

## **Seminar Report**

This report will explain and support the reasons why I choose the presentation subject and content I did. So I will begin by stating that the title of presentation is, 'Images and protest'. The area of protest is related to my final major project.

The images in the presentation are arranged in chronological order. I chose to arrange them in this way for three different reasons. Firstly because this seemed an easy and logical way to arrange images, secondly because it followed the way the rest of the unit has been presented and thirdly I wanted it to be a journey through time, as what has gone naturally influences the interpretation of what follows.

During this report I will go through each image I chose for the presentation and my rationale for selecting it. I will also provide information and background on the images. The bibliography at the end of this report will indicate where I sourced the images from for the presentation. It will also become obvious from the bibliography that the majority of my information was sourced from the internet. I did this because it was a more available form of information and fits in with my thought process and working practices, I feel that there is nothing wrong in selecting this as my dominant research method for this project.

### **“Falling Soldier” by Robert Capa (taken September 5, 1936)**

This is the earliest image I have chosen to include in my presentation, and it is also a highly controversial image. There has been a great deal of debate around whether this image is genuine or staged. Interestingly there has also been a lot of discussion about if it matters. Some argue that as long as the image achieved a positive consequence and motivated people to assist the Spanish soldiers, who were really dying and in need of aid, then it is irrelevant whether the photograph was staged.

The image did motivate people to act, and was responsible for a lot of international, including British, aid. Is this a bad thing if people were 'tricked' by a falsified image?

It was because of this debate that I felt the image would contribute well to the presentation, and be a good point to raise to the class. I wanted the presentation to inform and contribute valuable information and ideas.

### **Elizabeth Eckford : Little Rock Nine by Will Counts (taken 4<sup>th</sup> September 1957)**

This image of Elizabeth Eckford, a black female student, attempting to enter Little Rock Central High School on the first day of integration is very powerful. The result of much protesting during the civil rights movement, Little Rock was thought of as one of the most progressive areas of the southern USA. However the reaction to integration at the high school, which resulted in Arkansas National Guard being called in, revealed a lack of tolerance.

The contrast of Elizabeth and the angry crowd is quiet stunning. Especially when you consider racist remarks that is often made about black people being barbarous and primitive and yet Hazel Bryan, the most prominent protestor, looks like an angry chimpanzee, making the contrast between her and Elizabeth even more poetic. Even though some reports have claimed she was close to tears, her composure in the image makes her appear strong, and

has contributed to the iconic status of this photograph.

I thought it would be good for the presentation because of the contrast in the image, and the series of events and media coverage that followed this series of images. This is especially interesting when you consider that although this was a notable event, it was not extremely different from what was happening elsewhere in the country and world.

### **Thích Quảng Đức aka “Burning monk” by Malcolm Browne (taken 11<sup>th</sup> June 1963)**

This is the first of a series of Vietnam War related images I have included. When selecting images it was impossible to avoid including so many from this war, as photography was such an important part of it. In fact many of the most influential images of all time come from the Vietnam War.

The “Burning monk” is a shocking image of self-immolation, which is a not uncommon form of protest. The act of setting one's self on fire both gains attention and causes shock. I felt a good question though was whether it maintained peaceful protests?

Buddhists are supposed to be peaceful, and not resort to violence. Does the act of self-immolation count as peaceful? No one is injured except for the individual protesting, who have volunteered. Thích Quảng Đức did not run into a crowd or a building, it is not the same as a suicide bomber, who aims to harm others as well as themselves.

The other argument is that it is still violent as the act of setting one's self on fire is violent as it involves destructive, high energy act. The two perspectives make it a great discussion and point of reflection for my presentation.

### **General Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong prisoner in Saigon by Eddie Adams (taken 1<sup>st</sup> February 1968)**

This image is very alarming and can make many people feel uncomfortable as it depicts a man being shot in the head at point-blank range. At the time video footage of the execution was also released however some argue the still image is more shocking, as in the video the incident is over so fast the viewer hardly has time to fully process what has happened. Whereas with the still image the viewer lingers, they see this still moment of a man between life and death, frozen in that state with the calm look on General Nguyen Ngoc Loan's face, his finger still on the trigger.

### **Phan Thị Kim Phúc aka “Napalm girl” by Nick Ut (taken 8<sup>th</sup> June 1972)**

Possibly one of the best known images to come out of the Vietnam War, it has famously been re-created by many artists. The recreation by graffiti artist Banksy, shows Phan Thị Kim Phúc from this image with Disney's Micky Mouse holding one wrist and Ronald McDonald, the mascot of McDonald's Restaurant holding the other.

This image is so influential for a number of different reasons. One of these is because not only are the victims innocent civilians, they are children, who are synonymous with innocence. The image of their horrified faces, and naked burnt bodies create an extreme emotional reaction in most people, especially at a time where these sorts of images were being seen for the first time. The nudity is also an important factor in this image, as it makes the victims look even more vulnerable. The embarrassment and un-comfortableness of a young,

innocent vulnerable girl naked in front of grown men, is certainly shocking and likely to be a motivating image for many people.

### **Kent State Massacre by John Filo (taken 4<sup>th</sup> May 1970)**

The Kent State Massacre is an event that cannot be left out of any discussion on protests in my opinion. Not only was it caused by a protest, it fuelled further protests. What started as a peaceful protest against the Vietnam War then turned into a protest against the presence of the Ohio National Guard on campus. Some of the students threw rocks at the armed guardsmen, and threw back canisters of tear gas. Many argue that the rocks were insignificant to the armed guardsmen who were in full protective gear. The incident escalated in guardsmen firing sixty-seven rounds over a period of thirteen seconds at a group of unarmed students. The guardsmen killed four students and wounded nine others, one of whom suffered permanent paralysis.

Out of those killed two students were not a part of the protest; they were simply walking to class. The closest student, Jeffery Miller, was 81 meters away from the guardsman who shot him. He is pictured in the image I have selected, dead on the ground with Mary Ann Vecchio, a fourteen-year-old runaway kneeling over his body and screaming. William Knox Schroeder, Sandra Lee Scheuer and Allison Krause were all over one hundred meters away when they were shot and killed. All of which makes this a very significant point of discussion.

### **“Tank man” by Jeff Widener (taken 5<sup>th</sup> June 1989)**

Until recently if you tried to search for Tiananmen Square on Google Images China you would have returned some pretty pictures of the square, with flowers all over, nothing like the images of tanks and bodies you get if you use Google Images UK or US. But considering the protests ended so tragically why did the Chinese government feel the need to try so hard hide them? Did they not feel the fear of death was enough anymore in the internet age? Where they worried that if it happened again they would be powerless, with the eyes of the media on them they could not have a repeat without losing their financial link with the Western world?

It is for these reasons that I chose to include this image. The photograph of the student standing in front of the tanks was actually taken by several different photographers, all of whom were staying in the same hotel. The images look very similar with just slight difference from the photographs level and position in the hotel.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude I selected the images that I did because I felt they raised important points either for discussion or thought. As I have previously mentioned I wanted the audience to be able to engage with the presentation, and I feel these images will make them do so. I also wanted to share some of the world's most important images with them, and these are those.

However I did have to leave out some images which I would have loved to include, such as Dorothea Lang's *Migrant Mother* (1936) or Ronald L. Haeberle's images of the My Lai Massacre (1968). These are also important images that people should see, and it is highly unfortunate I could not include them. However part of the presentation process is being selective with your content. Overall I feel I have included the right images.

Word Count: 1,614

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