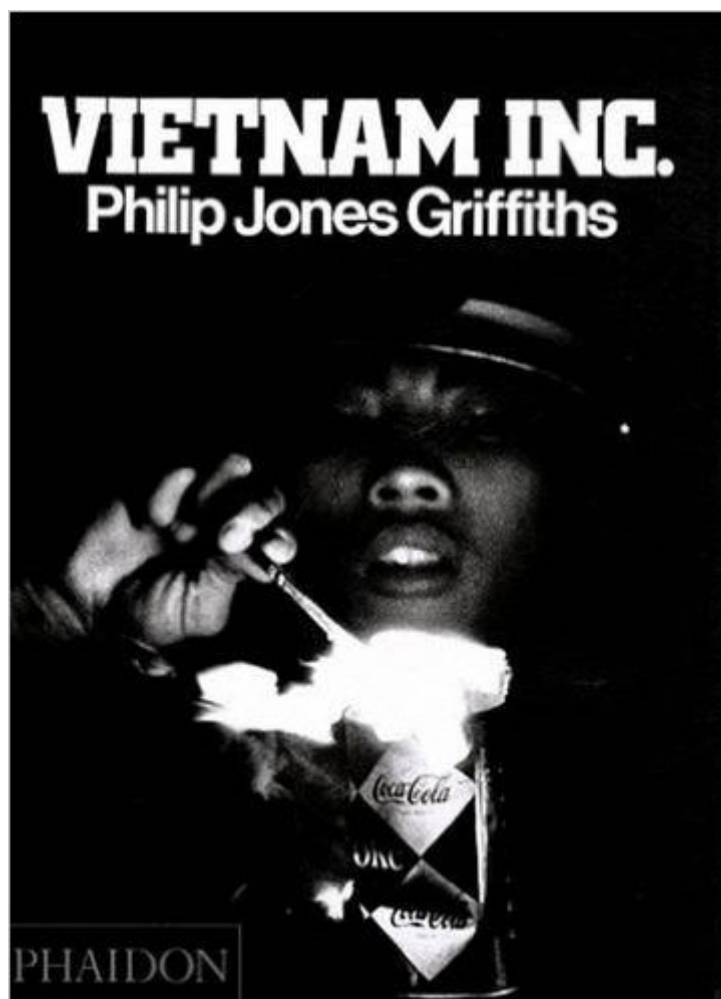


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Synopsis

A re-creation of Philip Jones Griffiths' classic book on the Vietnam War - one of the most important and acclaimed works of photojournalism - with a foreword to the new edition by Noam Chomsky.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a superb collection of photos that depicts the ironies and inanities that resonated throughout the US misguided war in Vietnam. There are haunting images of casual and mindless brutality, there are wonderful juxtapositions and there are the unforgettable faces of those caught up in the war as they try to lead their lives amidst wanton destruction. This is a book about betrayal...the betrayal of American ideals by US leaders, betrayal of soldiers by arrogant leaders, betrayal of allies for geopolitical machinations and betrayal of a people who suffered more than can be imagined. These timeless photos help us remember a dark chapter in US history and the reissue of this collection in a beautifully produced volume is welcome. Having taught about the Vietnam war to students who were born well after the debacle, this is an extremely valuable resource to bring to life the lessons learned from books and lectures. These mesmerizing images are informed by Griffiths' conviction that, "the overwhelming impression of Americans in Vietnam is one of stupidity rather than evil." Certainly some veterans may dislike the photos and text, but few books convey the banality of war so effectively. Griffiths elegantly combines his photos, text and perceptive insights on Vietnamese society and in so doing sets a standard for war reportage that others still only aspire to. This book is a must for anyone interested in the Vietnam conflict and the consequences of war.

I spent three years in Vietnam as a GI from 1967-70. I saw plenty of combat and was on many operations throughout that time from places like Danang to Saigon to Pleiku. I was also assigned for a time to the rear as an intelligence specialist. Reading this book and looking at the shockingly beautiful photographs bring home the realities of that war again. This is a great reference for those who are interested in the Vietnam war and the realities of often mis-directed American foreign policy. We entered that far away war sending ignorant young soldiers to a country with an alien culture and ended up fearing everything we did not understand, often destroying it. We did strike out with deadly force against the perceived enemy often killing innocent Vietnamese just trying to get by in an untenable situation. We counted the innocent among the enemy dead. This book has unique insights backed up with stupendous black and white photographs.

From the summer of 1966 through the fall of 1968, I was fighting in some of the same areas of Vietnam that Phillip Jones Griffiths so dramatically photographed. The pictures in his book are a jolting reminder of that experience. No other book, by a single photographer, comes as close to capturing what Vietnam was like as this does. He has produced a powerful, informative and compassionate work of photojournalism, that is as immediate today as when it was originally published.

I know not how Griffiths feels about communism, but he obviously sympathizes with the South Vietnamese civilians, and he considers the American war effort to be stupidly conceived and executed. The American officers and NCOs were organized, equipped, and trained to fight giant battles with the Soviet military. They did not think in terms of "hearts and minds". A South Vietnamese officer serving as guide/interpreter to an American unit put it succinctly: to defeat the communists, they need trained anti-guerrilla fighters and political cadres (not in the military). That, plus patience, for it would take -- what? -- 100 years to change the South Vietnamese historical memory of what to believe and how things are done. Griffiths' book is mostly of quality photographs showing what happened to civilians, but he delivers some insight into the Vietnamese Buddhist/Confucian mindset. For American success in true anti-guerrilla warfare in Vietnam, I suggest "The Village" by Bing West. But the Marines' success in that village was only a drop in the lake of the American war effort.

I read this photo journal with a great deal of chagrin. At the time, I fully supported the Vietnam War.

It is a hard lesson to learn that our government in collusion with the military lied. We were brainwashed and a fair reading of this book will force the same conclusion on most readers.

While the text at times seems more like an anti-war propaganda, but it does hold many merits and correct information. But if you cannot, then at least get this book for the masterful photography. How it was photography and printed (this was the film era) and anyone learning how to do both could learn a lot (both composition and printing to highlight or "dodge" parts of the photo to bring attention to faces, items).

I'm a Vietnam veteran and I read this book many years ago - I hadn't thought of it in years, but it occurred to me recently to take another look. Yes, Mr. Griffiths is a very good photographer, but his text was far too biased. I'm not saying everything he said was wrong - yes, there was plenty of American stupidity in Vietnam - there's plenty of stupidity and cruelty in all wars - and yes, there were American atrocities in Vietnam. But the text is so biased and one-sided that it obscures the complex reality of the war. Not all Americans in Vietnam were blundering, heartless idiots; not all Vietnamese hated all Americans; and the communists were not all innocent peasants - some were vicious murderers. This book would have been far better with more balance.

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