

WHERE ARE ALL THE HIPPIES?

In 1968, the youth of the United States were defining their generation with peace protests, open love, and rock music that was meant to shock. Students protested the lack of free speech in their schools. The Rolling Stones were getting sympathy for the devil, and the Beatles were holding a benefit for Mr. Kite. Bobby Kennedy was dead, Johnson wasn't running, and America was just getting a taste of what seven more years in Vietnam was going to be like.



The backlash against a raging war overseas and surging racial tensions at home created the self-proclaimed peace-loving Hippie culture. Then something happened; the culture began to die. A huge part of the generation that went to the moon began to crumble like the Columbia. Now, 1968 is 40 years in the past. In the modern day rush of technology and strident political warfare, the hippies seem to have died off. But is that the whole truth? Is the hippie culture still alive? If not, who killed it?

Part I: What Caused The Decline of Hippie Culture?

What can cause a culture to die? For Hippie culture, the concert at Altamont and time were both highly damaging forces. No one can honestly claim that they know exactly what caused the decline of the Hippie culture. But it can't hurt to venture an educated guess.



In 1969, the peace and love movement was shattered by one event: the murder at Altamont. This concert was put on by the Rolling Stones, and is considered to be second only to Woodstock in historical importance. Altamont was perhaps best described by Keith Richards:

The violence, just in front of the stage was incredible. Looking back I don't think it was a good idea to have Hell's Angels there... The trouble is it's a problem for us either way. If you don't have them to work for you as stewards, they come anyway and cause trouble. But to be fair, out of the whole 300 Angels working as stewards, the vast majority did what they were supposed to do, which was to regulate the crowds as much as possible without causing any trouble. But there were about ten or twenty who were completely out of their minds -- trying to drive their motorcycles through the middle of the crowds. (Rolling Stone Magazine)

Richards' comment is a tragic reflection on the occasion. During the concert at Altamont, the Hell's Angels gang brutally murdered Meredith Hunter, a fan who had come to enjoy the music and atmosphere.. The event was captured by cameramen who were there to film *Gimme Shelter*, a documentary on the Rolling Stones. For a movement so centered in peace, a murder at one of the hippies' biggest events was a huge blow to the hippie movement.



However, as Tanya Harjan, a self-described "Hippie kid" recalls, the vibes had already started to fade. "[In] 1968 Haight Street was being boarded up. Runaways were flocking. They've always been flocking but they were coming in droves. Umm, lot of speed was hitting the street. Lot of guys were out there harassing women whereas that didn't seem to be happening before" (Harjan, Tanya). Harjan grew up in Menlo Park during the 1960s, but as she remembers it, it wasn't all bad after 1968:

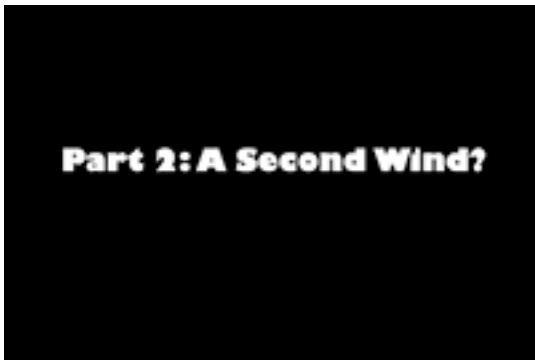
1969 was better somehow. Even though Altamont happened, there was still a lot of environmental consciousness happening. That's when I got my environmental consciousness. That's when it really kicked in for me. That's when I started growing organic vegetables and doing yoga and studying Zen Buddhism and what have you."

The hippie culture lived on past the disasters of Altamont and the decline of the Haight community. The radicalism was toned down. People began to move beyond their years of peace and love. Harjan remembers that "people began to leave. They began to go to Marin or Oregon. That's where a lot of the old hippies went to die. Or do something else. Altamont, like I said, kind of sealed the deal."



into rivulets, it'll do it.”

Part 2: A second wind?



But the hippies had not simply disappeared forever – it could never be that simple. According to Arthur Saltzman, a Ph.D. at Missouri Southern State University, the hippie movement began with the beatniks in the fifties. It was not simply going to disappear after nearly two decades of influence and popularity. Harjan notes that the hippie culture “sort of splintered off. And maybe parts of it have run dormant. It’s like blocking off a stream, the water’s gonna go wherever it can go and if it has to split off

As Harjan indicates, the hippie culture never totally died out. Today, there are far fewer self-described hippies than there were at the height of the peace movement, but it’s far from being dead. The Boomer generation is largely still alive. Those who withstood the mass defection of the early 70’s are, for the most part still living somewhat as they were in the glory days of free love. However, some things suggest that there is a revival of the hippie values. If that is the condition of the original hippies, are we

getting new ones?



With the exception of Freetown Christiania, the large, autonomous commune within Copenhagen, Denmark, The Peninsula School in Menlo Park is probably the one of the few places where young people continue to embrace hippie culture. Founded in 1925 by Josephine Duvencck, Peninsula School does not advertise itself as a hippie factory. The school is self-described as alternative, founded on Quaker values. Kids don’t need to wear shoes. They aren’t given homework before 5th grade. Students call their teachers by their first names and

there exists a strong bond of trust between students and faculty. The main focus of the school is the community and fostering of the whole child.



The academic growth of a child need not come at the cost of emotional, social and creative development. Students learn to weave and make clay pots right after learning times tables and chemistry. The campus has little cement, and children are free to play in the mud. There is a certain sense of responsibility expected of and instilled in every youngster, learned over time through group trips and activities. By the time students are in eighth grade, they go camping for seven nights at a campsite

that they choose democratically.



Many of the teachers there would describe themselves as hippies, and as a result the school never lost the environmental activism it picked up in the 1960s and 1970s. There is also strong support for

social equality; students are encouraged to “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.”



Tanya Harjan is a graduate of the school, and 4 of her nieces and nephews have also attended Peninsula. “I think that what Peninsula School is fostering is a very strong environmental awareness, and social awareness and importance of compassion and creativity. And in that sense yes, they might be fostering some kind of hybrid [hippie] maybe,” As

all of the current students were born well into the 1990s, calling them hippies would be anachronistic. However, Peninsula School produces students who largely embody the modern remnants of the hippie movement.

Another possible form of a hippie revival can be found in green movements, the rising popularity of yoga, and local or organic food movements. The green movement has experienced its largest period of growth since the foundation of Earth Day in April of 1970 (Hayes, Denis). In 2008, seven of the ten most popular cars sold were sedans, not the sport utility vehicles that still seem to dominate the road (Forbes). “Carbon footprint” became a popular phrase among teenagers and politicians alike. Environmentalism was a central aspect to the hippie culture. Could this new interest in going green possibly mean a revival, or is it just marketing? There seems to be a large contribution of both.



The green movement has certainly got a marketing aspect to it. If you drive around, you may occasionally notice bumper stickers saying something like “My carbon footprint has been balanced by *TerraPass*”. *TerraPass* is a “green business” that “works with project developers to develop greenhouse gas reduction projects in a variety of industries” (*TerraPass.com*). When someone invests in *TerraPass*, they contribute money toward “greening” the business practices of companies it partners with. It is important to note that *TerraPass* is

not a non-profit, but a corporation. Whether *TerraPass* honorably fights global warming or merely sells a “get out of jail free card” for your conscience is a matter of interpretation.

TerraPass tries to embody a hippie value; however it does so for profit. *TerraPass* is not alone in this endeavor. If you watch much television, you may have noticed advertisements for Apple Computer’s newest laptop. The laptop comes with a battery that according to Apple can take nearly three times more charges per battery than your average laptop. The screen is backlit with Light Emitting Diodes, which means it does not use as much power as other laptops and does not

contain any mercury (apple.com). These are all positive things that slowly help reduce our energy use. This sort of environmentally friendly technology seems as though it's an embodiment of hippie culture, however, these laptops are the most expensive ones on the market. It has some hippie values to it, but is it really an extension of hippie culture when it is so strongly based in consumerism? Another recent sign of revival is an upsurge in the practice of yoga. There haven't been many studies on the number of Americans who have participated in some form of yoga. That being said, many sources agree that there has been some form of a yoga boom within the last decade. According to Charles White, a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Religion "Various forms of yoga have become popular in the United States and Europe" (White, Charles). However, that boom is presumably attributed to yoga becoming fashionable, and not because people feel that it is part of a spiritual lifestyle they are looking to embody. Yoga is simply another trend where people acquire a 'hippie value' without truly becoming a part of the modern hippie culture.

Perhaps the most promising movement that could indicate a hippie revival is that of the urban farmers and Locavores. Urban farming is the practice of growing crops, fruit, animals in yards or on balconies and roofs in urban settings. Locavores are people who only eat things grown near to where they buy it. The limitations on the distance of their food sources vary



depending on who you talk to. According to *Newsweek's* Jessica Bennett, "Over the past few years, urban dwellers driven by the local-food movement, in cities from Seattle to Albuquerque, have flocked to the idea of small-scale backyard chicken farming—mostly for eggs, not meat—as a way of taking part in home-grown agriculture". (Bennett, Jessica) Urban farming is not something that can be accomplished easily. Chickens, corn, or whatever you choose to farm takes



maintenance and dedication.

Peninsula graduate Josh Kelly is a Locavore. He has 6 chickens and a large vegetable garden in his backyard. How strongly attached is he to his Locavore values? "I'm not going to go up to somebody and say, 'I'm not going to eat your food because I'm a Locavore.' Because I think that's really d*****baggy. I try to not impose my beliefs on others and not be really preachy," (Kelly, Josh).

For Kelly, it isn't so much about the environment. He feels the most interesting part is "the growing itself and working the land to produce food"

So What Can Be Concluded About The Condition Of Hippie Culture?

The hippie culture will never be what it once was. At best, it had peaked by 1969, and would never again see the popularity or social power that it had back then. Isolation from other like-minded people has left many hippies alone in a world that does not properly appreciate

what their culture did for this country. Harjan will occasionally “see somebody that I don’t know that I recognize as an old hippie and we kind of wink at each other and keep going. There’s no point in stopping; there’s not really much to say. We’re still out there but I personally feel like a ghost.” Even if another movement similar to the hippie movement of the 60’s were to surface, it wouldn’t be the same. As a society, we have slowly become more open to the ideals of the hippies. Over the decades, society has made a lot of the things that would be associated with the hippies very commercial. The peace sign for example is something that, according to Harjan, was “a very subversive thing”. She remembers that one of her mother’s friends was told to take a peace sign necklace off or be fired. Today, the peace sign is ubiquitous and non-threatening. However, this demonstrates a certain disintegration of hippie ideals. The modern commercialization of hippie culture is what is slowly killing it. That seems quite ominous, and it is. However, in this destruction it is important to make the distinction between the culture and the values. The culture is something that should be treasured, but there is no realistic way to preserve 1960s youth culture on a scale anywhere near to what it once was. Fortunately, the values of the hippies carry on in little niches across the world, as strong as they ever were. Places like Peninsula School instill them in everyone whoever spends any time there. Environmentalism is on the rise. Peace is as valued as it ever was. Sure, the battles for tolerance and awareness still rage on. They will continue to go on far into the future. That’s how the world is. We should thank the hippies for getting us that much closer to the completion of these battles. So what can be said about the condition of hippie culture? “It’s not dead, it’s just quiet,” (Harjan, Tanya).