tours, access to the collecti-, not necessarily access to the collection more, more facility access. So, setting up the lab that we needed, any additional equipment we needed to borrow, staff that work here in the Museum Resource Center that we needed for various projects or interviews, precedence, those sorts of things. From the collections side my primary contact was with the Director of NAMA. So that right now is a woman named Laura Anderson and, before Laura took over for Bob when he retired as the Facility Director, she had been the Chief Curator for NAMA. So, she had been my primary report specifically in terms of collection. So, as I curated records, as we needed access to different collection items, questions about the collection any sort of public representation of the collection, all of that sort of information, that kind of work flowed through her curatorial office. At this point, I don't know if they have appointed anyone to replace her as the head of NAMA, so I guess a long-winded answer to that question is we're getting a lot of turnover on the Park Service side so typically any of the more higher level contacts, where we're talking about supervisory staff within Park Service administration, anything really above the level of NAMA or Mercy Facility, that communication is typically happening between our CEO Jim Knotts and whomever at Park Service is holding the position at that time. So, you may consider reaching out to him or you might want to reach out to, she had been our VP of Communications, she is now, I believe she's our Director of Outreach, her name is Heidi. If you go onto our website, look for Heidi Zimmerman, staff listing, Heidi can kind of give you a better sense I think of who some of those executive level players are and who our CEO is communicating with at the moment.

CO: Ok, and so, of course I know just recently like the change with the Education Center at the Wall, kind of where it was going and where it's going to be going now. But I had also seen that the Content Advisory Committee had been formed to kind of create what was essentially going to be a narrative. I think what they called as like a "clear and concise narrative of the Vietnam War" and just picking your brain at how much you kind of know at what they were looking at doing. Do you have kind of a clue as to what kind of narrative was being developed? Sort of like where it started and ended at or-

JB: So I think when we're using the term narrative a little definition probably helps. Because I think we're talking about two separate tracks. Primarily what the Content Advisory Committee [CAC] has helped us with, up to this point, is really the academic history surrounding Vietnam and a lot of that academic history we used to flush out our timeline. So, the, had the Education Center been built, there would have been a large interactive timeline, multiple screens, kiosks for users to interact with the content. The academic history of Vietnam that would have been used to populate that timeline is what the CAC developed. We also used a lot of that content to then develop the timeline that's on our website, some of the timeline and the academic information that travels with our Traveling Wall that Heals, and a lot of that information will now be incorporated in this new online Ed. Center. So that's primarily what they've done up to this point and how we've used it. Had the Ed. Center actually been built and this is kind of the other definition I think of narrative, their role would have been to help us actually write the script for

the exhibition. So, using a lot of that academic background, those facts, those dates, the interpretation of that history to determine exactly how visitors from a purely historical standpoint would receive their information and would progress physically through the Education Center as a museum. So, it's really kind of two separate tracks, it's in script but then it's that academic history that was used for these various timelines and other initiatives on our current and future website.

CO: Yeah, and I had seen a, I think it was kind of a photo build-up of what the Center was going to look like, what it had been approved to be. And I knew it was an underground structure, if I'm correct, and then kind of in the center of the entire structure was going to be a display of the items.

JB: Correct. So the best way to think about it, like I said, so start architecturally. Everything had to be built underground because as a requirement of Capital Planning Commission and Fine Arts Commission, they required that we preserve site lines from Constitution Avenue to the Lincoln Memorial. We could not block those site lines so that was why it had to be built underground. It ended up being a pretty substantial challenge just because everything on the National Mall from the Washington Monument down to about Jefferson is all infill. That's actually natural flood plain. If you go back to say the middle of the 19th century that was all the Potomac River, there was no land there. So we ended up having to do a number of archaeological digs, soil assessments, these sorts of things to ensure that, that we could actually put that structure in there, that it would be stable, that it wouldn't flood, and then come up with a design that was kind of similar to what they did for the World Trade Center in Manhattan because you had a similar situation of sort of infilled land where they, and I don't know the actual architectural term, but essentially they build a bathtub and once they put that tub in that hole in the ground then they built the structure up out of that. So once that substructure had been created, then the museum would be built up out the center of that and the idea was to have the exhibit cases, as you mentioned, running down the center of the structure with ramps, walking ramps, for visitors cantilevered off those, those exhibit cases. So, essentially, as you come into the Center at ground level the idea was that you would walk up to our registration desk get information, audio guides, that sort of thing, you'd move down a hallway, get to the center of the structure, and then you would start winding your way around those exhibit cases until you reached the ground level. As you made your way around those exhibit cases, by the time you get down to the second floor, we would have had that timeline with the screens and the kiosks and so forth. When you get to the ground level there would have been temporary exhibition space and then, as you came off the last ramp and underneath the bottom of the exhibit cases, you would have stepped into an open sort of hall kind of area where you would have had the Wall of Faces. The Wall of Faces would have been roughly a 25' high 40' wide screen that would just cycle through a face for every name that's listed on the Wall. It would have also cycled through photos for Iraq and Afghan vets, probably grouped by birthday or something else, and then there would have additional educational resources for visitors' kiosks and those things on that level as well.

CO: Ok, and I'm glad you mentioned the Wall of Faces because I thought that was a really interesting thing that I had learned about only from looking on the Education Center at the Wall's website because I had not heard of it until then and I just wanted to know what sort of influenced that decision to do that kind of call for photos. Maybe, I don't know if ideological

perspective is the best way to put it, but what really caused this mission to gain its start to want to gather all of these photos?

JB: You know I would say from, if we want to use this term ideology or concept, it really was the idea to put a face to every name and to really personalize the extent of, of sacrifice of that generation. It's a term that we've used repeatedly called "scale of sacrifice." The thinking was that when the Wall, when the memorial itself, was initially built one of the things that was required actually as a part of the design competition, and that really sort of drove our thinking behind how it was built, was to incorporate every single name of every casualty from the Vietnam War. Everyone who had been lost I should say, not every casualty, but every death from the Vietnam War. That was much more personal than really most, I won't say all, but most memorials had been up to that point. Particularly on the National Mall, most memorials don't have individual names. It's more about the events, it's about an individual, you know a President or something to that effect, so this was the first time that you really had the personalization of having all the names. The thinking with the Wall of Faces, we would then take that one step further and try and connect especially younger visitors even more so to those names and personalize that even more by actually showing you this is what this person looked like, this was a person with a future and a family and an entire life that was cut short because of their service in Vietnam. It was ideologically in furthering that concept of personalizing loss and the scale of that loss and really putting those faces to the names.

CO: Ok, and what also caused that influence to extend into, because I know like you mentioned soldiers that have been lost in Iraq and Afghanistan, in wars following the Vietnam War? Because I thought that was another interesting addition, was going beyond just the names that are on the Wall and we're going on into wars that are more, even for like a younger generation, kind of a more of a contemporary understanding for them as well.

JB: Sure. So, there were a few different reasons that that was done. One of the things that we wanted to do, one of the ideas for the Education Center was to be able to place Vietnam within the broader continuum of military service. Often the way that Vietnam history is, is taught, is told, even the way that that era is thought of in American History, it's almost as if it's an outlier. It's some sort of an anomaly and we really wanted to debunk that idea. That there were protests for and against, you had the Civil Rights Movement, the sexual revolution, youth culture, you had all of these other things happening around it that make it very distinct, but in many ways the motivations for service amongst that generation and within that conflict weren't all that different than what motivated Americans to serve in other conflicts. So part of it was placing it in that context. Part of it is also that Iraq and Afghan vets don't currently have a memorial of their own and the process to get any sort of memorial or statue or anything built on the National Mall is very complex and requires a lot of resources and a lot of support at high levels. So what we tend to find is that we've got Iraq and Afghan vets coming to the Wall, drawing parallels between our current entanglements and the Vietnam War, and leaving things behind that, that relate to their comrades, their buddies, or that sort of draw that, that connection between Vietnam veterans and themselves. So in, in many ways what we call "New Dawn Vets" have taken a lot of ownership of the Wall and so that, we wanted to reflect that as well in, in the Wall of Faces and give them some place, even temporarily on the National Mall, until they have their own memorial to come to.

CO: Oh, that's really nice. I know I was kind of wondering with the extension, but your explanation really makes sense to it now. At least with the thinking.

JB: Well it's, and I can't speak to the conversations that were happening between the board members, our founder and former CEO Jan Scruggs, and some our donors. I do know that there were fundraiser considerations in there as well and it was not a universally popular or agreed upon strategy. Part of the concern is that Vietnam veterans have a very distinct historical memory as it were of I guess, I hate to put words into the mouths of Vietnam vets, but they feel like they've been screwed. They've been screwed time and time again by the government, by the VA. I mean you name it and there, on the part of some Vietnam vets, there was a feeling that well we finally get our own museum, we finally have this museum to show and to explain this, this wonderful memorial that we have and now we have to share it with veterans from these other wars. So, there was definitely that push back that, that was coming from the Vietnam veteran community and there, there were some pretty contentious conversations happening behind the scenes in terms of how far do we go with this, how much representation do we give to, to "New Dawn Vets," and I don't know that that had been fully resolved by the time that we decided, the board made the decision to (indecipherable) the project.

CO: Ok, and will it, now will this call for photos, this will just become a part of your online- where it's moving on to the online exhibition?

JB: So it's currently part of our website. It has been an online campaign I believe since 2013, and possibly earlier, so just about the entire time that I've been with the organization. It will transition into the new website, whatever form that takes. We're getting pretty close, though, to actually completing that campaign. At this point we are below 2,000 photos that we have remaining. The current figure that we give for names on the Wall is 58,316. That number, though, tends to change. Some names were engraved more than once, some names were misspelled, there are different things that happened in the construction of the memorial, so that number's not completely firm. But we're pretty close to having that done, so by the time the new website launches probably middle of the year next year, maybe early-late spring, early summer, we may be down to 1,000 or 1,500 photos, so it's not as if that campaign will have to continue that much longer. But we will continue to solicit for photos as we continue to learn more about what that number actually should be. As we continue to get better photos as we continue to just, I think, really solidly nail down that, that, that number of individuals that are actually listed on the memorial.

CO: Ok, and you did talk a little bit about kind of fundraising like you did it for the Wall and unfortunately the Center with fundraising didn't work out normally. But I know there was mention of quite a few different areas of where fundraising came from such as large and grassroots donors, congress members, advisors, and I thought was interesting was international allies. That was very interesting, I was wondering if you could describe any of the international allies who made donations? I did kind did my own little research to kind of see and I had seen like Australia and Singapore were two of them, but if you could just talk about them and their interest in donating to your mission and where that interest came from.

JB: So our primary foreign donor, I believe the largest gift that we got from foreign government actually came from the Republic of Korea. Koreans and the troops sent by Korea, South Korea of course, that was the largest allied contingence with the United States apart from South Vietnam. The other largest was, of course, Australia and New Zealand, so ANZAC [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] troops. I think their primary motivation really was to see some historical acknowledgement of the support that they gave the United States and the role they played in the allied coalition during the Vietnam War. We didn't really, be careful with how I phrase this, although we had the funding in place there wasn't an entirely clear understanding as to what form that representation would actually take in the education center. On one level it may have been simply, and this is how I looked at it, was trying to the greatest extent possible find artifacts in the collection that reflected that allied support during the war. Those governments, I think, were a bit more of the mind that they might actually have individual displays, or temporary exhibits, or dedicated spaces within the Center and that's where those conversations were, were still kind of evolving at the time. We do tend to see a lot of Australian and New Zealand items left at the Wall. That involvement was fairly substantial although, again, as I mentioned the Koreans were our biggest ally. But that again also kind of made a complicating factor when the board decided to terminate the project and the question became what portion of those donations could still be utilized, what portion needed to be returned, and I think at this point we're still in negotiations and discussions with them to figure out how we translate their expectations now into an online environment. The really positive aspect of that is because this is going to be a purely online Ed. Center and this isn't a physical facility that is a federal facility, belongs to the federal government, and is subject to a lot of ethics guidelines which could have made it difficult to give a foreign government their own individual display within a federal facility. We have a whole lot more freedom now because it's our website, we're nonprofit, we're designing it, I think we'll actually be able to fulfill those, those commitments and those expectations on the part of foreign governments. Perhaps more effectively in this environment than we could have in a federal museum

CO: Ok, well that's really interesting I thought the international allies part when I read that I know it kind of stopped me for a second, because I knew we had international support for the Vietnam War. The donations part was just something where I was like oh, I'll have to ask about this. And so, we can kind of talk now about going into the Education Center being something that's online now. And I know the decision is still extremely new at this point, if I read right, I believe you'll be going into creating your own website as you've just said, will there also be kind of developments on existing programs as well or are we kind of just making new?

JB: The, the best way probably to think of about the, this initiative is to not only take what would have been the physical Education Center on the Mall as a physical museum, but also all of our other programs and initiatives and to have kind of a one stop way-station as it were that digitally represents all of those different initiatives. So, it will be called the online Ed Center, or something to that effect, but it's really the next evolution in terms of how VVMF markets our programs and our services. So we will have a representation of the collection, obviously the items that I've been working on that would have been physically displayed in the museum, we will have a representation to some effect of our traveling wall, the Wall that Heals, we will have a lot of our educational resources on there, curriculum materials. One of the big initiatives that we've been undertaking from the education side recently is that our Vietnam curriculum

materials have been adopted by State of New York as their statewide K-12 Vietnam curriculum. State of Pennsylvania, the legislature, is also considering the same move. So I guess, more broadly, what we're thinking is that we don't anticipate that the VVMF will be the end all be all authoritative resource for Vietnam, but we want to be one of the most authoritative resources about Vietnam generally and the authoritative resource about the memorial, the collection of items, and then our programs. So, where someone else has developed more of a Vietnam content expertise or academic expertise, we hope to develop partnerships with them and be able to link to their resources. But, really, we want our site, we want this new online Education Center to be that initial stop to either find those resources from VVMF and the ones that we can provide or for us to be able to direct to other content partners.

CO: And definitely the items that, as you said, that you're working with are kind of unique to collections in the sense of that they've been left behind at a memorial. And while I believe what I've seen is that quite a few of them are also items that definitely come from veterans of the war, they may have worn while at war, that you're also taking in some objects that are left for memorial purposes as well. I was just wondering how you guys kind of categorize these items. Do you categorize them into certain, different fields as such as this one was worn by the soldier in war, this was left by a family member, this was left by, and kind of create the provenance of the artifact.

JB: Well so we're in two different questions, though, let me come back to the categorization. The collection is one of the most unique that I've ever worked with or that I'm aware of in the museum field, largely because of that method of donation. So for most museum collections you've got a Collections Manager, a Curator, a Museum Director, an Education Director, somebody behind the scenes saying this is what our collection is, this is what we do, and we need one of those, and three of those, and another one of those to have an authoritative, comprehensive collection. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial collection, by contrast, is composed entirely of things left by visitors to the memorial. So, it's what we generally term community curated or community sourced is a better way to look at it. What tends to happen with that is that you have this collection that's extraordinarily diverse, you have a lot of different material types, you have a lot of different ideas, opinions, concepts that are expressed. You have a lot of different types of visitors, so you do have the Vietnam veterans and their families, you have current and former, or prior, generations of veterans, we've got World War I and World War II items in the collection, we have Iraq and Afghan items in the collection. You tend to find a lot of things outside the military, so you get, especially these days, a lot of things left by school groups. Children and even teachers who weren't even alive during the Vietnam era, for them it's just a distant historical event. You have things that are left more and more now by international visitors. Particularly as you have the rising middle class in China and in India, you're beginning to see a lot more of those kind of middle class tourists who are now coming to DC, coming to the National Mall, visiting the Wall, interacting with it in that way. Probably the, one of the most interesting aspects of that is that the collection tends to reflect what's happening in society, so, and that isn't always necessarily having to do with Vietnam or even the era. For example, if there's a political march in DC, if there's a cancer rally, if there's an anti-nuclear proliferation event you begin to see items from those events left at the Wall, just because it's this cathartic space where it's condoned to be able to come there and leave something that has an emotional resonance for you whether or not it's really got anything to do with the Wall or the War. So, it's

really interesting the way you can kind of chart the social history, both of Washington, DC but of the entire country through the collection. That being said, it made it very difficult for us to figure out with our exhibit designers how to categorize this, how do we break this down, how do we begin think about it. And so, at this point, we're still using the framework that they set up. They essentially gave us six major themes and what these themes do is they, they really try and look at the collection initially from, initially from, from the standpoint of timeframe. So, items that were left in 1982, when the Wall was first built, are very different than what's being left in 2017, but also what does that say about the visitors? So, the way those, those categories break down is we kind of start with the items that were left earliest in the wall's history, early in 1982, they tend to be what we call "close to the loss" items. So, they're items that were either left by veterans themselves for their buddies, for those that they had lost just on their own behalf, or were left by family members, mothers, fathers of service members who died in Vietnam; sometimes children, these kinds of things. As time progressed and more and more of the Vietnam generation has died off and that visitor-ship has changed, we being to see what we now call "evolving meaning of the Wall" items, which tend to be things left by school groups, left by international visitors, items that might not have a thing to do with Vietnam or left by people who have no real personal or emotional connection to the event. And so that's how we've kind of tried to conceptualize the collection and it's also how we were going to try and represent it in the Education Center. So that as you start at the ground level and you make your way down to the bottom of the exhibit, well bottom of the center to the bottom of the exhibit cases, you're progressing through history through those things. So you're going from those very close, very personal, very directly connected items left early on to the kinds of things that are being left now where you've got a letter from a school kid that says something to the effect of "thank you veteran, I love freedom." It's been challenging and now that we're not actually going to build the Center, the question is do we abandon that theoretical framework that we've used for all of our curation efforts and free ourselves from that and try and pursue another avenue or do we still try and find what's valuable about that and massage it into something else and that's something we haven't resolved yet?

CO: Ok, and you said there were six themes, right?

JB: Yeah, so we have close to the loss, what we've termed "scale of sacrifice," which is you know multiples. Fifty helmets or 1,000 dog tags on the wall to give you that scale of sacrifice. Let's see, "bonds between veterans," which the way that I've been using that is really two-fold to look at the bonds between Vietnam veterans and just that bond of military service but also bonds between veterans of different eras and the, the commonality of that wartime experience. What we call the "toll of the war and healing," toll of the war and healing is beginning to look at the aftermath of the war, so things like illnesses, cancers due to Agent Orange, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, alcoholism, drug-use, those sorts of impacts of the war. Let's see so that's close to, scale, bonds, toll, evolving, I think I'm missing one actually, that's the other one I'm missing, "shared experience of war." So shared experience of the war is, that's really more about underrepresented groups, what would be good examples, medical personnel, nurses, our allies, a lot of those groups that participated in the war, maybe in a combat zone maybe not, but whose stories aren't often told. A lot of times we'll talk about the service members, we'll talk about families, but we don't necessarily talk about those ANZAC troops that had a high casualty rate at any given battle, or we don't necessarily tell the stories of the nurses who were behind the lines at the field hospitals, those types of things. So, it's hard to say that it's a chronological

framework, it is chronological, but it's chronological and thematic at the same time. And the best way to think about it just between those two endpoints, the close to the loss items that are early on, and the evolving at the end, and then a few kind of more thematic concepts in the middle. And if you'd like I'm happy to share with you a document that's got those themes on it and it's got a little more explanation for you than I'm maybe articulating at the moment.

CO: Oh yes, no, it's really a good explanation. Now you mentioned, cause, now the people who came up with the theme, they were an exhibit team prior to the one that they had? Prior to the one you have now or did some of them stay on?

JB: So present, for our traveling wall, either I'm doing the exhibition design or I am subcontracting that out. For the Ed Center, our design team was RAA, so Ralph Appelbaum Associates in New York, they've done the 9/11 museum, several other major projects, they're a big firm. But the initial design concept was theirs, the way that it worked out was that they had a sense of what they wanted the aesthetic of the Ed Center to be. Generally, they had a concept that they wanted to provide as little interpretation on the collection as possible, simply put these items in a glass case and let them speak for themselves with a few highlight items in between. But then, when I was hired and my Assistant Curator was hired, we really came on to provide the color for them to understand exactly how to create that thematic framework then within that physical design. And to, I think, flush out how to begin to tell some of the stories surrounding the collection and surrounding the design of the memorial through the script. Because, while they had an interesting design concept in mind, they really didn't know anything about the collection. They needed to have us on the ground, the hands in the items every day to be able to tell them this is what the collection looks like, this is what it feels like, these are the kinds of stories that people are telling, this is sort of the sense of the collection, and this is maybe how you'll be able to represent that.

CO: And what I could imagine, and you could also correct me if I'm wrong, I understand that the Vietnam War, and that era, was a time of great change but also really complex to explain all in one go. So I wanted to know if, at any point with when you and your Assistant Curator took on from RAA, if there was any kind of challenges to communicating the war's complexity through the items or if even the Advisory Committee had any challenges to communicating the complexity and what were these challenges?

JB: Sure. Two of the biggest challenges that we came across with, and it comes back to the difference between this museum collection and most. But most museum collections, when something's brought in and accessioned, the donor will either sit down in person with a representative of the museum or they'll have a long phone call, series of emails, you will get a lot of provenance of information. So, what is this item, how long has this person had it, are they the original owner, what was the circumstances under which it was purchased or created, what does it mean to them, what is their history with it, all of that contextual information that enables a museum to then do something interesting to an artifact. With about probably 85 to 90% of the artifacts in this collection there is zero provenance whatsoever. Someone comes to the memorial, they sit at the Wall, they have an emotional, cathartic experience, they leave something behind that's reflective of that. And most of the time they don't write a note, they don't leave a letter, they don't do anything that sort of gives any indication of why they left that thing or what that

thing was. So, one of the challenges that we had to explain to RAA and to help them incorporate into their design was this notion that it's very disingenuous for us to come along after the fact as museum personnel and impose our curatorial vision on something and say well, for example, we have a baseball in the collection, clearly this donor loved baseball or must have gone to baseball games with a father or a grandfather or a brother or a sister or whatever. We really had to reinforce with them this idea that you have to let the artifacts in this collection speak for themselves in the absence of any word from the donor themselves. But where we actually do have some provenance in that small sliver of the collection where we do have good information, we tend to get a lot of provenance. We tend to get very emotional and sometimes very graphic stories. And that sort of led into the next challenge was, without sacrificing fidelity to the history and to the intent of the donor, where do we draw the line in terms of what content we share and how complex that content can be. For example, we have some letters in the collection where service members talk about mutilations, they talk about rape, they talk about destruction of property, and those events that they lived through, those are informed by a lot of complex things that are happening in the environment, it's not as simple, obviously, as soldiers just want to set fire to a hooch and burn out a family. Well, there's a lot more to that, but how do we be authentic to that person's experience and represent it without being gratuitous just for the sake of gratuity. And not only that but how do we faithfully represent their experience through that artifact and yet provide all of that complex contextual information around it to help people understand. So that was probably the biggest challenge that we came across and with a lot those controversial objects, we had to develop some sort of a rubric to figure out ok where do we draw the line? You know, we're not going to draw the line about someone in a letter talking about blood and gore and combat. That's combat and that's what happens, but maybe we draw that line if we're talking about war crimes, maybe we draw the line if we have, for example, in one artifact a braid of hair that was taken as a war trophy. Perhaps that's something that we don't show because to try to be able to provide enough context around that artifact, it's still going to be in bad taste, it's still going to be difficult to create enough context for that to be taken as the donor intended and as is faithful to (unintelligible). So those were probably our two most significant challenges.

CO: Ok. And would you say with these, trying like you mentioned with the braid, probably not now is the best time it could be displayed. Do you think there is a significance to the length of time between the event and when we're exhibiting these items that really plays into, I don't know if I would say acceptance, but this general acceptance of something? Right now, the braid may cause some fire in a lot of people, thinking maybe 20 years down the road it could be an item that would be able to be displayed?

JB: I think at this point from a time standpoint enough time has passed that the ability to look at this in a more nuanced, contextualized way, that's there, that exists. And we have enough counterpoint examples in the collection that where, say a service member has taken a war trophy, they've held onto it for thirty years, they've grown, they've matured. They're not, as several of them have put it, that angry 18 year old kid with an M-16 anymore and they, they will come to the Wall and they'll leave these things with very, very thoughtful reminiscences about I'm not the person that I was, I ask your forgiveness. I understand that you were a warrior, just like me, defending your beliefs and your home just like I thought I was and I'm leaving this here as a token of respect. So I think we have enough of that time and space and enough counterpoint examples to be able to do that. But within the context of an Education Center that's a federal

facility on the National Mall they have their own set of guidelines and restrictions and legislative requirements that no matter how much time has passed they're probably not going to allow us to display certain things. There probably would never be enough time that would pass that would allow us to publicly display or bring a lot of attention to the letter where where the guy's talking about cutting ears off at least within the context of a federal facility on the National Mall. Now, on our website and as a non-profit again, we're freed up from a lot of those restrictions that the federal government has to operate under. So, it again kind of throws that whole calculus in the balance about what we're willing to display, where we draw boundaries, and about how much additional context we can provide. We can do a lot more of that and not light a firefight. Whereas with the limited time and space and attention span that you've got when you have someone in a physical environment, you have a lot less opportunity to contextualize.

CO: Mmhm. And so now will this be, going into online, all the items I'm assuming are going to be digitized for its (unintelligible)?

JB: Correct.

CO: -quite a lot of items, but is it going to be through the non-profit and then worked in with the NPS? Is the NPS also kind of providing assistance? Because I believe I've seen that they're kind of handling collections and digitization as well, is it going to like-

JB: Well, since the Chief Curator for NAMA took over as the Facility Director here, NAMA is really down to one staff member that is assigned to the entire collection out here from a Park Service standpoint. So, it's one person trying to care for a half a million-item collection. And they do what they can on a daily, weekly, monthly basis to do sort of high-level cataloguing, even batch cataloguing for a lot of multiple type of items. If you've got 500 boots maybe you'll do just do a quick batch catalogue for all 500 and you'll come back and take and individually curate them later on. So that's what Park Service is doing, they're doing as much as they can from a basic collections maintenance standpoint at a much higher level. For us, since we're just solely focused on this collection we can really dial in and do a lot of micro-curation on individual items be able to pull up historical resources, reach out to donors at times where that's possible, make connections between artifacts that weren't recognized as being associated artifacts by the Park Service when they were initially left. So we're doing the same work, both me and my Park Service counterpart, but our work is much more thorough and more detailed simply because of how we're then trying to then use those records via the online Ed Center and via our traveling wall later on.

CO: Ok, and I guess I could also ask, really this would have been, I really wish that there had been an Education Center at the Wall. I thought it was an interesting concept and it was going to be, it looked really great. But even now with it moving to an online curation, what kind of impression do you hope that this (unintelligible) contributions will have on viewers, probably, especially younger, the younger generation. When they look at it what impression do you hope that just seeing these items or seeing the educational aspects of it would have on them?

JB: Well one of the initiatives that we continue to do, and it may eventually be wrapped into this online Ed Center, but it's been operating independently of that. I hold distance learning sessions

from this lab here at the Museum resource center where I get to talk to school groups, show them artifacts from the collection share stories with them, talk about the context of Vietnam and the era. And what I'm always trying to get to with them is to help them understand how relevant a lot of lessons from the Vietnam era are to them in the 21st century. That would have been, I think, the biggest goal of the Education Center was to keep that historical event and the things that happened around that relevant to future generations going forward. Fortunately, there are enough parallels from a historical standpoint between our involvement in Southeast Asia and our involvement in the Middle East that we can help kids to make those connections and to see where we've learned certain lessons and where we're still making a lot of the same policy and political mistakes. That would be one of the biggest goals, I think one of the other big goals would be to help both kids but generally all audiences understand the context of the creation of the memorial and what the memorial has accomplished, I guess, from a societal standpoint. One of the biggest things that we always say about the wall is that the wall has promoted this reconciliation and this healing that was so essential after the Vietnam War. And you see just how polarized and just how controversial the memorial was when you look at the fight over the design, when you look at the opposition to a lot of aspects of the design, and then you see how the power of that design resolved a lot of those conflicts. So, I think that process of reconciliation and resolution particularly given how divided our society is right now politically, is another really valuable lesson that we want kids, certainly, but all audiences to come away from. I think looking at the story of the memorial and how it came to be and the fight over it gives us, to an extent, a road map to figure out how to progress and move forward as a society.

CO: Ok, and I think that's what was going to be happening at the Center too, was an introductory building as people were making their way over to the Wall. Because I think it was going to be placed in-between the Wall and the Lincoln Memorial, right? Or kind of caddy-corner?

JB: So, the initial concept for the Ed Center? Yeah. So initially, I, and I assume you've read some of this history, the concept was just a visitor's center. It was basically a a lean-to almost, might not have even been an enclosed physical structure. But really just a place that might have a couple of historical panel, maybe one or two artifacts from the collection that could withstand being out in the elements, and that would just really orient visitors to the site how to read the memorial, how to interact with it, how to find a name, a little bit of history about the design and how it came to be, and just prepare them to then go across Henry Bacon Drive and actually see the Memorial. That of course then ballooned and evolved into this much bigger concept of an Education Center and really sort of evolved in that way. So, that was a pretty dramatic shift in how the thinking around this project changed. It went from just trying to orient people and to help them to interact with the site and give them basic information they needed to be a good visitor, to really actively trying to provide educational resources, provide structured learning opportunities, and to really engage different targeted segments of every little population.

CO: Ok, well I think, I think I've taken up enough time from you today, for sure. But I think kind of we've covered a lot of the primary questions that I had just to understand the basis for the Wall, your job, and where it's going. But I would also like to ask if, from everything that we've covered, it was quite a lot, was there anything that we didn't talk about or would like to share with me or allow me to ponder on as I continue forward?

JB: Well I guess it depends on what direction your dissertation's going to go and how interested you are in the politics (unintelligible) and the mechanics behind the project. It's interesting to look at the relationship between the Park Service and VVMF, because, and I'll choose my words very careful here. The Park Service, to a certain degree, and I'll offer a disclaimer, I'm speaking on my own behalf, my own experience, but my sense is that there was never a firm resolution, an absolute commitment to the building of a physical Education Center. I think part of that was resource based. I think there were really valid questions about where were the funds going to come from to maintain this really expensive and really, you know, structurally innovative kind of building, and then do it in a flood plain? How was it going to be staffed? How would exhibits be changed out where you've got a 30-, 40-foot-high exhibit case that only opens from the top? Right? Because you have visitors walking around both sides, so you don't actually have doors on either side. So, what were going to be the logistics of actually getting in there and changing out artifacts? Especially for sensitive material types like paper and certain fabrics that, that can't be on display for more than six months at a time. And so I think there was always that underlying tension there in the relationship and those questions never really got resolved before the board made the decision to scrap it. However, on the other side of that, Park Service has really bent over backwards to carve out space here at the Museum Resource Center for us to curate the collection, for us to assemble content, do the digitization, and then to work with us to be able to either publicly display portions of the collection or reproduce the collection in certain ways for public display, for our traveling wall, for our education programs. So it's, that relationship has just been, it's an interesting one to explore and I think if you decide to get deeper into that, talking to some of the people who were involved in those sort of executive level conversations, CEO and, and some of the higher placed individuals in the Park Service might give you some real insight into not only what that relationship was like but maybe why the fundraising didn't quite progress the way that it might have been hoped.

CO: Alright, well you know I would like to say thanks again, Jason.

JB: You bet,. If you, if you think of anything else, just email the questions, I'm happy to answer butn just from my own personal perspective, it's sad for a lot of people that the physical Ed Center won't be built. There are a lot of people who will be disappointed. There are some expectations that aren't met. But I don't necessarily know that the Ed Center, as designed, would have been the very best way to actually represent the collection, represent the memorial, and to learn from that. I think by the end and, again, only speaking myself, but I think by the end the emphasis on Iraq and Afghanistan, the push to sort of place Vietnam within this broader continuum of service rather than really staying focused on the memorial, the design, the controversy over the design, and the collection and why, what is that experience. Why do people leave things, what does that mean, and what can we learn from it? I think we started to get away a bit from the core of that story that was probably the most important thing, and I always felt should have been what any physical museum should have been designed around. It should have been very focused on the memorial and on that experience of having this emotional connection to it and then leaving some physical token behind to represent that experience. So, it might not be the worst thing that the physical museum as designed is evolving into something else, I think it's actually going to be a better way to represent the collection and history of the memorial.

CO: Ok, yeah, and, more interesting, also like online's easier, I wouldn't say easier to control in a sense, but you don't have to tear down and build a whole new site, you can kind of accommodate as time changes.

JB: Exactly and that's just it. We don't have the same concerns about evolving technology, we don't have the same concerns about maintenance, there aren't the same concerns about just, just funding. How do you pay for the basic upkeep of something like this? I mean, just from an architectural standpoint, you've got sensitive museum collections and they're going to be underground in a floodplain. However well the building is designed at some point you're running a tremendous amount of risk there and so I think in a lot of ways the online Ed Center is just a great way to really expand, alleviate a lot of concerns and then expand the possibilities of what we can do with the content.

APPENDIX E. LIST OF THE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE WALL'S CONTENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

List of Content Advisory Committee copied verbatim from the Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund's website.

The Content Advisory Committee's primary goal is help craft a concise and compelling narrative of the Vietnam War.

CONTENT SPECIALIST

MARK A. LAWRENCE

Mark Atwood Lawrence is Associate Professor of History and Senior Fellow at the Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law at The University of Texas at Austin. He received his B.A. from Stanford University in 1988 and his doctorate from Yale in 1999. After teaching as a lecturer in history at Yale, he joined the History Department at UT Austin in 2000. Since then, he has published two books, Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam (University of California Press, 2005) and The Vietnam War: A Concise International History (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Lawrence is also co-editor of The First Indochina War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis (Harvard University Press, 2007), a collection of essays about the 1946-1954 conflict. He is now at work on a study of U.S. policymaking toward the developing world in the 1960s and early 70s.

Recipient of the American Historical Association's George Louis Beer Prize and Paul Birdsall Prize for his book, Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam. Winner of President's Associates Teaching Excellence Award, 2003-2004.

ADVISORY MEMBERS

LARRY BERMAN

Dr. Berman, Professor Emeritus at UC Davis and now Founding Dean of the Honors College at Georgia State University as well as professor of Political Science. He completed his doctorate at Princeton University in 1977, joined the faculty at UC-Davis after earning his Ph.D. He has become an internationally recognized expert on American politics, foreign policy, the American presidency, and the war in Vietnam. The founding director of the University of California Washington Center and director of the Davis Washington program, he also served as department chair for eight years. Dr. Berman has been awarded multiple fellowships, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the American Council for Learned Societies.

He has been a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and a scholar-in-residence at the Rockefeller Foundation's Center in Bellagio, Italy. Additionally, he became the first political scientist to receive the Bernath Lecture Prize.

A committed teacher, he has received the Outstanding Mentor of Women in Political Science Award from the Women's Caucus for Political Science. He is the 2010 recipient of the highest honor that the Davis Division of the Academic Senate accords its members, the Faculty Research Lecturer Award. In June 2010 he was also awarded the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Mentoring Undergraduate Research.

Dr. Berman is the author of several noted publications including "Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam," "Lyndon Johnson's War: The Road to Stalemate in Vietnam," "No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam," and "Perfect Spy: The Incredible Double Life of Pham Xuan An, Time Magazine Reporter and Vietnamese Communist Agent."

Dr. Berman's most recent book, published by HarperCollins, is a biography of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr., who rose to command of the U.S. Navy during the 1970s, when initiated sweeping reforms that modernized the fleet and challenged institutional racism. The paperback edition will be published by Naval Institute Press in September 2014.

PAULETTE G. CURTIS

Dr. Paulette G. Curtis, Faculty Director of Undergraduate & Pre-College Programs/Faculty Director of AnBryce Scholars Initiative, is responsible for the vision, growth and management of two summer academic programs that host nearly 400 talented national and international high-school students. In this capacity, she oversees a multi-million dollar budget and supervises three full-time staff. As first director of AnBryce Scholars Initiative at Notre Dame, Dr. Curtis is responsible for building a program that will serve talented first-generation, low-income students. Responsibilities include cohort selection, curriculum development, advising, programming, and managing a two-million dollar budget and a small support staff.

Dr. Curtis serves as a member of committee convened by the Assistant Provost that discusses matters related to recruitment and retention of faculty, post-docs and students of color at the University of Notre Dame. In a related capacity, chairs a subcommittee that is assessing the engagement of students of color in Notre Dame's social and academic life.

She served as the Assistant Dean in the central advising office for the College of Arts and Letters (Liberal Arts) at University of Notre Dame. In addition to advising a cohort of students (approximately 500) on requirements, majors and minors, choice of courses, studying abroad, and progress to degree, along with the Associate Dean, she evaluated student appeals of Honor Code violations and also communicated College policies and procedures in various formats to

faculty and other parties (e.g. Guide to Undergraduate Teaching, produced for new Arts and Letters faculty). Serves on the College Council, which votes upon academic amendments, addition of majors and minors, etc.; and is a voting member of the 20-person Undergraduate Committee on Women Faculty and Students (UCWFS).

Professor Curtis served as the Academic Dean for residential community of upper class students (approximately 400) at Harvard College. Position encompassed academic, judicial and student affairs, and required management of 20-person tutor staff and oversight of pre-professional programs. Regularly collaborated with offices across campus (e.g. University Health Services, Student Disabilities Office, Harvard Police Department) to provide student services, make referrals, etc., significant expertise advising students in academic and personal difficulty, and adjudicating academic, disciplinary and physical and sexual assault cases.

Ph.D was awarded to Dr. Curtis for her dissertation: "Locating History: Vietnam Veterans and Their Returns to the Battlefield, 1998-1999," which examined the social politics of battlefield tourism to sites primarily in Central and Southern Vietnam among Vietnam Veterans, and based on fieldwork and travel to Vietnam between 1997 and 1999.

GEORGE C. HERRING

George Herring, retired Professor Emeritus and formerly Alumni Professor of History, has been connected to the Patterson School from the early Vince Davis years. He received his B.A. from Roanoke College in 1957 and his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 1965.

Professor Herring retired after thirty-six years at the University of Kentucky. He served as chair of the Department of History from 1973-1976 and 1988-1996, and he was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. In 1993, he was a visiting professor at the U.S. Military Academy and in 2001 at the University of Richmond. In 2002, he was awarded the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations' Norman A. Graebner Prize for distinguished contributions to the field.

Professor Herring's research centered on U.S. foreign relations. His most recent work is From Colony to Superpower: American Foreign Relations Since 1776, (part of the Oxford History of the United States). His other published works include Aid to Russia, 1941-1946: Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War; with Thomas M. Campbell, eds., The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius; America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975; The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The "Negotiating Volumes" of the Pentagon Papers; and LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War. Professor Herring is one of the nation's foremost experts on the Vietnam War.

RON MILAM

Ron Milam is an Associate Professor of Military History at Texas Tech, where he has taught for 7 years. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Houston in 2004. He teaches both halves of the U.S. Survey, the Vietnam War, and graduate and undergraduate courses in military history. His latest teaching interest is terrorism and insurgency, an interest which developed from his having been named an Academic Fellow for the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. He serves as the Academic Advisor for the annual Vietnam Center sponsored student trips to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. He taught "The History of U.S. Foreign Policy" as a Fulbright Scholar to Vietnam in the spring of 2012.

Dr. Milam is the author of Not a Gentleman's War: an Inside View of Junior Officers in the Vietnam War, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2009. He also has written numerous articles and chapters on the Vietnam War. He is currently working on two book projects: The Siege of Phu Nhon: Montagnards and Americans as Allies in Battle, which deals with one of the most significant battles in the late days of the Vietnam War, and Cambodia and Kent State: Killing in the Jungle and on the College Campuses, which deals with America's Incursion into Cambodia in May, 1970 and the subsequent demonstrations that resulted in the murder of college students.

Professor Milam is a member of the Texas Tech Teaching Academy and is the recipient of the President's Excellence in Teaching Award and the Distinguished Faculty Award presented by Phi Alpha Theta and the History Graduate Student Organization. He also serves as faculty advisor to the Texas Tech Veteran's Association.

Dr. Milam served as Executive Officer of the Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade, 82d Airborne Division and as an infantry advisor to the Montagnard Soldiers in Pleiku Province, Republic of Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. He is the recipient of the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Bronze Star with "V", the Army Commendation Medal with "V", the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Palm, the Bronze Star for Service, and the Parachutists Badge.

Ron is a member of the Texas Tech Vietnam Center Advisory Board, and the Board of Directors of the David Westphall Veterans Foundation, which operates the Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park in Angel Fire, New Mexico. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Music From Angel Fire Chamber Festival.

EDWIN MOÏSE

Dr. Edwin Moïse received his B.A.in History at Harvard University in 1967 and his M.A. from Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan. In 1977, Edwin obtained his Ph.D. in History, from the University of Michigan. He attended the ROTC Workshop in Military History, U.S.M.A. at West Point in the summer 1982.

Professor Moïse served two years in the U.S. Peace Corps and taught at Appalachian State and the University of Detroit before coming to Clemson in 1979. He teaches courses in Modern China, Modern Japan, and the Vietnam War, as well as a course in Modern Military History. Among his numerous books, Land Reform in China and North Vietnam: Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level (1983), Modern China: A History (1986), with a second edition in 1994, and a third edition in 2008, Historical Dictionary of the Vietnam War (2001), and Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War (1996). His electronic bibliography of the Vietnam War, accessible at his webpage, is a great resource for anyone interested in the topic. In 2002, Dr. Moise was honored with two major university awards: the Alumni Association Distinguished Research Award, and the Provost's Award for Scholarly Achievement.

Currently, Dr. Moïse is working on a book about the effort of the U.S. government to present a very optimistic picture of progress in the Vietnam War during 1967. A perspective that left the United States unprepared for the magnitude of the Communists' Tet Offensive in 1968, and led to the ways these events have been remembered and interpreted (often very inaccurately), up to the present. In addition, he is in the process of completing the manuscript of a revised edition of my book on the Tonkin Gulf Incidents, with the intent of publishing it in the near future.

LINDY POLING

Lindy Poling received her B.A. in History from the College of William and Mary and her M.A.T. from Colgate University. A 35-year veteran educator, she spent her last 27 years teaching history at Millbrook High School. She also served as Social Studies Department Chair from 2005-2010. She has worked with VVMF educational programs since 1999.

Ms. Poling co-authored three Wake County Social Studies curricula: U.S. History, American History Themes and Dreams, and Lessons of Vietnam/Recent International Relations. She has been a contributing author to the following publications: The War and the Wall (VVMF), The VVA Veteran, Homespun: Teaching Local History in Grades 6-12 (Heinemann Press), and NCSS Middle Level Learning. She also authored two major websites: Teacher Guidelines for Linking Students to the Vietnam Era and Best Practices in a Community in the Classroom Social Studies Program. Ms. Poling is the co-author of the 2013 revised edition of VVMF's Hometown Heroes Service Learning Project (www.vvmf.org/userfiles/files/PDF/Hometown%20Heroes%20-%20DRAFT.pdf), and she actively recruited teachers from across the nation to pilot this program during the 2014 school year.

This dedicated teacher has been nationally recognized for her Community in the Classroom approach to studying history and her Lessons of Vietnam/Recent International Relations course. The Community in the Classroom approach helps students interpret history by seeing it through the eyes of those who experienced it. Students are encouraged to talk with family members about the Vietnam Era, and guest speakers come from North Carolina and across the country.

Classroom speakers have included the late Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., General George B, Price, Vice Admiral Emmett Tidd, Medal of Honor Winner Colonel Roger Donlon, LTC James G. Zumwalt, ABC News Chief National Correspondent Byron Pitts, local television news anchor Larry Stogner, former "Donut Dolly" "Larry" Hines, ARVN Air Force Veteran Son Pham and Raleigh City Councilman John Odom. In addition to her visiting speakers, each student is paired with a "link," someone who has firsthand experience with the Vietnam Era or the War on Terror, for the semester. Students also contribute to a an award-winning quarterly newsletter entitled Bridges (http://mhs.wcpss.net/academics/poling/index.htm) The course culminates with a field trip to Washington, DC, which includes a special visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Ms. Poling's Board associations include: the VVMF Education Advisory Board, the National History Club Advisory Board, the UNC-Chapel Hill Humanities and Human Values Teacher Advisory Committee, and the UNC Project for Historical Education Steering Committtee. She has received numerous honors on the local, state, and national levels, including: National History Club Advisor of the Year (2011 & 2007); Gilder Lehrman North Carolina History Teacher of the Year (2006); USA Today All-USA Teacher First Team (2004); and VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher of the Year (2002).

JOHN PRADOS

John Prados heads the [National Security] Archive's Vietnam and Intelligence Documentation Projects, co-directs its Iraq Documentation Project, and is a Senior Research Fellow on national security affairs, including foreign affairs, intelligence, and military subjects. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science (International Relations) from Columbia University and has authored many books, most recently, In Country: Remembering the Vietnam War (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

His other works include, Normandy Crucible: The Decisive Battle That Shaped World War II in Europe (NAL/Caliber, 2011), Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, winner of the Henry Adams Prize in American History; Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA (Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2006, paperback 2009); and How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History (Potomac, 2010). Prados is the author of more than twenty books and many articles and papers. His research centers on subjects including the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Vietnam War, and analysis of international relations, plus diplomatic and military history more generally. Additional works include, William Colby and the CIA: The Secret Wars of a Controversial Spymaster (University Press of Kansas), The Hidden History of the Vietnam War and Presidents' Secret Wars (Ivan Dee); Inside the Pentagon Papers (with Margaret Pratt Porter, Kansas); and Hoodwinked: The Documents that Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War (New Press, 2004). Among his books, Unwinnable War, Keepers of the Keys (on the National Security Council) and Combined Fleet Decoded (on intelligence in the Pacific in World War II) were each nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. Combined Fleet Decoded was the winner of the annual book prize of the New York Military Affairs Symposium, and along with his book

Valley of Decision: The Siege of Khe Sanh (with Ray W. Stubbe) was named a Notable Naval Book of the Year by the United States Naval Institute. His The Soviet Estimate was awarded the book prize of the Consortium for the Study of Intelligence. Prados's papers appear in many other works, and his articles have been in Vanity Fair, Scientific American, MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History, Naval History, the Journal of American History, Diplomatic History, Intelligence and National Security, The Journal of National Security Law & Policy, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the Journal of East-West Studies, Survival, The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe and The VVA Veteran.

RONALD SPECTOR

Ronald Spector (Ph.D, Yale) has been Professor of History and International Relations in the Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University since 1990. He previously taught at the University of Alabama and at LSU. Besides his recent book, In the Ruins of Empire he is the author of three other works. His best known books are Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan, which was a main selection of the Book of the Month Club and winner of the Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Prize in Naval History and After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam. His book, At War at Sea: Sailors and Naval Combat in the Twentieth Century received the 2002 Distinguished Book Award of the Society for Military History. Spector has been a Fulbright Lecturer in India, Israel and Singapore and Visiting Professor at The National War College, the Army War College, Keio University in Tokyo and Princeton.

He entered the U.S. Marine Corps as an enlisted man in 1967 and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve. He served in Vietnam during 1968-69 and in various active duty assignments during the Grenada/Lebanon incidents in 1983-84. He also served on the adjunct faculty of The Marine Corps Command and Staff College. His other government experience includes service as a historian with the U.S. Army Center of Military History and the Naval Historical Center where he was the first civilian to serve as Director of Naval History and Curator for the Navy Department.

ROBERT SUTTON

Robert K. Sutton assumed the duties of Chief Historian of the National Park Service in October 2007. He came to this position after serving as the Superintendent of Manassas National Battlefield Park for the previous 12 ½ years. From 1986 to 1990, he directed the Historic Preservation and Historical Administration public history programs at Arizona State University. He has published a number of books, articles and reviews on various public history topics. One of his primary interests at Manassas Battlefield and in his current position is preparing for the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, and as part of that effort, he has encouraged Civil War battlefields to expand their interpretive programs to focus more attention to the social, economic, and political issues during the Civil War Era.

APPENDIX F. EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE FROM MUSEUM CURATOR

JANET FOLKERTS

Re: [EXTERNAL] e-introduction
Janet Folkerts <janet_folkerts@nps.gov>
Thu 8/16/2018 10:04 AM
To: Olmsted, Chelsea <chelsea.olmsted@ndsu.edu>

Hi Chelsea,

After reviewing your questions, I think it would be better to refer you to Jason Bain with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Jason is the Senior Collections Curator for the Fund and is responsible for selecting items from our collection that will eventually be exhibited at the Education Center.

To explain a little about our differing roles, the museum collection is managed by the National Park Service. As the curator for the museum collection, I am responsible for the day-to-day management of the collection. I have little involvement in the ongoing planning process for the future Education Center. The Education Center is being designed and funded by our partners at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Once the center is built, management of it will be transferred to the National Park Service.

As the curator, I am the person responsible for the museum collection. I do the work of accessioning items, inventorying, packing and storage, cataloging, photographing and labeling objects, and providing accountability for each item in the collection. I coordinate loans with institutions, but I am merely the provider of artifacts, and have little experience with exhibit design myself. As it seems most of your questions are related to the design of the Education Center and not with the history and make-up of the museum collection itself, I will leave most of the answering up to Jason.

Here is a little bit about the museum collection itself:

This collection of items began in 1982 with the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on November 13. Almost from the first days of the memorial, visitors were leaving items at the base for those whose names are listed on the Wall. The NPS staff hadn’t expected or encountered this phenomenon before, and weren’t sure at first what to do with the things being left behind. However, many items were of such a personal nature and were deeply meaningful and they couldn’t bring themselves to throw them away. The objects being left were collected by NPS staff and kept in maintenance yards for a time. This continued for two years. In 1984, the regional curator of the NPS decided to try something completely new and make these items part of a museum collection.

We have been collecting items that are left at the memorial since that time. The collection is made up entirely of offerings that are left at the memorial. We are different from other museum collections in that we don't hand-select what we want for the collection – we leave it up to the public to decide what belongs in it. Museum collections of preserved objects offered at a site of mourning have become known as tribute collections, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial museum collection was the first of its kind, as far as we know.

This museum collection does not document the history of the Vietnam War. We don't have historical objects from that time period or military documents. The collection documents the experiences of Vietnam veterans, from during their time in service and afterward. We collect items related to the men and women listed on the memorial, and remember them through the objects and notes left for them.

We place the items that are part of our collection into 6 broad categories:

1. **Personal Artifacts:** Objects of a personal nature that show the history or experiences of a casualty or a veteran and their involvement in the war. These items document their lives and their experiences.
2. **Vietnam Military Service Items:** Personal gear and uniform pieces worn by service members. This can be summed up as "the things they carried".
3. **Protest, Activism, and Advocacy Materials:** Items that relate to veterans activism for causes such as P . T. S. D. awareness, the POW/MIA issue, Agent Orange, suicide or homelessness.
4. **Public Tribute Items:** Objects left by the general public to honor the men and women who served in the Vietnam War.
5. **Architectural Elements:** Blueprints, plans, casts and molds, original stone samples, etc.
6. **Site History Items:** Materials that relate to the Memorial's planning, design, construction, and preservation, along with materials that document major events that have occurred there.

If you have any more questions related to the museum collection, please let me know. Otherwise, you are in good hands with Jason regarding your questions related to the Education Center.

Sincerely,
Janet Folkerts
Museum Curator | Vietnam Veterans Memorial
National Mall and Memorial Parks
3300 Hubbard Road | Landover, MD 20785
301-832-3958 - OFFICE
202-650-7640 - CELL

APPENDIX G. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES FOR THE VIETNAM WAR: A FILM BY KEN BURNS AND LYNN NOVICK

List of interviewees for *The Vietnam War: A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick* copied verbatim from PBS's website: <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-vietnam-war/about/about-the-participants/>.

Everett Alvarez

Navy pilot Everett Alvarez, a Navy airman shot down over North Vietnam, was held in Hanoi as a prisoner of war from 1964 to 1973.
First appears in Episode 3

Nguyen Nguyet Anh

As a member of the North Vietnamese Army, Nguyen Nguyet Anh drove trucks along the Ho Chi Minh Trail from 1968 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 7

Nancy Biberman

Nancy Biberman was a student at Barnard College, where she was active against the war.
First appears in Episode 8

Anne Harrison Bowman

Anne Harrison Bowman was the youngest child in a military family. Her father was an Army colonel, and her brother Matt was an Army officer in Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 4

Philip Brady

Philip Brady spent many of the war years in Vietnam, as a military and civilian advisor and as a correspondent with NBC News.
First appears in Episode 3

Nguyen Thoi Bung

Nguyen Thoi Bung (deceased) was a regimental officer with the NLF (Viet Cong) and fought in the battle of Binh Gia in December 1964.
First appears in Episode 1

Philip Caputo

Philip Caputo was as a second lieutenant in the Marines in 1965 and returned to Vietnam as a journalist covering the final days of the war.
First appears in Episode 3

Rion Causey

Rion Causey was a medic with Tiger Force in the 101st Airborne Division in 1967.
First appears in Episode 5

Tran Ngoc Chau

Tran Ngoc Chau served in a variety of high-ranking roles in South Vietnam, including as a colonel in the ARVN and as the province chief of Kien Hoa.
First appears in Episode 2

Le Van Cho

Le Van Cho was a scout in the elite special forces of the North Vietnamese Army from 1966 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 5

Max Cleland

Max Cleland was an officer with the First Cavalry (Airmobile) Division in Vietnam and was badly wounded in the spring of 1968.
First appears in Episode 1

Le Quan Cong

A veteran of guerrilla campaigns against the French, Le Quan Cong fought with the NLF (Viet Cong) in the Mekong Delta from 1960 to 1975.
First appears in Episode 1

Carol Crocker

Carol Crocker attended Goucher College in the late 1960s. Her brother, Mogie, served in Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 3

Jean-Marie Crocker

Jean-Marie Crocker is the mother of Denton “Mogie” Crocker, Jr., who served in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966.
First appears in Episode 3

Cao Xuan Dai

Cao Xuan Dai served more than a decade in the North Vietnamese Army beginning in 1966.
First appears in Episode 2

Bui Diem

Bui Diem held several influential positions in the South Vietnamese government from 1955 to 1975, including Ambassador to the United States from 1967 to 1972.
First appears in Episode 1

Huy Duc

Huy Duc lived in North Vietnam during the war. He later became a journalist and was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard in 2012-13.
First appears in Episode 1

Bill Ehrhart

Bill Ehrhart served with the Marines in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968.
First appears in Episode 3

Duong Van Mai Elliott

Duong Van Mai Elliott was born in Vietnam and spent her childhood in Hanoi. In 1954, her family fled to Saigon where Mai later did research on the Viet Cong insurgency.
First appears in Episode 1

Ron Ferrizzi

Helicopter Crew Chief Ron Ferrizzi served in the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division in Vietnam from 1967 to 1968.
First appears in Episode 1

Joan Furey

Joan Furey served as a staff nurse in the Post-Operative ICU of the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku from 1969 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 8

Joseph Galloway

As a young reporter for UPI, Joe Galloway arrived in Saigon in 1965. He covered the war, off and on, for the next ten years.
First appears in Episode 3

Robert Gard

Robert Gard served as a military aide to Robert McNamara and as an artillery officer in the 9th Infantry Division. He spent 31 years in the Army and retired a four-star General.
First appears in Episode 3

Leslie Gelb

Leslie Gelb worked as an analyst in the Defense Department during the 1960s.
First appears in Episode 1

James Gillam

James Gillam was an Army sergeant in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 8

Phil Gioia

Phil Gioia was an Army officer who served two tours in Vietnam between 1968 and 1970.
First appears in Episode 6

Donald Gregg

Donald Gregg spent more than three decades with the CIA and was stationed in Japan, Burma, Korea and Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 1

Roger Harris

Roger Harris served as a Marine in I Corps, near the DMZ, in 1967 and 1968.
First appears in Episode 1

Matt Harrison

After graduating from West Point in 1966, Matt Harrison served two tours in Vietnam between 1967 and 1969.
First appears in Episode 4

Victoria Harrison

Vicky Harrison grew up in a military family. Her older brother Matt was an Army officer in Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 7

Mike Heaney

Mike Heaney was a platoon leader in the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) Division in 1965 and 1966.
First appears in Episode 1

Stuart Herrington

Stuart Herrington was an Army intelligence officer in Vietnam in the first half of the 1970s.
First appears in Episode 4

Nguyen Thi Hoa

Nguyen Thi Hoa grew up near Hue and joined the NLF (Viet Cong) at fifteen.
First appears in Episode 6

Jan Howard

Country singer Jan Howard wrote and recorded the song, "My Son" a few months before her own son, Jimmy, was killed in Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 8

Le Cong Huan

Le Cong Huan fought with the Viet Minh against the French and was later as an officer with the NLF (Viet Cong).
First appears in Episode 1

Tran Ngoc "Harry" Hue

As a lieutenant colonel with the ARVN, Tran Ngoc “Harry” Hue played a key role in retaking the Hue Citadel during the Tet Offensive and fought in the 1971 invasion of Laos.
First appears in Episode 1

Sam Hynes

Sam Hynes taught English at Swarthmore College and Northwestern University during the war. He had been a Marine aviator in World War II.
First appears in Episode 6

Le Minh Khue

From 1965 to 1968, Le Minh Khue repaired bomb damage on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, then became a military journalist covering the North Vietnamese Army in the South.
First appears in Episode 3

Hal Kushner

After graduating from medical school, Hal Kushner joined the army and served as a flight surgeon in Vietnam.
First appears in Episode 1

Ho Huu Lan

As a North Vietnamese Army officer, Ho Huu Lan participated in major operations, including the Siege of Con Thien, the Battle of Hue and the Spring Offensive in 1975.
First appears in Episode 4

John Laurence

John Laurence was a correspondent for CBS News, and covered the Vietnam War off and on from 1965 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 6

Pham Luc

Pham Luc studied art as a young student in Hanoi, and during the war he was assigned to paint propaganda posters to aid recruitment and boost morale.
First appears in Episode 7

Karl Marlantes

Karl Marlantes served with the Third Marine Division in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969.
First appears in Episode 1

Craig McNamara

The son of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, Craig McNamara became began to question the war in high school and demonstrated against it while at Stanford University in the late 60s.
First appears in Episode 4

Merrill McPeak

Fighter pilot Merrill McPeak flew 269 missions in Vietnam between 1968 and 1970. He eventually became Air Force Chief of Staff, and retired after 37 years.
First appears in Episode 4

John Musgrave

John Musgrave served with the Third Marine Division in Vietnam in 1967.
First appears in Episode 1

John Negroponte

John Negroponte was a foreign service officer in Vietnam in the 1960s and later served as an aide to Henry Kissinger during the Paris Peace Talks.
First appears in Episode 3

Nguyen Ngoc

Nguyen Ngoc joined the Viet Minh as teenager, later became a military journalist and was eventually a political officer in the North Vietnamese Army. He is a widely respected writer and teacher.
First appears in Episode 1

Dong Si Nguyen

From early 1967 until 1975, Dong Si Nguyen was the commander of the North Vietnamese Army unit charged with building and maintaining the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
First appears in Episode 1

Bao Ninh

Bao Ninh served in the North Vietnamese Army from 1969 until the war ended in 1975. He is the first North Vietnamese foot soldier to write about the experiences of ordinary soldiers.
First appears in Episode 1

Tim O'Brien

Tim O'Brien was an infantryman based in Quang Ngai from 1969 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 1

Vincent Okamoto

Vincent Okamoto served as a lieutenant and then a captain with the 25th Infantry Division in 1968 and 1969.
First appears in Episode 6

Eva Jefferson Paterson

Eva Jefferson Paterson enrolled in Northwestern University in 1967, where she became student body president and was active against the war.
First appears in Episode 5

Rufus Phillips

Rufus Phillips served in South Vietnam at various times from 1954 to 1968 as an Army officer, a CIA officer, a USAID official and a State Department consultant.
First appears in Episode 1

Juan Ramirez

Juan Ramirez served two tours with the Marines in Vietnam from 1968 to 1970.
First appears in Episode 8

Robert Rheault

Robert Rheault (deceased) graduated from West Point and served two tours with Special Forces in Vietnam starting in 1964.
First appears in Episode 2

James Scanlon

Captain James Scanlon was an advisor to the South Vietnamese Army from 1962 to 1963.
First appears in Episode 2

Neil Sheehan

Neil Sheehan began covering the war in 1962 as a young reporter based in Saigon.
First appears in Episode 2

Wayne Smith

Wayne Smith served 17 months in Vietnam as a combat medic in 1969 and 1970.
First appears in Episode 8

Frank Snepp

Frank Snepp was a CIA analyst and interrogator in Saigon off and on from 1969 to 1975.
First appears in Episode 10

Nguyen Thanh Son

Nguyen Thanh Son served with the 174th NVA Regiment in the Central Highlands.
First appears in Episode 3

Lewis Sorley

West Point graduate Lewis Sorley served in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 as executive officer of a tank battalion.
First appears in Episode 7

Nguyen Tai

Raised in Hanoi, Nguyen Tai (deceased) infiltrated the South in 1964, where he was put in charge of counterespionage in Saigon and the surrounding area.
First appears in Episode 8

Lo Khac Tam

A junior officer, Lo Khac Tam was among the first to lead North Vietnamese Army regular troops in the South in 1965.
First appears in Episode 3

Pham Duy Tat

Pham Duy Tat was an ARVN officer. He was promoted to general during the last months of the war.
First appears in Episode 6

Tran Cong Thang

Tran Cong Thang spent six years working to keep the Ho Chi Minh Trail open as a combat engineer with the North Vietnamese Army.
First appears in Episode 4

Lam Quang Thi

A graduate of the South Vietnamese Military Academy at Dalat, Lam Quang Thi rose through the ARVN to the rank of lieutenant general.
First appears in Episode 1

Tran Ngoc Toan

Tran Ngoc Toan served with the South Vietnamese Marines from 1962 to 1975.
First appears in Episode 1

Jack Todd

Jack Todd went to the University of Nebraska and was drafted by the Army in 1969.
First appears in Episode 2

Nguyen Van Tong

Nguyen Van Tong served as a high-ranking officer in the NLF (Viet Cong) 9th Division, one of the first large units to be formed in the South.
First appears in Episode 1

Phan Quang Tue

The son of a prominent political figure in South Vietnam who opposed the Diem regime, Phan Quang Tue worked in the Office of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Saigon from 1970 to 1975.
First appears in Episode 2

Nguyen Thanh Tung

Nguyen Thanh Tung spent decades as a guerrilla fighter with the Viet Minh and the NLF (Viet Cong). She had two sons who also joined the NLF.
First appears in Episode 6

Nick Ut

Photographer Nick Ut grew up near Saigon and started working in the darkroom of the Saigon bureau of the Associated Press in 1966, at age fifteen.
First appears in Episode 9

Juan Valdez

Juan Valdez served two tours in Vietnam. He was among the first Marines to arrive in 1965, and was the last American evacuated from the U.S. Embassy on April 30, 1975.
First appears in Episode 10

Thomas J. Vallely

Thomas Vallely was a Marine corporal in Vietnam in 1969. He entered politics after the war and worked to normalize diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United States. He is also the founder of the Vietnam Program at the Harvard Kennedy School.
First appears in Episode 2

George Wickes

George Wickes served in Vietnam in 1945 with the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the C.I.A.
First appears in Episode 1

James Willbanks

James Willbanks, an advisor to the ARVN in 1971 and 1972, was a career officer for 23 years before getting his PhD in history.
First appears in Episode 3

Sam Wilson

An early proponent of counterinsurgency tactics, General Sam Wilson (deceased) headed the pacification program in Vietnam for USAID during the mid-1960s.
First appears in Episode 1

Bill Zimmerman

Bill Zimmerman was an antiwar activist throughout the war.
First appears in Episode 2