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### The American Dream

The American Dream is a concept based on the notion that the United States is a country of fortunes and opportunities for the natives, citizens, as well as newcomers or immigrants. This concept was first defined by James Truslow Adams back in 1931, in which the American Dream portrayed the US as the land of vast opportunities that allows every individual to pursue a richer and a fulfilling lifestyle (Beach 153). The concept of The Dream has largely been associated with the social status of an individual as illustrated by Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther King, and F Scott Fitzgerald, in their respective works.

Thomas Jefferson, a white male from the upper social status, interpreted the Dream as championing for the rights of landowners, as revealed in his thoughts about The Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's American Dream was to gain liberty from Britain and pave the way the white upper classes to be treated equally as far as land ownership rights were concerned. According to Thomas Jefferson, the white upper-class males were leading the revolution, and hence they were entitled to enjoy the benefits of their quest to achieve independence from Britain. Jefferson wrote '*...the representatives of the United States of America...*' to refer to white males from the upper, class a sub-segment of the American population that signed The Declaration of Independence document (Beach 150). He also insinuated that men were created equally with inherent rights and liberties to allow them to pursue happiness and self-gratification. Jefferson's version of the American Dream championed for the liberties and rights of the white

male upper-class landowners, exclusively leaving out other races, social classes, and women from the American Dream.

Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech defined the notion of the American Dream from the perspective of seeking to achieve equality among the African American population. He stressed that the Negroes were yet to be free from different forms of institutionalized slavery, despite living in the country that is based on the values of liberty and social freedom. Luther King stated that the African American populations were living in an island of poverty and various forms of discrimination in the land of prosperity (King 40). He was referring to the outcomes of years of marginalization, in which the African Americans were generally excluded from well-paying jobs, education opportunities, healthcare, and other forms of socioeconomic and political opportunities. This, according to Luther King, was against the values of the American values, in which every person living in the US enjoys inherent rights to fulfill their dreams. He also noted that the Promise of freedom for all people as prescribed by The Declaration of Independence excluded people of color through institutionalized discrimination and segregation (King 20). However, Martin Luther King also appeared to exclude other minority groups such as the Hispanic and Asian populations, and instead opted to focus on the people from his race, the African American populations (King 35).

Apparently, Jefferson's American Dream differs from that of Martin Luther King but share inherent similarities. Martin Luther King was striving to ensure that Negroes enjoy their rights of freedom and equality through the elimination of institutionalized racial discrimination, segregation and prejudice affecting the African Americans (King 20). This reveals that the American Dream is based on the Promise of freedom for all people as omitted by The Declaration of Independence. On the other hand, Jefferson's American Dream was based on the

need to ensure that people of his race and social class, white male upper classes, have equal land ownership rights as it was the case with the European settlers and colonizers (Beach 150).

The American Dream as illustrated by F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is based on the quest to eradicate the idle rich populations. Major characters enjoy affairs with women, but they are slow to admit their weaknesses, essentially deceiving women and causing a public nuisance (Callahan 377). Tom enjoyed extramarital affairs, yet he lied to his wife Daisy and downplayed the matter. Tom was also very offended by Daisy's affairs with Gatsby, yet he was unfaithful. Gatsby, the main character in the novel, was a party animal and would often throw parties to please his friends, regardless of the time. These behaviors presumably caused a public nuisance, but Gatsby was too indulged in showing any concern. Fitzgerald reveals how the rich are often idle, and their version of living the American Dream involves carelessness, party-lifestyle, and immorality (Callahan 379). He also reveals that the rich living the American Dream only care about themselves and disregard the interests of everybody else.

In summary, the concept of the American Dream has since been described from various approaches, with the primary components of ideology liberty, equality, and freedom in distinct expressions or interpretations. This reveals that the concept of the US as a land of dreams and achievable opportunities has unique and specific interpretations to different individuals. Each person is inherently predisposed to experience the American Dream in his or her own way. However, the outcomes in these dreams often lead to self-gratification, riches, success, and fulfilling life to each American citizen.

Works Cited

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