

The american dream in the mid-20th century essay sample

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



Many people, Americans and foreign peoples alike, see America as a land of opportunity, where they can achieve the American Dream, the widespread belief that in the United States of America, discipline, perseverance, and hard work are all that are necessary to improve one's life. The American public's original conception of the American dream was wealth, fame, or both, achieved through hard work in America. However, this idea is not limited to financial success, but may also mean a 'comfortable' life.

The American Dream is very...American, in that it focuses on material gains for the improvement of one's life. The fame and success of many rags-to-riches stories in the mid-20th century encouraged a "get rich quick" attitude in America's consciousness (Warshauer). The heavy consumerism that started in the mid-20th century encouraged the idea that the American Dream is "based on acquisition and consumption of the rising tide of commodities" (Murphy). White-collar workers, who made up the bulk of the 'consumers' in 'consumerism', became representative of those who had achieved the American dream.

James Truslow Adams is commonly believed to have coined the phrase 'American Dream' in 1931 in his book *The Epic of America*, during the beginning of the Great Depression, although the American Dream was especially difficult to achieve during the Great Depression 20th Century. According the comedian and actor George Carlin, "It's called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it." His statement is especially applicable to the time of the Great Depression. But the concept of the American Dream, along the phrase itself, became popular during the

Great Depression, probably as something that those affected by the depression could hold on to as a symbol of hope.

Additionally, for non-Caucasians in America, blacks in particular, the American Dream must have also included what Martin Luther King, Jr. aspired for in his speech “ I Have a Dream,” which he made in 1963: the recognition of the fact that all men are created equal, regardless of the color of their skin.

The American Dream has been a huge factor in the immigration patterns to and from the United States, attracting immigrants from all over the world. Although during the Great Depression of the 1930s more people were leaving the United States than moving into it during some years, immigration rapidly increased after the fast rise in the economy of the United States following the Depression (Bryant). After World War II in the late 1960’s, American Capitalism gained new life, and with it the world’s enthusiasm for the American Dream strengthened (“ Economic History”). Especially for many immigrants, particularly the immigrant poor, America was once again the land of opportunity.

Works Cited

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