ART AND THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT

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Art and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my grandmother, Augida Gammad, and my mother, Evangeline Gonzales, for teaching me the intrinsic value of education. Thank you for feeding my soul with unconditional love, strength, and wisdom.
The purpose of this thesis is to take control of the past by presenting an alternative history on the war in Vietnam and the antiwar movement. This thesis demystifies the study of the war in Vietnam by looking at historical evidence. The evidence includes the study of the French colonization of Vietnam, French Indochina War, Geneva Peace Accords, Pentagon Papers, and tactics used by the U.S. in waging the war on the Vietnamese people and their country. In addition, this thesis examines the largest anti-war movement experienced in U.S. history by presenting the tactics used by various antiwar groups. Last, the thesis will present how art and art collectives played a crucial role during the movement. This thesis presents antiwar artwork produced during the movement and demonstrates how political posters became the most effective means of protest. Taken as a whole, this thesis lies at the intersection of three themes. First, in order to understand the truth about the present, the war on terror, we need to reveal the truth about past wars. Second, in order to assert our collective power, we need to understand that in the past, collectively, we have changed things for the better. Finally, we need to understand how the power of art and its images can be a tool for the struggle for social change, truth, and a just society.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I enrolled in History 101 my sophomore year in college. After teaching us about the Second World War, the professor introduced the Vietnam War with a candy dish. As she lectured about the war, she had the students pass the candy dish around and when the candy dish was passed to me, I saw that the candy dish was a small glass warship and I read the words written on the side, “USS MADDOX.” I remember asking myself, why would anyone make a candy dish as memorabilia for the Vietnam War? The professor answered my question without me having to ask it. She said that it was an important symbol for understanding the reason that the United States waged a war in Vietnam. She said that the Johnson Administration became involved in Vietnam because the USS Maddox, a “patrol ship,” had been attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats in international waters. This was an act of war, she said, and the U.S. responded to it. She also went on to explain that the My Lai massacre was an isolated incident and that it occurred because there had been an error in locating the “Real My Lai.”

I never questioned nor challenged my teacher and accepted the “facts” and “knowledge” presented about the war as truth. At the end of the semester, I received an A in the class. Yet, as I was to discover, the grade I received did not reflect my knowledge of American history; it reflected the problems of the study of history within our educational system. It was in my graduate program that I began to truly understand the reasons why teachers lie to their students. One of the first experiences that opened my eyes was reading a book, “Lies my Teacher Told Me,” by James Loewen. Loewen’s book analyzes the ten American history textbooks that are most often used in American high schools. He argues that teachers take students on a “trip of their own, away from the facts of history, into the realm of myth” (Loewen 1995:30). The educational system, he goes on, reproduces “an outrageous concoction of lies, half-truths, and omissions” of significant historical events in order to support patriotism and the ideas of “freedom and democracy” (Loewen 1995:30).
The professor in this course was certainly guilty of lying, because the truth about the attack on the U.S.S Maddox had been revealed in 1971 when Daniel Ellsberg made the Pentagon Papers\(^1\) available to the public. And the truth about the My Lai massacre had been known and covered up by the military since the moment it happened. The two most important truths about the My Lai massacre, discovered during the military’s own investigation of it, was that it was not an error, but, in fact, a planned operation that only ended when a U.S soldier threatened to shoot the soldiers who were committing the atrocities. And, at least as significantly, the My Lai massacre was not an isolated incident (Zinn 2000).

I learned something about the intentional omissions of our educational system in my graduate program at San Diego State. I learned that the educational system, as Loewen says, not only lies, but omits much. And one of the things it omits is how progressive social movements have shaped American society for the better. It seemed obvious once I was taught about social movements and read about them that the reason our educational system omits them is because such knowledge would lead people to believe that when acting together they had power. As Howard Zinn (2000) points out in *People’s History of the United States*, by the mid-1970s, the power elite in the U.S. were concerned that they were losing control of society because of the widespread popular participation in the social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. The plan, Zinn (2000) says, was to pacify the public, and one group that needed to be pacified, according to the power elite, was students, and there would be no better way to pacify them than by controlling history. As George Orwell says in *1984*, “Those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future” (Orwell 1950:32).

\(^1\) On June 30, 1971, after 15 days in court, the Supreme Court of the United States allowed the New York Times and the Washington Post to continue publishing the Pentagon Papers. The 3,000 page document divide in four volumes is an archive of government decision-making on Indochina for three decades; from World War II to May 1968, the same month as the peace talks in Paris. Robert S. McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, commissioned the RAND Corporation to write a top-secret history of the role of the United States in Indochina. Daniel Ellsberg, an investigator for the RAND Corporation, leaked the papers after he secretly copied the document. Ellsberg faced 12 federal felony charges and a possible 115 years in prison. Yet despite the risk, Ellsberg hoped “exposing secrets five presidents had withheld and the lies they told might have benefits for our democracy that were worthy of the risks.” The Pentagon Papers, following the Oval Office crimes toppled Nixon and the papers became a crucial document in ending the war.
When my professor lectured on WWII, she omitted any discussion of the Spanish Civil War. This allowed her, of course, not to have to explain the reasons why the United States stood by while those challenging the Fascist government of Francisco Franco where being killed by Franco’s forces, and also the Fascist forces of Nazi Germany and Italy. She also did not have to explain the Abraham Lincoln brigade, American citizens who volunteered to help fight with the anti-fascist forces. Nor did she have to explain Guernica. It is only when I saw Picasso’s painting that I learned there had been a Spanish Civil War and that the forces of democracy and freedom had fought against fascism without the help of the U.S. But I also realized something else when I saw the painting and it had a profound effect on me. It was that art has a political dimension and there is a power to art; the power of the image to reveal lies, untruths, intentional omissions and to depict the atrocities of Guernica and My Lai.

This thesis lies at the intersection of the three themes. In order to understand the truth about the present, the war on terror, we need to reveal the truth about the past. In order to assert our collective power, we need to understand that in the past, collectively, we have changed things for the better. And we need to understand how powerful art, and the image, can be in the struggle for truth and a just society.

Chapter Two titled “The American War” demystifies what Americans call the Vietnam War by looking at the historical evidence. This evidence includes the French colonization of Vietnam, the French Indochina War, Geneva Peace Accords, attempts by the newly formed government of Vietnam to be recognized by the U.S., the documented history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the Pentagon Papers, and the tactics used by the U.S. in waging the war on the Vietnamese people. The United States, between 1964 and 1972, used its maximum military effort, everything except an atomic bomb, to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in Vietnam, a tiny peasant third world country, and lost. The U.S. Administrations presented the war as a fight against communism in order to spread freedom and democracy. Yet, the war in Vietnam was an American war waged on the Vietnamese people and their country.

Perhaps the first Americans to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam were merchant marines who were serving on U.S. ships taking French troops back to Vietnam immediately after WWII (Zinn 2001). They realized the hypocrisy of fighting a war for freedom and self-
determination and the “recolonization” by the French of Vietnam. Civil rights groups realized another kind of hypocrisy and they challenged it. They pointed out the contradictions in supposedly fighting a war for freedom ten thousand miles away while at home the law of the land in many places was still unfree, de jure segregation. These were not the only groups who opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam. During the course of the war, the United States experienced the largest antiwar movement in U.S. history. The movement played a critical part in ending the war. Chapter 3, *The Anti-Vietnam War Movement*, examines the antiwar groups and the tactics they used. While there were many groups, a twofold goal was shared by all. The first part of the goal was to reveal the truth about the war, the contradictions, the tactics, and the human and social costs. The second part was to stop the war machine from being able to function. This involved primarily stopping the military’s ability to meet the manpower needs for waging the war.

Chapter 4, *Art and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement*, will examine the role of art, artists and art organizations in the movement. As early as 1966, art collectives such as Art and Writers Protest were organized. After the Tet offensive and the My Lai massacre even more art groups were organized. The Art Workers Coalition and the Guerilla Art Action are examples. They organized events and protests, created and displayed anti-war art, and linked the art world to the military-industrial complex. They also moved art beyond the museum and into the streets with the creation of anti-war political posters that became an important tool for achieving the goal of the movement, informing the public through images about the lies, the tactics and the human and social cost of war.
CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN WAR

Between 1964 and 1975, the United States waged a war against the country and people of Vietnam (Figure 1). In reality, U.S. involvement in Vietnam began decades earlier and was tied to French colonialism.

FRENCH COLONIALISM AND U.S. SUPPORT OF FRENCH “RE-COLONIZATION”

The Vietnamese refer to what Americans call the Vietnam War as the American War. The American War was tied inextricably to colonialism\(^2\), specifically French colonialism in Southeast Asia (Semm, personal communication, August 15, 2012). Between 1887-1954, France colonized most of modern day Southeast Asia. The countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand made up what the French called French Indochina.\(^3\) The Japanese invasion and occupation of Vietnam during World War II was among the initial causes in the ensuing breakdown of French control of its Asian colonies. A broad based anti-colonial organization called the “League for the Independence of Vietnam”, also known as the “Viet Minh,” formed a resistance movement to the Japanese invasion and occupation. The Viet Minh was a nationalist group that had fought against the French colonial occupation. Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Minh, sought wartime aid from the United States in exchange for intelligence on Japanese military operations, but the United States did not provide the aid (Karnow 1997).

The United States position after the war was based on a promise that it had already made to the French two weeks prior to the signing of the Atlantic Charter, a promise that

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\(^2\) 111 B.C., Vietnam was conquered by China for a thousand years. In A.D. 939, the Vietnamese gained independence, yet, faced persistent incursions by China and bordering countries through the mid-1400s (Karnow 1997).

\(^3\) French missionaries and traders worked in Vietnam for several decades. By 1858, France sought to control Vietnam. Forty-years later, in 1897, Vietnam became a colony and split in three States (Karnow 1997).
contradicted the Charter’s principles of self-determination. The Pentagon Papers called the policy “ambivalent” toward Indochina and “expressed or implied that the French had an intention to restore to France its overseas empire after the war” (Zinn 2001:412).

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4 August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill released the Atlantic Charter consisting of four goals for the post-war world, their countries would “seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other” and respected “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will to live.” The Charter was declared the right of
In 1945, after Japan surrendered to the Allies, Ho Chi Minh and his People’s Congress formed the National Liberation Committee of Vietnam as a temporary government. In Hanoi, with one million people on the streets celebrating the defeat of Japan, Ho Chi Minh issued a Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was based on “The French Declaration of the Rights of Man” and the “American Declaration of Independence.” As the American revolutionaries did, the Vietnamese listed their grievances against French rule. The Declaration concluded,

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country. We are convinced that the Allied nations, which at Teheran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam. (Minh “Declaration,” 1945)

Yet, after Japanese withdrawal, France set out to retake its former colony.

Ho Chi Minh wrote eight letters to President Truman between October 1945 and February 1946. These letters asked for the United States to recognize Vietnam’s right to self-determination. One letter states, “When the Japanese were defeated in August 1945, the whole Vietnam territory was united under a Provisional Republican Government. In five months, peace and order were restored, a democratic republic was established on legal bases, and adequate help was given to the Allies in the carrying out of their disarmament mission.” (Minh, “Letter,” 1945). He went on to explain to Truman that the French were trying to reestablish control over Vietnam. He declared, “This aggression is contrary to all principles of international law and the pledge made by the Allies during World War II” (Minh, “Letter,” 1945). He asked for U.S. support consistent with the Atlantic Charter and support for U.N. intervention the would be directed at stopping the re-colonizing efforts of the French. Additionally, Ho declared that, “It is with this firm conviction that we request of the United Sates as guardians and champions of World Justice to take a decisive step in support of our independence” (Minh, “Letter,” 1945). Still, no one replied to Ho Chi Minh’s letters and in

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nations to self-determination (Chomsky 1972).
an ensuing interview, he told a journalist, “we apparently stand quite alone…We shall have
to depend on ourselves” (Zinn 2001:470).5

**U.S. SUPPORT OF FRANCE DURING THE FRENCH INDO-
CHINA WAR**

The American War was not a war between North and South Vietnam as it was
presented to the American people. There was no country of North Vietnam and no country of
South Vietnam. According to the Pentagon Papers, “South Vietnam was essentially a
creation of the United States” (Zinn 2001:472). The war was not against communism
although it was also presented that way to the American people. It was argued by U.S.
leaders that the take over of Vietnam by the Vietminh was proof of the domino theory, “you
have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last
one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly” (Wiest 2003:13).6 However, the
Pentagon Papers revealed a quite different story.

The primary concern for U.S. leaders at the time was not that Vietnam was the first of
many dominoes falling to communism, but that it could become what was called a “rotten
apple.” Vietnam, under the Vietminh, the Pentagon Papers claimed, was a threat because its
aspirations and goals were nationalist, not communist. Vietnam wanted political
independence from the French, but also economic independence. It wanted to use its
resources for its people. This proved a threat to the U.S. in what was called the “Grand
Strategy,” an American-centered imperialism (Chomsky 1972), because it was argued if
Vietnam was successful in gaining both political and economic independence, it could set a
bad example for other countries that were fighting wars of national liberation. These other
countries could be inspired by the success of the Vietnamese to define their goals
independent of a global system. Consequently, the U.S. refused to recognize the government
of Vietnam and even supported the French re-colonization of Vietnam, politically,
 economically, and militarily (Chomsky 1972; Zinn 2001).

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5 Ho Chi Minh also sent a letter to the United Nations.

6 It was believed that if one country becomes communist, then neighboring countries will fall to
communism. This led to the justification for the United States to intervene to suppress communism in Southeast
Asia (Chomsky 1967; Karnow 1997; Zinn 2000).
The U.S. kept the promise that it made to the French during the war by providing ships to transport French soldiers back to Vietnam. On October 1946, the French bombarded Haiphong, a northern port city, and an eight-year war began, called the “French-Indochina War.” The French were not able to defeat the Vietnamese, in fact, they were not able to fund the war, and could not have continued for eight years without the significant aid it got from the U.S. The U.S. funded 80% of the war’s cost, and provided several hundred thousand weapons to the French, enough to equip all the French soldiers.\(^7\) Despite U.S. military aid, the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu on September 2, 1954, which led to the signing of the “Geneva Accords” in 1954 (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998).

**U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM BETWEEN 1954 AND 1964**

The Geneva Accords created the conditions for the reunification and independence of Vietnam. The Accords temporarily divided Vietnam at the 17\(^{th}\) parallel or the demilitarized zone (Figure 2). According to the Geneva Accords, the 17\(^{th}\) parallel would vanish and Vietnam would unite after a democratic election in 1956. In addition, the Accords stated, “these Agreements recognize and guarantee, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam (Article 6 and 7 of the Final Declaration)” (Sartre 1968:185). The Geneva Agreements prohibited the introduction of additional troops, of military personnel, arms and munitions and the installation of military bases (Article 16 of the Armistice Agreement; Sartre 1968:185). It also stated the inclusion of Vietnam in military alliances, this applying to the two zones (Article 9 of the Final Declaration; Sartre 1968:185). Yet, the United States, although at Paris during the negotiations, did not sign, nor did it comply with the Geneva Accords.

The Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States knew that Ho Chi Minh would win the election and Vietnam would be unified under a nationalist government. The U.S. then began its more direct involvement in Vietnam. Even before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, the United States began undermining the agreements. Several weeks

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\(^7\) By 1952, the United States’ aid totaled 775 million. And France spent half it’s military budget that weakened its position in Europe and negotiations began. After the end of the Korean War, China began support the Vietminh (Hillstrom and Hillstrom, 1998).
Figure 2. Demilitarized zone. Source: 
(http://www.cambodiacorps.org).
before the conclusion of the Geneva Conference, the United States placed Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic anti-communist leader who had ties to the French colonial elites, into the presidency of South Vietnam. Diem essentially became a puppet dictator for the United States and successfully blocked the reunification elections. Because the U.S. imposed him, he had no popular support, so during his rule, he used force to govern (Karnow 1997; Sheehan et al. 1971; Zinn 2000).

Diem was able to pass legislation, 10/59 Law that allowed him to detain suspected communists. As a result, thousands of “communist sympathizers” were imprisoned, tortured, and/or killed. In addition, Diem placed his own military men in the positions of provincial chiefs. He also used his Presidency to reverse economic policies that had been initiated by the post-WWII government. For example, he reversed the post-colonial land reform programs and returned land to the French and Vietnamese elites (Zinn 2001). As a result, the Diem regime became more and more unpopular and this required the U.S. to support the regime more directly. The U.S. therefore proceeded to increase the number of military “advisers” it had in the country and also to increase its economic support for the regime (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998).

By 1958 extensive opposition to the Diem regime was growing in the countryside. Hanoi gave aid, encouragement, and sent people, mostly those who had lived in the south previously, to the south through the “Ho Chi Minh Trail,” a path that went through Laos and Cambodia (Figure 3). The opposition became known as the “National Liberation Front (NLF);” a term the U.S. disparagingly referred to as the “Viet Cong.” Members of the NLF were organizers much more than they were soldiers. According to U.S. government analyst Douglas Pike, “in the 2561 villages of South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front created a host of nation-wide socio-political organizations in the country…the purpose of this vast organizational effort was…to restructure the social order of the village and train the villages to control themselves” (quoted in Zinn 2001:473). By 1962, there were an estimated 300,000

8 The United States sent the U.S. Military Assistance Advisor Group (MAAG) to train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in combat tactics and logistical tasks. The Geneva Accords only permitted 685 military advisors in southern Vietnam, yet Eisenhower secretly sent several thousand (Chomsky 1972).
NLF members. According to the Pentagon Papers, the Viet Cong were the only political organization with mass based political support in Vietnam (Sheehan et al. 1971; Zinn 2001).

The end of the Diem regime began with religious conflict. Buddhist monks experienced religious persecution under Diem’s rule. Catholic priests began to send private armies to force conversions and if conversions were not successful, these private armies would loot and then destroy the pagodas. The oppression of the Buddhists majority, accounting for between seventy and eighty percent of Vietnam’s population, resulted in political upheaval (Karnow 1997).

By 1963, Buddhist monks began to use non-violent civil disobedience as a means to protest against Catholic rule. On May 8, 1963, as Buddhists assembled in Hue to celebrate the 2527th birthday of the Buddha, a Catholic Major, Dan Xi, enforced an old decree, Decree Number 10 of 1958. This law banned the Buddhist flag. In response, several thousand Buddhist gathered to listen to a speech by Tri Quang, a Buddhist leader. Yet, the station director was pressured to cancel the speech and the crowd was ordered to disperse.
Immediately, the army and police fired toward the crowd and the people stampeded. A woman and eight children were killed.

This event led Buddhist demonstrations to intensify. Days later, Tuich Quag Duc, responded by drenching himself with gasoline and burning himself to death on a busy road intersection in Saigon. Many other Buddhist monks began to commit suicide in the same way. In response to the protests, Diem imposed martial law and the Army began to raid and close down pagodas and temples (Karnow 1997).

Despite the reactionary nature of the Diem regime, the U.S. continued to support it and continued to give the same ideological justification for this support: the “domino theory.” Robert McNamara, who became the key architect in the escalation of the American War reported to Kennedy in 1961 on the U.S. national interests and objectives in South Vietnam and said, “The loss of the South Viet-Nam to Communism would not only destroy SEATO\textsuperscript{9} but would undermine the credibility of American commitments elsewhere. Further, loss of South Viet-Nam would stimulate bitter domestic controversies in the United States and would be seized upon extreme elements to divide the country and the Administration.” (Sheehan et al. 1971:494-495). McNamara concluded that it is therefore up to the government to “take measures necessary for that purpose in exchange for large-scale United States assistance in the military, economic, and political fields\textsuperscript{10}” (Sheehan et al. 1971:496).

The U.S. accelerated its commitment to the Diem regime by increasing its troop commitment by eleven thousand and initiating and directing a counterinsurgency program called the “Strategic Hamlet Programs.” This program forced the mass transfer of the rural Vietnamese population into relocation camps. The Hamlet Programs had two goals. First, it was to separate the peasants from the NLF in order to minimize the influence of the NLF

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\textsuperscript{9} In 1954, the United States, Australia, France, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the Philippines, Thailand, and the United Kingdom formed Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). SEATO mimicked the same military, political, and economic policies of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The goal of the organization was to form an “international collective defense to contain communism.” SEATO disbanded in 1977, two years after the fall of Saigon (Chomsky 1972).

\textsuperscript{10} Kennedy sent two thousand, some involved in combat operations, including four hundred Green Berets (Army Special Forces) to the Central Highlands to train Montongards, indigenous tribesman in counterinsurgency tactics, in early 1961. And by the fall of 1962, Kennedy sent an additional nine thousand military advisors to aid ARVN, now known as the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) (Anderson 1999; Chomsky 1972).
while simultaneously cutting off resources and aid that was coming from the villages and villagers. Secondly, the program involved the tactic of burning the villages, from this tactic came the term “Zippo job” (Schell 1988). Homes were burned; water poisoned, crops burned, food stores poisoned and animals killed. This second goal also involved another tactic, which was the shelling of villages by ARVN artillery. Because many civilians escaped the forcible relocation program, this tactic resulted in killing many civilians (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998; Sheehan et al. 1971).

The program was a failure for many reasons. It was riddled with corruption; it was based on ignorance of the population, its cultural beliefs and its relation to the Vietcong.\(^\text{11}\) Ignoring all of the more important factors that led to its failure, the Pentagon Papers (1963) reported that the program was an ultimate failure because the Hamlets did not meet minimum security standards and the program ended in 1966.

The United States initiated what was called “Operations Trail Dust” in 1962, a series of operations involving chemical warfare, clearly violating the Geneva Conventions of 1925. The operation’s objectives were to destroy crops, rid the Vietcong of jungle coverage, and to expose the Ho Chi Minh Trail. These chemical agents, known as “rainbow herbicides,” were sprayed from airplanes. The most common herbicide used was “Agent Orange.” U.S. ‘experts’ at the time claimed that these chemical agents were harmless, short-lived in the environment and a “prototype smart weapon.” DOW and Monsanto, the chemical corporations who produced the agents, knew about the harmful effects of the herbicides and defoliants in humans. In addition, by 1968, numerous studies were published about the long-term harmful effects of the agents on humans and vegetation. Yet, herbicidal warfare in Vietnam did not cease until 1972. Ranchhanders, U.S. soldiers who dispersed the agents, released a total of 200 million gallons of defoliants and herbicides.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{11}\) The Pentagon Papers noted that there was an estimated 4.3 million Vietnamese located in 3,225 hamlets by 1962. By the end of July 1963, over eight million people lived in hamlets and 7,250 hamlets were built. Yet, the Vietcong overrun 25 percent of the hamlets, the majority of them located along the Mekong Delta. The hamlets that were over-run by the Viet Cong were later bombed or dropped with drums of napalm. Rampant corruption occurred during the operation. Many government officials pocketed the compensation promised and many angry peasants, who were not already Viet Cong, became Viet Cong sympathizers (Chomsky 1972; Karnow 1997).

\(^{12}\) The agents are known to cause kidney damage, various forms of cancers, diabetes, neuropathies, and
resulted in the destruction of about 14 percent of Vietnam’s total land area equating to about 25 million acres of land destroyed, the size of Massachusetts. By the end of the war, the use of herbicides by the U.S. turned Vietnam into the largest dioxin contaminated site in the world (Zinn 2001).

The United States abandoned the unpopular Diem regime and supported a coup and the assassination of Diem in 1963. The U.S. then supported seven successive puppet governments none of which had anymore-popular support then the Diem regime. None were successful in ending the popular insurgency.

By late 1963, there were more than 16,000 U.S. advisors in Vietnam, but despite this increase, General Westmoreland, the commander of U.S. troops in Vietnam, requested more troops. As General Maxwell Taylor said, “The ability of the Viet Cong continuously to rebuild their units and to make good their losses remained one of the mysteries of guerrilla war…Not only did the Viet-Cong units have the recuperative powers of the phoenix, but they had an amazing ability to maintain morale” (Zinn 2001:475). Only in rare cases did the United States find evidences of bad morale among Viet-Cong prisoners or recorded in captured Viet-Cong documents. However, it was not until a controversial incident occurred that the military leaderships request for more troops was answered.


In 1964, there were allegedly two attacks on two different U.S. destroyers. These attacks, according to the allegations made by U.S. authorities at the time, were unprovoked and occurred on international waters in the Tonkin Gulf. U.S. authorities claimed that on August 2nd, three North Vietnamese patrol torpedo (PT) boats fired torpedoes at the USS Maddox. Two days later, North Vietnamese PT boats allegedly attacked the C. Turner Joy. According to the Pentagon Papers, the attack was quickly reported as a radar signal error. In his book, Legacy of Ashes, Tim Weiner claimed that the first attack was actually two U.S.

birth defects. Years after the war, Vietnamese and American veterans’ babies are being born stillbirth or with birth defects such as Down Syndrome and Spina Bifida. The agents are still present the in the Vietnam’s ground today.

13 Three weeks later, President Kennedy was assassinated.
destroyers firing at each other (Weiner 2007). The two destroyers could not see each other because of the heavy fog. In fact, as Senator Gurening claimed, the CIA was conducting a covert operation on North Vietnamese coastal facilities (Silber and Brown 1979). The Maddox was not on a “routine patrol” on international waters: the Maddox was on a special electronic spying mission in Vietnamese territorial waters and no torpedoes had been fired at the U.S. ships (Silber and Brown 1979; Zinn 2001). However, the alleged attacks on the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy were used as justification to massively escalate the American war (Sheehan et al. 1971).

Three days after the Tonkin “attacks,” a congressional resolution was passed in the House with only two dissenting votes. This resolution gave the President the power to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression” (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998:263). The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution allowed Johnson to wage war against Vietnam without securing a formal Declaration of War from Congress. In retaliation for the “attacks” of the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy, President Johnson approved Operation Pierce Arrow, the bombing of North Vietnam’s coastal facilities and authorized the increased bombing of the south. In addition, according to the Pentagon Papers, Johnson authorized the secret bombing of the Laotian trails, near the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Furthermore, Johnson authorized a massive bombing campaign, “Operation Rolling Thunder,” an operation that lasted three and a half years that was intended to bomb the north into submission (Karnow 1997).

Most importantly, though, the alleged attacks on U.S. ships and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave the U.S. the justification, popular support, and the legal framework to engage in a massive military buildup in Vietnam. By 1965 the U.S. had 200,000 American soldiers in Vietnam, and in the next year, an additional 200,000 soldiers were sent to Vietnam. At the peak of the War, early 1968, there were more than 500,000 American troops in Vietnam.

As Johnson escalated the American war, he spoke publicly about the need to win the “hearts and minds” of the Vietnamese people, however the strategic goal was to kill as many of the enemy as possible. And the tactics employed were designed to do that. However, because the war was popularly supported by the Vietnamese people, the “enemy” frequently became “anyone who ran” or “anyone who was still there,” or “anyone who was killed.” The
“body count” became the measure of success, and according to the body count, the United States was winning the War (Sheehan et al. 1971; Wiest 2003).

The tactic of defoliation was continued and accelerated as mentioned earlier as was the use of napalm. The tactic of declaring areas “free fire zones” and then sending troops on “search and destroy” missions in the “zones” became common. The initial phase of this tactic involved the clearing of the area of non-combatants by various means, leaflets, loud speakers, and then entering the areas and killing anything that was still there. All persons remaining were considered “enemy.” The free fire zones and search and destroy missions led to massive destruction of villages, crops, and animals to the killing of many civilians (Sheehan et al. 1971). Jonathan Schell’s book, The Village of Ben Suc, described one such operation, “a village surrounded, attacked, a man riding a bicycle shot down, three people picnicking by the river shot to death, the houses, the women, children, old people herded together, taken away from their ancestral homes”14 (quoted in Zinn and Arnowe 2004:433).

The U.S. military continued “carpet bombing,” high altitude saturation bombing, of both North and South Vietnam.15 There were many covert operations. For example, the CIA in Vietnam orchestrated a program called “Operation Phoenix.” This was designated a targeted assassination program. At least twenty thousand civilians suspected to be communists were executed without trial. (Zinn 2001:478).

The United States declared that it was winning the war because the goal had been killing the enemy and the success rate was being measured by “body count,” and the U.S. was claiming a 10:1 kill ratio. The body count statistics given to the American public at this time led many to believe that final defeat of the enemy was near.16 Yet, the Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States was not winning the war because of the influence of the NLF. The NLF continued to be successful in occupying and redistributing land among the

14 By 1972, about half of the nation’s rural population had refugee status (Wiest 2003).
15 Seven million tons of bombs were dropped during the war. In a seven-year period 1965-1971, the area of Indochina, slightly larger than Texas, was bombarded by a tonnage of munitions amounting to approximately twice the total used by the U.S. in all the theater of the World War II. By the end of the war, there were 21 million bomb craters in south Vietnam and 1,200 square miles of land was bulldozed flat, stripped of all life (Chomsky 1972; Karpow 1997; Zinn 2001).
16 In previous wars, success and efficiency of the war was measured by land accumulation.
peasants. In 1967, a secret congressional report said, “the Viet Cong was distributing about five times more land to the peasants than the South Vietnamese government, whose land distribution program had come to a virtual standstill” (Zinn 2001:480). The report said, “The Viet Cong have eliminated landlord domination and reallocated lands owned by absentee landlords and the Government of Viet Nam (G.V.N.) to the landless and others who cooperate with the Viet Cong authorities” (Zinn 2001:480). The truth about the success and failure of the American war was revealed in 1968 in what is called the “Tet Offensive.” Although the offensive was a significant military defeat for the insurgency, it was a much greater propaganda victory for the NLF and an equally if not larger propaganda loss for the U.S (Karnow 1997).

North Vietnamese regulars and Vietcong forces carried out the Tet Offensive. On January 30th and the 31st in 1968 and it revealed to the American public that the United States was not winning the war nor was it winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people. Tet is the celebration of the Lunar New Year on the first day of spring and is the most important national holiday for the Vietnamese. The Offensive involved a coordinated attack on 150 cities, hamlets, and military installations in the south such as Saigon, Hue, and Khe Sanh (Dougan, Wiess, and the Editors of Boston Publishing 1983; Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998). Battles went on all over the south for nearly two months and in the end, the Viet Cong lost 58,000 men, seventy percent of its soldiers. The attack, however, revealed the Vietnamese determination to win and it created more popular support for the resistance. Furthermore, it caused a decline in support for the war with the American public.18

17 The main focal point of the Tet was in Saigon. NVA forces did not plan to overthrow the capital, they chose to target political and military importance in effort to paralyze government control and start a general uprising. The Presidential Palace, radio station, and both the MACV and ARVN headquarters. Viet Cong sapper battalion attacked the compound of the US embassy proper leading to a 6 hour battle. The attack in the capital revealed that government officials were lying when imminent victory was close. Some of the most brutal fighting during the Tet took place in Hue, the old imperial capital located in central Vietnam. Hue was divided into two sections along the Perfume River, north was the walled Citadel and south was the new city. NVA forces invaded north of Hue and seized most of the Citadel and the new city, but by February 9, US Marines cleared most of the new city but fighting in the Citadel. The battle of Hue went on for three more weeks resembling the fighting in Stalingrad during WWII, soldiers fought hand-to-hand for every square foot amid surrounded by rubble. Fifty-percent of the city was totally destroyed, leaving 116,000 civilians homeless of a total population of 140,000.

18 Support in the war in 1965 was 52 percent and by 1968 it declined to only 32 percent.
Another event in 1968 served to undermine the war effort and its publicly stated goal of winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people; the “My Lai Massacre.” The massacre was an obvious example, and not an exception, of the consequences of the “search and destroy” missions. Soldiers from “C” Company, within a twenty-four hour period, killed five hundred non-combatant villagers. These victims were women, children, and the elderly. News of the massacre was not revealed to the American public until November 1969. News of the My Lai Massacre led to a further decline in support from both GIs and the American public (Barringer 1999).19

There was not only the growing public disenchantment with the war; there was a growing disenchantment with the war among the American governing class. At the end of Johnson’s presidency, Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense, stated, “I could not find out when the war was going to end: I could not find out the manner in which it was going to end. I could not find out whether the new requests for men and equipment was going to be enough, or whether it would take more and, if more, how much…All I had was the statement, given with too little self-assurance to be comforting, that if we persisted for an indeterminate length of time, the enemy would choose not to go on” (Wiest 2003:47-49).

VIETNAMIZATION

In 1969, Richard Nixon became the 37th President of the United States. His campaign promise was to “end the war [in Vietnam] and win the peace.” Nixon’s plan to end the war was called “Vietnamization.” His stated goal was to withdraw U.S. troops and to gradually turn the fighting of the war over to the Army of Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) until they were strong enough to defend the Saigon government. In the fall of 1969, Nixon asked for public support of the new policy, “To you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support. Let us be united for peace. Let us be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United

19 The story of the massacre was revealed in May 1968 in two French newspapers and another published by the North Vietnamese delegation to the peace talks in Paris. The American press did not pay any attention, except for Seymour Hersh, then working for an anti-war newspaper agency in Southeast Asia. The only person convicted for the mass murder was platoon leader Lieutenant William Calley, a low ranking officer. His sentence was reduced to only three years in house arrest.
States. Only Americans can do that” (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998:209). Nixon began to withdraw troops and by 1972, there were less than 150,000 troops left in Vietnam. Yet, the bombing continued.

According to Howard Zinn, the reality of Vietnamization was quite different than the stated goal. It was true, according to Zinn, the goal was to withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and turn the ground fighting over to ARVN. Yet, the real goal was only to end the most unpopular aspect of the war, American casualties, and regain support for the war at home. The reality was that the U.S. continued its economic, political and military support such as training, weapons, and advising, for the Saigon government and continued it until the very end. But Vietnamization was really a plan to win the war by increased bombing, and not just increased bombing of North Vietnam, but expanded bombing and expanded ground military operations into adjoining countries, Laos\(^{20}\) and Cambodia\(^{21}\).

\(^{20}\) The Nixon Administration aided the Laos government in military aid and advisors. As the war in Vietnam escalated, the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos became a top priority to the United States. The American war in Laos became a “secret war” fought by the CIA. The Hmong, a tribe in the northern part of Laos, allied with the Lao government. The Hmong lost 10,000 and 100,000 fled as refugees during the war. By the end of 1971, after the peace treaty was signed, the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao engaged in ethnic cleansing of the Hmong. Like the Hmong, other indigenous people, known as the Montagnards of the Central Highlands were recruited (including children), in the Civilian Irregular Defense and allied with US Special Forces. The Montagnards, with the total population of one million, lost 200,000 during the Vietnam War. In addition, their lands were located near “free fire zones,” which resulted to 85 percent of their population being forced to resettle. Tensions between Laos and Vietnam intensified long after the Vietnam War ended.

\(^{21}\) In 1962, Prince Sihanook, ruler of Cambodia, allowed NVA and VC forces to set up base camps near the eastern border and in 1965 he cut diplomatic relations with the United States. But by 1969, he accepted the aid of the West to remove NVA and VC forces. By March, Nixon authorized secret offensive strikes in Cambodia known as Operation Menu, three months before the Vietnamization program. After the bombing of Cambodia, a coup occurred and General Lon Nol seized power. When troops started to withdraw troops in June 1970, the country experienced a three-year civil war with NVA and Khmer Rouge forces.

By 1975, the Khmer Rouge pushed General Lon Nol’s troops to retreat to the capital, Phnom Penh. Thereafter, the Khmer Rouge took over 70% of the countryside. The United States sent B-52 strikes to prevent the Khmer Rouge from overtaking the capital. The fighting resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and thousands of refugees. When the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973, the NVA allies withdrew (this created animosity between the two countries which lead to the invasion in 1978 and control of the country for 20 years) and the Khmer Rouge became the most radical communist force in Southeast Asia. B-52 bombing ceased and the capital fell on April 17, 1975.

The leader of the Khmer Rouge, Saloth Sar, adopting the name Pol Pot, planned to transform Cambodia into a Democratic Kampuchea by destroying all Western influence and creating an agrarian utopia. “The regime abolished money, evacuated cities and towns, prohibited religious practices, suspended formal education, newspapers, and postal service. The regime proposed to wage a class war and to turn the economy around by abolishing class distinctions, destroying prerevolutionary institutions, and transforming the population into unpaid agricultural workers.” The regime started a genocidal rampage towards “intellectuals” and liquidated
Vietnamization began on February 8, 1971, the South Vietnamese infantry invaded Laos with U.S. air support, an operation known as Lamson 719, intended to destroy the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The operation failed, yet Nixon lied to the American public in April, “I can report that Vietnamization has succeeded” (Karnow 1997:645). In May, the Nixon Administration decided to mine Haiphong harbor and intensify the bombing in North Vietnam. In December, the United States dropped forty thousand tons of bombs over the heavily populated areas between Hanoi and Haiphong. Within eleven days, Vietnam had experienced the largest bombing campaign ever seen in history. Within a six month period, the United States dropped a greater tonnage of bombs than they had in the entire Operation Rolling Thunder (Karnow 1997).

The bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos ended in military and public relations failure. By 1973, the U.S. was forced to admit that it was unable to win the war and agreed to a settlement. The Saigon government, however, refused to accept the settlement and the U.S. made one last attempt to win the war by bombing Hanoi and Haiphong. This was known as the Christmas Bombing. This was again a military and public opinion failure and the U.S. was forced to sign a peace agreement. A cease-fire was agreed to on January 28th and the draft ended. As American troops withdrew from the south, the Viet Minh conducted the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, resulting to the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 (Karnow 1997).

Between 1964 and 1973, the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world applied its maximum military effort, except for the use of an atomic bomb, to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in a tiny peasant country. The American War was a war waged against the Vietnamese people. More than four million Vietnamese soldiers and civilians died during the course of the war (Chomsky 1967; Karnow 1997; Zinn 2001). Vietnam, for centuries, fought against Chinese and French colonialism and won. Despite this, the United States, determined to win the war, underestimated the will of the people to fight against U.S. aggression. In the words of Howard Zinn, “it was organized modern technology versus organized human beings, and the human beings won” (Zinn 2001:269). During the course of

“all sorts of depraved cultures and social blemishes.” An estimated 30% of the population, 2 million Cambodians, were slaughtered in, what was known as, the “killing fields.” Many of them were driven into forced marches or labor projects, died from famine, disease, mistreatment, or exhaustion.
the war, the United States experienced the largest antiwar movement ever seen in history. The next chapter will look at the different segments of American society who participated in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement and how it led to the ending of the American war.
CHAPTER 3

THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR MOVEMENT

The Anti-Vietnam War Movement was a grassroots movement composed of many different segments of American society and many different groups. The first protests against U.S. involvement in Vietnam took place when U.S. ships were used to transport French troops and military equipment back to Vietnam after the Second World War in 1946. But the first sign of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the United States occurred in April and May 1964 when ads appeared in two newspapers signed by 87 and 149 people, respectively, who announced they would not serve if called. That same year, on Armed Forces Day, twelve young men publicly burned their draft cards in New York City (Dougan, Lipsman, and the Editors of Boston Publishing Company 1984). As with most of the early antiwar protests these were small. The Antiwar Movement grew as the U.S. military escalated the war in Vietnam in March 1965 and many young men began to refuse to register for the draft and refused to be inducted if called. The tactics used were diverse: demonstrations, grassroots organizing, congressional lobbying, electoral challenges, civil disobedience, draft resistance, self-immolation, occupation of university and government buildings, and physical violence. The goals of the various groups differed somewhat, but what was a common goal was that of informing the American public of the true nature of the war and stopping the American military from being able to wage the war (Semm, personal communication, August 15, 2012).

This chapter will examine the Anti-Vietnam War Movement from the point of view of the groups and segments of American society that shaped it and participated in it. In

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22 The United States committed the first act of warfare in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam when American troops were diverted to transport U.S.- armed French troops and Foreign Legionaries from France to retake their colony. Merchant Marines organized a protest and on the arrival in Saigon, they drew up a resolution condemning the U.S. government for using American ships to transport troops in Vietnam.
addition, this chapter will demonstrate how the Anti-Vietnam War Movement was successful in forcing the U.S. to first withdraw troops, and second to surrender to the Vietnamese.

**CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS**

Organizations from the Civil Rights movement such as the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), Southern Christian Leadership Congress (SCLC) and Student Non-Violence Coordination Committee (SNCC) were among the first to oppose the war in Vietnam (Dougan et al. 1983; Kitchell 1990; Silber and Brown 1979; Zinn 2000). The first actions of these groups in opposition to the war occurred in early August 1964 when black and white activists gathered near Philadelphia, Mississippi at a memorial service for three civil rights workers had been killed while working for Freedom Summer. One of the speakers pointed out that Johnson’s use of force in Asia was no different from the use of violence against blacks in Mississippi (Zinn and Arnove 2004). Furthermore, on July 28th 1965, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, in McComb, Mississippi, published one of the first petitions against the war in Vietnam.

SNCC also spoke out against the war in Vietnam by writing a position paper in January 1965. Seeking to connect the issues of racism at home and the war in Asia, SNCC compared the murder of a civil rights activist, Samuel Younge, in Tuskegee, Alabama, to “the murder of people in Vietnam, for both Younge and the Vietnamese sought and are seeking to secure the rights guaranteed them by law.” The SNCC position paper further argued that, “in each case, the U.S. government bears a great part of the responsibility for these deaths. Samuel Younge was murdered because U.S. law is not being enforced. Vietnamese are murdered because the United States is pursuing an aggressive policy in violation of international law.” Many SNCC leaders encouraged Black men to refuse military service and urged all Americans “to use their energy in building democratic forms in this country” and believed that work in the “civil rights movement and other human relations organization is a valid alternative to the draft… knowing full well that it may cost their lives, as painfully in Vietnam” (Zinn and Arnove 2004:428). Members of SNCC went even further in their opposition to the war. In the summer of 1965, six members of SNCC invaded an induction center in Atlanta in an attempt to disrupt the induction process. They were arrested, convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison (Zinn 2001).
The experience of blacks Americans with the government led them to dispute any claim that U.S. was fighting for freedom in Vietnam. In mid-1965, in McComb, Mississippi, young blacks distributed leaflets in response to the death of a classmate who was killed in Vietnam. The leaflet read:

No Mississippi Negros should be fighting in Viet Nam for the White man’s freedom, until all Negros are free in Mississippi. Negro boys should not honor the draft here in Mississippi. Mothers should encourage their sons not to go. No one has the right to ask us to risk our lives and kill other Colored People in Santo Domingo and Viet Nam, so that the White American can get richer. (Zinn 2001:484)

A year later, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale wrote the first draft of the Black Panther Party for self-defense called “Black Panther Party 10 Point Program.” The program made the war and the draft one of the main issues that needed to be addressed. Number 6 of the program states,

We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Services: We who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary. (Newton and Seale 1970:4)

In April of 1967, Martin Luther King, head of the SCLC expressed his moral objections to the Vietnam War in his “Beyond Vietnam” speech. King states, “A time comes when silence is betrayal and that time has come for us in relation to Vietnam. I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government.” He expressed his moral objection to the war, “we have destroyed their two most cherished institutions: the family and the village. We have destroyed their land and their crops. We have cooperated in the crushing of the nation's only noncommunist revolutionary political force, the unified Buddhist Church. We have supported the enemies of the peasants of Saigon. We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men.” King urged Americans to give voice to the Vietnamese people, "now there is little left to build on, save bitterness. Soon the only solid physical foundations remaining will be found at our military bases and in the concrete of the concentration camps we call “fortified hamlets.” The peasants may well wonder if we plan to build our new Vietnam on such grounds as these.
Could we blame them for such thoughts? We must speak for them and raise the questions they cannot raise. These, too, are our brothers and sisters." 23

THE POOR AND WORKING CLASS

As the war escalated, members of the antiwar movement pointed out that poor, working-class, and minorities accounted for a disproportionate percentage of the U.S. soldiers serving in Vietnam (Appy 1993). By late 1969, critics of the war presented the war as a “working-class war.” 24 The disproportionate share of deaths and injuries during the Vietnam War were Americans of poor and working class backgrounds. David Halberstam, a reporter in Vietnam, noted in the *Atlantic Monthly*, “All you had to do was see [the American soldiers] to know that this was America’s lower-middle class. Vietnam was a place where the elite went as reporters, not as soldiers. Almost as many people from Harvard won Pulitzer Prizes in Vietnam as died there” (quoted in Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998:112).

The publicity given to student protests created the assumption that the opposition to the war came mostly from middle class intellectuals (Loewen 1995). But a number of elections in American cities showed that antiwar sentiments were strong among working class Americans. Furthermore, a survey made by the University of Michigan showed that Americans with only a grade school education were much stronger for withdrawal from the Vietnam than Americans with a college education. Harlan Hahn, a political scientist doing a study of various city referenda on Vietnam, found that the highest support for withdrawal came from groups of lower socioeconomic status (Zinn 2001). 25 Also, American popular culture began to reflect the widespread belief that the war was being fought by the poor and

23 Weeks after his “Beyond Vietnam Speech,” U.S. military advisors were sent to Venezuela and mounted counterrevolutions activities in Guatemala. In response, Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “this is the role our nation has taken—the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up privilege and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments…. Nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation” (Lippard 1990).

24 American troops in Vietnam included a disproportionate number of men from rural towns and inner cities.

25 Bruce Andrews, a Harvard student of public opinion found that the people most opposed to the war were people over fifty, blacks, and women. Also noted, in a study in spring of 1964, when Vietnam was a minor issue in the newspapers, showed that 53 percent of college educated people were willing to send troops to Vietnam, while only 33 percent of grade school-educated people were willing (Zinn, 2001).
working class. An example of this is the song “Fortunate Son” by the popular group Creedence Clearwater Revival’s (O’Nan 1998). By the 1970s, many murals in minority communities contained antiwar messages. In response to the murder of a Chicano television newscaster, Ruben Salazar, by Los Angeles police during the East L.A. Moratorium protesting the number of Latinos fighting and dying in Vietnam, the Chicano art community performed and created antiwar pieces.26

**DRAFT RESISTORS**

The U.S. had experienced draft protests before. The civil war draft riots in New York City and more recently, in 1947, between 400-500 men publicly burned their draft cards in protest of President’s Truman decision to reinstate a draft. After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed and the draft was instituted, there was an almost immediate protest. One thousand students demonstrated as part of the “May 2nd Movement” of 1964 in front of the United Nations building in New York City. They chanted “NO, NO. We Won’t GO!” while twelve of the protesters burned their draft cards. As draft burning gained media attention, President Johnson signed a law criminalizing draft card burning. The crime included a five-year prison sentence and a one thousand dollar fine (Dougan et al. 1984; Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998).

Draft card burning was not the only form of draft resistance.27 Others simply refused to be inducted. And many of those that had been drafted or anticipated being drafted fled to Canada. Draft resistance was somewhat successful in its goal of depriving the military of the necessary manpower to wage the war. With this limited success and the demand for more soldiers increasing as the war escalated, the U.S. changed its draft policy and began drafting college students who had previously been given deferments. In 1966, General Lewis Hershey, director of the Selective Services System, announced that local draft boards would

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26 Chicano performance group Asco performed Last Supper and The Situations of the Cross. Jose and Malaquias Montoy, Esteban Villa, Armando Cid, and other artists in Sacramento formed the graphic artists collective, the Royal Chicano Air Force. See Chapter 4 (Lippard 1990).

27 After the introduction of combat troops in De Nang in 1965, the draft resisters movement steadily gained momentum. The Selective Service sent out 13,700 induction notices in April and another 15,100 in June. By July, the number climbed to 27,400, and by December it was over 400,000 (Dougan et al. 1983).
be free to draft students who ranked in the lower level of college classes. Most universities complied and created a test system to rank students and then gave the rankings to local draft boards.

In response to this change in policy, students urged their university administrations to not comply. The local chapter of Students for the Democratic Society (SDS) at the University of Chicago formed an ad hoc committee called Students Against the Rank (SAR). The students tried to hold discussions with the administration, presented arguments against the new draft plan before faculty, and signed petitions. Yet, administrators and faculty ignored the students. In response, 400 students occupied the administration building and closed down the offices for five days. Similar actions took place in other colleges all over the country such as Cornell, Wisconsin, and San Francisco. SAR listed three reasons for their protest against the draft plan, “an immoral and discriminatory national policy, the transformation of the university into a coding and classifying machine for the Selective Service, and the transformation of ‘a community of scholars into a set of madly competing factions’ to earn high ranks.”

Throughout the course of the draft, an estimated 600,000 draft age Americans illegally evaded the draft and about 200,000 more were tried for draft offenses. Fifty thousand draft-age Americans fled to Canada, and an additional 20,000 went to Sweden or Mexico or adopted underground identities. An estimated 170,000 Americans received “conscientious objector” (CO) deferments from the draft during the Vietnam War, but 300,000 were denied CO deferments. Many draft resisters were men who were denied CO deferments or refused to support the draft on grounds of moral conscience. By the early 1970s, federal prosecution of draft evaders reached 5,000 cases annually and thousands were sentenced to prison. From 1965-1973, more than 22,000 were indicted for draft law violations; approximately 4,000 faced imprisonment. Yet, as the war was becoming more and more unpopular, many draft violations were dismissed. (Dougan et al. 1984; Hillstrom and

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28 Nixon ended the draft July 1973.

29 CO tripled from 1964 to 1971. Pacifist groups such as the American Friends Service Committee built counseling centers in which volunteers discussed CO deferments and other options with draftees, and universities became reporting centers of information that included strategies on eluding the draft (Hillstrom and Hillstrom 1998).
Hillstrom 1998). Juries began to believe that draft resistance was a justified means of stopping an illegal and immoral war.

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

A small group of Catholic priests and nuns became active in the antiwar movement. Their strategy was to stop the war machine by undermining the draft process through acts of civil disobedience. In May 1968, members of the group walked into Local Draft Board 33 in Catonsville, Maryland and grabbed draft cards, stuffed them in a wastebasket, and rushed to the parking lot where they incinerated them with “homemade napalm.” Among the nine were two priests, the Berrigan brothers, Daniel and Philip. They alerted the press and read a statement, “We are the Catholic Christians who take our faith seriously. We use napalm because it has burned our people to death in Vietnam…we believe some property has no right to exist” (Dougan et al. 1984:70).

The Berrigan brothers soon founded the Catholic Antiwar Organization and became unpopular in the church because of their radical acts of civil disobedience. In October 1969, the “Baltimore Four,” which included Philip, entered the city’s Selective Service headquarters and poured blood into the draft files. Other members of the Catholic Church made similar raids in Silver Springs, Maryland; Providence, Rhode Island; Chicago; and New York.

The Catonsville Nine, as the press called those who had burned the draft files were put in trial and as the jury decided the verdict. The judge stated, “I agree with you completely, as a person. We can never accomplish, or give a better life to people, if we are going to keep on giving so much money to war. It is very unfortunate but the issue of war cannot be presented as clearly as you would like. The basic principle of the law is that we do things in an orderly fashion. People cannot take the law into their own hands” (Dougan et al. 1984:71). Yet, many antiwar activists from the Catholic Church were committed to what Pope John XXIII stated during his 1963 “Peace on Earth” encyclical, “If civil authorities legislate or allow anything that is contrary to [moral order] and therefore the will of God,

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30 On May 20, 1973, the 24 men and women of Camden, New Jersey, including four priests, were found not guilty of destroying Selective Service Files in 1971.
neither the laws made nor the authorizations granted can be binding on the conscience of the citizens (Dougan et al. 1984:74)."

The Berrigan brothers continued civil acts of disobedience and were ultimately convicted and sentenced in April 1970. They disappeared underground and only appeared to speak at churches and antiwar rallies. Philip was found within weeks after he fled arrest but Daniel continued to be able to evade the authorities and after four months underground, he became the first priest to appear on the FBI’s most wanted list. One of Catonsville Nine, Mary Maylan, was never found. By 1971, almost a third of the American Catholic Church took a stand against the war in Vietnam.

**STUDENTS AND FACULTY**

Students became deeply involved in the protests against the war. The most prominent student organization during the movement was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The ideas of Student for a Democratic Society’s Port Huron Statement became the basis of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement.\(^{31}\) Grass roots organizations all over college campuses embraced these ideas especially after the Free Speech Movement\(^{32}\)

The Port Huron Statement was based on the ideas of participatory democracy that was rooted in the social theory of C. Wright Mills. Participatory democracy was “based on humanism, individualism, and community, a democratic society, where at all levels the people have control of the decisions which affect them and the resources which they are dependent” (Charters 2003:143). They demanded greater democratization of American political life, greater popular control over economic institutions, and massive programs to eliminate poverty. Furthermore, the statement addresses America’s political, economic, and social problems. Most importantly, the Statement argues that the rise of the military industrial complex and Cold War foreign policies had created a permanent war economy.

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\(^{31}\) Students for a Democratic Society published its Port Huron Statement in 1962 at the University of Michigan.

\(^{32}\) In 1964, students at the University of California Berkley lifted the ban of on-campus political activities under the basis of free speech and academic freedom after months of protests and demonstrations. Most of the arguments about political activism revealed that the higher education system has become an institution that supports capitalism and its students were to become white-collar professionals in support of American Capitalism.
The statement argues that the United States had become a “Warfare State” where the base of the economy is concentrated on military ends with its “primary objective of the military and economic strength of the Free World (Students for a Democratic Society 1962:15).” Over half of all research and development on college campuses was military. Moreover, the Statement argues that students have become apathetic, where individuals do not have the “ability to make moral distinction, it has made people understandably give up, and it has forced private worry and public silence (Students for a Democratic Society 1962:7).” Yet, it explains, “apathy is not simply an attitude; it is a product of social institutions, and of the structure and organization of higher education itself (Students for a Democratic Society 1962:10).” They urged students to demand less dependence on the military in all sectors of American institutions and “disarmament experiments.” Most importantly, they urged students to join the peace movement.

Student organizations against the war began to demand the abolishment of institutions on college campuses that supported the military industrial complex. These student organizations adopted the same tactics used in the Civil Rights and Free Speech Movement such as demonstrations, pickets, sit-ins, teach-ins, and occupation of administration buildings.

Teach-ins became an effective means for protesting the war. At the University Michigan in Ann Arbor, students and faculty organized the first antiwar teach-in in response to the introduction of combat troops in Da Nang. The purpose of the teach-ins was to "constitute a clear factual and moral protest against the war” and to achieve peace through education. Faculty cancelled classes and, in place, conducted seminars. The seminars included the study of the Geneva Accords and the history of the colonization of Vietnam. Over 3,000 students attended with the support of 200 faculty members. Along with guest speakers, seminars, and films, rallies were held. The event went on for 12 hours. Two days later, on March 26, a similar teach-in occurred at Columbia University in New York City. Other teach-ins occurred on college campuses across the nation throughout the Anti-Vietnam War Movement (Barringer 1999; Dougan et al. 1984).

Between, 1967-1968, nearly half of America’s colleges and universities were experiencing political protests by means of building occupations and peaceful assembly. And more than one hundred colleges involving over half its student body protested against their
university’s complicity in the war (Dougan et al. 1984; Zinn 2001). Throughout the antiwar protests, a total of 3,652 students were arrested and 956 were suspended or expelled from school.

The most effective means of protest was targeting the on-campus organizations that were affiliated with the war in Vietnam, primarily those that supplied manpower. Reserve Officers Training Programs (ROTC) existed on many campuses and the military depended on ROTC programs because they provided half of the officers needed for the war. These programs became the target of protests. The protests were successful and resulted in the canceling of the ROTC programs in over forty colleges and universities. In 1966, 191,749 college students enrolled in ROTC, yet, by 1973, the numbers dwindled to 72,459. By 1973, for six consecutive months, the ROTC could not fill its quota. One army official stated, “I just hope we don’t get into another war, because if we do, I doubt we could fight it” (Zinn 2001:491).

During the war and despite increasing resistance, many universities continued to allow recruiters from companies and government organizations tied to the war effort to recruit on campus. For example, DOW and Monsanto were allowed to recruit on campuses, as was the CIA. These recruiting efforts became targets of student protests. For example, during October of 1967, students at the University of Michigan began targeting DOW’s recruiting on campus (Dougan et al. 1984; Silber and Brown 1979). At Columbia University, SDS members organized a march inside Low Library to protest Columbia’s participation in the Institute for Defense Analysis, a consulting firm to the Department of Defense (Dougan et al. 1983; Zinn 2001).

The peak of the student protests came in spring of 1970 when President Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia. The demonstrations were meant to stop further escalation of war in neighboring countries. The most well known of these demonstrations was Kent State, less well known but just as significant was the protest at Jackson State, an all black university. The precipitating cause of the protests at Kent and Jackson State was the invasion

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33 See Chapter Two. They were producers of Napalm and Rainbow herbicides.
of Cambodia, but the target of the protests were the ROTC programs and most directly at Kent State, the ROTC building on campus.

After days of antiwar demonstrations at Kent State, National Guardsmen were ordered to occupy the campus on May 2nd. National Guardsmen tried to break up on campus demonstrations and enforce the ban on student gatherings. They enforced the ban through violence, frequently, using tear gas and clubs. On May 4th, National Guardsmen were trying to breakup students who were meeting in front of Taylor Hall for a scheduled protest. As students were moving to and from classes, twenty-eight National Guardsmen fired 67 rounds directly at students. Within a period of 13 seconds, four students were killed and nine injured; one sustained injury in the spine and became wheelchair bound. FBI agents concluded, “Most of the National Guardsman who did fire their weapons do not specifically claim that they fired because their lives were in danger “(Stone 1971:11). Two of the students who were killed were not radicals but spectators or students going to class and they were not part of the demonstrations on the previous days. There was an immediate public outcry after the Kent State killings and over one-third of the nation’s student’s boycotted classes. One mother said, “They are killing our babies in Vietnam and our own backyard” (Stone 1971:17). Ten days later, at Jackson State, Mississippi police and state officers killed two male students and injured fifteen. Unlike Kent State, little media coverage was given.

Between May 14 and 15, at Jackson State in Mississippi, students began to protest against the war and the Kent State shooting in addition to the issues of historical racism and intimidation by white motorists travelling on Lynch Street. The ROTC building was set on fire and a small group of students took the protest to Lynch Street. Seventy-five local police and Mississippi State Police met the protesters and blocked Lynch Street. The policemen marched toward the crowd of 75 to 100 students. They pushed the students toward a

34 Alison Krause, Sandra Scheuer, Jeffrey Glenn Miller and William K. Schroede
35 Media coverage was poor and racist, giving no accurate facts of the event leading up to the shooting. Even the university newspaper did not report on the tragedy until in a special edition was published, one year later.
36 Lynch Street divided an all white suburb and Jackson State. Lynch Street was a main road that linked Jackson to downtown.
37 National Guardsmen blocked the west end of Lynch Street.
women’s dormitory, Alexander Hall, and started shooting. The policemen fired at least 460 rounds in 30 seconds towards panicking students who were trying to run into Alexander Hall. Each window of the five-story building facing the police was shattered. Ambulances were not called for twenty minutes. Before ambulance arrived officers picked up shelling and left the scene. Phillip Lafayette Gibbs, 21, and James Earl Green, 17, were found dead. Fifteen students were wounded, one of them who was sitting in the second floor dorm lobby. There were no convictions or arrests for both the Kent and Jackson State killings (Spofford 1998; Stone 1971).

GI RESISTANCE TO THE VIETNAM WAR

There were many individual acts of protest against the war by soldiers, but as the acts became more common, GI antiwar organizations emerged. One of the first of these organizations was Veterans for Peace, which formed in 1965. After the escalation of the bombing of North Vietnam in 1966 another organization formed; it was Veteran Reservists To End the War. But the most prominent GI antiwar organization emerged in 1967 and it was the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. The organization was grew to several thousand members as GIs returned from their tours. GIs became an important force during the anti-war movement because they gave insight into what was really going on in Vietnam. These GIs had witnessed and participated in the atrocities that occurred during the war.

In 1968, in San Francisco, the Nine For Peace became the first publicly recognized GI Anti-Vietnam War protest. The Nine For Peace sought sanctuary in Howard Presbyterian Church where they chained themselves together with ministers and priests. The military police entered the church and arrested the nine GIs.

Many GIs deserted or went absent without leave (AWOL). Some fled to Western Europe, Sweden, France or Holland, yet many fled to Canada or sought sanctuary in churches. In 1968 the Senate Committee reported that “a GI deserted on average once every ten minutes and a GI went AWOL approximately every 3 minutes.” The Pentagon reported, in 1970, “nearly 1 out of every 12 (89,088) GIs in the Army deserted and 228,797 went

38 Green was a high school student walking home from work and stopped to watch.
AWOL.” During the course of the war, the Pentagon reported 503,926 “incidents of desertion.”

After the Tet Offensive, many GIs not only questioned the morality of the war but began to doubt that the war could be won because of the popular support that the “enemy” had. And many GIs started to question and publicly speak against U.S. involvement in the war. Many of the operations that GIs were involved in were the search and destroy missions. ⁴⁹ The missions resulted in the killing of innocent civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as homes, crops, roads, and bridges. The Tet Offensive revealed that the National Liberation Front and Viet Minh had nation-wide support from the Vietnamese people and GIs began to question why they were fighting against the people of the country that they were supposed to be liberating. ⁴⁰

During the war, GIs began to organize in coffee shops. These coffee shops were a space where GIs could get away from military life. GIs were able to get the latest GI underground newspapers, listen to music, and talk about their own personal experiences in the war. The Oleo Strut, in Fort Hood, Texas, was one of the first coffee shops that opened near military bases. More coffeehouses started to open near military bases across the country such as the People’s Place, Fort Knox Coffeehouse, and Pentagon GI Coffeehouse. Many coffee shops were later raided by military police and forced to close. Other coffee shops faced opposition from locals and a number were burned (Zeiger 2005).

In 1970, performances artists, lead by Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland, created the “Free the Army” (FTA) show (understood to really mean Fuck the Army). The artists based their sketches and songs from GI newspapers. The show was intended to inspire and support U.S. soldiers to voice their dissent and organize to stop the war. The show included protest songs, political theatre, and appearances from GIs and veterans who spoke out against the

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⁴⁹ The success of the missions was measured by high body count. Many villagers were suspected Viet Cong because they aided the Viet Cong with medical care, weapons, food, and shelter. Many villagers became directly involved in the war efforts. Women and children carried out logistical tasks such as transporting weapons through rough terrain, lived in underground aid stations, and even became soldiers (Karnow 1997; Wiest 2003; Zinn 2000).

⁴⁰ Many other anti-Vietnam War organizations arose such as the American Serviceman’s Union, Movement for a Democratic Military, Black Liberation Front of Armed Forces, Black Brother’s Union, Concerned Officers Movement, and GI United Against the War (Zeiger, 2005).
war. They began to perform in coffee shops and parks close to military bases in the United States. In response to their growing popularity, in 1971, the FTA show toured the Pacific Rim, and performed near military bases in Japan, Okinawa, Philippines, and Hawaii. Furthermore, the show supported black soldiers and their struggle against racism within the military. Many black soldiers organized and produced underground newspapers.

GIs became actively involved in protests within the military. They published antiwar underground magazines such as Winter Soldier, Last Harass, Fed Up, Shakedown, RAP, Fatigue Press, and FTA (Fuck the Army to replace the army slogan Fun Travel and Adventure). Over 300 anti-war newspapers were published and circulated on military bases all over the nation weekly or monthly (Zeiger 2005).

Low morale led to disruptive and violent behavior in the front line troops. Examples were drug-use, refusal of orders, “search and avoid mission” and acts called “fragging.” These acts involved GIs killing their commanding officers, especially officers whose orders put GIs in “harm’s way.” As the war went on, and became less and less popular, fragging became more and more common all over South Vietnam. According to the Pentagon, in 1970 alone, there were 209 fragging incidents.

Many Americans did not know the true nature of U.S. military actions in Vietnam. After the My Lai Massacre, Vietnam Veterans Against the War organized investigations that proved that the My Lai Massacre was not an “isolated incident of aberrant behavior,” but, it was a common practice. As Colonel Oran Henderson reported in early 1971, “every unit of brigade size had its My Lai hidden someplace.”

The findings of the investigations were presented in Detroit, 1971, and became known as the Winter Soldiers Investigations. The Winter Soldiers Investigations involved one hundred and twenty-five veterans of the war who testified about acts which they witnessed or participated in that were war crimes. They testified in panels arranged by

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41 During the winter of 1776 at Valley Forge, as the soldiers who enlisted during the summer were going home because their enlistment was over and the way was hard, Thomas Paine stated, “These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and the thanks of men and women. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have the consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”
combat unit in order to clarify the policy of each military division and therefore the larger policy about search and destroy missions and free fire zones. The soldiers gave accounts of the everyday routines of burning villages, destroying civilian infrastructures, poisoning water supplies, torturing/killing prisoners of war, killing civilians, destroying crops, killing livestock and raping women. All of this was standard operational procedure or “SOP” according to those who testified. Many testimonials involved other atrocities, such as competitions in collecting the most body parts from enemy dead, throwing suspected Viet-Cong out of helicopters, cutting off heads and displaying them. In addition, the Investigations revealed the miscalculation of body count. Many GIs reported that they had falsified body counts to satisfy their officers and/or had produced a higher body count by killing civilians or prisoners of war.

On April 22, testifying before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, held by its Chairman, William Fulbright, Lieutenant John Kerry, representing Vietnam Veterans Against the War and an investigator in the Winter Soldiers Investigations, called for immediate withdrawal based on the personal experiences of veterans that were revealed during the Winter Soldiers Investigation.42 Kerry (1971) stated:

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war, and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.

The Winter Soldier’s Investigation and Fulbright Hearings became crucial in documenting the true nature of the American War to the public and in that way served to further the broad anti-war movement.

Two months after the Winter Soldiers Investigation, Vietnam Veterans Against the War launched Operation Dewey Canyon III, a week long series of demonstrations in Washington, DC. Mothers Who Have Lost Their Sons in Vietnam joined with disabled

42 Further investigations occurred from April 20th to May 27, 1971, this was known as the Fulbright Hearings. The Hearings, head by Senator Fulbright, was a set of 22 hearings conducted before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Vietnam. The hearings consisted of pro and anti war supporters.
veterans for a series of rallies and other actions. The protest heightened on April 23 when one thousand veterans marched to the Capitol Building and threw their Vietnam War medals over the erected barricade of the buildings steps. In addition, they performed guerrilla theater on the steps of the capital in order to expose the true nature of U.S. operations. They reenacted combat battles and demonstrated how prisoners were treated. Soldiers became a strong force in stopping the war at home and abroad.
ART IN THE EARLY 1960s

In the early 1960s art had little to do with social issues, and when it did, it was rarely exhibited in museums. The reasons for this were varied but two of the most important were the still present shadow of McCarthyism and the acceptance of an assumption that art existed in a dimension of its own, “high art” or what Herbert Marcuse called the “aesthetic dimension” (Marcuse 1978) and the place for art was in museums, private galleries, and private collections (Lippard 1990).

An exception to the rule was Wally Hendrick who was one of the first artists to criticize in his artwork United States’ policies in Vietnam. He did this in the late 1950s. As a Korean War veteran, Hendrick knew that war had devastating effects on countries and their cultures and he believed that U.S. involvement in Vietnam would have those effects on Vietnam. His 1959 painting titled *Anger/Madam Nhu’s Bar-B-Q* (Figure 4). The painting’s text read, “Madam Nhu Blows Chiang” and “Anger.”

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43 The 1947 House Un-American Activities Committee “Hollywood” hearings created to uncover Communist subversion in the motion picture industry; thus, limited cultural expression during the Cold War. This, reinforced the view that art and culture should be separated from politics, the trend toward “apolitical art” also marked the visual arts, where abstract expressionism became the dominant form (Martin 2004).
Madam Nhu was the sister-in-law of Diem and widely accepted as the first lady of South Vietnam. She was a devoted Catholic who became a symbolic figure of repression towards Buddhist monks. She wrote a letter to the *New York Times* saying, "I would clap hands at seeing another monk barbecue show, for one cannot be responsible for the madness of others" (Karnow 1997:210). The painting depicts a black sun with a brown penis inserted into a red heart and a mushroom cloud in the background. The painting criticizes U.S. policy in Vietnam. It depicts the policy has both an attack on the “heart” of Vietnamese culture, Buddhism, and high tech violence directed at the Vietnamese people.44

Activism within the art community started to emerge in 1965 as art collectives such as the New York based art group called the Artists and Writers Protest (AWP). The AWP was one of the first art collectives to urge the art community in New York City to protest the

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44 Hendrick continued to produce anti-war paintings during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1973, Hedrick’s whole “Vietnam” series was shown in San Francisco. The painting themselves were called “refugees,” “MIAs,” “war orphans,” or “wounded veterans” (Lippard 1990).
escalation of the war. In the spring of 1965\textsuperscript{45}, following the deployment of Marines in Da Nang, AWP placed two letters, “End Your Silence,” in the \textit{New York Times}. These letters advocated the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.\textsuperscript{46} Many well-known artists such as Rudolf Baranik, Leon Golub, Nancy Spero, and May Stevens signed the letters. In another letter, June 1965, AWP stated, “American artists wish once more to have faith in the United States of America. We will not remain silent in the face of our country’s shame” (Shafer 1990:268).\textsuperscript{47}

Simultaneously, on June 26, 1965, the Artists and Protest Committee (APC), based in Los Angeles, picketed the Rand Corporation, a government think tank, to protest their involvement in U.S. interventions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. Other grassroots art organizations began to emerge after 1966. And by 1966, art and artists were coming out of the galleries and the museums and into the streets, and the art that was emerging was becoming an essential tool in the Anti-Vietnam War movement (Bradley and Esche 2007; Lippard 1990; Martin 2004).

\textbf{ART COLLECTIVES}

In 1966, AWP organized the construction of the \textit{Peace Tower} (Figure 5) to protest against the escalation of the war in Vietnam. The sixty-foot tower\textsuperscript{48} covered with 400 uniformly sized panels sent by antiwar artists all over the world was raised on a rented vacant lot located on the corner of Sunset and La Cienega Boulevards, a highly visible intersection, in downtown Los Angeles. Advertised in the \textit{New York Times} and attended by many well-known antiwar activists such as Irving Petlin, Susan Sontag, and ex-Green Beret Donald Duncan. Duncan, who spoke on the opening day said, “I am not here today to protest our boys in Vietnam, I’m here to protest our boys being in Vietnam” (Bryan-Wilson: 2009:11).

\textsuperscript{45} April 18 and June 2, 1965.

\textsuperscript{46} AWC published its first letter in the New York Times, June 1962, protesting nuclear testing, requesting a test ban treaty, and calling for “tangible disarmament agreements.” The letter began, “We artists of the United States are divided in many ways, artistically, ideologically, but we are as one in our concern for humanity.”

\textsuperscript{47} Also see Lippard 1990 and Martin 2004.

\textsuperscript{48} Designed by Mark di Suvero, and built by sculptor Mel Edwards and others (Lippard 1990; Martin 2004).
In New York City, the same week as the opening of the Peace Tower, AWP organized a weeklong event called, “Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam” (Figure 6). During the week, there were a series of dances, music, film, art, poetry, and photography events. Over six hundred artists participated in the events. A 10-foot-by-120-foot canvas with 150 panels called The Collage of Indignation (Figure 7), was also created and exhibited during the week (Lippard 1990).49

In 1967 Ad Reinhardt created No War (Figure 8) for the Artists and Writers Protest portfolio. It was a double-sided postcard addressed to the “War Chief, Washington, D.C., USA.” In Gothic script it reads: “No war, No imperialism, No murder, No bombing...No consciencelessness. No Art of War, No Art by War, No Art to War, No Art on War, No Art

49 The elements of the event were ‘poets’ street caravans, midnight postering brigades, a conductorless performance of Beethoven’s Eroica at Town Hall (to symbolize the individual’s responsibility for the brutality of Vietnam). “Angry Arts Week” was the largest cultural protest event since the 40s (Lippard 1990; Martin 2004).
by War, No Art from War, No Art about War, No Art for War, No Art with War, No Art of War” (Lippard 1990).

Artists became more involved in the anti-war movement after the Tet Offensive and revelations of the My Lai Massacre. The Art Workers Coalition50 (AWC) and the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) were established in 1969. Both groups organized series of antiwar protests in New York City. These groups engaged in more radical types of protest. Examples of these protests were Guerilla Theater51, agit-prop exhibitions, and sit-ins at New

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50 AWC resembled the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee’s efforts to function as a “leaderless” organization and the Living Theatre’s “collective creation.”

51 Spontaneous public performances or street theater to draw attention to a political or social issue.
York museums (Lippard 1990). And these protests came to be known as “events” or “happenings.”

On April 2, 1969, in response to the Tet Offensive, AWC organized an event called the “Mass Antiwar Mail-In.” The event consisted of antiwar artwork which was addressed to “The Joint Chiefs of War.” The protesters marched to the Canal Street Post Office and mailed the artwork to Washington, D.C. All of the work was accepted and mailed. One month later, members of AWC and AWP carried black body bags, identical to those used to return dead American soldiers from Vietnam. The protesters walked along a white cloth runner inscribed with the names of the dead (Martin 2004).

GAAG engaged in more radical protests and connected the art world and the aesthetic dimension to the war.52 In a list of demands sent to the Museum of Modern Art,

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52 In October 1968, GAGG removed Kasimir Malevich’s painting White on White from a gallery wall at MoMA and posted its list of demands in its place. GAGG chose Malevich piece because it once possessed “revolutionary” meaning but now was exhibited stripped of its political context and reduced to a “valuable object.”
they said “There is no justification for the enjoyment of art while we are involved in the mass murder of people…today the museum serves not so much as an enlightening educational experience, as it does a diversion from the realities of war and crisis” (Lippard 1990:40).

Further, they linked the art world to the military industrial-complex. The group pointed out to the public that David Rockefeller, Chairman of the Museum of Modern Art board, was tied to the Defense Industry Advisory Council, and held controlling interest in Standard Oil which was tied to Dow and McDonnell Douglas corporations. After receiving no response, the GAGG performed “Blood Baths” in major museums (Figures 9 and 10). As the protesters entered the museums, they threw a list of demands on the floor and ripped at each other’s clothes while crying “Rape!” They had concealed sacks of animal blood which they opened and poured out. After the dramatic performance, the audience applauded and GAAG members asked the audience to “help us clean up the mess” in Vietnam (Bradley and Esche 2007; Lippard 1990; Martin 2004).

On May 18, 1970, following the invasion of Cambodia and the subsequent shooting of student demonstrators at Kent State and Jackson State, artists organized Art Strike. Approximately, fifteen hundred artists met at New York University’s Loeb Student Center and planned Art Strike. Officially calling the strike, “The New York Artists’ Strike Against Racism, Sexism, and Repression,” the artists sent telegrams to the city’s museums and galleries asking them to close on May 22. The goal of Art Strike was to not only address the art world’s complicity in the war, but it also wanted to transform the art world itself, to open it to greater representation of women and artists of color. The Whitney Museum, the Jewish Museum, and fifty private galleries closed in New York City. The Metropolitan Museum of Art stayed open, and in response, over five hundred artists participated by blocking the museum entrance for twelve hours. The protest gained extensive local television coverage. Yet artists knew that they had to go beyond the formal art world and many artists and art organizations started to produce posters and flyers in order to reach a mass audience. Political posters became one of the most effective tools of protest during the Anti-Vietnam
War Movement. Between 1965 and 1973, an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 anti-Vietnam War posters were produced (Perdue 2011).

**Political Posters**

The themes of many of the posters reflected the tactics used by the protesters during the antiwar movement. As mentioned in Chapter Three, draft resistance was one of the most prominent tactics. For example, one such poster (Figure 11) shows Joan Baez posing with her sisters, Pauline and Mimi. The poster encourages draft age men to say “no” to the draft. The poster reads, “Girls Say Yes to boys who say NO.

![Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No](http://collections.museumca.org)

**Figure 11. Girls Say Yes to Boys Who Say No.**
Burning draft cards was a public declaration of one’s refusal of the draft. Fuck the Draft (Figure 12) is a political poster, created by a group called Dirty Linen Corporation, that is a photo of a male burning his draft card and reads: FUCK THE DRAFT.

![Fuck the Draft poster](image)


Another poster *Don’t Register for War* (Figure 13) is a black and white drawing of General William Westmoreland as a chicken hawk. He is wearing medals from corporations of the major weapons manufactures, Boeing, Raytheon, DOW, and TRW. In the background of the poster, dead American soldiers wrapped in American flags are being disposed.

The most significant political poster to emerge from artists during the anti-war movement was titled *Q: And babies? A: And babies*. (Figure 14). The artists, who chose to remain anonymous, used Ronald Haeberle’s color photograph of civilian victims, women, children and elderly, of the My Lai massacre. A quote overlay the photo; it was a quote from
Mike Wallace’s interview with an American soldier, Paul Meadlo, who had participated in the My Lai massacre. Mike Wallace asked, “Did you kill civilians”? And Meadlo replied, “Yes.” And then Wallace asked, “And babies?” And Meadlo replied, “And babies.” The poster was an anonymous collaboration⁵³ and originally intended to be shown at the Museum of Modern Art, however it became much more. The Museum refused to show the work and in doing so made it even more popular. Protests by artists followed. Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche (Figure 15) are holding Q: And Babies? A: And Babies. in front of Picasso’s Guernica. Guernica is a painting that depicts the bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica.

⁵³ The creation of the poster was collaboration between GAAG members and the AWC poster committee.

on April 26, 1937. The demonstrations received world-wide publicity and resulted in the creation of fifty thousand copies of the poster. The poster became ubiquitous at anti-war rallies, marches, and demonstrations.

Many artists created posters as a means to inform people about planned protests and demonstrations. Borrowing the name from Freedom Summer of 1964, antiwar activists organized Vietnam Summer in 1967. A poster, Vietnam Summer, (Figure 16) was created to inform people of Vietnam Summer and depicts a fleeing Vietnamese women who is carrying

54 Guernica is the ancestral lands of the Basque minority and had the population of seven thousand. The Basque opposed the authoritarian dictatorship of Francisco Franco who was backed by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

55 During the summer, volunteer anti-war activists across the country knocked on doors and educated citizens about the human, moral, and economic costs of the war. In addition, legitimatized the illegality of the war.
two babies, one upside down and disfigured. The woman and babies are painted in red behind a yellow background. *End Demonstrations. End the War*, (Figure 17) is another example of a poster whose goal was to inform people of a demonstration in New York City. The poster depicts four individuals holding protest signs. A young woman is holding a poster of an injured Vietnamese child while a woman to her right is holding a poster with a peace sign and wearing a button that reads, “Peace in Vietnam.” A black man holds a poster that says “No Viet Cong Ever Called Me Nigger”56 and in the background there is a man holding a poster that says, “Stop the War.”

Artists produced artwork for the National Vietnam Moratorium on October 15, 1969. The main focal point was in Washington, D.C where 250,000 people demanded that the

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56 Muhammad Ali, black boxer and heavyweight champion, refused to serve in what he called the “white man’s war” based on moral grounds. In 1966, he was denied CO deferment and refused to be inducted. He was stripped of his title and convicted of draft evasion. He told a reporter, “I ain’t got no quarrel with them Viet Cong, no Viet Cong ever called me nigger.”
Nixon Administration end the war. Two million Americans across the nation participated. Jasper John was commissioned to create a poster (Figure 18) for the Moratorium. It is a depiction of the American Flag, but not red, white, and blue colors. The flag has black stars and stripes on an orange background. There is a white whole the size of a bullet in the middle of the flag. According to Lippard, the white whole refers to a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko: “The Stars/ in your flag America/are like bullet holes” (Lippard 1990:56).

Many others artists also continued to use the American flag as a symbol of protest despite the fact that the Flag Desecration Bill had been passed in 1967. One such poster, (Figure 19) by George Maciunas, titled, U.S.A. Surpasses All the Genocide Records! The use of flags in antiwar artwork had been determined to be desecration after the case of Marc Morrel, an ex-Marine. Morrel’s one-man show (Figure 20) had resulted in his arrest and conviction of his dealer, Stephen Radich. The case resulted in the passage of the Federal Flag
Desecration Bill in June 1967. Artists known as the Judson Three challenged the flag desecration law by organizing a week-long art show called “The People’s Flag Show.” The group argued, “a flag which does not belong to the people to do as they see fit should be burned and forgotten…if the flag can be used to sanctify killing, it should be available to the people to stop killing” (Lippard 1990:70). The Judson Three were arrested, tried, and convicted, despite legal defense by the ACLU and protests in Europe as well as in the U.S.

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57 The show opened at Judson Memorial Church on November 9, 1970.

58 The court suggested that visual art was not really a “form of communication” and was therefore not protected by the First Amendment.

Icons of American culture and consumer products were also used in anti-war posters as symbols of violence and oppression. Antiwar posters used not only the American flag, but the Statue of Liberty, Uncle Sam, and Coca-Cola. An example, Figure 21, produced in 1971, shows a tilted Coca Cola bottle to represent Napalm. The poster reads, “It’s the Real Thing for S.E. Asia” and in smaller print below the bottle reads, “Trade-Mark United States” all rights reserved. A poster (Figure 22) by Violet Ray shows two terrified Vietnamese women and children struggling to cross a river. On the left half of the poster is model, Ali MacGraw, in a river to advertise Chanel. The words on top of the poster read, “This is the Spell of Chanel for the Bath.

Posters criticized not only the atrocities of the war but the effects of the war on U.S. society. Lyndon Johnson had an ambitious plan to end poverty in the United States; he called it the “Great Society.” The plan had, as a focus, the creation of new social programs, the goals of which were to end poverty. But the increasing cost of the war eventually led to these social programs being cancelled. Great Society (Figure 23) is a poster that depicts the impact of the war at home. At the top, Johnson, with a sinister expression, is looking out. All of the images in the poster are engulfed in flames, images of people living in poverty, the ghetto riots, and American soldiers. A serious problem with continuing to wage the war which was
also a serious domestic problem for the Nixon Administration was the continued deaths of American soldiers in an increasingly unpopular war. So Nixon tried to eliminate this problem with what he called Vietnamization (see Chapter 2). The poster (Figure 24) shows Nixon mounted on a B-52 airplane and holding a Nazi flag. The poster reads in four different languages: “Nixon’s Peace.”

**ART AND ATROCITIES**

Artists produced artwork that depicted the atrocities that were committed during the war by the American military. The use of war imagery in antiwar artwork became a powerful
way to communicate to the American public the devastating effects of the American War on the Vietnamese people. An example (Figure 25) by an anonymous artist is a photograph of a child holding his arms out to a man who is burning him with a Zippo lighter. The poster reads, “Would you burn a child?” and the answer, on the bottom half of the poster reads, “When Necessary.” Below the text is a photograph of a Vietnamese woman holding a badly burned child.

Women Strike for Peace,59 a prominent pacifist group during the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, used posters protesting the use of napalm. And example (Figure 26) is a poster that uses an excerpt from Martin Luther King Jr.’s Beyond Vietnam Speech. The text reads:

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59 The Women Strike for Peace played an important role in the anti-draft movement, counseling more than
“If America’s soul becomes poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam.”[60] The children shown in the poster are children burned by napalm. Michele Oka Doner, a Michigan University undergraduate art student, created a series called *Death Masks* (Figure 27). The death masks were ceramic molds of a series of dolls and death masks with tattoos or mutilations. These were understood to be a reference to the victims of napalm. Furthermore, Leon Golub produced *Napalm I* (Figure 28), in 1969 *Napalm Series*.

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100,000 young men (Hillstrom, 1998).
The United States dropped seven million tons of bombs during the war, amounting to two times the total of bombs dropped on Europe, Asia, and Africa during the Second World War (Karnow 1997). Many artists produced work that depicted the bombing and its adverse affects on the Vietnamese population. Printmaker Antonio Frasconi created a book-object titled *Viet Nam!* Published in 1967, the book is a visual narrative of images taken from newspaper photographs of air strikes, pictures of bombing victims, and bomb sights. *Untitled* (Figure 29) is a woodprint of a black and white image with five rows of B-52s dropping bombs onto a landscape. Furthermore, to protest against the escalation of carpet bombing, many artists created posters. An example (Figure 30) shows an American eagle raining fire


on a small village of peasants. The poster, by Doug Lawler, reads, “Bring the Monster Down, End the Air War.” In 1970, Robert Morris produced a series of lithographs called, “Five War Memorials.” *Crater with Smoke* (Figure 31) shows postwar craters under ominous skies. The landscape represents the devastating effects of bombing on people, their homes and villages and the environment. The American War had left twenty-one million bomb craters in Vietnam and destroyed twenty-five million acres of land (Zinn 2001).

**ART AND THE MILITARY**

Antiwar artwork even appeared in underground GI newspapers. An example is a drawing (Figure 32) that shows a maimed soldier, wearing a Purple Heart and bandage from head to toe, standing next to a little boy who is holding a toy automatic weapon and the American flag. The boy stands in front of a poster of a soldier that reads “The Army Builds

Men.” The boy stares at the soldier with a confused expression. *Black Unity*, (Figure 33) appeared in an antiwar newspaper. It accompanied an article that was written by black soldiers stationed in Camp Pendleton that addressed racism in the military. The picture shows a black soldier beside a quote from Number Five (demanding all blacks be exempted from the war) of the Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program of Self-Defense.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984, the “prols” are controlled in several ways. They are constantly under surveillance by “Big Brother.” Violence, force and psychological techniques are also used to control them. But coercive techniques are not enough to maintain control of a population even in a totalitarian society; consensus is also necessary. Winston Smith, the protagonist, works in a bureaucracy, the Ministry of Truth, the function of which is to manufacture consent. And consent is manufactured in the Ministry by the continuous writing and rewriting of history. Those who have power in the dystopia, the Party, know that history is a weapon that can be used in the manufacture of consent. “Those who control the present, control the past and those who control the past control the future.” If the history of the United States is written as a history of a peaceful nation, reluctant to intervene militarily in the affairs of other countries, and only doing so as a last resort, self-defense, or support for a weak ally, then Americans are less likely to question U.S. justifications for its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq or its defining the earth as the theater of battle in a “war on terror.” Also if the history books in U.S. schools omit the story of social movements making America a better society, and instead tell students about “leaders” or “natural progress,” then those students are less likely to believe in the need for collective action, or its efficacy.

This thesis has been an effort to regain control of the present by taking control of the past. The goal is threefold. First, by examining the American War, it attempts to establish context to U.S. foreign policy and U.S military interventions. Second, by examining the Anti-Vietnam War Movement, it hopes to demonstrate the efficacy of collective power. And third, and what is most important to the author, by examining the role of artists, art groups and art works in the anti-war movement, it hopes to demonstrate the power of the image and imagination.

In Chapter Two “The American War,” what Americans continue to call the Vietnam War was examined from the point of view of the Vietnamese people, but also from the point of view of the U.S. government’s documented history of the war, the Pentagon Papers. In this
sense, the thesis presents an alternative perspective on American history as a way of taking control of the past. The American people were told that the U.S. was involved in Vietnam in order to protect the tiny democracy of South Vietnam from the invasion by the communist country of North Vietnam. The Americans were told that this was not just a war to save a country that most Americans could not find on a map, but was a war to save the world. For if the U.S. failed to defend South Vietnam, then the rest of Southeast Asia would fall to communism, then Australian and New Zealand, and ultimately the U.S. This theory was called the domino theory. Massive troop build-up which involved a draft, massive bombing campaigns of both north and south Vietnam, radical tactics against intransient guerillas, napalm, Agent Orange, search and destroy missions, free fire zones, targeted assassinations, and massive economic expenditures were all necessary to win this crucial war for freedom and against communism.

From the point of view of the vast majority of Vietnamese people this was a war against them, a continuation of the French-Indo China war and a new form of colonialism. Hence the name given to the war by the Vietnamese people, the American War. The Pentagon Papers reveal the truth of the view held by the Vietnamese people. According to the Pentagon Papers, the U.S. was less concerned about the global spread of communism, and more concerned about the global spread of nationalism, because nationalism meant that the people of a country wanted to use their resources for themselves, rather than to be a supplier of raw material and cheap labor to a colonial empire. The real problem with the country of Vietnam, according to the Pentagon Papers, was that if it were allowed to take its own course independent of global power arrangements, it would be serve as an example to other countries pursuing movements of national liberation. It would be what the Pentagon Papers called a “rotten apple.”

The Chapter examined how the American War from the first stages of U.S. involvement was a war waged against the people of Vietnam. First, the U.S. transported French troops back to Vietnam and then supported the French against the Vietnamese war of national liberation. And after the defeat of the French, the U.S supported a dictator who had no popular support, imprisoned and killed his political opponents, and engaged in military attacks against the rural peasants who were rising up against him. His failure to repress the popular uprising was the reason for his removal, not his policies of violence and oppression.
After 1964, when the U.S. took over the war completely, the U.S. engaged in acts of war that destroyed much of the country and killed many people that it was supposedly defending. Search and destroy missions, free fire zones and napalm killed many innocent civilians. Agent Orange killed the jungle, crops and animals and poisoned the people. Ninety per cent of the bombs dropped (two times more than in all theaters of war during WWII) were dropped on South Vietnam. The Vietnamese say that the American War killed four million of their people. The American War became more and more unpopular in the U.S. and the largest anti-war movement in the history of the U.S. emerged.

Chapter 3 “The Anti-Vietnam War Movement” examines the movement, its goals, and tactics. The Anti-Vietnam War movement demonstrated the power that people have when they come together collectively. There were two main goals of the movement: the first was to inform the people about the true nature of the war in order to gain more popular support for ending the war and second was to engage in tactics that would prevent the military from being able to wage the war.

Many different and varied groups participated in the movement. Groups ranging from Catholic priests to soldiers themselves played integral roles in the movement. Civil Rights groups were some of the first groups to oppose the war. They saw an irony in the war. The call to war was based on fighting for the freedom of the Vietnamese people, but as was obvious to these groups, such freedom did not exist in the U.S. They argued that no black male should serve in the military and they engaged in forms of draft resistance.

The conventional wisdom in American society is that predominately college students and the educated made up the anti-war movement. As James Loewen points out, the war was less popular with the working class and poor, and resistance to the war, draft resistance in all its forms, emerged from this group. Also when resistance to the war spread to the military itself, poor and working class soldiers, were the first to engage in anti-war tactics.

The anti-war movement did find an institutional base at universities. Students for a Democratic Society wrote a document on participatory democracy strongly influenced by the sociologist C.Wright Mills. The document was called the Port Huron Statement and it became the theoretical basis for the Anti-Vietnam War movement. Students and faculty engaged in various forms of dissent from teach-ins, to student occupation of buildings, to protests of corporate/military recruiters on campus, to protests of ROTC programs.
While the tactics of draft resistance, popular protest, breaking into and destroying draft records were all tactics the goal of which was to make it impossible for the military to wage the war, one of the most successful tactics was that which American soldiers in Vietnam engaged in, the refusal to fight. The reason given was the loss of conviction in what they were doing. As the war proceeded, American soldiers were able to see that they were the instrument of a government that, contrary to what they had been told, was waging a war against the Vietnamese people. As Phillip Caputo, who had served in Vietnam, stated in his book, *A Rumor of War*, “we carried, along with our packs and rifles, the implicit convictions that the Viet Cong would be quickly beaten and that we were doing something altogether noble and good. We kept the packs and rifles; the convictions, we lost” (Caputo 1977:xiv).

Chapter Four “Art and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement” examines the role of artists, art groups and art works in the movement and in so doing illuminates the transformation of art from the “aesthetic dimension” to the streets. Artists began protesting the war as early as 1959, but became much more involved in the anti-war movement after 1969. One of the best examples of art groups protesting the war was the protest at the Museum of Modern Art. During this protest, artists stood before Picasso’s painting “Guernica” with a poster entitled “Q: And Babies? A: And babies.” Art joined the broader anti-war movement in the form of political posters. The powerful images in the posters depicted the atrocities committed by the U.S. in waging the American War. The “And babies” poster and the “Would You Burn A Child?” poster are powerful and irrefutable images that demystify U.S. propaganda about the war. “And babies” depicts the consequences of search and destroy missions and free fire zones. Infants, children, women and the elderly lie in the dirt under the words of an American soldier who had been involved. And “Would You Burn A Child?” depicts the truth about napalm a weapon that can not be directed accurately at military targets only.

The Anti-Vietnam War movement was successful in both of its goals. The first goal had been to inform the American public of the true nature of the war in order to gather popular support for ending the war. In 1965 sixty-one per cent of Americans supported the war, by 1969 this percentage had been reversed and sixty-one per cent of Americans thought the war was wrong. In fact as early as 1969, the opposition to the war, according to the Pentagon Papers, resulted in Westmorland’s troop request being denied and Johnson’s
decision to not run for another term. And Richard Nixon admitted that the tactics of the movement, mainly draft resistance and the undermining of ROTC programs, led to a shortage of manpower, which significantly limited his options for continuing the war. And he also acknowledged that popular protest over the bombing of Cambodia was a factor in his decision to seek peace.
REFERENCES


