

Victorian mansions in the neighborhood. Both bands played numerous free concerts in nearby Golden Gate Park.²³

In January 1967 Allen Cohen, Ron Thelin, Allen Ginsberg, and others promoted the Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park. Seeking to bridge radicals and hippies, Cohen called for “a union of love and activism.” The idea was to impress authorities by attracting large numbers of young people to a big party with plentiful shared food, alcohol, and drugs, including marijuana and LSD, along with free rock music and poetry readings. “Human Be-In” was a play on *human being*, but it also meant that it was acceptable just to exist in the present. Shortly afterward, Richard Alpert announced the philosophy of “Be Here Now.” Calling for a “Pow-Wow” and “A Gathering of the Tribes,” the Be-In poster featured an Indian on a horse. To hippies, Indians were pure in spirit, primitives liberated from Western civilization, and true Americans. As part of the search for authenticity, the counter-culture tried to gain depth by absorbing others’ wisdom. On the poster the Native American carried an electric guitar, but it was not plugged in.²⁴

The crowd was estimated at around twenty thousand. The Beat poet Gary Snyder officially opened the event by blowing on a conch shell, and Ginsberg chanted “om,” which he had learned in India. Timothy Leary attended. Wearing white clothes with a flower in his ear, the stoned psychologist famously advised: “Tune in, turn on, drop out.” Leary later explained that he wanted young Americans to tune into their feelings, get turned on by the music, and then drop out of the middle-class rat race, but most people at the Be-In thought Leary meant that they should take acid that day. Owsley Stanley passed out acid.

²³ On media discovery of the Haight in 1966 see Maitland Zane, “Trouble in the City’s New Bohemia,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 15, 1966, 1, 6; Nicholas von Hoffman, “A New Drug Culture Is Burgeoning,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 1966, E1; Ed Denson, “Folk Scene,” *Berkeley Barb*, November 4, 1966, 4; “The Nitty-Gritty Sound,” *Newsweek*, December 19, 1966, 102.

²⁴ David Farber essay in Melvin Small and William D. Hoover, eds., *Give Peace a Chance* (Syracuse, NY, 1992), 15 (Cohen quote); Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 7–10. Rick Griffin’s poster is in Grushkin, *Art of Rock*, 197.

A good deal of LSD was consumed, and the Dead, the Airplane, and other bands played loud and long. When the political radical Jerry Rubin tried to give a speech, the crowd ignored it. Rubin's angry tone scared Garcia, who asked, "Why enter this closed society and make an effort to liberalize it? Why not just leave it and go someplace else?" Hell's Angels protected the sound system. "We had no idea there were so many of us," one attendee later said.²⁵

The success of the Be-In led to an interesting philosophical discussion about the meaning of what was happening among Snyder, Ginsberg, Leary, and Alan Watts on Watts's houseboat in nearby Sausalito. The "houseboat summit" was recorded, and Allen Cohen printed the transcript in the *Oracle*. Ginsberg believed that the Be-In validated the Beat search for individual happiness and demonstrated a widespread following among the emergent hippies. He saw value in drugs, music, and community in the search for spirituality, but after his 1963 spiritual epiphany, he no longer emphasized drugs. Snyder, heavily influenced by his eleven years in the Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan, stressed the spiritual significance of the moment, and Alan Watts, the student of Eastern religions who had settled in the Bay Area, concurred. In contrast, Leary believed that LSD would change the world one stoned mind at a time. "I want no part of mass movements," he declared. "I think this is the error that the leftist activists are making." The high priest of acid sought spiritual enlightenment through drug-induced psychological transformation.²⁶

²⁵ Helen S. Perry, *The Human Be-In* (New York, 1970); Greenfield, *Leary*, 302 (Leary quote); Gair, *American Counterculture*, 302 (Garcia quote); Herbie Greene interview in Hayes, ed., *Tripping*, 153 (attendee quote). See also "Hippies Run Wild-Jailed," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner-Chronicle*, January 15, 1967, sec. 1, 1; David Swanston, "Human Be-In's Aftermath," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 16, 1967, 3; Ed Denson, "What Happened at the Hippening," *Berkeley Barb*, January 20, 1967, 1, 4, 7; Herbert Gold, "Where the Action Is," *New York Times Magazine*, February 19, 1967, 1, 50-2; Jann Wenner, "The Gathering of the Tribes," *Sunday Ramparts*, January 29, 1967, 4; "Dropouts with a Mission," *Newsweek*, February 6, 1967, 92, 95.

²⁶ *San Francisco Oracle*, #7, March-April 1967; Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York, 2012), 57-69; Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 12 (quote), 126.

The San Francisco Be-In stimulated later Be-Ins in other cities, including Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., Seattle, and Detroit. Drawing much curiosity from the media, the Be-Ins marked the point where the hippie movement gained widespread public notice. Most of these outdoor events took place after warm spring weather had arrived. There was little interest in being zonked out in the snow on LSD. At this point, being a hippie seemed to be mostly about having a good time. Pot and acid were just new vehicles to achieve an altered state of being previously attained by Americans primarily through alcohol. There certainly was a generation gap, as parents wondered why their own children could not accept drinking as the normal way to get high. But while the children never truly rejected alcohol, they added these new drugs to set themselves apart as a new generation. The children also sensed that picking a new drug of choice was about more than just getting high. LSD was fun, but perhaps it was about more than having fun. Leary's advice to "drop out"

expressed young Americans' discontent with the status quo, but his quotable quip did not in itself state the logical next point, which was a spiritual quest.²⁷

They were called the *love generation*, a label they accepted. "We assert the right to enjoy ourselves," wrote one enthusiast, "which is the right to love." The *San Francisco Oracle* called for "the freedom of the body, the pursuit of joy, and the expansion of consciousness." Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were being transformed. Tuli Kupferberg (1923–2010) of the Fugs rock band declared, "Sensory gratification and love are the first desiderata." What was needed was "a revolution of love." The young were hated because they "love more, fuck more, take more drugs." But all of the talk about love may have been camouflage. "The call for love is a cry for help," Margot Adler's father warned his daughter. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) affirmed that the Beatles saw love as the antidote to loneliness. Bob Dylan, too, waged war against the lonely self. Middle-class white youth felt the self was a void; they tried to fill the empty space with the blues, black language, Indian mysticism, nostalgic clothes, and American Indian shamans.²⁸

Kupferberg noted, "Man's true life is inside." He later elaborated, "The real revolution is the revolution that occurs within you." This concern for the interior, derived from psychedelic experiences, permeated the counterculture. In 1968 the Hornsby College art students in London issued a counterculture manifesto: "Revolution of thought and feeling is the only permanent revolution. A structure can only work so long as it grows out of

²⁷ Other Be-Ins are in Francine Grace, "A Groovy Time at Human Be-In," *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1967, E8; Willard Clopton Jr., "The Be-In," *Washington Post*, April 2, 1967, B2; "Hippies Turn Out for Be-In," *Seattle Times*, April 2, 1967, 3; Scott Salsenek, "Love-In," *Detroit Fifth Estate*, May 15, 1967, 1, 5. On the New York Be-In see Bernard Weinraub, "10,000 Chant Love," *New York Times*, March 27, 1967, 1, 24; Don McNeill, "Central Park Rite Is Medieval Pageant," *Village Voice*, March 30, 1967, 1, 20.

²⁸ Jerry Rosenfield letter, *Berkeley Barb*, March 17, 1967, 6 (first quote); *Oracle* quoted in Troy, *Captain Trips*, 95; Tuli Kupferberg, "The Love of Politics and the Politics of Love," *Berkeley Barb*, April 14, 1967, 8; Margot Adler, *Heretic's Heart* (Boston, 1997), 202; Nicholas K. Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows* (Chicago, 2000), 77, 110, 130.

feeling.” Citing “imagination” as the key, the students declared, “Anyone, anywhere, can create this revolution.” The revolution in feelings caught the attention of John Sinclair, the radical manager of the MC5 band. “We have to establish a situation on this planet,” he wrote, “where all people can feel good all the time.” Rock music was always about feelings. Only the lyrics were about understanding, and they were less important. The call for a revolution in feelings suggested that the counterculture was more of an offshoot of the mainstream than it ever wanted to admit. Affirmation could be found in a sign carried at a street happening in Berkeley: “Jesus was a hippy.”²⁹

The psychedelic young, unlike their alcohol-drinking parents, were on a spiritual quest. Aldous Huxley had been the first user of psychedelic substances to understand this potential. Ginsberg had concurred, and so had Leary and his assistant, Richard Alpert, as soon as the pair had left Harvard. After undergoing an LSD-prompted spiritual crisis at Leary’s Millbrook estate, Alpert had fled to India, embraced a mishmash of Indian religious ideas, and returned to the United States as the spiritual leader Ram Dass. Deemphasizing drugs as the means to spiritual fulfillment, Dass nevertheless believed that psychedelics could, if administered as religious sacraments, aid the user in the search for spiritual fulfillment. Even before leaving Millbrook, Leary had reached a similar conclusion. After a brief stay in India, Leary tried to bring religious ideas, especially concerning the interrelatedness of everybody and everything, into his lectures on psychedelics. By the late 1960s he publicly advocated a personal spiritual search using meditation, chants, yoga, and prayer rather than drugs, but at the same time he continued to take large quantities of LSD. Leary’s public emphasis upon nondrug spirituality

²⁹ Tuli Kupferberg, “The Love of Politics and the Politics of Love,” *Berkeley Barb*, April 14, 1967, 8, and Kupferberg interview, *Berkeley Barb*, May 12, 1967, 8; art students in Andrew Wilson essay in Grunenberg and Harris, eds., *Summer of Love*, 91; Sinclair in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, eds., *Takin’ It to the Streets* (New York, 1995), 301; Simon Frith, *Sound Effects* (New York, 1981), 14; Jesus sign in “Berkeley Hips Warm,” *Berkeley Barb*, April 14, 1967, 4.

may have had more to do with his legal problems over a drug bust than his beliefs.³⁰

Many young Americans were in spiritual crisis in the mid-Sixties. “American churchmen,” concluded one observer, “seemed to have neither the patience nor the fortitude to deal with people who were, well, *unsettled*.” Certainly youthful dissatisfaction with bland mainstream Protestantism played a role, and the sudden changes in post-Vatican II Catholicism jarred many Roman Catholics. The civil rights movement, especially as advocated by Martin Luther King Jr., suggested that religion and secular life should be more connected. The Cold War had produced a permanent war fever, the Vietnam War raised troubling questions, and many young people were terrified of nuclear war. Lacking a long-term perspective, young Americans lived lives of great anxiety that bordered on desperation, even though objective evidence did not support extreme fear. Psychic anxiety required religious reassurance, but existing religions failed to heal. “Do your own thing,” wrote the hippie journalist Jerry Hopkins. “Be what you are. If you don’t know what you are, find out.” Youth was ripe for a religious revival, but the inadequacy of existing religious institutions propelled a spiritual longing that brought a search for spirituality from nonorthodox sources, whether psychedelic drugs or Eastern religions.³¹

The spiritual quest was never systematic. Like the Beats and beatniks, hippies knew what they disliked – orthodox, traditional religion. In the Sixties the young had only a vague idea of what they wanted. They took LSD to gain insights that they believed would inform the necessary spiritual search, but in pursuing

³⁰ On Dass see Colette Dowling, “Confessions of an American Guru,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 4, 1977, 41ff; Don Lattin, *The Harvard Psychedelic Club* (New York, 2010), 115–18, 149–58. On Leary see Lattin, *Harvard Psychedelic Club*, 119–26, 131–3; Greenfield, *Leary*, 226–32, 279–90, 297–307, 342–3, 370–3.

³¹ Warren Hinckle quoted in his “Hippies,” 17; Hopkins in Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 13. In general see Robert S. Ellwood, *The Sixties Spiritual Awakening* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1994); James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties* (New York, 1997); Steven M. Tipton, *Getting Saved from the Sixties* (Berkeley, 1982).

spirituality, they mostly rejected existing religious systems. To adopt a system would be to substitute a new orthodoxy for the existing orthodoxy, which would inhibit further explorations and change. Disinterested in theology, philosophy, or other organized thought, hippies borrowed methods to express feelings or handle emotions from various non-Western religions. Individual spirituality came from the quest for authenticity. Gary Snyder advocated Zen Buddhism's meditation; Alan Watts favored "Beat Zen" to throw off repression. Hippies mixed Zen practices with Mahayana Buddhism, which stressed unity of material and spiritual worlds, and Tantric Hinduism, which promoted sex.³²

Native American shamans were also favored, especially if they used peyote or "magic" mushrooms. Carlos Castaneda, an anthropology graduate student at UCLA, tracked down Don Juan, a native healer in a remote part of Mexico. Castaneda, unlike many hippies, wanted more than to sample the shaman's drugs. Rather, he asked Don Juan, a Yaqui Indian, to teach Castaneda to become a shaman. The elder resisted, which the pupil interpreted as an expression of Don Juan's desire to prevent his secrets from falling into an outsider's hands. Later, after Castaneda had gained the leader's trust, the young American realized that Don Juan's reluctance was rooted in the shaman's fear that the rationally educated Castaneda could not handle the power of the drug-induced challenge to the Western belief system that the healer accepted. In the end, potent drugs and clashing worldviews caused Castaneda to have a shattering, life-altering experience.³³

Exotic travel allowed escape from an oppressive present and made possible transformation of the self. Favorite destinations included Marrakesh, the Ganges River in India, and the mountains of Nepal. Spiritual seekers went for low costs, cheap drugs, and the presence of religious holy men. Memories were not always fond. About young Americans in Nepal, Kate Coleman recalled, "Almost everyone I met was a seeker and a moron."

³² Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 133-4.

³³ Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan* (Berkeley, 1968).

Perhaps it was better to stay home and found a new religious group: Children of God, Hare Krishnas, Brotherhood of the Source, Brotherhood of the Sun, Synanon (which used faith and community to end drug addiction), Unification Church, People's Temple (Jim Jones, who later poisoned his followers), Church of All Worlds (followers of Robert Heinlein's *Strangers in a Strange Land*), or the Love Israel Family. They started as Dionysian hippies in the Haight, became Jesus Freaks, and resettled as primitive Christians in the Pacific Northwest.³⁴

The counterculture challenged not only orthodox religion but also orthodox views about society, politics, and individual psychology. Hippies were big fans of the radical Scots psychiatrist R. D. Laing. In the widely read *The Politics of Experience* (1967), he argued that mental illness did not truly exist. Rather, the concept was entirely a political construct of a deeply disturbed society. If a person was maladjusted, it was not due, as Freud had argued, to problems in the womb or with parents in childhood. Rather, the problem was the deep alienation of the self that was natural in present-day society. The self-preservation of the existing order required the political system to incarcerate nonconformists, including drug users, in mental hospitals.

Some in the counterculture preferred science-based therapeutic systems to work out their needs. Abraham Maslow's Human Potential Movement was rooted in Viennese psychiatry, which continued to enjoy prestige in the Sixties. Maslow's emphasis on the need for individual self-transformation resonated with hippies. Frederic Perls's Gestalt Therapy offered a similar promise. Perls said, "Do your own thing." In contrast, Werner Erhardt's seminar training, popularly called EST, stressed the need for self-control. After caffeinating recruits on coffee, EST refused to allow them to go to the restroom. Being able to endure the resultant discomfort was taken as proof of the triumph of self over

³⁴ J. Anthony Lukas, "Beatniks Flock to Nepal," *New York Times*, December 26, 1966, 1, 11; Ralph Blumenthal, "In Tangier," *New York Times*, December 26, 1966, 1, 10; Joshua Eppinger Jr., "Exploring the Road to Marrakesh," *San Francisco Sunday Examiner-Chronicle*, December 7, 1969, T4; Coleman interview in Hayes, ed., *Tripping*, 228; MacFarlane, *Hippie Narrative*, 99-100.

a primitive biological function. Drugs were welcome in many therapeutic systems. The principal place for exploration was the Esalen Institute at Big Sur, California. Joan Baez lived there for a time, and Bob Dylan satirized the setting in “Desolation Row.”³⁵

Hippies also escaped from mainstream values with the fiction they read. They devoured J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, which gained huge sales when published in the United States in 1965. A retreat to Middle Earth meant living a mental life inside a moral world devoid of Western hypocrisy and confusion. Hippies also read Herman Hesse, especially the novel *Siddhartha*. A German writer, Hesse had absorbed the East as an idea signifying a state of soul. This technique plunged the self into an exotic cultural milieu in which counterculture adherents could free themselves from mainstream values. But exoticism could also be guilt-driven, a search for mystic primitivism, or a form of neocolonialism. In the Sixties youthful Americans were looking for salvation by seeking out the “other,” for example, by wearing headbands to become white Indians, by embracing Eastern religious practices, or by becoming a Hindu or Zen mystic. India particularly appealed because it represented a “third way” in the Cold War. The adoption of Indian otherness enabled an indirect comment on politics.³⁶

The counterculture also used non-Western music to sidestep the mainstream. For example, Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit” (1966) opened with an exotic section that resembled Ravel’s “Bolero,” which was widely played on radio during the Sixties. “Bolero” was exotic because of its flamenco flavor. While the “Bolero” motive in “White Rabbit” was proudly macho, the guitar solo was seductive, intoxicating, and almost uncontrollable. Grace Slick’s vocal line mimicked the guitar’s thrusts and turns. Lyrics urged being otherworldly by taking drugs and withdrawing from society. Slick’s words conquered the “Bolero” line,

³⁵ Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men* (New York, 1984), 88–94 (quote at 94); Robert V. Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla* (New York, 1989), 61. See also Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen* (Chicago, 2007).

³⁶ Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 61–4, 88–90.

which suddenly switched to European harmony. In other words, Alice's drug world felt most comfortable when Western harmony intruded. The final admonition to hallucinate took place over Western harmony. But the ending provided no resolution and no clarification. Slick signaled individual discovery, but danger, too. The song suggested escalation with no end in sight – precisely where the United States was headed in Vietnam in 1966.³⁷

In many respects, 1967 marked the peak of the hippie movement, which was strange in two respects. The idea had barely existed or been noticed in 1966, and hippies continued to be important, even growing in numbers in 1968 and 1969, and then the movement trailed off in the 1970s. Most articles about hippies in major newspapers appeared between 1967 and 1970. But 1967 was important for another reason. San Francisco experienced the "Summer of Love," and thousands of hippies, many of them teenage runaways and bored high school students, crowded into the Haight to listen to music, have sex, and take drugs, especially LSD. An estimated seventy-five thousand young people passed through San Francisco that summer. Most stayed only a week or two. A crash pad for runaways opened, but many hippies chose to live on the street, which became dangerous, as thugs moved into the area, especially late at night. A free hotline was set up, so parents could try to contact children, and so children could reassure parents that they were safe.³⁸

³⁷ Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 65–75; Simon Reynolds essay in Grunenberg, ed., *Summer of Love*, 155.

³⁸ This conclusion is based on an electronic search of articles about hippies in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Seattle Times*. On the Haight see Richard Goldstein, "A Reason for Hippies," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 5, 1967, 1, 12–13; Jack Viets, "Hippies Begin Their Summer of Love," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 22, 1967, 1, 14; Carolyn Anspacher, "Hippies in Danger," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 27, 1967, 1, 12; Jeff Jassen, "Violence Flares on Street of Love," *Berkeley Barb*, June 2, 1967, 1; Hunter S. Thompson, "The Hashbury Is the Capital of the Hippies," *New York Times Magazine*, May 14, 1967, 14ff. See also Nicholas von Hoffman's fifteen-part series in the *Washington Post*, October 15–29, 1967. The seventy-five thousand estimate is in Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties* (New York, 1999), 98. On the phone hotline see George Gilbert, "Hot Line between Hip and Straight," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 10, 1967, 1, 11.