Поделиться…

Начало формы

  

Конец формы

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|  | **The American Dream**Few terms are defined in so many different ways or bandied about more loosely than "the American Dream." To some people, the term is a joke, an object of satire, derision, or contempt, and a made-in-America label for a congeries of chauvinistic cliches mouthed by jingoists. To others, it merely signifies self-determined success, wealth, the "good life" of modish clothes, sports cars, and hot tubs - in a word, the latest thing touted by Madison Avenue. And to still others, less scornful or frivolous, it denotes a unique set of social and moral ideals. The phrase "the American Dream" came into the American vocabulary starting in 1867 when writer, Horatio Alger came out with his book "Ragged Dick." It was a rags-to-riches tale of a poor orphan boy in New York City who saves his pennies, works hard and eventually becomes rich. It became the model that through honesty, hard work and strong determination, the American Dream was available to anyone willing to make the journey. The origin of the American dream stems from the departure in government and economics from the models of the Old World. This allowed unprecedented freedom, especially the possibility of dramatic upward social mobility. Many early Americans prospectors headed west of the Rocky Mountains to buy acres of cheap land in hopes of finding deposits of gold. The American dream was a driving factor not only in the Gold Rush of the mid to late 1800s, but also in the waves of immigration throughout that century and the following. Impoverished western Europeans escaping the Irish potato famines in Ireland, the Highland clearances in Scotland and the aftermath of Napoleon in the rest of Europe came to America to escape a poor quality of life at home. They wanted to embrace the promise of financial security and constitutional freedom they had heard existed so widely in the United States. Nearing the twentieth century, major industrialist personalities became the new model of the American dream, many beginning lives in the humblest of conditions but later controlling enormous corporations and fortunes. Perhaps most notables here were the great American capitalists Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. The key difference here from the Old World societal structure is that the antiquated monarchies of Western Europe and their post-feudal economies actively oppressed the peasant class. They also required high levels of taxation, which crippled development. People who were consciously free of these constraints, however, built America. There was a hope for egalitarianism. Martin Luther King invoked the American Dream in what is perhaps his most famous speech: "Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends. And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream." (I have a dream) In the 20th century, the American dream had its challenges. The Depression caused widespread hardship during the Twenties and Thirties, and was almost a reverse of the dream for those directly affected. Racial instability did not disappear, and in some parts of the country racial violence was almost commonplace. Since the end of World War II, young American families have sought to live in relative bourgeois comfort in the suburbs that they built up. The possibility of great wealth has remained more of a distant dream in the recent century, while the widely held goal of home ownership, financial security, and civil and international stability have come to take the place of the common American dream in modern times. The basic capitalistic virtues of hard work, intelligence and independence had been seen as the means to achieving this 'final' incarnation of the American dream. A skeptical view would say that the American dream was built on aggressive colonialism. The Civil War to promote Liberty could be seen to be undermined by the earlier displacement, dispossession and slaughter of the original inhabitants of the land: this amounts to genocide on a par with that which many immigrants came to these shores to escape. Other critics point out the falsity of the implied view that everyone can succeed and become rich if they only try hard enough. This view, it is said, penalizes people who are poor and already penalized, and does not take into account individual levels of ability and potential. It is true that for most people the American Dream is a pursuit of material prosperity. But actually, to find out what your American Dream is you should find what you love. When you find what you love and fit it into your life (or better yet, fit your life around it), then you have found your personal dream, your own piece of the American Dream.  |
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