

Amelia Hansen

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English 11

## **The American Dream**

Why is it that so many people want to and have emigrated to America? People want to be able to work towards their goals and the American Dream gives everyone the chance to do that. The American Dream is what has shaped our country and is unique to America. There is no other country that gives you as much opportunity to achieve your dreams, through individual effort, than America. Lately people seem to argue that the American Dream has turned materialistic or is now irrelevant to our society, but I believe that the dream is still there and has morphed to be unique to each individual.

Though some believe that our country was built upon the American Dream, could anyone define it? Hamilton (2012), an author who picked a song that he felt defined the American Dream, said, "I'm not sure anyone knows what the American Dream is; ask a hundred people and you'll get a hundred different responses, it's like asking a hundred people to define God, or postmodernism" (para. 1). So many people can't define what God and postmodernism are, and if they do, no two responses match. This is comparable to the American Dream and the fact that you can't just look up its definition in a book. I think that this is very true for the American Dream. So many people have a different vision of what it is, so there is no way you could just stick a definition in a dictionary and hope that everyone

will be happy with it. Despite there being several definitions, two overwhelming opinions are that the American Dream doesn't exist anymore or that, if it does, it's about comparing who has more money than the next person. Our founding fathers originally stated, in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (US History, 1995, para. 2). The pursuit of happiness is a right that every American has. I believe that when they referred to the pursuit of happiness, they were talking about the American Dream. The Founding Fathers intended for the American Dream to be a right, but if it has been lost or turned materialistic then our country hasn't lived up to what it's original creators intended or has it?

The American Dream becoming unachievable is becoming a growing argument. "The American Dream of improving one's lot in life still exists, but it's becoming more difficult to accomplish" (Francis, 2012, para. 13). Francis believes that the American Dream is improving your life in some way, though this is becoming harder and harder to achieve. Thomas Edison, the creator of the light bulb, was quoted saying, "Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work" (Secret Entourage, n. d., para. 5). He is portraying the fact that if the willingness to work isn't there, then the Dream isn't either. People don't want to put forth the effort of working towards something and risk not receiving anything in the end. Especially with the recent bad economy, people lost their jobs and didn't have the ability to get the money they needed

and wanted. This could have been another cofactor in the reasons why some people believe the American Dream is going away. If this is the case, then the American Dream's disappearance would be the Americans fault.

Either the Dream is gone or people are no longer able to tell what it is because they have become so wrapped up in the world around them. Peoples perspective of what the American Dream is has changed and some think that in order to be happy they have to be on the cover of a magazine. You can't go a day without seeing or hearing something about a celebrity. If you were to ask a little kid about what they want to be when they grow up, their response may be a singer, model, or actor. Patterson (2013) wrote about the strive people have to become famous, "Lately, it seems almost everyone wants to be a celebrity, and, worse still, almost anyone can. The banal but powerful lust for fame has swept the globe" (para. 2). Humans are attention seekers, if they can have a better car, a bigger house, or nicer clothes their self-esteem shoots to the ceiling. temporarily. America has changed a lot since the time it was organized, our morals may have changed so much that we have changed what's important to us also.

The American Dream is what gave our country the freedom that we have today.

Weddle (n. d.) wrote:

The American Dream. While it is a quintessentially American aspiration, each of us has a unique vision of just what it is. For some, the dream is a chance to build a successful business. For others, it's a home of their own. And for still others, it's the

opportunity to shop until they drop. (para. 1)

The American Dream is tweaked for each person, or everyone has their own idea of what the American Dream is. Do I think the American Dream is gone? No, I don't think we are able to truly be America without it. Do I think the American Dream has become all about money? No, I believe that the American Dream is unique to every individual. It's the ability to do what makes you happy in life. If being a multi-million dollar actor makes you happy, that's your American Dream. If being able to be with your family and have a roof over your head makes you happy, then that's your American Dream. It can be as hard or easy to achieve as each person needs it to be. If there was one Dream for all Americans, then obviously only a few would be able to achieve it. You can't have one type of food, or one design of pants. You need to have a variety of options that are unique to each and every one of us. There just has to be several different American Dreams in order to meet everyone's needs (Library of Congress, 2013). Freedom to choose and freedom to want to achieve something that makes you happy, that is the American Dream.

Despite me not agreeing with the American Dream being gone or being about money, I can see why some people still agree with the previously stated opinions. For some the American Dream may literally be about money. Plus, the media has become such a big part of the world that it almost looks flawless. You hear about people getting obsessed with celebrities all the time. Most people may not even want the money or the popularity; they may just see the rest of the world striving for it, so they just assume that's what everyone wants. Those who believe it's gone may still think that the American Dream

is about reaching the highest social status possible. With the recent bad economy, most can't reach that high potential. I'm sure there are several other reasons why others would believe these two point of views, these are just a few that I was able to assess.

The American Dream is unique to everyone. Not everyone in the entire United States has the same goals, they just can't! For example, If your goal is to use all your money to help charities all your life then you wouldn't be keeping up with the American Dream of becoming as wealthy as possible. America gives you the chance to reach nearly any goal that you have. The American Dream seems to be framed as something that is difficult to achieve, but it's as simple as doing what makes you happy. Your Dream can change, or it can stay the same. It can be long term or be accomplished within a few seconds. You may not even know what yours is, regardless you have a Dream individual to you.

The American Dream makes America unique. You have the ability to reach nearly any goal you have in America. That's what makes it the perfect place to have not only an American Dream, but have a Dream. In many of the other countries around the world you are constrained to living under a certain set of rules that restricts how you think and act, but in America there are nearly no constraints. That is the beauty, that is why people risk their lives to live here. People can believe that the Dream is gone, that it's now about becoming rich, or that it can be anything you want. Either way, everyone has a Dream and they have it by living in America and using their freedom as much or as little as they want.

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