

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Homework: Black and White in Vietnam – Interpreting Fairness with Statistics

Goal: To connect the probability and fairness of the Vietnam draft lottery with the lived experiences of African American soldiers, and to reflect on how fairness in numbers may differ from fairness in practice.

Directions: Read Gerald F. Goodwin’s New York Times article [“Black and White in Vietnam”](#) (2017). Then answer the following questions, using both the statistics and the narrative examples from the article.

Part A: Evidence from the Article

1. African Americans represented about 11% of the U.S. population in the 1960s, but 16.3% of all draftees in 1967. How does this overrepresentation compare to what you would expect if the draft had been completely random?
2. The article states that African Americans were 23% of all combat troops in Vietnam. If assignments to combat units had been proportional to population share (11%), what percentage would you expect instead? What does this comparison suggest about fairness in combat duty assignments?
3. In 1965, nearly 25% of all combat deaths in Vietnam were African Americans, dropping to 12.7% by 1967. If 1,000 U.S. soldiers died in 1965, how many of those deaths would you expect to be African American if deaths were proportional to population? How many were actually African American? What does this difference reveal?
4. A 1972 Defense Department study reported that African Americans received 25.5% of nonjudicial punishments and 34.3% of courts-martial in Vietnam. Compare these statistics to their population share. What pattern do you notice?

Part B: Discussion & Reflection

5. Based on the statistics, what patterns or trends can you identify regarding the experiences of African American soldiers in Vietnam? Cite at least one statistic in your explanation.
6. The article begins by highlighting positive race relations in some units, but the statistics tell a different story. How do the numbers challenge those early perceptions? How do these statistics about punishment, combat assignments, and deaths reflect broader issues of racial discrimination and inequality in American society during the Vietnam War era?

Part C: Connecting Back to the Draft Lottery

7. In class, we saw that the 1969 draft lottery was not truly random because of how the capsules were mixed. Even when procedures are intended to be random, outcomes may not be fair. How do the statistics from the article show another way that “fairness” in the draft and military service broke down?
8. What similarities or differences do you notice between fairness in the draft lottery system (expected vs. actual values by month) and fairness in how African Americans were drafted and treated in service?

(Not required to complete) Extension

Ask family members that may have been alive during the Vietnam era (1954-1973) about their experience with the time. Did you know anyone who served in the war? Was drafted during the time? Anyone who was granted a deferment? Participated in protests about the war? Feel free to share with me anything you find out.