

The american dream: walt disney's cinderella and ron howard's cinderella man rese...

[Art & Culture](#), [American Dream](#)



All around us stories abound of how people struggle to attain the American dream. Wherever we go everybody wants to have a piece of this life and as a result, it has been the inspiration behind most of these great achievements in our lives. After watching Walt Disney's Cinderella and Ron Howard's Cinderella Man, I became interested to analyze the process of the American dream, how the different genders work towards attaining them and what the society expects of every gender.

Comparing these two movies one comes to one very important conclusion; that a man has to struggle, act to lift himself and his family from the vestiges of poverty to becoming rich. This status is equaled to the American dream. This is in contrast to the woman, who like in Cinderella's case she is passive and waits for miracles in order to finally live the dream.

There are many ways to explain this concept, and many a times people have tried to break it down according to their understanding of the ethos.

Listening to stories of big time multi millionaires or even billionaires and how they made it all the way from scratch may not be enough to make one understand the American dream.

The real surprise is how the actual dream is attained. Smith describes the American Dream as " an idea, which suggests that all people can succeed through hard work and that all people have the potential to live happily, astride with their success in life" (Hoobler, 63).

This, however, is a short description of what the dream entails, but he fails to mention the other cognitive factors at play that may propel or hinder one

from living this dream, for instance gender and the society. There are many viewpoints towards which people relate to this dream; this has been redefined over time courtesy of the ever changing social and cultural norms in the American society.

In order for us to gain a broader perspective into the idea that bore the ethos that is the American dream, we first delve into what, when and where it was originally launched. The idea is a philosophy that was founded by America's forefathers, who enshrined it in their constitution as a matter of declaration of independence (Leo, 12).

This philosophy states that "all men are created equal" and that they are "endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights" including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" It is by these virtues that America has identified its statesmen, loyalists, heroes and the people that struggle daily to ensure that America remains the haven it is (Leo, 12). Many other people have tried to define the American dream and expound on their understanding of the philosophy.

James Truslow in his definition and understanding of the term explains that with the American dream, "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of social class or circumstances of birth" (Hoobler, 24).

This is what has motivated the Americans to be the best in what they do, to provide the best to their people and embrace democracy full throttle. In this paper, I will analyze the different mirrors through which gender has played a

huge role defining how the male and the female of our species are working towards attaining the dream.

To help us bring out the clear disparities that be, which almost always are the societal standards in most cases or rather the path through which man goes through, we shall analyze two different pieces of art. These are movies which were presented to various audiences over time, and their main agenda is one; the American dream.

The first movie, Cinderella man highlights the struggles man has to go through to get whenever his ambitions and dreams beseech him to be. The other movie called Cinderella was directed by Clyde Geronimi, it highlights and points out the woman's role in the dream.

These two directors lead us through the different experiences and lifestyles the characters have gone through. There are obviously divergent perspectives on issues and the different social expectations they bear although they have one aspect that is common to the both of them; The American dream. This is the real motivation behind their daily struggles, and whatever they pass through in their struggles, it is the promise of the American dream that keeps them strong and going.

In this classic story, we follow the tale of a beautiful girl who undergoes a torturous journey through life with her step family. She is hated, scorned and despised by even her family members. She is subject to her family's inclination, whatever it would be. This goes on until when her fairy godmother intercepts and helps her.

She makes her meet a handsome prince who comes along her path in life, falls in love and proposes to her. They get married and live happily thereafter. The movie is one of the most famous to have been used through time, and as such has sparked scholars' interest to read it through, analyze and research on what it is about the book that continues to fascinate people across the different races and generations. Its universality and timelessness have also contributed to its popularity.

The story is pulled off from far-fetched context but the main idea revolves around the American dream. In her books, Disney creates a world that is beyond the real, with bigger parameters about the boundaries of life. It a wonder world, one that critics and fanatics alike claim was the perfect mirror for the American dream. Others just call it the "perfect American dream" (Ted 13).

Though a good number of people (the critics) feel that the world is fake, claiming that it is just a flicker of a person's imagination, it has been a sanctuary of hope and for most the inspiration behind their daily struggles.

To the critics, fanatics urge that there is no better presentation or any other means through which the dream has been so deeply yet vividly embodied, they urge that we live at a time when the American dream is getting bigger and bigger yet the platform to attain it is quickly eroding. This is attributed to the fact that the original ideas and the fundamental principals that founded the dream are quickly fading away given the changing fortunes of the average American.

Through Cinderella, Disney creates in us a platform where we revive our childhood dreams; we revisit our former worlds and the comforts they present in the midst of the confusion that surrounds us. Disney world provides a platform where families, friends and relatives meet once in a while. The comfortable and soothing atmosphere makes them to part with their sorrows and their myriad problems.

The movies and the soothing atmosphere provide an ample opportunity for one to revisit his fantasies. Much as Disneyworld is an artificial place, it still attracts people from far and wide, and researchers attribute this to its physicality. It is the people's imitation of Disney world and their unwavering desire to attain and live the dream that compels them to work so hard (Lloyd, 16).

Ron Howard has also directed a play that revolves around the American dream. His is a male character who, at the end of everything achieves the goal to see his wife and children live and operate within the world he worked so hard to build (Hoobler, 24).

His attainment of the American dream is however different from Clyde's Cinderella because he has to bear the worst of circumstances and, undergoes the worst of situations to attain it.

In Cinderella man the play sets out to explore the life of a boxer, James Walter Braddock. Initially, we meet James doing well, he has everything he needs. This, however is short lived since sometime later he loses everything

he has thanks to the great depression that swept the region he was operating in then.

He lost all he had, but this was not enough to pin him down to poverty, or living a low life; not even a broken limb. To get back on top, to living the life he had; to attain the American dream he had to struggle. In his world there were neither fairies nor fairy tales, it was stark reality staring him right in the face. He had a family that was looking up to him and children who expected much from their father, all these he had to shoulder and get his family back to the top.

Man, according to the above plays and even in life generally, has to struggle and work hard to attain this dream. He shoulders everything if he has a family, and when he is just starting to venture out he is exposed to the harsh realities in life (Leo, 33). To fulfill his ambitions he has work from rags to riches.

He has to stand against all the odds, whatever society and life brings against him. He is expected to shoulder all these, get married and carry the burden that is his family and maintain the status quo; operate within his class, one of people who have attained the dream. It does not matter how he is faring on health wise, broken limb or not that burden is still his.

How the female uses the American dream

On the other hand, the woman does not strive as hard to attain the dream. She may be poor and belong to the lowest of classes in the society she operates in, but when she gets married she gets elevated to the man's

position (Ted, 16). She directly inherits the class the man operates in and this therefore becomes her new social class.

That is how women are depicted to attain the American dream. When the husband's fortunes dwindle or somehow they are lost she plunges into paucity with him, and will stay there till the man works his way and lifts himself up to regain his status in the society. The woman around him automatically takes up after the husband, and her lifestyle reflects her husbands.

From the readings above and the observations made from around, it is clear that the society has clear cut distinctions on how the man and woman attain this dream. It is collective to both genders in that they complete the cycle together, but the man struggles harder to attain it. He then provides this to the wife and family. This is the hallmark of a man's success in the American society. The woman on the other hand, stays passive patiently waiting for her turn to prosper which then would be brought about by the man's prosperity (Lloyd, 18).

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