

The concept of the American Dream is flawed, because it is not for Americans

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by Annie Jiang (United States)

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I can still recall the time when my classmates in China expressed their admiration for me when my family decided to move to the U.S. for the betterment of my education. In our minds, America is a place where prosperity prospers, where opportunity abounds, and where wealth and education command respect.

This image, deeply ingrained in not only national, but global psyche, paints a nation where success is attainable for those who dare to dream and work. This image is essentially what people perceive as the American Dream.

As an immigrant student, I do agree with the term as a way of motivation. I recognize the history the dream stemmed from, and appreciate the successes many have accomplished under this motivator. The essence of the American Dream is commendable, but it has evolved in a way that has promoted toxicity because it embodies an endless pursuit of elitism in which its accessibility is only circumscribed to a limited extent. It's challenging to articulate the complicated flaws behind the American Dream without a thorough research paper. However, due to the pervasive materialism and stereotypes throughout American society, it becomes apparent that the American Dream is indeed superficial.

I moved to the United States at the age of 12, and I faced a significant language barrier many other immigrant students may have faced. I was fortunate to have access to extra support in improving my English, and I recognize that my ability to write this

opinion is influenced by the privilege of benefiting from unequal opportunities alongside my pursuit of the American Dream.

Although I received a lot of compliments on how I excel in English as an immigrant student, how my activities at school are Americanized, and how I speak like a native speaker, I feel extremely uncomfortable. It took me a long time to figure out that the root of this confinement is how the term American is circumscribed by the idealization of White Americans.

In simple terms, it's not just about reluctance to accept compliments; it's about my inherent hesitation to be acknowledged as successfully assimilating into white culture.

Research has shown that our subconscious often [shapes a hierarchical perspective of accents](#), where we attribute varying values including pleasantness, prestige, and even intelligence. The term of the [standard language ideology](#) heralds a prevailing belief that the dialect possessing the highest social prestige is synonymous with the sole correct and legitimate form of the language.

I am not entering the workforce yet, but this phenomenon abounds even in education settings.

It seems to me that, because I was labeled as “that Chinese immigrant student who only came to the U.S. for two years and she’s already winning speech awards,” is a way that excludes me from being American. was applauded for having the most perfect American accent, but this also indicates ignorance and possibly marginalization of accents that are not considered perfectly American.

If achieving an American accent is considered part of the American Dream, it implies a narrow and exclusive definition of American identity.

American novelist Jennine Capo Crucet has once noted, “I’ve come to see the American Dream for what it really is: a lie my parents had little choice but to buy into and sell to me, a lie that conflated

working hard with passing for, becoming, and being white,” the underlying assumption for many is that you can be successful if you are white—that’s it. Success can be accomplished through the American Dream, but an American Dream that is for White Americans. This is a society where whiteness inherently defines everything.

My friends in China once asked me about the white population at my school, believing that the quality of education is influenced by the presence of white students. This belief stems from common stereotypes such as the idea of the [Asian Tiger Mom](#) and widespread criticisms of Asian education practices that thus hinder the true education value. While many criticize Asian culture based on these stereotypes, they often overlook the underlying issues: the root cause is not inherent toxicity within Asian culture but rather the lack of consideration and inequality perpetuated by the American Dream.

If America hadn't historically implemented harsh anti-immigrant laws or imposed stringent immigration criteria, and if it hadn't perpetuated nativism to this day, there would be less pressure for immigrants to work ten times harder. While meritocracy is theoretically attainable, the American Dream, as it's often portrayed, is not realistically achievable for many immigrants due to systemic barriers and discrimination.

The first step to achieving the American Dream is to be perceived as an 'actual' American. But this is flawed: It essentially means a forgetfulness of language, an erase of culture, and a desire of white assimilation. If the definition of American is not inclusive, the American Dream is not inclusive.

In the end, the American Dream remains out of reach for many Americans unless we actively strive to dismantle the arbitrary racial hierarchy that exists.

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