**SPACES AND EXCHANGES**

**To what extent can we say that the American Dream is still alive ?**

**Introduction**

We decided to touch the notion of Spaces and Exchanges throuh the following question : « To what extent can we say that the American Dream is still alive ? »

At school, we studied the 4 following texts:

1)I wasn’t unwelcomed by Chang Rae Lee, Gesture Life (1999)

2) I still believe in the American Dream by Fareed Zakaria, « How to restore the American Dream », Time, October 21, 2010

3)The American Dream is still just a dream for most minorities, by Philip M. Deutsch, The Tech online edition, Tuesday, February 11, 2003

**and**

4)A successful woman, [onlineessays.com](http://onlineessays.com/), Oprah Winfrey’s influence in America.

To tackle our main topic and question, I will first describe the notion of the American Dream and I will then show you the positive and negative points of the American Dream.

I) **The Definition of the American Dream**

**The American Dream** is the notion that the American social, economic and political system makes success possible for every individual. Someone who manages to achieve their version of the American dream is said to be « living the dream ».

The American Dream is not the same for everyone. It has an individual meaning. It is peculiar to every individual. For some people to achieve the American Dream is getting a good job, a big house, food on the table for the family. For others, it may have another meaning such as finding a house in a safe neighborhood, a good school for one’s children, being free and far from war and persecution.

**II) The Positive aspects of the American Dream**

A)In the first text that we studied, the protagonist who is of Asian origin managed to integrate quite successfully in his new country.

When he arrived no one / a few people seemed to notice him / people seemed rather indifferent. But after some years – 30 years – people seem to appreciate and respect him. Wherever he goes, he is greeted by the local population.

• Although the narrator expected to be discriminated against rejected / ostracized, people were interested in him and made him feel he was not unwelcomed.

We may think that he was welcomed because he was a doctor and he also play a social part in the society by taking care of people who are sick.

B) The second text is an article from Time. Before going to America, Fareed Zakaria had a mythical idea of America and the American Dream. For him, America was a paradise where everybody lived a wonderful life.The American Dream for him consisted in open land, shiny skyscrapers, fancy cars, cowboy businessmen, sexy actresses… There seemed to be an immense

contrast between his native country and the US. By comparison, India seemed far behind. When he came to America on a first visit, the journalist realized it was not what he had imagined. His vision of the American Dream was slightly different.

The situation today is not the same as it used to be. It is a reversed situation. American people seem pessimistic/

discouraged/hopeless about their future whereas Indian people are full of hopes and faith.

After years of stagnation in India, the whole country is coming out /coming to light. It is conveying the image of a booming economy.

However, there are reasons for hope.The reasons for optimism are:

• Economic reasons: America is the largest and the richest market in the world.

• Demographic reasons: it is the only country in the industrialized world where the population is increasing.

• Historical reasons: immigrants have contributed to keep the Dream alive.

The American Dream is a part of American history.

• Cultural and psychological reasons: it’s the only country in the world to have the diversity, the openness, the dynamism which give this country its power / which make this country so powerful and unique.

The diversity, the openness and the dynamism have made this country exceptional and unique. Even if the American economy is not thriving, the US still gives immigrants the opportunity to improve their lives / to remain hopeful for the future / to live in a democracy / to have a shot at the American Dream

**This is why Fareed** Zakaria is optimistic and values America so much.

**III) The Negative aspects of the American Dream**

The last text that we studies offers a negative aspect of the American Dream. The author, Philip M. Deutsch regards the American Dream on a more realistic perspective.

His position is that « race » is an obstacle which prevents you from attaining the American Dream.

He compares the case of White people and Black people in America.

The situation of Black people is very alarming. They are more likely to be affected by the plagues of drugs, poverty and illiteracy.

Racism  is a social plague. Hence the use in America of the Affirmative action, a quota system. A certain percentage of jobs or school vacancies are reserved for members of a certain group.

**Conclusion**

As we said before, the American dream is a myth and it has different meanings. I will finish my exposé by emphasizing the fate of a great woman like Oprah Winphrey who is the richest Afro-American woman. Thanks to hard work, her self-confidence, her wit, she succeeded in creating a real financial empire of which every black people is proud of. As she started from nothing and rose to fame, we can say that she is the evidence that the American Dream is still alive.