

The collapse of the american dream

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The Collapse of the American Dream“ The American Dream has run out of gas,” said JG Ballard, a prominent English novelist. The American Dream was once a reality, a time when the citizens of America were the simple migrants who had immigrated because they sought a place where they could dictate their own fate. It was further developed in the 1770's, and was referenced to by a great document through the words “ 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. These words are the basis of the Dream, which is now defined by Webster's dictionary as the ideals of freedom, equality, and opportunity traditionally held to be available to every American. For generations, achieving the dream was the goal of all Americans. However, this period of happiness did not last long; for times change, and the people along with them. Today, the American dream has evolved into an unachievable illusion, caused by a capitalistic economy, human nature and the government. To start off, the American dream is unattainable because of the capitalist economy.

For example, in the Grapes of Wrath, the Joads are unable to get jobs because of the income disparity in the economy. When traveling the California, a garish one-eyed man appears. He tells the Joads how the flyers that advertise job are actually fraud. To fill 800 positions they print out several thousand flyers. Employers use unemployment to their advantage and drive wages down further making it impossible for many to achieve the American Dream. The Capitalistic economy strives to maximize profits, regardless of human consequences.

The Joads end up losing their so called American dream and their family endures much suffering which causes them to break apart. Similarly, In the Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald presents the American Dream as a corrupt shadow of what it once was. The valley of ashes, one of the settings of the novel, is a capitalist wasteland that represents the degradation of the Dream. Fitzgerald compares the valley of ashes with the Eggs, the other setting, on many occasions. All descriptions of the valley of ashes are grim. The poor live in the ashes compared to the wealthy who live in clean and extravagant communities.

This shows the disparity caused by capitalism; only the rich can enjoy their lives, while the poor must work long hours of manual labor in order to survive. The dream is nonexistent to anyone who is not born with a silver spoon. The time where one could work hard and rise from rags to riches is gone. Likewise, in the recent Muppets movie, the characters are hindered on their way to the American dream by the capitalist oil baron Tex Richman. He tries to raze Muppet studios and drill for the oil beneath it. This once again shows that capitalism does not care for human rights; it's only goal is money and power.

But naturally, since the Muppets is a children's movie, Tex becomes a better person by the end of the movie. Sadly, it is not so in reality. People are not afraid to go out and kill each other's dreams for personal gain. Next, The American Dream is unreachable because of the government. For instance, in To Kill a Mockingbird, Tom Robinson is denied the American dream because of the biased system. Long before the trial occurs, Harper Lee

makes the reader recognize how prejudiced Maycomb county is. Atticus acknowledges this fact when he tells his brother John that the jury couldn't possibly taken Tom Robinson's word over the Ewell's.

And later, even though Atticus points out plenty of holes and discrepancies with Mayella's story, the jury refuses to believe the word of a black man. For Tom, the worst part of the deal is being imprisoned after the court hearing. This, Atticus says, is what led him to try to escape; " he was tired of white man's justice. " The American Dream is nonexistent to all colored folks because they were denied their basic liberties by the system that was supposed to protect them. Likewise, in the novel Anthem the people of future world are denied their American Dream by the government.

Equality, the protagonist of the novel, is a very intelligent person who desires only to be a scholar. Instead, the government delegates him the task of street-sweeping. Later, when he discovers the light, the government, instead of praising his accomplishment, shuns him and banishes him from society. Thus, his Dream to unify mankind and teach them about the wonders of the unmentionable times is killed. Lastly, The Night Thoreau spent in Jail presents Henry David Thoreau, an able man, fighting for his dream, though the government forestalls him at every turn.

The Mexican war is going on in during the novel. Thoreau, the protagonist, does not believe that it is a just war and refuses to pay tax. He is so determined to prove his point, that he even goes and lives in the woods, creating a sanctuary he calls his Walden. Still, the government throws him in jail, and he continues to refuse to pay, boycotting the war. Finally, he is

kicked out of jail and finds that he made no impact. The war was as Abraham Lincoln said was “ of the sheerest deception,” as the people had no choice in the matter.

So, Henry David’s dream was unfinished, and he died a heart-broken death at the age of 45. Finally, the American Dream is unachievable because of human greed. Although this great nation was founded on the noblest of principles, the founding fathers forgot one crucial detail; people always want more than they have. According to Daniel Gilbert, a highly esteemed professor and writer of the Futile Pursuit of Happiness, says that people have a tendency to miswant, or mistakenly believing that wanting something will bring one happiness.

This leads them to think that money, is the most important thing, and soon, they stop at nothing to achieve more and more money, often throwing others under the bus. The novel, Death and the American Dream, by Daniel Cano, is about a Mexican revolutionary who wants to start over in America. He is actually an American citizen, but his only identification is his American passport. His friend, desperate for money, steals his passport and makes him look like an illegal immigrant to get a reward. It is a story of betrayal, politics and life; a shockingly real portrayal of life today.

Similarly, they say that life is a race. What they don’t say is that if one falls, he is unlikely to ever get up again. In conclusion, the American Dream is now just an unattainable dream, instead of a reality because of the capitalistic economy, the government and human nature. When this nation was first created, American believed that wealth, prosperity and happiness could be

created through handwork and perseverance. But now, with society on the verge of collapse, America needs to stop dreaming and wake up. Works Cited Cano, Daniel. Death and the American Dream. Tempe, Ariz: Bilingual, 2009.

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