What is the origin of the symbol "Peace and Love"?



The "Peace & Love" symbol, often depicted as a circle with three lines inside, has become an iconic representation of pacifist movements and the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. However, its origins trace back to a more specific cause: the British campaign against nuclear weapons.

Origin of the Symbol

The symbol was designed in 1958 by **Gerald Holtom**, a British graphic designer, for the **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)**. Holtom, a committed pacifist, sought to create a powerful visual to express his opposition to nuclear weapons, which were at the center of international debate at the time.

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The design of the symbol is based on the semaphore alphabet, a visual communication system used by sailors. The circle represents the Earth, while the inner lines are a combination of the letters "N" and "D" in semaphore, standing for "Nuclear Disarmament." The letter "N" is formed by two arms raised in an angle, and the letter "D" by one arm raised and one lowered.

Adoption by the Peace Movement

The symbol was first used during a march against nuclear weapons between **London and Aldermaston** in April 1958 and quickly gained popularity. Because of its simplicity and strong connotations of peace, it was embraced by various peace movements around the world.

In the 1960s, as tensions related to the Cold War increased, the symbol was adopted by anti-war movements, particularly in the United States, where it became a prominent emblem of opposition to the Vietnam War. It later became closely associated with the hippie movement and the "Peace & Love" culture that advocated love, non-violence, and solidarity.

Evolution into the "Peace & Love" Symbol

Over time, the symbol’s original connection to nuclear disarmament expanded to represent broader ideals of peace and harmony. During the 1960s and 1970s, it merged with the "Peace & Love" slogan in popular culture, symbolizing an ideal of universal brotherhood and the rejection of violence. The hippie movement widely embraced it, turning it into a visual emblem of social and cultural protest.

A Global Symbol of Peace

Today, the "Peace & Love" symbol remains a powerful visual, universally recognized as a representation of peace and non-violence. Whether seen on protest posters, clothing, or artwork, it continues to convey a message of tolerance, respect, and rejection of armed conflict. It also serves as a reminder of past and ongoing struggles for a more just and peaceful world.

Sources

- fr.wikipedia.org

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