

An Evolving American Dream

The American Dream can be a hard thing to find today, however the millennial generation is working to redefine it. The way that the economy is today, they are faced with so many hardships. In order to overcome the obstacles put in front of them they are trying to better the economy for themselves and future generations. “The American Dream has been part of our culture since the 1930’s” (Kadlec, para. 2). It has caused many people to immigrate to America for better opportunities. Owning a house, having a family, getting to spend time with the people you love the most and travel across the world is the millennial view on the American Dream.

Millennials see the world and new opportunities as a way to learn. They question why they should do something, how it will relate to their future or when a particular learning experience will ever be used. Some people see the millennial generation as lazy and wanting everything to be handed to them. Others may see them as go getters that strive to achieve a better future for themselves and subsequent generations. They struggle with some of the age old problems just like the past generations, but they have found a new way to look at a problem and solve it.

The state of the economy that the United States is in today has caused so many changes in the way that millennials look at the American Dream. It can be hard for the older adults to understand why younger people want to go travel to see the world and live “day-to-day” lives (Kadlec, para. 7) instead of living a monotonous predictable life. There have been changes in some areas of how the economy works and how work environments have adapted to the changing pace in generations. The work force has been another influence on the dream to own your own business for some millennials.

America has become increasingly more technologically advanced. The millennial generation is a very “technologically savvy generation” they also “have no memory of a time before the high-speed internet” (Chambers, pg. 49). With the technological advances that we have had in America “36% say all of the online resources for job searches and networking make them feel less anxious about losing/ finding a job” (Sharon, para. 39). Technology has made it easier in this hard economy to apply for jobs and to look for nearby jobs that may pay the bills. It isn’t always easy to find a job quickly in our economy, but millennials take on the challenge. Dan Kadlec mentions in his article that many college graduates don’t even use their degree to find a job and may not target their degreed field. They simply search for jobs that don’t require a degree. It may seem pointless to get a degree then not even secure a job utilizing all of your hard work and studies; but our economy and our shortage for certain jobs is so specific that they thought would have tremendous potential, only to learn there is no need for that type of job anymore then they have to look elsewhere.

When millennials look for jobs they want certain things that workplaces of generations past would not comply with, but companies have changed their policies to acclimate to the changing generations. “Millennials prize job mobility, flexible schedules, any work that is more interesting than punching a keyboard and the ability to travel and be with friends” (Kadlec, para. 5). It has led to a world trying to evolve in the direction that the millennials are heading and companies are striving to keep up with the ever-changing attitudes and work ethics of the millennials. Jayson Sharon mentions in his article that only 25% of millennials say if they can’t find a job or lose their current job they will just start up their own business. It is stressful to own a start up business and be successful with it. Patricia Chambers discusses at the end of her article that work places with employees that have longevity bring in experience and that novices

generally bring enthusiasm and “cutting-edge learning.” Both experienced and inexperienced people in any work place have to learn to work together to create more effective ways to get the job done and done right without future problems.

Home ownership has always been a part of the American Dream and it is still a desire for the millennials. “Far from rejecting suburbia, homeownership, and the American dream, millennials are simply seeking to recreate it in their own image” (Kotkin, para. 17). Some people think millennials are just giving up on having their own home, but in a survey done by TD Bank “They found that 84% of renters aged between 18-34 intend to purchase a home in the future” (Kotkin, para. 18). Some people will continue working for that dream while others may not. The choice to buy a house depends upon each individual person and their desire to stay in one place or to have the ability to travel as they wish.

Millennials are starting to go toward a smaller housing called “tiny houses”. These houses are made to be energy efficient and to help the environment. The interest in these houses is slowly growing because of how expensive it can be to purchase a house and to have a mortgage. With these tiny houses millennials are able to pay them off quickly and have the ability to travel if they please. It is hard to travel and wander the world like a nomad if you owe any kind of debt. Tiny houses help millennials to learn to live with what they need and not take up an excessive amount of space. Reducing their carbon footprint is something people of all ages, all across the world are trying to do. People are trying to be more conservative in order to reduce their overall environmental impact. Having the ability to travel may mean more to some millennials than to others, however at some point they may decide they want a change in pace and traveling or settling down just may do the trick.

Many millennials are starting to downsize and are becoming more aware of how they live and have started to live “within their means” (Sharon, para. 20). Instead of having a big kitchen or living room, millennials choose to make their homes more technologically advanced or more energy efficient. For example, they may add solar panels onto their house solar panels to produce energy or choose to own a TV that they can operate by voice or a radio in the shower that will sync up to their phone and play music. There are so many great opportunities that millennials have to better their way of life and they are using them.

There has also been a shift in the way that millennials view marriage and family. “Young Americans increasingly avoid both marriage and having children, according to a recent Pew Foundation study” (Kotkin, para . 13). Getting married and having a family is something that has always been a part of our society. Procreation is what helps us to expand our population and leave a legacy behind. Not every person is able to have children or even wants children for that matter, but many millennials have seen how children can cause a strain on their lives, and that they may choose not to live paycheck to paycheck. Millennials are aware of how hard it can be to struggle to keep families from falling apart or from losing their house to foreclosure. Many people have all sorts of debt that they are unable to pay back. Being aware of this debt issue, with the economy being weak and unemployment rates being at an all time high; having a family doesn't seem logical to millennials because they do not see a way they would be able to support them.

Millennials dream of having a family and owning their own home, just like every generation before them; however, millennials have to approach those two things in a different way than generations before them. They have to make sure that they are making enough money and have a stable job, because they don't want to go through the struggles their parents went

through with possible foreclosure or financial instability. Millennials want to have a hand in creating their future and they desire to create an even better future for their children. When millennials build their houses and their family structure they create it not in the image of their parents but in their own image. The reason financial stability is so important to millennials is because they see a better economy as a way to improve the American Dream for their kids and future generations. It is hard growing up in a recession and constantly seeing people lose their homes, their jobs, and seeing families fall apart because of those hard struggles with money. Watching people experience loss after loss has seriously impacted the millennial generation.

The evolved American Dream is very much alive today. It is constantly changing and always will be. If a comparison of the American dream from the 1930's was compared to today's there would be countless differences. The reason they are so different can be attributed to the way the world is changing. With technology and the economy being driving factors, it can make it hard to survive. Millennials are changing the world; they are working toward their interpretation of the dream to better the future. They see the American Dream as meaning many different things such as: traveling the world, spending time with family and friends, owning a home, and having a family. It is no longer all about having your own business and building your own success. Everyone is striving for success; millennials are just working in a different way to achieve that success, and thus their American Dream.

Works Cited

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