

# A vietnam veteran opposes the war 1971

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Brianna Obermiller English 1000 " A Vietnam Veteran Opposes the War,

1971" In 1971, veteran John Kerry stands for himself and many other veterans in a speech opposing the Vietnam War. Relaying how the veterans feel after coming back from such a horrific war, the audience is sympathetic with those who return with such terrible memories that they must bare for the rest of their lives.

For John Kerry, it may be hard for him to describe such atrocities to his audience, and it may be even harder for the audience to believe that what he is saying is truthful, because what was going on in Vietnam at the time was much different than what the citizens of the USA believed it to be. For them, knowing the truths of the Vietnam War may simply put them in denial, however I believe Kerry's descriptions were effective in convincing the audience of the truths of the war, because he conveys his truths by appealing to the audience's pathos.

The speech begins with John Kerry speaking on behalf of a large group of veterans. Describing the " war crimes" that they committed in Southeast Asia, a disgusting picture is painted of " cut off limbs, blown up bodies, [and] randomly shot at civilians" (23). To the American Citizen, it would be hard to imagine that this was what the young soldiers were doing in Southeast Asia at the time; Even harder to believe.

However, when he speaks of how the young men feel upon their return, the truth of what he is saying becomes apparent. " The country doesn't know it yet but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence and who are given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with

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a sense of anger and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped” (24).

For the mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers whom have sent one of their own to live in such conditions, this would be such a shock that denial may be imminent. And for the listeners of this speech who have little or no personal connection, the sympathy as well as the horror would be overwhelming. How then does Kerry convince his audience that what he is saying is indeed the truth? First he chooses to speak for himself and the other men in Asia.

In response to West Point Vice President Agnew’s statement that “ Some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of those misfits abuse,” (24). Kerry states that “ for us, as boys in Asia whom the country was supposed to support, his statement is a terrible distortion from which we can only draw a very deep sense of revulsion” (24). Why is it a terrible distortion? This would be a very common view for most Americans at the time.

Kerry states that it is a distortion “ because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country; because those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to... because so many of those best men have returned as quadriplegics and amputees- and they lie forgotten in... Hospitals... We cannot consider ourselves America’s best men when we are ashamed of and hated for what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia” (24). The graphic descriptions that Kerry provides may convince the audience that what he is saying is indeed truthful, because it appeals to their pathos, as well as shocks them.

His descriptions alone are, what I believe, his main advantage in convincing the readers of his point. In conclusion, the speech that John Kerry gave in 1971 would have been such a shock to his audience, that the truthfulness of his words may have been questioned. However, I believe that through appealing to the audience's pathos, Kerry was very effective in swaying the audience to believe that what he was saying was indeed the truth, as well as effective in getting his point and his hope for the outcome of the war across to Wartime America. We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service as easily as the administration has wiped away their memories of us... [in] 30 years from now our brothers [will] go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys [will] ask why, and we will be able to say " Vietnam" and not mean a... filthy obscene memory, but mean instead a place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning" (26). Citations: Kerry, John F. A Vietnam Veteran Opposes the War, 1971. Apr. 1971. U. S Government