

"The American Dream is alive and well"

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People can still achieve their aims if they work hard. Success stories: Bill Gates, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Those people who made their dream come true, make headlines. The thousands who don't succeed go unnoticed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It's about equality of opportunities, not equality of rich and poor: free movement between the social strata. There are many examples of people who have moved up the social scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statistics show that compared to other countries social mobility in the US is rather limited. ○ Mobility actually lower than in Europe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social background does not decide on where you end up. US society is a classless society in which everybody can move up and succeed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The US has an aristocracy of sorts. It's the families with new money, hereditary dynasties all the same.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People can still achieve their aims if they work hard: success stories like Whoopie Goldberg or Oprah Winfrey. ○ Self-reliance, the role of the state is minimal. Because of this, there is hardly any other country which offers chances like the US. ○ Individualism is an important aim vs. influence of the State. (In European welfare states, the notion of "community" seems to rank higher than individualism.) ○ Communism or socialism have never had a chance to spread in the US. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you are not able to work hard (e.g. handicapped) you will not receive as much financial help as you would in Europe. There is a welfare system for the handicapped and elderly which is called social security and Medicaid. ○ However, if you are poor, it is seen as your own fault. "Just get another job!" ○ Emphasis on individual responsibility can lead to isolation and insecurity or indifference from other people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The American Dream is what you want it to be ⇒ not necessarily material goods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recent developments ⇒ The rich become richer, the poor stay poor, the middle class decreases in size. (cf. "Occupy Wall Street" protests)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are many examples of people who "made it" with seemingly crazy ideas, e.g. Bill Gates, Whoopi Goldberg, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg.... ○ President Obama, the first black president, is a case in point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It's not possible to do every job you want ⇒ no job, no money. ○ Examples are not the rule and real success is rare.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is free education for everyone. Most colleges and universities also offer scholarships for gifted students and the state offers grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High quality schools or universities are very expensive. Many people rack up high debts for tuition and find it virtually impossible to pay them off and make ends meet at the same time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The American Dream is an ideal to encourage people to give their best. ○ ⇒ The ideal never dies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The ideal has changed from something tangible to a vague idea that seems to become increasingly harder to reach these days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everybody has the same opportunities to achieve their goals. This doesn't mean that everybody will succeed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ limited chances to climb the career ladder ○ There are not enough well-paid jobs (e.g. due to outsourcing) to get ahead. Many Americans have to work two or even more jobs to make ends meet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The American Dream means that children will do better than their parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents today are less optimistic because of the economic crisis, too many temporary jobs, the cost of education etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 37% of Americans still believe in the American Dream. ○ Actually, the American Dream seems to have its staunchest supporters among recent immigrants and second-generation immigrants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ But many ethnic minorities fare less well. African Americans have a lower median income than e.g. Asians. Not everybody has the same opportunities even though this is what the Constitution guarantees. ○ American Dream: for (rich) whites only?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The AD means different things to different people, social mobility, money, material success etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pursuit of material things leads to disaster, climate change, and pollution in the US and in the developing world.