

# The American Dream - then and now

“American Dream” is a term first used in 1931 by James Adam to describe the motivation of millions of people to settle in America, sharing the dream of a better life. But since everyone wanted to live their very own dream, soon the “survival of the fittest” concept started to play a major role , and, obviously there could not be only winners. An important question though is in how far did the chances and hopes of the immigrants changed during the last centuries. Is the “American dream” still realizable?

Freedom, individualism, flexibility, hard work, progress and patriotism. Those are the six basic values of the American dream which are still important and valid for most Americans today.

Focusing on the six aspects we can definitely say that hard work is the aspect that has changed most. The “manifest destiny” , the idea that God has chosen the American people to civilize the uncivilized world (in their case the American west) in something that all the pilgrims and pioneers believed in. When the first immigrants arrived with the Mayflower in 1620, they had many places to settle and start a new life. Today it is not possible to just settle in America. In order to come and live in the United States you need to measure up to certain expectations, which include qualifications, so that you can bring advantages to the American economy, if you are not qualified enough your only option is winning a green card. Therefore you can see that already the possibilities to even come and live in the “Promised land” have changed lot.

Furthermore it is quite visible that also the goals and the reasons for immigration are different nowadays, obviously there is the image of a better life but the expectations changed. The first immigrants (pilgrims) came to America in the 17 / 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, from a bunch of different countries, looking for freedom since in their home countries they were persecuted for religious or political reasons, so they were able to find their luck and success. Those people created the “melting pot” or “salad bowl” image , because all of the people from different countries came to live in one country and became a very own nationality. This explains also the Patriotism, which can be noticed in America quite often, they built their very own country, and they are very proud of it. Another big wave of immigration took place in the 1940 - 1960, because people escaped from dictatorships in Europe. Their expectations were high (“from rags to riches” ), but most of them got disappointed. After passing the control on Ellis Island they lived in big cities in really bad living conditions, only the fewest were able to climb up the ladder of success. Nowadays people are trying to search for a good job to make lots of money, they mostly did not escape from oppression or similar problems.

In conclusion we can say that most of the aspects that characterize the American Dream haven't changed a lot, but the American Dream in itself became different. Most people are still blinded by the few successes that were made and think it is easy going, what they are not realizing is that America became a normal country in which you almost have the same options and chances than in Germany or Great Britain. Since the people back then found their happiness in this country the image of "the country with a million possibilities" still sticks on America until the people come there and have to live their disenchantment. Hard work isn't enough anymore.