Is Nostalgia Really Making America Great Again?

Nostalgia is defined as a sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations. At some point almost every American has experienced nostalgia even if they do not realize it. Experiencing nostalgia can range anywhere from hearing a favorite childhood song or even seeing something that brings back memories of a “happier” time in someone’s life. America is obsessed with nostalgia, Americans believe that if they continue to try to relive the past they will eventually achieve it.

According to the article “How Nostalgia Made America Great Again” by Mike Mariani, America is fascinated with nostalgia because it gives Americans a sense of security of a time when America was considered great. Scientist have proved that people fascinated with nostalgia tend to forget the negative and only remember the positive aspects, or what people believe to be positive. The article highlights that people think things such as the crime level used to be significantly lower than it is now, however America is the least violent it has ever been.

Americans are so fascinated with nostalgia because it takes them back to a happier time or in some cases what people believe to be a “safer” time. As showcased in the article, majority of the time when people have nostalgic thoughts they think back to the 1950’s. The article encompasses this by saying “It revealed 51 percent of the population felt the American way of life had changed for the worse since the 1950s” (Mariani). This shows that Americans are nostalgic for the 1950’s because if 51 percent of the population feels as if the American way of
life has changed for the worse since the 1950’s, then it almost implies that people are longing for
the way of life that was obtained in the 1950’s. It is understandable for someone to think back to
the 1950’s with nostalgic thoughts, because from the way that era is portrayed to Americans it
seems as if everything was perfect, however it is portrayed to seem perfect to leave Americans
longing for that feeling of joy and happiness, which in turn is leaving Americans nostalgic. What
Americans fail to realize is that there were many aspects of the 1950’s that were negative, such
as during the 1950’s America was involved in the cold war. So was America in the 1950’s really
better than it is now?

Nostalgia skews the past in a way, for example, when someone looks at the 1950’s all
they see is the happiness and fun, but what they neglect to look at is important details such as
crime level and war. The article explains “In the process of looking back, people tend to filter out
negative or painful experiences” (Mariani). Majority of the population of the United States
would more than likely say that Americans in 2018 live in an era with the most crime and
violence, because of what is portrayed to Americans by through different platforms such as
social media and the daily news. The people who think this are wrong; according to the article
America is the safest it has ever been. What these sources fail to exhibit is all of the good going
on in America. This pollutes the minds of Americans and causes Americans to believe that there
is nothing but negative things going on in America. If Americans decided to ignore all of the
negatives that are being thrown in their faces and just open their eyes to the positive all around
them, then nostalgia would not be as big of an issue. Nostalgia allows people to live in the past
and not move forward with their lives and see the positive all around them, making the present
seem more negative than it actually is. At this time, America is thriving compared to other times
in American history.
Many Americans seem to forget important aspects of the past to accommodate them and current situations. Mariani says “Our past is constantly shifting to accommodate our present”. Although Mariani says that the past is constantly shifting, the past never truly shifts; it is just American’s memories that shift. For example, one of the major issues in America right now is police brutality. Many Americans think this issue is related to racism, however it is not. Police brutality is a major issue in America that contributes to the crime level, but even with this contribution America is still incredibly safer than in the past. Many people think that the issue of police brutality is a new issue, however it has been around for years and is just now being brought to light. This shows how nostalgia shifts the past to help the present, because it shows how Americans have forgotten something that has always been around but are just now making it seem like a larger issue than it actually is. Nostalgia affects everything slightly and in some aspects it affects it much more vastly; especially when it comes to remembering negative things. Americans tend to forget that many things never change and are always there. Americans use nostalgia as a buffer to make current social issues seem worse than they actually are.

At some point in majority of Americans’ lives they have had a nostalgic memory of something. However is their nostalgic memory of the actual event that happened or is it a memory that has been affected by nostalgia to make it seem better? In many cases memories have been affected by nostalgia. For instance when someone from the baby boomer generation looks back on the 1950’s they do not remember all the war and negative things that were going on; they remember the exciting things like going to a sock hop with their best friends on a Friday night. Most memories are affected by nostalgia in one way or another. Nostalgia is a serious problem for Americans, and it affects every aspect of life. Nostalgia is not “making America great again,” if anything it is making it worse.