

Born on the fourth of july

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Born on The 4th of July is a film based on the true story of Ron Kovic, a young, naive man who went to Vietnam in the noble efforts of serving his country - once there, he was shot in the chest and was forever paralyzed. He returned to a United States which didn't believe in the war, and didn't believe in him. He soon grows embittered with life, losing his chances to be a man, condemned to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. He eventually joins the anti-war movement, gets thrown out of the Republican Convention where Richard Nixon is speaking, and finally is allowed to speak at the Democratic National Convention in 1976.

The idyllic 1950's to the turbulent 1960's represented a dynamic shift in American culture. The end of World War II prompted a booming economy and the American dream of your own house with the white picket fence was born. Although the 50's were picturesque in some respects the end of WWII entrenched a deep fear of Communism. As America entered Vietnam the conservative ideals of the WWII generation clashed with the rising student and youth awareness. This movie represents a modern view of the Vietnam War era and the transformation that occurred throughout the country with varying degrees of historical accuracy.

The opening scene of the movie pictures the mood of the country in the mid to late fifties. It romanticizes war with the parade scene and the kids playing army. This plays on the theme that some war is good, or at least justifiable. Kovic, the main character of the film, is a patriotic person wanting to serve his country and believing that Vietnam would be his chance. . The U. S. became polarized over the war. Many supporters of U. S. involvement argued for what was known as the domino theory, a theory that believed if one

country fell to communism, then the bordering countries would be sure to fall as well, much like falling dominoes.

This theory was largely held due to the fall of eastern Europe to communism and the Soviet sphere of influence following World War II. In the movie as Kovic and his friends discuss entertaining the Marines the ideas of containment and the domino theory are discussed. Kovic enlists and joins the Marines, where he fights on the front line of the Vietnam war. He is later shot and thus paralyzed from half of his body. Kovic spends months in a Veteran hospital in Brooklyn, NY. The conditions of this hospital are deplorable.

Patients are left to lie in their own fecal matter while they are ignored and mistreated by the Doctors and Nurses. It is then that Kovic begins to see how Americans felt about the war he so proudly went into. By 1970 nearly 50,000 had already been killed and up to 200,000 wounded. Even though this number paled in comparison to the 100,000 South Vietnamese and more than 500,000 North Vietnamese who had died, many Americans thought the number far too high for the mere defense of a strip of jungle on the other side of the world.

Morale had fallen to an all-time low both for the families at home and for the men in the field. Veterans' protest groups such as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War became increasingly vocal, attacking U. S. policy after they came home. Kovic eventually joined this group emerging as a strong voice against the war. The neglect and resentment of veterans was an unfortunate social effect of the war. While after other wars, the soldiers were welcomed

back with parades and open arms, the Vietnam veterans were shunned, demeaned and booed.

This was accurately depicted in this movie when Kovic returns and is mistreated at the hospital, and during a Fourth of July Parade he is booed at. Since it was such an unpopular war, Americans held veterans responsible for the war, although many of them did not approve of the war either. The veterans' situation was a tough one, especially with little or no support.

About 150, 000 veterans came home wounded, or amputated, and at least 21, 000 were permanently disabled, unable to work for the rest of their lives.

Many developed illnesses after the war such as cancers liver disease and rashes, mostly due to exposure to Agent Orange. Having seen the horrors of Vietnam, many veterans were psychologically scarred. Nightmares, anxietycausing flashbacks, and fits of terror from loud noises were common behaviors reported amongst veterans. Approximately 830, 000 survivors of Vietnam suffered mental and emotional disorders and showed symptoms of Post TraumaticStressDisorder (PTSD) However many were unable to get the help they needed and deserved, because they were perceived as crazy and dangerous, and even deserving of their circumstance.

Economic medical and educational aid was not made available to them right away, and many veterans felt abandoned by the country they served. In trying to deal with this situation, some veterans developed drug or alcohol habits and many felt driven to suicide. As the proud daughter of one of these Vietnam Veterans, I can tell you that this movie was difficult to watch at times. Growing up, most of my memories with my father are going to see him

in the Veterans hospital. Therefore, I had the privilege of growing up around many Vietnam war Veterans.

I saw firsthand the self medicating of drugs and alcohol. Many times when my sisters and I would visit my father, we never really knew who we were going to get, the fun loving father, or the drugged up father. As I got older my father slowly began to talk about his experiences in Vietnam. My father's accounts of what happened during the war and after the war, are chilling. This movie accurately depicted many of them, as the stories my father has are not so different from many American Heroes that Served in the Vietnam War.

References

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