

"our sprawling,
supersize utopia" by
david brooks essay
sample



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“ Our Sprawling, Supersize Utopia” by David Brooks Essay Sample

In his essay “ Our Sprawling, Supersize Utopia” David Brooks defines the American dream as an idyllic world that is comparable to Lewis Lapham’s essay “ Who and what is American?”. The American dream is not just a shared imagination, but a fantasy. Brook’s humorous descriptions help him describe and critique the many suburban and ex-urban communities today. He characterizes the American dream as very unrealistic and argues that a our dreams cause a “ Paradise Spell”, a mysterious longing that causes a “ great dispersal” from cities to suburbs. These suburban developments is where Brooks states that people hope to find their dreams. These dreams rarely come true; therefore, a lot of Americans start to lie to themselves, imagining that they are content, and their dreams have been fulfilled.

According to Lapham, the suburbs represent “ the pleasure of telling lies” and are a “ mist of lies [...] that bind [Americans] to the theaters of wishes and dreams” (194). Lapham states that people lie to themselves to reach their unrealistic dreams. There are two types of dreams: ones that can become a reality and are rational, and ones that are unrealistic and unattainable. The rational dreams include an individual’s choices in educational institutions, and location on where to live or work. Although, that is not what the American dream is, most suburbanites have goals that are impossible to achieve and include components only found in fairy tails.

Brooks states that Americans are looking for a Paradise Spell. This Paradise Spell is entirely fictional. Americans buy houses that haven’t been

constructed so that their kids can go to schools that haven't been build; these actions are taken in hopes of finding " just the right moral revival, the right beer and the right set of buddies" (63). According to Brooks, Americans move from cities to suburbs and try to fulfill this " mysterious longing" but they end up being disappointed, " That's why you meet so many boring-looking people who see themselves on some technological frontier" (62). Brook's warm portrait of suburbs represents " the pleasure of telling lies." People deceive themselves into thinking that they are happy and have attained their goals. According to Lewis Lapham, " if we indulge ourselves with evasions and the pleasure of telling lies, we speak to our fears and our weaknesses instead of to our courage and our strengths" (294). If one lies to himself about whom he is, then he makes himself weaker. When our population deludes itself, our whole nation becomes weak. This is why we must balance our dreams towards reality, set accomplishable goals, and imagine how we can better ourselves rationally.

Although Brooks shows warm portraits of the suburban life, there is a darker more desolate side of it. Americans have a weakness, which may not be noticeable at first but is obvious when the subject is looked at more in depth. " Suburban America as a comfortable but somewhat vacuous realm of unreality: consumerist, wasteful, complacent, materialistic, and self absorbed"(59). The suburb is a real empty place. It may look like a very comfortable place to live in, with luxurious cars and clean neighborhoods, but it's made up of nothing more than people's failures of their dreams.

Thus, The suburbs are filled with emptiness and unaccomplished dreams.

Lapham concurs with this point when he recalls his readings from <https://assignbuster.com/our-sprawling-supersize-utopia-by-david-brooks-essay-sample/>

nineteenth-century adventurers and pioneers, " I think of the would be settlers lost in an immense wilderness, looking into the mirrors of their loneliness and measuring their capacity for self-knowledge, against the vastness of the wide indifferent sky" (193). Early settlers moved out west, similarly to people now, to find new and better lives in which many occasions they end up failing. These travelers end up lonely just like the people of the suburbs now. People never found exactly what they were looking for in the suburbs making the suburbs just an empty dream.

The American dream is impractical, unrealistic and not viable, yet many Americans believe their dreams can be reached, and their utopia can be found. Brooks states " just out of reach, just beyond the next ridge, just in the farther-out suburb [...] there is this spot you can get to where all tensions will melt, all time pressures will be relived and happiness can be realized." Brooks exaggerates and goes from reality to fantasy and says that this utopia does exist; it's just out of everyone's reach. The only way this utopia can exist is through their imagination. People cheat themselves into believing they got what they always wanted by pretending they reached all their goals. Brooks recalls Albert Einstein saying " that imagination is more important than knowledge" (60). Although it's an interesting concept, it is wrong. How can a person be happy if they imagine themselves as having the perfect life if they know that it's not even close to what they really wanted? People live in denial, and look past the truth into " the theaters of wishes and dreams".

Americans lie to themselves by trying to forget their past, hoping that their future will be better. " Americans found themselves drawn to places where
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the possibilities seemed boundless and where there was no history" (62). Americans move to new places that help them forget about their pasts. Consequently, by abandoning their past, it is easier to create an ideal future. There won't be any past obstacles there to stop them from reaching their goals. Americans lie to themselves trying to forget their negative or depressing past. Lapham agrees with Brooks when he says " we were always about the becoming, not being; about the prospects for the future, not about the inheritance of the past" (188). When Americans deny their past, they lose experience and past knowledge that we had. Americans should stop lying to themselves, get rid of this weakness and start being realistic with goals that can be accomplished and work towards " the work of our shared imagination". If we are truthful to ourselves, we aspire candor, self-knowledge, liberty, and real heroes.

The American Dream is a utopia that all Americans hope to find. Brooks describes the suburban life as a search for the American dream and mocks the suburban communities. He points out the vast parking spots and the perfect DVD collection that you can find in the suburbs. Many Americans have different views of their own dream. Some might have ones that are realistic and tangible, while others might have impossible ideals. The people who have these fantasy dreams can never realistically reach their goals. What these people start doing is they lie to themselves. They tell themselves that they found all that they ever wanted, while still looking for their dreams.

They move to the suburbs where they hope they can forget about their past failures and hope to setup a new future that will be in parallel with their ideals and dreams. Never reaching their dreams, these people lead their

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empty suburban life in denial, hoping that one day they will be truthfully happy. According to Lapham, the denial and the lies make a person weak. To be courageous a person would have to be truthfully. If Americans become more realistic with their dreams they will be able to achieve their goals making them stronger.