



Stay Informed

Our Programs >>

Programs

Redefining the Dream

Beyond Consumerism

Collaborative Communities

Redefining the Dream

Inspiring, engaging, and challenging Americans to re-examine their cultural values on consumption and consumerism and initiating a new national conversation around what "the good life" and the "American dream" mean.

[About This Program](#)

[The American Dream](#)

[Living the Dream Series](#)

[A Plenitude Economy](#)

[America the Possible](#)

[New Dream Poll & Infographics](#)

The American Dream

What Is the American Dream?

In his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*, writer and historian James Truslow Adams defines the American Dream as the "dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement."

Truslow emphasizes that the American Dream does not represent a quest for wealth or material abundance, but rather a vision for self-actualization and personal fulfillment. He writes: it "is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

Truslow's definition reflects the ethos of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, which states that "all men are created equal" and that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights, including "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Unfortunately, the political, economic, social, and environmental realities of our day make it all but impossible for most Americans to achieve these goals. Today, the term "American Dream" is being used to frame everything from [social movements](#) to [mega-malls](#), although it is most often used as a proxy for home ownership.

The New American Dream

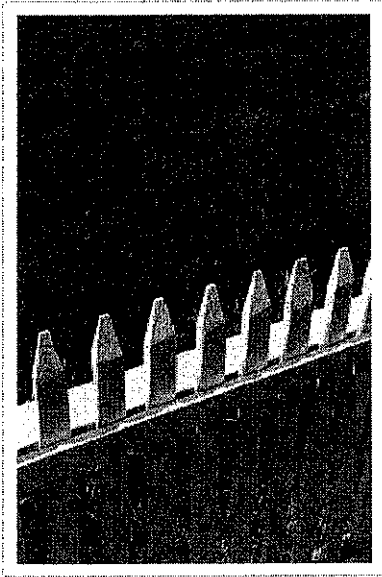
At the Center for a New American Dream, we seek to cultivate a "new" American dream—one that emphasizes community, ecological sustainability, and a celebration of non-material values, while upholding the spirit of the traditional American dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Further Reading

- ["What Is the American Dream? Dueling dualities in the American tradition."](#) by James Gustave Speth
- *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, by Jim Cullen (Oxford Univ. Press: 2004).
- *Rebooting the American Dream: 11 Ways to Rebuild Our Country*, by Thom Hartmann (Berrett-Koehler: 2010)

The American Dream

- *The American Dream vs. The Gospel of Wealth: The Fight for a Productive Middle-Class Economy*, by Norton Garfinckle (Yale Univ. Press: 2006)
- "[The Polls—Trends: Attitudes About The American Dream](#)," by Sandra L. Hanson and John Zogby (*Public Opinion Quarterly*, Sept. 2010)



We seek to cultivate a new American dream—one that emphasizes community, ecological sustainability, and a celebration of non-material values.

- [Our Programs](#)
- [Get Inspired](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Donate](#)

© Center for a New American Dream (Creative Commons License)

Stay Informed

Email Address

Confirm Email

Zip Code

Submit >

Search

