



Ten Things You Should Know about the Vietnam War

1. Between 1945 and 1954 the Vietnamese were combating French control of the country. In 1954 the French suffered a major defeat at Dien Bien Phu which ultimately ended their regime in Vietnam.
2. The peace conference that followed in Geneva resulted in the country being split at the 17th parallel between the communists controlled North under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, and the democratic South led by Boa Dai.
3. The election to unite the country was supposed to be held in 1956, however this never occurred. Boa Dai also lost the support of the US as an effective leader; Ngo Dinh Diem claims himself president in 1955- he also has American support because of his Western democratic ideals and his Christian background; he was later assassinated in 1963.
4. The U.S then began sending military advisors (MACV) into Vietnam by 1963 the number reached 16,300. After 1965 American involvement in the war escalated resulting in large number of combat troops being sent overseas. By 1968 over 536,000 US participants were in Vietnam.
5. A major turning point in the support of war came in 1968 with the Tet Offensive and the My Lai massacre as many Americans began opposing the war cause.
6. In response, President Nixon began a vietnamization program of the war in which more of the fighting would be in the hands of the South Vietnamese troops while American troops would be withdrawn.
7. On the home front, anti-war demonstrations were taking place on college campuses across the nation. The most notable occurred at Kent State in 1970 where guardsmen fired into a crowd of demonstrators killing four students as they protested Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia.
8. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, several social movements were underway as Latinos, African Americans, and women combated their second-class citizenship status within US society. Chicanos in particular were struggling against de facto segregation and discriminatory treatment as well as the large numbers of Latinos being sent into Vietnam into combat.
9. U.S Presidents during war: Eisenhower – 1953-1961; Kennedy – 1961-1963; Johnson – 1963-1969; Nixon – 1969-1974
10. Statistics: <http://www.mrfa.org/vnstats.htm>;
http://www.veteranshour.com/vietnam_war_statistics.htm
 - a. 88.4% of the men who served in Vietnam were Caucasian, 10.6% (275,000) were black, 1.0% belonged to other races
 - b. 86.3% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasian (including Hispanics), 12.5% (7,241) were black.1.2% belonged to other races
 - c. 170,000 Hispanics served in Vietnam; 3,070 (5.2%) of whom died there.
 - d. 76% of the men sent to Vietnam were from lower middle/working class backgrounds,
 - e. 9,087,000 Military personnel served on active duty during the Vietnam Era. Aug. 5, 1964 - May 7, 1975
 - f. 58,202 deaths
 - g. 7,484 Women (6,250 or 83.5% were nurses) served in Vietnam



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Please start with this preamble:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. Today is month/day/year. I am in city, state, and location interviewing _____ for the Voces Oral History Project. Thank you, Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ for agreeing to interviewed by our project.

Please know that if there are topics you don't wish to discuss, you will not have to discuss them. Also, if there is something you wish to discuss, we want to hear you. If at any point you wish to stop the camera to get a drink or use the facilities, please let us know.

As we said earlier, your interview will be housed at the Nettie Lee Benson Library at the University of Texas at Austin campus. So, let's begin.

Prewar

Family Life

1. Tell me about your childhood — what was your daily life like?
2. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
3. Were you the oldest?
4. Did you have to help take care of your siblings?
5. What kinds of things would you do together?
6. What are your memories of your childhood?
7. Where were your favorite places to be?
8. What did your parents do? Where were they born?
9. What memories do you have of your parents?
10. What traditions did your mother and father maintain from their up-bringing?
11. Were those traditions from their country?
12. Did your family have to struggle economically?
13. How did it affect your family?
14. Did any of your family members participate in World War II or the Korean War?
15. How old were you when your parents died?
16. Do you think your attitudes about the country were different from your parents?
17. Do you think the expectations and opportunities were different for you than your parents?
18. What languages did/do you speak? Did you read Spanish publications or listen to Spanish music?
19. Did you speak different languages in different settings, such as home, school, or work?

School Years

20. Tell me about your school years?
21. How many years were you in school?
22. Where did you go to school?
23. What were your first years in school like?
24. What was your school like?
25. What kinds of activities or clubs did you participate in?
26. Do you have any special memories about being in school?

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27. What did you think about your teachers? Were you treated differently or just like everyone else?
28. Were your schools predominately Latino?
29. What was high school like?
30. What kinds of activities or clubs did you participate in?
31. What do you remember most about your high school days?
32. What kinds of things did you do with your friends after school?
33. Did you work while you were in school?
34. Was your school segregated in any way?
35. Do you remember being treated any differently from other students?
36. Do you remember others being treated differently?
37. Was the education you received about the same as your brothers and sisters?

Life after School

38. What do you remember about what was going on in the country and your community when you were growing up during the 1950s and 1960s?
39. Do you remember any particular historical events and experiences?
40. Did you attend college?
41. What did you study?
42. Did you encounter difficulties there?
43. What did you do during the 1950s and 60s, work, care for family...? Did you face any difficulties because you were a Latino?
44. What do you recall about the time when the Vietnam War started? How old were you? Did older siblings enlist? Were others later drafted?
45. Would you say you were like most other Latinas of your generation? In what ways were you similar or different?

War Experience

Social Movements on Home front

1. Were you a member of the Chicano movement before you were drafted or enlisted?
2. If so, which organization were you a part of? LULAC, AGIF?
3. Did you participate in demonstrations? Did you support the war effort?
4. Would you describe yourself as being “political” or “apolitical” or something else?
5. Did you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, something else, or none of the above?
6. What were your feelings about the Civil Rights Movement that was going on during the time for Latinos, African-Americans, and later women?
7. In what ways, if any, did the Vietnam War touch your life when the conflict was going on? Did you feel distanced from it or did you feel as if it had a strong presence in your life?
8. Did you discuss the war with friends and family?
9. What kinds of things do you remember talking about?
10. Did you want to go or did you not want to go to Vietnam?

Enlistment or Draft

11. How old were you when you enlisted and where were you?
12. What was your military branch?
13. Were you drafted or did you enlist voluntarily? What was the date of your enlistment or the date you were drafted? How long were you in the military?

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14. Did you go back for a second tour? If so what years and why did you choose to serve again?
15. If you entered military or government service voluntarily, why did you make this choice?
16. How did your family respond to your decision to enlist or to you being drafted?
17. Were many Latinos drafted or did many enlist in your community?
18. If several were drafted or enlisted, how did the community respond to the numbers?
19. Were you married when you went to Vietnam? If so how did your wife react to your decision?
20. If married, where did you wife stay? What did she do while you were away? Did she work or stay with your or her family?

Basic Training

21. Where did you go for training? Describe this experience.
22. How many other Latinos were with you at the training facility?
23. If there were others, did you all speak Spanish with each other? What other aspects of your culture did you retain while at the camp?
24. Did you befriend anyone while at the training camp?
25. Do you have a special memory while training?
26. Did your training prepare you for Vietnam?
27. Were you briefed about the people, culture, or terrain of Vietnam/Southeast Asia while in training? Was it what you expected when you arrived?

Overseas

28. Upon arriving in Vietnam/Southeast Asia, what did you think of the indigenous population? How much contact did you have with them?
29. What was the interaction between the U.S. troops and the native population? What about with the native women?
30. Did you learn to speak any Southeast Asian languages while serving in theater? If so, what language did you learn?
31. What was a typical day like for you in Vietnam?
32. Describe the base in which you lived. What were your living conditions like? Housing, food, etc. Was there anything you missed about home? What did you miss the most?
33. Describe the ethnicities of the people in the base. Describe your relationship with these people, men and women.
34. If there were other Latinos stationed with you, did you all speak Spanish with each other? What other aspects of your culture did you retain while overseas?
35. What did you do for recreation?
36. Describe the most memorable experience from base life in Vietnam/Southeast Asia.
37. Did you or someone you know face any type of discrimination while overseas? If so, can you describe the situations?
38. Did you feel any type of racial tension among enlisted men/women/officers? Can you provide examples?
39. Did you write letters to relatives and friends back in the US? If so, how often did you write?
40. Did you keep a diary or journal?
41. How did you feel about fighting against communism and the communists? Did you feel they were a big threat to the United States? What did the military say about them?
42. Did you have enemy contact at any point? Describe this experience.
43. Where were you when the Tet Offensive happened? How did you feel about this?

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44. The My Lai incident occurred also in 1968. Where were you when this happened and how did you feel about the situation.
45. What were your specific duties during in Vietnam?
46. Were the assignments distributed equitably between the Anglo, Latino, and African-American troops? Was one group assigned to more combat missions than the other or was it equal?
47. Were you ever wounded down during the war? Describe this experience and the medical treatment that followed your injury if needed. How long were you out? Were you sent home?
48. Did you have exposure to Agent Orange, or other chemicals in Vietnam?
49. Were you affected by them?
50. If so, how?
51. Were you ever captured at any point during the war or know of anyone who was? Describe this experience please.
52. How did you feel about the military leadership in Vietnam? Did you feel secure under their leadership?
53. What do you remember most about combat if you were involved?
54. If you were a leader or commander, please describe the most difficult challenges you faced while as a Latino leader?
55. Were there several other Latino or African American officers? If not, why do you think many were not officers?
56. How did you get along with the Vietnamese people? How did the other troops in your unit feel about or get along with the native population?
57. Why do you think the US was involved in Vietnam/Southeast Asia
58. What awards, citations, or commendations did you receive for your service in Vietnam/Southeast Asia?

Anti-War demonstrations during conflict

59. How did you feel about the anti-war demonstrations back in the states? Did any of your family members participate in the demonstrations?
60. How did you feel about Latinos participating in the anti-war demonstrations?
61. Have you ever been involved in an anti-war demonstration? When, where, and why?
62. **[If Mexican American]** Did you participate, or know about the Chicano movement during the war?
63. If yes, can you give use details?
64. How effective do you think the Chicano movement was?
65. What role do you believe the media had in fueling the anti-war demonstrations because of increased press coverage of the war?
66. Do you believe the media was an advantage or a hindrance to the war effort?

Postwar

67. How were you treated by the community and your family when you arrived in the states?
68. What do you think and feel about your service as a Latino in Vietnam?
69. What do you think and feel about US participation in the Vietnam War? In other countries?
70. Do you suffer any disabilities because of the Vietnam War?
71. Do you believe that the government took care of its troops in Vietnam? Its veterans today?
72. Was it difficult for you to adjust to life in the US when you came back? Please explain.
73. How did the war affect your life?

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74. Have you ever been diagnosed or treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? How are you coping? How did your family feel about your condition?
 75. Would you change anything about your Vietnam experience?
 76. Are any other members of your family in the military? How did you feel about this?
 77. What did you do after the war? Where did you work?
 78. Did you marry after the war? How many children did you have? Did you teach them Spanish?
 79. What does military participation mean to you as a Latino?
 80. Did you join any organizations after the war? LULAC, AGIF, American Legion, VFW?
 81. Do you think that Vietnam affected Latinos differently than other races or do you think everyone was affected the same? Can you give some examples?
 82. Do you think that war had an effect on the Latino community? In what ways? What difficulties remain?
 83. Do you feel that TV, movies and books give accurate representations of Latinos in Vietnam? Which ones?
 84. From your life experience, is there a story about the war that hasn't been told or that hasn't been told accurately? How do you think your experience differs from WWII and Korea?
 85. What advice do you give to future Latinos listening to this interview?
 86. Is there anything else you would like to add?
- 46.