

Nixon vs. Ellsberg

By: Tucker Frederickson

Junior Division

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In the middle of the Vietnam War, in 1971, Daniel Ellsberg shared classified papers from the Pentagon with the media. Why would a government contractor do this? Did he do the right thing? Ellsberg took a stand in history by sharing information to the American citizens revealing secrets that the Federal government withheld. His actions led to the downfall of President Nixon and the Plumbers (Nixon's secretive group meant to fix leaks in the government using either legal or illegal means.) This was important because it showed that the government was lying to the American citizens, and made the public more aware of their government's actions. Daniel Ellsberg took a stand in history by showing freedom of the press is essential to democracy.

This paper examines Daniel Ellsberg's Historic stand against the Vietnam War, how he did it, and his role in the impeachment of Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon lied to the American citizens in the Watergate scandal and the bombings of Cambodia triggering riots, marches, and the eventual resignation of the President. In these events, it will show, without an informed free press, the government can lie so easily and the American citizens won't know anything about their government's actions unless someone like Daniel Ellsberg stands up and does something.

Daniel Ellsberg worked as a military analyst at RAND corporation (the Rand Corporation is a nonprofit global organization that provides war analysis and research.) He took the information given to him and tried to find the best strategy to approach the war or strategy inside the war. Daniel Ellsberg had uncovered the Pentagon Papers during his work on the matter of the Vietnam war. He was analysing the best strategy for the Vietnam war when he was given the papers as supplemental information. Each night for several weeks, Ellsberg took the Pentagon Papers from a

government safe and in secret, with the help of Anthony Russo, Robert Ellsberg, and Linda Sinay, made copies to share with the press. Ellsberg thought the nation needed to know the true story about events in Vietnam..

The Vietnam war began in 1954 after the rise to power of Ho Chi Minh and his communist Viet Minh party in North Vietnam, and it ended in 1975. Some conflict dated back to the mid 1940's. The war was an armed conflict that pitted the Communist government of North Vietnam and some of its southern allies against the more pro-Western South Vietnam. The war was in some ways an extension of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, but it was more of a civil war between North and South Vietnam about how a unified Vietnam should be governed. Historians estimated that more than 3 million people were killed total, 58,000 of them American, more than half of them Vietnamese civilians (A&E Television Networks). At the peak of the war, in 1969 more than 500,000 American soldiers were involved. Nixon suspected communist bases in Vietnam's neighbor to the east, Cambodia. Cambodia was being paid by the North Vietnamese to keep bases there. The US tried to negotiate, but Cambodia wouldn't turn away the money they were receiving from North Vietnam to have these bases. Richard Nixon started to bomb Cambodia in secret, killing over 500,000 Cambodian civilians. Nixon never consulted congress and even kept these secret bombings from the high ranking military officials, saying "No comment, no warnings, no complaints, no protests...I mean it, not one thing to be said to anyone publicly or privately without my prior approval." Nixon's administration misled the pilots driving the planes that dropped the bombs on what exactly they were bombing. In 1973 through 1974, Richard Nixon resigned and Gerald Ford withdrew from

the war. Communist forces took control over Saigon ending the war. The country was unified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam the very next year.

The information in the Pentagon Papers exposed the actions of the secret bombing as well as a few other involvements in the war. Daniel Ellsberg gave the photocopied pentagon papers to the New York Times and Washington Post newspapers who began printing them immediately. The resulting anger led to many riots and protests. The newspapers were stopped for a short while as the Nixon administration used the Espionage Act to take these papers to court but, eventually, freedom of press allowed them to continue to print.

At his time, news of the Watergate scandal broke with the help of a man using the alias Deepthroat who had surfaced information about the break in. Deepthroat was really Mark Felt. He had provided information to two people at The Washington Post. He spoke/leaked about the Watergate scandal and Nixon's involvement. The scandal was a major political scandal involving President Nixon and his cover up on the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in The Watergate Hotel in Washington DC. Seven men were in this scandal. They were known as the Plumbers. They broke in. In 1970, they wiretapped the phone and other communication systems with some wires around the house to tape conversations. The central characters in the Watergate scandal were Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, Charles Colson, Gordon C. Strachan, Robert Mardian and Kenneth Parkinson. The Plumbers were an organization of people who worked on breaking into buildings for the Nixon administration for whatever he needed. Their job was to cover up any leaks about/on the government. They worked illegally for Nixon. If they got caught or killed, all evidence about them would have been

destroyed. It all was destroyed when Mark Felt leaked information about the Watergate scandal and the plumbers were caught. Frank Wills was a security guard who was working when the break in at Watergate took place. He had first found the tape on the door keeping it open. Thinking it was misplaced or put there by accident he put the tape into his pocket and walked away. After awhile of patrolling he came back and found more tape on the door keeping it open. He immediately called the Second Precinct police and five men had been arrested for breaking in. These men were the first plumbers, but one of them testified against the rest including Nixon.

The Nixon administration tried everything they could to discredit Daniel Ellsberg. The plumbers were found guilty of breaking into a pharmacy office to see what Prescriptions Daniel Ellsberg was taking. Nothing was found that they could use. The Plumbers who broke into the pharmacy staged it as a drug raid and they found no evidence that would help them. Daniel Ellsberg had a very clean record and had nothing against him. The Plumbers had also broken into Daniel Ellsberg's Psychiatrist's office to see if they could find any medical notes. They found nothing they could use. After the Plumbers failed to discredit Ellsberg, the Justice Department began to prosecute Ellsberg and Anthony Russo with the charges of stealing and holding secret documents by a grand jury in Los Angeles. The new group of Plumbers got caught later on too trying to cover up the Pentagon Papers leak. When they got caught, all of the charges against Ellsberg were dropped and he got away free. Nixon authorized the break-in of Brookings Institute, where Ellsberg supposedly copied the Pentagon Papers. They were trying to find more evidence on Ellsberg to discredit him and his sources. With threats of indictment and prison time, Nixon's advisors testified against Nixon and the Plumbers.

After the scandal surfaced, the trial was deemed a mistrial by Federal District Judge William Matthew Byrne Jr. and Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo walked free. Richard Nixon was just about to be impeached and knew this, so instead of waiting and losing his rights of a former president he resigned keeping those rights. Mark Felt who was formerly in the Plumbers unit had helped the Washington Post and the New York Times unravel what had happened in Watergate leading to Nixon's involvement.

The effect of the Pentagon Papers caused different levels of trust in the government and their actions, so many people didn't trust what their government was doing since it had lied about big things, like the Vietnam war, that affect American citizens' everyday lives. There are so many conspiracies and rumors about the government because of situations like the Cambodian bombings. It hurt our relationships with other countries. The Pentagon Papers affect us, telling us what our government does. Their existence showed that members of government don't always do things that they say they are going to do. The Pentagon Papers show the government expanded the military in Laos when they said "we seek no wider war". This shows that government can lie to get what some leaders want in the end of everything with citizens still thinking the government is still truthful and honest. The Pentagon Papers revealed the secret bombing of Cambodia, where Richard Nixon's Administration was secretly attacking Cambodia, killing civilians. The bombs dropped exceeded the amount dropped on Japan during WWII. Each nation's press has a different relationship with their government, sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, but in every nation, press is critical and sometimes criticised. Without freedom of press, there would be no democracy and Daniel Ellsberg knew this. It is why he released the

papers. The press helps everyone know what is happening or why it's happening. Without it, everyone would be clueless, leaving the government to do whatever they want. Nixon hid what he was doing and lied to the American citizens on what they were voting for. Nixon talked about not widening the war while the election was going on. When he was elected, he widened the war in a big way. Freedom of press is a pillar of democracy. Without it, there would be misconception for the American citizens. Former president Obama stated "Journalists give all of us as citizens the chance to know the truth about our country's, ourselves, our governments," he said. "That makes us better, it makes us stronger, it gives voice to the voiceless, it exposes injustice, and holds leaders like me accountable." I believe that, without whistle blowers like Daniel Ellsberg, there would be too many secrets that the government would withhold. There are so many conspiracies about the American government because they have told lies and big ones. With freedom of press, there shouldn't be lies. There should only be truth. Daniel Ellsberg took a stand because he knew that without freedom of press, there would be a broken democracy. The biggest question during the events of 1971 is did he do the right thing, I believe so, do you?

Primary

"Home Page." *History Study Center*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.historystudycenter.com/search/displayMultiResultHistoricalDocItem.do?Multi=yes&ResultsID=15A0ED102AC&fromPage=search&ItemNumber=1&QueryName=historicalDoc>>. I used this site to find more information about the Watergate scandal and the impeachment of Richard Nixon.

Gage, Beverly. "Deep Throat, Watergate, and the Bureaucratic Politics of the FBI." *Journal of Policy History* 24.02 (2012): 157-83. *Deep Throat, Watergate, and the Bureaucratic Politics of the FBI*. Web. 7 Mar. 2017. <<http://yalechess.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Gage-Watergate.pdf>>. I used this site to find out information on deepthroat and what he did in the Daniel Ellsberg trial and the Nixon trial.

"American Rhetoric: Barbara Jordan - Statement on House Judiciary Proceedings to Impeach President Richard Nixon." *American Rhetoric: Barbara Jordan - Statement on House Judiciary Proceedings to Impeach President Richard Nixon*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordanjudiciarystatement.htm>>. I used this cite for the trial against Anthony Russo and Daniel Ellsberg. I found out information about the trial and how the pentagon papers were released.

"DANIEL ELLSBERG TESTIFIES AT PENTAGON PAPERS HEARING." *Americangovernment*. N.p., n.d. Web. Jan.-Feb. 2017. <<https://americangovernment.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/1295392?terms=Daniel+ellsberg&sType=multi>>. I used this site for the criminal trial against Daniel Ellsberg. It's how I found out about the partners in the pentagon papers copying.

"American Rhetoric: Richard M. Nixon - Resignation Speech." American Rhetoric: Richard M. Nixon - Resignation Speech. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixonresignationspeech.html>>. I used this site to find out how Nixon had resigned, what he said when he resigned, and why he resigned.

"Follow Us!" The Nixon Administration and Watergate: Ellsberg Break-in. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2017. <http://www.historycommons.org/timeline.jsp?timeline=nixon_and_watergate_tmIn&nixon_and_watergate_tmIn_pentagon_papers=nixon_and_watergate_tmIn_ellsberg_break_in>. I used this site to find insight on the Watergate break in. I found out about how and why they staged this break in and how they did it.

"Pentagon Papers." National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, n.d. Web. 08 Mar. 2017. <<https://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers>>. I used this website to find what what in the Pentagon papers, it gave me copies and a downloadable pdf.

"Lincoln Star." Newspaper Archives. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Mar. 2017. <<https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/nebraska/lincoln/lincoln-star/1971/08-22/page-36?tag=Daniel+Ellsberg&rtserp=tags/?pf=daniel&pl=ellsberg&psb=relavance>>. I used this website to find the different opinion of Daniel Ellsberg through the articles the newspaper contained.

"Nixon in the White House." Newspaper Archives. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Mar. 2017. <<https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/massachusetts/greenfield/greenfield-recorder/1971/10-19/page-12?tag=richard+nixon&rtserp=tags/richard-nixon?pr=30&ndt=by&py=1970&pey=1979&ndt=ex&py=1971>>. I used this site to find out different

information on Nixon including, what the public thought of him and what Nixon was doing with the press.

Secondary

Swaine, Jon. "The Impact of The Pentagon Papers 40 Years on." *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group, n.d. Web. 19 Oct. 2016.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/8573899/The-impact-of-The-Pentagon-Papers-40-years-on.html>>. I used this source to find out the after affect of the Pentagon Papers and why they still matter, also the lesson that comes out of the events of the 1970's.

Study.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2017.

<http://study.com/articles/Military_Analyst_Job_Description_Duties_and_Outlook.html>. I used this site to find out about what Daniel Ellsberg did at Rand corporation and what it was. I also used it to find out how he got the Pentagon Papers.

"The Most Dangerous Man in America." *PBS*. Public Broadcasting Service, n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.

<<http://www.pbs.org/pov/mostdangerousman/>>. I used this source as an extra source. It showed me the different views about Daniel Ellsberg and how important he was.

Ellsberg, Daniel. "Why the Pentagon Papers Matter Now | Daniel Ellsberg." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 13 June 2011. Web. 19 Oct. 2016.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jun/13/pentagon-papers-daniel-ellsberg>>. I used this site to get insight on why the Pentagon Papers matter now and the long lasting effect of the Pentagon Papers.