

What Should We Teach Our Children About Vietnam?

By Megan Knox and Jessica Highsmith

Although the Vietnam War ended over thirty-two years ago, many people still vividly remember the effects this war had on their lives. In trying to determine what we should teach our children, Lessons of Vietnam students interviewed parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, and veterans. Now those students have a better understanding of the lessons that can be learned from such a compelling event in history. Following are some meaningful responses to this important question:

• "We should teach our children to always believe in democracy, and that America is a republic. Always believe in freedom and be willing to fight for it and defend our rights and way of life." ~ MHS Father

• "We should always try to stay informed about what is going on around us. The public shouldn't just accept everything the media tells us as the truth." ~ MHS Grandmother

• "Teach kids how to learn from history. Sometimes there are times we need to be involved and fight for what is right."

~ MHS Grandfather

• "I actually haven't talked to my girls about Vietnam, but what I will tell them is that freedom is costly. Freedom has to be protected." ~ MHS Co-worker

• "To love and care about each other, and not to forget our country even though we lost the war. Remember who we are." ~ MHS SouthVietnamese Veteran /Father

25 Years Later: What Does The Wall Mean to our Veteran Links? By Eric Book

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated on Veterans Day weekend 1982, is the most visited memorial in Washington. Often referred to as "The Wall," it currently has 58,256 names of men and women who gave their lives or remain missing. For the fourth time in 25 years, the reading of the names will take place at The Wall starting on November 7, 2007. As this special anniversary approaches, several LOV class Veteran links were asked to reflect on what the memorial means to each of them.

For most, The Wall is a place to re-

flect and remember all the soldiers who did not survive the war. Many commented on the tremendous cost associated with this war. Red Cross Donut Dolly Larry Hines stated that The Wall is a "stark, huge, tangible reminder of all the lives that were lost in an undeclared war...one that robbed my generation of 58,000 of our best and brightest." Vietnam Veteran Larry Weatherall commented, "I'm glad it's there for the world to see as a symbol of the cost of the Vietnam War and the price that some of us paid."

For others, this memorial is seen as hope that lessons learned will not be forgotten. It also evokes a strong feeling of patriotism. According to Veteran Steve Seblink, "[The Vietnam Veterans Memorial] is a reminder of what it means to be an American, what it means to be a citizen and a symbol of hope in that we learn from our experiences and are better prepared to address the challenges of the future." "The Wall serves as a * * * * * * * * *



Photo by Barclay Poling

warning to leaders who would make the same mistakes and send another generation's children into the cauldron of war," commented Veteran David Rabadan.

This memorial is also a place of comfort. Veteran Stephen Sossaman reflected, "Perhaps the primary value of this memorial for veterans and their families is that it is a physical space that allows everyone affected or interested to be in the same place. Hawks and doves, military veterans and peace movement activists, jingoists and pacifists . . .We stand next to each other, not always knowing who is who, or who

thinks what, and are quiet." Vietnam Veteran Bob Gray said, "I can go and find solace and peace in recalling the friends that I lost."

I am beginning to understand why this memorial is so important to so many veterans. The Wall is a place of hope, reflection, comfort, and healing. It is different from most other memorials as its "focus is on the names of the dead, all ranks and services treated equally, so what we are told to remember is the sacrifice of actual human beings," submitted Mr. Sossaman. The main reason that The Wall is so meaningful to these veterans is because they were there. Veteran Dan Sheehan said, "Some of the names engraved in granite were my friends. I was there and the memorial speaks to me personally." Dr. Ric Vandett has left us with some very poignant words, "No more pain. No more tears. No more agony...just a deep feeling of pride. Pride in the men and women with whom I will be forever united: the Vietnam Veterans." ★. * * \mathbf{x} ★ -* * \mathbf{x} * * * ★. *

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By Andy Didsbury

On September 11th, 2007, General David Petraeus went before Congress to give his report on our nation's progress in Iraq following the troop surge that began this past January. This report detailed many positive effects of the surge, particularly in Anbar province. Since October, 2006, the number of attacks against U.S. forces there has dropped from 1350 to just 200 in August, 2007. Tribal leaders in this region, such as Sheikh Hussein al-Tamimi, have rejected Al Qaeda and are working with the U.S. military to keep the peace. In Baghdad, civilian deaths and ethno-sectarian combat deaths are down 70% and 80% respectively since December, 2006.

There are some, however, who have criticized the Petraeus report. For example, on September 12th Senator Hillary Clinton was quoted in the New York Sun as saying, "His progress report required the willing suspension of disbelief." This is after she had previously stated, "It looks like the surge... may be working," in an August 20th speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. She later applied this statement to only Anbar province--not all of Iraq. This is interesting, considering the Petraeus report shows ethno-sectarian combat deaths *over all of Iraq* have dropped 55% since last December, and the number of car bombings *over all of Iraq* is down from 175 in March to only 90 in August. We would do well to heed the counsel of a military leader like General Petraeus over that of less experienced politicians. A man listed in US News and World Report as one of the "25 best American leaders," as well as the recipient of numerous medals including the

Distinguished Service Medal, two awards of the Defense Superior Service medal, four Legion of Merit awards, and the Bronze Star, General Petraeus seems much more qualified to make statements about the war. Senator Clinton

is not the only one who does not believe the surge



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is working. Certain media sources and unnamed "independent commissions" want the public to believe progress either is minimal or non-existent. The LA Times, for example, tells readers civilian deaths in Iraq are down only 15% since the surge started. While true civilian deaths are down 15%, this is not since the start of the surge but only after the surge had started to take effect. The more accurate statement, given by General Petraeus, is civilian deaths in Iraq are down 45% since December, before the surge started.

Perhaps former New York City Mayor and current Republican Presidential candidate Rudy Guiliani said it best, "These times call for statesmanship, not politicians spewing political venom." Those who do not believe the report need to stop spewing and start accepting the truth!

By Michael Frucht

This past September, General David Petraeus went before Congress to give his interpretation of the progress being

made by the surge in Iraq. It is important to note that this report was of his own design, and presented a surprisingly positive outlook on the surge's effects. General Petraeus' report primarily detailed the effects that the increase in troops has had in Anbar province. It noted



Artwork by Irma Tello

that the number of ethno-sectarian combat casualties has dropped by 80% since December, and by 55% in Iraq as a whole. CBS correspondent, Lara Logan, pointed out a key omission in General Petraeus's report, stating that the number of ethno-sectarian deaths is down simply because of the decline of ethno-sectarians in the region. Most of those ethno-sectarians involved have either become wartime refugees and, as a result, fled the country, or have already been killed in the sectarian crossfire. Basically, this means that ethno-sectarian deaths may not have necessarily declined because of U.S. progress, but rather, a thinning of sectarians in the general population due to continued violence over the past nine months.

It is important not to perceive General Petraeus' assessment of the war as progress, but rather as unconditional optimism, partly because of past statements of his views on the war. Dating back to 2004, General Petraeus has had a positive outlook on the war, publishing his own assessment of Iraq's security forces at the time. In his assessment, General Petraeus indicated, "Today approximately 164,000 Iraqi police and soldiers... are performing a wide variety of security missions. Equipment is being delivered. Training is on track and increasing in capacity. Infrastructure is being repaired. Command and control structures and institutions are being reestablished." Recently, an independent commission declared that "the Iraqi police force was so infiltrated with sectarian militia, that it should be disbanded." This is a startling revelation that begs the question of whether or not General Petraeus is being optimistic about the war when he needs to be an objective leader who scrutinizes all the happenings under his watch.

Optimisim from American military leaders is a good thing in times of war. But, it has become abundantly clear over the past few years that we, as a Nation, have moved past wishful thinking and more towards seeing some kind of effective strategy put into place in a timely manner. As Senator Hillary Clinton concluded, "Although [General Petraeus'] charts tell part of the story, I don't think they tell the whole story."

The First Online War

By Hillary Stewart

The War in Iraq has been a part of American history since March 19th, 2003. Like some wars in the past, it has been

publicized through newspapers and television. But it is the first to be viewed through what today is considered a common household resource, the Internet. The Internet has empowered millions of Americans to voice their opinions on the war and debate others around the country. Since it is easily accessible, many Americans go online effortlessly to search videos, news reports, and new information on the war. Numerous websites have become available for people of any age, race, etc, to post comments and interact with others on the Internet as well. Such websites are now known as "blogs." The Internet today finally gives the "silent majority" of old a voice to share their own views.

While searching for blogs online, I came across a website entitled, "My War:

Killing Time in Iraq." This is a blog that has been updated regularly since June 2004. The creator of this website has written a book with the same title. While the author has posted on this site, he also allows others with opinions to post as well. His

site has received posts from thousands of people all over the world, including some from soldiers currently serving in Iraq.

> Another vehicle available for people to express their creativity is "You Tube." This is a website that makes accessible billions of videos ranging from homemade movies to news castings. If one searches "war in Iraq" on "You Tube," roughly 132,000 videos have been posted. When sorted by play count to determine the video viewed most often, surprisingly a video that has only been posted for a month has received the highest number of hits--8,514,264.

The Internet has made it easier for people to keep up with the war and obtain a broader range of views than one gets by reading the newspaper or watching television. The war in Iraq may not exist in some American's lives, but it is

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very prominent in the lives of others. Although the Internet has been available to the public for about 18 years, this is the first time it has generated heated and controversial discussions online. Now everyone with access to the Internet has a voice.

Artwork by Chris Pilley

Point of View: A Big Promise, Unfulfilled

By Dawn Nwaebube

With the War on Terror going on for six years now, the main focus seems to be on Iraq. But, what about Afghanistan? The news does not talk about how American soldiers are still sacrificing in that country or how the people in Afghanistan feel about the American presence. Since the war began, in 2001, American intelligence agencies had reported that the Taliban was so decimated that it no longer posed a threat.

The Bush administration announced widespread big goals in April of 2002, and President Bush promised a "Marshall Plan" for Afghanistan; but an article written by David Rhode and David E. Sanger suggests that the plan has not taken place. On April 17, 2002, President Bush traveled to the Virginia Military Institute and gave a speech saying, "We're tough, we're determined, we're relentless. We will stay until the mission is done." The speech fueled positive expectations in Afghanistan; vet despite President Bush's assurance, during the months that followed his April speech, no detailed reconstruction plan emerged.

The Pentagon was considering withdrawing up to 3,000 troops from Afghanistan, roughly 20% of total American forces, in September of 2005. In the end, the planned troop reduction was abandoned; but three months after this announcement, the White House Office of Management and Budget cut Afghanistan's aid by one-third. General James L. Jones, a retired American officer and

a former NATO supreme commander stated, "If we don't suc-

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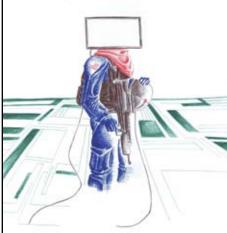
ceed in Afghanistan, we are sending a very clear message to the terrorist organizations that the U.S., the U.N., and the 37 countries with troops on the ground can be defeated." CNN reported that the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, said that he would be willing to meet personally with Taliban leader Mullah Omar and give militants a position in government in exchange for peace. Unfortunately, Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, insisted that there would be no negotiations until the U.S. and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan.

If we are not able to help one country reconstruct itself,

then how are we able to keep the promises that we make to other countries? It would be commendable if the same effort being put in Iraq was put towards Afghanistan in order to see the mission in that country succeed. If greater focus were put on Afghanistan, perhaps the Taliban threat in Afghani stan would diminish.

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A Saffron Revolution?

By Jessica Highsmith

Recent protests in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, have prompted its ruling junta to take excessively violent action. In mid-September, hundreds of enraged Buddhist monks, dressed in saffron robes, assembled around the sacred Shwedagon pagoda, in Yangon. Crowds of protestors could be seen loudly chanting and marching throughout the streets of the city. The purpose of these demonstrations was to peacefully protest elevated gasoline prices in August that have been weakening an already impoverished country.

While the Burmese police have authoritative rule, the Buddhist monks hold the key to ultimate moral authority. While the junta lacks legitimacy, it has ruled with an iron fist through its use of intimidation and military strength. Interestingly, as an overwhelmingly Buddhist country, there are nearly as many monks as soldiers. The Buddhist monks

have an irrefutable impact on the country due to their spiritual status. These two established groups are both 400,000 strong, making the protest a challenge between mammoths.

After an increase in fuel prices raised the cost of transportation and other necessities, the protests began. The massive street demonstrations went into effect as a result of the junta's

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Who doesn't think about ris-



Artwork by Zach Smithson

attempt to repress the protestors. The official death toll is ten; however, there are several reports that hundreds were killed during the bloody demonstrations led by the Buddhist monks. The military forces unfairly arrested, beat, shot and disgraced the monks. In one video smuggled out of the tightly controlled country, a man is seen with his hands raised above his head as Myanmar security personnel beat him with sticks. The soldiers even prevented the monks from carrying out their daily religious practices by surrounding their monasteries. In an even more striking act of selflessness, the monks refused to accept the alms, which buy their food, from the military rulers. This refusal effectively isolated the junta from a religion that is a foundation of Burmese culture. Although the volatile demon-

strations have ended for the most part, the impact of the Buddhist monks' dismissal of the Junta's cruel repressive tactics will continue to influence the citizens of Myanmar. If something is not done to halt the unpopular regime's cruel display of power, it is likely the streets of Myanmar will once again be filled with mobs of saffron-colored robes.

A Presidential "First?"

Bv Annie Wheeler



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number of "firsts" that no previous election has. We have the opportunity to elect our first female President, our first African-American President, our first Hispanic President, our first Mormon President, or our first Vietnam Veteran President. With so many unique prospects, one would be hard pressed not to have input into next year's election. Experts do expect to see the number of voters increase for this election.

A field of 27 eager men and women have filed with the Federal Election Commission to run for the U.S. Presidency. Many have already grabbed the media's attention! We hear a lot about Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Senator Clinton, who is seeking to become our first female President, proposed a bill called the Iraq Troop Protection and Reduction Act of 2007 to

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bring an end to the war before the next President takes office. She also supports a plan to provide greater care to all veterans. Senator Obama, who could become our first black President, proposes a plan to halt escalations of the war and begin phasing our troops out. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who hopes to become our first Hispanic President, wants to pull our troops out immediately.

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney has the chance to be the first Mormon in office. He believes withdrawal from Iraq would be a mistake, and Americans should show a surge of support for the troops and war. Senator John McCain, whom if elected would be the first Vietnam war veteran to serve as President, is campaigning again after losing the Republican nomination to George W. Bush in 2000. Senator McCain's focus is on stabilizing and securing Iraq, as he believes the failure to do so endangers future generations.

So, for whom will you cast your vote? For a "first" in American history? For someone who wishes to change President Bush's strategy in Iraq or someone who wishes to continue it?-There are many important issues to analyze. Hopefully, for whomever they vote, American citizens will make well informed decisions in the 2008 Presidential election.

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Not on Our Watch

By Lisa Huynh

Worldwide rallies

occurring in as many as

thirty different countries

have joined forces for one

crucial cause: to save Dar-

fur. Four devastating years

have passed during which

Darfurians have endured

continuous violence, mur-

der. rape, and torture. The

Sudanese government-ap-

proved militia has killed



Ashley and Alex fill food packets for Million Meals for Children.

thousands of civilians. Thousands more remain refugees. In the fall of 2004, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell officially used the term "genocide" to describe the ongoing massacre in Darfur.

Through the years, awareness of the current genocide has steadily spread to more and more individuals, and as awareness increases, so does the effort to put an end to it. This effort is shared globally; protesters in Rome wore T-shirts bearing a bloodstained hand and carried peace torches, marchers in London carried signs reading "Rape, torture, murder. How much longer for Darfur?" China is preparing a 300-strong team to be sent for deployment in Darfur to build roads, bridges, and wells. Some countries choose to display their opinions symbolically in order to be heard. For example, demonstrators from Ottawa and Accra, Ghana donned blindfolds to advise world leaders not to look away from the continuing brutality. Here at home, people are taking a political stand, finding it a priority for the next president of the United States of America to be willing to take action on the situation in Sudan. "Ask the Candidates" is an online petition calling on each presidential candidate to partition his/her personal investments and divest from companies that are complicit in the genocide. Even students here at Millbrook High School formed a Darfur Awareness Club in 2005 dedicated to informing students about these atrocities. On October 20th, club members packaged meals for refugees at the Cary Towne Center Mall through a program called Operation Sharehouse.

Everyday, increased action is taking place, but there is

more needed nevertheless. There are still people unaware of the genocide, still those who are apathetic. Those are the individuals that can be the difference between a simple relief, to international aid. Join in the cause, and chant alongside others, "Not on our watch!"



MHS Darfur Awareness Club members display their community service certificates from Operation Sharehouse.

By Catherine Leake

The number of child soldiers between the ages of 15 and 18 in various countries of Africa has increased by over 100,000 since 2003. Young men are often recruited to serve in rebel

militias while females as young as eight are recruited for sexual purposes or forced marriages. These children are often abducted from their villages at night and taken away to serve. Many children are driven to join the armed forces due to poverty, discrimination, and alienation. Governments in countries, such as Namibia, Somalia, and The Republic of the Congo, claiming a shortage of adults, depend on children to do the fighting. Children are chosen as they are easy to mold into fearless killers due to their unwavering obedience. In return, they are rewarded with drugs and alcohol. Some child soldiers fight on the frontline; others serve as spies, messengers, sex slaves, and servants. A lot of them suffer physical

abuse, and in some cases, attempt suicide or turn on one another as they cannot bear their own mistreatment. Organizations such as *Lord's Resistance Army, United*

Front for Democratic Change, Union of Democratic Forces for Unity, and Forces Nationales pour la Liberation are among the groups with child soldiers. In Somalia, the Islamic Courts Union engaged an estimated 20,000 children in the fight against Ethiopian and Somali forces—resulting in the deaths of over 5,000 teenage fighters. In Sudan, an estimated 7,500+ children serve

> in the Sudan Liberation Army. In Zimbabwe, child soldiers have displayed the worst acts of violence against their own. A local Zimbabwean group, known both as The National Service Group and the "Green Bombers," provides child soldiers with weapons and narcotics, using them for protective acts of violence.

Africa is not the only continent with child soldiers. In Southeast Asia, countries such as The Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar have more than 10,000 children under arms. The use of children is common among insurgent groups. Young suicide bombers from the Middle East have made headlines all over the world. Iran and Afghanistan have about 300,000 child soldiers combined.

Some former child soldiers are now coming forward

to tell their stories. The United Nations and *The Voices of Youth* newsletter on *unicef.org* are featuring former child soldiers sharing the horrors about having to fight for their countries at such an early age—often being discarded like toy soldiers—and the innocence they have lost in the process.



soschildrensvillages.org.uk

Welcome to Bridges!

On behalf of the *Bridges* Newsletter Staff, I would like to welcome you to the ninth exciting year of our unique publication. 2007-08 promises to be a great year for *Bridges*. We are proud to be a fourth year charter member of the *National History Club*. Ms. Poling's *LOV/RIR* classes are energized to learn about the lessons of Vietnam, as well as current global issues. We are delighted to pass along our research, observations, and opinions to our readers. Our staff consists of an enthusiastic group of writers, poets, artists, and graphic designers who are eager to share with you our special *Bridges* publication throughout the year. Enjoy! ~ *Eric Book, Editor*

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Generation Next

By Molly Emmett

Acceptance of increasing diversity, feeling removed from the political process, looking up to role models who are non-political leaders--these are just a few of the traits found in those who are members of "Generation Next." The Pew Research Center identified such traits in a recent survey entitled, "A Portrait of 'Generation Next:' How Young People View Their Lives, Futures, and Politics." Generation Next refers to anyone born since 1982 (under 25) -- the generation that has grown up in the aftermath of September 11th. The survey discovered that Generation Next is generally more positive in discussing the government than are older groups and less likely to characterize the government as inefficient. This generation is more aware of what is happening in politics than previous generations were at the same age. Unfortunately, the percentage of informed Generation Next members is still very low. Only a third follow world news "most of the time." Statistics show that politics do not seem to be a priority for Generation Next. Less than half feel a civic duty to vote, which is very disappointing for a country founded upon democratic principles of which voting is one of its core values. The survey also found that Generation Next members do not make print news a part of their daily lives. They often turn to television and other people, instead of newspapers, as their sources of global information.

Intrigued by the Pew Research Center survey, the *Bridges* Staff decided to conduct a random survey of 160 Millbrook seniors. Thankfully, the results did not always match. Eighty percent of Millbrook seniors polled agreed with the statement, "I feel it is my duty as a citizen to vote," a much larger percentage than the Pew Research Center found. Millbrook survey results did match when it came to news sources. Most students rely on the Internet and television for their information. But, disappointingly, our survey found that only twenty-three percent of seniors polled "know what is going on in the government and national news."

What does this bode for our future? *Generation Next* will need to become much more informed, or it will run the risk of allowing politics to become dominated by a select group. Hopefully, as my fellow students gain the right to vote, they will realize the importance of casting these votes as an educated electorate, thus proving wrong the findings of both surveys.

In the Spring 2007 issue of the *National History Club* newsletter, the club honored Millbrook High teacher Lindy Poling as one of five "History Club Advisors of the Year." Ms. Poling received a copy of *Churchill* and a certificate of appreciation from the *NHC* for her exceptional commitment to history education and the mission of the *National History Club*. There are currently

260 *NHC* chapters nationwide. The newsletter includes an article authored by Ms. Poling about the *Bridges* Newsletter Club which has been a member of the *National History Club* since 2003.



~ Bill Poston, WCPSS Communications