

Hippies and Rastas: Long Lost Cousins in the Quest for Change

They emerged from dramatically different times and continents, yet the Hippie and Rastafari movements seem almost destined to cross paths and align like long lost cousins. This convergence hints at a deeper, universal impulse simmering within humanity - the urge to forge new ways of living and being in the world.

Origins

The Hippie movement first blossomed in the U.S. during the tumult of the 1960s, as baby boomers came of age questioning the dominant values of post-war society – its blind allegiance to consumerism, Nine-To-Five drudgery, and dedication to militarism typified by the Vietnam War. Many white, middle-class college kids found themselves allergic to these establishment values.

Meanwhile in 1930s Jamaica, an alternate worldview took root amongst the island's poor black population. Drawing from Old Testament Christianity, Pan-African political thought, and the crowning of Haile Selassie as Emperor of Ethiopia, a distinct ethos emerged – one clenching onto concepts of black identity, pride, and deliverance from white colonial oppression. Rastafari was conceived.

So on the face it's an unlikely pairing – white American hippies enjoying the fruits of the world's most prosperous country, and economically-deprived Jamaican Rastas forging an ideology from the bitter history of slavery and colonialism.

Yet both emerged as expressions of generational rebellion, challenging societies they perceived as soul-crushing to the human spirit.

Values

This impulse for change united the two movements at the level of values. Peace, love, and human unity rose to become defining principles within both subcultures. Both questioned society's obsessive materialism, finding meaning rather in community, unconstrained self-expression, and dwellings attuned to nature's rhythms.

While Rastas unveiled a distinct spiritual cosmology and dress code, hippies freely blended Eastern mystic traditions with psychedelic experimentation. Yet both shared a penchant for introspection – be it meditating or reasoning out life's mysteries with ganja smoke and brethren.

Livity and Vibes

Rastafari speak of "livity" and hippies had their ineffable "vibes" – that positive aura exuding

warmth and togetherness. At the core, they amount to the same thing – a state of collective being where souls harmonize, where people “overstand” rather than argue pretentious points. This state emerges from the heart of community. Both formed closely-knit, almost familial bonds, circles that danced to nobody’s tune but their own. Life in the Rasta commune or at the hippie gathering affirmed that we belong to each other, that cooperation and care bear sweeter fruits than BASE jumps from the lonely summits of corporate ladders.

Threads of Change

What concrete shape did this impulse for change take? The Rasta quest for deliverance evolved into threads of activism for Pan-African unity, black empowerment, and repatriation movements that continue today.

The hippies, through activism against war and nuclear weapons, catalyzed the modern environmental movement now engulfed in existential climate battles. Early innovations around renewable energy, organic agriculture, and holistic living resonate loudly today. Both showed how positive change percolates upwards from small committed communities centered on oneness with each other and nature. These models of change predate today’s sustainability buzzwords but beat with the same heart – they’re gentle revolutions through lifestyle shifts not angry placards.

Parting Ways

Yet by the late 70s the movements drifted onto divergent streams. The hippies saw their revolutionary hopes dampened through commercial exploitation and media caricatures. The 80s piloted in an era glorifying wealth, status, and ruthless individualism.

Many found the Rastafari emphasis on Old Testament dogma and Haile Selassie worship difficult to fully embrace. Bob Marley achieved global fame bringing Rastafari symbols like dreadlocks onto MTV, but few adopted the strict codes on diet, dress, and ritual. So while Rasta settlements (communes) continue thriving in Jamaica, hippie communes largely evaporated and transformed into occasional ritual gatherings like Rainbows or Burning Man.

The Call Beyond the Waterfall

Nonetheless, the soul call for a different way of living never fades to silence; the impulse forever regenerates in new forms. Today’s Anthropocene predicament, where cascading environmental crises and gross societal inequality threaten future generations, calls us to forge radical new models – be it urban ecovillages applying high-tech sustainability or rural communities centered on ancient lore.

The old creed holds true – we must be the change we wish to see. And within the hippie, the

Rasta, pulses a faith in our ability to collectively midwife the future we want – not through force or grand ideologies but through creating inspiring examples of the possible. This was the seed they planted and nurtured.

Now the harvest beckons.