

# Vietnam War

Leonard Mason

Here is a story of the experience of  
many black soldiers who fought in  
Vietnam

Vietnam was America's first  
racially integrated conflict.  
In the Vietnam War whites  
and blacks fought together  
for the first time.

Before this,  
they fought in segregated units



African  
American  
soldiers  
fought hard in  
Vietnam  
Many proving  
themselves  
outstanding  
soldiers

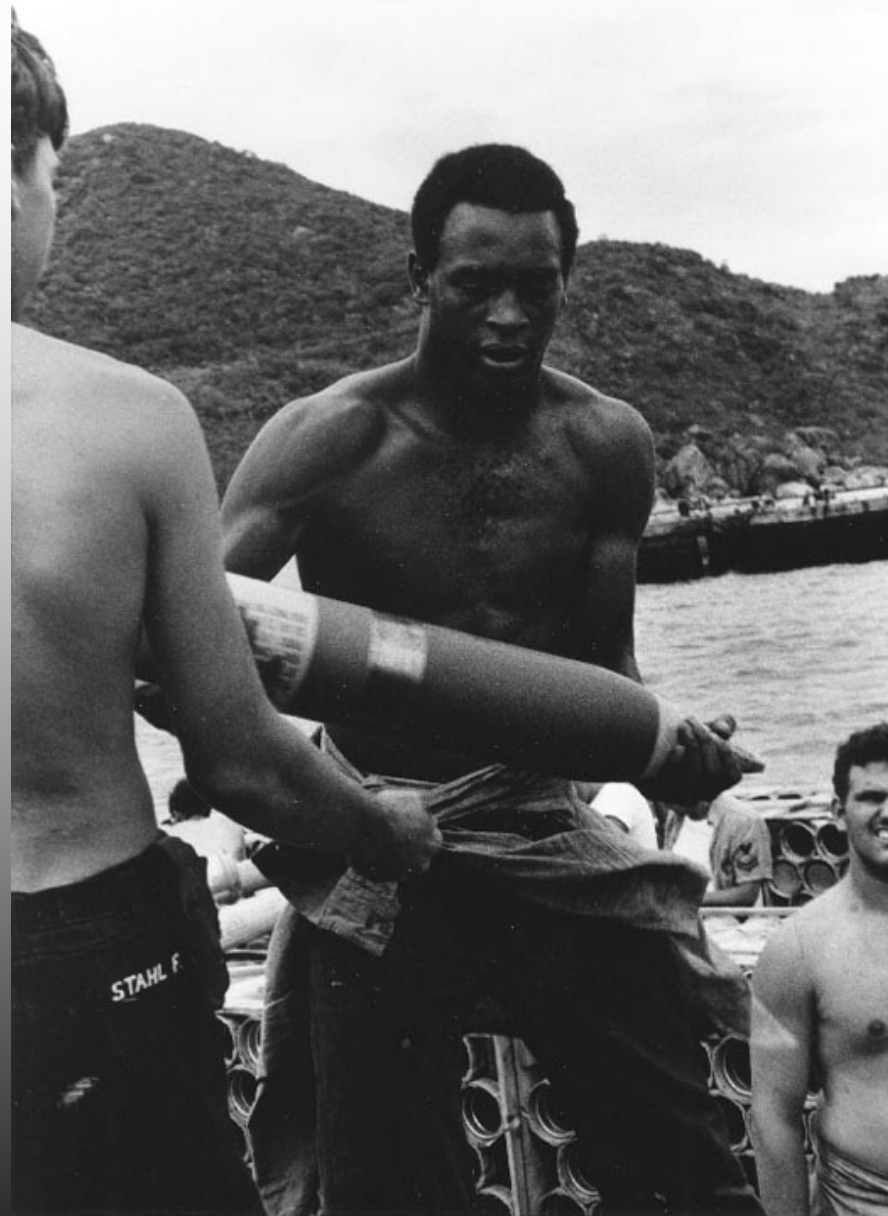


Photo # USN 1140635 Loading 5" rockets, Vietnam, 1969

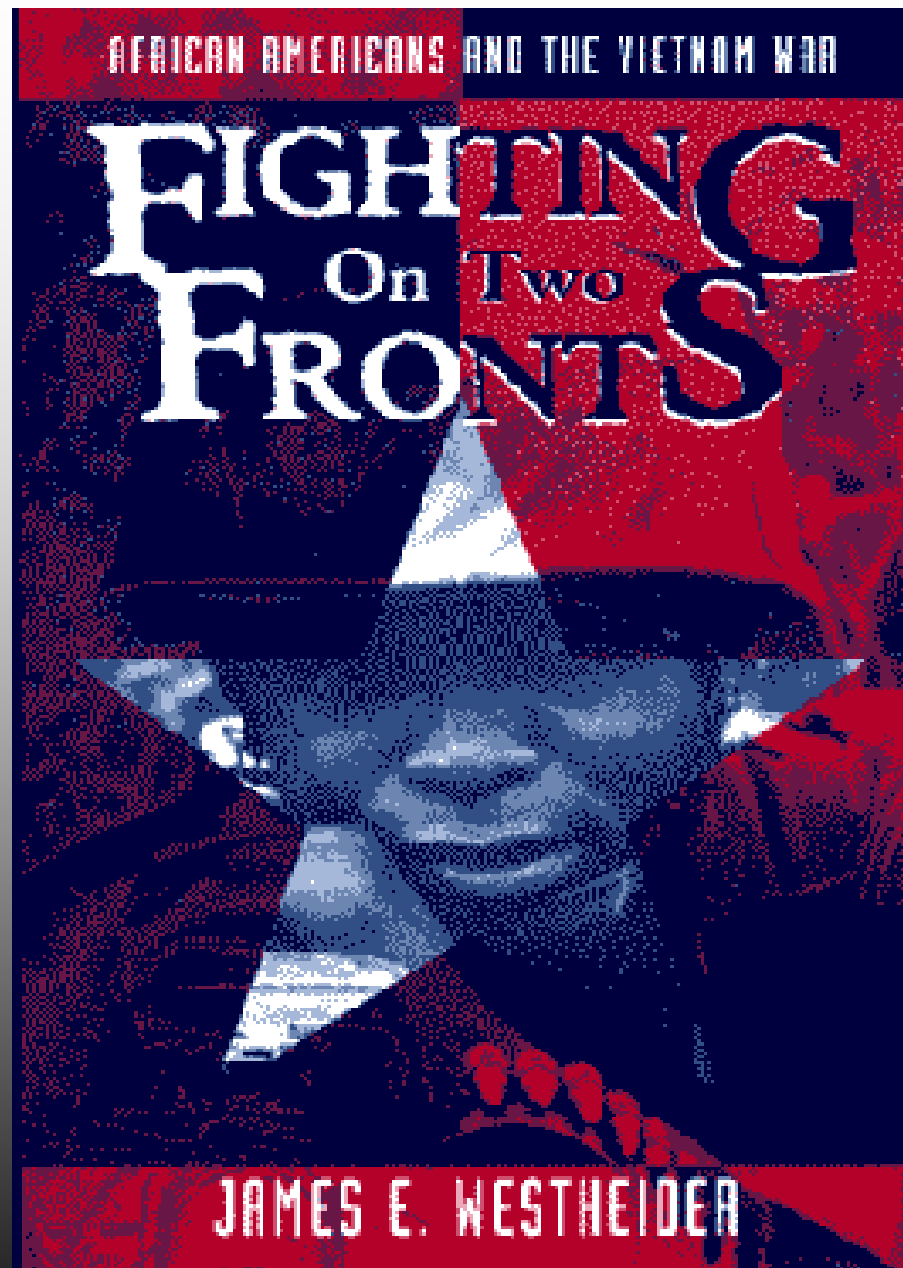




But the ongoing **conflicts**  
between black and white  
**Americans**  
at home were reflected in  
**Vietnam**

In these years, there was a  
surge of **inter-racial violence**  
within the US forces in Vietnam

African Americans  
fought in Vietnam  
just like whites  
but they had to  
deal with  
racism  
at home  
and  
in the military



Tensions escalated after Lyndon B. Johnson lowered the draft requirements through “Project 100,000”

41 % of the new draftees were Black  
(but Black Americans were only 11% of population)

In 1969, 56% of black Americans opposed the Vietnam war.

Black Americans "are asked to die for the system in Vietnam, in Watts they are killed by it".

- Black Panther, Eldridge Cleaver



In 1968, Martin Luther King charged the US government with being "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today", and urged those against the draft to seek the status of conscientious objectors.

'You'll either join the Marines or go to jail!

Many Black Americans tried to avoid the draft  
they were *veterans* of the civil rights movement  
and didn't believe in the war

As objectors they were arrested and given the  
choice of enlisting or going to jail





In Vietnam-  
many white  
soldiers cheered

the death of  
Martin Luther  
King Jr.

In Cam Ranh Bay,  
a group of  
white men  
wore  
Ku Klux Klan  
robes and paraded  
around the base



Why  
should I fight  
for  
prejudice?



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BLACK POWER - VIETNAM

Black soldiers had to put up with racist remarks like this one

“I'd rather kill a ni\*\*er than a g\*\*k”

Confederate flags were allowed to be painted on Jeeps, tanks and helicopters



Some commanders  
tolerated Ku Klux Klan  
"klaverns" on their bases.



# Military justice ?

Black service men were sentenced to longer terms than white service men

Black Muslims were denied copy of the Koran

One black soldier was ordered to  
remove a "Black is beautiful" poster  
from the inside of his locker.

Many black soldiers embraced the emerging Black Power politics movement and its external symbols.



The black Americans who were drafted from 1967 to 1970 called themselves Bloods, and many were influenced by the teachings and politics of Stokely Carmichael, the Black Panthers and Malcolm X.

These black soldiers were  
"the ones who ain't going to take no more...".





"THE SACRED DOG POLICEMEN MUST WITHDRAW IMMEDIATELY FROM OUR COMMUNITIES. CEASE THEIR WANTON MURDER AND BRUTALITY AND TORTURE OF BLACK PEOPLE. OR FACE THE WRATH OF THE ARMED PEOPLE."

HUEY P. NEWTON, Minister of Defense

**BLACK PANTHER PARTY**  
P.O. Box 1041, Emeryville, Calif.



Black and white marines faced each other in violent confrontations, some involved weapons

- Riot in Military Prison – the Long Binh Stockade
- China Beach – flinging rocks at black soldiers

"You should see for yourself how the black man is being treated over here and the way we are dying. When it comes to rank, we are left out. When it comes to special privileges, we are left out. When it comes to patrols, operations and so forth, we are first."

-a quote from a black private



Photo # K-31453 Machine gun watch, 1966

At times, white privates informed their superior black officers, including Allen Thomas, that they "weren't going to take orders from a ni\*\*\*\*."

Even the Vietcong perceived the tensions and tried to capitalize on them with an aggressive propaganda campaign

They dropped fliers to  
lower the morale of Black soldiers

“Go home, Soul Man”

Dropped Pictures of  
police beatings back at home



Eventually, but not everywhere, tensions over race settled

Soldiers began to realize color did not matter when “you start to depend on that person to cover your a\*\*”





Marching in the 1960s, GI's of South Vietnamese guerrillas, they're fighting some of the old battles. GI's Vietnam, like their white counterparts, to search for information and to fight them in the. They are among some 20,000 Negroes in military and civilian service contributing to their. Negroes 20 who have been recruited to support jobs.

## NEGROES IN VIETNAM: 'WE, TOO, ARE AMERICANS'

Fully integrated GIs resist Viet Cong claims of brotherhood

BY SIMON BOOKER

21(1) News 1967  
p. 71-72



GI's Vietnam, Negroes 20 who have been recruited to support jobs. They are among some 20,000 Negroes in military and civilian service contributing to their. Negroes 20 who have been recruited to support jobs.

GI's Vietnam, a Negro GI now walks through a mountain range with equal intensity, or he can go to the village where Viet Cong guerrillas operate here. "There'll be no battle or profit for anyone you see here," he says. "You can't go to the village where Viet Cong guerrillas operate here. There'll be no battle or profit for anyone you see here." "You can't go to the village where Viet Cong guerrillas operate here. There'll be no battle or profit for anyone you see here."

But GI's don't fall for the propaganda. The reason is that the U. S. is the dominant power in the world, and the Negroes are the dominant power in the world. The reason is that the U. S. is the dominant power in the world, and the Negroes are the dominant power in the world.

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As the Civil Rights movement gained momentum in the States

Camaraderie and respect replaced prejudice and mistrust in the military



