



Make Love Not War

by
Dug

(Originally appeared in Scratch Magazine)



Being born the year Albert Einstein and James Dean died makes me a really old, romantic fuck. By the late '60s and early '70s my older sister, the flower child, was letting me tag along to love-ins and listen to Strawberry Alarm Clock. In case you didn't know, a love-in was a gathering of idealistic young people in a local park. Bikers would pound out a beat on upended trashcans while patchouli-scented hippies would play flutes and dance the slow, methodical dervish of the Dead fans.

It was here that I developed my sense of style and the core of my political beliefs. Dressing in fringed, knee-high moccasins, a serape, and bell-bottoms with rainbow inserts in the legs was my idea of clothing. My idea of politics was railing against the devil of my age, the Republican President known as "Tricky Dick Nixon". It's fittingly ironic that his most memorable photo op was his hunch-backed "victory" pose. He was famous for thrusting his hands in the air with peace signs and gleefully glaring at the audience with his beady little eyes. He was infamous for his CIA-generated enemies list that included half the Democratic Party. This human abomination was the leader of the most powerful country in the world in 1968.

The youth of America rose up. We would gather hand in hand at local colleges and sing peace songs and make protest speeches. Inevitably, the police or National Guard would arrive and begin the tear gas bombardment. Fleeing from the choking, stinging smoke was a rush in itself. We were standing for something we believed in, linked together in a noble quest to end the war in Vietnam, as well as ending poverty, bigotry, and ecological disaster.

I believed in our country and the inherent good in all mankind. Though Nixon turned the guns of the National Guard upon his own people and executed students at Kent State, Jackson State, and the Chicago Democratic Convention, we always believed we would win in the end. One out of every thirty students in my high school graduation class died in Vietnam. Many of those who didn't die came back broken, like my sister's friend, the tank driver, who would get drunk at the beach and tell us about how they had a game to see who could run over the most Viet Cong skulls, or my close friend who had the unenviable job of machine-gunning anything that moved in the napalm flames from the safety of a helicopter door.

We did have our successes. Woodstock was a milestone. Half a million people gathered together to prove that a nation of people could exist on music and idealistic dreams. The war churned on and became ever more unpopular as the American people learned that our country wasn't so much the great white hope of freedom as a country scrambling to protect the interests of the Goodyear rubber industry. The military used the war like Hitler and Mussolini had used the Spanish Civil War, as a testing ground for the latest

weapons and strategies. Our Air Force was ecstatic that it could test the new generation of jets against real Russian and Chinese pilots. The orgy of senseless destruction ended when we left and gave the country back to the Vietnamese.

In the end we may have lost the war, but we changed the hearts of the American people with the protests. Some of our troops came home. There were over 50,000 young Americans killed in the war and countless numbers of Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians. There were casualties on the home front as well, as the culture that professed free love, peace, and individuality also brought with it an unhealthy dose of drug and alcohol abuse. Hendrix, Joplin, and Morrison all got sucked into the abyss, while other heroes like Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King got taken out by fear and ignorance. A little bit of America died with the end of the hippie generation.

Disco, new wave, and punk came and went. Now we belong to a different generation. It's a Woodstock nation where the citizens riot and burn down concession stands. It's a crowd that rallies behind a fat guy in a red baseball cap whose biggest statement was "Give me something to break!" It's a country run by another Republican tyrant, the son of the head of the CIA.

The leader of the most powerful nation in the world today is the king of doublespeak. He has a "Clear Skies" bill that will allow more air pollution than ever. He has a "Healthy Forests" bill that will allow more logging in our National Parks and Forests than ever before. He has a "Leave No Child Behind" bill that will drastically cut the funds to schools, leaving every child behind. And he has a bone to pick with the same evil despot that his father picked a bone with. I'm not saying that evil despots should not be removed from power...but if we're getting rid of the likes of Kim Jong Il and Saddam Hussein...let's not forget George Bush Jr. and Dick Cheney.

The colorblind society we envisioned in the '60s has turned into a multi-cultural hate stew where the slightest misstep is a capital crime. The folksy protest songs of the Vietnam era about peace and love have turned into today's anthems of angst and despair. A society that once put flowers in the barrels of the National Guard guns is now required to carry a handgun in every glove box.

This is a generation that grew up on cell phones, video games, and computers. Drugs like crack and crystal meth fuel the senseless anger in the inner cities. Our over-caffeinated lifestyles have us rushing headlong towards our own Gotterdammerung. Yet amidst all the sturm and drang of the new millennium, there is a glimmer of hope.

In the first organized protests against the rush to war in Iraq, 200,000 citizens rallied at the capitol mall. 80,000 people protested the same day in San Francisco. At the same time, in the ultra-conservative bastion of the Richard Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, 800 people chanted "Impeach Bush".

While our planet bleeds through the ozone hole over Australia our President refuses to join the other nations on earth to stop global warming. Young people climb into trees and

risk arrest to keep them from being destroyed. Earth First! members lay their lives on the line to stop the ecological terrorism being visited upon the environment by our President and his oil cronies.

There is a moment in every human's life when the choice they make will change history. That moment is now. The time is yours. Rise up and be heard. I still have a dream. Walk hand in hand in the streets. Love your fellow man. Save the planet. Stop the madness. Make love...not war.