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## **Immigration to the United States**

### **From the American Dream to the Disillusionment**

A Dissertation Submitted to the department of Foreign Languages in Partial requirement for  
the Fulfilment of Master degree in English language: Civilization and Literature

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*Dedication*

*To my sweet mother*

*My loving father*

*My beautiful sisters*

*And my lovely cousin Marcoua*

## **Acknowledgment**

I owe my success to my teachers and all the body of the English department for their help all these years. I wish to express my deep gratitude to my teacher of American Civilization, and supervisor Mr. Temagoult for all the encouragement and facilities that he provided for this project, he has been very helpful. This dissertation could not have been written without him, so thank you for all your patience. I would like to thank the entire staff of the English department of Mohammed Kheider University, and all my classmates of second year Master of English LMD.

**Abstract**

Immigration is one of the important factors that shaped the United States of America. Beginning with the first English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia, the world witnessed the born of a nation that grew to become the most powerful nation in the world, due to the principles it was based on, principles of freedom, equality, and opportunity. The study focuses on these principles that shaped America as a unique nation, with highlighting the American Dream from the beginning. The study also discusses the development of the American society, and how people abandoned most of their beliefs, passing by a period in which the country faced many challenges, the period of disillusionment that marked the awakening of Americans from many illusions that surrounded them.

## ملخص

تعتبر الهجرة من أهم العوامل التي أسست الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. بدءا من أول مستوطنة إنجليزية في جيمس تاون بولاية فرجينيا، شهد العالم ولادة أمة، نمت لتصبح أقوى دولة في العالم، ويرجع ذلك إلى استنادها إلى مبادئ الحرية، المساواة، وتوفير الفرص. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى التركيز على هاته المبادئ التي أسست أمريكا كدولة فريدة من نوعها مع تسليط الضوء على الحلم الأميركي منذ بدايته. تناقش الدراسة أيضا تطور المجتمع الأمريكي وتخلي الناس عن معظم معتقداتهم، وذلك بمرورهم عبر فترة زمنية واجهوا فيها العديد من التحديات ،هاته الفترة تميزت بخيبة أمل رافقتها صحوة الأميركيين من العديد من الأوهام التي كانت تحيط بهم.

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## **Chapter One: General Introduction**

### **1.1. Background of the Study:**

The United States of America has always been a land of immigrants, with different races and ethnicities, a melting pot of people who wanted to have a better life, including political and religious freedoms and especially economic success, these are the basics of the American dream. Before we go deeper, it is important to understand the meaning of the American Dream.; first, religiously speaking: a country in which people practice their religions freely. The puritans were the first settlers in the new land, their struggle with the old religious community, i.e. Britain brought them in the first place to leave their lands, and face the difficulties of America as a new place to find “liberty to worship” without being judged. The concept of the American Dream existed at that time, in the seventeenth century, when the puritan’s leader John Winthrop gave his sermon “a City upon a Hill” to his fellow puritan colonists, the term describes the vision of Winthrop of a society in which everyone would have the chance to prosper, as long as they work hard and follow biblical teachings, and that America should be an example to everyone else about how they should live, it means living the way that God wanted: “We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us”.

The other aspect of the American Dream is the political one; in 1776 the Declaration of Independence adopted the idea of political freedom, the most cherished symbol in the United States, drafted by Thomas Jefferson to officially break the ties between the colonies, and their mother country, the British Crown. “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” became the

main inspiration of America, meaning that everyone has the right to live a life in which they are free to make their own decisions to achieve things that make them happy.

The third and the most important aspect is the economic one, because without the availability of materials, Americans would have not been able to achieve their dreams, immigrants from all over the world travel to America seeking work and financial success, unlike the communists systems, America's free-enterprise system provides the circumstances to allow individuals to go beyond meeting their basic needs to achieve personal fulfillment, this can be summarized in one sentence "If you go to America you become rich".

The term American dream was introduced by James Truslow Adams in his book '*The Epic of America*' (1931), the writer and historian defines it 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", he also makes sure that the American Dream does not represent a quest for wealth or material acquirement, 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 and position", this leads to the second part of the thesis which is the disillusionment. We cannot claim that the American Dream worked out for everyone who tried to achieve it, otherwise there would be no poor in America, the idea in its beginnings contained ideal principles that did not last, its decline is attributed to many factors, such as: Industrialization, Wars, and mainly the Great Depression, another factor was the change of the idea itself, as it is well depicted in Scott Fitzgerald's "*The Great Gatsby*". When the American Dream became about acquiring as much wealth as you can regardless of the way or the reason to achieve it.

The disillusionment period is often referred to as the “Roaring Twenties”, after the First World War, when Americans began to realize the horrors of the war and the big numbers of deaths. Contradictions arose among the nation: while African Americans celebrated African American culture with art, music, and the Harlem renaissance literature, the feeling of patriotism increased the crimes of the Ku Klux Klan towards black people, the newly formed bureau of investigation put restrictions on immigrants, women acquired the right to vote in 1920, farmers’ income dropped, which led Hoover’s presidential campaign to call for “a chicken in every pot, and a car in every garage”, but after the economic breakdown; many people started to question the financial situation of America. The disillusionment period was a shift from an economic prosperity based on greater mass production of consumer goods to the longest lasting economic downturn, after the stock market crash of October 1929.

### **1.2. Statement of the problem:**

The American Dream as described by authors such as Jean de Crevecoeur in “*Letters from American Farmer*”, and Horatio Alger’s experience “*from rags to riches*”, showed an enthusiastic image of the dream of succeeding in America, many writers took the side of defending the American dream, while others tried to send a different image about it, the most recognizable piece of literature was “*the great Gatsby*” by Scott Fitzgerald in which he depicted materialism of the American society. The problem of the research is in the effects of the industrial revolution on the American society, turning from rural to urban. Many changes occurred in that period, when materialism, consumerism, and clash of cultures caused the decline of the American Dream.

### **1.3. Purpose of the study:**

The work aims to analyze the endurance of the American Dream, and discusses its existence throughout different periods of time. While people in Europe and the rest of the world saw America as a salvation from dictatorships and poverty, their situation there, i.e. America cannot be described as an ideal one, they were struggling to achieve the minimum of life needs. The work also attempts to discuss the effects of the Great Depression on the American economy and social life. Succeeding in America, became a harder goal to achieve for most of immigrants

### **1.4. Significance of the study:**

The research is important because of the historical information given, in addition to the analysis of abstract ideas in a remarkable period in the history of the United States of America. The research's significance is also represented in the way of studying certain events and how they shaped the American point of view of the American Dream during the disillusionment. The goal is to unveil a dark side of the American Dream, other than the way it is academically studied, because students always study the idealized version of the American Dream putting a blind eye on the numerous factors that existed in America and showed a totally different image of the country that is believed to be the most ideal in the world.

### **1.5. Primary research questions:**

Whether a reality or a myth, we cannot deny that the American Dream was, and still important to Americans, the questions here are related to the extent of its validity after the economic breakdown. The questions are:

What were the major reasons behind the decline of the American Dream? How did the changes that occurred in the first half of the twentieth century affected the American culture? And what was the role of the American government in maintaining the basic beliefs of the American society?

### **1.6. Limitation of the study:**

The study is somehow a comparative one, between the American Dream in the seventeenth century, and during the disillusionment, the 1920s. It focuses on the contradictions of the most important values that shaped America, such as working hard to acquire wealth, or the ability of realizing any dream no matter how hard it is, while in reality a large population in America works hard just to get the basics of everyday life. The research is limited to study a specific weakness of America, which is the failure of keeping the dream alive, despite its importance.

### **1.7. Methodology:**

The work adopts a descriptive, analytical study; it describes the abstract ideas of freedom, equality, and happiness, that have been associated with the American experiment, and analyses the decline of the American Dream considering the controversies that comes with it. The research will be based on data collected from various sources, such as: books, articles, magazines, and every other available source related to the issue.

### **1.8. The structure of the work:**

Throughout the research, the study is divided chronologically as follows: a general introduction, a body of the work contains two chapters, and a general conclusion, the first

chapter is a general introduction of the work, the second one contains historical information about immigration in the United States, and the role it played in shaping the country, the third chapter is about the turning point of America regarding the American Dream and the reasons behind major changes in the American thinking, or awakening. It also deals with the decline of the dream, and the other America, a country that contradicts with its values, and could not maintain its principles as they were set on its foundation. It also contains the restrictions that the American government had to put to limit the huge number of immigrants.

### **1.9. Literature review:**

The American dream has been the subject of many writers with different aspects and perspectives, such as Jean de Crevecoeur in his essay “*what is an American*”, the French-American writer introduces the new land for Europeans who were not familiar with. He describes the differences between America and Europe, in terms of richness, opportunities for employment, and people’s freedom, he defines “the American” or the new man as follows:

*“....What then is the American, this new man? ... He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds, he has become an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims.” (Letter III, 1782)*

Horatio Alger, one of the novelists, who tried to make people understand the American dream from his perspective, through his stories "From Rags to Riches". Horatio attempted to make Americans believe that anyone could work hard and become rich, a "self made man". By his novels, he answered questions of how to get rich in America, his typical story revolve around hard working immigrants who become wealthy through seizing opportunities, and insisting on making their situation better in the land of opportunity and ultimately realizing the American Dream.

On the other hand many writers criticized the idea of the easiness of becoming rich, such as: John Steinbeck's novel "*of Mice and Men*", which its events took place in the 1930s, during the great depression. At that time, the land of opportunity became the land of the misfortune, the major theme of the novel was the impossibility of the American Dream as many novelists portrayed it in the past, Steinbeck, shows the coexistence of the dream and poverty, in a controversial way, through making the characters of his novel facing hardships in order to realize their simple dreams; however they find out that it is impossible to achieve them, as poor migrants during the depression. The main characters end up thinking that the dream that they were looking for is nothing but a trap or an illusion, "Nobody gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land." The inability of the two main characters in the novel to realize their material dreams, did not stop them from looking for happiness, which at the end they fulfill it by appreciating their friendship, and consider it as their own dream.

In another work, Arthur Miller in his well-known play, "*Death of salesman*" 1949, emphasizes on the race for the dream no matter how it costs, the play criticizes the American consumerism that led people to compete irrationally in order to be in a better position in society, the main character of the play, spends his whole life trying to be someone he is not, pretending to be financially successful, to impress others, the problems that the salesman was

facing throughout the play ends up in his tragic death, caused by his “stupidity”. Miller in this play gives another image of the American Dream that many writers described, and warned people about, an image that portrays the American Dream as a justification for the poor to do whatever it takes to be rich, disregarding how unethical or how hard it is, the death of the salesman represents his inability to achieve what he wanted, instead, he should have lived a simple life without the need to show off his success.

Scott Fitzgerald’s “*The Great Gatsby*” does not differ much from Arthur Miller’s play, the novel’s events set in the 1920s during the great depression, Fitzgerald focuses on the immense change of the American values: instead of striving for equality, they just want to get as rich as they could, he shows that social discrimination still exists in America, as people were not treated equally, he also shows that greed, and empty pursuit of pleasure marked the decadence of the American dream, “*The Great Gatsby*” is seen as the novel that perfectly described the situation of America in the 1920s, through the depiction of the social classes, and the difference between the newly rich people, and the old money, the newly rich could never be as important as the old money, because of the latter’s aristocracy. Crime arose in America, and selfishness, and materialism controlled people’s thinking. The perception of the American Dream of achieving success in life regardless of family history, or social position was dead, and the lack of humanity was the weapon to achieve material, and status goals.



## **Chapter Two: Immigration and the Dream:**

### **2.1. Introduction:**

Immigration to the United States of America is an important factor in the American history comparing to other countries, since it has a huge population of different races and ethnicities under one constitution that managed to keep the coexistence of its citizens. America is defined as a country of immigrants, because of generations of people who came from different parts of the world to create a united country in which all immigrants are called “Americans”, every American is an immigrant or a descendent of immigrants, except American Indians.

Motives behind going to America differed, from political to economic to social; many people’s dreams were the possibility to go live in the greatest nation of the world. The importance of immigration is represented in enriching the American culture and enhancing the country’s influence on the world, in addition to the important role of building, and strengthening the American economy.

Hundreds of thousands go to America each year hoping for a better life there, not only on the material side, but also the social one, as many people face in their home countries hardships, of wars, and dictatorships, so they hope to find in America the freedom that their home governments could not provide for them. Despite its diversity, America has faced some difficulties regarding the living conditions of minorities there, for example: African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians have the biggest percentage of poverty, and social ills. Overpopulation also plays a negative role in maintaining the system of immigration which is the basis of the country; the government has put a series of laws to make immigration as a

powerful factor to the continuation of America, rather than a burden that one day can destroy the structure of the country.

## **2.2. Waves of Immigration:**

The melting pot of America today is due to almost four centuries of immigration to the new world that can be split into three waves of immigration, these three waves represent various events that happened in America, but especially in the rest of the world, i.e. many factors led people to leave their ancestors and move to another country to start a new life, some of the immigrants intended to settle there, while others wanted to work and provide financial help for their families overseas. The total number of people that moved to America from the beginning is around seventy three million.

### **2.2.1. First wave of immigration: from the sixteenth century to the late eighteenth:**

The French and Spanish were the first to establish settlement during the sixteenth century, their main purpose was trade. Until 1607, the first permanent English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia, founded by the London Company. The first settlers led by Captain John Smith built a fort of church and other structures; however, starvation, disease, and shipwreck killed many immigrants before even getting their feet on the land. The Spanish had established ST. Augustine city in 1565 as the first Spanish settlement, while European powers disputed on conquering lands across the ocean of North America. By late eighteenth century after the war of independence, English settlers made sixty percent of America's population. Slave trading contributed to the rise of population by 500,000 Africans by the time of the American Revolution. (Waggoner: Three Waves of Immigration that Changed America)

### **2.2.2. Second wave of immigration: the nineteenth and early twentieth century:**

This period marked the shift of America; from a rural gricultural society to an industrial one, during this wave many Irish, and Norwegians, went to America as their situation in their homelands was difficult due to famine and the potato crop failure, most of them were granted large acres of land to grow farms and build houses. Immigration from Europe was also as a result of the industrial revolution there, as workers were replaced by machines, so their only hope was to go to America to find better jobs since the American industrial revolution worked better for them, considering the low population of America, comparing to the size of the country. Some immigrants received “American Letters” from encouraging family members and friends to join them in America, the second wave was the largest one, the main immigrants went from western Europe, the Nordic Stock (Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands), after the beginning of the Civil War; Immigration declined, but after the collapse of confederacy it got back on track. By the beginning of the twentieth century, immigrants made about 7.5 million of the population.

### **2.2.3. Third wave: from the mid-twentieth century to the present-day:**

Immigrants of the last wave went mostly from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Eastern Europeans suffered from poverty and deprivation, they saw America as their salvation; however, they did not find what they expected, because they worked in industries in overcrowded cities under difficult conditions. Many of Eastern European immigrants went back to their countries not being able to face the complicated situation in America after the Great Depression and World War II.

It was easier for Asians (mostly Chinese, Japanese, and Indians) to integrate into the American society, because of two factors: first, they went with a lot of money which they invested by opening shops and stores, and their working hard nature. Second, because of the relationship they have with their children, as they are very severe concerning studies considering it as a matter of honor, this helped Asians because their children go to good universities and get good jobs.

The United States became the main destination for Cubans due to economic and political issues. After Fidel Castro's communist regime took over Cuba, many followers of the old regime escaped to America fearing Castro's persecution, also seeking jobs and better living conditions, especially after the economic situation in Cuba became very difficult; a large number of Cuban immigrants settled in Miami, Florida, being the closest to them, in a city called "Little Havana" named after the Cuban capital "La Havana". Cuban immigrants are also located in other states, such as California, New York, and New Jersey.

Mexicans' settlement in America goes back to the period of the US-Mexican war (1846-1848), after Mexico gave up one third of its territory to the United States, as a result of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty, America offered naturalization to nearly 100,000 Mexican citizens who preferred to reside in the north part, which is now California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico. Mexicans have a better chance to cross the boundaries to the United States, since they are neighboring countries. Illegal immigration to America has been, and still a big issue especially in the second half of the twentieth century. (History: American Latino theme study)

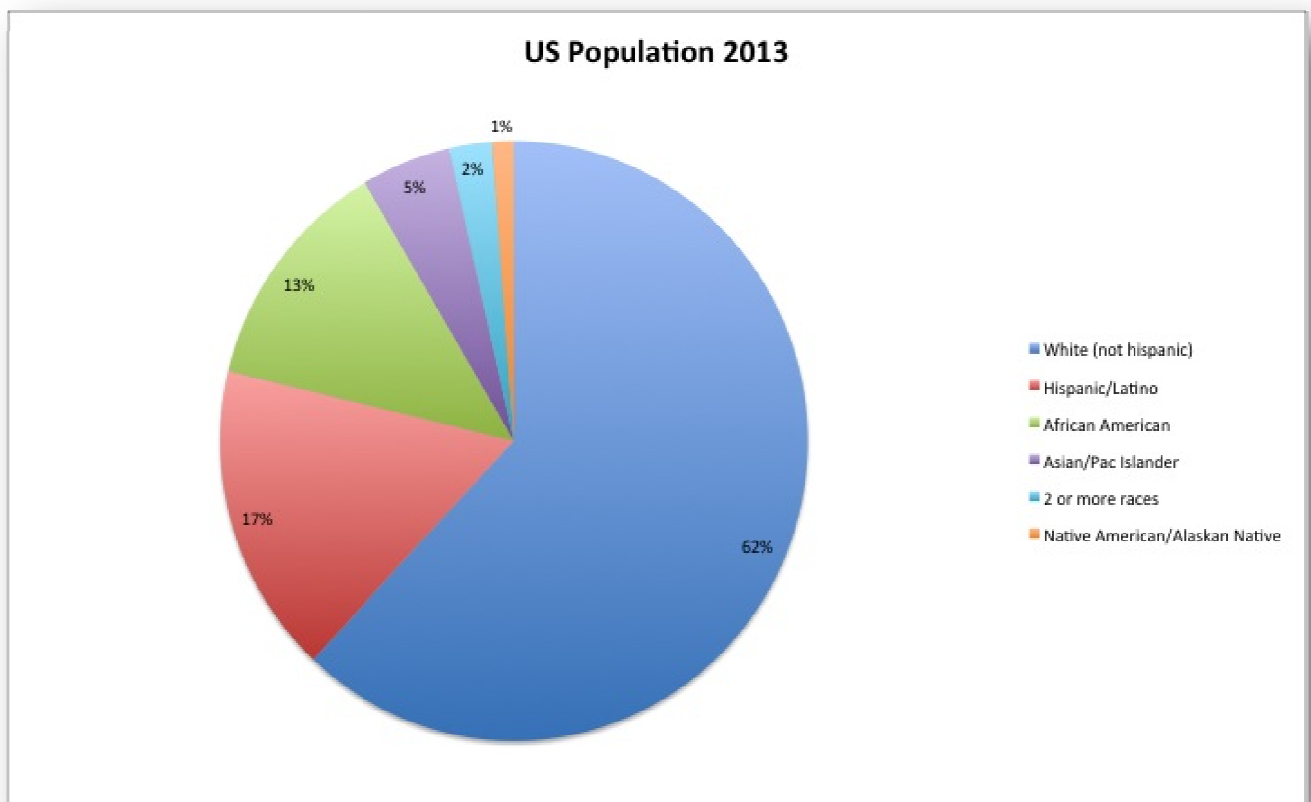
Nowadays the destination of immigrants changed to the western states like California and Texas, because of the overpopulated Eastern states. Mexicans made the highest number of immigration in the past decades.

### 2.3. Minorities and immigration:

America contains all races from all continents; its history is based on centuries of immigration as it is mentioned before. there are significant minorities that American population consists of, racial groups in America are what distinguish it from other countries, the country recently is no longer described as a “melting pot” rather than a “salad bowl” in which the numerous diverse races still hold their origin traditions, cultures, and costumes, such as Hispanics, African-Americans, and Asians.

The US Census Bureau publishes the statistics of the American population to shed light on American minorities’ residents, as it is shown in the figure.

Source: US Census Bureau.



**2.3.1. Hispanics:**

The term Hispanic is related to the Spanish-speaking community in America, within this group, there are people with different ethnic origins: Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, and Caribbean countries like Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. As the fastest growing minority these recent years, Hispanics do not consider themselves as a single group, due to the attachment of each group to its origin country, and their relation with their home lands, costumes, and traditions.

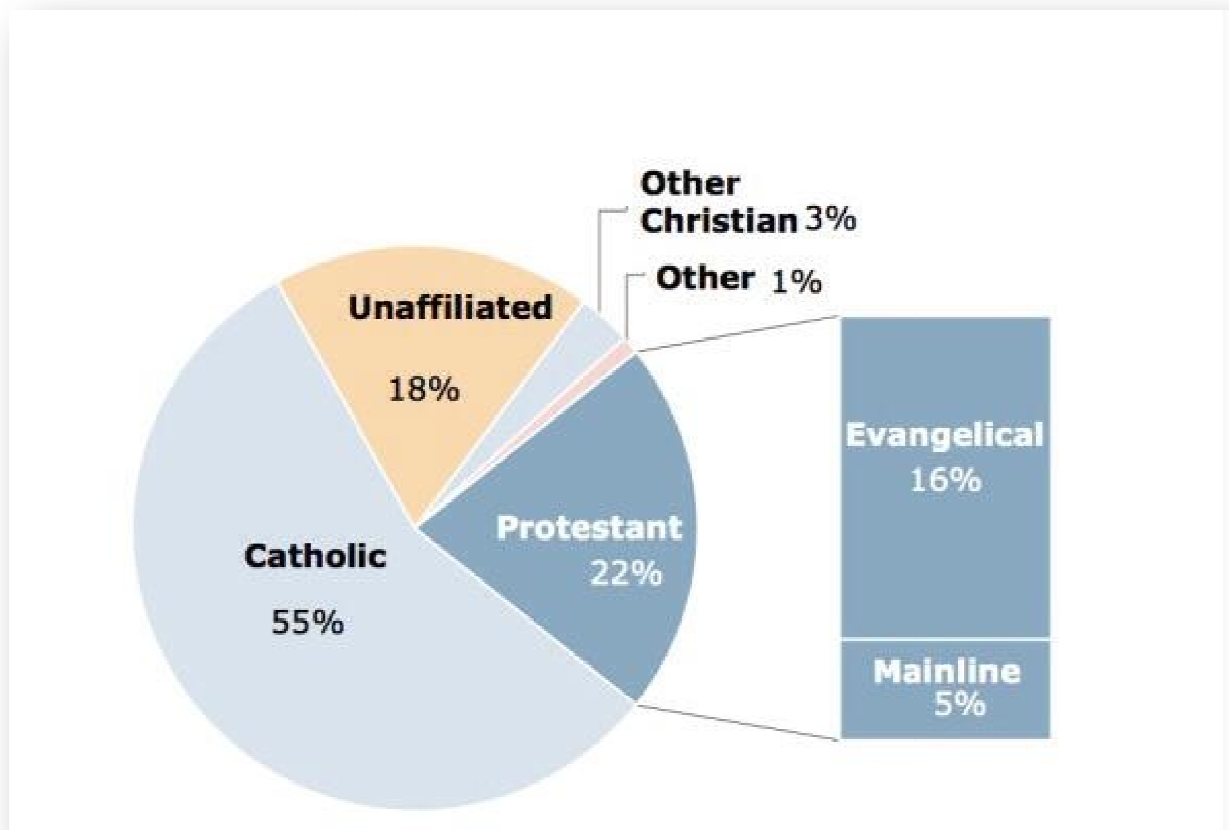
The origins of Hispanics go back to the first settlement in 1565, when Saint Augustine was established introducing Catholicism and Spanish language in Florida, later in 1598 South West New Mexico was settled by the Spanish also as the oldest South West Spanish settlement; by 1691 Texas was made a separate Spanish province governed by Don Domingo de Teràn. The American Mexican war (1846-1848) was the most important event in Mexican immigration, because of the surrender of the latter, leaving a huge Spanish-speaking population in south west America after the Guadalupe Hidalgo treaty which is now California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico. The territorial adjustment between Mexico and the US was made by the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.

Mexicans make 66.9 percent and the majority of Hispanics, because of the south borders and closeness, while Puerto-Ricans make 8.6 percent and Cubans with 3.7 percent. (Pew Research Center)

**2.3.1.1. Religion:**

Religiously, according to the Pew Research Center, the number of Hispanics Catholics has decreased from 67 percent in 2010 to 55 percent in 2013; however they are still the majority, as it is shown in the figure below. Protestants make 22 percent of the Hispanic

population and 18 percent unaffiliated. The majority of Hispanic have maintained their Catholic faith from their early Spanish ancestors, while others converted to Protestantism influenced by the majority of the whole nation. (Pineda, 2)



Source: Pew Research Center survey of Hispanic adults 2013.

**2.3.1.2. Education:**

About 50 percent of Hispanics do not obtain a higher educational degree, despite the attempt of the 89 percent who think that a college degree is important to succeed in life; this may be attributed to the need of those of Hispanic origins to work as soon as they could to support their families financially. There is a huge gap between immigrant Latinos and native-born ones, we find that the immigrant Latinos have more pressure to support their families, and this limits their goals in pursuing a college degree despite their view of the importance of college. (Lopez, Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends).

**2.3.1.3. Poverty and crime:**

Unemployment represents a quarter of the Hispanic population, according to the Pew Research Center; the median income of Hispanic households in 2012 was 39,005 dollars, poverty had huge consequences on this minority's health situation. Poverty and food insecurity are linked to unemployment, which can be associated to low education as it is mentioned above, it can also be related to low wages that obliges households to work in more than one jobs to pay bills.

Crime and gangs are as a result of the low level of education and poverty, the shortage of life needs can lead households to spend the most of their time outside. An increasing number of household are headed by single-mothers. In the absence of parents, gangs make youth join them, and then destroy their hopes of a better life. According to Josh Sugarmann (violence policy center), murder rate for Hispanics is double murder rate for whites, because of gun violence. Gangs in America threaten the health of both Hispanic and non- Hispanic communities as the gun control presents an existing issue in America.



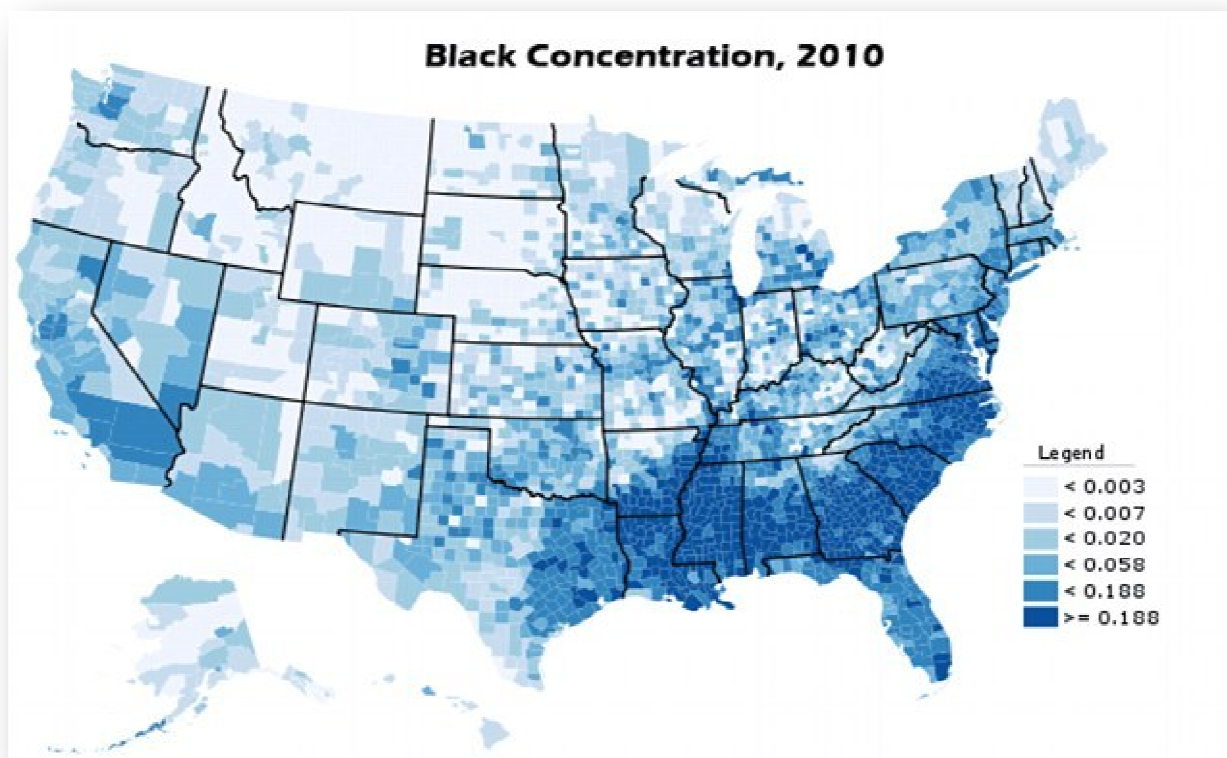
### 2.3.2. African Americans:

Almost all African Americans are descendents of captive Africans held in the United States, and used as slaves. Tonya Buell describes slavery in her book *“Slavery in America, a Primary Source History of the Intolerable Practice of Slavery”* as “shameful history”, Buell argues that unlike every other immigrants who went from Europe and other continents to achieve a better life in better conditions, African slaves were taken against their will, “like a group of animals”, spending days on a sea that they never “set eyes on before” to be sold to the one who gives the highest price, she also describes the harsh situation of African slaves, being forced to spend all day, every day in cotton and tobacco farms, forced to work and supplied with little food, living in a small room “with no furniture or bedding”. From the blacks’ history to America we can understand that not all immigrants had the same opportunities and goals, however; America was not the only country to practice slavery, but the fact that Americans were acting against their most important principles, like freedom and equality, slavery was a disgrace to the American history, accepted by the church and described as a “necessary evil” as a justification for the white who could not escape the fact that it was an immoral act that distorted the American values.

History of slavery goes back to the African continent in the seventh century, when Arabs of the Middle-East and North Africa and Europeans were the first slave buyers, and later turned to be the main slave traders in addition to the black-black slavery trade. Slaves were chosen by age, and physical strength.

In the 1619s, the first African slaves were taken to America in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, to help in the production of crops and tobacco, the slaves contributed in a large development of the American economy for the European market. Since the lands of the new world required a huge workforce, Americans saw slavery as their only solution. The struggle of blacks in America was represented in the first slave revolt in Stono, South Carolina in 1739, when a group of slaves went to Florida, proclaiming liberty, which was given to them by the Spanish settlers. The slaves armed themselves in a firearms shop killing the two shopkeepers, and killed a man named Godfrey and his son and daughter by burning their house. Many attempts of blacks for freedom took place to give rights to slaves, but none of them have succeeded, until the end of the Civil War in 1865, which marked the death of 617,000 Americans, the North and South issue on slavery ended with its abolition after 250 years of slavery, because Americans could not keep slavery at the same time considering themselves as a nation of freedom and equality in the Declaration of Independence. This paradox did not disappear anyway, because after the abolition of slavery, blacks suffered racism for decades.

African-Americans make the second largest minority in America, it represent 13 percent of the population as only blacks, and 15.2 percent as African Americans with more than one race, the US Census Bureau predicts that by 2060 the percentage of African Americans will reach 17.9 percent of the total American population, the distribution of black race in America geographically is mostly situated in the East South as shown in the map.



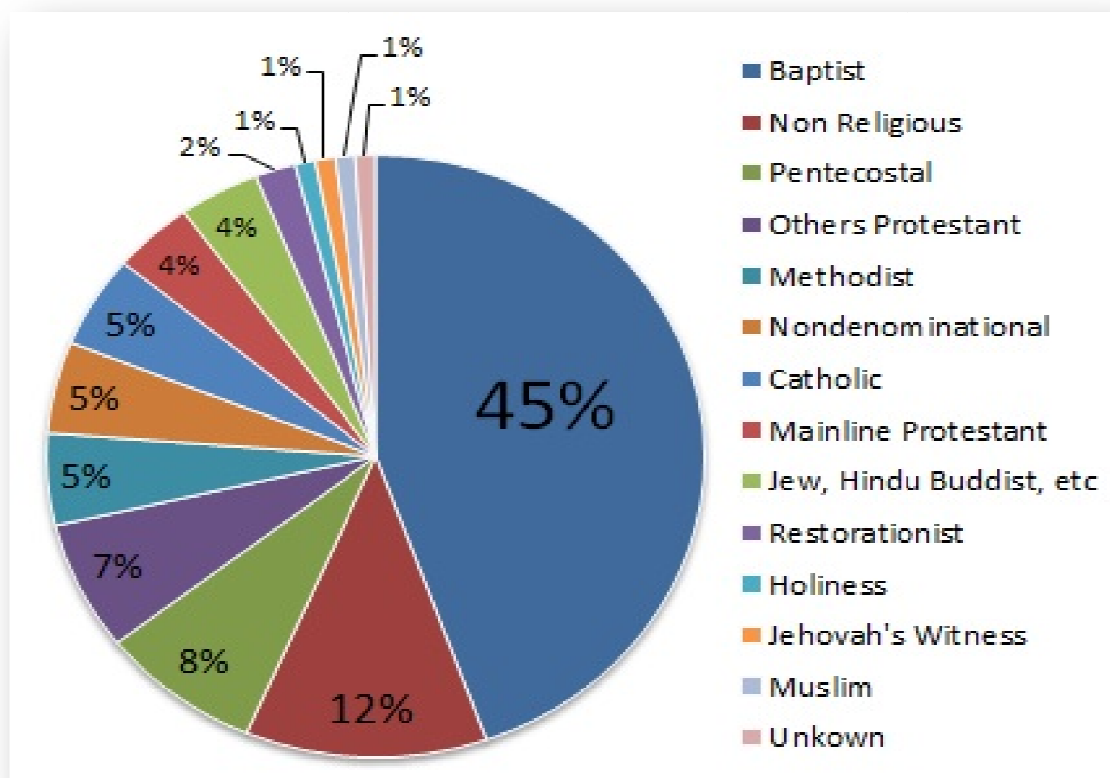
Source: US Census Bureau: Black Geographical Concentration.

#### **2.3.2.1. Religion:**

African Americans are considered as the most religious minority in the US. The large majority of African Americans are Protestants, with 78 percent of the black population, while Catholics represent 5 percent, and African Muslims which were referred to as the black panthers represent only 1 percent of the African Americans, as well as the Jews. (Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life)

The following figure shows the religious diversity of African Americans by percentage.

## **African-American Religious Affiliation**



Source: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion.

### **2.3.2.2. African American contribution in shaping the American culture and politics:**

African Americans are believed to be the most influential minority in America, since the foundation of the country, black slaves played a massive role in enriching the

American economy through working in cotton and tobacco fields that were exported to Europe, despite slavery and racism, black citizens managed to keep their hopes alive dreaming of equality, it was a hard dream, but today, especially the recent years of 2013 until 2015 the black African dialect or slang is spoken by a large number of whites.

African-American literature has shaped the American culture through many writers, during the Harlem renaissance. but before that, there were many authors who introduced the first American prose, drama, and poetry, such as, William Wells Brown, who wrote the first African American novel in 1853, entitled "*Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*", he also wrote the first African American play "*The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom*" in 1858. The Harlem renaissance was the most remarkable movement of African American literature, with Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, and so many authors of the beginning of the twentieth century who gave much importance to American literature.

Music played a big role in the African American cultural contribution to America, African American music roots back to the beginning of the seventeenth century under the hard conditions of slavery, slaves sang while working cotton lands, to ease their pain, and relay messages. African American Jazz had a big influence on music in America as a whole, and the Blues that turned into rhythm and blues, or R and B, which is combined with the Hip-Hop, and Rap music in the last decades.

African Americans contributed in politics even before becoming citizens, by participating in the Civil War as soldiers, and their active participation in the reconstruction after the war. During that period they got their citizenship and the right to vote. Probably the most known African Americans in the politic history were Malcolm X and Martin Luther king, both were victims of assassination, and both were known for fighting for black

freedoms, although their points of view were a little bit different: King attempted to achieve a community in which “blacks and whites would sit down together at the table of brotherhood” while Malcolm rejected the whites and called them “White Devils”, both accomplished meaningful changes in the American society during an instability in politics concerning equal rights between blacks and whites. Barack Obama is the first African American president of the United States of America; the 44<sup>th</sup> president was elected in 2008 winning over Senator John McCain, being the first black president is considered as an immense accomplishment for blacks who struggled for centuries for equal opportunities in the country, although many citizens criticized his policy, he still has support especially from the African American minority.

Americans celebrate the Black Month History annually, each February to recognize blacks’ achievements in America; the event grew out of “Negro History Week”. During the Black Month History; Americans give credit to contributions of African Americans whether through history or in the present time. Many blacks are honored and encouraged to participate in the improvement of the American society.

#### **2.3.2.3. Education:**

African American academic achievement has recently increased, however it did not reach the white educational level. the modest level of blacks in America is mainly a result of the lack of financial opportunity to pay for private schools, unlike the other minorities, black Americans have to deal with some hurtful stereotypes, such as the lack of education and “decadence” of culture within the community, these stereotypes perhaps existed in the past decades, when acquiring a college degree was seen as an exception rather than normal. But the last years statistics showed that the level of educated African American both males

and females is rising due to the remarkable social and financial improvements of the black community.

#### **2.3.2.4. Crime rate:**

Race crime is one of the issues that the American community faces since the slavery era, tensions are still apparent between blacks and whites, some black movements leaders still complain about whites' attitude toward blacks, while whites themselves are complaining about "white racism": the thinking that blacks should accept the fact that the racism time is over. On the other hand there is crime in its general meaning i.e. without implicating race, the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that "one in three black men can expect to go to prison in their lifetime" and they are "four times as likely to experience the use of force during encounters with the police", also black youth have higher rates of being sentenced to adult prison. According to Human Rights Watch; colored people are the most arrested concerning drug dealing, and using drugs. Comparing to whites, black offenders, once they are convicted, they receive sentences 10 percent longer according to the US Sentencing Commission. There have been many attempts to raise awareness within the black community, especially among the youth, organized by political and popular figures that resulted in decreasing the crime rates by giving better opportunities to youth in schooling and other activities that can keep their justice record clean.

#### **2.3.3. Asian Americans:**

The large wave of Asians who went to America was during the nineteenth century or the Gold Rush, at that time Chinese suffered economic hardships because of the dominance of Britain over china after the latter's defeat. History of Asians in America is linked to hard work and fulfilling dreams, they had high hopes of making better their situation in "Gold Mountain" California. After the end of slavery Americans depended on

Asians to build the railroads in the west, a high number of Chinese with few south Asians (Japanese and Koreans) gets the credit of developing agriculture, building railroads, and working for newly established factories, they were less paid than their white counterparts, and obliged to pay high taxes.

Many whites saw Asians as a threat to their jobs regarding their natural love for work, these fears led to the Chinese Exclusion act of 1882 that banned Chinese laborers to immigrate to America, there were many acts after that which carried the same racial exclusion of Asians from the country.

Asian population represents more than 5 percent of the American population, and it is the fastest growing one after Hispanics, they are well integrated in the American society in terms of language, work, and education. According to the Pew Research Center: Asian-Americans “are more satisfied than the general public with their lives, finances and the direction of the country”, their most important values are family, parenthood, hard work, and career success. Asian-Americans are descendents of multi-national groups who immigrated to America more than two centuries ago, the Chinese are the dominating number with 4,010,114 people, the Filipino are next with 3,416,840 people, Indians with 3,183,063, Vietnamese with 1,373,433, Koreans 1,706,822, and finally the Japanese with 1,304,286.

#### **2.3.3.1. Education:**

Asian-Americans have the highest rates of educational level, like other minorities, they fought a long battle to have equal education opportunities, they realized the American Dream through education, statistics say that forty two percent of Asian-Americans have a college degree, the highest of all the rest of minorities. This gave them the title of “Model Minority”, the college degrees helped Asian-Americans to get better jobs, comparing to



Hispanics and African-Americans, which makes their household income the highest. The structure of the family also helps in the rise of income, as they live together, and more family members work, unlike blacks and Hispanics who have higher rates of single-mothers and family separation.

#### **2.3.3.2. Religion:**

According to the survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, Christianity represents forty two percent of religious affiliation in the Asian-American community, while Buddhism represents fourteen, Hinduism ten, and Islam four percent. The unaffiliation makes twenty six percent of the community. Religious commitment of Asian-Americans is low comparing to the other minorities, as the percentage of atheism is high; many Asians see that religion is not important in their lives; instead, they give much importance to work and education.

#### **2.3.4. American-Indians:**

Thousand years before Christopher Columbus landed in the America, South and North America was settled by Indians who crossed the ice bridge from North- East Asia to Alaska. Since the arrival of Europeans to the new land, Natives faced big conflicts with them. The act of taking the land was seen by Americans as a “Civilizing Mission”, the mission is a justification of the white men to conquer the land that they saw much profit in, they claimed that the natives who were living in tribes needed to be civilized and religious, the westward expansion of Americans took many lives of Indians who were not able to defend themselves in anyway. Indians were forced to leave their lands and be relocated to the west, wars between the whites and Indians resulted in genocide of thousands of Indian deaths. After the war of independence President George Washington conceived the idea of

civilizing the natives in preparation for the assimilation, the natives were asked to give up their tribal life and adopt the American way of life; it was not easy for Indians to abandon their culture of thousands of years, however, they did not have the choice, the American government used three ways to achieve the westward expansion, the first is by assimilating the natives into America by education in bordering schools, the second method was the relocation: despite the intention of some tribes like the Cherokee to join the American society, they were still obliged to move to the west, hundreds of miles away (the Trail of Tears), because they were “savages” who had too much land, according to Americans. The third method was the genocide, or the ethnic, racial, and religious destruction. Some tribes decided to fight American expansion, they lost all the wars, and hundreds of thousands natives were killed.

The 2013 US Census Bureau showed that American-Indians and Alaskan natives make one percent of the total population, the states that include more than one thousand American- Indian are: Alaska, Oklahoma, California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Colorado.

#### **2.4. Conclusion:**

America is a mosaic of races, the diversity of the nation is what makes it special and different from all nations of the world, all of the minorities have contributed to the American society in a way or another, and we can always find the American identity in these citizens, because whoever goes to America ends up adopting the American mentality and culture. America is seen as the model country regarding immigration, the country

succeeded in making an advantage of diversity to prosper and develop economically, politically, and socially.

## **Chapter Three: The Decline of the American Dream**

### **3.1. Introduction**

As time passes, millions of people moved to America, as a new immigrant nation, America had to face difficulties in and out its land. It had to deal with the economic depression, World War 1 and 2, in that period of history, many ideas started to haunt people's minds, and many writers attempted to raise awareness among Americans warning them to not fall in the trap of breaking the unity of the country. Although the United States held the isolation policy, it couldn't help but interfere in wars, which resulted in the change of the uniqueness of the country that led to the immense deviation of the American thinking towards the values that shaped the country. The most valuable ideologies in America were threatened, ideas like the American Dream and freedom began to be questioned as people faced hardships in realizing the dream of living a good life in America. The economic breakdown could not be avoided as the nation received millions of immigrants each year, the overpopulation led to disorder and a great challenge appeared in the eyes of Americans to maintain their basic principles. The third part is devoted to certain events that changed the American thinking from a blindly positive perspective to a rational one. Many tragic wars and conflicts led to the instability in the world and affected America.

The disillusionment period has been described as between the end of the First World War and the middle of the Great Depression. The term disillusionment means clearing the mind from an illusion. In this case the illusion is the complete naïve belief in the easiness of becoming rich in America, the idea was supported by Europeans who were struggling with wars and famines, trying to escape tyrannical rule in different parts of the continent. The

decline of the American Dream was both, economic and social, but it was the social side that was more important, because America recovered somehow of the economic breakdown. However the “social decline” played a great role in reshaping the beliefs of Americans. The events that timed with the disillusionment period left a big impact on America today, especially on the moral side. The 1920s were the beginning of a new thinking that was discussed by many writers and historians who wanted to mark the transition between America of the nineteenth century and America after facing events that changed its corps. Through time the government had to put restrictions to preserve the country from falling in a political issue that can be difficult to settle.

### **3.2. Industrializing America:**

The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed vast territorial expansion, and urbanization, these changes helped the beginning of the Second Industrial Revolution that took place between 1820 and 1870 during the annexation of Texas and the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty in which America acquired the south western territory. The expansion needed ways of telecommunication in order to reach cities like California and San Francisco, railroads had to be built to facilitate the mission, the Industrial Revolution was also known as the Technological Revolution, because of the different innovations like automobiles, paper making, engines, petroleum, and applied science. It witnessed the growth of some industries of huge economies, and mass production of consumer goods, the period also witnessed the rise of businessmen like Andrew Carnegie, and John D Rockefeller whose oil industry exists until nowadays. The question here is: to what extent has the industrialization affected America?

Most of the eighteenth century, Americans lived in self-sustaining rural communities, the industrial revolution have changed the way of their lives in terms of building factories, providing more and more work opportunities while immigration reached its highest peak. The large number of immigrants had a negative side, which is the working conditions of laborers; they were obliged to work for long hours under difficult circumstances.

The social life of Americans at that time shifted from a united society, where everyone helps in work, to an individual one, the rise of businessmen made the situation harder for the rest of laborers, greed and selfishness arose among the middle and high classes, while a lot of workers suffered the lack of basic needs.

The middle-class women's situation also marked a great change in women's rights; they entered the economic industry in different fields and became a powerful part of society, they also helped the industry by being good consumerists, and changed the idea that women should be concerned only with the domestic affairs of their houses, instead they played a big role in improving the American economy which was becoming the most powerful nation in the world.

*“If a Western Rip Van Winkle had fallen asleep in 1869 and awakened in 1896, he would not have recognized the lands that the railroads had touched. Bison had yielded to cattle; mountains had been blasted and bored. Great swaths of land that had once whispered grass now screamed corn and wheat. Nation-states had conquered Indian peoples, slaughtering some of them and confining and controlling most of them.*

*Population had increased across much of this vast region, and there were growing cities along its edges. A land that had once run largely north-south now ran east-west. Each change could have been traced back to the railroads.” – Richard White, Railroaded*

### **3.3. The Roaring Twenties:**

The roaring twenties was a period after the industrialization, between the end of the First World War and the beginning of the Great Depression, the era is known by its prosperity and consumerism, because of the economic development.

The events of the 1920s or as it is referred to by the “Jazz Age” were caused by the First World War, when young people wanted to forget and overcome the horrors and the deaths after the war, and enjoy life again. During this period women gained a new level of independence, they went to college, earned wages, and were given the right to vote. The “Lost Generation” as it is also referred to, challenged the Victorian values and traditions of society, breaking the rules that they have been living with for centuries, and replacing them with new ideas. Music and appearance were the most important things in society, and lifestyle changed from rural and countryside to urban or the city lifestyle. This period witnessed the progress of architecture, which was reflected in the high buildings in what they called “The Age of Steel” with elevators and wide electric lighting. Transportation also characterized the twenties as the Ford Company sold fifteen million automobile which led to the building of roads and highways and service stations. Arts played a remarkable role in conveying the modern artistic movements; it was special by its use of so many colors, this new Art was known as “Art Deco”.

The luxurious and glamorous life of Americans attracted immigrants from all around the world especially Southern and Eastern Europe, over 800,000 immigrants traveled to America expecting to live a comfortable life, but instead, they struggled in maintaining their humble jobs where they were working under difficult circumstances with low wages, immigrants created a kind of fear among the American society, which led to the Quota Acts, in an attempt to preserve the northern European racial composition, this fear was also characterized by the revival of the Ku Klux Klan that reached its high peak in the 1920s with four million people across America, the organization did not only attack blacks, but also Jews, Roman Catholics, communists, and foreigners. .

Corruption of the American society appeared when the prohibition of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in 1919 led to the spread of illegal selling of alcohol due to the strong demand, home-made alcohol led to blindness and death, in addition smuggling caused the rise of Gangsters who seized the chance of prohibition to promote for prostitution, gambling, and organized crime. A hysterical fear of communism in the USA during the 1920s led to conflicts between the non-communists and the anarchist communists; this was referred to as the “Red Scare”. This period witnessed instability, because of anarchist bombings. Innocent people were arrested just out of suspicion and civil liberties were ignored.

### **3.4. World War One Outcomes:**

The United States was affected by the First World War for many reasons. Although Europe was the biggest loser in terms of stability, economy, and number of deaths, there were many consequences that America had to deal with during the war, and after. One of the important factors that transformed the US was the breakdown of the economy that resulted in



the Great Depression. Despite adopting the isolation policy, the United States got in the issues of Europe through lending money to the British, during the great depression in America, Americans found themselves in a situation totally opposite of the early times when living in America was the greatest dream. America was not affected as much as Europe by the “Great War”, but the impact that it left on the American economy and society played a huge role in the deviation of the American thinking, the change appeared in the horrors that Americans felt when witnessing the war. It was the first time anyone saw such big destruction which they thought was needless. The relation between immigration and the First World War was in the “Open Door” policy of the United States. Big numbers of Europeans had left their homelands to escape the deadly situation there, which led to intolerance among the American society, the fact that America could not receive immigrants as it used to before, tells a lot about its difficulty to face problems of overpopulation, the war left a kind of bad feeling and hopelessness in Americans on the psychological side, and because of that, they spent many years trying to overcome that feeling through celebrating life again which can be seen in the way things were going during the Roaring Twenties, where values started to change, and taboos started to be broken concerning women liberties, music, and sex. Since this period, going to America to get rich became very difficult for new people who entered the new land.

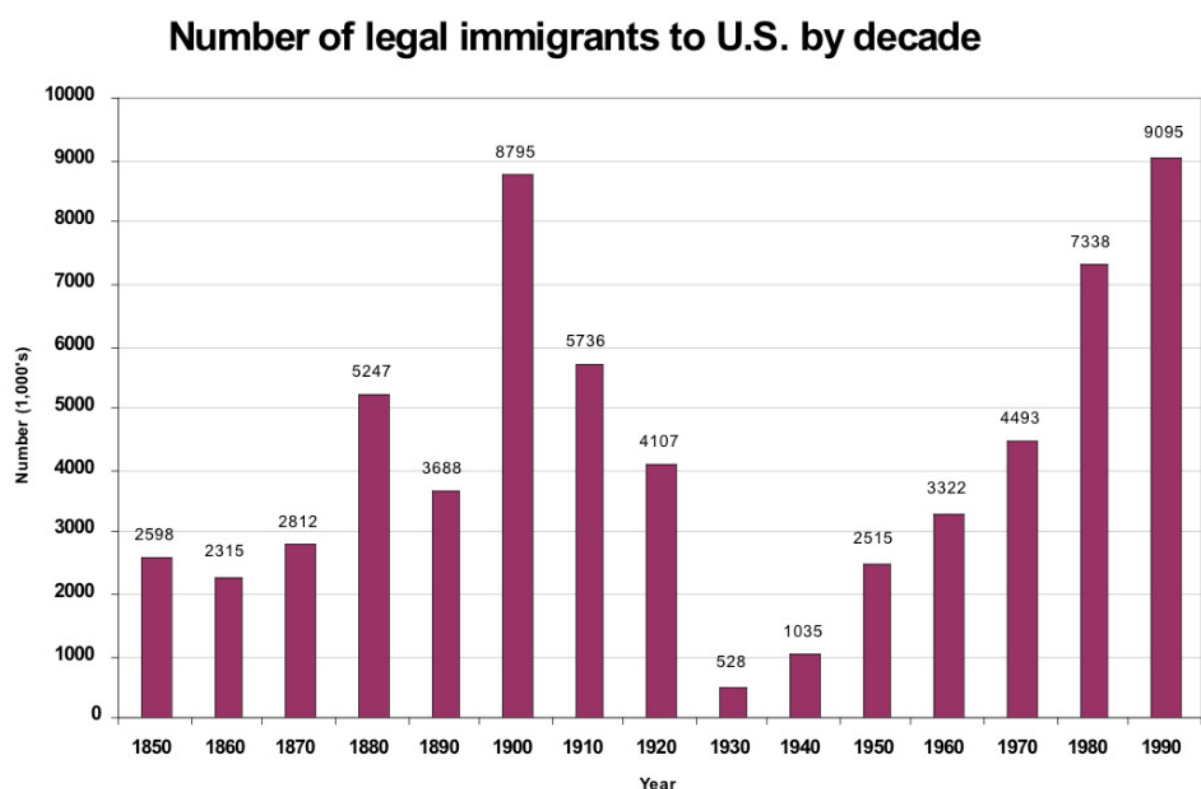
### **3.5. The Great Depression:**

A series of challenges faced the United States in the period between the First World War to the end of the Great Depression, right after the crash of the Stock Market on “Black Tuesday” of October 1929. Stockholders lost billions of dollars in a small period of time, the next years witnessed fall of banks, which left no opportunity for people to loan money, and many people were left hopeless. The nation could not emerge from such crisis without deep social and cultural changes, these changes were represented in the demoralization of the family unit; families could barely afford to buy food and clothes for their children, many couples delayed their marriages, birth rates dropped to the lowest level for the first time in the American history, and divorce rates were lower, because it was hard to support two householders, and pay lawyers’ fees. The shift from the luxurious life Americans were living to deprivation and poverty created a major fear among the society, the situation was a little bit different from the post World War One, and America seemed to becoming like the European nations, with extra political and social problems to deal with, such as racism and the misleading of government considering the economic situation that controlled people’s minds, blaming President Hoover on not working hard to find a solution to the economic problems. (US History in Context)

During the Great Depression, everyone had to adjust to the situation, and individualism started to rise, as teenagers moved from their houses feeling as burden to their families, and looked for modest jobs, to provide a living.

There were many significant results after the Great Depression, whether politically or economically. The election of the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 led to many social

improvements, the program of the “New Deal”, which created a lot of public-works to diminish unemployment. For example the Tennessee Valley Authority, and The Public Works Administration. The Securities Exchange Commission was as a response to what happened during the Great Depression and the crash of the Stock Market, to involve more security laws, these are examples of the many legacies left after the depression that worked as a lesson to the economic management of the country. The unusual decrease in immigration can be seen in the next figure. It reached the lowest level in 1930, which reflects the terrible economic situation during the Great Depression.



Source: INS Statistical Sourcebook

### **3.6. Second World War Effects on Economic and Social Situation:**

Americans were recovering from the “Great War”, not expecting that a bigger damaging war is about to start, for the second time in history, the United States became involved in a devastating world conflict. The efforts that the US made in the Second World War were much bigger than that of World War I. The economic consequences were enormous; America had to face a bigger economic and social crisis, but at the same time they felt the need to sacrifice to achieve victory. Everyday life across the country altered. War brought much sadness, and a more serious way of life, full of stress and mixed emotions about fathers and sons who went to fight with the possibility of never coming back to their families. The unfortunate events led to the decrease of old patriotism and the decline of morals, while poverty and starvation came along with severe shortage of housing, schooling, and hospitals, which led to great migrations toward urban places. But perhaps the most noticeable issue of the time was the rise of racism against Japanese-Americans. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, an anti-sentiment of Japanese grew within the American people, leading to stripping Japanese from their rights in the Law Executive order 9066 that President Franklin Roosevelt signed. The law resulted in the imprisonment and relocation of all Americans of Japanese descent who lived in the West Coast, all out of fear of disloyalty, even the ones born in the US. (EyeWitness to History)

### **3.7. Immigration Policies:**

#### **3.7.1. Laissez-Faire: 1780 to 1875:**

The eighteenth century saw the biggest wave of immigration, since the beginning, America received people from all around the world. The policy of Laissez-Faire served the

desires of many immigrants, because there were fewer laws for people who wished to find work opportunities there. Before strict restrictions were put, the government promoted for immigration, as the country needed to be built, as an example, railroads presented a significant work opportunity for Asians to move to the other side of the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand immigration worked well in the military side; the recruitment of a large number of people served the US, as immigrants made up one-third of the American army in the 1840s. After a certain time, the government and people feared the withering of American culture and customs. The Naturalization Act of 1790 set up the principle that an immigrant can acquire the American citizenship after residing in the country for several years, without any admission tests, but not until 1819, the federal government started to push ship captains to collect information on newcomers, and report data on immigrants that they take to the US. The whole phase favored immigration and the anti-immigrant feeling did not affect the majority of Congressmen. Immigration slowed and the issue of slavery dominated the American atmosphere.

### **3.7.2. Qualitative Restrictions: 1885 to 1920:**

Immigration got back on track after the Civil War, mostly from Eastern and Southern Europe, concerns aroused among rural American Protestants. In 1901 Woodrow Wilson shared his opposition to immigration writing “Immigrants poured in as before, but now they came multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meanest sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of the ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries of the south of Europe were disturbing themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population.”

The qualitative restrictions represented the selection of immigrants according to certain measurements; it raised the fear of the population from new immigrants who have been seen as a threat to the country, it led to restrictions that intended to put barriers to certain type of immigrants. In 1875, convicted and prostitutes were banned from entering the country, the Immigration Act of 1882 joined “mental defectives” and paupers to the list of those who could not immigrate to the United States, and for the first time, an act that barred immigrants from a particular country, the 1882 act barred Chinese immigration for ten years, and the act was renewed every decade until 1943. The Chinese Exclusion act came out of the tensions between immigrant and native groups or political events, as the large number of Chinese immigrants in the west did not assimilate well with settlers of European descent.

“Whereas, in the opinion of the government of the United States,  
the coming of Chinese labourers to this country endangers the good  
order of certain localities within the territory thereof”. (Forty-  
seventh Congress. Session I. 1882, Chapter 126)

In 1897, Congress approved a legislation demanding that only people who could read and write would be admitted as immigrants to reduce number of peasants from Southern and Eastern Europe, where the level of education was low.

The Alien Immigration Act of 1903 banned the followings from immigration admission:

- People afflicted with a loathsome or with a dangerous contagious disease.
- Epileptics.
- Polygamists.

- Paupers; persons likely to become a public charge; professional beggars.
- Insane people.
- Anarchists or people who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the government of the United States.
- People who have been convicted of any crime.
- Prostitutes or persons who procure or attempt to bring in prostitutes to the US.

### **3.7.3. Quantitative Restriction: since 1921:**

From 1921, restrictions measurements took another side; it was the quantity of immigrants. In 1924, the United States set an annual limit of 150,000 immigrants plus wives and children, in the 1920s; the immigration legislation established the Quota Systems that aimed to ensure the predominance of the northern and western Europeans to restore a certain balance. 1924 marked the creation of Border Patrol, partially to control Chinese immigration to the US across the American-Mexican Borders.

### **3.8. Organized Crime and Alcohol Prohibition:**

The origins of Organized Crime during the 1920s go back to the national Prohibition. After the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified; Congress set the Prohibition Act in 1920, it prohibited the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverage in the United States, the goal of the Amendment was to reform society and protect women and children from the effects of the abuse of alcohol. During this period, many people had secret bars in their houses, while others smuggled alcohol from Canada.

“Gangsters” took advantages of the situation since the need for alcohol started to appear on the surface of the American society. Al Capone was the most famous one who profited

from the illegal market. From New York to Chicago to Los Angeles, organized crime groups supplied speakeasies (equivalent to a bar) and underground establishments with liquor. As organized crime groups became bigger, through the Prohibition era, disputes over territory turned America's cities into battlegrounds. Robbery, crime, and assaults became widespread; Al Capone devised a system to distribute alcohol, which involved delivery truck drivers and salesmen, and heavily-armed bodyguards to protect this investments. Prohibition did not achieve its goals leading toward high crime rates, and excessive violence. Alcohol prohibition was the ideal environment for the American Mafia to prosper and upgrade to other criminal ventures, like drug-dealing and illegal gambling. The Mafia's violent crimes, secret rituals, and characters like Gotti and Al Capone, became a part of the American popular culture, and reflected the government's need to keep things under control in a period of social and economic instability.

### **3.9. Clash of Cultures:**

Perhaps the biggest change that happened in the 1920s was the transformation from rural areas to urban ones; this resulted in a gradual cultural clash between the old traditions and the new way of life adopted by many Americans, as the old beliefs were about to disappear, especially after the Industrial Revolution that led to the rise of consumerism and spiritual emptiness, which left the country deviated from religion to science.

The second clash is in the way Americans used to think about the past, the new generation of the 1920s had another view of life. Before, people cared more about idealizing the past and glorifying their ancestors, while in the twenties Americans started to think about the future. The rapid changes and developments made them think about what to expect in the next few years since innovations kept getting bigger.



Huge waves of migrations of African-Americans from the rural south to urban areas also made one of the noticeable changes of the distribution of population. African-Americans hoped to get more rights and freedoms in the cities and change their fate of centuries of slavery and discrimination. (Hilton, 90).

### **3.10. Conclusion:**

The American Dream have changed to a large degree during the World War One and two, the many attempts to forget the Great War resulted in a massive change, which could not be realized without the industrial revolution, that turned the way of living of Americans from rural to a modern lifestyle full of vitality accompanied with what was seen as immoral behavior, like the liberation of women, sex and alcohol that challenged the old Victorian behavior. While the aristocracy played a big role in changing the values of the principles of a new nation that was supposed to be a model for the rest of the world. The Second World War unveiled disillusionment, when there was no place for big dreams, as poverty, and deprivation devastated a big proportion of the American society. The government had to put immigration restrictions due to the large number of immigrants that caused disorder into the American society. The decade of the 1920's saw new values and emphasis in American culture that led to cultural conflicts. Mass culture and consumerism were part of a new philosophy of self-indulgence, leisure, and pleasure. Organized Crime and Alcohol Prohibition had created a fear and confusion among people. Much of the immigration laws succeeded in maintaining the stability of the American society which is needed in terms of preservation of the American legacy represented in the general principles of the American public.

### **General Conclusion:**

There has been a long debate about the reality of the American Dream, some may even say that it never existed, and others may prove their success and how going to America changed their lives, no one can deny that the American Dream has been running in Americans' blood for centuries. Until nowadays, people dream of going to the US to become famous in Hollywood, or successful businessmen and women. Historically speaking, the United States since its beginning have been known for its uniqueness, where everything is new and special, a lot of pride and patriotism is held in the hearts of American citizens whom ancestors came centuries ago sharing one purpose, which was finding the peaceful, free life that they could not experience in their home countries.

Every American comes from a certain part of the world, but being Americans to them means that they share the same beliefs of liberty, equality, and the right to be happy, by following their specific purposes of life. However, the American dream of the seventeenth century is not the American Dream of the twentieth one, there has been many changes during that period that reshaped the idea of easily becoming rich when going to America, whether for political reasons, economic or social ones, the circumstances changed from time to time. This idea have been the focus of many writers who themselves experienced the trip to the country, and there were many efforts made to keep the innocence of the Dream. We cannot separate immigration from the Dream, because these two are closely linked, people immigrate because they find better chances in other places. Some people find a little bit of exaggeration in describing the American Dream, such as early authors for example. Even the first people who landed on America found difficulties. But from another

perspective, the dream is in fact a way of life, not just the act of obtaining money and becoming rich, James Truslow Adams says: “Life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement” regardless of social class or circumstances of birth, Adams’ book came as a reaction to what was happening during the Roaring Twenties, how the situation changed from hard work and believing in the ability of making things better to the foolish way of people to get rich as much as they could. Hard work is not greediness, and equality is not selfishness.

After the urbanization people had the same mentality that they ran from centuries ago. “The survival of the fittest” had a great share in the minds of those who only wanted to acquire money however and no matter how the situation of the country was. Ideas like becoming better than the rest arose in people’s minds. It was a race to the top. The values turned to the other side, as modern life started to spread across the country, and especially the city. The situation got harder especially for the poor, as immigrants flow each year thinking that America is the right place to be. On the political side there were too much advantages, knowing that the American constitution is the best in liberties and opportunities, but immigrants were not only looking for freedom. They ran away from wars, famines, they looked for a place to earn money. The massive waves of immigration created fear among Americans, as they were struggling from too much people on the land which made them lose their jobs, and also it was hard for a new country to deal with such huge population even though the land was big.

Besides the problems of the new arrivals, America was drowning in a big national issue that until nowadays is a sensitive matter, which is racism. Slavery and next racism made America look like a paradoxical country, in which they witnessed such practices of

inhumanity; it was against the beliefs that were written in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, such “barbaric” deeds have darkened the history of the country.

The disillusionment period was an awakening to the reality of what they call “The Other America”, people had to face the reality of life and accept the difficulties, instead of living the illusion of the perfect life where everything is easy to accomplish, and try to overcome them with a rational way.

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