

Counter culture of the us hippie movement



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What was the counter culture that was created in the USA during the Hippie Movement?

Americans were motivated by the Vietnam War, racial injustice, fear of nuclear destruction, and the materialism of capitalist society to start rebelling against authority and start what would be known as the 1960s counterculture. Many were also inspired by people such as John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Ghandi. The Hippie movement started during the 1960s, when young middle class men and women questioned America's materialism and cultural and political norms. Seeking a better world, the 1960s Hippie movement began, and with it, the counter culture. The counterculture of the 1960s began in the United States as a result of the conservative social norms of the 1950s, the Cold War, and the intervention in Vietnam of the military. The counter culture consisted in questioning political and cultural norms, new music, having religions outside Judeo-Christian tradition, the want for peace, more environmental awareness, changes in attitude about gender roles, less concern about marriage and physical appearance and the search for a utopian lifestyle. William Braden, a contemporary observer said, " the era of the 1960s was an age of Aquarius that heralded a new American identity-a collective identity that will be blacker, more feminine, more oriental, more emotional, more intuitive, more exuberant and better than the old one." The counterculture made American society change; it was a step closer to society as we know it today.

As a result of the strict and conservative education that many parents were inflicting in their children in the 1950s, many young people decided to go against social norms and seek for freedom. With this counter culture they

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seeked change for the society they lived in and for societies of the future. These young people became known as hippies. They also wanted everyone to be free and to be tolerant of other races and cultures. They wanted to live in a peaceful and shared community. Many embraced psychedelic drugs and smoked marijuana in public to go against the authorities. Hippies caused various riots and movement in expensive and reputable universities in order to have more publicity. Movements such as the "free speech" movement in University of California, Berkeley became an effective way of challenging authorities and get full coverage on the media. Riots were against foreign policies, due to the Vietnam War, their purpose was to make it known that wars were ineffective and not worth it. This upset many people such as workers, one said, "Here were those kids, rich kids who could go to college, didn't have to fight, they are telling you your son died in vain. It makes you feel your whole life is shit, just nothing." Truth is, hippies wanted to make a change, so they rioted and made movements to get their views of freedom, peace and love known.

An important factor that was part of the counter culture that the hippies started was music, different kinds of music were beginning to open up to the world during the 1960s as a way to show freedom. Many festivals and concerts took place during the 1960s to reflect this counter culture, the most important one, however, is The Woodstock Music and Art Fair, held in upstate New York in August 1969. For the hippies this meant, three days of generosity, peace, great music, liberation, and expanding consciousness, and for the conservatists of the time it meant three days of self-indulgence, noise, promiscuity, and illegal drug use. The promoters were expecting a lot

of people but not the 300, 000 to 400, 000 people who attended. Rock music and bands were starting to get more popular with groups such as The Beatles which reflected the youth's emphasis on change and experimentation. Singers such as Bob Dylan and Janis Joplin who talked about change, freedom and peace in their songs also emphasized the hippies want for change and freedom. With his song "Blowin in the Wind" Bob Dylan was able to make protest songs number one hits. Its lyrics say, "How many times must the cannonballs fly, before they're forever banned? ...How many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?"

Music was a way of expressing thoughts and this was what the counter culture was all about, people started listening to songs that talked about poverty, war, and everyday issues that hippies wanted to change.

Hippies looked for change, this also included change of religion, and they were sick of the traditional Judeo-Christian religion and started to look for other religions that resembled their beliefs. Many hippies converted to religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Native American religious culture. They thought that these religions would give them inner peace and it made them stand out and break away from the traditional religion that their parents followed. They looked for meditation, yoga, and mysticism in these religions in order to have a peaceful and calm mind. This was a change because before these religions were only popular in Asia and this was another way for the hippies to reach inner fulfillment.

The motto of the Hippie movement, is with no doubts "peace, love and freedom". Hippies had anti war protests in many knownd colleges around

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the United States, such as Berkeley college, or they would protest in front of the White House saying antiwar slogans such as, "Hey, hey, LBJ,(referring to *Lyndon Baines Johnson* the 36th President of the United States) how many kids did you kill today?" or chanting "Hell no, we won't go!" when security would try to make them leave. The largest anti-war demonstration in history was held when 250, 000 people marched from the Capitol to the Washington Monument, once again, showing the unity of youth. There were also anti-war movies such as *Dr. Strangelove*, directed by Stanley Kubricks this movie ridicules the excesses of the Cold War, and was an anti-war film. Books were not left behind in the anti-war movement. Joseph Heller published *Catch-22*, a novel about the inanities of the military in World War II. Hippies did not believe in war. They thought that it caused deaths for no reason, since there was no reason to fight for; they believed that everything could be solved by peaceful ways.

The counter culture of the 1960s also included a great part of environmental awareness. Many people started to care more about ecology and wanted to find out ways of how to help it. This is due to the work of Marsh and Hückel, it made environmental awareness sprout and it achieved environmental reforms being passed. Books also made people more aware of the environment. Rachel's Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 gave an eloquent warning against pesticides and environmental pollution. Rachel Carson said, "Like the resource it seeks to protect, wildlife conservation must be dynamic, changing as conditions change, seeking always to become more effective." This message made Americans care more about the Earth and study it more. Environmental concern then became a popular social movement. As a result

of the growing concern for the environment and the critiques the government was getting due to the destruction of forests. Many legislative reforms took place in this decade, the most important and the ones who helped the most were the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Endangered Species Act of 1967. These acts signaled a new era of environmental consciousness due to the belief that man was not the owner of the earth but was just a guest. The Wilderness Act said that humans were no more than "visitors" on land, and the Endangered Species Act, alleged that, "nonhuman beings were granted the legal right to exist." The 1960s movement for environmental preservation is a confirmation of how aware people became of the environment.

Women in the 1950s were expected to be good mothers and wives, but women in the 1960s were the total opposite, they craved for a change in gender roles, to have freedom and will to do what they liked. This desire came with a new decade in which revolution and social change was taking place. Many women started to challenge the authority of their parents by wearing short miniskirts, smoking and drinking in public, much like the flappers of the 1920s, but with the exception that the skirts were much shorter and what they smoked were not only cigarettes. These actions, though they stirred controversy, it was not the greatest challenge against conservatives; women would live openly with men before marriage, and many also joined the work force, as a way to defy traditional ideas. All these women were inspired by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* which was a book that was a huge seller, and it helped initiate a renaissance of feminism. The *Feminine Mystique* argued that women should be allowed to find their

own identity, and not just be limited to the roles of wife and mother. Betty Friedans said, "When she stopped conforming to the conventional picture of femininity she finally began to enjoy being a woman." This statement was actually very powerful, since it initiated many women to fight for their right and stand out from the traditional image of being mothers and wives. In 1966, a new organization for woman was created in order to address issues such as having federal aid for day-care centers for working mothers who did not want to leave their babies alone and had no one to care for them. It also guaranteed women the right to an abortion if they did not want to have a baby, and they also worked on eliminating gender-based job discrimination, including equal pay and equal opportunities in labor force. This organization was the National Organization for Women (NOW.) The 1960s counterculture included the liberation of women and a new found freedom for them, for the first time, women were stepping out of traditional ideas and fighting for equality in the work force.

The counter culture of the 1960s also initiated a sexual revolution, in which people were much more open about sex and sexual ideas. The pill was put into use during this decade and it assisted the spread of the sexual revolution. The use of other birth control measures, such as diaphragms and IUDs, also increased. The famous magazine Playboy introduced its "Playboy Adviser" column. This column offered explicit advice and guidance to readers who seeked new and more imaginative ways of having sexual intercourse. Soon, books and magazines started to include sex and sex discussions in their pages. Helen Gurley Brown wrote *Sex and the Single Girl* , which was a message of female sexual liberation that it later became *Cosmopolitan*

magazine. Plays also played a great part in the sexual revolution, *Hair* was a rock musical that featured frontal nudity, the play became a hit in New York and it was proof that times were changing. Giving in to change, sex shops were legalized in the 1960s, though they were restricted to men, it was still a great change for the time. Many people started to be more open minded, and the idea that a woman would not be able to find a husband if she was not a virgin, became absurd. With people being more open minded about sex, new sexual preferences started to become known such as homosexuals and lesbians. Although they were not fully accepted they started to push for rights and they achieved more than in the past decades. People started to be more casual about sex and less uncomfortable in discussing it. Before the 1960s the word pregnant was forbidden on television. The sexual revolution was a huge part of the 1960s counter culture, because most of the changes that occurred in that time were because of this revolution.

Though The " Summer of Love" took place over thirty years ago, its message is still significant and crucial to know and understand about the 1960s counterculture that the hippies incited. We get an idea of this with Abbie Hoffman's words, she said :

" We are here to make a better world.

No amount of rationalization or blaming can preempt the moment of choice each of us brings to our situation here on this planet. The lesson of the 60's is that people who cared enough to do right could change history.

We didn't end racism but we ended legal segregation.

We ended the idea that you could send half-a-million soldiers around the world to fight a war that people do not support.

We ended the idea that women are second-class citizens.

We made the environment an issue that couldn't be avoided.

The big battles that we won cannot be reversed. We were young, self-righteous, reckless, hypocritical, brave, silly, headstrong and scared half to death.

And we were right.”

“ Counterculture of the Sixties”- North Hagerstown High School A. P. U. S. History

<http://library.thinkquest.org/27942/counter.htm>

Primary source: *Haight-Ashbury Maverick* , “ Notes to Tourists: Roll Down Your Windows,” newspaper article, 1967.