

What were the important reasons for the peace movement

Countries, United States



There was a lot of hippies and flower power in the sixties and people were all for peace and harmony towards others. This was not the Vietnam war. First off, there were a lot of soldiers; injured or disabled when they came back from the war. They were extremely confused during their time in Vietnam. Because they thought all the Vietnamese looked the same, they did not know the difference between the VC and normal civilians. There was a large feeling of paranoia. The average soldier age was 19 and the average time spent at war was 1 year. Most middle or upper avoided the draft by going to college or getting married.

Most soldiers were poor white or black southerners. Some soldiers who went mad or against the war threw grenades at their superiors. Soldiers sent letters home to their families telling of terrible stories. The media documented a large amount of these soldiers' experiences. Vietnam was, of course, the first 'televised' war. Another detrimental effect was that veterans of the war were very against it. They then went into colleges and universities and gave lectures to students. The young people of America were obviously the future, so they had to be taught about this war.

At that time students were extremely easy to influence so this was helping to turn the screw against the war and started more anti-war movements. The media also showed a lot of what chemical warfare could do. Televised campaigns showed that the chemical Agent Orange (the name derived from the orange sticker which was placed in the petrol cans that contained it) had an extremely bad effect on the natural jungle terrain, which the VC used to

implement their guerrilla warfare. Agent Orange defoliated, or destroyed the jungle, leaving only dirty, scrubby, desolate land; leaving the VC exposed.

In fact, the Agent Orange and other chemicals had a reverse effect, tactically. Firstly, the VC had an ingenious under ground tunnel system. Also, many civilians and even US troops had drunk contaminated water, which later led to cancer and severe hereditary problems and deformities. As said, the media got all of this, but the effects of Napalm were probably the most damaging. Napalm was jellied petrol, which was dropped on suspected VC villages. This chemical burned through the skin to the bone. It was all televised so the American people could see its countries power.

All it did was show its country's ignorance, with pictures of young children, running with their skin burning off, it was all extremely graphic. This caused further unrest among peace movements and most Americans. Blanket bombing was also covered by television and showed massive areas and towns blown up. Blanket bombing, or Mass bombing is bombing in large areas, sometimes at random. The opposite of this is Surgical, or Precision bombing, which targets specific areas and requires much planning. This was also supposed to show the US's massive power, but again; because of the Media, it backfired, sparking more movements due to its ruthlessness.

One of the main, if not the main reason was the Mai Lai Massacre in 1968. My Lai was once a village in Vietnam. On March 16 1968, nine helicopter gunships landed near the village. Three US platoons set off into the village, followed shortly by TV cameras. The soldiers were ordered to kill anyone

suspected of being or supporting the VC. What followed was no short of a massacre. Some 500 Men, Women and young children and babies were slaughtered. The troops were supposed to be drunk or high on drugs when they carried out the atrocity, their 'plan' was to kill everything that moved.

As I said, the media came in afterwards and had pictures and film of it. They were beamed to the world. This caused an enormous amount of unrest among the peace movement and an inquiry was held. There were mass protests and it seemed almost everyone was against the war. There were a lot of demonstrations and protests against the war back in America.

Students, radicals and the usual anarchists started most of which. At Kent State University, 1970, National Guardsmen shot four protesting students aged only 19 and 20. This caused even more uproar amongst the students.

All of these protests were again, largely documented by the Media. It was in the American peoples face all the time through the television, it could not be ignored. The Media were probably the largest benefactor to the ending the Vietnam War. The US Government wanted to show America's power, so they didn't reject to the Media covering the war. This badly backfired. Without the Media, the US probably could have fought the war in peace; this doesn't mean they would have won the war though. In the US Government had to pull out because of upcoming elections, the people wanted the US to pull out of the war.

This obviously meant that the candidates had promise to pull out. And they did, gradually with the method of Vietnamisation. This gave the AVRN (South

Vietnamese forces) more power and pulled the US troops out. One thing about the 1960's was its free-loving spirit that showed a time of prosperity and new rights. Black rights and Women's rights were going on at the time. The sixties were a time of laying back and chilling out. A time of free love. The Vietnam War was not. It was going against the times and it could not carry on whilst the free loving spirit of young Americans was the way it was.