

America's obstacles to success essay



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Success can be a rather abstract term and it can mean very different things to different people. The dictionary's definition of " success" is the achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted. It is something that everybody wants.

For some, " success" means having a lot of money, fame and power, but for some, success does not necessarily means having a lot of monetary things. When I ponder at what society tries to influence my view on success, I see constant visions of having finer things in life, looking fit and beautiful, marrying a rich husband, raising perfect children, attending high society events, and owning a respectable business. These ideal images of success do play a part in its attempt to shape what Devore would call " the social me". On the other hand, my " interior I", is shaped by other influences in my life, like my parents, teachers and pastors. They always taught me that honesty, good education, hard work, thrift, perseverance, love and faith will eventually lead me to success and happiness.

Therefore, my " success" would be to become a registered nurse and managing my own medi-spa clinic in Laguna Beach, in the near future. If I am successful in my career then it would means having great income, high status, respect, and self confident. Although achieving my career goal is nice, but what is more important to have a healthy, happy family and good friends. A wonderful husband, I can trust and rely on; hard working and respectful children, whom I can be proud of; good parents, siblings and friends that I can count on when I need them. They are most important to me, because they are the people that are around to support and to inspire me to go further and come closer to what I define " success" is. Interestingly,

the pressures my “ social me” encounters are summarized neatly in Gregory Mantsios’ short essay, “ Class in America”.

He tends to define “ success” as belonging to the upper class, and the lower you are on the class’ ladder, the less chance you will have of “ success”. In his article, he describes the different classes’ obstacle to success, in our society. Furthermore, he makes his point about the increasing gap in our society is due to the realities of our economic spectrum, American life-styles, our class and educational attainment, our spheres of power and oppression. At the same time, he refutes the four common beliefs in our society: The USA is classless; we are a middle class nation; we’re all getting richer; and everyone has an equal chance to succeed. He justifies that if you are born into the life of wealth, you will have a better chance at succeeding in life such as school, career, and marriage. On the flip side, if you are born into a less fortunate family, the chance of becoming successful greatly decreases.

Moreover, Mantsios questions the notion of people having equal chance at becoming successful as long as they work hard. “ The reality is, even ignoring the extreme poles of the economic spectrum; we find enormous class differences in the life styles among the haves, the have-nots, and the have-littles. (p. 92)” Success is attained by these separate classes, through constant struggle to keep it or to achieve it and the advantage is likely going to be the class above the other, who’s going to win in this social and economic tug of war. Furthermore, Mantsios’ view on capitalism, racism, and sexism are the other significant factors that impede the success of many Americans.

“ Even though, people rarely or never talk about the existence of social classes in our society, but such distinct classes do exist. We don't speak about class privileges, or class oppression, or the class nature of society (p. 80). ” Instead what we do is focus on the middle class to avoid any suggestion of conflict or injustice of class differences.

Our country echoes the notions that rich or poor, we are all equal in the eyes of the law, and as citizens of this country, we are provided with basic needs as healthcare and education regardless of economic standing. This is not true from what I have experienced, when our country was in an economic recession. During this time, my husband and I endured the greatest tragedy of our lives, as our real estate and mortgage company went under. Our finance shrunk so fast that we were behind our mortgage, and since we were struggling to put food on the table, healthcare became not a priority on our list. As sad as our situation was, we were denied of healthcare benefit, because we were still the owner of a two million dollar home that was upside down. Gregory Mantsios claims the difference in class determines where people live, who their friends are, and how well they are educated...and what they come to expect from life.

It is mostly true that people who are born in the well off families do have a better education, and opportunities than the people whose parents are poor. Since school performance and educational attainment also correlate strongly with economic class. The higher the student's social status is, the higher the probability that he or she will get better education. It really amazes me; how my wealthy friends and acquaintances' children are qualified to attend most universities when their grades were just barely average. It is not hard to

imagine, these kids' parents can buy their way into a reputable college with a generous financial contribution.

Needless to say, when you have deep pockets, a small investment toward your offspring's future is not a big deal. Once upon a time, the idea that anyone can succeed through thrift and hard work, one could be happy living a successful life. Children were always taught that if they were honest and worked hard enough, they were able to obtain their dreams of success.

However, the American Dream seems to be more difficult to reach nowadays because not everyone is content with what they have or they are limited and confined by opportunities afforded or denied them by a social and economic system. The indigents and minorities are not given the fair chance to succeed in our society. These groups of people are burdened by social economic, which enforces class division between the "have" and the "have not".

To make matter worse, capitalism is guiding Americans' belief that success is gain by profit for one self, rather than to fulfill the needs of others whose is less fortunate. I absolutely believe money is the necessary evil to fulfill one's American Dreams. Therefore, as citizens of America, we should try to work together to lessen or to eliminate these difficult obstacles, so that everybody is able to achieve their idea of success. In America, not only does parents' economic status affect their children, but a person's race and gender greatly inhibit economic advancement. Mantsios informs us that "racial and gender domination are the other forces that hold people down (p.

321)” He believes that if a person is non-white or female, they will face oppression no matter what kind of job description they have. I strongly object to his arguments, because 40 years ago, both of my parents came to America as immigrants with nothing. They worked hard and invested wisely, and now, they owned about 40 rental properties in Orange County. While accomplishing their personal goals, they manage to raise all successful children, three of which are practicing physicians. My family's success has made a great impact on how I believe that the issues of class are not worsened by sexism and racism, stripping the poor of even more opportunities for success.

In conclusion, it is this difference, my idea of “ success” juxtaposed to Mantsios' idea of “ success” that shows some similarities and some contrast in our ideas of “ success”. I agree with the author that social classes do exist, and plays a huge role in human's success. One of the important factors that determine success is which family you came from. Which is why, decision regarding marriage is so important for the future of your children.

Economic mobility is not an easy matter, but I honestly believe that people can always change their situation and go beyond what's given to them. People are not restricted to stay in their define classes, because there are no certainties in life. If you are born into a rich family, then you should consider yourself lucky. The likelihood of you getting better education, job, and opportunities are good. As for those that aren't so lucky, don't feel bad, America is what it is because you're free to do what you want in order to succeed in life. Unlike Mantsios, I believe that Americans dream can be

accomplished through hard work and determination, which will lead to success no matter what your economic status.

On the other hand, I disagree with Mantsios' opinion about “ the particular issues that confront women and people of color maybe quite different depending on their position in the class structure (p. 296). I understand that sexism and racism sometimes have their downfall, but I believe it can be successfully overcome by ones eagerness to reach a goal that will help him or her to get far. Therefore, we should not blame the obstacles that are in our way, to success.

Hard work and perseverance are obstacles that I see prevent you from achieving your success. “ A more just society will require a radical redistribution of wealth and power. We can start by reversing the current trends that further polarize us as people and adapt policies and practices that narrow the gaps in income, wealth and privilege (p. 97)” It is pretty disappointing that Mantsios didn't offer much possible solutions in changing the very problem that this essay is addressing.

Maybe one of the ways to eliminate class, wealth would have to be distributed evenly throughout the population. Since we have seen how such a system can fail in the fall of communism, therefore, this is an answer to help our underdogs. Another way to probably resolve our increase gap issue is tax regulation can be tools to change the desperate situation of the lowest classes. Success in America is not guaranteed, however, neither is it guaranteed failure.

America is known for its diversity of cultures filled with different people of all races. Every individual is given the opportunity to succeed regardless of who they are and where they came from. So what if someone is lucky to be born into an upper class family, and he/she will have a better chance of success than the kid that is raised in a poor family, because everybody's chances for success in America are reachable if ones is determined enough to reach a little higher.