

The American Dream as Concept vs. Reality

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The American Dream, however that is defined by each individual grasping for it, is a nebulous creature always seductively luring the lower classes (as the upper classes have supposedly reached the finish line) to its bosom often to find out that a wet nurse is needed. David Kamp in the new issue of [Vanity Fair](#) discusses this illusive creature and the many years of discourse surrounding how this American concept, as he states there is no "Canadian Dream or Slovakian Dream", was founded as a "freedom from want, not freedom to want world away from the idea that the patriotic thing to do in tough times is go shopping," and its evolution through the years.

“ The American Dream was now almost by definition unattainable, a moving target that eluded people's grasp; nothing was ever enough. It compelled Americans to set unmeetable goals for themselves and then consider themselves failures when these goals, inevitably, went unmet. In examining why people were thinking this way, Easterbrook raised an important point. "For at least a century," he wrote, "Western life has been dominated by a revolution of rising expectations: Each generation expected more than its antecedent. Now most Americans and Europeans already have what they need, in addition to considerable piles of stuff they don't need."



Illustration from the Article "Rethinking the American Dream."
Family Romp in the Living Room (1959), by Lee Howick. 2009 Kodak, courtesy of George Eastman House.

Thanks to [Scott Lessing's blog](#) for an introduction to the article.