

# HEART OF A JOURNALIST

“Women did not belong on the battlefield. The Pentagon banned them”

Elizabeth Becker

A limited series, based on the newly released book, **YOU DON'T BELONG HERE** by Elizabeth Becker, will chronicle the story of female journalists who forged their place in a land of men to report on the most consequential story of the decade, the Vietnam War and the conflict in Southeast Asia.

When Elizabeth Becker was a graduate student at the University of Washington studying Southeast Asia, her master's thesis was rejected by her professor who unsuccessfully wanted to “bed her.” So, she decided she would not let this man who ruined her academic career ruin her!

Becker accepted an invitation to visit a friend who was covering the Vietnam war in Asia. “When I got to Cambodia, I realized what a fool I was,” she said. “It was so hard. It was so difficult but at the same time it was the most amazing thing I've ever done. It changed my life. And I became a reporter.”



*Kate Webb, Frances Fitzgerald, Catherine Leroy*

Becker and an unprecedented number of women journeyed to Southeast Asia in the late 1960s and early 1970s to establish themselves as journalists and photographers and report on the conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Frances Fitzgerald had been writing “personality pieces” for various newspapers. Denby Fawcett left her job on the Women's Page of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin covering society parties. Tad Bartimus, who hailed from a military family, was determined to find out what this war was all about. Jurate Kazickas used the prize money she won on a quiz show to travel to Saigon to write about the war.

Kate Webb, an Australian iconoclast, quit her job at the Sydney Daily Mirror in 1967 and travelled to South Vietnam to cover the escalating Vietnam War. She was captured by the North Vietnamese troops while on assignment, and given up for dead after a three week incarceration. Catherine LeRoy, a French born photographer, moved by images of war she had seen in Paris Match, travelled to South Vietnam to "give war a human face."

Often arriving on a one-way ticket and without an official assignment, these women braved the muddy trenches, hostile officials, and abusive male colleagues in search of the truth. Since the US government did not officially declare the Vietnam conflict a war, censorship of the press could not be imposed which allowed them unparalleled access. “The appetite for news was so great,” said Elizabeth Becker. “That I got a job as a local stringer for The Washington Post and Newsweek.”

They lived hand to mouth. They had no health insurance. They had minimal accommodation in brothels or above storefronts. But they possessed the passionate heart of a journalist, and these women pursued their stories while they were shot at, had their press credentials revoked, were imprisoned by the enemy, and contracted life-threatening diseases. They faced life and death decisions --whether to continue to document unreported stories or return home to a safer environment. Their struggles make their accomplishments even more amazing.





These women tried to keep a low profile because they knew they were breaking new ground and would be ridiculed and dismissed. Their reporting often departed from the traditional military coverage. Instead, their stories and photographs allowed the world to see the human cost, the human anguish, and collateral damages of war.

Their intrepid work and dogged determination convinced the Pentagon to allow them to continue to cover the war even though there was an official ban against it. "That's what made it possible for female journalists afterwards. They never put the ban back on," said Becker.

These women distinguished themselves but often were overlooked.

Becker and Fitzgerald would win Pulitzer Prizes and other awards for their reporting. Catherine LeRoy won many awards for her photographs, including the George Polk Award and the Robert Capa Gold Medal award.

**YOU DON'T BELONG HERE** reveals the extraordinary bravery of these women, and their commitment to discover and document the truth. Their finely detailed coverage in print, photographs, radio and television shaped the narrative of America's longest war in the public's awareness, embedded it in history, and paved the way for all female war correspondents to come. Their stories permanently shattered the barriers to women covering war.



**"I'M VERY AWARE OF ALL THE  
WOMEN THAT PAVED THE ROAD  
FOR ME."**

**~ CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR**

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