



Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era

By Heather Marie Stur

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Beyond Combat investigates how the Vietnam War both reinforced and challenged the gender roles that were key components of American Cold War ideology. While popular memory of the Vietnam War centers on the "combat moment," refocusing attention onto women and gender paints a more complex and accurate picture of the war's far-reaching impact beyond the battlefields. Encounters between Americans and Vietnamese were shaped by a cluster of intertwined images used to make sense of and justify American intervention and use of force in Vietnam. These images included the girl next door, a wholesome reminder of why the United States was committed to defeating Communism; the treacherous and mysterious "dragon lady," who served as a metaphor for Vietnamese women and South Vietnam; the John Wayne figure, entrusted with the duty of protecting civilization from savagery; and the gentle warrior, whose humanitarian efforts were intended to win the favor of the South Vietnamese. Heather Stur also examines the ways in which ideas about masculinity shaped the American GI experience in Vietnam and, ultimately, how some American men and women returned from Vietnam to challenge homefront gender norms.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Heather Stur provides us with a rangy and insightful exploration of how the Vietnam War reconstituted the political culture of gender in ways that were transformational and retrograde, life-affirming and violent, liberating and dehumanizing." - Christian G. Appy, author of *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*

"In an insightful examination of everything from the miniskirt to army rifle manuals, *Beyond Combat* reveals the ways gender and sexuality framed Americans' perceptions and experiences of the Vietnam War. This important work challenges what we think not only of the Vietnam War, but also of war-making and foreign policy more broadly." - Kara Dixon Vuic, author of *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War*

"The Vietnam War era remains a fascinating moment in our history. Historians and veterans continue to explore gaps in experiences and policies. The book contains an excellent reference list and a comprehensive list of important archives. I hope that the interviews Stur conducted will be available to future writers and interested listeners." -Elizabeth Norman, *H-War*

"An excellent contribution to understanding the Vietnam War. Highly recommended." -Choice

"...contains an excellent reference list and a comprehensive list of important archives. I hope that the interviews Stur conducted will be available to future writers and interested listeners." -Margaret Sankey, *H-War*

About the Author

Heather Marie Stur is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Mississippi, a fellow in USM's Center for the Study of War and Society, and director of USM's Vietnam Studies program. She received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 2008. Dr Stur is the author of several articles, including: 'In Service and in Protest: Black Women and the Impact of the Vietnam War on American Society' in *Soul Soldiers: African Americans and the Vietnam Era*; 'Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies: Red Cross SRAO and the Vietnam War' in *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*; 'Borderless Troubadour: Bob Dylan and the Music of the Cold War World' in *Highway 61 Revisited: Bob Dylan from Minnesota to the World*; 'The Women's Army Corps Goes to Vietnam' in *America and the Vietnam War: Re-examining the Culture and History of a Generation*; and 'Finding Meaning in Manhood After the War: Gender and the Warrior Myth in Springsteen's Vietnam War Songs' in *Dancing in the Dark: Bruce Springsteen, Cultural Studies, and the Runaway American Dream*. Dr Stur's research interests include gender and conflict, the US in a global context, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the impacts of militarization on societies, and oral history.

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