

JAMES BALDWIN PROJECT: THOUGHTS FROM DIRECTOR AS A GUIDE FOR FINDING
INSPIRATION FOR YOUR PERSONAL STORIES/ORIGINAL WORKS.

The American Dream: Different Experiences and Assumptions

The “American Dream” is a fiction based on the assumptions we are all asked to accept. In exploring the American Dream one must acknowledge the very different impact of that dream in the experiences of people oppressed and marginalized.

***The American Dream: The distorted reality and being born into a world defined by
Whiteness***

The police and institutional frameworks of discrimination and persecution distort reality for the oppressed and underline that they are the “other.” One sees a world defined by the oppressor in which everything of value or use is white; where one sees society in terms that are devoid of those that look like them or have their experiences; where questioning the system is seen as an act of subversion rather than an act of seeking justice.

***The American Dream: The moment you discover you are the other and that the
“dream” is not for you***

For children born in this country and raised on the hope messages found in the promises of the flag and the allegiance pledged to that flag, there is a moment when it is clear that the flag and its promises are not for them.

The American Dream: The toll of oppression

There is a toll exacted for having to carry the weight of pervasive discrimination and watching it passed on to new generations. That toll is reflected in attitudes towards trust, safety and belonging.

***The American Dream: The enslaved and exploited have built this country and received
nothing for their efforts.***

Some have paid for the American Dream in blood, sweat and tears extracted through force and exploitation and have received no benefit from their sacrifices. For them the “dream” is unrealized.

The American Dream: Dialogue

To realize the American Dream, the oppressors and oppressed must somehow open dialogue.

The American Dream: Redefining Identity

To realize the dream, the marginalized must shape a new sense of identity, of worth and not surrender to the place they’ve been assigned. If they cannot claim this sense of identity and equality, then the possibility exists that the American Dream will die a final death.