

R.C.

AP Lang

Definition Essay

The United States of America, the land of opportunity and liberty, has yet to realize its bold founding doctrine, that all men are created equal. Forged in fiery revolution, America was fundamentally designed to be radically different. A world embroiled in chaos, America takes on the responsibility of global police. America, a nation that cherishes and embraces its cultural diversity, is riddled with biting racism and blatant prejudice. Abandoning aristocracy, America achieved both rampant economic inequality and established an inclusive class of political elite. This nation adamantly pursued but ultimately failed this grand dream, the somnium magna.

Somnium magna translates from Latin to mean “great dream.” The dream that promises lavish homes, exotic cars, and a faithful family. It evokes the fantasy of drinking expensive champagne by your gorgeous beach house in Miami, the dream of having extravagant parties in penthouses in Manhattan, and the unadulterated thrills of sunny L.A. The ideal life, a life satiated and blissed, where money isn’t ever an issue. Somnium magna encompasses values such as equal opportunity, freedom, and honesty.

However, somnium magna is unrealistic and purely idealistic. In a nation of eccentric millionaires, everyday ordinary families rely heavily on welfare programs just to make ends meet. In a nation of peace and security, we fear for the safety of

our children in school. In a nation that praises creativity and education, our graduation rates on an international scale are humiliating. In a nation of unalienable equality and liberty, we deny the right to love someone, when it goes against the norm. In a nation that preaches democracy and human rights, we unleash covert missile drones and devastating bombs. This “American dream” deviated to become an archaic ideal, no longer viable in modern society.

The American dream falters in the modern century; we intentionally ignore our nation’s problems. We choose to ignore that homeless man begging around the block. We choose to ignore that kid who doesn’t know where his next hot meal is coming from. We choose to toss clothing without the notion that others could find use in it ever crossing our minds. We choose to ignore that slow guy in class who’s confused, then ridicule him with your friends about “how stupid he is.” We confess to be this nation of silent spectators of our social injustices.

Modern American society condones prejudice and racism, and it has been fueled by the media; the idea of equality is dead. From the moment of my birth, I’ve been plagued with a mold of what my future held. I am Asian, so of course I can’t play sports other than kung-fu. Of course, I plan on becoming a doctor or a lawyer, a path my parents sent me towards. Of course, my best friend is this TI-89 calculator. Of course, I’m too busy studying to hang out. Of course, you know what my aspirations, beliefs, habits, and background, all before meeting me. These stereotypes and stigmas contradict the core American values of freedom and social equality.

Walking through Northern High, I faintly listen in on others’ conversations. They use hate-filled diction that has no place in our society. These students

completely disregard how offensive and ignorant they sound. Insults now encompass “gay”, and “retard,”; an atrocity that should not be tolerated. Movies, TV shows, and video games all fuel this modern generation on “what’s cool.” We as a culture praise views, likes, and retweets above all else. Although this is a much more subtle transition in American society, it is by far the most detrimental to the American Dream.

Earbuds plugged in, I observe America’s decline in our pure ideals. I can only hope that the upcoming generations will be different, and correct our societies’ imperfections. I have to have the hope that the lifeless American Dream can be revitalized by individualism and nonconformity. I pray to see the day when we hold true the promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The day we as a nation, can collectively realize the “*somnium magna*.”