

Alicia Fu  
Rights Breached, Responsibilities Neglected: How the My Lai Massacre Unraveled the Ethical  
Issues of the Vietnam War  
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Back during the 2023-2024 National History Day contest, during my research on President Richard Nixon's visit to China, I stumbled upon many appalling news articles on his involvement in the bombings of Laos and Cambodia. This news was shocking as I had never learned about the horrific war crimes surrounding the Vietnam War. Through my rabbit-hole research, I had learned that the war was full of similar war crimes, all committed by American soldiers. This led me to choose my topic this year, the My Lai massacre, because the issues of rights and responsibilities intertwine and weave into all aspects of the war itself, right back to America's initial involvement.

During my research, I focussed on identifying the two most important aspects of my project: the rights and responsibilities. Through research I established those distinct categories, and used international humanitarian laws to back them up. I was able to find many primary-source stories from Charlie Company soldiers and My Lai survivors through documentaries and newspapers. I then established my personal opinion through many JSTOR articles and books such as Nick Turse's "Kill Everything That Moves". This variety of perspectives allowed me to better research and establish my personal point of view on such a nuanced topic that was initially very difficult to navigate. I initially struggled the most with deciding how I wanted to approach a topic as sensitive as war. I knew it would be very inappropriate to address it by placing the blame solely on the soldiers. Because of this, I aimed to present my research in a way that was respectful, while also continuing to hold perpetrators accountable as to not disrespect other victims.

I chose to present my project as a website due to the fact that I had done my previous two projects with NHD Webcentral, and have come to love the process. I find that the website format allows for a very comprehensive and thorough deepdive into whatever topic you choose, which can be expressed through all the different sources. Everything works together beautifully to create a harmonious project style that I have come to adore. I chose a green, gray, and brown scheme for my website due to its relations with the Vietnam War, and chose to organize my

website in a geometrical design for easy access. I also decided to color-code quotes to highlight the varying perspectives in my website.

The My Lai Massacre was one of the most publicized and infamous war crimes committed by American soldiers against Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnam War. Its nuanced arguments involving the responsibilities of soldiers and rights of civilians sparked broader conversations regarding the conduct of the Vietnam War as a whole, and exposed the poor leadership that surrounded America's participation. May we use the My Lai massacre not only as a reminder of the importance of national humanitarian laws, but also as a remembrance for the hundreds of innocent lives lost that day. Let us bear witness, and not forget their powerful story.