

The world as a whole faces a plethora of struggles every second of every day, which America is not immune to. Whether it be a mass shooting, the constant battle against world hunger, or the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic that has recently amassed new all time high numbers. It is nearly impossible to point out all of the problems that this nation faces despite the claims to greatness, which is exactly what the biggest issue in the nation is. This false idea that America is the “greatest nation” has caused immense blindness to these problems that we face everyday. Such a strong sense of nationalism has caused citizens to not recognize the issues right under our noses.

Those who claim that America is the greatest nation in the world often bring up that we are the “land of the free” or the “American Dream”, and while these are certainly true for some people, it is a figment of imagination for others. America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, as nearly 1 in every 32 adults is under some form of criminal justice control. Of those, 38.6% are black, while only 13.4% of the American population is black. Once imprisoned, the justice system consistently fails to focus on reform, causing many people to end up incarcerated once again when they are released. It is hard to imagine that a country increasing spending for corrections at a rate that is 3 times higher than they are spending for education could be claimed as the greatest. People fail to recognize that the American dream is exponentially easier for certain communities than others, it is not as simple as working hard. For those who are born into an underprivileged household, they face far higher incarceration rates due to over policing, are presented with weaker education systems, and trouble getting jobs. While it is obtainable, for some it is nearly impossible.

The problem with claiming to be the greatest is that it puts a mask over all of these problems we face. The overwhelming nationalism by some blinds them from issues, and causes them to support those who promote the idea that we are the best nation. In order to fix this, there must be increased education not only on what is happening within America, but what happens in other countries as well. Many believe that America is the only country with freedom, which couldn't be farther from the truth, as there are 210 countries that are free according to the freedom house, of which the United States ranks 5th on the human freedom index. Educating people on the weaknesses that our nation has will allow them to work amongst their communities to eradicate them, and elect officials who are willing to make moves in order to diminish these problems nationwide. Once we stop telling ourselves the empty statement that we are the greatest nation in the world, we may progress as a nation to become that, however the first step is acceptance.