

Social Media Scroll



Social Media: X

A decade ago, Radiolab aired a piece about the Hmong people. Like many Radiolab pieces, this one set out to find the “fact of the matter” in correcting a historical wrong. The Hmong people had contributed to the interests of the United States in the region during the 1960s conflict, and the purported “purpose” of the Radiolab interview was to air the true reality of what happened after the United States pulled out of Southeast Asia in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Journalism is always supposed to be something treated with integrity, where one is supposed to report exactly what they saw in the most objective manner possible. The point of journalism is for the audience to be able to believe that they were actually there, that they were the ones talking to marginalized people, that they are receiving an accurate and first hand portrayal of what happened. The point of journalism is not to be the middle-man who muddies the water with their own personal feelings on the matter.

When a journalist has a certain pre-disposition towards something, it will always affect the way a piece is presented. In this specific case, it was clear that the interviewers from Radiolab were not exactly coming into this situation with open eyes and a clear head. When a journalist is dismissing a first-hand account of genocide as “nothing more than bee defecation”

and questioning whether a person who survived an incident “[witnessed the powder] with your own eyes”, it is clear that there are prior motivations at play. If you are doubting the credibility of the person you are interviewing you are interviewing, why are you interviewing them in the first place? If you want to argue with the way a first-hand survivor recounts the situation, what is the point of interviewing them in the first place?

Radiolab treated this interview as a formality, as something that would only validate the Radiolab hosts’ own take on the situation. When it proved to be something that did not accomplish what they wanted, the hosts demeaned and diminished the account of the survivor that they interviewed. By any journalistic standard, this has to be something unacceptable and not something indicative of the journalistic community. In the future, the Hmong encounter has to be more appropriately described and handled, and journalists everywhere should ask themselves: are you reporting someone else’s story or tarnishing it with your own biases?



Social Media: Bluesky

The United States has won wars, intervened in foreign affairs many a time, and helped fight against communist and totalitarian regimes abroad many times. This is well documented, and something that every student in the US studies in school over and over again. Here's one thing that is neglected throughout all of that: who were the allies that helped the United States in these wars? I'm not talking about the allies in World War II, but the more undercelebrated and understated allies who aided United States military troops in their times of need. Locals who gave the United States help when no one else would, and were instrumental in the United States reaching their foreign objectives. One example of this is the Hmong people in Southeast Asia, who played a critical role in the United States winning the "crucial war" in Laos during the 1960s.

In 1959, the country of Laos became embroiled in a civil war when Vietnam exercised influence in the country to support communist puppet Pathet Lao. As was common at the time, the United States took it as their place to intervene and began to fight the “secret war” in Laos against Pathet Lao as part of their ongoing fight against communism. As the United States military was in a foreign country on unfamiliar grounds, they quickly became overwhelmed and needed the help of locals to survive. The locals in question were the Hmong people, who populated Laos to the tune of hundreds of thousands of people. In 1961, the US military began training local Hmong tribesmen to fight against the communist armies, and this led to the CIA supporting and collaborating with Hmong armies.

The war raged for over a decade and as a result, killed many Hmong people and families. However, the worst was yet to come. When the United States evacuated their military personnel, they did not have enough resources to also evacuate the Hmong people who were at risk of getting killed by Pathet Lao. As a result, many Hmong people were forced to attempt to evacuate the country of Laos on foot into Thailand. As one would imagine, this led to the loss of life of many, many Hmong people, who were unable to escape in time to join their allies in the US military in the safe grace of Thailand.

The thing to remember here is how the Hmong people contributed to US interests in the region, and how quickly that contribution has been forgotten. This event in particular has been overwritten by the Vietnamese Civil War, and that has led to the genocide of tens of thousands of Hmong people to be forgotten. This post aims to remember those brave Hmong people who aided the United States in the conflicts of 1960s Southeast Asia.