

Rebellion of '60s, '70s still influences youth culture

The 1960s and 70s were times of rebellion in the streets of America. That rebellion ushered in pro-drug messages and a youth culture with positive aspects, such as activism, and negative aspects, such as the glamorizing of drug use. The results are still seen in youth culture today.

In an ever-changing world, youths need factual information on the consequences of drug use more than ever. Parents need to counteract the messages teens get from celebrities who keep their fame and money despite trips to rehabilitation centers.

Three days of rioting outside the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village bar, gave birth to the lesbian/gay rights movement.

Cesar Chavez emerged as a leader of the farm workers union and Chicano rights by spearheading a five-year national grape boycott, which ended in 1970 when growers finally signed a contract with workers in the field.

Women launched a revitalized movement for equality in the 60s, taking up the battle for an Equal Rights Amendment that suffragettes abandoned nearly a half century earlier.

The American Indian Movement laid siege to the village of Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1973, demanding the return of captured Indian lands. In the Pacific, the "Hawaiian renaissance" ushered in a renewed cultural and political awakening as young artists expressed themselves in their native tongue, a language which had been suppressed since Hawaii's annexation to the United States in 1900.

The topic of drug use gained greater media exposure in the 60s



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and 70s. Marijuana use peaked in 1979.

Hallucinogens were promoted as a way to achieve spiritual enlightenment. Beatles songs like "Yellow Submarine," "Strawberry Fields Forever," and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" (the initials spelled LSD) were interpreted by fans as celebrations of psychedelic drug experiences.

Messages celebrating drug use were common while factual information on the consequences was scarce. Head shops operated openly in most cities, selling drug paraphernalia, psychedelic fashions, and black light posters.

Then, as the 70s turned into the 80s, pop culture changed dramatically as the legacy of drug use became clearer. The list of performers who died of drug-related causes kept growing. Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, two performers who talked openly about escapism through drugs, died of highly publicized heroin overdoses.

Jim Morrison of The Doors, another vocal promoter of drugs, died from suspected drug use. Freddie Prinze, a young Puerto Rican comic who broke barriers with his show "Chico and the Man," committed suicide in 1977, ending a life tormented by alcohol and drug abuse.

Comic Richard Pryor nearly died after setting himself on fire while

and drugs became a serious concern. In fact, by 1986, a Gallup poll found that drugs were considered the number one problem in schools. This was the environment in which the parents and grandparents of today experienced their own youth culture. A lot has changed across the generations.

Generation Y has grown up surrounded by computerization and technology, from automatic teller machines to digital clocks. Radios and compact disc players are the size of earphones. Even sneakers are high tech.

Their environment is more multicultural than that of their parents and grandparents, and images of sex and violence continue to surround them on a daily basis.

To some youths, the Vietnam war and the assassinations of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, Medgar Evers and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are ancient history.

But they do know about Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; the attacks at the Oklahoma City Federal Building, the World Trade Center, and the Pentagon; the suicide of Kurt Cobain; and the murders of teenagers by fellow students at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Youth culture is reflected everywhere with positive and negative aspects. Some of the most positive

youth values include:

- Self-idealism/Optimism: Most youth believe they are special and can accomplish whatever they desire.

- Activism: Teens often play an active role in such issues as environmentalism and social responsibility. Teens are interested in working on a personal level to improve society.

- Morality/Spirituality: Today's teens tend to speak about the importance of spirituality and religion. According to one study, 50 percent of teens surveyed said religion plays an important part in their lives.

- Authenticity: Honesty is important to teens. They often perceive that the most authentic voices belong to those who have "been there and done that" and who have shared experiences similar to their own.

- Self-Reliance: Many of today's teens have been raised to be self-reliant and to believe in their own abilities.

These positive youth values are good news for parents. Yet, parents still have to contend with poten-

tially harmful aspects of youth culture. Even parents who know their teen's friends and carefully screen everything that their teen watches on television and every compact disc and video game that their teen plays cannot keep ALL negative messages at bay.

Much of youth culture is brimming with symbols. Some of those symbols may be relatively harmless, like peace signs and logos of expensive clothes and cars. Other symbols openly promote to youth the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs, like marijuana leaves or malt liquor logos on caps and T-shirts.

But obvious pro-drug messages aren't the only problem. There are more subtle messages that glamorize substance use and abuse in youth culture. Popular actors and actresses travel back and forth from drug rehabilitation programs to jail, then return to star in hit movies or make chart-topping recordings without any visible loss of income or popularity.

The same is true for many professional athletes, who are admired

and emulated by youths. Given all this, it's easy to see why some young people may not fully understand the risks or consequences of using alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.

Youth perception of harm associated with drug use decreased in the 90s, and youth marijuana use doubled during the decade.

The 90s saw a boom in the use of "designer drugs," modified versions of illegal drugs that were first produced in the 60s by underground chemists. They were made illegal in the 80s, but their use has now become associated with "raves," all-night dance parties usually held in old warehouses and abandoned buildings.

Designer drugs like ecstasy, GHB, and special K are often more potent than the original substance they mimic. Just one dose can cause major brain damage and even death.

These are the reasons it is important for parents to stay informed, keep the lines of communication open and give their teens clear no-use messages.

club news

The Lowell Coleman Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars held its April meeting on April 24 at the Post home. In the absence of the president, Jo Ann Wahrman called the meeting to order. Eleven members were present.

Projects reported on for the month of April and upcoming in May included the following: care packages sent to a dozen service personnel with ties to our community, \$25 donated to the Ronald McDonald House in Denver and \$25 donated to the Run Across Kansas.

The run is a group of students from the Kansas City area who run from St. Francis to Topeka over Memorial Day weekend. They are raising money for veterans, although one or more important side benefits is that they stay at Veterans of Foreign Wars posts along the way and get acquainted with veterans and their sense of history.

The auxiliary will be helping to host the luncheon on the 18th of

May in Oakley for the Run for the Wall motorcycle group. This group rides from California to Washington D.C. for Memorial Day.

Along the way, they promote the awareness of Prisoners of War/Missing in Action and veterans' issues. They will be riding through Goodland around 9:30 that Sunday morning. It would be nice to see people waving flags on the overpasses in support of their efforts.

The auxiliary will also be furnishing rolls for the achievement breakfast May 6 at the high school. Local scholarships will be awarded at graduation to seniors whose parents or grandparents belong to the post or auxiliary.

Flags will be presented to the AFS students as part of the flag exchange at graduation.

The charter was draped in memory of Dena Schwerdtfeger. Memorial Day services will be held in Brewster, Goodland and Kanorado. Volunteers are needed to help with the color guard that day. Contact

Rita Erickson or Jo Ann Wahrman if you'd be able to help with that project.

The Ninth District spring convention was held on Sunday, April 27, at Grinnell. Several members from the local auxiliary attended that meeting. While there, Barb Whisler was installed as the Ninth District Senior Vice President; Bill Selby was installed as the Ninth District Commander; and Alyssa Mason was given a plaque and check for her Ninth District winning Voice of Democracy speech.

If you the mother, wife, sister, grandmother, daughter or granddaughter of military personnel who have served overseas in time of conflict, you are eligible for membership in the auxiliary.

The club's purpose is to support veterans and their families. Now is definitely a time of need for that mission. Contact Floriene Whisnant, Barb Whisler or Jo Ann Wahrman for more information about the value of the organization.





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