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# **The American Dream; A Reality or a Myth?**

*Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a Partial  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for a Master's Degree in Anglo-Saxon LC*

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## **Dedications**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents who mentored, loved me unconditionally, and encouraged me to become the person I have become.

To all my friends for helping me overcome all the odds and stress, and to all my acquaintances who wish me the best.

To all those who are interested in the American culture.



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## Abstract

What makes any culture in the world worthwhile, different and deserve to have a look at is its long special history, rich heritage, amazing stories and customs, and advanced civilization. People around the world have always heard that the United States of America has all those criteria; thanks to the different powerful terms that has been used to build this reputation and affect people's beliefs. The American Dream is one of those famous terms to receive a great international attention. In 1931, this term was created by the American Writer and historian, James Truslow Adams, on the purpose to rise over the depression, but after that, the circle of its definition started to expand gradually until it become a manifestation of all forms of the United States' power and uniqueness and denote all the meanings of hope and happiness that appeal to every human by nature. Based on this, this dissertation tend to verify the credibility of the American Dream's specifications under the title « *the American Dream a Reality or a Myth?* ». The research methodology that was applied is the New Historicism, first to help build a foreknowledge of the topic, and then a detailed investigation and examination of the term in different fields of culture and knowledge in order to provide clear answers to the research questions. The research leads to the fact that the American Dream carries many contradictions within itself, therefore, it can benefit its believers in some cases or shock them with unexpected results in other ones.

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# **General Introduction**



## General Introduction

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It is often believed that the United States of America is the most powerful country in the world, quite a fascinating country for many reasons. Several historical, political, and religious factors contributed significantly to give it a positive image, a good reputation, high prestige and moral authority that the whole world respects. Today, the omnipresence of the US can be felt in every single country where all people receive news about strong military, developed economy, high living standards, and cultural and ethnic diversity that worth appreciation. In order to maintain this stereotype and remove growing doubts about how true those news are, the American governmental system is working hard using a set of plans and methods among which slogans that praise and promote living in the US.

The United States of America has a great history that had always been associated with the hopes and aspirations of American people who wanted to build a country where all citizens can live in peace and have the necessary conditions to a decent happy life. These aspirations began to be pursued since the first voyages of pilgrims and puritans towards the New World escaping from the persecution of the corrupted British Crown, followed by establishing many cities and states, revolution against the mother country, getting independence, then starting the expansion of the geographical surface up to the establishment of a powerful state. Inspirational leaders and characters who took the starring roles to making this history used their power to create change, thus, their deeds truly affected the lives of the next generations.

Although the Declaration of Independence contains many concepts of hope and aspiration, they were not sufficiently highlighted only after they were included under the controversial term, the American Dream that was created by James Tuslow Adams in 1931.

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The United States of America promises to achieve this dream and to protect it by an exceptional political system that is based on democracy, liberty, and equality. The dream was not given one single definition, but different ones. However, the material dream is the dream that got into big dispute regarding its importance to all people and because it is supposed to achieve prosperity and happiness.

As a powerful term that reflects the American Culture, the American Dream strongly entered popular discussion which was represented in different fields of knowledge including philosophy, literature, movies and music in addition to political speeches, newspapers and magazines. These fields have helped a lot to providing profounder and wider understanding of the term. Moreover, each field contained both negative and positive criticism of the American Dream.

Regarding the cohesive American experience that it helped to build, the broad controversy that it caused, and the importance that it represented to many people; the American Dream has to raise many questions among them:

How and when did the American Dream come into existence?

What does it refer to?

Is it a reality or merely a myth passed between generations?

If it is a reality then, is it true that it brings happiness?

Based on these questions, the researcher presents two hypotheses to be examined and then validated.

The American Dream appeared as a result of some specific past historical factors that do not necessarily reflect one single dream but endless ones.

## General Introduction

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The American Dream denote primarily what it is; a dream only that has nothing to do with reality.

After extracting the necessary information from reliable sources which are mainly books, articles, and websites, the researcher used the New Historicism in an attempt to connect the historical background of the topic to specific aspects of the work in order to provide answers to the above questions.

The extended essay is divided into tow chapters, the first one gives a brief history of the United States of America in order to show its realationship with the American Dream, and how things developed and led to coin this term. It also hylighted the different concepts of the dream under the title: the Origins of the American Dream. However, the second chapter goes to study the American Dream and enquire its claims through several sources including philosophy, literature, movies, music, political speeches, newspapaers and magazines in order to show the real case of the American Dream under the title: The Criticism of the American Dream.

# **Chapter 1**

## **The Origins of the American Dream**

1. 1 Introduction
1. 2 A Glance at the American History
  1. 2. 1 The Discovery of the American Continent
  1. 2. 2 The European Conquest
  1. 2. 3 The American Revolution
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  1. 6. 5 The New American Dream
1. 7 Conclusion

## **1.1. Introduction**

In order to remove the mystery from the American Dream term as well as for a better understanding of its meaning, the reason it was formed, and how people have reacted to it. It is of necessity to first take a look at the events that preceded its birth and shed light on the features of those events and the famous characters that contributed in its creation.

This chapter, therefore, gives the reader essential information. Starting from the first preliminary discoveries of the American land, its occupation and settlement up to the independence and the establishment of a new state based on a distinctive constitution that calls for human values and rights in an unprecedented manner. The term American Dream, thus, comes to uphold these values and open the door for unlimited aspirations.

## **1.2. A Glance at the American History**

The United States of America has a long rich history that can be summarized in numerous stages, including those which played an important role in shaping the current image of the country. Looking at those historical stands helps one to better understand the US nature and recognize what sets it apart from the rest of the world. (Goodrich7)

### **1.2.1. The Discovery of the American Continent**

The Discovery of the American Continent has always been a controversial point among historians. Some believe that it dates back to the 10th Century AD by Norsemen, while others stick to the fact that it was not explored until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century AD. (Alexander1917)

Relying on historical as well as archaeological evidence, some historians argue that the Vikings were the first to discover the American Continent and that their expansions were not limited to Northern Europe and Greenland, but reached North America. ( Logan 2005)

Leif Ericson is thought to be the first Viking man to navigate westwardly well beyond from Greenland to reach a New world, where he founded his short-lived settlement five centuries before Columbus's arrival. Ericson could not coexist with the native people,

making the demise of his civilization, there, inevitable. However, his achievements were celebrated for hundred years in the Norse Stories. (Janusz19)

Christopher Columbus, a famous European sailor and adventurer, had always been known for his passion for exploration. With the emergence of the knowledge and reconnoitering spirit in Europe, Columbus's dream of sailing across the Atlantic began to loom.

European governments were increasingly interested in finding new routes to the East. Columbus took the opportunity to ask for the support of his plans from the Portugal's king who, categorically, refused.

Columbus next destination was Spain, where his hopes finally gathered. Isabella and Ferdinand have agreed on his projects. But the time was not appropriate to apply them because of the war against the Moor. Columbus waited until 1492 to sail westwardly from Spain and eventually succeeded to reach the Islands of Cuba and Haiti.

His voyages did not stop until 1502. During this period, he undertook a systematic work to discover, what was according to him, sundry parts of Asia. After he finished his travels, he returned from where he already started, Spain, to die there, leaving a great discovery that would change the course of history forever. (Alexander 1917)

In 1501, another explorer named Amerigo Vespucci came into America, where he realized that this discovered land is not parts of Asia rather than a completely New World. After that, Columbus's ideas about the the New World were rejected whereas Amerigo's ones were adopted then America became considered an independent land. As a consequence, Amerigo deserved to attribute its name, America, to him. (Lincoln and McHenry 3-4)

### **1.2.2. The European Conquest**

The New land became the focus of many European countries who were striving to get new colonies. The Spaniards have the lead in conquering it. From 1509 to 1535, their expansions in the south had been done successfully. The French, following them succeeded in occupying Canada and establishing their first city there, Quebec, in 1608. The Dutch as

well as the Swedes had also a share in the vast continent where they found commercial companies. As for the English, they were not able to get a land only after the end of their religious war with Spain. (JAYAPALAN2-3)

Moving to America was such a sacred goal for the English, because England had no longer provided them with the appropriate atmosphere for working and, thereby, achieving success. They struggled best to earn as much colonies as possible. And indeed, their struggles have not gone for nothing, they could found the colony of Virginia in 1606 under the king James blessing. Then, came Jamestown, after, as their first colony. However, what can be considered as a beginning for great achievements is Plymouth settlement, which was a sanctuary for the pilgrims who fled from the persecution of the English church and came to America searching for religious freedom. As soon as they arrived, they signed an important document called the May Flower Compact. Puritans were another religious group who came from England before the Civil War. They were worried about the spread of Roman beliefs in their country. They first, landed Massachusetts where they established their own government before they began to expand to other colonies like Connecticut and Rhode Island and so many others. (JAYAPALAN 3-6)

### **1.2.3. The American Revolution**

The Land of America has experienced fierce battles before it gradually changed to what it is nowadays. Among the wars that took place there between European colonizers was the British-French war which lasted 7 years and ended with the British victory in 1763. The war cost Britain considerable human and financial losses. Hence, it wanted to recover from this crisis by forcing the American people to pay taxes. Therefore, it resorted to enacting a set of laws, notably the Stamp Act, which imposes the purchase of stamps on many commercial, legal and law transactions. The Americans, of course, did not welcome these decisions, but took it as a reasonable cause to rebel against their mother country.

The Americans chose to express their rejection of the colonizer's policy in a form of demonstrations all over America. Boston was one of the main cities to have witnessed a massive wave of riots in which Tea Party took place. A huge number of tea boxes have been thrown into the sea. As a reaction, the government imposed harsh sanctions and increased repressions against protesters. All these incidents led the Americans to declare the war



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against Britain in 1775 and a year later declared themselves independent from the British empire though they did not get the official recognition until 1783. (Cogliano 2011)

#### 1.2.4. The Declaration of Independence

After the US military achieved overwhelming victories over the British one, the American demands for their legitimate rights significantly increased despite of the British determent and intimidation, it became difficult for the both of them to reverse their decisions. During these circumstances, the Americans felt that their dream of establishing a fully-sovereign state became so attainable. As a result, American leaders thought that there was an urgent need to declare themselves independent from the British crown, hoping to receive some support from outside the empire, like France, to make this happen. Hence, they started to work on it step by step; Richard Henry Lee speech that was announced by Virginia Convention on May 15, 1776, was probably the first step that expressed the Americans unbridled desire for independence. It is, though, included clearly what the 13 Colonies wanted in the following claims: « That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States ».

Although it was crucial and important, for the American leaders Lee's speech did not meet the point. Thus, they had to draft a comprehensive document that would reflect the values and principles of the American liberal people. John Adams, Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Thomas Jefferson, Five of America's greatest men who gathered in Philadelphia on 11 June 1776, based on the Congress decision to form a committee to prepare a statement supplementing, interpreting and confirming Lee's decision as well as to put the hopes, aspirations, and rights of their people in a historical document which was mostly written by Thomas Jefferson. The five leaders were able to prepare the document on 2 July when the 12 colonies voted for its adoption at Pennsylvania state house which became named nowadays « Independent Hall ». The New York delegations delayed voting until July 15. On July 4, 1776, America had been declared an independent nation, and today, it celebrates this day as its National day.

The document put emphasis on the ideas and principles that they were prevalent in The Renaissance Era which are basically: freedom, democracy, nationalism, which are also the same ideas of John Locke, Algernon Sidney, and many others. As James Madison comments: « The object was to assert, not to discover the truth ». These principles are also

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the main reasons of claiming for independence. Furthermore, it strongly condemned the slave trade, blamed the king and stressed the rights of their legitimate revolution in particular and the right of people to self-determination in general. This document has demonstrated the power of words which inspire other nations.

One of the most famous lines which Jefferson innovated in such an elegant literary style which would become an aphorism, carries a deep meaning of the American dreams is: « We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ». (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018)

### 1.3. Manifest Destiny

The United States of America with its old geographical borders, that they were drawn for the first time it was founded, was never the country that the Americans dreamed of rather they aspire for larger surface. As a result, their expansion plans have never stopped before the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861; they could include Oregon country, Texas, New Mexico, and California. Manifest Destiny; a short term with a deep meaning that strike in the roots of history, played a key role in the success of these expansions and cover them with legitimacy. However, they could not continue only after the Civil War was ended in 1865. Alaska was the first state to be purchased when the war ended which brought the term Manifest Destiny to the political arena again, but this time more strongly; it became the justification that the US used to colonise more states like Hawaii.

The United States of America owe a lot to John O'Sullivan who wrote about Manifest Destiny, as a specific term to America, for the first time in an article of the United States Magazine, and Democratic Review which he personally edits. He, therefore, stated:

for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.

With these words O'Sullivan choose to defend the United States' territorial expansion rights, in front of all the European attempts to fail it. He was very unpleasant with European

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interventions in his country's policy, especially from the English and French sides, hence, he decided to make things explicit to them that the path of the US towards greatness is decreed by the Lord, for that reason, no one has the right to oppose the Lord's destiny. On December 27 of the same year, Mr O'Sullivan came back to write on Manifest Destiny in the column of New York Morning News in order to justify the American expansions by asserting on divine protection (providence), which was clearly represented in the following lines : « the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us ».

Later, the term has become increasingly popular and it entered the political debate from its widest door. Therefore, some officials from different political spectrums mocked on it and thought that it is an overstated term to have all this fame, whereas others supported, believed and took it as a motto. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018)

#### 1.4. The American Exceptionalism

The term American Exceptionalism is likely to have appeared in 1835 in the book of the French writer Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. By which he meant that all what America has passed through was exceptional at all levels. He regarded it as an exceptional country not just because it is different from the rest of the world, but also because it is unique in its history and its social, economic, and political development. All these factors made it an ideal country for other countries. In such eloquent words, he explained:

The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit », he continued, « I have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passion, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite in drawing the native of the United States earthward; his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and

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distracted glance to heaven. Let us ceasen, then, to view all democratic nations under the example of the American people. (DUNN2013)

Unlike De Tocqueville who was fastinated with America's history and superiority, Joseph Stalin believed that America is not superior especially in terms of economic matters. According to the communist leader, if American exceptionalism means Aamerican superiority then it is empty talk. It is believed that Joseph Stalin contributed in spreading the term even more than De Tocqueville did, though he described it in a negative way calling it heresy of American exceptionalism. (Mccoy 2012)

President Ronald Reagan was one of the most prominent supporters and promoters of the American exceptionalism ideology. He believed and defended it in his political speeches. Perhaps he wanted it to be a permanent subject in Ameican policy as he might intended to embed it in the American's minds forever. And this is an excerpt from his final presidential speech when he clear things up about American exceptionalism:

Those of us who are over thirty-five or so years of age grew up in a different America we were taught, very directly, what it means to be an American. And we absorbed, almost in the air, a love of country and an appreciation of its institutions. If you didn't get these things from your family, you got them from your neighborhood... school...and popular culture. (DUNN2)

Some politicians and scholalars see what makes America an exceptional nation is the principles that were stated long before in the Declaration of Independence. Among them Seynour Lipset who encompassed the exceptionalism in these words: « Liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire.» (DUNN 2-3)

As for the scholar G.K Chesterton, who claimed: « America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence.» (DUNN 2-3)

American exceptionalism did not leave the political field until today present; that what was clear in President Obama's words, who strongly believed in it: « I believed in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the British believe in Brtish exceptionalism » By which

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he meant that American exceptionalism is not exclusive to America, but other nations can have it too. (Mardell)

According to Florida's new Republican Senator Marco Rubio, « Americans believe with all their hearts, the vast majority of them, that the United States of America is simply the single greatest nation in all of human history. » (Bryant 2016)

What can be understood from this quotation is that the Americans are very confident about their country's distinctiveness and uniqueness in comparison to other countries and of course in a good way not the opposite. Furthermore, they have the absolute grandeur and superiority over the other nations. As a result, the term is no longer exclusive to the political sphere, but it widely spread to cover the popular culture.

### 1.5. The Birth of the American Dream

Following the remarkable successes of his books, *The Founding of New England* in 1921, and *Provincial Society 1690-1763* in 1927. James Truslow Adams, the American Writer, who seeks to embellish his literary reputation, decided to write a book reminding of his ancient ancestors history, reviving their glory, and serving as a ray of hope when despair began to gnaw at the nation's body. (Cullen3)

The writer chose the right time to publish his book. At the climax of the Great Depression, the book came to give a better vision of the future, and resuscitate the dream of the Founding Fathers, which calls for adherence to the principles of the Declaration of Independence and this is how he had expressed it:

Possibly the greatest of these struggles lies just ahead of us at this present time not a struggle of revolutionists against the established order, but of the ordinary man to hold fast to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' which were vouchsafed to us in the past in vision and on parchment. (Ibid4)

The book that was supposed to be named the American Dream, was changed to *The Epic of America* after his owner had been convinced that the first title will not get the readers attention. However, because he put too much emphasize on it through out the book, the American Dream resonated more strongly than the title itself. The American Dream was the essence of James Truslow book, in which he described it as:

That American Dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank, which is the greatest contribution we have made to the thought and welfare of the world. That dream or hope has been present from the start. Ever since we became an independent nation, each generation has seen an uprising of ordinary Americans to save that dream from the forces which appeared to be overwhelming it. (Ibid3)

As a more accurate description he clarified:

The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement, It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not adream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are ianately capable, and be recognized for what they are, regardless of the foruitous circumstances of birth position. ( Devits and Rich 4)

The American Dream, therefore, became tremendously interesting term that received a huge fame, not becuase it is an exceptional dream, but because the political system, that protect it and tend to make it real for every citizen, is an exceptional system. (Heather 20)

## 1.6. The Different Meanings of the American Dream Over Time

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, American Dream is: a happy way of living that is thought of by many Americans as something that can be achieved by anyone in the U.S. especially by working hard and becoming successful with good jobs, a nice house, two children, and plenty of money, they believed they were living the American Dream.

However, it is difficult to confine the American Dream in one single definition because it is a wide term that can mean different things to different people, whether they were individuals or groups. Cullen aptly illustrated: «There is no one American Dream. Instead, there are many American Dreams 2003 ». Those dreams can be dreams of equality, religion, wealthiness or social class etc. However, dreams like freedom, equality, opportunity are dreams of all time since they related to the nature or the country and the creed it based on, they are also shared by all humanbeings. Moreover, achieving them is a prerequisite for any other dreams. (Girén2009)

### 1.6.1. The Dream of Pilgrims and Puritans

One may think that the idea of the American Dream is a sort of modern, due to the huge fame it has received. However, as a matter of fact, it has existed since the day of pilgrims not as a term, but as a deep faith embeded in their hearts. Since their first journey to the New World, pilgrims came carrying their own dreams and aspirations to live a better life in a better country, where they could practice their beliefs peacefully, without any obstacles. They strived to build their civilization in that country, and make it always a fertile land for planting dreams for the next commers.

The Founding Fathers after them had the utmost courage to defend on their dreams through the Declaratin of Independence document which serves as a Constitution to the state and contains fundamental principles that make the America's status great among the other states. This is exactly what the French writer Alexis De Tocqueville could not find a better expression for than: «The Charm of anticipated success. »; by which he meant that the success of American leaders in achieving their endeavors has made some people expect to achieve success in this country as well. (Cullen5)

Concerning the dream of puritans, it was born from their sense of purity, to which the name puritans denote. Because they believe in their purity so, they think that they deserve a purer country than their corrupted England; a country whose soil should be suitable for planting their pure dreams. This fake puritanical reputation as soon as became contaminated with their terrible crimes against the indigenou inhabitants. To make their dreams and hopes alive, they killed the dreams and hopes of Indians. Nevertheless, they are not the only ones who should be condemned, in this respect, their European relatives from Spain and England did the same thing with those innocent people. However, whatever their dreams

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were, what matters is their insistence on it and fighting for it. This is what is likely to be inherited by the next coming American generations. (Ibid12-13)

### 1.6.2. Winthrop's Dream

It is known that the founding of the New World has been done successfully by a group of puritans, but the great credit for making this work, as a matter of fact, goes mostly to their first leader, John Winthrop. This man is a noble Englishman with strong puritan faith, born in 1588, Edwardstone, Suffolk, England where he grew up, married, learned law and held many governmental positions. In 1630 he moved to America where he spent the rest of his life and died in 1649.

There are many reasons behind Winthrop's moving to America, the man had dreams to chase and plans to execute. As a puritan, he did not see the future of his religious community in England due to the king's persecution of them, on the other hand, economic melt down and the loss of his job pushed him to think seriously about leaving the country. When Massachusetts Bay Company got the Royal Charter that allows it to establish a new colony in the New Land, Winthrop considered it as an irreplaceable opportunity for him and his group to flee England. Thereby, he did not hesitate to join the company, promise to sell his estates and take his family to the New World in case the company government and its charter were also transferred to America. With this way, he could obtain the trust of his fellow members of the company and became their first leader. The puritan Doctrine that was running in his veins helped him a lot to be confident that he was chosen by God to achieve salvation. « *A Modell of christian Charity* » was one of his most famous and effective religious sermons that sincerely expressed his Great dreams and goals that he hoped to achieve in the New World and gave his clear vision to the future of his people; he stated:

If we deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword throughout the world; we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God and all believers in God; we shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us, till we are forced out of the new land where we are going.



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*A Model of Christian Charity*, according to Winthrop visualization, is a sacred, powerful Christian City where there is harmony between communities and life is upscale which denote Christian Charity. This city should be placed upon a hill in order to be highly regarded and renowned by the whole world as *City upon a hill*. This dream would not be achieved without God's preservation that requires the efforts and hard working of all puritans. Through this sermon he tended to encourage his people to work hard and prove his abilities in preaching and leadership as the spiritual father of the puritan doctrine. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018)

### 1.6.3. The American Dream From 1940 to 1950

After leaving the whirl of depression, the concept of the American Dream, which was all about rising over the depression and the request of fathers to do their best in order to provide the simplest conditions of a decent life for their families, has changed with the change of events in the country. The nature of the Second World War required the participation of men, which called for women to replace them at work, which was a changing point in the American society. After the end of the war; a new culture began to spread in the country named consumerism, and with the early Fifties, Americans started looking to the future with a completely new vision. All these changing circumstances contributed in altering the traditional American Dream with a new dream that would suit the epoch they are living.

When women started working instead of men, they wanted to improve their status as working women. As a result, they started claiming for new unusual rights that would change the face of the US; Feminism was probably one of the most prominent phenomenon that represents those rights. Work has given women a strong impetus to be free, therefore, getting rid of the subordination to men, as it has broaden their dreams circle; women are no longer dream of a husband, a home and a family. Now a new era has began in which both the married and single dream of gender equality, getting a job, and achieving independence.

In an attempt to increase their profits, the US companies have implemented several advertising strategies, which are related to soldiers, as the best way to convince customers to buy their products. The patriotic spirit pushed the American people to buy anything, even if it is not necessary, that would help their beloved heroes who are engaged in the fierced

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WWII. As a result, they fell into the trap of irrational consumption, from which they could not get out easily after they became dominated by the spent desire.

Although in the decades following the birth of the American Dream, America has witnessed significant historical events like Feminism and Consumerism that have created new cultures as well as new dreams and desires whose erasure became so difficult, yet, the classical American Dream of a simply having a house, a job and a family, did not lose its bright, but some modern touches have been added to it, especially with the beginning of the Fifties. When the doors of creativity, in various fields, were opened. When ordinary people became brilliant stars, in art, literature and so many other fields, the American youth started anticipating to the future more positively and turned their dreams bolder. With the beginning of the Cold War and the outbreak of the US-Russian competition, achieving military and technological superiority, as well as space invasion has become America's greatest dream. To sum up, all what America has experienced in the forth and fifth decades of the Twentieth century proved that American Dream has no limit conceptions. (OltraSwank2013)

#### **1.6.4. The American Dream of the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

There is no doubt that owning money can solve a lot of problems and achieve a lot of dreams, especially the material ones, including a house and a car. For the Americans, as individuals, the American Dream, indeed, differ from one person to another. For example, there are those who want to be famous, whereas others seek to achieve humanitarian dreams like Martin Luther King or religious dreams like Winthrop, but what remains as a common dream to all of them is the material dream, for which they are all striving. Since its appearance in the 20th century, Americans knew one road to realize that dream, which is a long, hard road that requires hard working and perserverance. Marketers wanted to pave and shorten the road for people by organizing new programs and competitions offering fictional prizes under the slogan of rag to riches. It is a new notion that would contradict the American values and ethics based on self-reliance, individualism and hard working to make success. Actually, this concept has quickly turned into a culture of greed that swept through out the country.

The Program of Who wants to be a Millionaire? The American version of the British program Millionaire is likely to be the first and the most famous entertaining TV show to cause great Media hype due to the huge financial rewards it endows for simply answering

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easy questions. So the opportunity of winning was available to everyone. The original title of the British program had been changed to a question who wants to be a Millionaire? In order to suit the contemporary American Dream, which is all about having money, On the other hand, to excite the Americans eagerness, because who does not want to be a Millionaire?

In front of the US insistence on keeping the dream alive, a program such who wants to be a Millionair? Did not seem sufficient, While lottery games, seemed to be an effective solution. This type of games completely eliminated the concept of hard working. By contrast, all it needs is luck, and nothing but a lot of luck. As soon as it appeared, people insanely run after it. What created a state of chaos in the country almost went out the authorities' control.

Although those TV shows and lottery games gained a lot of people's acceptance and became new sources of money-making and dreams achieving, the state did not stop devising more rouds to realize the Dream; it came up with compensation Lawsuits, the system that allows all people to get financial rewards as a compensation for damages, whether it was material or moral. This is new method that led some people to, purposely; injure themselves for the sake of money. It was such a scary situation to which a lot of Americans have arrived in their pursuit of material dreams in the early 21<sup>st</sup>Century. However, no one can deny that a large number of Americans still stick to their ancestors' principles and have not got tricked by the deceptive marketers and TV shows orgnizers that benefit from their participation. (AR Net 2003)

### 1.6.5. The New American Dream

The Official website of abc News, in 2011, presented an an article entitled *Suze Orman on the New American Dream*.Thefinancial expert, Suze Orman, believes that it is of necessity to redefine the American Dream in present days, because she thinks that the Old Dream of materials was profitless and have not brought happiness which all people strivefor.Thus,she decided to change the Americans material thinking and make them aware of the disappointment that the materials caused in case they irrationally used. She gave pieces of advice through a series of books, articles, and TV programs tending to make a

good difference in the society, affect the public opinion and help all people to live a happy life without anxiety, stressor fear of loosing the precious things that they own. Orman once described the old American Dream as follows:

It used to be more, bigger, best," she said. "Everybody in America started to define themselves by all these things they had around them. And all of a sudden, it came tumbling down. So the old American dream has died, and that is a good thing.

What she meant is that the old American Material Dream lives for a short time and when it vanishes the Americans would wake up to a painful reality. Furthermore, she thinks that spending all money and enjoying all the material things and showing off represent a fake happiness which was proven by previous experiences. As a consequence, Americans must be confident that its disappearance is better than its survival.

Concerning the New American Dream, Orman presents arguments to emphasize that:

It's a dream where you actually get more pleasure out of saving than you do spending," Orman said. "It's a dream where you live below your means but within your needs. You are not spending every penny, you are not impressing people. You are living a life where you can sleep at night and you are actually happy.

In this saying, Orman is trying to replace the old American dream that is based on having a lot of materials, spending and showing off, with a new dream that led to a true happiness. In order to avoid bad scenarios, Suze urges all the Americans to start thinking financially before they spend all their money and to give up bragging. Saving money, living within the needs circle, and the investment, according to her, are effective methods to decrease irrational consumption and limit greed, on the other hand achieve contentment, happiness and pleasure without worrying about what the future may hold.

She gave an effective solution for more earning by investing in land; she claims: «Should invest in exchange traded funds or dividend-paying stocks that give you a high-dividend yield, because you have to get income for this money. You cannot just let it sit there.»

Orman's tips can be summarized in the importance of saving over spending, not exceeding the needs does not damage but benefits, how to make money is more important than how to spend it, Mortgage repayment is necessary to maintain home ownership that is part of the American Dream. These pieces of advice were her solutions to live the American Dream and achieve its purpose, happiness, and saving the American values that are seemed to be fade in the quest of materials.

### 1.7. Conclusion

In succinct words, The idea of the American Dream existed even before the United State was founded, but it can be considered as a major reason for its foundation. Ever since their feet were set on the New World for the first time, the puritans and pilgrims began to sight the light of their dreams. For its sake, they never stop struggling so did their descendants after them, notably the Founding Fathers who imagined the American Dream that is conceived in liberty and equality, and devoted to happiness. Their dreams were not mere dead letters, they, instead, turned a reality that can be seen through the victories they had achieved and in the strong exceptional system that they had established.

People's interpretations and definitions of the American Dream have differed overtime; because every person and every group has specific dreams and aspirations that fulfill their needs and fit their conditions. However, the Dream remains related to success and happiness which are supposed to be achieved through hard working by individuals and providing freedom, equality and opportunity by the governmental system. Various social movements like Feminism sprung up demanding change under its name, several games and entertaining programs were organized for its sake, it was talked about in media by active personalities in the community, however, this does not imply that the American Dream is a reality. As a consequence, it should be validated, especially because the state claims that it is protected and the constitution confirms that.

## **Chapter 2**

# **The Criticism of the American Dream**

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## 2.1. Introduction

There is no doubt that what matters all human beings in this life is to realize their dreams which in turn lead to happiness. The United States of America, though, claims that it has all the necessary conditions to make these dreams come true. It is, therefore, very axiomatic that all people who are interested in the matter, whether they live in America or abroad, to question whether this claim is a reality or merely a myth. In order to get satisfactory answers, there are some specific fields from which one can extract the knowledge and information.

The sources that people usually resort to in their search for both the thrill of learning and the light of knowledge are various among them philosophy, literature, movies, music and influential speeches in addition to all sources of news like Magazines and Newspapers. For that, the second chapter is devoted to display the most important subjects that these fields; had tackled in its trial to give people all what they need to know about the so-called American Dream.

## 2.2. The Representative of the American Dream in American Philosophies

First and foremost, one should know that a philosophy does not necessarily reflect the fact of something or the opposite. Any philosophy refers only to the philosopher's opinion in a form of premise which cannot be considered correct or incorrect. Though, it is correct or incorrect only from the philosopher's point of view. (Ringer 2)

Because it is called American philosophy, it may come to mind that this philosophy is purely American, however, when going deep in it, one would discover that it inspired a lot from other European philosophies. Metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology besides, interconnections of theory and practice on experience and community, which are already known in Europe, are the most philosophies that the American philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead and George Santayana dealt with, in addition to that, these American philosophers themselves are from European decent. On this account, American Philosophy is not entirely American; it is likely to be named American only because it was dealt and developed in the United States of America by different American philosophers in different time periods. Moreover, people, movement, school of thought and tradition philosophies, which have agreed on sometimes and contradicted on the other times, contributed

significantly in building it. Philosophies of religion and language, on the other hand, expressed the nature of American identity and serve as a fundamental reason for calling it American Philosophy. (Boesema 1)

### **2.2.1. Pragmatism**

Pragmatism is a philosophy that denote working, its origin back to the Greek word pragma which means action or affair. This philosophy was developed in the US in the first quarter of the 20th Century by Charles Peirce. It denies the success of thoughts and beliefs until they came into practice. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2017)

In 2013, The Desert News website offered a set of pragmatic statistics about optimism and the American Dream based on the American opinions and experiences. The statistics which have been conducted in recent years were brought from different sources. The results showed a sharp contrast in American views. According to Pew Charitable Trusts' Economic Mobility Project, 70.4% of Americans believe in American Dream's reality whereas 65.5% believed that they, actually, achieved it or near to. Concerning the percentage of optimism, according to Northwestern Mutual new survey, reached to 73%, as for people who believe in the American Dream, it has not exceeded 34%, yet, those people think that opportunities are no longer available as much as before. In reference to the same source, 21% of Americans think that the American Dream is dead whereas, 9% admit that the American Dream is alive and well more than ever before. About 36% believe that it is a reality, but for them it is all about happiness and a good health. Other studies showed a fluctuation of percentages between optimism and pessimism of the American Dream; whereas 79% of American people see the future of the American Dream in a positive way, while 37% are worried that their grandchildren would not be able to live it like their grandparents did.

### **2.2.2. Social Darwinism**

Social Darwinism is the application of Charles Darwin's ideas and theories of natural selection, which arised in the late nineteenth century in the society. This philosophy means that the nature selects the best of the evolving organisms among plants, animals and humans. Thus, the British philosopher and scientist Herbert Spencer transfer those ideas to the society under the slogan of *Survival of the fittest* which expresses of the inevitability of success and

superiority of the strong over the weak and represent all conflicts of individuals and groups for the sake of power and authority. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018)

The American Dream has contributed significantly to making America an exceptional country which motivated people from around the world to come live there, hoping for a better life and tending to achieve their dreams which are not easy to be achieved in their own countries. With the increasing number of those immigrants, concerns over their dangerous impact on the American Dream have also increased. Thus, it was necessary to intervene by insinuating new ideas and philosophies in the society that would save the American Dream. Social Darwinism and the idea of survival of the fittest seem to serve as an appropriate solution. As a result, the dream would deserve to be chased only by those who strive and work hard for it with all their strength. Herbert Spencer argued that these philosophies are not helpful only for the society but even the state that would not pay for other people's mistakes and failures, because they are the only responsible of it and the only ones who can overcome it. This philosophy did not yield to many due to its contradictions with religious beliefs, however, it remains as one of the main American philosophies which is not likely to die, but it cannot be sure how long it will stand protecting the American Dream in front of the flow of immigrants of all ethnicities. (Gonzalez 2016)

### **2.2.3. Idealism and Materialism**

This philosophy considers beliefs, ideas and spiritualities as a reference to recognize the truth. As a result, no need to look for reality out of the mind and spirit because it already exist there. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2018)

Materialism, on the other hand, is a philosophy that regards materials as the only proof of reality and does not accept the reality of something only if it was materially tangible. According to materialism, the senses are the major tools that should be used to recognize the reality of something. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2016)

What enables the American Dream to earn a greater reputation and more interest is its relation with two of the main American philosophies that fascinate all people by nature which are Idealism and Materialism. Idealism, therefore, supports human instincts and thinking. Hence, since the American Dream born as an idea it became a desirable concept to many idealists. For this, the American Political System protects it by setting ideal laws in the

constitution including human rights like for example; the principle of the unalienable rights. As a result, idealistically speaking people's dreams can be realized in America. On the other hand, since materials are, definitely, important in one's life, the American political system claims to be able to provide all the material stuff that people dream of based on Materialism philosophy of which America is proud. (Brzezinski 2012)

### **2.3. The American Dream in American Literary Works**

As a historical and philosophical theme, the American Dream should have been addressed in the American Literature. On the other hand, literature expresses the life of man and describes the state of the society what motivate people who want to know more about the American Dream to check literary works. American Dream is a wide and thorough term that refers to plenty of things which concerns the American individuals and community alike, hence, it can be used in different shapes of literature including poetry, novels, drama and theater. With this way, the American Dream would serve literature as other several philosophical and Literary movements such as transcendentalism, the Enlightenment, the puritanism, the expressionism, the Academic myth and so many others that served it and contributed together to making it sound more interesting and valuable. Otherwise, literature would serve the American Dream and highlight it more. (PDF Created with desk 1-2)

Literary works of 1960's had clearly contradicted in dealing with the American Dream. Some of which presented it as a reality that brings happiness whereas others showed it as a myth that caused depressions and sorrows. (Coser 23)

#### **2.3.1. Angela's Ashes**

*Angela's Ashes* by the Irish writer Frank McCourt is a master piece in literature. This book is the writer's own memoir in which he talks about his experience with poverty, family problems and illnesses during his childhood period. His family's moving from America to Ireland seeking for a better life was merely needless. Consequently, when he grew up and became a self-dependent, he decided to get back to America believing it would be the land where he could achieve his dreams and change his family's miserable situation. And indeed, his expectations were not wrong, but America was may be more than he had thought of because he could study there, got his master's degree and became a teacher, help

his family and practice his hobbies. This story, then, besides the themes of the willpower and hard working that it provides, it is considered as a promoter of immigration to America; the land that provides one with all the elements of success when his or her country does not. (Mccourt 398)

### **2.3.2. Great Gatsby**

The Novel of Great Gatsby by Fitzgerald reveals the people's lifestyle and describes the nature of their dreams in the Roaring Twenties. The character of Gatsby is one of these people who were chosen by the writer to typify the American Dream at that time. Before the WWI, Gatsby did not dream of money or wealth as much as he dreamed of winning Daisy's heart. However, with the outbreak of the First World War, he was obliged to leave her and go to fight outside the country. When he turned back from the war, he found the American lifestyle has completely changed. Owning fortune and showing off with luxurious things became people's way of living. Daisy, Gatsby's beloved, on the other hand, like the majority of people, lost her feelings, due to the cruel war, and became very materialistic. Hence, she got married to a wealthy man. In a failed attempt to get her back, Gasby had no choice except following the society's rules. As a result, he started showing off with all the materials he had owned and organizing parties in order to impress her. Yet, Daisy has changed; now she does not mind to have more than one relationship at the same time with him and with her husband. What makes him furious and eventually died without achieving his biggest dream of marrying her. This concept of the American Dream, the Material Dream, had failed at all levels because it cannot achieve what it was already made for, which is happiness. (Saika 8-10)

### **2.3.3. The American Dream**

As a result of the Second World War and all the atrocious memories it had left in European minds, a group of playwrights wanted to reflect these painful memories and the way they affected people's life in the aftermath of the war on the stage by developing a new genre of theatrical literature called "theatre absurd". Edward Albee, the American playwright, considered this type of theatrical literature perfectly appropriate in dealing with the notion of American Dream in the early 1960s, for this, he wrote his play The American Dream which was displayed in 1961 at York. The play criticizes the American way of living in the 1960s and highlights mainly the pathetic situation of the American Family at that period of time.

The play takes place in an apartment inhabited by a married couple named Mommy and Dady who receive Mrs. Barker, Mommy's Grandma, and a Young Man as their guests at home. Mommy and Dady like many American Families whose journey towards realizing the American dream was so silly and trivial rather than absurd. Many subsequent drama series which dealt with the same themes of despair and absurdity, came after this play and they are likely to be repeated in the future.

This play hylighted the life of fake people who strive better to cover the flaws in their lives without stop chasing the Mirage of the American Dream what makes them fell in the bog of absurdity. The father and mother attempt to reach happiness through the establishment of an ideal family and perfect life has categorically failed. When they started pretending to be happy hiding their family problems, they made things even worse. Their foster kid was the victim of their behaviours and obsension with the American Dream that led them to misery instead of happiness. (GradeSaver 2018)

#### **2.4. The American Dream in Movies**

The concept of the American Dream has been treated in several literary works, TV shows, music, and movies are not an exception. There are a lot of movies that depicted the American Dream from different angles. Upward mobility films mainlly embelish the image of the American Dream and show its success in terms of materials and individuals hard working for it. Thio has given an explicit view of this kind of dreams in these words:

The American ideology of success...encourages the popular raise their level of aspirations to believer in established society as one with abundant opportunities...the later may be regarded functional in terms of blaming themselves rather than society for their deprivation.

Movies of moralizing mobility, otherwise, seek to break the Material Dream that makes people lose their morals and its main aim is to show that the material dream is so attainable rather than is so real, butit does not achieve happiness only if it is combined with morality. (Winn 12-14)

### 2.4.1. The Pursuit of Happiness

The Pursuit of happiness is a film that was inspired by a real story of an African-American man called Chris Gardner. The role of this character who is the hero was played by Will Smith. The movie showed the problems, tribulations and bad conditions that have stood in the Chris Gardner's path towards happiness and highlights the way he faced them with patience and faith. His first job as a salesman of bone density scanners did not help his family to get out of the poverty circle. Consequently, his wife left him with their child. He was obliged to cope with all the difficulties of living conditions altogether with his son, besides being homeless. Nevertheless, a glimmer of hope began to emerge as soon as he discovered his dexterity at digital and interpersonal relationship, he did not hesitate to look for a job in which he could use those skills. A stock broker that needs this kind of work had employed him, and after a long way of serious hard working, he succeeded to get an upgrade and continues to improve himself until he established his own company.

The purpose of this movie is to show one of the most important things in the American culture which is the pursuit of happiness which needs the believing in the American Dream and among the things that help in keeping this belief is the adoption of individuality and the application of equality, what the Declaration of Independence called for a long time ago. One can discover all those things throughout the character of Chris Gardner; who did not prevent him, neither his poverty nor his skin color from realizing his dreams, because he took the responsibility, relied on himself and above all believe in the American Dream. (Junhong 2014)

### 2.4.2. Revolutionary Road

After a series of literary works that blamed the American Dream in the aftermath of the Great Depression, came the novel of Revolutionary Road in 1961, by Richard Yates, not only to blame it rather than mock on it and urge to eradicate it. This novel was turned later into a movie that starred by Leonardo DiCaprio and Cate Winslet. The movie narrates the story of two couples, April and Frank Wheeler, who seemed that they achieved the American Dream when they dwell in a new house in Connecticut suburbia, had two children, had a good job with a good pay, besides, living in Revolutionary Road where they could share many things in life with their neighbours who are just like them. However, this

normal, stable life which is supposed to be perfect, did not appeal to them especially April who tried to convince her husband to raise the ceiling of his dreams. Therefore, they set new dreams for themselves and tried best to chase them, but they failed to overcome their problems and get rid of this life. As a result, April aborted her child, what caused her death, leaving Frank with their rest children desperate. This story, tells that the American Dream of achieving happiness is merely a myth and people like April and Franm who attempted to change this fact of the will not succeed anyway.(Keys 2013)

## 2.5. The American Dream in Music

The American Dream powerfully entered the field of music, various coulors of songs, that has been composed on it and performed by famous singers, became extremely popular. Some songs extal the American Dream with expressive lyrics; whereas, some others satirized it and mock on it. For instance, Singers like Madonain her song, “AmericanLife”, Bob Dylan, “Heartland”, and Bruce Springsteen songs,“The street of runaway American Dream, “and many others, their songs became highly influential and well known. (Narlooch 13)

### 2.5.1. Party in the USA

Party in the USA is one of the most successful songs of the pop princess Miley Cyrus. The success rate of this song was beyond expectations; it has been watched more than 342 million times on YouTube, In addition to people’s claim to make it a national anthem in Obama’s presidency. 766 person singned on a petition which expresses their appreciation for Cyrus’ song and their strong desire to make it a national anthem which suit the country. The petition includes: “We the People” site two days before Independence Day, “Obama please make Miley Cyrus’ “Party in the USA” our national anthem. It is what is best for this country”.

The reason behind the great success that it has achieved and the uproar it has caused is the theme of the American Dream which was out load in it and the extalation of the American Land; the land of pleasure and amusement. The song tells the story of a yong Jay z and Britney Speers fan who found what he was looking for in Los Angeles, where it seems to be in a party all the time; it is a place where the American Dream is truly alive and happiness is widespread. (Huffpost 2013)



### 2.5.2. Born in the USA

Born in the USA by Bruce Springsteen and his best selling song, earned a wide fame and huge commercial success. Its title may imply the grace of being born in the United States of America, however, its content tells the contrast. The title of the song together with the Album's background which contains the American flag, have contributed a lot to affecting people's understanding of the lyrics of the song. Many people, including the president Ronald Reagan were deceived by this title; they thought it was praising living in America, but as a matter of fact, the song was mocking the American Dream and reveals its flaws. A Decade later, its singer, Bruce Springsteen, explained that his song admonish the American Dream and blame it for the disappointment that it caused. (BBC News 2014)

## 2.6. The American Dream in Political Speeches

The governing authority is the most prominent side that people usually heading to in order to find out what solutions to their problems it would offer and what projects to improve their lives it would accomplish. These inquiries ought to be answered by the political leaders, the ones who represent the governing authority, throughout their political speeches. Thus, Politicians of different orientations, ideas and beliefs put too much emphasis on the American Dream in their political speeches hoping to reach people's hearts. Each one of them has his or her special vision to the American Dream that he or she thinks it would benefit the nation. (Hernandez 13)

### 2.6.1. The Martin Luther King's Speech

Dr. Martin Luther King, once, declared:

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 that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: we hold this truth to be a self-evident that all men are created equal .....

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. (Hernandez 14)

With these words, Martin Luther King described his American Dream of equality. This speech is considered as one of the greatest political speeches in history which was delivered on August 28, 1963, during the March on Washington. This speech stemmed from King's desire to changing the situations of racism and inequality that they were widely spread at that time; he was unhappy with the treatment of the minorities. For this reason, he decided to convince all the Americans to sympathize with him by reminding them with the doctrine of equality upon which the state is based. His greatest dream was to achieve equality and liberty among all people in America holding hope that one day whatever human backgrounds were, will not stand on the way of achieving ones' dreams.

While reading an article of The Washington Post by Peter Dreier in 2013, entitled: *50 years after the March on Washington, What would MLK March for Today?* One would recognize that there are still some of King's dreams have not yet been fully accomplished, though he had achieved a lot of his dreams when he was alive. He managed to persuade the Congress to give the blacks the right to vote, as he was able to limit all kinds of violence. Furthermore, he defended the rights of women and migrants. Today, the United State is still suffering from such problems of inequality, violence and the absence of social justice. Besides Women's reproductive freedom that is still restrictive and accepting immigrants is still difficult. As a result, It cannot be said that his dream has been fully fulfilled because the issue of blacks has not yet been resolved like so many other issues.

### **2.6.2. Barack Obama's Speech**

According to the president Barack Obama, the American Dream is all about the following points: the equality of opportunities, healthcare, a retirement wage that fulfill the needs of all citizens and enhancing the quality of education for children. These were the main points that were tackled in his campaign speech in 2007:

In big cities and small town; among men and women; young and old; black; white and brown Americans share a faith in simple dreams a job with wages that can support family, Health care that we can count on and afford a retirement that is

dignified and secure. Education and opportunity for our kids  
Common hopes. American Dreams.

For being a humble black man with a strong, challenging personality, Obama became an example of hope and change, thereby, he won the majority of votes in the presidential election, and this incident is itself considered as an achievement of the American Dream. Since he became a president, Barack Obama exerted all his abilities to achieve his dreams as well as his people's dreams. This is what was reported in 2016, in the Time Magazine which highlighted his achievements in an article entitled: *Honorable Effort: what President Obama achieved in 8 years*.

This article discussed Obama's most successful projects in economy, technology and foreign policy. Perhaps his most famous and remarkable achievement was the stimulus package known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, about which Grunwald wrote in his book *The New Deal: The Hidden story of Change in The Obama Era*; he stated :

It was the biggest education reform bill in the great society; he continued the biggest foray into industrial policy in a Franklin D. Roosevelt, biggest into expansion of antipoverty initiatives since Lyndon Johnson, biggest middle-class tax cut since Ronald Reagan, biggest infusion of research money ever.

Grunwald, though, did not mention all Obama's achievements. Obama's administration could achieve remarkable successes in the Development of industries, in addition to building new bridges, opening new roads, and constructing high-speed railways. Moreover, it worked on large economic stimulus bill, tax relief, and unemployment insurance, scientific research, environmental protection projects, renewable energy and so many. When Obama held the office, the Auto industry was collapsing, but thanks to his plans, the industry firmly back and General Motors and Chrysler were pulled out from bankruptcy. Obama, once, announced :

From the National Institutes of Health to the National Science Foundation, this recovery act represents the biggest increase in basic research funding in the long history of America's noble endeavor to better understand our world, and just as President Kennedy sparked an explosion of innovation when he set America's sights on the moon, I hope this investment will ignite

our imagination once more, spurring new discoveries and breakthroughs in science, in medicine, in energy, to make our economy stronger and our nation more secure and our planet safer for our children.

In this speech, Obama had shown a great interest about the scientific research, then, he made promises to fund and support this sector, under the so-called the Recovery Act, which he believed will benefit the nation in several areas including science, medicine, economy, and security. On the other hand, in order to gain people's support, he compared himself with President Kennedy who is credited with the success of the space invasion projects. However, This act resulted in an increase of growth by 1% to 4% in 2010.

Concerning foreign policy, perhaps the best thing he did is the withdrawal of military forces from Iraq. Nevertheless, Obama could not fully solve all the problems among them the unemployment and the financial crisis. His reforms, on the other hand, in banking sector as well as healthcare system which was known by Obama care did not impress all politicians especially the republicans like Donald Trump. Obama remained a believer of the American Dream though he could not achieve it fully.

### 2.6.3. Donald Trump's Speech

President Donald Trump has a special vision of the American Dream as he has special plans that would help in achieving it. In his speech to the farmers at a Farming Convention in Tennessee, he expressed a range of projects that would benefit the farmers in particular and the whole country in general; he announced: "We are fighting for our farmers... And we are fighting for our country ». Fox News had reported this news in an article entitled: *Trump tells farming convention the American Dream is Roaring back to Life*. Trump believed that the American Dream was dead in Obama's era. Consequently, he gave a bunch of promises to bring it back to life. Exempt a large number of farmers from paying taxes was one of the main promises. In addition to providing internet services more widely in rural areas and improving healthcare, were all sensitive issues that the president had promised to work on. However, he did not neglect the cultural sector; he claimed: « protecting our cherished second amendment ». He also expressed his support and encouragement for the sport sectors. As for his plans to maintain security and economic stability, they were represented in his promises to restrict immigration; he claimed: « We are going to end chain migration, he

continues, we are going to end lottery system and we are going to build the wall. » What could be understood from his words is that building a wall that would prevent the immigrants who are coming from a neighboring country to arrive America, and ending lottery games are all in the benefit of the country.

## 2.7. The Definition of Reality and Myth

According to English Oxford Dictionary, reality is:

The state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them.

In reference to the same source, myth is:

A traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.

## 2.7. The Reality of the American Dream in a Form of Success

*A Daily Dose of the American Dream Stories of Success, Triumph and Inspiration* by Allan Elliot, is a book that offers a collection of real, personal American stories that would inspire other people in their quest for their dreams. The heroes of those stories are people from different backgrounds with different dreams, shared the same path of hard working, patient, challenge to make their dreams come true. Thus, they embody the real meaning of the American Dream.

Among those stories, is the story of Mr Sonny Bono who is a role model in determination and insistence on achieving dreams and not only one single dream. The man used to change his dreams whenever his life's conditions obliged him to do so. Every time he tried hard to achieve his dreams, overcoming all odds; he had to borrow money as a beginning of his musical career. However, he succeeded in selling 40 copies after that. Then, he was obliged to end his career as a Rock singer because of his standing against weeds. He, then, went to work on TV with his wife. Their comedy series was such a successful work, even though, it could not continue after the couple split. These events did not let him down, instead he set a new dream for himself to become a senator and he did not stop struggling until he realized it. (Elliot1)

Another story of success belongs to George Parker, who is confident of himself, creative and careful in his work. He devoted his time and efforts to improving the quality of

pens. He did his best to keep his brand on the top, thus, besides achieving his dream he had achieved other people's dreams of having good pens. David Thomas, on the other hand, lived a bad difficult childhood, but thanks to his grandmother's education and support he could make his way toward success and develop his passion of cooking and eventually realize his dream of founding Wendy's Restaurant of fast food after a series of failures. (Elliot 4-7)

During the presidential election of Hillary and Trump, CNN Money handled a poll that questions the believing of the American dream's reality. The result comes to tell that the majority of Americans have really achieved their dreams and even those who have not achieved it yet, a large number of them believe that they could achieve it despite all the difficulties. CNN Money offered vivid examples that realized the dream; ordinary people shared their stories of success, like for example, Krista Shockey who said: « I believe I have lived the dream, I have had three beautiful children and own my own home. » In addition to Rosey Lee Josie who confessed: « Most of my dreams have come true » Professor Silva, on the other hand, thinks that it is not patriotic to question the reality of the dream because it is one of the most important component that distinguish the American society from the rest of societies. Based in this, she claimed: « The American Dream is sacred in our society. »

The New York Times Newspaper, on the other hand, in 2015, highlighted the success of the American Dream in several areas in an article entitled *the American Dream is Alive*. The writer of this article argued that the American Dream is a reality that the United States has always been living. His arguments based on the remarkable developments that had been achieved by the government, in the field of economy, industry and technology which benefited both the individuals and society. Companies with different industries have contributed largely to providing jobs for all people regardless of their social states. That is why it is still a desirable place for living. All these indications denote that the American dream is a reality that the Americans have lived and are living and can be guessed that they will live it for the rest of the century as long as the government is doing its job as it should be.

For Market Watch website, the proportion of the dream fulfilment varies from city to city and from year to year. Since homeownership is one of the most important components of the dream, the website provides some statistics about it as a measure for the reality of the dream. The result that it came up with is that the overall of owning home in all across

America reached to 69%, as the highest percentage in 2004, but in 2017, it reduced to 63.9%. However, 10 cities in 2018, which are: Milwaukee, Charlotte, N.C, Memphis, Tenn, Baltimore, Allentown, Pa, Pittsburgh, Albuquerque, N.M, Nashville, Tenn, Dallas, Syracuse, N.Y, according to Realtor.com, witnessed an increase in homeownership, compared to other cities, which ranged from 60.1% in Dallas to 74.8% in Allentown, Pa, that is to say that the American Dream is relatively real.

## 2.8. The Myth of the American Dream in a Form of Failure

In 2012, CNN presented a research about American citizens' bad life conditions and the failure of the government to achieving their dreams and fixing their problems. The research discussed the position of the American Dream in different aspects; economical, social and political ones. The most catastrophic economic crisis was probably exemplified in the prevalent of unemployment and the huge student debt which reached to 1 trillion. Moreover, the state budget deficit, the problem of unemployed single mothers who could not provide the necessary health cares to their children. As for the housing sector, constructions, manufacturing, government jobs were also not saved from the crisis; they witnessed a triple failure because of the slow of Market economy. However, what infuriates people the most is the inequality between rich and average people in paying taxes. In addition to the rights and powers that are given to companies which enables them to spend whatever they want on advertising and to make quick profits at the expense of people. The bottom line thus, the economy continues to deteriorate as poverty is more largely covering the society as a result of failed government policy in achieving the American Dreams.

In the same context, CNN money presented the case of the American Dream from the viewpoint of one of the notable figures in the economic world who is the Nobel Prize winner, Mr Joseph Stiglitz. According to him the United State does not have the main condition to realize the American Dream which is equality of opportunities. For that, he claimed: « the American Dream is a myth ». He was certain that the American Dream has not come true economically speaking. Stiglitz wrote a book entitled *The Great Divide* in which he addressed the issue of the income inequality and economic mobility inside the American society. The book came at the time of the presidential election to alert the candidates of what the nation is suffering from. The problem of inequality, actually, emerged when CEO started to get paid 300 times the average worker's income and Stiglitz does not see an

appropriate solution to this problem except limiting the powers of monopolistic companies. (2015)

Students debts, was another economic crisis which appeared on the surface in a few decades after the Second World War which was treated in an article of The New York Times newspaper in 2013. In America, the students and their parents have to finance the high education and burden the expensive costs of university tuitions. Thus, a lot of students fell into huge debt which was out of their ability to repay. The government left the student drowning in the debt sea reach to 1 trillion Dollars. 13% of students owed 50000 Dollar whereas 4% exceeded 10000, and in 2009 when federal loans were taken out, 13% default repaying. This crisis caused another series of crisis mainly slow economic growth, real estate crisis, and the unemployment. This is what killed the American Dream and proved its failure.

### **2.9. The American Dream Between Reality And Myth**

American Dream with its several meanings can never come true only if The nessessary conditions which are security, freedom, equality, and opportunity of success were provided to every citizen. As it is known America is the major country that is supposed to have all those values more than any other country in the world. For that reason, its regime is stuggling as much as possible to keep this stereotype. Beause if it failed the American dream would fade, whereas if it succeed the American Dream would live. However, the realization or the success of the dream does not depend on the regime only, but on the efforts of individuals as well.

Since education is extremely important in one's life, leads to many career progressions and achieve a lot of dreams, the American governmental system seeks to give it high priority by supporting it with financial aids and the most developed eductional technologies. In addition to that the system strive to give everyone equal opportunities; each person will hold the position that he or she wants on condition that he or she is efficient to this position.

On the other hand, in order to maintain security and stability in the country, the Justice system must be democratic and determined and this is what the American justice system tend to be under the slogan of "all citizens are innocent until proven guilty". However, this system is extremely lenient with the criminals who committed crimes and no one point fingers at them what threaten security and public safty.



Concerning equality, American regime claims to be very equitable system that gives every person equal opportunities regardless of their backgrounds or social status, though, in the past, America witnessed a wide racial discrimination. As a result, a lot of people start to claim their legitimate rights and end racism which stand as a barrier to realize the American Dream. Martin Luther King was pioneer in defending the rights of blacks in particular and all minorities in general, through his historical speech *I have A dream*. King could make a difference in the society and since he delivered his speech, things began to change to the best. Today, the American regime assert that there is no segregation among minorities; however, still some voices rise to claim for their rights including women, African Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, Jews and blacks who rarely hold some high governmental positions like president and vice president. For that, some people like Susan B. Anthony started defending their rights ; what proves that still there is problems, she claimed : « We are assembled to protect against a form of government existing without the consent of governed-to declare our right to be free as man is free, to be represented in the government which are taxed to support. » Such claims are very important and they can make changes in the state and collective movement and claiming for rights can be taken into consideration. Madeline Albright could not achieve the dream of being Secretary of state without a lot of self-effort and defending her right, the same for Janet Reno who became an Attorney General.

The bottom line is if the American regime succeed to achieve equality, freedom and opportunity, and overcome all the problems and the individuals exploited it better and work hard for their dreams the American Dream could be a reality, whereas if the regime failed to provide these conditions and the individuals did not strive for their dreams then the American dream would be considered as a Myth. (Bleckmann 1 2)

The achievement of happiness which is the intended target of the American Dream, depends largely on the convictions of individuals and the way they define happiness. Some individuals may achieve their dreams which are often related to wealthiness and materials, hence, they became happy, but as soon as their abilities and circumstances change, their definition of happiness would change as well. As a result, they scale up ambitions; for example, they change their dreams from a simple car to a luxury one and from a humble house to a modern one. Consequently, things that they were once a source of happiness became worthless, and the American Dream that was once a reality that brought happiness may turn to a myth that bring sadness. (Naylor 54)

## 2.10 Conclusion

To recapitulate, Philosophy as a helpful field to overcome the natural limits of thinking, Literature as the largest collective reference of all information, Movies and Music as the most prestigious cultural activity in modern world and a mirror that reflects the state of societies, Politicians as the responsables for providing the needs of people, and Newspapers and Magazines as sources for the latest and updates news on the state of economy, social development and everything concerns people, have tackled the American Dream from different angles in their quest to answer the question that puzzles everyone which is : *Is the Amerrican Dream a Reality or a Myth?*

By offering some ideas, facts and stories, those fields prove that for some people the American Dream come true; some were born in poor families but they managed to be successful, for them the American Dream in its material meaning came true. However, there are many people who never live the American Dream and even if they lived it, in many cases they would not be happy.

# **General Conclusion**

The term American Dream was coined in 1931 by James Truslow Adams, by which he meant that America is the land where everyone can achieve his or her dreams regardless of their social, religious or ethnic backgrounds as long as they are working hard for it. The reason why Adams coined the term is the state of depression that the Americans arrive at when the Us stock market collapsed and the most famous economic crisis in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is known by the Great Depression, appeared in 1929. Because Adam knows the effect of words and how they can change someone's convictions, he wanted to give hope to all Americans by using only a simple term with a deep meaning like the American Dream, which he inserted in his book *The Epic of America*. In order to destroy despair, he used its contrary word, dream. Moreover, in order to remind them that their nation was never built on despair and laziness but always on hopes and hard working, he inspired his dream from the Declaration of Independence, the creed that states: « All men are created equal » with rights to « life liberty and the pursuit of happiness », which is the most important historical event in the history of America. This is why he tended to strengthen their faith of the inevitability of their dreams realization as their Father's dreams. These facts confirm the validity of the first part of the first hypothesis which tells that the American Dream appeared as a result of some specific past historical factors.

American Dream refers to plenty of dreams not specific one because dreams can differ from person to person and from group of people to another. However, the material dream is the common dream among all people because materials provide a person with comfortable living standards, but whatever the dream was it depends on freedom, equality, and opportunity of success that is provided by the American governmental system and, on the other hand, on hard working and struggles by the dreamers. As a consequence, it can come true and when it come true it is supposed to bring happiness. These results also indicates the validity of the second part of the first hypothesis which tells that the American Dream does necessarily reflect one single dream but endless ones.

Because of its splendor, as soon as the American Dream appeared, it received a wide fame and became a proudly national echo that represent American values and principles and part of the American culture, furthermore it became an interesting issue for all American and other people from around the world who usually want to know whether this dream is true or not. As a result, it entered the national discourse; a large elite of intellectuals including philosophers, writers, directors, musicians addressed it in their works, in addition to different

political leaders who tackled it in their speeches and several newspapers, magazines and websites which discussed the state of economy, equality, social development etc, from the point of view of the general public and experts in order to provide the necessary answers to the common questions that relate usually to the nature of the dream, its purpose, and the most important whether it was a reality or a popular myth that passed between generations. Every field presented contradictory works; some of which proved the reality of the dream, praised, extolled it and encouraged people to adopt it whereas some others blamed it for its inflated expectations, denied, cursed and mocked on it and warned people for believing in it, because they would end up disappointed. According to all those fields the American dream can be both; a reality that bring to happiness and a myth that bring sadness. Thus, the second hypothesis that the American Dream denote primarilyly what it is; a dream only that has nothing to do with reality, is definitely a false hypothesis.

Between reality and myth, it can be said about the American Dream, that it is all about the responsibility of the American governmental system and American governmental system kept the basis of the American Dream which are freedom, equality individuals to make it one of the two; if the and opportunity, and individuals work hard for it, then the American Dream would be a reality but if they did not the American Dream would be merely a myth. The right word to press the American Dream in success which in many cases means money and materials which in turn can achieve happiness in case they were used well. The research presented the Gatsby's story as an example of the misuse of materials like in boasting which brought only sadness to Gatsby who died before marrying his beloved Daisy. Furthermore, the movie, Revolutionary Road was presented as an example of discontent that led the heroes to the most horrible endings exemplified in the death of the wife and then the family breakdown. However, materials can bring happiness in case it used well, what was proven by Chris Gardner who worked hard to get out of poverty and secure a decent life for him and his child, furthermore, he was happy during his journey and became happier when he achieved those noble goals. All these in the wonderful movie the pursuit of happiness. The American Dream is a thorny topic that can be discussed all time. Thereby, the question still remains, how will the case of the American Dream be within the Trump's administration and how will it be in the following administrations, especially in front of the increasing numbers of immigrants of all ethnicities ?

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