



***THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER SPEAKS:
A COLLECTION OF JOURNAL ENTRIES,
LETTERS, AND POEMS INSPIRED BY THE
VIETNAM WAR***



BY: WHSAD JUNIOR ELA CLASSES
& MR. RODRIGUEZ—SPRING 2013

The Unknown Soldier Speaks: Vietnam Point of View Writing

RAFT Assignment for Magazine

Unit/Theme: The Vietnam War/Vietnam War Memorial

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family/Loved Ones of Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay/Article• Poem• Song• Journal Entry• Letter	The Vietnam War
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family/Loved Ones of Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay/Article• Poem• Song• Journal Entry• Letter	The Vietnam War
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Citizens/Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay/Article• Poem• Song• Journal Entry• Letter	The Vietnam War
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family/Loved Ones of Vietnam Soldier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• American Citizens/Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essay/Article• Poem• Song• Journal Entry• Letter	The Vietnam War

Assessment:

R.A.F.T. Assignment Assessment and Feedback Rubric

Assignment Traits	←				
	5	4	3	2	1
Accuracy How correct is your information? Is it fully supported by the text and/or history?					
	<u>Comments:</u>				
Perspective Do you stay in role? How effective are you at performing your role and convincing audience?					
	<u>Comments:</u>				
Focus Do you stay to assigned format? Do you fully satisfy the chosen topic with numerous details and examples?					
	<u>Comments:</u>				
Mechanics Does your writing contain a minimal of mechanical errors? Does your writing contain no errors as identified in your grammar goals?					
	<u>Comments:</u>				
Benchmark How is the overall quality of your work compared with both past work and ever increasing expectations of better work?					
	<u>Comments:</u>				

GRADE: (based on levels attained for each criteria)

Scoring key
25-24 = A+
23-21 = A
20 = A-
19 = B+
18-16 = B

15 = B-
14 = C+
13-12 = C
11 = C-
10 = D
9 = D-

Assessment guide
5 = Exceptional
4 = Effective
3 = Developing
2 = Emerging
1 = Not Yet

THE UNKNOWN
SOLDIER SPEAKS:



JOURNAL ENTRIES

June. 20, 1965

It's a church day, I should be in mass with Emily and my family except I'm in a hospital bed with agonizing pain. Well, I was in pain. It has been 19 hours since the incident. Since I lost my friends, well most of them were real pieces of sh__ anyway, karma will bite those sons of b_____ in the ass. It did, why, you may ask? They are dead, but I am tired of living in the company of death. I should have just shot myself in the leg to get back to the love of my life. Screw the government; it's so arrogant of them to drag my a__ out of Pennsylvania when I should be taking care of my mother at the hospital. I had a feeling I would be in one; terrifying screams emerge from the corners of the room. Lights flicker rapidly. Nurses running back and forth like children playing tag, except that their faces are filled with darkness; soldiers going through the hallways of the hospital, dead soldiers. Thank God (if there is a God), I am not traumatized or mentally failing because it's better than me.

Operation Arch Light, that's where it all went downhill, it was June 18 and Friday morning, but I didn't know it was going to be one hell of a day. Rumors about 30 tons of conventional bombs were being piled up in a B-25Ds spread around the base like if it was the flu. It was called "Project: Big Belly" and to me, it was no rumor. Twenty seven aircrafts were going to be flying out of Andersen Air Force Base to bomb "damn" Viet Cong. I was in one of them. Everything was a blur, at least the majority of it, it's hard to explain. I was being rushed to the aircraft but I do remember that I was sitting next to one cruel son of b_____ "Kiwi" Johnson. His real name is Kerwin but we call him "Kiwi" because of his obsession to kiwi which makes him eccentric. Talk about a weirdo. Tension grew between us during the ride because last night was one hell of a ride. All Kiwi was passionate about was irritating the crap out of us by playing frivolous pranks, but he went too far the night before. At the moment, I looked at him with so much hatred and I remember teasing him, but in the blink of an eye, BAM!

The B-25Ds on the side of us collided with our aircraft; heart racing fast, blood rushing to my head, and the smell of the fire. My head was spinning around. The plane was picking up speed and the roaring of the wind sounded like a monster terrorizing a city. The plane ripped in half causing it to land in trees, while the other half exploded into the distance. After that, everything went black. I saw a light. You may laugh, but yes I did think I was in heaven, until the sounds of screams and guns shooting brought me back to reality; a reality that never existed. Kiwi, "Wake up you lazy a__!" I tried picking myself up but fell straight to the ground. I was weak and drained out of energy. Realizing I was 10 feet away from the plane and it was a bit blurry, but it wasn't that

blurry that I could see the bodies of some men. Cold metal touched my hand, it was the M72.

I got up. Power filled me up. I grabbed my gun and started shooting in front of me, where I saw random flashes of light appearing out of nowhere. My sight started coming back to me. Kiwi was shooting alongside with me, and 3 men were 15 feet in front of us (running into the forest). I realized they were leaving us. I always thought that it was "leave no man behind." Leave no man behind my a__! They left us but the next second, BOOM! A huge explosion came by surprise and their bodies disappeared. That's the last thing I remember about Operation Arch Light.

Josh Cepeda

March 11, 1966

So far it's been a year in this island of chaos and desperation. Before my arrival, I didn't think that this war would be that serious, nobody thought, not even the president. Sadly, I could say that this is just the beginning, but I'll be lucky enough to make it alive for another 24 hours. Like one my partners said, "Death cannot hold those with purpose..." I thought about it, he fulfills his purpose. Looking at it from a "positive" point of view, it's probably what helps me get through the night, besides alcohol and drugs, a chance to make a difference. Just the other day during battle, I witnessed a rookie paralyze in fear, crouching behind a thick solid boulder, all motionless like the rest of the remains on the ground. When he finally found the courage to fire back, he was tackled with bullets, like a boxer was his opponent in the corner, unleashing a fury of combos, eventually knocking him down and out. Watching him being pummeled to his death, I was laying down 50 feet across from him with a bullet in my upper right shoulder, another in between my left arm, unable to move, hopeless. I started to fade out slowly as the world and bullets kept turning, the rough ground began to feel comfortable to sleep on. As soon I was convinced that all of life had given up on me, I heard a soldier shouting, saying, "They are retreating back, keep moving forward!" We have a man down here!" I felt being dragged away from the gunshots, bombings, and my own grave. "Don't fall asleep on me now soldiers!" The same guy who was shouting earlier before, then I passed out as soon as I blinked. I woke up in one of the medic beds from a hangover of excruciating pain, still somewhat unconscious and unaware of where I was or what time it was, confused mostly. Standing next to me was the soldier who helped me. His name was Tim O' Brien...

Miguel Sanchez

August 5, 1969

Today, I was sent on a patrol with a few soldiers from the second platoon to make sure there weren't anti-tank mines buried in the road, in order for our tanks to move out. At first, it seemed a peaceful day with decent temperature; it hasn't rained in weeks so there was no mud on the road. Around 12:00 PM, I sat to eat pork with mashed potatoes with my friend Bobby from back home in Alabama. Around 2:30 PM, right when we were about to move out, I heard a loud bang behind me. As soon as I turned back, I saw 19 year old private Brian laying down on the ground dead. He was hit in the chest by the shrapnel of an NVA artillery shell. After that, shells started landing in our position. Apparently, we had been spotted by an NVA recon team and they called in an artillery strike. We started to run as fast as we could and then I heard gunshots left of our position, I threw myself on the ground as fast as I could and I saw how bullets started landing on the ground right next to me. I turned my head to my left and I saw how Lieutenant Edward didn't lay on the ground fast enough and got shot in the chest. He had a giant wound next to the heart and he was suffering and in pain. I managed to get a medic, but it was too late by the time I came back. He died from the loss of blood caused by the puncture of a main artery. We realized that we had been ambushed by the NVA. We tried to call air support and back up, but they said that it was going to take at least 30 minutes for them to get here. We had to hold the position till the second battalion and the 3rd airborne division came. I grabbed my m 60 and shot 4 NVA that were trying to set up a heavy machine gun on the top of a hill. Then after 10 minutes, I saw 2 tanks that began to move down-hill. One of them was heading straight to the bunker where my friend Bobby was. Luckily, Private James managed to get the tank on the side; the weakest part, with a LAW anti-tank rocket. 30 seconds after the tank was hit, it blew up like popcorn kettles. The other tank headed towards my direction. We tried to run towards the direction Bobby was because they were the only ones with anti-tanks rockets. Private James saw what we were trying to do and tried to hit the tank with a rocket. But as soon as he tried to hit the tank, the tank operator saw him and shot him with the main cannon. He died instantly and our only hope of survival was lost at that time. The tank then turned its hull towards our direction. I closed my eyes thinking that I was going to die. Then I heard a loud bang. I opened my eyes again thinking the tank had missed, but I realized the tank was on fire. I turned, and saw about 40 American tanks behind me. It was the second armored division, they arrived just in time.

Antony Frias

April 3, 1968

“Lieutenant Dan Taylor”

Hate, suicide, and abandonment is what I'm feeling. Betrayal is what I did. He's a jerk; a coward is what he is. He had no right to disobey my orders, to decide what my future was going to be. Who is he to decide? Who? To take away, to rip off, to tear apart my honor, I was supposed to die, with far-reaching honor, with my prints and blood drenched against the field of Vietnam. I entirely sold myself to this war, placed my heart down against the pavement of Vietnam. This war was my destiny, my spot of death to continue the honor of the Taylor family. But the b**** had to automatically decide that he had the right to take away my life like he was some kind of f***** angel. My destiny was shattered, he made me into this. This useless, no good, legless jerk, I was supposed to die in that field! It was my destiny! I don't deserve to live. I'm trapped in this useless world because of Gump, the coward that pulled me into this life. And I will never get it back. Never get it back!

Abraham Arriaga

March 8, 1965

Yesterday was the day I was sent to Vietnam, I was part of the first troops that arrived in Vietnam. Everything went so fast, but the way I was feeling inside made my heart beat so fast. When I was walking inside the helicopter, everything felt like I was walking in a new world that I didn't know, and I didn't know what was going to happen. Everybody looked so calm, but I know that inside they felt scared and nervous. When I was in the helicopter, I looked out and all I saw was everything small, but when it landed every thing looked so big and different. I was feeling so tired, my uniform weighs a lot, plus my weapon and the bag I was carrying. When I got off the helicopter, all I saw was everything green with little houses made of trees and people got scared, so they started running away. All I heard were kids screaming, guns shooting, and the people running away. Everything was green but it turned to red, everything was getting burned. All I saw was fire and a lot of bodies on the floor. When I started shooting, I was feeling guilty, killing innocent kids and people that didn't do anything. I couldn't do anything about it because I had to do my job and make my country proud. I was running with my troops to the village and the people were shooting. I was getting scared if I was going to get shot. I could not see anything at all, just dust in the air, and people running and hiding to protect themselves. Everything was going so fast, I was getting more nervous. I was shaking while holding my weapon. I wanted to go back to my country but there was no way to go back, only if I got shot or died. I want to be alive and to enjoy my days with the people I love.

Armando Mora

March 14, 1965

Heading out to Vietnam, my other colleagues look nervous and scared; one of them looked like they wanted to throw up. We headed up in the vehicle; there were at least six soldiers, in each vehicle. Unfortunately, I was with the guy who wanted to throw up . He rushed towards the window seat not caring about anything else. I got the seat next to a soldier playing around with his pocket knife, we started to move. As we drove down the street, you could see citizens looking at us and waving. If you read their lips, it looked like they were saying good luck. I can really see why most of these soldiers are scared and nervous because once you leave here and move here and move on to Vietnam its just you and the battlefield; No one there who actually cares about anything, no family to turn to. If anyone is reading this, I might be dead. Give this to my grandchildren in the future; make sure they learn a little about the past.

**Brian
Moses**

September 6, 1965....

Okay, well I am just 21 and my name is Bob "Rat" Kiley, got the name Rat from my brothers I'm here with. Don't know why they call me Rat; I don't know why I'm even writing this damn thing! This ain't one of those special writings people find 20 years from now and it sells everywhere and makes me look like a hero. Honestly, I'm writing this because after everything I've seen in these past several months, I have been in this s***-hole place called Vietnam, I'm sick. They say I'm going to look more like a wuss, instead of a hero people usually get to read about and honor. But maybe I'm not a wuss! Maybe, several months of seeing what I seen is enough to be recognized and honored! But day and night I've been sick from my head to my stomach, don't know what's next for me? Don't know if the next soldier that comes in severely hurt, I will be able to help. What happens if I fail and become the death of one of my brothers? How will I go and live with that memory? Someone is dead because I lost all the courage in me and I've just about seen enough. Soldiers begging for my help, I need out! How do you ever escape hell without paying your dues? Do I just give up? Maybe I could call it quits for myself, kill myself, maybe my brothers would think the enemy killed me because we are at war. But I don't think I'm smart enough to pull it off. I know someone has drugs here. Maybe that could be the cause. Drugs made me shoot myself and pull myself out of the service, but will my brothers still have respect for me knowing I pulled a wuss move like that

when they count on me? The troops are probably on their way back, carrying a soldier that's probably missing one of his limbs, someone I would need to help. I'm done writing this nonsense; it's not helping me out with my problem.

Bob "Rat" Kiley (Darell Colon)

1968, February 4th

This is my first entry about how it is to live in this sh** hole. The guys told me it's a good way to stay sane and detach yourself from this hell we're living here. The first day in, I saw a guy get blown to bits, dragging what we thought was a dead Vietcong off the roads, like his soul found its way back to his body; his eyes lit up like a candle light. The dead man yanked the pin off of the grenade on the soldier's belt, I tried to look away but the image already carved its way into my brain. Their faces haunted my dreams, preventing me from the sleep I already lacked. "Welcome to Vietnam," I remember a man saying that while standing next to me, he had a stupid smirk on his face, like he thought it was funny. That day I learned to spend a few extras rounds on those damn Vietcong, just to make sure they don't bring me to hell with them. I somehow relearned to be afraid of the dark because that's when the demons lurk. "Live by day, die by night," is what I always say. I'm beginning to understand that the only way I'm getting home is in a box, but don't worry I'm bringing flowers.

Dominic Brown (Edwin Torres)

November 3, 1970

Dear Journal,

It's been several months now since my father got drafted to fight the Vietnam War. Basically, he's been given a death sentence, but hey these are our tax dollars, right? When I really think about this war, the US has nothing to gain from it. An illegal war that makes no progress but gives soldiers (like my father) mental illnesses. I'm not that mad though, I just hate being lied to. President Nixon said winning this war is another victory for America's freedom but what kind of freedom is it if we have to kill hundreds of thousands Vietnamese people? Also, with my father being a young soldier, never in combat, he has almost no chance of living in this warfare. Pops sent a letter last week saying he'll back by the 21st, but later that day Nixon said the war will continue, surpassing the date of the 21st. Now I got 21 questions and no one can answer any. I used to be very proud of this country, but now I believe the government is doing this for their own benefit. Always heard the opinion and disagreed until they pulled anger out of me. Now, I say f*** them with a passion, no apologies.

Isaiah X

JUNE 21, 1968

IT WAS A HOT AND STRESSFUL DAY IN THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM, WORRYING ABOUT TRAPS OR ANYMORE VIETNAMESE POPPING OUT TO DO KAMIKAZES. I MEAN ME AND THE REST OF THE PLATOON WERE WALKING IN THE WOODS, TRYING TO BE AS STEALTH AS POSSIBLE, BECAUSE WE WERE ORDERED TO RESCUE PT. SIMMONS; A FORMER SOLDIER WHO WENT MIA DURING A RECENT BATTLE A FEW DAYS AGO WITH THE VIET-CONG. HE WAS COCKY, SO I GUESS COCKINESS GOT THE BEST OF HIM BY GETTING CAPTURED, BUT WE FOUND HIM, LUCKY SON OF A B****. HE WOULD HAVE DIED, IF WE DIDN'T FIND HIM. SO HERE WE ARE, ME, PT. KELLY, SGT. JOHNSON, AND CPT. KOWOLSKI, RIGHT OUTSIDE THIS CAVE WHERE WE SUSPECT HIM TO BE. THE DAMN VIETNAMESE WERE PROBABLY TORTURING THE POOR COCKY BASTARD. SO WE BURST INTO THE CAVE, IT SMELLED LIKE DEATH. IT SHOULD HAVE, CONSIDERING ALL THE DEAD BODIES WE SAW IN THE CAVE. ANYWAY, ONE BY ONE WE'RE TAKING OUT SOME OF THE PATROL; WE HAD TAKEN ONE OF THEIR PEOPLE TO INTERROGATE. WHERE WAS PT. SIMMONS? HE WALKS US TO WHERE SIMMONS WAS HELD CAPTIVE, BUT THE DOOR WAS SHUT TIGHT. WE BREECH AND GLEARED THE ROOM, FOUND SIMMONS BEATEN UP TO A PULP, SKINNY AS S***, LIKE HE HASN'T EATEN IN DAYS, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO SAVE HIM AND MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO CAMP.

SERGEANT LUIS MERCADO

March 8, 1965

Today is the first day we arrive in Vietnam and the air is warm. The sky is dark gray, as if it's about to rain. It was freezing. I had felt surrounded in an unknown environment surrounded by forest for miles. That feeling I felt, as if I was being watched, made me not want to be here; this wasn't what I planned for my future. I thought to myself, if I was just a pawn in this war, a soldier waiting to die. My friend Jason was part of my combat group, I was glad to be with someone close. This lightens my mood a little. We were part of the first U.S combat troops sent to Vietnam. I went up to Jason to see how he was doing. At that instance, it started raining. We quickly hurried into our base for shelter. Our base was pretty huge so it was possible to keep personal space with doctors ready to treat the wounded and beds laid out. Our lieutenant shouted, "Hurry the f**k up!" He said that we would be leaving in a few minutes for combat. Lieutenant Dan was his name, he was a good leader but very strict. He'd usually yell but always had our

backs. I was talking to Jason but then I noticed he was shaking. His face showed everything. He had fear in his eyes. Jason was always a pretty joyful, calm guy. Since being drafted into the war, he didn't take it lightly. I decided to tell him it would be okay. Then he started to break. He started sobbing and I couldn't help but feel sorry for him. Being so young, we were only 20. Like Jason, I was also scared, I never knew when it will be my last day or if I would make it out alive. Before we head out, I'll take one last breath and hope to come back alive.

Brandon John

March 8, 1965

Dear Journal,

It's March 8, 1965 and I arrived in Vietnam as part of the first U.S. combat troop. When we landed, I walked onto the Vietnam soil and it was nothing I imagined. It wasn't the peaceful and calm environment one of the soldiers told me it would be. It was loud, as if all the fireworks in the world were going off at the same time. Shots were firing from left to right. My commander, General William West Moreland, started giving orders right away. My emotions were everywhere. I was scared, excited and determined. Weaving behind my buddies, I started to remember my family, my mom Rosa, my brother Jim and my twin sisters Maurchel and Maurshay. Then, flashing lights snapped me back into reality. We were moving throughout the night, looking for a safe place to hit the hay. Finally, we found a place behind a clump of trees and bushes. We all were nervous, wondering what morning would bring...

Johnny "Determined Soldier" Smith (Micah Kennedy)

November 18, 1969

Today I went to the battlefield and as I walked with my troops, there was total silence. All I heard was the grass as everyone walked and the tanks drove. As we got towards the jungle, we stopped completely and looked around for about 10 minutes to observe things, to see if it was safe. We walked about 1.5 miles into the jungle and all I saw was an explosion on some of my troops. Then, gun shots began to take place and bullets flew everywhere. I got low to the floor and started to shoot in directions that the shots were fired at us. I couldn't believe my eyes and ears because of what I saw and heard. I stood in shock for a few moments. I thought to myself,

why am I here? To serve my country, I thought. Soon more troops of mine came for backup. We pushed ourselves forward to take total control of that area. After we cleared that area, it felt like 200 pounds came off my shoulders and I was so relieved that I was still alive fighting for my country. We returned to base to prepare for the next day...

Claudius Ramdhan

November 22, 1967

I was sent on a mission with 3 of my teammates. We were all going on this mission battling harsh weather. There was a storm approaching but we still had to do our mission. We left at night so that the enemies wouldn't be able to notice us and we would have more advantages. We were sent to check out the place and figure out where things were put and to see if things were in order so the mission would be a success. As we proceeded with our current mission, the harsh weather was coming on to us. The weather was getting worse by the hour. The wind was picking up and it was getting hard to see where we were going to go. It felt like we were going to freeze to death because it felt like it was 12 degrees out here. We had to find shelter for the moment and make a fire so we wouldn't freeze and keep warm. We found shelter and stayed there for an hour, waiting for the harsh weather to pass by. It was midnight and we were getting ready to leave the shelter and proceed with the mission. It took us a while to get to where we were going; we were delayed because of the storm. While we were walking through this land we noticed that there were mines on the ground where tanks would go by and if the tanks went over them they would blow up. We had to carefully deactivate the mines but there were only a couple of mines. After we were done doing that, we proceeded with our mission. We were only a few miles away from our destination. There were only a few hours till it was morning so we had to hurry up or our mission would have failed. We got there in 3 hours, and all of our other teammates back at base were waiting till we got to the enemies place. My fellow soldiers and I got there safely. We split up into groups of two. My partner and I took the east side and my other teammates took the west side of the place. We were going to take them by surprise. They had a lot of men walking around and protecting the place so we were going to have to go in quietly. If we did a wrong thing, we would have been compromised and we would have failed. We killed our enemies and we called back to base to tell them that the mission was a success and for them to move on with the mission. In the morning, we were waiting for our other teammates to come...

Oscar Castillo

July 5, 1965 – I was alone and afraid, didn't know what to do. I was still in Vietnam, in the forest surrounded by VC. My mission was a total failure. I was supposed to find out what the VC was planning and put a stop to it. That's the time I knew the war was getting started.

Dec 17, 1967- I was the VC's executioner. I met a friend named John Shepherd AKA Ghost, he is a machine gunner/ medic, with the U.S. After all the years in the VC's prison, we both were *thinking of a way to escape and we did. We fought our way through, getting Intel.* And finally we made it home.

Prince St. Louis

October 11, 2012

The Day My World Stood Still

It was a nice spring day, 1969. This place could have been a resort but instead it was hell for the condemned. Most of us knew we wouldn't come back; some of us had wives, children, and families to support; 11 of us drafted. To get the fear and frustration away we smoked a bit, sang some hymns and listened to some old tunes back from when we were kids. This was a nice day off, so we thought; we sent Cortez to get some fire wood for the night to come; only problem is he never came back. This was fishy because there's so much wood on land like this. I sent Johnson, Merchy, Philips, and Acri to search for Cortez but none came back. Worried for the others, the rest of my platoon all went searching for our missing men. After half an hour in this jungle, I see Acri tied upside down from the branch of a tree I ran to cut him loose. I knew it was a trap but no man should be left behind. I heard a loud shout from above "Get"! Shots being shot from all around me; fireworks from the sky to the floor, my men dying, I can hear Stevens crying for his daughter. I ran as fast as I could, knowing that those men were dead. My men; the ones who trusted me, the ones who followed my word, now all dead, Johnson, Merchy, Philips, Acri, Cortez, and the rest of them. Now I'm 57 years old, still mourning for them;

wanting to kill myself for being a coward. Those Vietnamese killed my brothers in arms. That war was my life; I was an old man at the age of 24. And I'll always be a grunt.

Angel Ordonez

December 10, 1970

Guns fire and blood pours, that's all I can remember as I sit in this padded white room, rocking back and forth. I wonder why the government took my life away. Killing people because they couldn't talk over their differences, why go straight to war? The day I got this letter, my whole life changed. My family didn't know how to take it that their little man has been chosen to play a role in your war. How could I take someone's life? I couldn't kill a little bug, better yet take someone's life. As I lay under this bed scared, I thank you Mr. President for taking my life away. Every time a door slams all I hear is a gunshot replacing the sound; there goes another innocent person down.

Travis Wiggins

April 7, 1972

As the days go by, my dosage increases. I know it's not the best or the healthiest but...I need it...to go on. It's my medicine. When I inject the tranquilizers, I can feel it gradually entering my veins, deliberately traveling up my system, and heroically seizing my body. I no longer have possession of my mind. My heart doesn't belong to me. My eyes do not control what I see. I remember one time, when I took twice the dosage of my hallowed dope and tranquilizers; I entered the most beautiful trance. Another world so to speak; we were still in Nam, but...it was a different kind of Nam; one where the sun rose in the east and set in the west. I remember seeing Kiowa surrounded by little Vietnamese children. All of them were laughing. He was doing that silly rain dance of his. The children were jumping and falling and twisting and turning, in an attempt to emulate the dancing man. Henry's pantyhose were lying in the shade of a tree's canopy. Not seeing it wrapped around his neck was quite surprising. But that wasn't the most amazing part. There it was, positioned right on top of the pair of dainty, nylon pantyhose, the most exquisite and exotic butterfly I have ever seen. With its shades and hues of purple and blue, and dashes of yellow, I became mesmerized. Its wings were delicately detailed of lattice and its dark eyes had a soft glimmer to them. It stood there, gazing at the dancing cohort beside me, watching vigilantly, as if contemplating. Within a matter of seconds it clutched the

stockings from underneath and began carrying it away, off to the distant sunset, its graceful wings flapping gently; taking not only the garment with it, but the fear and embarrassment as well. It was all gone now. It was over. Henry glanced at the departure and smiled. Happy, Happy because he didn't need it anymore; he was safe.

Lilia Chunir

*THE UNKNOWN
SOLDIER SPEAKS:*



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LETTERS

July 26, 1970

Dear Dad,

I got your letter and I'm more than glad to know that you're okay; I can't believe that you almost got killed! When I read about how you were walking and you seen your comrades fall right in front of you, I honestly just wanted you to come home.

Even though we write each other back and forth, I'm afraid of the day when someone comes knocking on the door and tells me that my father was killed in action or even went missing in action. I still remember all of the fun filled trips we've been on, all the times we played; you teaching me how to play basketball, baseball, and football. But to tell you the truth, I really can't stop thinking about when I'm going to see you again. I know you're out there protecting us from them, but I'm always wondering who's protecting you. I just want you to come home safe. Love you and please write back.

Your son,
Jamie J. Collado

September 28, 1973

To My Dear, Lovely Wife Cindy,

Today, I read something so grim. I received a letter and in it I was told that my life has been sold. So now my new life is on the road, to a place far, far from home. To a war I didn't start, nor want to be a part of.

Wishing I was back home, instead of waking up cold and alone, ending my nights stoned. Trying to forget where I've been sent is the hardest part and my biggest regret. I should've gone home when I had the chance, to give you one last dance. Days I miss my family, I can barely stand me. I feel all dead with you in my head. Hoping my days go fast, feeling like I don't have much to last. I write this letter in a melancholy mood so you can at least remember me, because I have yet to forget the pain and the sorrow of not seeing you tomorrow. If it was my choice, I'd hear your lovely voice, instead of the pain and agony that has been brought all around me. I've been put to the test infatuated with death,

wanting to be home so I could put it all to rest. This war has caused me to become much more distant and less resistant, trying to ignore all the blood and the gore, while fighting this war and missing your more. I end this letter wishing for better. But don't worry I'll be home soon to see your beautiful womb. Good bye my beautiful wife Cindy, just know that I'll always carry you with me.

Love Always,

Your Beloved Husband Sal (Bianca Gonzalez)

September 18, 1968

Dear Family,

How I have missed you guys so much! I can't wait to see you guys, you are all I think about and you all are what gets me through the day. I miss mom's homemade pancakes and my baby sister crying. I would have never thought the war would be so hard and bloody. All I see in the day is dead people and our people killing people I hate how people can do this but things are the way they are. I can't stop it, I can just do what I have to do. I try not to kill people but I have to, if I don't I will die. It's crazy what people do in the war, thank God I haven't acted how most of my friends do. They kill the people we should be helping, but it is what it is. I do my job and that's it.

Things here are hard. I have never seen so many people die. I would do anything to make sure you guys are safe, that's why I am here and I don't want to go to jail, too. But at the end of the day, I miss you guys like crazy. When I look at the stars at night, I think of when I was camping with dad and my brother in the woods, it was a so fun, but here it's crazy. Last week, someone got shot in the a. His a** is falling off because we have a new doctor. It's sad how the doctor gets scared so fast, good thing I have not been hurt or shot. I never want to come back to this place again, it's crazy.**

I can't wait till this war is over so I can go back home and spend time with you guys. I miss you all so much!! I have to go, I will write to you guys when I have the time. Love you all.

Luis Alcantara (Angel Lugo)

August 15, 1971

Dear Family and Friends,

I am so glad to be writing to you! I hope you read this and that I will be receiving a letter back. Let me tell you about the war, it's been a cold and painful war. Innocent people being killed, we are supposed to be here protecting these people but instead we're here bullying them, killing and raping their women. With every day that passes, I feel a little sicker to my stomach. I'm tired of this war, I want to escape. What should I do?

Love,

Daniel Pitre

11-12-1970

Dear Government,

I strongly believe that the Vietnam War is a huge tragedy. The death percentage of soldiers is sadly increasing. Every day another person is taken from their family. How would you feel if it was someone you love? This is definitely a big issue and I think it's time that y'all do something about it. Instead of fighting and risking people's lives, maybe try talking it out. Fighting will only cause bigger conflicts. Many people have probably complained about this before, but it's time that something really gets done. I'm am so concerned about this because I know several people fighting in the war and it's terrifying knowing that they can be taken from me any second. After reading this letter, I hope that you all will reconsider stop fighting. and make a big change for the world.

Sincerely,

Quanaya Kennedy

March 31, 1971

Dear Richard Nixon,

Do you know how it feels? Do you understand how fun it is to dodge Vietnamese bullets every day? No, of course you don't, because you're too busy trying to

get your presidential figures. I had planned to go to Yale after working a full year out of high school so I could have enough money for room and board. Then, one day I get home and there's a letter with your signature on it. It told me that I had to, HAD TO go to war. Who the hell are you to tell me what I can and cannot do? Do you want to know what I did with your letter? I rolled it up and toked it. That was the best moment I had since you sent your minions to take me away. The 13th amendment clearly abolishes slavery in all of America. So, you take me to another country to be your slave there? Every day of war I lose a friend. All I have to say is "go screw yourself!" I refuse to be another one of our minions.

Sincerely,

Henry Gunn (Albert Brunn)

July 10, 1970

Dear Mother,

It isn't easy to kill random people, but if I don't, it will cause me my life. Seeing dead bodies in every aspect of Vietnam is a huge tragedy. To see blood everywhere, guns shooting here and there, firing accelerating and smoke everywhere is one of the biggest, chaotic Things I have ever had to go through. I can see it with my eyes, the fear on these innocent people's faces, but it is my job to shoot the bullets out of my gun and to take away their lives. I feel sick to my stomach, but mostly a huge sadness. It isn't right but I have to do what is instructed. By wearing this uniform, I'm supposed to feel like a hero but I don't. I feel more like a killer than a soldier. Well, I have to go now, I have a duty to do that I honestly don't feel like doing.

Love,

Jacob (Ashley Garcia)

April 15, 1967

Dear Cousin Jeff,

Hey, how's the family? I hope they're good. God, how I miss you guys, these past few months have been hell in Vietnam. Being deployed is hard, but I have to do it for my country. So much stuff has been happening, but the one thing that I can't erase out my of my head is me killing a kid about 13 or so. It made me think of my son and what kind person this makes me. It seems to be that people don't know how war is life changing. I can't sleep at night, the only thing that makes me sleep is this reefer me and my camp mate share. It's been tasting really funny lately. Hopefully, some Vietnamese a** wipes didn't f**k our plants up. Anyways, I can't wait for this s**t to be over, man. If I don't

make it back alive, tell my wife I love her and tell Dahlila, my youngest daughter, daddy will be back soon. It hurts to think I won't make it back to see her pretty little face again. As for my eldest daughter Emma, she needs to help mommy around the house till I'm back. And as for you Jeff, always remember only the dead see the end of the war, and take care of my family. Change is a law of life, see you soon.

Always Love,
Sergeant Danirys Ventura

January 21, 1967

Dear Mom,

There really is a war going on over here. We made contact in daylight yesterday for the first time since I've been here. You know how we usually say war is not like the movies, well we're both wrong, it is exactly like the movies. The only difference is we don't have a script to follow so whatever happens, happens. We were out in the open yesterday, when they opened fire on us. One member of my team got hit, but we managed to escape out of range, about 100 meters down the trail. Then, we got on line and assaulted the men who fired at us. After a while, things seemed to calm down and we were able to get back to our base safely, with no more injuries or death. So Michael recently sent me a letter, telling me that he is thinking about becoming a soldier and coming to Vietnam, to help fight the war. He knows how much you're against his desire, so he told me not to tell you. I'll write him back soon and tell him he needs to talk it over with you. Hope I get to see you in the next couple of months, I'll write again soon.

Love,

Taivon Edwards

June 23, 1965

Dear Whoever Finds Me,

My best friend has died. A gunshot wound to the back of the head, boom!
I think about it mornings to night, damn, it's my fault.

I wasn't paying any attention; I was too busy fantasizing about my dearly beloved, Martha. I'm writing this letter to let you know I'm dying slowly. I have been carrying 7 pounds of premium dope in my bag and today I feel like it's the day to take my life, so I'm overdosing on these pills I found down by Lake Ru. Losing my best friend was the worst thing that could have ever happened, and on top of that I was supposed to be right behind him every step of the way. My best friend's death was devastating to me. Whoever is reading this letter, please let my family know. Back in New York life is too short, maybe I shouldn't have taken it for granted. I set myself up for failure and I apologize today for everything I have caused. It is now my time to go; Vietnam took my best friend.

R. Golden (Rayna Austin)

February 4, 1966

Dear Family,

The feeling I have is indescribable, I miss you all so much. It's like everyday someone dies; I can't take the sight of dead bodies just lying around. My partner had drugged himself and shot his foot so he wouldn't have to work, it's really that bad. During the North Vietnam attack against the South, most of the soldiers keep the bodies they kill for rewards for themselves; sick, yeah I know! The bad part is we're supposed to protect half of the people living here and the soldiers just kill them for fun or to make themselves feel good. Nobody is safe, it's everybody for themselves. Other than that, I miss you all, I miss the fresh outdoor smell, the laughter, the sun and the days I used to go to the park; I miss everything to tell you truth. Being away from the kids is harder every day; seeing kids run around and get shot down for running makes me cry because I can't imagine that happening to mine. I'll give anything to have my warm bed again, I hate sleeping in these tents on the cold dirty grounds. Nothing can amount to the things I have seen, smelled, or heard. Friends turning on friends, everybody is losing their minds. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam had to impose a communist system over the entire nation. I hope to see you soon.

Love Always,

Diamond Marquez

March 24, 1968

Dear Mom,

I am sorry that I haven't been in contact with you since I've been back from the war. It's been hard for me. I've been trying to get my head together. I can't get a job and I can't move around like that. During the war, my leg got messed up because I was shot. I kicked down a house door. When I kicked down the door, one of the Vietnamese shot me in my leg. They took me in the helicopter. They cleaned the wound until I was able to get to a doctor. When I got shot it was hot, painful and felt like needles were sticking me over and over again. I was scared because I did not know if I was going to die or not. Leaving this war changed me a lot and messed me up. It messed me up physically and mentally. When I get back on my feet, the right way, I am going to see you and the family. I want you to know ma that I love you, I miss you a lot and I can't wait to see you.

Yours Truly,

Tim (Jac-quela Mclemore)

July 7, 1968

Dear Jahmauny,

I want to start by saying I love you and my longing for you grows with each passing day. I want you to know that your absence has taken a major toll on me. Every time I feel lonely, I always think about the last few days we shared, the few days before you left; it was all so sudden. I didn't want you to leave, but I had to be strong now. Your drafting has given me time to think, and time to figure out what really happened, where I went wrong.

I understand now that I should have been there for you, and I'm sorry. I should've been the wife you wanted me to be but I didn't know if I was able to be that person. Ever since she passed, you haven't been the same. There was something missing, as if you were void of passion or care. It is important for us to be together. It took a war for me to realize but I need you more than ever right now.

I wanted you to be here for the birth of our baby. She was born on June 29, 1968. She was about 6 pounds. I named her after you and your mom: Jamia

Ibrielle Monds. She's beautiful, and a spitting image of her father. She's more than just our child; she's hope, a promise. When I look at her, I see you and with every smile she lets me know you're coming home. And when you get home, you know you have a wife and daughter waiting here for you. I miss you, and your daughter needs you; promise us you'll make it home.

Love always,

Valerie and Jamia (Jahmauny Monds)

March 8, 1967

Dear Johanna and John,

I hope everyone is doing great over there and I hope my little John is doing all of his work and in great health. It's been a year now since first arriving to Vietnam and the war is just getting worse and worse. A couple of days ago, a fellow soldier and great friend of mine died. His name was Kiowa and he disobeyed orders of camping out in the field, days later he died. Many fallen soldiers have perished and the numbers seem to keep increasing. I don't think President Johnson realizes how serious this war is. I heard that many people have begun to protest against Johnson and his decision to fight a war. I can not blame them; this war is taking away many souls; it's making me sick. By around March of last year, many U.S. aircrafts began bombing and helping us with our targets. Jimmy Cross has been very strict with us and made us clear about our objectives. But all of the blood and violence surrounding us has left many soldiers in shock and traumatized. Many of us did not accept that the war would be this insane and also violent. Even I am in shock and in disbelief, having to carry a gun with blood in the water and wearing a helmet is very tiring. It's even worse having to see your fellow mates lay down dead and seeing how many innocent little kids and parents get killed in the field. It's such a horrible sight and I wish the fight could get better every time, instead of the opposite. I hope this deadly war comes to an end soon because I don't believe people can afford to see more American lives be taken away by violence. Well I must go now family, a fellow soldier, Tim O'Brien, has been shot and I've been asked to assist and aid him. Remember that I love you both so much and that I wish I could be home playing football with you and John. If God still keeps me alive, then I will write you guys another letter. Take care my loves and I send you a big hug all the way from the

battle field.

Always Love,

Jonathan Chuquimarca

July 4, 1965

To my family back home,

I wanted to take this time to write about my life in the Vietnam War, and the events that I have encountered at this time. I'd like to inform you that these events are tragic and extremely touching, and I want you all to know how it really is out here. First off, I am okay so have no worries for me.

So tomorrow, July 5th, 1965, I will be deployed to another bunker, more south of Vietnam. I spent several months in my first bunker, and made a lot of friends. When it was time to fight, we all prayed to return to our bunker in one piece and be reunited. We were like a family together and I loved it.

Slowly as we engaged in battle, we noticed that less and less of our friends had returned to the bunker, after battle. We knew that they had died in battle and we tried not to grieve upon it, but to look at it as an honor.

My experience on the battlefield was horrifying. For example, men from my own bunker blown to pieces, and still moving, and dead Viet Cong hanging from trees along with American soldiers. I think the worst part of it all was when the sergeants pulled the gold teeth out of the dead Viet Cong's mouths, before we had to bury them. I have even seen women and children die in the middle of battles.

Some nights I dream about coming back home to the family. Other nights, I have nightmares about this terrible place. I want you all to know I love you and please wish me luck in my new bunker deployment. Please write me back as soon as possible.

Love,

Sergeant Jordan P. Forgione

December 15, 1966

Dear Mom,

How's the family? Hope everybody is doing well, I miss you guys. It's going to be my 2nd Christmas without you guys. As much as my little brothers were annoying and whatnot, I miss you guys dearly. I miss your cooking and the screaming of my little brothers and sisters, and kiddish arguing with them. I miss those days you would wake us up for school and walk us everywhere through the rain, snow, hail; even if anyone was sick we would go and you would tell us to manage. Over here, nobody is friendly with you. The only two who were really friendly died; one in combat and another committed suicide because he found out his mother died. Earlier that day, he accidentally killed a baby. I wish I would've listened to you when you said to stay out of trouble, not to mix with the wrong groups, to do better in school, and to not sign up for this s**t, pardon my language, ma. Over here, sometimes we go up to 4 days without food, just dirty water from the lakes, bloody water and crops. Not able to sleep for 72 hours isn't easy for a buck; I miss and love you mom. Tell everybody I miss them and love them, I'll be home soon.

Love Always,

Nelson Vasquez (Jorge Hernandez)

February 8th 1973

Dear Family and Friends,

I'm writing you this letter so that you know that I am doing okay. I really hope you guys are doing well and are living your lives to the fullest. It's depressing out here seeing all these lives lost; watching them all fall to the floor dead or wounded. Sometimes I lay here and I think about all these families and kids that no longer have a father, brother or uncle. To think that that could be me one day or is going to be me one day, it's just so sad. I think about you guys a lot and it just makes me fight harder and harder every day knowing that I could go home and hold you guys in my arms. I have to go now but I will write to you guys again soon. Love you with all my heart.

Love Always,

John Stevens (Keylah Escalera)

March 6, 1965

Dear family and friends,

As I take my leave for the war on March 8, 1965, I'm not sure if I may come back but I will do my best to return home to my family, friends, and loved ones. I can't wait to see the look on your faces when I'm back; the joy, the happiness, and my kids fully grown from toddlers to teenagers, haha.

I arrived at a camp where all the Vietnam U.S. soldiers wait to march or fly in with the jungle birds. I was one of the soldiers to enter the jungle bird; my heart was pounding, adrenaline rushing, waiting to see what comes next. I was in the jungle bird when we took off for war. I had no friends, no one to talk to. I was alone, one with my team, we were ambushed and most of us died. I was one of the few that survived. I moved on with the others that survived, hoping that the next time that we get ambushed would never happen. God was on my side, another ambush never happened.

After the first ambush we moved on, me and my team saw things that were never meant to be seen by any man in their right mind. The death of so many is extremely traumatic; their heads, arms, and legs not on their bodies, some don't even have a body because it has been blown to bits. It's time for me to end this letter by saying good bye for now. I will try to write another letter but for now friends, family, and loved ones, be safe and await my return. Thank you and I love you all.

Love,

Lloydell Campbell

January 7, 1971

Dear Valerie,

Being in this war has taken a toll on me. Every experience, every death, every action is a weight on my heart, mind, and soul. I can't let weakness show though. Well at least not here, there is no place for that here. At least I can show it to you. With you I can show how vulnerable I really am, my longing to come home, out here a soldier has to put on his poker face. I just can't show it here. In Than Khe, I feel it's by far the worst part of this war. No man should ever experience this much death. I saw mothers, fathers, children, and newborns die. Oh my gosh, the amount of babies!

It's just not natural. I can't take it much longer. I miss you. Each bullet I fire, I whisper your name. Weird right, but that's how I cope. Not just with this war, but our war. Sometimes the bullets remind me of the piercing feelings you left in my heart. So I say your name for pleasure or ease, but also to build up anger, to show no mercy to my prey, like you did to me. I tried telling Lieutenant Cross to do the same, before something happens where he can't focus because of Martha. He doesn't listen though. This war has me so confused. I miss you at times, especially at night. It's like you slip into my mind like a thief stealing my capacity to stay alert. However, during the war, during all the humping and battle I see myself building hatred, no not hatred, I could never hate you but I feel a deep anger towards you. I don't know what to feel. Did you know I started smoking because of this s***? Not just because of the war but because of you. Smoking this dope out here ain't even right, man. Remember the weed Andrew used to smoke in high school, it doesn't even smell like it. It smells like Vietnam, blood, and toxins. I think this weed is going to rot me from the inside out. But to real issues, why did you leave me dumbfounded? Why did you not give me your heart? What did I do or say? I have to go now. I picked the lucky number 17. This means I have to inspect a tunnel. If I don't make it back, just know you were my one and only.

Signing off,

Brian O' Conner (Jasmyn Cumberbatch)

January 14, 1971

Dear Brian,

I just don't understand you anymore and why things got so difficult and why you can't accept that I've moved on. I waited 5 years for a call, a letter; a general to show up at my door with war scars. I waited for you to be honest with me and I can't wait any longer. It just doesn't make sense for me to. You wouldn't have waited for me. Brian I know about the baby, he's two now, his name is Brian G. O'Conner; a small, plump infant, exceptionally smart and has the eyes of his father, but with the beginning of his life I see the end of us and it hurts me. I was confused and jealous. I wanted to be the one for you, but slowly I realized I was not. How many times must we try to "compromise" before we realize it's going nowhere? Maybe it's something bigger, but I don't see it, and if you love me I don't feel it. I'm overwhelmed with thoughts of whether to leave you. I want to because I believe there's nothing left, but I can't because you're fighting three wars and who would I be if I didn't stick around when you needed me the most? But what's dawning on me is whether you need me because you didn't say it, and you didn't show it before you left. Being in THAN KHE doesn't suppress

the issue that I don't love you anymore, you deserve to be in war fighting for me. It finally shows me what you could never do, be a man, grow up, move on I deserve better than you. I guess it just takes time for us to both believe it really is good bye this time, R.I.P. O'Conner.

Sincerely,

Valerie McCree

6/29/1965

Dear John,

I know it's been awhile and I'm sorry I haven't replied to any of your letters. I mean, of course I read them all, it's just all so overwhelming. I barely know what to say anymore.

Believe me, I know it's hard for you, I really do, but it's hard for me too, John.

*Every morning, I wake up in an empty bed. Each afternoon, I return home to an empty house and every single night I cry myself to sleep, hoping and praying that this can all just be a dream, and wishing that when I wake up I'll be wrapped in your arms. But instead, I wake up alone and each day it hits me harder than the last, **YOU'RE GONE!***

Want to know something funny?

I was out on the porch the other night and I saw the moon, how it shone so bright and how full it was, and I thought to myself, "If only John were here to see how beautiful this looks."

After, I sat on the porch and read your letter and guess what you wrote about!

You told me how beautiful the moon looks over there and how you can finally appreciate its beauty in a place so dark.

And do you know what I did?

I cried John, not because I was sad, but because I looked at the moon and felt you with me.

So you go out there and fight that war, but just promise me when you feel like giving up and like nothing is worth it anymore, you look at the moon and know that even if

I'm not there in person, I'm there with you in spirit, looking at the same moon and waiting for you to get home safe

All my love,

Stephanie Perez

Feb 8, 1966

Dear Soldiers,

I wonder how you guys deal with the loss of your partners. Dealing with the sounds, guns, and bombs; traumatized at the thought of how you walk out into a war zone, so brave, fighting for your country, for your people. You guys are my heroes, but I can only imagine how you deal with this. Soldiers that are alive and well and those who passed on, I want you to know that you're amazing and without you the world wouldn't be the same. Thank you guys for being the best, you are so brave and caring towards our country, I adore you.

Tyzhane Brown Wright

December 12, 1972

Dear Kenneth,

Hey, how are things now in Vietnam? I can't say I fully understood all that you were feeling when you wrote the last letter, probably because I have never been in a war. I can say I understand the loneliness you feel. I miss you and it gets cold at night. I know you are colder than us because you sleep in a hole you dig at night to keep yourself safe at night. I can't help it, but as soon as I close my eyes when I lay down to sleep, I picture us lying next to you in the hole you have dug for us. Last night, I came to be so lonely that I started going through your clothes and came across your tie you wore to graduation, it made me cry. We were the perfect couple in high school. It seems like yesterday, even though it was 5 years ago. I guess I know what it is like to "relive yesterday, every day" like you do.

You're far away fighting a war in Vietnam; no matter how many times I say it or write it, it still seems surreal. It may be wrong of me to ask for you to think of us, since the lives of men are in your hands, and recently your friend died from an unfocused soldier (blessing and peace be upon him), but I need you to think of us, so our hearts and souls can be together even when we are not. I know this may seem selfish, but I can't do this on my own. Just the other day there was a riot, many people say they will not welcome you soldiers home, but we'll be there with open arms for you.

I'm not avoiding your question, but I don't know if telling you while you're away is the right thing. When I say we, it's not because I'm with someone else or because of your family because they completely stopped talking to me after you joined the army. I know in my heart this is not the best way to tell you, but I need your mind to be clear when fighting and this is the only way I can. We need you to come home, until then we'll write you.

Love Your Wife and Hopefully Soon To Be Baby Boy !!!!!

Shawnaisha Battle

THE UNKNOWN
SOLDIER SPEAKS:



POEMS

“Bullets Flying”

Bullets flying like birds in the air.
I saw my sister get shot as I waited in fear.
My papa told me he'll come back for me, I swear
I remember the day he left,
Tears running down his face as he hugged me
With a tight embrace.
He told me that everything would be OK,
But why are body bags on display
In front of my doorway.
I don't understand why this is happening,
People I know are dying every day in front of my face,
Why isn't papa here to stay with me?
He is supposed to protect me
'Cause I'm in fear.
What if the next body is me?
Papa would have no choice but to bury me.

Janaé

October 23, 1972

“To my beloved Macy”

Vietnam is a horrible place
Because we are fighting, killing, and invading a different race.
It's not really our war to fight,
But we fight for the side that is right.
I miss you, my family, and friends
And hope I make it till the end.
Pray I'll make it out alive

So I can go home and make you my wife.
I might not come out the same person
'Cause life here has just worsened.
Drafted soldiers do crazy things to cope
Like torturing animals, drinking, and doing dope.
I don't feel like you will understand.
Or accept me for the person I now am.
Your pictures and letters help me make it through
So I can finally be with you.
I love you with all my heart
And it stinks that we're apart.

Love,

J.R. Sanders (Carina Maria)

"Curry Goat"

A man that showed me how to love with a loving soul, my husband was a man with a warming soul. I know his heart touched many of the wounded souls; the kids that were hurt and wanted someone to be there for them during the brutal war. His hugs were charming and everlasting, never wanting to let go. I know his fellow soldiers adored his loving laughter like a kid loves a candy store. The war taught him how to grow and filled him up with courage like a warm plate of curry goat.

Jovanna Fuller

"Thoughts of a Dead Soldier"

BOOM! BAM!

I lose hearing in my left ear

BAM! WHOOSH! BAM!

I lose hearing in my right, just after the sounds

Of the explosions that seemed to have appeared out of nowhere

And everything slowed down.

As the corners of my sight grew dark,
Every part of my body felt like it was drifting off.
First my legs, then it spread like drowning in a deep bottomless ocean
And soon I grew completely numb.

...I wasn't sure at first what was going on, but
I fell to the ground before I knew.
And so I saw a light and I thought it was the sky clearing up,
But then my body regained its feeling and I felt a lift.

Pulling, and helping me up I looked to see,
Lieutenant William Smith and a band of soldiers,
William was gunned down yesterday.

Adrien Acevedo

"The Few, The Proud, The Marines"

Walk on a field,
More like grass and trees,
Coming to kill,
With a smelly breeze.

I know who it is,
I can't remember.
Oh wait, that's my friend Kriz
Who I met last December.

After this, I went blank.
Suddenly, I became a target
As I planked
On the ground, I can never forget.

What goes through your mind?
Being chased by bullets,
Not knowing what you'll find,
Hearing a plane's pellets.

How could I lay in bed?
With no emotion,
Seeing friends drop dead
With so much commotion.

I'm lucky to be "alive,"
Whatever that means.
I think I survived,
Now I know what it means to be a marine.

Alisha Francis

"Dear American Citizens"

Just boom and down,

*How f***** dare you,*

You ungrateful, lucky swine.

Money and all,

Never seen war.

War has not fought,

War has not made you chose,

Enemy or Ally,

Ally or Enemy.

*How f***** dare you?*

Than Khe's mind games,

Stuffy, Barely

Breathable.

The struggle between sane

And inhuman.

The ways of tunnels,

*How f***** dare you?*

Blood never staining

The land you walk on,

Blood never piercing

The purity.

Kiley,

Rat Kiley,

Just Boom! And down,

Image staining the

Purity, the purity to

Hatred,

Hatred to insanity.

The feeling

Cold ... Heartless,

Only wishing,

Only wishes spreading our wings

and taking off.

Than Khe

Vines Wrap,

The dirt surrounds,

It lies, the secrets

It contains.

*How F***** dare you?*

You, the U.S.,

You, the loyalty,

You, disrespectful

Cowards.

War has not met

Eyes of yours

Eyes you would have

Bleached

To smash, crush, and burn

The bodies, the mind, the keeper,

The memories.

Only wishing to spread your wings,

Some kind of loyalty,

But be left

With sin.

Bodies,

Stems,

Vines wrapping

Our purity.

Our purity into hatred,

Our hatred into insanity,

Our insanity into isolation,

What do you think about that

Disrespectful swine?

Thank you for your consideration,

Liam Bennet (Brianna Pack)

"Memories"

All I can do is think about you,

As these tears run down my face,

I think about the memories we shared,

Before you went to Vietnam.
I remember how your smile
Lit up the place.
How your laugh
Made me laugh insanely.
The way you danced around our place.
Oh, I miss you so much,
I just wish that we could rewind time,
So I could hear your voice.
But it's okay,
At least I have my memories in place.
Destiny Albert

“Father (Soldier) to Daughter”

I'll never forget the time you were born,
Small hands held my finger, your beauty adorned.
My daughter, my love, my angel I adore,
It hurts to say that I'm leaving for war.
I'll love you always and you know it's true,
But daddy must go fight to protect you.
When I leave, be strong for your mom
And don't think I'm not thinking about you in Vietnam.
Tomorrow you have school, don't be sad, have fun and play,
And be proud to say your dad is fighting for the U.S.A.

- Joshua Ibbott

“Daughter to Father (Soldier)”

Every night before I sleep,
Mommy reads this poem to me.
She says that you will be home soon,
But until then we'll stare at this moon.
Each day I grow and understand why you left,
But now I know it was for the best.

And every time I sit alone, I feel your love
When I read your poem.
How does it feel to be at war?
Those Vietnam guys probably have you sore.
All worn out from fighting all day, but when you're home it'll all be okay.
And never will I be angry with you, because our relationship will always be true.

At school when we have Father's Day,
I used to be sad but now I'm okay.
I'm eight years old now and I'm proud to
say, my dad is fighting for the U.S.A.

- Joshua Ibbott

"Love Me A Villain and Hate Me A Hero"

I know. you are going to
Hate me for leaving,
But I'll be back with the water to the earth.

Bringing oil and water together with their own blood,
It's what I'll do, trudging through the mine fields

In the wicked jungle,
Mercilessly pacifying with the tools of death,
It's why I'll be back a sociopath.

Those hippies, so high can't see past the clouds,
But I'll kill for peace so
It all contradicts.

Love me a villain and hate me a hero
Because I'll be back as notorious as ever.

I think i might die there* (*i will die),
I'll be a walking corpse in the victory,
But when I'm finished
I'll be back alive.

Joshua Munoz

“My Final Words To Say”

Dear mama,

I'm sorry mama,

I never meant to hurt you,

But this might be my last letter.

I'm going out into the field,

Pray for me so God's word can be my shield.

May I ask?

Am I human? 'Cause I feel like a monster;

Killing people, feeling guilty for killing others, family members

In this war, I have learned a lot.

People are dying

So many are trying,.....

*Trying to live, trying to go back home and give.
To give happiness to their family and friends,
I have seen a lot in this war.
Friends being gunned down,
Shooting,
Feeling the energy of the gun
As I fire.
Feeling the shock in my body,
Mommy it's hard being out here in the battlefield.
I'm trying not to cry,
It's scary. Sometimes I think one day,.....
Just one day, it might be my turn to fly.
It might be my one day to just die,
But before I go, I must tell you.
I have given my all and know that....
That I **LOVE** YOU and the family, just know before I go
That I'll be looking down from above,
Filled with **LOVE**,
I might just be one of those doves.*

LOVE YOU MOMMY.....

Sincerely your daughter

Monique Chambers

“In Heat Like A Cactus”

I'm in heat like a cactus,
Your taxes are aiding my tactics,
Viet Cong guerilla attacks were theatric.

It was something we never seen before,
Boom, boom Rat-tat-tat MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN get the detour.

Bodies buried under floor,
Limestone covered their corpse,
they screamed until they were hoarse

Women waiting on their porch,
awaiting the burning news,
their husbands have been torched.

Us survivors were saliva,
Getting spit like bullets,
Rolling out the drum of the magazine clip,
Some of us developed mental misfits.

Akil Coard

“Johnson and Nixon”

Does one know the hardships of a soldier?

Bloody battles, tough choices, and the death of your conscience;

They drafted me and told me to come and fight for my country.

Now, my own country is against me!

This was never my choice I was just given a bad hand.

Now I sit confused,

Not knowing what to do,

But just play,

Play the cards I was dealt.

Even though the people at home may hate me,

I still have to fight for my country.

One should understand that there are many hardships being a man,

To the citizens of the U.S, I am not a bad man,

I was just dealt a bad hand.

The one to blame is the man in charge.

The man who started it all,

The man who involved us in this controversy,

The man who made my own friends hate me.

Don't act as if y'all don't know.
The man who the country so beloves and looks up to,
Yes, it is the prez, President Nixon to be exact.
At home, they criticize us for what we do,
But how do I know who is who.
This war has surely taken a toll on me,
I try to cope and hold on to hope.
But every day is just another day,
Filled with war cries,
And animosity,
Longing for home,
Longing for New York City;
I can feel my mind slowly slipping away,
Every hour, each day,
I wake early and inhale,
Lighting a joint and tracking its passage from man to man,
Inhaling, holding in the humiliation,
But as we army men know,
War is just a process of elimination.

Ramon Williams

"February 8, 1966"

We all fought hard, our power was strong.
We had no remorse, because nothing felt wrong.
Bombing and shooting to fight for our country,
Seeing their faces, they were petrified of me.
Ducking and diving because we were under attack,

But we weren't afraid because we got them back!
We all fought hard, our power was strong.
We had no remorse because nothing felt wrong.
It felt like all blood and sweat when we dropped out the sky
And then after that we heard nothing but cries.

Rashard Peartree

“Memories”

**I remember sitting in my chair,
So calm and quietly.
But once I saw my draft papers,
Everything changed so drastically.**

**We have to obey like dogs,
Just kill with no mercy,
In Vietnam everything changes,
Thoughts, visions, it even changed me.**

**I have to be a machine gunner,
Kill anyone in my way.
In here no one is innocent,
My soul slowly turns gray.**

**We are forced to live this nightmare,
Lose soldiers and lose friends.
Some get wounded, some get shot,
That's when their suffering ends.**

**The sound of shots and the odors
Won't stop haunting me,
The scene of wounds and death
Won't let my mind go free.**

**Eventually it came to an end
And I'm blessed to be alive,
But all those dead soldiers,
I wish they had survived.**

**So now I sit in this chair
With those memories in my mind,
They said we fought for peace
But in my heart the pain is all you'll find.**

Steffany Munguia

**"The Bank Stained Red"
The bank stained red,
Shallow as my consciousness,
In my bed as you bled,
Is this dystopia Godless?**

**The bank stained red,
Consumed within the darkness,
You left me grains of bread,
You left me regardless.**

The bank stained red,

The filthy creatures slaughtered you,
Leaving you another carcass,
I will come back! You said.

The bank stained... BLACK!
Saturated with the blood shed,
No matter... soon... I will depart,
Depart from this dystopia that is Godless.

Tahreem Khandakar

"Unstable"

I am an unstable soldier,
My name is Azar,
I can be more brutal than a loud roar.
Once I blew up a dog,
Mocking people is my job.
I aided Tim O'Brien in getting revenge,
Bobby Jorgenson was his carnage.
I just sat back and engaged in my needles,
Missing our loved ones during the Vietnam War,
Although this war was a mistake,
We got our memorial on a wall that was fake.
A tough world we live in,
 Things that are happening in our world,
Dead bodies and violence,
People being killed in silence,

These events happen in life.

Looking at everyone

So sad to see what's happening.

I know I am tough, but the revealing

Of my feelings show, when I break down.

Sinthia Calderon

“For My Country To See”

My heart is covered in a dark dome

Because I fight to get back home,

I miss my friends and then I don't,

I think I'll die, but then I won't.

The winds they howl,

The bombs will roar,

Then friends will fly,

And stay on the floor.

From World War I it came to be,

It could happen to you, it could happen to me.

The sickness of the foot I feared to see,

Trench foot came and it came after me.

You have no power but an m16,

Stay in formation and keep it clean.

The jungle birds above, the sound they displease,

Our eye in the sky against the Vietnamese,

The medics on hand,

Our friends in the field,

Though we are mighty,

Our foes will not yield.
With my gun in hand, I looked in his eye
As I shot someone down, he didn't want to die.
I stepped on a mine, it was really well hid
It didn't go off, but I wish that it did.
I hope this gets home,
Before my mind's blocked
Because I know and I fear
I'll be killed by shell shock.
With these honored words
That I know to be true,
You can die for your country,
But it can't die for you.
Before I go out, before it gets me,
I wrote all of this for my country to see.

Luis Ramirez

"March 16, 1968"

**We killed people we didn't even hate.
The blood on the ground was harsh to see,
And to think the person, who did it, was me.
So many families waiting for their dad,
I couldn't imagine how sad
Their families would be.
Being in Vietnam, being in this war
Has given me a feeling that I can't ignore,
The things that go through your head,**

Like sometimes you just wish you were dead.

You think what if this was your last day,

But you didn't get the chance to say..

I love you dad and I love you mom

And before you know it, you're gone.

Lorena Arias

"Vietnam Soldier"

Now this Vietnam soldier was only 19 years old,

Fighting for his life, in the world so cold,

Trying to put together pieces while everything unfolds,

Sleeping in tents with nobody to vent,

Starting to deal with bulls**t around him,

Noticing everything was real when people attacked him,

Praying to God to make everything right,

This was a dream a whole big fight.

Had one best friend named John,

These two buddies had a whole big bond.

Did things from left to right,

Never left each other's sight,

Then came this one day where they had to go into war.

His partner in crime went his separate way even more,

After a few days, he lost his mind not knowing what to do,

Took a bullet to the head and he was gone.

Not only was John his best friend

But he was also a brother to him,

Lost his homie, his best friend,

Now this Vietnam soldier was a brave one,
Fought his way, kept his head up, and still today he's strong.

Judith Ventura

"Wounded"

During my experience I've been wounded,
Physically and mentally; the brutality of being
In the war is a punishment, which was not expected.
I've been wounded but yet no bullets touch my body.
The only person that knows what I am going through
Is the lord almighty. The sound of gun shots penetrates
My brain mentally; the bodies lying on the ground
Are unbelievable, it's just not a normal environment.
The pain of my partners dropping and grunting,
In pain being shot, puts me in more pain than
They are in. Sometimes, I wish I never made the
Decision to be in a war, but it's something that's in me,
To protect and help my country.

Ricardo Ravius