

Summer of Love

I want to be where the free people are, laughing and singing on the grass near the corner of Haight and Ashbury. I want to be under the sun, radiant like the smiles of the people around me. They live as one family, their individual pasts forgotten and forgiven as they entered the city of San Francisco. The year is 1967, and the world cannot run from disaster for much longer, but these people manage to find love and peace in the midst of war and hate. They are not cowards; they are not America's spoiled children because these ideas are shared all around the world. They are pioneers, exploring a lifestyle that others dare not embrace. They play their anthems on electric guitars in the hazy evenings, flames and flashing lights illuminating the field. It is the Summer of Love, and I want nothing more than to be a part of it.

The 60's counterculture, as it was called, was composed of a generation of free thinkers who refused to pass on the neurotic nature of their parents. They understood and accepted each other, focusing on the present rather than dwelling on the traditions and standards that were followed so carefully in the past. At the heart of the movement was a pure love for humanity. Everyone shared what they had: shelter, food, clothing, or simply knowledge. All their lives, they had been taught that they needed a house, a car, and a steady job to be happy, but these dreamers were learning that all they really needed was love and a supportive community of like-minded people.

The counterculture reached its peak at the Summer of Love music festival, where nearly 75,000 people gathered. Out of the many ideologies that were expressed during this movement, one of the most appealing was the freedom from materialism. The belief was that if you had a hobby you loved and focused on, you did not need a well-paying job to be content. It is much

more fulfilling to find yourself by creating art than it is to force yourself to fit into a mold. During this summer, people encouraged each other to be aware of their existence and to affect the world in a positive way. Ideas about peace and love conquering fear and hatred were expressed through art, music, and various demonstrations. Overall, the festival represented brotherly love and the potential that humans can reach when they join together. Much like the efforts put forth by Gandhi, these people had very little money, no weapons, and no standing political influence, but they managed to change the world.

If a person looks deep enough into their heart, they can find that they too are drawn to the beliefs behind the Summer of Love. The idea of living simply and searching for joy rather than wealth is an alluring concept. Throughout history, humanity has been searching for the key to complete freedom, and I believe the closest we have ever come to that was during the summer of 1967. It wasn't perfect, but it was organic and beautiful. If I could travel back in time and experience that freedom, I would try to capture the spirit of the festival and find a way to bring it into today's society. In the words of John Lennon, "The thing the sixties did was to show us the possibilities and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn't the answer. It just gave us a glimpse of the possibility."

Bibliography:

Lennon, J. (1980, December 8). John Lennon's Last Interview [Interview by D. Sholin & L. Kaye]. In Beatlesarchive.net. Retrieved October 20, 2016, from <http://www.beatlesarchive.net/john-lennons-last-interview-december-8-1980.html>