

Drugs and the 60's

Most of the time, when thinking back to the sixties, people remember hearing about things such as sex, drugs, and rock and roll. However, what they often tend to overlook is the large emphasis "freedoms" had on the era. This does not just refer to the freedoms already possessed by every American of the time. This focuses on the youth's of America's fight to gain freedom or break away from the values and ideas left behind by the older generation. These fights were used to help push for freedoms from areas such as society's rules and values, competition, living for others first and the older generation's beliefs as a whole including the freedom to use drugs. The younger generation just wanted a chance to express their own views rather than having to constantly succumb to the values and rules left behind by the older generation.

In order to find these unique and different qualities in each other and themselves, the younger generation often turned to drugs. This was another freedom which they were required to fight for since the older generation did not support drug use as a source of pleasure or creativity.

This could basically be considered an outright rejection of the older society's values. Drugs were also seen as a freedom from reality. They enabled the youths to escape to a different kind of world. Because of the youths' great desire to achieve a universal sense of peace and harmony, drugs were sometimes a very important part of one's life. Sometimes, they would plan a day or evening around the use of a major drug so that they could enjoy it to the fullest extent. This could almost be considered ironic in the sense that while trying to gain one freedom, the ability to use drugs, the youths appeared to have lost another freedom, the ability to live their own lives. It seems more as if their lives were controlled by the drugs and the drugs' effects than by the people themselves.

The combination of defiance, revolution, and drugs created a major Hippie era. Thousands of hippies would flock to the party capitals of the world for the high of a life time. Haight-Ashbury, San Francisco, was once considered hippie central for the world. Here people would just line the streets with drug use, sex, and wild music.

Drugs such as acid, Marijuana, and PCP were serving to fuel the fires of the youth and they began to spread their message of freedom to others.

In 1967, came the "Summer of Love." This period was not unlike the previous acts of the hippies, just more intense. And to top off the hippie era, one of the largest concerts in the world took place in Woodstock, New York. During the several days of music, sex and drugs were abused heavily, almost to a point of complete stupor. But even though it may have seemed like under mayhem, it was one of the greatest moments of the 60's.

Of course to every upside there is a downside. As many innocent young people were experimenting and living days of free thought and action, loads of not so innocent abusers were arriving everyday. The scene at the Haight-Ashbury began to resemble a war zone with crime and prostitution rates rising.

Some believe that the end of this flower power generation was at 1969 Rolling Stones show in Altamont, CA. Playing a free event the Stones came on the stage with the crowd already in a violent frenzy. The climax came when

members of the Hell's Angels, used for security at the show, murdered a man that they vaguely suspected was brandishing a gun.

In the end the role of drugs in the 60's cannot be denied. Although some will say that they did not play a positive role, no one will say that drugs did not serve as a foundation of the wonderful movement of peace known as flower power.