

What Students Are Saying About the American Dream, **The New York Times**

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Do You Think the American Dream Is Real?

The American dream has always been the motto that has pushed my mother and father everyday in their lives. My mom, a village girl from India growing up never gave a thought to coming to America because usually it was impossible. Even though my dad had a good life growing up, in India usually the people who had a lot of money were only able to go to America. While my mother was in college she read through so many textbooks about American doctors and watched the news late at night to learn English, dreaming one day to go to America. When my parents got married and came to America all they had with them was a suitcase filled with some clothes and a picture of their family. While settling in they were on their own to find an apartment, job, money and other necessities because they had no family nor friends in California. There were also instances where my parents went into debt; they had decided one time to go back to India, and they have cried many nights as well. Thanks to my parents believing in the American dream I was able to become a US citizen and now live a happy life in Philadelphia.

— [Eleena John, Philly, PA](#)

I have witnessed the American dream in action. My father was born in Hungary to a mother and father that were both survivors of the holocaust. His father was liberated from Auschwitz and his mother from Bergen Belsen. My father came to America with nothing but a pair of black pants and a white shirt. He stayed with his uncle for 3 years and eventually put himself through college and medical school. He has created a successful practice and makes enough money to support my family everyday. That is the American dream. To build yourself up from absolutely nothing, to grind for every last penny in order to make your dreams a reality. I witnessed the American dream first hand. I watched a man battle from one of the deepest holes imaginable in order to give his children the opportunity to have a better life than he did.

— [Tibor K. Glenbrook North Highschool](#)

I think that the American dream can happen, but only if you work hard and try to reach that goal. My grandmother was originally from Lithuania and lived on a farm. When she was about 15, her family decided to come to America because of her country getting overrun with communists. She took a huge steamship crowded with thousands of people just to make it to New York. She then started working in a factory and living off food stamps. Her life might have been difficult but in the end, she moved to Philadelphia and met my grandfather who had my mom and aunts and uncles. This is an example of the American dream actually happening to someone just like me or you. My grandmother had to work her way to achieve this experience, she did not sit around on the couch and binge watch Netflix all day. To achieve the American dream, you have to try to achieve what you want in life and want to achieve it, you can't sit around and wait for things to happen to you, you have to make those things happen to you.

— [Ona Stocovaz, J.R Masterman](#)

I used to believe in the American dream; I used to believe that living in America meant that you could make something of yourself with ease. The American dream does not exist in my eyes, it's a concept used to motivate people in a volatile economy and favored society. It used to exist, though ... My grandfather came to the United States from Greece with not even a dollar to his name. He came to the "land of opportunity" in 1969, hoping to support his family and give them a life which was unavailable in 20th century Grecian poverty. Within a decade he created a family run pizzeria chain, bringing success to his life, his family's, and the community. But, all of this came from tremendous hard work and determination, something I believe our newer generations lack. But what can one do in an era where cost of living is the highest it's ever been? How much motivation can one hold when a living wage job is rare without a college degree, which leaves one in debt for years? The American dream existed in a time where it was realistic to live a balanced, successful life. Now, we're in an age of economic bias with little social mobility; making it big is increasingly unachievable.

— [Alexandra Pechlivanidis, Hoggard High School, Wilmington, NC](#)

... Depending on your identity and background, it could be more difficult to achieve the American dream. As a woman, it might be harder for me to achieve the same American dream as a man. In theory, the American dream is attainable for everyone, but I'm not sure everyone can achieve the same version of the American dream.

— [Colleen, Northbrook IL](#)

When I was younger, the American Dream consisted of a few things: wealth, possessions, and power, all things similar to what was mentioned in the article. But as I'm getting older, and as our world is changing, my perspective is changing along with it. Of course it's nice to have nice things. Who wouldn't want to be able to buy whatever they wanted whenever they wanted for whoever they wanted? But today, as I see people in our world facing violence and injustice everyday, my idea of the American Dream is a little different.

To me, the American Dream is having the ability to be safe and healthy, to not have to fear for my life everyday, to have access to the basic resources I need to survive. When I see people across the world, people in the same country as me, even people in my own community faced with violence and injustice, I start to notice how privileged I am compared to others. Maybe I don't have all the nicest things or all the money in the world, maybe I don't even have a little bit of it. But, I have access to the resources I need, I have a family, and I have a stable home. And that's enough for me.

— [Libby Roth, Hoggard High School, Wilmington, NC](#)

Now that I am older and can understand what is going on in the world, I know that the idea of the "American Dream" is different for everyone. People that come to America to live the "Dream" don't have the mindset of a white picket fence, these people are coming here for more opportunities. The "Dream" for some people is to come here for a more prosperous life, that includes having more jobs for that require many different skills, or maybe to leave a warring country. The more modernized "American Dream" does not depict images of becoming wealthy, but more likely of having a happy, fun, and enjoyable life, which is also a healthier and more reachable goal of living than the expectation of living up to the classic "American Dream." I believe that whatever someone wants their "American Dream" to be, that's what it is to them. Everyone does not need to have the same dream.

— [Jenny Braswell, Hoggard High School, Wilmington, NC](#)