



WAR MEMORIAL CENTER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Worksheet 1: “Getting Our Voices Heard:” Latino Americans in Vietnam

Part I

The Draft (from *On Two Fronts: Latinos & Vietnam*, PBS, 2015, 9’35”)

1. The Selective Service System (SSS) is an independent agency of the U.S. government that keeps the records of all Americans who are subject to military conscription (may be drafted to serve in the armed forces if necessary). During the Vietnam War, SSS used “channeling” to decide who would go to war and who would stay at home. How did it work? How did “channeling” connect to college education?
2. Latino Americans typically did not take advantage of *deferment* (official postponement of military service). Why?
3. Julian Camacho, who as a young man served in the US Air Force, was a member of one of thousands of draft boards that decided who would go to fight in Vietnam and who would be granted deferment (postponement of military service). In the clip, Camacho says, “We were sending the children of the working families to die in the war and the children of the privileged were being saved from that by this induction system.” What does Camacho mean? How did the draft system work?
4. Rosalio Muñoz, who in 1969 was a college student, decided to resist military draft. Muñoz read the following statement to explain why he did not want to fight in Vietnam, “I accuse the draft, the entire political, social, and economic system of the United States of America of creating a funnel which shoots Chicano (Mexican American) youth, our Chicano youth, into Vietnam to be killed and to kill innocent men, women, and children.” How do you understand Muñoz’s statement? How does this statement connect to the draft system discussed in this video?

Part II

An excerpt from *Adelante #1902* (PBS Milwaukee, November 9, 2017)

You will hear eyewitness accounts of three Latino Americans who served in Vietnam. Fernando Hernandez Rodriguez was only 18 years old when he went to fight in Vietnam. Jose Cortez Ruiz was born in Mexico, immigrated to the United States in 1963, and in 1968 was fighting in Vietnam on behalf of his new home country. George Francisco Banda was a combat medic, who left for Vietnam not long after graduating from high school. What did the three men witness in Vietnam? Write down as many details as you can.

Part III - A

Analyze the following quotes from the three Latino American veterans of the Vietnam War featured in the *Adelante* video. Explain in your own words what these quotes tell us about the Vietnam War and about the experience of young Latino American men who served in Vietnam.

Fernando Hernandez Rodriguez

“We knew what we had to do when the first shot came in. It’s automatic.”

“I got shot. It’s something that never really leaves you ... Vivid, real, real, like I’m there ... It was a long time before I could say that.”

“[It took] fifteen – twenty years before we [Latino Vietnam veterans] started talking... [Before] being able to talk to each other. Then we were able to talk to others. That started healing process.”

Part III - B

Analyze the following quotes from the three Latino American veterans of the Vietnam War featured in the *Adelante* video. Explain in your own words what these quotes tell us about the Vietnam War and about the experience of young Latino American men who served in Vietnam.

Jose Cortez Ruiz

[About a barrage that he experienced in 1968] “You remember these things ... You didn’t know where to crawl initially but then you had to fire your own guns.”

“[It was] a lot of fear, a lot a chaos.”

“As long as I’m alive... people that I knew who died in the war... as long as I’m alive they’ll be alive.”

Part III - C

Analyze the following quotes from the three Latino American veterans of the Vietnam War featured in the *Adelante* video. Explain in your own words what these quotes tell us about the Vietnam War and about the experience of young Latino American men who served in Vietnam.

George Francisco Banda

“[Witnessing the war in Vietnam] was real tough, real emotional, something I wouldn’t wish on anyone.”

“War is hell. It’s terrifying. It’s uncivilized.”

“We [Latino American veterans] finally get our voices heard... We have to speak up... We contributed a lot for this country ... We have a voice... We should be allowed to speak up and say something about our contributions, to highlight those contributions.”