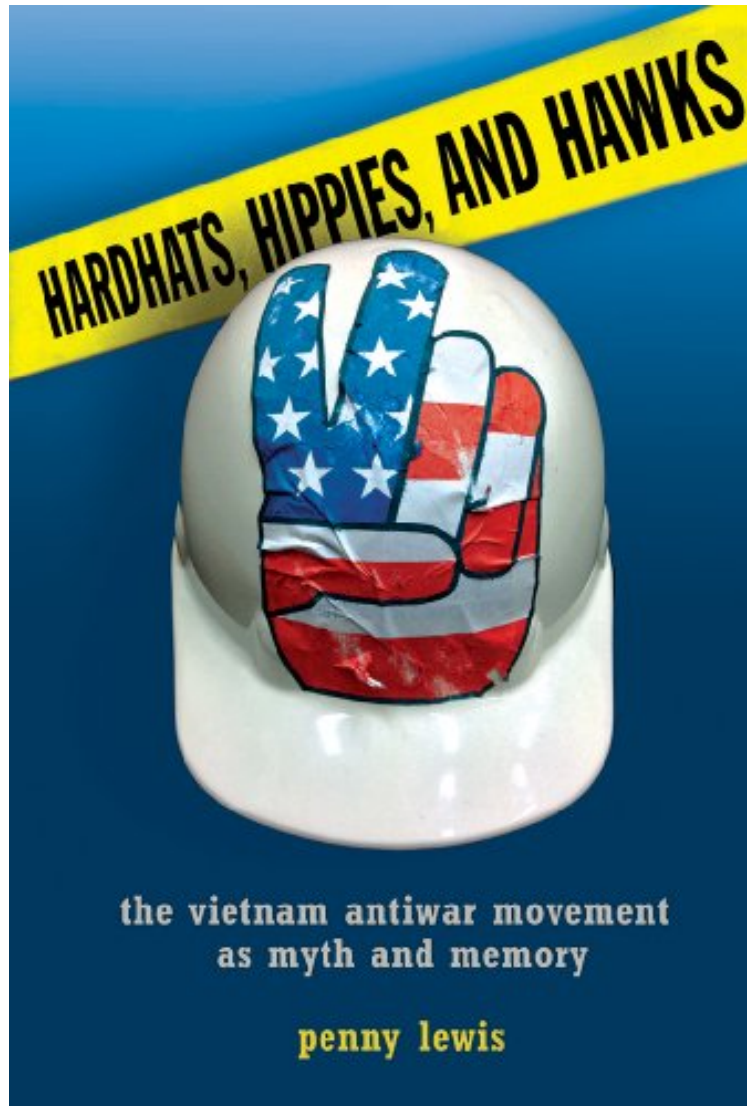


(Free pdf) Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory

Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory

Penny W. Lewis

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Penny W. Lewis : Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Another correction to a distortion of our recent history... and the ever-important "Lessons of Vietnam"...By George N. SchmidtJust when you think we've learned the hard way the so-called "Lessons of Vietnam," we get another dose of stupid historical revisionism that lands us in the same swamp that brought a half million of my brothers into the U.S. Army (and Marines) in Vietnam by 1968 and drew all the wrong

conclusions from that experience to sink us into similar swamps since. At least now and then we get a book, like "Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks" to remind us of the Hollywood distortions of history that have the power to sink us again and again into those mistakes. Do empires ever learn? Just about every American who has paid attention to military history for the past 100 or 200 years knows about the stupidity of the Maginot Line in France, built during the 1930s and outflanked within weeks by Blitzkrieg in 1941. The moral of that story has always been that it's a BIG MISTAKE to "learn the lessons" of the last war while the other side is preparing for the next one. But it seems that every nation has its own versions of the Maginot Line, and some, like the USA, repeat the mistakes we learned from our last victories forever and ever until we are bankrupted by the endless stream of involvements. Have many Americans considered how much our own delusions and illusions have cost us dearly since we helped win World War II and developed a set of "doctrines" that we've continued to apply mindlessly (as mindlessly as those who built the Maginot Line) ever since? So by 1944 and 1945, we had the power to reduce entire cities to dust and pulverize a great army in the process of marching from the coast of France to the interior of Germany. But just because we could obliterate the cities of Nazi Germany by air and artillery power in 1944 and 1945 did not mean that every "enemy" we face would prove to be such sitting ducks for the overwhelming power of American industry. Ultimately, even with all those B-17s, B-24s and (finally) B-29s, infantry had to finish the job in Germany, and was poised to finish the job with Japan from Okinawa had the Japanese empire finally realized the enormity of its defeat. But that's getting ahead of this story. The main "lesson of Vietnam" is not the possibility of "counter insurgency" (no matter how sexy David Petraeus tried to make it) or that we could have "won" (or even that the U.S. and ARVN had "won" after Tet 1968). As Penny Lewis points out in her new book, the main lesson of Vietnam, then and since, is that Americans are not really the kinds of people who are prepared to go overseas on an endless string of imperial adventures, and that the American working class was in the forefront of the fight to end the Vietnam War where it counted most -- within the U.S. military itself. "Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks" by Penny Lewis reminds us, again. Despite all the lies of the Reagan years (and since) and all the Ramboization of reality (brought to us by Hollywood and a wealthy draft dodger who spent his Vietnam years in Switzerland), the "anti war movement" that ended the Vietnam War was primarily a movement of working class men and women. That movement built by 1971 into a force -- inside the U.S. military -- that ended the ability of the U.S. government to order its own forces into battle. And those anti war soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors were mostly of the working class. Even though there is a serious distortion of U.S. History based on the false claim that working class "hard hats" were part of the so-called "Great Silent Majority" that Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew claimed were supporting that "Peace with honor" stuff, by the time Nixon was freaking out and doing Watergate, his own working class was organizing and acting against his Indochina War -- often from inside the U.S. Armed Forces. But as we are reminded whenever history is confronting a new generation, argument by anecdote often wins over the massive and messy facts of what actually happened there then. The greatest recognition of this fact is still with us today. The United States has no military draft because the rulers of the United States became afraid, by 1971, to continue forcing young men into the Army (for a time, the draft had also been into the Marines). By the second year of the Richard Nixon presidency, the United States military -- viz., the soldiers on the ground doing the fighting, and increasingly those ordered to do the massacring from the air -- went on strike against the Vietnam War, a very working class thing. Despite the creepy "hard hats" beating up "hippie anti war protesters" image pushed as "history," the majority of working class Americans -- including the majority of hard hats -- became fiercely against the war, ultimately achieving its end. As Penny Lewis reports in *Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks*, the military brass recognized its problem long before it was common knowledge. "Marine Colonel Robert Heinl argued in 1971 in the *Armed Forces Journal* that "the morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the US armed forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States." While the reasons were many, the fact was simple: The U.S. government, even though Richard Nixon was twice elected President, could not sustain a war against a people that clearly didn't want us there or welcome us into their country. And the people who learned that fact the most clearly and the earliest were the men who had been sent by their country to fight on the ground in Vietnam. And since the gimmicks that allowed middle class Americans to dodge (as opposed to resist) the draft were firmly in place by the time of the great escalation of American forces in Vietnam (1968), the majority of soldiers on the ground (the grunts or boonierats, depending upon when you were viewing them) were working class -- from the working class and returning to the working class. As Bruce Springsteen wrote: "Got in a little home town jam... sent me off to a foreign land, to fight and kill the yellow man... Born in the USA!" Two fallacies have been invented since the end of the Vietnam War, and neither of them has served this country well. The first is that the working class of the USA (the "Great Silent Majority") supported the Vietnam War. The second was that the U.S. military could have "won" that war if the military commanders hadn't been forced to fight, as the sergeant in "Platoon" says, "with one hand tied around our balls." The first fallacy was promulgated and is still sustained based on the simplistic example of a fight between middle class anti-war protesters and pro war "hard hats" at an anti war event in New York City in 1970. That single and simplistic event has been cited for decades as the proof for working class reactionary support of the war in Vietnam. There are many variations on that proof, one of the most personally insulting to me is the portrayal of my home town, Linden New Jersey, in the Academy Award winning film "Hearts

and Minds." If you view that movie, which does a good job portraying some of the anti-war movement in the military, you also see a returning POW coming back to his home town in New Jersey to a massive welcome and some reactionary pro-war moments. And it is true that then George Coker was coming "home" to a working class town in New Jersey. But what is not reported in that film, or elsewhere, is that by 1972 most of the people in Linden were either massively confused or against the Vietnam War -- and I was one of the first of those young men. By 1968, a year after my high school friend George Coker was shot down over Vietnam and began his six tragic years in the Hanoi Hilton, I had become a draft resister and ultimately the first Conscientious Objector in Local Board Number 42 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Linden was not the stereotype in the Academy Award movie "Hearts and Minds." Like every working class community in the USA, Linden was split, and two of the town's Eagle scouts (Coker and myself) were dramatic examples of the split. But the anti-war part was left out of the left wing interpretations of the war and the anti war. My opposition to the Vietnam War had solidified by 1966, when my best friend from high school was killed while serving in the Marines and I was in college on a "II - S" student deferment. All of us from there were working class, and many of our fathers were "hard hats." Few of us were "hippies." And it was very difficult for those of us who began trying to find and become part of the anti war movement to get along with the hippies who were leading it in many cases. But we did. Hollywood didn't merely propagandize for one version of the pro and anti war people through stuff like "Hearts and Minds." By the 1980s, things got worse. A war dodger actor (Ronald Reagan) became President of the United States and began promulgating the Big Lie about Vietnam, while another grade B actor (and draft dodger) Sylvester Stallone created "Rambo" and all those crazy stories about how myself and the others in the anti war movement were going around spitting on soldiers -- when in fact I was organizing with them at military bases from the Ohio Valley to the Rocky Mountains, while other people in the "G.I. Movement" were organizing elsewhere, from Germany through the USA all the way to Okinawa and Danang. It was a world wide movement against the Vietnam War -- from inside the military! But the lies told by Sylvester Stallone and Ronald Reagan, and repeated by legions of middle class pundits, have become America's conventional wisdom. And those lies lead into the second big lie that came out of Vietnam: that "we" would have "won" if only we had been allowed to fight "our war our way." And that brings us to the Maginot Line. The United States won the Second World War because of the industrial might of the USA. By the end of the war in Europe, Ford Motor Co. had produced more than 50,000 M4 Sherman "medium" tanks, which even though they were inferior to the major German tanks (and became death traps) the Panthers and Tigers, there were more of them, and they were supported by massive air power that converted the German tanks (and other vehicles) into a different kind of death trap. But the tank was only one of the many many industrial products that pulverized the German armed forces and cities as the U.S. Army moved east during 1944 and 1945. Victory was a co-production of the Soviets, the U.S.A., and the British (with a bit of help from the French by 1944). Trouble was, the conclusion from World War II became doctrine -- massive firepower deployed in advance of infantry. And so, for the next several wars, the Americans were always pissed off because the other side (be it in Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan) wouldn't come out into the open and "fight like a man." But that only shows that the other side had learned the "lessons" of warfare from 1940 through 2020 better than "our side" has. When, for example, the Iraqi soldiers were exposed (line up in a massive traffic jam fleeing Kuwait City after Desert Storm) the United States (er., the United States and our "allies") massacred them in their vehicles in an incineration that hadn't been seen in warfare since the pulverization of the German Army in August 1944 via Operation Cobra. As a result, the Iraqis learned not to fight in the open, and Americans in Iraq were confronted with IEDs and, now, ISIS. Our doctrine of massive firepower is our Maginot Line. And once our adversaries figure that out, whether in Vietnam (digging the tunnels at Cu Chi, etc) or avoiding direct "contact" (Iraq and Afghanistan), we just get all macho and frustrated and send out a guy to Rambo things and then do a movie about it ("American Sniper"). But the core problem, as laid out in Penny Lewis's book, is much simpler: Americans will not fight in a war that is the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time. No matter how much propaganda is poured into it. American working people are smarter than that, even though the pundits (for example, James Fallows) and the puerile pontificating politicians (Barack Obama) will never get it. You don't go into someone else's country, killing people in large numbers, while preaching about how we are there to win their "hearts and minds" and "liberate" them. Ultimately, the American working class stopped the Vietnam War, with assistance from the hippy anti-war protesters and many upper class people who proclaimed the immorality of the war. But, as Lewis quotes David Cortright as reporting (in "Soldiers in Revolt") by 1971, the anti war movement was more dramatic and widespread within the U.S. military than anywhere else, and the soldiers (and sailors and marines and airmen) who were in revolt were the majority of the enlisted men (and many women) and a large number of the officers. "During the worst year of decline of the army (1971)," Lewis writes, "Cortright summarizes, 'we find seven acts of desertions, seventeen incidents of unauthorized absence, two disciplinary discharges, twelve complaints to congressmen, and eighteen non-judicial punishments for every one hundred soldiers; at the same time, 20 percent of the men smoked marijuana frequently, while 10 percent used narcotics on a regular basis.'" Bad history makes bad policy. This book helps correct some of the bad history we've had to accept the past 30 years. Maybe we can finally get beyond our own Maginot Line fallacies. But, to be honest, I doubt it. There is too much invested in the United States in a number of major lies for us to correct the historical records at this point. So it's a good thing that "Hardhats,

"Hippies and Hawks" has arrived. Hopefully, it will be very widely read. 8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. An honest look at the whole working class and the Vietnam War. By Kim Scipes. Excellent look at what really happened with the "working class" during Vietnam War. This is an important book--takes the story far beyond white male construction workers in NYC, and argues that while that was just one small part of working people's responses to the war, although that was pretty much the only part portrayed by the media. As a USMC veteran (1969-73), I especially appreciated that she recognizes that the troops were overwhelmingly from working class backgrounds, and so our struggles against the war and the military while on active duty, as well as after we got out, were also part of the working class' response to the war. 5 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A fine work on the American antiwar movement. By Gramsci. The ongoing Vietnam Commemoration announced by the Pentagon and President Obama in 2012 will continue until the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War in 2025. It will rewrite the actual history of the war as a "Noble Cause" to make it more acceptable to Americans. Penny Lewis's fine book is a powerful answer to the propaganda the Commemoration will put forth in the name of an uncritical patriotism and nationalism. One of the biggest myths of that conflict concerns the American antiwar movement: that students and professors at elite colleges and universities opposed the war and the working class overwhelmingly supported it. Lewis blows this myth out of the water in her careful and documented work, revealing the critical and powerful role of working-class Americans in the movement to end the war; at home, in unions, and the military. *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks* is an important and well-written tool for college students and professors who need a factual understanding of the greatest antiwar movement in US history. John Marciano

In the popular imagination, opposition to the Vietnam War was driven largely by college students and elite intellectuals, while supposedly reactionary blue-collar workers largely supported the war effort. In *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, Penny Lewis challenges this collective memory of class polarization. Through close readings of archival documents, popular culture, and media accounts at the time, she offers a more accurate "counter-memory" of a diverse, cross-class opposition to the war in Southeast Asia that included the labor movement, working-class students, soldiers and veterans, and Black Power, civil rights, and Chicano activists. Lewis investigates why the image of antiwar class division gained such traction at the time and has maintained such a hold on popular memory since. Identifying the primarily middle-class culture of the early antiwar movement, she traces how the class interests of its first organizers were reflected in its subsequent forms. The founding narratives of class-based political behavior, Lewis shows, were amplified in the late 1960s and early 1970s because the working class, in particular, lacked a voice in the public sphere, a problem that only increased in the subsequent period, even as working-class opposition to the war grew. By exposing as false the popular image of conservative workers and liberal elites separated by an unbridgeable gulf, Lewis suggests that shared political attitudes and actions are, in fact, possible between these two groups.

"As Penny Lewis argues and persuasively demonstrates in this theoretically and methodologically innovative book, 'working-class opposition to the war was significantly more widespread than is remembered, and parts of the movement found roots in working-class communities and politics.' She therefore sets out to revise the distorted history of the anti-war movement and then to explain theoretically why this belief has persisted for such a long time." David Ryan, *International Affairs* (January 2014) "On rare occasions, something enters one's mental universe so radiant that it lights up the whole mind, burning away what now seem like intellectual preoccupations of vastly less import. Such was my experience consumed by *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks*, a book worthy of regard as an instant classic on literature on the American experience of the Vietnam War and for an audience far beyond academia." *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture* "This book offers a powerfully argued response to a thesis about working-class conservatism and the Vietnam War that posits that members of the working class were so alienated by hippie protestors' appearance, tactics, and lack of patriotism that they rallied around the U.S. flag and supported the war more than their middle-class fellow citizens did. Penny Lewis demonstrates that 'working-class opposition to the war was significantly more widespread than is remembered' and that 'the greatest support for the war came from the privileged elite, despite the visible dissent' of some of its members. . . . Methodologically responsible and exhaustively researched, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks* is an indispensable contribution to scholarship about the domestic debates surrounding the Vietnam War." *Journal of American History* "Penny Lewis's *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks* will spur readers to think differently about our present and not just the past; the tropes of the top and the bottom and of a relationship between them that imperils the great 'middlers' are at the heart of our current political and social debates. Lewis explains how the enduring and familiar images of white, conservative, blue-collar workers and liberal antiwarriors from privileged milieus were created, circulated, and consumed." Peter Rachleff, *Macalester College*, author of *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement* "This book compels us to fundamentally reexamine how we remember the Vietnam years and the movements of that period. In forcing such reexamination, Penny Lewis brilliantly challenges conventional theorizing about class, about collective identity, about protest and public opinion. It's one of those rare books that changes how both scholars and the public think about recent history?and what that history means for us now. What's more?it's wonderfully well-

written!"?Richard Flacks, University of California, Santa Barbara, coauthor of *Playing for Change: Music and Musicians in the Service of Social Movements* "Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks displays historical sociology at its best. It is historically subtle, nuanced and rich, as well as theoretically sophisticated while not at all arcane. Penny Lewis provides a fresh and important, deeply and carefully contextualized account of the ways that class, and narratives about class, emerged within and around, shaped, and were shaped by the movement against the Vietnam war in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Just as important, she examines the complex impact that history has had for subsequent American political understandings, including how dominant narratives?particularly the imagery of working-class conservatism?formed in that period have persisted in constraining even left politics in the United States. This book makes an invaluable contribution to contemporary scholarship and political debate. Lewis's account is full and true."?Adolph Reed, Jr., University of Pennsylvania, author of *Class Notes: Posing as Politics and Other Thoughts on the American Scene* "Penny Lewis's thoroughly researched, thoughtful, and subtle book not only upends conventional wisdom about the sixties antiwar movement but does a good deal to help us rethink what class means in America. Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks is an indispensable reconsideration of a history we thought we knew."?Todd Gitlin, Columbia University, author of *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* About the Author Penny Lewis is Associate Professor of Labor Studies at the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, City University of New York. She is the author of *Hardhats, Hippies and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* and coeditor of *The City Is the Factory: New Solidarities and Spatial Strategies in an Urban Age*, both from Cornell.