Symposium: Re-Imagining Self and Other: Creativity and Ethical Action in the Aftermath of Violence

Wednesday, October 13, 2004

Barbara Sonneborne, Regret to Inform: Responses from a Q & A Session

This was the first session in the symposium that included a screening of the film Regret to Inform by Barbara Sonneborne. After the screening, a discussion followed with the film's director. For more information please see biographies of symposium presenters and the schedule of events. Below is a transcript of the question and answer session with audience members.

Q: So the same thing [Iraq War] is happening right this moment. It makes it worse than it already was?

Barbara: It [the film] is being seen all over the world now. The plan was to have community meetings and television broadcasts in Vietnam, but it was cancelled. We did however go to meet 23 of the women who were interviewed. We gave them copies and now there are lots of copies in Vietnam.

Q: What did doing the movie do for you?

Barbara: I had felt tremendous anger; and continued to feel the anger even making the film. My holding on to my anger was perpetuating war. Who suffers more, the victim or the perpetrator? If you kill someone, you are affected forever. I am at peace and I am satisfied now.

Q: Could the same film be made about World War II?

Barbara: War is suffering, and it is suffering on all sides. War is a failure of humans to negotiate. You can't include everyone interviewed on video, some people fall apart. So the story might be good in a book, but it may not work on the screen.

Q: What was the result of the interviews with the women? What did you do to follow-up?

Barbara: We met with both women in the United States and Vietnam and they said, "you have taken a great weight off my shoulders." It was much easier in the states where I could connect more directly. There was a woman, whose husband is missing, and she was very angry that the movie wasn't about that. But, overall the women reported that they wanted to tell their stories and we traveled with several of the women—both US and Vietnamese. The experience was empowering.