

What to do with a fading dream

We've all had dreams that have stayed with us long after we've awakened from a deep sleep. Some of them have been powerful enough to have thrown us off balance and left us with a kind of uneasiness that's difficult to shrug off. Sooner or later, however, we manage to regain our equilibrium and move on with our daily lives.

The American Dream is something else, entirely. It's a national phenomenon that's been affecting all of us for over two centuries and is one of those dreams we actually invite into our consciousness to take up permanent residence to both guide and inspire us as we live our lives. The exceptional thing about this particular dream is that it is both the same and different for all of us. The similarities are what actually make the individual interpretations possible. They are the freedoms and opportunities we all share and they have enabled millions of Americans to turn their personal dreams into reality.

That was then.

Somewhere along our journey, we got sidetracked and the dream that was once so vivid and so real started to fade out of sight. It's hard to pinpoint exactly when it was we lost our faith in ourselves. It's equally as hard to know where to assign specific blame so I'll leave those questions for the social scientists to answer. Suffice it to say, we're all suffering mightily for that loss of faith and hope and there seems to be no way to rekindle those feelings and return to the days when optimism was a national keepsake. So here we are in 2021, in a country comprised of a large swath of the population that has consciously decided to regress and devolve into a past that was steeped in racial segregation, severe ideological and political division, rampant tribalism and gender discrimination.

We've chosen pettiness over greatness and cynicism and skepticism over tolerance and understanding. We've stepped up our urge to self-hyphenate instead of simply adopting the appellation, 'American.' We no longer trust our institutions or the men and women that run them. We view "justice for all" as a quaint motto as opposed to a guiding principle. We've dumbed down our cultural standards on quality and now glorify mediocrity. We've promoted the sexualization of our young girls and worked to de-couple biological gender from men and women. We've allowed our school teachers to become purveyors of phony doctrines about our country's history and allow them to encourage students to engage in self-hatred for being born of a certain race.

We have elected leaders who care little or nothing about preserving our God-given rights and who have but one thing on their minds...establishing dominance and gaining control over US, the very people who put them in office. We have all but forgotten the sacrifices made on our behalf by the millions that have gone on before us. Sure, we celebrate a holiday in their honor here and there, and we pay them lip service, but we then turn around and kneel when our national anthem is played at a sporting event. We call the Boy Scouts a sexist organization, but protect those who would *choose* their sexual identity on a whim and then give them the key to the girls' locker rooms and allow them to compete on equal footing with them in sporting events.

We promote the social media de-platforming of those who don't toe the Leftist Progressive party line and have no problem in picketing their homes or issuing death threats to their families if they call themselves Conservatives or Trump supporters. We use the term 'racist' to describe anyone who dares to criticize Black Lives Matter or who expresses a politically uncomfortable or controversial viewpoint. We are perfectly fine with making everyone *unequal* in the name of equity and have no regrets in forcing every Caucasian to accept their inherent racial bias and White privilege. We who resist attempts to control our bodies with vaccines are accused of being health heretics, and those of us who demur from wearing masks are called unpatriotic or selfish or 'superspreader killers'. And should we doubt the veracity of our medical leaders and our government officials about lockdowns and other mandates we are considered conspiracy theorists.

Questioning authority has given way to unquestioning obedience to authority.

So, my fellow Americans, where is the dream that once was? Does it live within the minds of our leaders who seem incapable of telling us the truth? Maybe it resides with our aging and cognitively-challenged President who talks of what it *means* to be an American but who does everything in his power to *subvert* it.

For many of us who have lived through better times, the American Dream still exists, but it exists as but a memory. It's a postcard from a bygone era, time-stamped, *the past*. There is one place where we can still find the Dream, however, and it is not buried somewhere in an unmarked grave. It lives within the hearts of thousands of immigrants from third-world countries who are waiting in detention centers on our southern border. Strange that so many people, knowing what they know about us, would still want to risk life and limb to journey to a land that has seemingly lost its way. It may be true that America was always just a dream to begin with, and that while some dreams may fade with time, others have the power to live on forever...albeit only in people who appreciate their true value. Pity it's not us.

Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of ten books, four of which are on American politics and has written over 1,100 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He operates a political news story aggregator website, www.projectpushback.com. He can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com