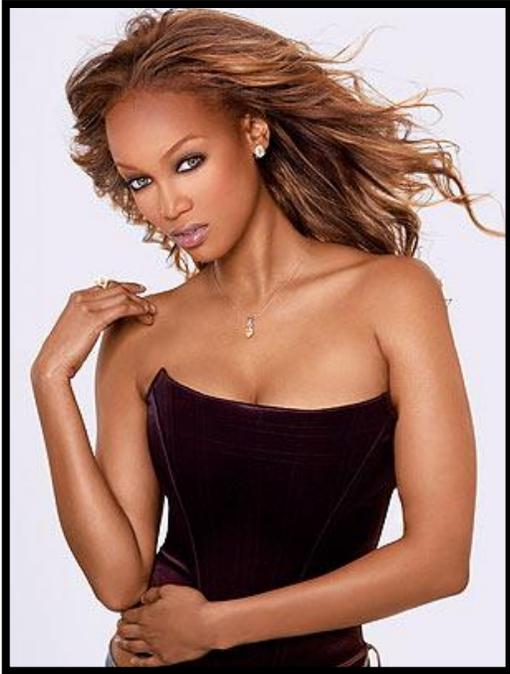


# WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM?

*Forbes Special Report: "The American Dream"*



*Tyra Banks is one of the world's most recognized supermodels and the creator, host, and executive producer of both reality-TV hit America's Next Top Model and daytime syndicated talk show The Tyra Banks Show.*

The American Dream is about fulfilling your potential to the max. It's not a chase for material goods, it's about learning what inspires you in life and creating a plan to turn it into your life's work.

The way to achieve the Dream is to follow the plan and pay attention to the details because it's those details that make or break you. I look at young girls in the world today and I know every single one of them has the potential to make anything happen in their lives.

I guess I'm traditional in that I believe hard work and determination have a lot to do with achieving one's dreams. When I was a model, my dream was to have a talk show, so I made a plan to do

it—and look at me now. From model to talk show host, anything is possible with a plan. So stand up, be counted and make a difference in the world. The world is waiting for you.

*Ret. Gen. Colin L. Powell was born in New York to immigrant parents and raised in the south Bronx. He served 35 years in the U.S. Army, eventually becoming a four-star general, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, national security adviser and U.S. secretary of state.*

The American Dream is something that every immigrant brought to this country, as my parents did, and that is the ability to go as far as you can in life, limited only by your own dreams and willingness to work hard.

And above all, the American Dream for these folks meant that your children will have the opportunity to do better than you will.

I lived the dream that my parents brought to this country, as did my sister. My parents came here as poor laborers. They left the country they loved--Jamaica--to go to a place where there was opportunity, a place where they could dream, a place they came to love deeply. They worked hard and watched their children become successful, one as an educator and one as a soldier.





*Mel Brooks is a director, producer, writer, actor and the creator of such comedy film classics as Blazing Saddles and Young Frankenstein. Brooks is one of only seven artists/entertainers to earn all four major entertainment prizes—the Tony, the Emmy, the Grammy and the Oscar. When I was a little kid 50 years ago, in 1946, I had just got out of the Army after two years fighting in the war. The American Dream was a house and a car. Today, the American Dream is winning American Idol. It's changed slightly. In another 50 years from now, when the economy collapses and everything is in threads and torn, the American Dream then, in 20-whatever, will be a house and a car.*



*Henry Cisneros is the former secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and a four-term mayor of San Antonio. He is currently the executive chairman of CityView, a company which develops affordable residential housing.*

I know the American Dream when I see it. I see it in the joyful tears of the people who strive, those who work hard for something they care deeply about and who attain it. I have always been moved by the experience of people who work, who apply themselves, who sacrifice, who discipline themselves, who play by the rules—who strive.

Sometimes they strive because they want something for themselves, such as an economic advancement, a prize, an honor or an achievement. I am especially moved when people strive because they love others and want something better for those they love: a home, an education, a career success, an opportunity. I say I know the American Dream when I see it because I am moved to tears myself and feel it as deeply as I feel anything else in my experience when I see it.

What makes this striving in fact American is that it is so much at the core of our culture. It is not that people don't strive in other societies or that they don't achieve. Clearly many do. I think it is that we try to make it possible for every person. Many other cultures are more class-bound, fatalistic, rigid, prejudiced or unfair. The American Dream is the right to strive, with the best chance in the world of being rewarded for it. Our American Dream is not perfect, but in America, if you strive you have a good shot at the reward—if not for you, then for someone you love who comes behind you.

*Chuck Norris is the star of more than 20 films and the long-running TV series Walker, Texas Ranger. He is the author of several books, including Justice Rider and Against All Odds, and writes a weekly column at [www.worldnetdaily.com](http://www.worldnetdaily.com).*

I believe the American Dream is not something we've invented but inherited. When our founding fathers created our country, Thomas Jefferson penned that dream in the Declaration of Independence: "We



hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

I used to think the American Dream could be obtained through the accumulation of possessions, positions and prestige. The "truths self-evident" to our founding fathers eluded me for too long. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is so much more than fulfilling our own dreams, doing what we want and feeling good. It's about using our God-given potential to make a positive difference on this planet. Notice in the Declaration that life and liberty are coupled with happiness, not money, status or materialism. Why not the latter? Because they are fleeting and fluctuate, just like the stock market.

The one constant in life is also the source of all things in the Declaration: "their Creator." Our founders trusted not in the supply but the supplier to acquire life, liberty and happiness, and encouraged us to do the same. There's a verse in the Bible that summarizes it for me: "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy." When you've got God, you've got the gold—and all you need to achieve and experience the American Dream.

*Madeleine Albright served as the 64th U.S. secretary of state from 1997 to 2001, and was the first woman to hold the job. Today she heads The Albright Group, a global strategy consulting firm.*

The American Dream means being part of a society that allows you to be or do whatever you want, and to have a sense that your individual optimism and hard work will be rewarded. I think that the American Dream does exist for most people. The hard part is that it doesn't exist for as many people as it used to. The most serious problem now is that large sections of our society feel that they can no longer be a part of it, even though they are striving. It exists outside of the U.S. as well as inside. People continue to come here because they want to improve their lives, they want to be able to support themselves and they want to live in freedom. A lot of people who criticize this country still send their children here to study. Coming to America was the most important event in my life, no question. In many ways, I think I'm the epitome of the American Dream. I came here when I was 11 years old. I was able to get an incredible education, I worked hard and I ended up as secretary of state. I only hope that in some way I made it possible for others to live the American Dream.



## QUESTIONS

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1. Pick three of the people from the packet and respond to their comments on the American Dream. Do you agree or disagree with what they had to say? Explain.

2. Who is a person who you feel embodies the American Dream? This should be an American, living or dead, who is not included in this packet. Why does this person embody the American Dream to you?
3. What is *your* American Dream? Using your rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, what are *three* specific goals you plan to accomplish in life?