

John lennon: greatest artist and advocate of peace



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The New York Times recently reported Mark David Chapman's eligibility for parole for shooting John Lennon to death in December of 1980.

The reporter, Clyde Haberman, related in his story, that the chances of the killer actually being freed were slim (Haberman, 2000). Of course, Chapman's parole was denied, to the relief of millions of followers who mourned his loss and believe in what John Lennon represented. Although Lennon was not a politician, many news reporters compared his death to the deaths of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. Lennon did not have the power to send people to war or bring soldiers home. He was a man, however, who has been portrayed as an artist and an advocate of peace.

He is noted for reshaping an entire generation of youth through his music and for taking a stand against war and violence (Hamill, 1980). No artist in history has ever surpassed his contributions to music, poetry, and world peace. John Lennon is the greatest singer, songwriter, and advocate of peace that ever lived. The Beatles came on the scene in the early sixties to the dismay of many parents who were disturbed by the four lads' long hair and rock and roll music. The revolution produced a massive metamorphosis of music, media, politics and fashion. With such an influence over the youth of the sixties, it was fortunate that the Beatles wrote songs with timeless messages of peace and love.

Much of the older generation were up in arms and tried to ban the Beatles and their music, but their influence was great and their message powerful. They became role models to youth worldwide. The Fab Four's music and lyrics brought youth together to fight politically against war. Songs such as “

All You Need is Love” and “ Come Together” reached out and touched their hearts and motivated them to make a difference. The music produced by the Beatles in a mere seven years provided a political backdrop for young people to question their government and demand world peace (Hamill, 1980).

Today, the light of John Lennon still shines brightly through his music.

“ Imagine” was voted the greatest song ever written (Synovitz, 1998). The song “ In My Life” was also recognized and recently voted the song of the century over the World Wide Web. Released only two years ago, the Beatles’ Greatest Hits album entered the rock and pop music charts at No. 1 according to Rolling Stone magazine. The power of Lennon’s lyrics has continued on over a forty-year span, and he also led his public and private life in a way that served as a model for peace. An excellent example of Lennon taking a peaceful stand occurred on March 25th, 1969.

John and his wife Yoko spent their honeymoon staging a weeklong bed-in for peace in Room 902 of the Amsterdam Hilton, in The Netherlands. For one week, John and Yoko gave international interviews that were reported via newspapers, radio, television, and newsreels worldwide. John and Yoko ignored the hostility that they received as a rebuttal to their peace campaign. The media literally did all the work, managing to spread the word through extensive coverage. The Lennon’s became “ champions of peace and humanitarianism” (Synovitz, 1998).

Shortly after Lennon’s death in 1980, an anonymous group of youth in Prague set up a mock gravesite for the deceased Beatle. The event was spontaneous, much like the fans that gathered in Central Park when hearing

of Lennon's death. But, unlike the New York mourners, the Prague youth risked prison to gather and erect the tombstone. At the time of Lennon's death, Communist authorities had outlawed western pop music. But the threat of prison did not stop Lennon mourners from scribbling graffiti, painting pictures of Lennon, and writing lyrics on the wall. The wall took on a political focus, forcing the Communist State to install surveillance cameras and to hire guards.

But this effort did not stop the opinions from being expressed. Lennon marches began to take place every December 8th. Many were jailed or beaten for joining the marches. All of these efforts became a part of the non-violent Velvet Revolution, which forced Communism to collapse in November 1989.

In 1998, the local "John Lennon Peace Club" reconstructed the crumbling monument. Today it is not uncommon to find Czechs strumming guitars near the site in a serene setting, making it very hard to imagine youth just a few years ago risking prison for singing Lennon's music (Synovitz, 1998). It is not difficult to imagine what John Lennon represented in the lives of these Czechs who today experience freedom. John Lennon can be undisputedly called the greatest singer, songwriter, and advocate of peace that ever lived. In the twenty years since his death, Lennon has continued to reshape generations, as evidenced by the current surge in Beatle mania.

The media has already begun to report the anniversary of his death, just as they reported his birthday, the releases of nine new "Beatles" books, a greatest hits album, the re-release of the movie "Hard Day's Night", and two

television specials. Dozens of websites have been made available for Lennon followers to find updated information, purchase memorabilia, and chat with each other (Entertainment Weekly, 2000). In closing, many people are remembering John Lennon and sighing in relief that Mark David Chapman is not a free man. In reviewing Haberman's September 30th article, one can detect the anxiousness of awaiting the decision concerning Chapman's parole.

But fortunately, the anxiety was totally unnecessary. No one should have doubted that in the spirit of John Lennon, we would give peace a chance.