

## Broken Dreams

America, the land of the free and the home of the brave. “The sky's the limit,” adults will tell you. But is it true that there is no limit to your dreams and hopes? Or is this only an illusion of hope? To this day, many minorities have to cope with their shattered dream of success.

Is the American Dream still alive? The road to the building of America has truly been a long and treacherous journey. On July 4, 1776, America declared independence from Britain and opened up opportunity for all of its people. Approximately 90 years later, America's patriots won the bloody Civil War against the confederates. It was such a devastating war, but it was necessary in order to establish equality for all. This opened new opportunities for African Americans and others who were enslaved in the war. African Americans thought to themselves “nobody'll dare say to me, ‘Eat in the kitchen,’”(Langston Hughes). However, little did they know, that the Civil War was only the beginning of racial discrimination. In fact, it is reported that “...in 1998, there were 4,468 incidents of racial crime that [were] reported by the police. 2,901 reports came from African Americans”(sound vision.com).

How did the American Dream begin? At the turn of the 19th century, all people around the globe lent an ear to listen to the great stories of the “American Dream.” They desired for the belief of opportunity upon the vast lands of America. Immigrants flocked to America and worked their hardest to achieve their dreams. However, there were American citizens that felt trapped and enclosed in the crowds of immigrants and feared their own dreams would be snatched away. Thus, creating a division of people that supported the American Dream and people who did not.

The American Dream has transformed from an America that opened its arms of wondrous dreams and opportunities to a monster that holds its prejudice in high pride. It is now a dream that discriminates and regulates minority's opportunity in success. It now only allows America's favored white race to achieve their dreams of becoming successful. The American Dream is still alive and thriving but only for those who are racially accepted.

When people think of the American Dream, they think of the freedom and opportunities it endorses. However, people such as ethnic minorities who have been born and raised in the United States do not get the same access to the American Dream as others do. For instance, Kesaya E. Noda, a Japanese- American citizen, acknowledges that her race does not receive the same access to the American Dream. As Noda puts it, "A voice from my childhood says: 'You are other. You are less than. You are unalterably alien.' This voice has its own history"(Growing up Asian in America). In other words, Noda observes that after World War 2, she is treated as an enemy and an alien to American citizens, because she is Japanese. The idea of superiority that is implanted in Americans has wrongfully prohibited the Japanese from achieving their American Dream. Americans act on this idea by interning the Japanese into camps where they are forced to work on farms. In my opinion, America is not the land of the free when they are unrightfully stripping other citizen's rights. There are many others, besides the Japanese Americans, who face societal discrimination in America. For example, in today's southern states, many African Americans are accused of a crime that they never committed. With this in mind, in the book, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the lawyer, Atticus Finch, defends a black man that has been accused of raping a young white woman. At the end of the book, the reader discovers that the woman's father was the one who created this lie because of his racial discrimination against colored people. How does one achieve the American Dream if people like this take it from you?

Common Sense seems to dictate that ethnic minorities tend to be in a lower social-economic level. The traditional American Dream is based on the belief that determination and hard work will improve a citizen's life. However, according to David Wallechinsky, "...many average Americans are struggling- squeezed by rising costs, declining wages, credit- card debt, and diminished benefits, with little left over to save for retirement" (Is the American Dream Still Possible?). The essence of Wallechinsky's argument is that even though the American Dream paints the picture of living in America with no worries, it contradicts the evidence that it only provides access to those who can afford it. However, by focusing on the premise that all Americans are struggling with finances, Wallechinsky overlooks the deeper problem of the ethnic minorities' financial issues. It is said that "The income of 2.1 million African-American families (26 percent) was below the poverty level" (soundvision.com). Basically, the average white American is making a far more amount of money than an African American. I agree with this statistic because my African- American friend who lives in Arizona has had more job interviews than any of my white friends. Once the Caucasian employers assume that your name is not a typical "white" name, they discard the job application and crush the opportunity for the job applicant.

Ethnic minorities have little to no involvement in government and politics. In fact, the U.S. senate has "96 white, 0 black, 2 Asian, 2 hispanic, and 2 American- Indian" (thisnation.com). The majority of the Senate is comprised of white people while there are only 4 other races represented. Some minorities dream of having a role in government but then they discover that employers harbor racially biased opinions. Claude McKay, an educated black man, states, "Although she feeds me bread of bitterness and sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth..." (America). Claude McKay's point is that America's citizens abuse the rights of others even

though the American Dream contradicts it. It is like rooting out the white roses because the red roses are much more beautiful even though they are both flowers. This applies to how the American Dream only provides access to non-minorities.

In conclusion, the American Dream only opens the door for non-minorities and shuts others out. The American Dream casts out minorities by societal discrimination, economics, and politics. I have learned that there are varying aspects of the American Dream by examples of patriotism, immigrants, economics. All of these factors contribute to why the American Dream has good and bad qualities. My opinion regarding the ability of anyone achieving the American Dream with their hard work has changed because not all citizens are treated equally. The people that praise America's righteous freedoms are the ones that live a rich and safe life. The other voices are the ones that have been outcast and brutalized, but their say in the discussion of the American Dream is silenced. But these voices will gradually grow louder until there is no American Dream left. If the American Dream included equality for all then it would be a whole different story. The American Dream should not insinuate that anyone can work hard to achieve what they desire. That leaves it up to society to corrupt the basis of equality and thus, only few can achieve their dream. The American Dream should extend to everyone. No matter if they're poor or racially unaccepted. The American Dream should be established as a foundation for those that need and want to achieve their success. Instead, the American Dream acts as a figurehead that embodies America but reveals itself to only those that are considered to be the golden ideals of America.