

The american dream: negative and positive aspects essay

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



The American dream is one of the most revered ideals of the nation and it has become a part of the American national identity. This national philosophy states that the United States of America is a land of opportunity and every person has equal opportunity, regardless of their socio-economic background, for prosperity and success if they use their talents and work hard. Inevitably, the American Dream has influenced generations of citizens who seek to obtain richer and better lives in accordance with the dream.

However, the US has experienced significant inequality and poverty even as more people pursue this dream. These issues have led to questions as to whether the American Dream is a good or a bad thing for the dreamer and the society. This paper will argue that the American Dream is bad because it ignores the growing inequalities, promotes individualism and encourages materialism by the American people.

The American Dream creates an illusion of equality while the reality is that power and wealth influence the socio-economic outcomes of an individual in the United States. The perception that the US offers equal opportunities for was first articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

In this document, Thomas Jefferson affirmed the ideal of equal rights and opportunities for all by declaring, “ All men are created equal” (376). This ideal is echoed by Lincoln in the “ Gettysburg Address” where he stresses on the importance of liberty and equality in the formation of the United States (1). As such, the American Dream proposes that each person has equal opportunity in the US in spite of his or her backgrounds. As such, even a

child born and brought up in poverty has an opportunity to achieve great wealth in the country.

However, this is not the case and a person's socioeconomic roots greatly determine their future prosperity. This statement is reinforced by the fact that the nation's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and the gap between the rich and the poor is ever widening in the country. The Dream is therefore a bad thing since it downplays the reality that the US is a land where power and wealth influence a lot.

The American Dream encourages individualism and a lack of concern for the poorer members of the society. The ideals promote the ethos of personal achievement through hard work. Because the dream asserts that everyone has equal opportunity and can prosper if they work hard, the "nation's losers" are blamed for their problems.

The proponents of this dream propose that any person can succeed if they transform themselves and use their talent in this land of opportunity. From the assumption that everyone has equal opportunities to prosper, all individuals are expected to achieve success if they work hard.

Such an outlook ignores the lack of opportunities that individuals from poor backgrounds often face. Since failing to be successful is blamed on the individual and not the system in place, the government and other community members are not inclined to do anything to remedy the situation. People are only concerned with their wellbeing therefore creating a society that does not care for its less fortunate.

The ideals of the American Dream wrongly equate economic prosperity with happiness. The American Dream is based on the ideals of creating a more successful life by working hard and earning more money. It suggests that once one achieves success, economic expansion, and social mobility, he/she will experience happiness and contentment.

The dream exhorts materialism above everything else and this may be harmful for the society. The American Dream has become a nightmare in reality since compassion for human beings has all but disappeared as more people become preoccupied with making more money.

In Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams", the young confident and hardworking Dexter Green is dedicated to gaining wealth and status, well in line with the American Dream. He is convinced that achieving this will give him joy and satisfaction. However, once Dexter achieves his goals of wealth and power, he realizes that his dreams are illusory and he will never get the happiness he seeks through achieving wealth and status (Fitzgerald 23).

The American Dream has been used as a justification for questionable conduct by individuals who are trying to achieve some goals or ambitions that are in line with the ideals of the dream. The Dream is not a well-defined concept and it has been stretched and adapted to fit all kinds of people and historical circumstances.

The dream has accommodated immigrants, drug dealers, as well as ambitious youths yearning to make a better life for themselves. The prominent Civil Rights Activist figure Martin Luther King used the American

Dream to justify the civil disobedience that he was advocating (608). From these examples, it is clear that the American Dream can be used to justify both noble and questionable causes.

On the positive side, the American Dream has been used as a tool for progress and the promotion of unity. The idea of the American Dream was very instrumental in the establishment of the United States as a country independent from Britain. The American Dream was an underlying theme in the Declaration of Independence that is linked to freedom of the American people (Jefferson 377). The dream also served as a tool to overcome slavery in the 18th century.

Because the dream stated that equality and freedom were prerequisites for all American's, the abolitionists used the American Dream to champion the emancipation of the slaves. President Lincoln referenced the American Dream in his attempt to unify the warring citizens and remind them that they all fought for the ideals it represented.

The American Dream has also served as inspiration for people to fight for their rights and promote equality in the society. This is best exemplified by Martin Luther King who fought for the dream of equality. King believed that all people in the US should have the same rights and opportunities as it is granted in the Declaration of Independence (622).

With such a deep conviction, he was able to mobilize people and eventually achieve the civil rights for the African-American population in the US. The

American dream therefore inspired people to fight for their rights in the country.

The American Dream has promoted the capitalistic economic system, which is the most favorable system for economic growth and development. The dream promotes the ideals of Capitalism where each person is rewarded based on their efforts.

People are therefore encouraged to work hard and their efforts are rewarded through better pay and/or career advancement. The American Dream therefore contributes to the growth of the country's economy since when individuals pursue and achieve their dreams; the economic outcomes of the country are improved.

Despite being the richest country in the world, there is significant poverty and socio-economic inequality in the US. This situation can partly be blamed on the American Dream. The American Dream is not one dream but a set of ideals that have been developed over time. While the dream constitutes a wide range of ideas, they are all based on achieving prospering, success, and living a good life.

This Dream is not realizable since individuals will always want more than what they have and therefore end up in a state of discontent. In addition to this, the dream diminishes social cohesion since it encourages individualism and an overemphasis on material possessions. The capitalistic system promoted by the American Dream favors the minority capital contributors at

the expense of the working class. Capitalism also encourages exploitation of others in order to make more money.

This paper set out to argue that the American Dream is bad for the individual and the society as a whole. To this end, it set out to highlight the negative outcomes of the dream. The American dream creates a false sense of equality and promotes individualism. This paper has demonstrated that the American Dream has gone astray and is today out of reach for most Americans.

The United States is a land of opportunity and liberty, but these opportunities are not available equally. Instead of promoting the universal prosperity and equality, it assumes to uphold, the American dream has encouraged immense inequality within this great nation.

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