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Is There Still an American Dream?

Does the American Dream still exist is a topic that is frequently discussed in the news and media. The concept proposed by the media indicates that the American Dream has changed over time and may soon be eliminated. The media often portrays the millennial generation as a group of young people who do not have the opportunities to have jobs and work that will allow them to support themselves in a manner similar to their parents. This topic is of special interest to me because I fit into this age group. History gives a background on how the American Dream evolved, but research is needed to look at how that history and diverse cultures have affected the American Dream. I believe there is a question as to whether this dream is the same as it was for my parents or if it even still exists. The following research articles discuss different views about the American Dream and its relevance to our modern society. I believe they help to clarify the question concerning how the American Dream may have changed and how it may still be possible for my generation to reap the benefits of those generations before us.

Borosage, Robert, and Katrina Vanden Heuvel. "THE AMERICAN DREAM: Can A Movement Save It? (Cover Story). "Nation 293.15 (2011): 11-15. Academic Search Premier.

Web. 2 Apr. 2014.

In 2011, activists gathered in Washington to participate in a Take Back the American Dream conference to promote the idea that citizens must take up the cause of saving the American Dream. This article asserts that our economy is not working for the American public due to the lack of full-time work, low wages, and high poverty levels. It discusses how

conservatives rebelled against current policies and organized the Tea Parties to help set citizen protests. The ideas of the conservative movements discussed in this article are countered by the various demonstrations from the left that supported the government. The article questions if the movements presented by these groups can actually change the despair that Americans are feeling about our current economy and the hopes that the American Dream can be salvaged.

The authors present statistics from recognized people such as Pollster Stanley Greenberg to back up their claims their claims that Americans feel everything in Washington is “rigged” when the economic issues are confronted. They logically discuss several movements that have had historical significance in shaping the American Dream in previous administrations such as Roosevelt’s New Deal, Social Security, and the Wagner Act. They appeal to both sides of the controversy by discussing the issues the conservatives and the liberals see. They appeal to the emotions of the reader when they quote Dr. Martin Luther King and address his statement that “I still have a dream” (11). They challenge the reader to consider if this is the time to create a movement to save the American Dream.

This article is highly critical of government actions and caused me to consider where I stand on how the economy is being handled. It challenged me to become more aware of both sides of the issues facing our middle class and lower class families. It presents a forceful argument that calls for the American public to take part in creating a movement that might effectively change the lifestyle of people by becoming involved in a dialogue that brings everyone to the table to consider options for a new path for America.

Herbert, Bob. “Hiding from Reality” They Say/I Say: the Moves That Matter

In *Academic Writing*. Ed. Cathy Birkenstein, Gerald Graff, and Russel Durst. New York: W. W. Norton, 2012. 564-567. Print.

Bob Herbert defines the American Dream in this article as he sees it. He points out the shortcomings of the government system and questions if the country will be able to recover to the level of a thriving economy. The article looks at the human suffering caused by a bad economy and questions if recovery efforts have been channeled in the right direction to build the economy. The education system in America is brought into question and concerns about the actually eliminating jobs of teachers in some parts of the country. Herbert questions if we are in denial about how bad the situation with the American economy is.

Statistics from the Pew Hispanic Center are used to show the plight of immigrants in America. These facts appeal to the reader to consider how diverse populations are affected by a lagging economy and how these workers should have the opportunity to enjoy a decent standard of living. The writer reminds us that many in this nation are suffering and yet we engage in wars that only continue to eat up our resources. He points out that children in America are being punished by the austerity measures we have enforced. His writing style is highly emotional and aims at making the reader consider the inequities that are faced in America.

Herbert uses logic and emotion to stress the declining state that he feels our American economy is in. As a reader, he appeals to the inner feelings most of have about wanting everyone to have equal opportunities. I made me dig a little deeper into my own views and question if I am in denial about where our country is headed or if I am willing to look at changes that might help others even if they would have an effect on my own status.

Meacham, Jon. "Keeping The Dream Alive. (Cover Story)." *Time* 180.1 (2022): 26-39.

Academic Search Premier. Web. 2 Apr. 2014.

This article discusses the origin of the term "The American Dream" that began in 1931 and the historical prospective of how this applied to America at that time. It moves through the

history of this dream as it changes in the 60's. It explores the idea of whether the dream can be restored and looks at the economic conditions of the 70's through the 90's. It addresses the issue of the Great Depression and those who lived through World War II and how they survived the crisis of those times and actually entered the middle class life. It suggests that if the American Dream is to survive, it must be up to the individuals in America now to make that happen.

Meacham appeals to the emotional aspect of this topic as he describes the crisis in America at the end of the Great Depression and World War II. He emphasizes how America was steeped in hard times and yet there was a hope for a better tomorrow. He uses quotes from James Truslow Adams, a popular historian, to express the idea that "that dream or hope has been present from the start" (26). Meacham suggests that naysayers may feel that there is no hope for the American Dream. He acknowledges their claims and credibility by looking at the social problems America has endured during the 90's and early part this century. Meacham approaches the idea that there is still hope for the American Dream as he appeals to the American public and this generation to consider the fact they we as individuals must be willing to create a climate that makes this possible.

Meacham generates some important questions about the path America has taken to fulfill the American dream. He outlines the struggles that so many Americans overcame in order to make this a better place for the upcoming generations. His writing style appeals to me to consider the facts about how I should reflect on the past and see how it will affect the future. One of the greatest factors that he uses to appeal to his reader is the idea that while the American Dream may have changed and is certainly in need of work, it is also important to note that we cannot give up on this idea. He prods me to look at how I might affect the changes that need to take place in order to make my own American Dream come true.

Stanley, Tim. "The Changing Face of the American Family." *History Today* 62.11

(2012): 10-15. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 2 Apr. 2014.

This article discusses how the family is still held as the most important part of the American Dream. It looks at how this dream was shaped around the conservative attitudes of the 50's and then at the way the civil rights movement affected the way diverse populations looked at the American Dream. The author uses popular media from those times to discuss the influence they had on the perceptions of this dream.

The author uses some very popular sitcoms from the 50's to appeal to the emotions of his readers. He makes everyone wish for a return to the good old days of "Leave It to Beaver". He brings credibility to his article as he describes how popular media and government interventions helped to swing the pendulum of the values of the American family. Statistics are used to show how the values of the American family shifted on issues such as divorce, sexual orientations, and birthrates outside of marriage. He appeals to the reader to look at how these issues changed the look of the American values and dream.

This article intrigues me as it takes a different look at where the ideals of the American Dream originated interweaving media ideals with social changes. I can relate to some of the sitcoms that are mentioned in this article and see how the changing family values may have had an impact on the changes of the original conservative views of the American Dream.

Thomas, Cal. "Is the American Dream Over?" *They Say/I Say: the Moves That Matter*

In *Academic Writing*. Ed. Cathy Birkenstein, Gerald Graff, and Russel Durst. New York:

W. W. Norton, 2012. 568-571. Print.

Thomas explores the ideas that fundamental principles on how life should function in American have sustained the idea of the American Dream for 200 years. He argues that parents feel that their children should inherit a "better" life than they had, but he questions how we define the term "better". He addresses the issues such as an out of control government that are

robbing citizens of the fulfillment of this dream. He discusses the rules that made this dream work for past generations and questions how we as individuals must apply those same rules to our present circumstances.

This article looks at a recent article by Bob Herbert that Thomas does not feel actually addresses the issues concerning the blame for the decline of the American Dream. Thomas appeals to the reader with an emotional statement that he does know the reason the American Dream as it was known may be over. He accordingly presents a strong admonition to the reader to actually consider if they are putting their faith in the wrong place when they rely on the government and politicians to make their lives better.

This article brings out some very good questions that caused me to think about the part the important role the government plays in our perception of the American Dream. Thomas is critical of the government, but makes me think about the fact that we need to more than just complain about the government faults. He presents some thoughts for me to ponder on the idea that we must look at how we got to the place we are in this journey to the American Dream and how we may need to change the path that we are on.

I have concluded after reading these articles that there is a great debate about the state of the American economy and about the reality of the American Dream. History portrays the American Dream as the possibility of achieving a “better” world than that of previous generations. However, these articles bring to mind the question of what we consider “better” to be. Many of the naysayers would say that most Americans are only looking at material wealth and accumulation of things. They would assert that this idea is destroying the American Dream since it is impossible for the general public to accomplish these goals in our current economy. In contrast to those who question if the American Dream is dead, the hope for a revival of this dream is strong in the minds of many Americans. They assert that the foundation for America

was laid with principles that always encouraged Americans to improve their lifestyle and to make the lives of their fellow men better. There is a strong consensus that individuals can bring about a change that will ensure this dream for the millennial generation and future generations if we are willing to put in the same efforts and hard work that past generations encouraged. The question seems to be if we are willing to step up to this task and increase our participation in changing the path of the American Dream.