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The American Congress, as vice president to George Washington, and eventually as the second President of the United States. These letters chronicle important moments before, during, and after the American Revolution, including the Declaration of Independence signifying the beginning of democracy in America. The 19th Century American Dream included individuals who had hopes of starting a new life in America. The Civil War was a period of industrialization that seemed to almost instantly change American economy and culture. Rather than a mindset of cooperation, competitiveness set in as Americans fought over their share of development and wealth in their hard-won country. Those hundred years experienced rapid expansion and the notion of the "self-made man" took on a new, powerful meaning. While the Civil War obliterated many American's dreams, the survivors became advocates against racial and gender discrimination. The 1800s began with a desire to explore the vast, rugged wilderness west of the colonies. This "frontier" mindset triggered the removal and displacement of Native Americans and eventually the race for California gold. With the exploration of the frontier out west, the wilderness became less "wild" and therefore, less feared. Ralph Waldo Emerson replaced the often feared term wilderness, with the word "nature." Emerson rejected traditional religion and materialism and proclaimed that nature was the root of endless human possibility and fulfillment. The Transcendental movement supported the individualistic mindset of this century. Many participants of the movement became well-known social reformists, particularly anti-slavery and promoters of women's rights. In the 1900s, the diverse backgrounds of people in America had never been greater. The economy experienced record highs and extreme lows, with the devastation of WWI, followed by the Great Depression hitting America's interests hard in the late 1920s and 1930s. Just as America's economy was recovering from the downturn, Hitler and the Nazi regime ignited WWII in Europe, forcing the Allies to step in. America was once again thrust into another war turning the once idealistic mindset of a nation into cynicism and dread. Following the first World War, American's were haunted by the terror of modern warfare resulting in disillusionment and doubt toward traditional beliefs and the ideals of the American Dream. F. Scott Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920), describes the "new" American Dream as a quest to find one's own identity. "It was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being," writes Fitzgerald. The arrival of the Great Depression magnified the increasing gap between wealthy and poor American's. Criticism toward the government's failure to look after the poor were abundant as dreams of prosperity were overpowerd by the need to simply survive. For many dreamers, the Great Depression signaled the end of the American Dream. American's in the twentieth century carried the burden of massive loss due to multiple wars. The 1960s brought the Vietnam War where many people finally verbalized the notion that "war has no winners." Mainstream American culture is thrown to the wayside by many and the redefining of the American Dream continued. The nature of the American Dream was no longer mainstream ideals, but what lies on the edges of society. Another decade brings yet another shift in the picture of the American Dream. During the1980s, the dream of success shifted away from having a family, home, and job and toward money, fame and power. The final two decades of the twentieth century American Dream follows a similar theme: change. The effects of the 1991 Rodney King assault, trial and riots in Los Angeles dug up long-buried cracks in the foundation of the American Dream. These events broke open a conversation about the ongoing issues of race, social class, and justice in America. These issues were previously ignored as to not disrupt the comfortable ideals of the mainstream American Dream. The American Dream has been a long-time model of prosperity for both American's and people around the world. "The charm of anticipated success" has brought millions of immigrants to America, looking for equal opportunity and a better life. Historian Emily Rosenberg came up with five components of the American Dream that began showing up in nations around the world. These five components include: Belief that other nations should replicate America's development. Faith in a free market economy, Support for free trade agreements and culture. Promotion of free flow information and culture. Acceptance of government protection of private enterprise. The notion of the American Dream continues to be a theme across the nation and around the globe. Whether these dreams brought triumph or despair, American's keep on dreaming his or her own version of the Dream. Has the American Dream today moved away from the vision set forth by our Founding Fathers? Many argue that it has, while others remain optimistic in the evolving definition of what the American Dream is today.

A number of U.S. presidents around the turn of the century, including Bill Clinton and George W. Bush supported homeownership as an integral part of the Dream. In fact, during Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in 2008, she laid out her American Dream Plan. This plan included homeownership, college, retirement, and health insurance for children. Obama went on to pass the Affordable Care Act, which expanded the right to healthcare for all American's. The Great Recession of 2008 resulted in even greater income inequality across the U.S., seemingly putting an end to the American Dream for many. In reality, the recession only injured the materialistic Dream. The New American Dream is returning to the basic values of our Founding Fathers. The Center for a New American Dream imagines, "...a focus on more of what really matters, such as creating a meaningful life, contributing to community and society, valuing nature, and spending time with family and friends."

Three factors are said to have made the American Dream possible: A large land mass under one government Benign neighbors Abundant natural resources A new crisis has emerged as the impact of climate change is becoming more prevalent. Science has proved a rising rate of global warming resulting in a call for lower levels of consumption and a greater reliance on natural resources. Extreme weather, rising sea levels, increasing health risks, and food inflation is already costing the U.S. government billions of dollars, thus slowing economic growth. Therefore, a vision for a new American Dream is needed in order to endure this new crisis. The Founding Fathers of this nation could not have foreseen an American Dream that didn't offer the right to clean air, water, and plenty of natural resources. But like our Forefathers included rights to be self-evident, America's strength now seems to grow with the differences of its citizens. A diverse population gives companies in the U.S. competitive advantage, with more innovation and accessible markets to test new products. Additionally, America's "melting pot" offers diverse demographics, further giving commerce the edge to test niche products, generating more innovative ideas compared to a small, homogenous population. The U.S. continues to enjoy the benefits of cultural diversity. Thanks to the vision of our Founding Fathers, everyone has an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of one's own happiness. The Declaration of Independence makes no attempt to define happiness or lifestyle. Rather, it protects the right for everyone to have the same opportunity to pursue their personal vision of the American Dream. It fosters a belief in free enterprise where people can create and own businesses that operate without government control. It promotes a free market economy where products, prices and services are decided by the market and not the government. Giving everyone an equal opportunity to create wealth however they see fit. "Hope will be found by understanding that diversity is the essence of the American Dream and why we need each other to fulfill it." Ilhan Omar "When we make college more affordable, we make the American Dream more achievable. William J. Clinton, 42nd President of the U.S. "Our workforce and our entire economy are strongest when we embrace diversity to its fullest, and that means opening doors of opportunity to everyone and recognizing that the American Dream excludes no one." Thomas Perez, U.S. Secretary of Labor "A basic element of the American Dream is equal access to education as a lubricant of social and economic mobility." Nicholas Kristof, Journalist "I am the epitome of what the American Dream basically said. It said you could come from anywhere and be anything you want in this country." Whoopi Goldberg, Actress and Comedian "The promise of the American Dream requires that we are all provided an equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to our nation." Charles B Rangel, U.S. Congress "To me, the American Dream is being able to follow your own personal calling. To be able to do what you want to do is incredible freedom." Maya Lin, Architect "For many, the American Dream has become a nightmare." Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator "I have spent my life judging the distance between American reality and the American Dream." Bruce Springsteen, Musician "The promise of the American Dream requires that we are all provided an equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to our nation." Charles B Rangel, U.S. Congress "My father worked in the Post Office. A lot of double shifts. All his friends were in the same situation - truck drivers, taxi cab drivers, grocery clerks. Blue collar guys punching the clock and working long, hard hours. The thought that sustained them was the one at the center of the American Dream." Gary David Goldberg, Writer "To realize the American Dream, the most important thing to understand is that it belongs to everybody. It's a human dream. If you understand this and work very hard, it is possible." Cristina Saralegui, Journalist "There are those who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American Dream." Archibald Macleish, Poet "I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American Dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

Martin Luther King, Jr. "The faith that anyone could move from rags to riches - with enough guts and gumption, hard work and nose to the grindstone - was once at the core of the American Dream." Robert Reich, Economist and Former U.S. Secretary of Labor "The American Dream is a phrase we'll have to wrestle with all our lives. It means a lot of things to different people. I think we're redefining it now." Rita Dove, Poet What is the American Dream today? This Thanksgiving, may we reflect on what the American Dream means to all of us, both individually and collectively. May we celebrate our diversity, show gratitude and respect to our Forefathers who paved the way for every American to have the freedom to define, pursue and achieve the Dream. Share - copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Add - remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Immigrants who journey to the United States for a better life often say they are coming in search of the American Dream. But many people in the U.S. — immigrants and natural-born citizens alike — now seem to feel that dream is closer to a fantasy. And based on current lifestyle metrics, they aren't necessarily wrong, as the American dream continues to shift.What is the American dream?It's a "century-old phrase used to describe the idea that anyone can succeed through hard work in the United States," says the Pew Research Center. And the American dream defines a land where people can thrive and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each," said historian James Truslow Adams, who coined the term in 1913. He called "The Epic of America," a 1,700-word book titled "The Epic of America: An Interpretation of the American Mind," published in 1931. The book explored the history of the United States, tracing back to the Pilgrims, who were seeking an alternative to the Old World religious persecution. The idea that progress and improvement would come through hard work and dedication still draws people to America. Get the facts behind the news, plus analysis from multiple perspectives. From our morning news briefing to a weekly Good News Newsletter, get the best of The Week delivered directly to your inbox. Adams wrote "The Epic of America" at the height of the Great Depression, so his American dream concept was largely aspirational. But a decade later, the dream was coming true. More than 90% of children born in 1940 ended up better off than their parents. MIT economist Nathaniel Hendren and Harvard economist Raj Chetty have found. But "only around half of those born in the 1980s were able to say the same," The Wall Street Journal said. "It's still a coin flip whether or not you'll earn more than your parents," Hendren said, "but mobility probably hit a record low in the early 2020s."Is the American dream still attainable?A narrow 53% majority believes it is, Pew found in an April 2024 poll, while another 41% said it was once possible to attain but no longer. Older and wealthier people were about 25 percentage points more likely than younger and lower-income Americans to say the American dream is possible on the American dream, while people with a college degree were 7 points more bullish than those with less education. Pew found that 31% of respondents felt they had achieved the American team, 36% said they were on their way to achieving it and 30% said it was out of reach.This lack of optimism is especially apparent when it comes to younger people. A January 2025 survey from UCLA shows that nearly 85% of Gen Z and Millennials believe the American dream is unattainable, compared to 63% of Boomers and 58% of Generation X. And young adults also tend to favor financial aid over student loans, suggesting they are wary of debt.A recent Gallup study, released last August, asked Americans whether they believed the American dream was still alive and well. Three recent studies, including a July 2024 Wall Street Journal/NORC survey, found that people "overwhelmingly desire all the traditional trappings of the American dream," which the Journal described "as owning a home, having a family, and looking forward to a comfortable retirement" "but very few believe they can easily achieve them." 98% of respondents said owning a home was an essential life goal but only 10% said homeownership was at least somewhat easy to attain.Marriage, homeownership and a comfortable retirement seem less like American goals than universal ones. But "people are right to feel that the American dream has become harder to achieve in terms of their chances of doing better than their parents and their chances of rising out of poverty," Harvard's Chetty said to the Journal.Why is the American dream increasingly out of reach?Growing wealth and income inequality and decades of stagnant wages have raised the ceiling for the American dream while leaving the vast majority of people near the floor. Despite America's reputation as a land of opportunity, "there is less movement up and down the economic ladder here than in many other countries," the Brookings Institution said in a 2022 report. In America today, "wealth inequality is high. And wealth status is sticky," and this combination creates "sharp class divides which are at odds with the American dream." This disparity has been building for a while: a 2014 press release from the House Ways and Means Committee said that the U.S. needs "policies that grow the economy and create jobs so the next generation of Americans can realize the American Dream," and that too many Americans faced "mounting bills and student loan debt."Journalist David Leonhardt, who wrote about the fading American Dream in his 2023 book "Ours Was the Shinning Future," primarily blames this stratification on the restructuring of the U.S. economy. From the democratic capitalism that helped create America's large middle class, to the laissez-faire "greed is good" policies that replaced it, Leonhardt traces the decline of the American dream to political and economic forces. He argues that the American dream is dead because it was never real to begin with. "If you don't know what the American dream is, you won't miss it," he wrote in his book. "The country's largest activist groups, on both the left and the right, are focused on other subjects."While the dream may still technically be reachable for some, a large portion of Americans, particularly young people, simply no longer feel that way. Gen Z and millennial Americans "still really want financial security and independence, but many feel like the cards are stacked against them and the system is rigged," said Yalda Uhls, a professor in psychology at UCLA. Notably, high interest and mortgage rates, rising insurance costs, low housing stock and soaring real estate prices have also made it harder for first-time homebuyers to purchase a house, something 75% of Americans consider an essential component of the American dream, according to a Realtor.com survey.And while "income and wealth inequality have both soared" in America, "the 'clearest sign of our problems' is the 'stagnation of life expectancy for working-class people,'" Leonhardt said at The New York Times. "In 1980, the U.S. had a typical life expectancy for an affluent country," but now it ranks lower than its peers and even many poorer countries.Can the dream be revived?"If "the American political system helped create today's problems," then surely "the American political system can solve them," Leonhardt said at the Times. The American dream was made real largely by organized labor, civil rights crusaders and other "often grass-roots political movements" that steadily nudged the government into creating the American they envisioned. If the revitalized labor movement and other groups representing the bottom 90% of Americans can coalesce into a "mass movement organized around the goal of lifting living standards" for the middle class and working class, he added, it "might well succeed. It has before."Not everyone agrees that the dream is dying. "The American dream is of individual upward mobility, not social progress toward uniformity," John Early and former Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas) said in the Journal in 2023. And that "the American dream is alive and



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