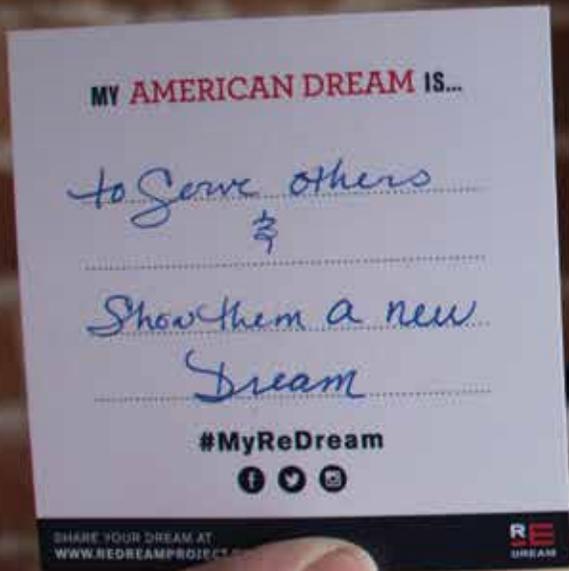
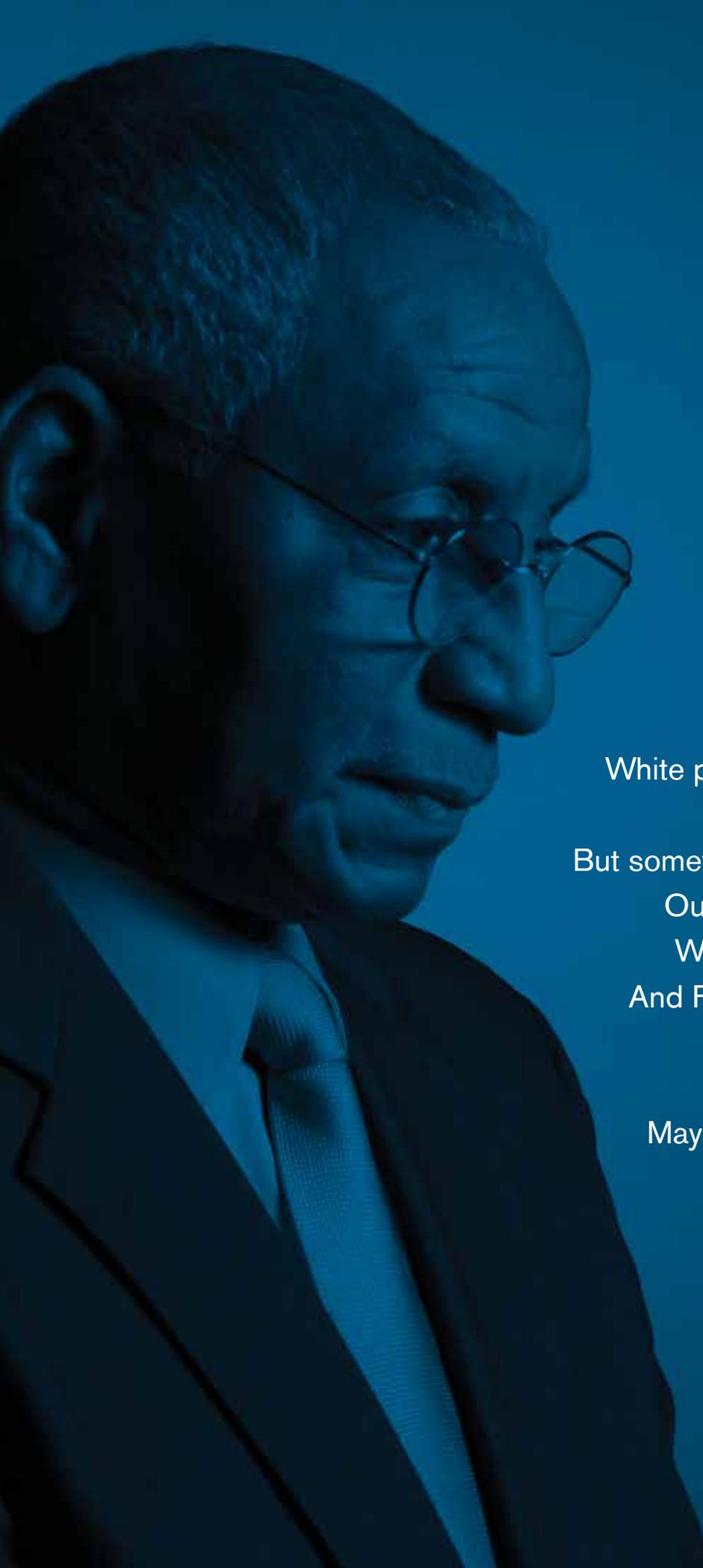


RE:DREAM

DISCUSSION GUIDE





The American dream.
White picket fences, 2.78 kids and a dog.
It's a dream we once shared.
But somewhere along the way, we woke up.
Our fences need a new coat of paint.
We're still saving for kid number .78.
And Fido? He's still waiting for his walk.
But you know what?
Good.
Maybe that wasn't your dream anyway.

So, what's success to you?
What barriers keep you down?
What dream do you chase?

Welcome to Re:Dream.

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**“The American dream for
me right now is to just
have a dream. My dream -
no American in it.”**

- Star Palmer
Re:Dreamer

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome, Re:Dreamer!

Thank you for downloading (or picking up) this discussion guide.

Re:Dream is a nationwide conversation about opportunity, obstacles, and the American dream in the 21st century. It's about taking issues that exist on paper or in vocabulary, and making them human and relatable.

That's where our videos come in.

Each Re:Dream micro-documentary tells the story of someone pursuing, struggling, overcoming, failing, or just, living. They are all real people whose stories make up the current American epoch. But – clearly – 40 videos aren't enough to capture the whole breadth of the American experience. Which is why we've created Re:Dream to be incredibly interactive and invitational. It's why we've endeavored to have such a strong social media presence and to continually invite you to say what your dream is. What's keeping you down? What does opportunity in the 21st century look like for you? And how do we, our communities, neighborhoods and schools, reimagine the way we prepare for those opportunities?

That's what the conversation is about.

Is the American dream alive? Or do we need to revive it? Is opportunity available to all, or are there some folks who haven't got a fighting chance from the day they hit the ground?



A close-up, low-angle shot of a woman's face. Her face is painted with the colors and patterns of the American flag. The top of her forehead and the bridge of her nose are painted blue with white stars. The lower part of her face, including her cheeks and chin, is painted white with horizontal red and white stripes. She has a slight smile and is looking upwards and to the right. The background is dark, with a large white star visible in the upper left corner. The text "THE AMERICAN DREAM" is centered over her face in a white, serif font.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

THE AMERICAN DREAM

-Dr. Mary Ann Wynkoop, professor, American Studies, UMKC

No other phrase permeates American history and culture like “the American Dream.” It is woven into the fabric of what it means to be an American. To dream is to hope and this is a country founded on hope for a better life and a brighter tomorrow, for greater opportunities for ourselves and, especially, for our children. But where did it come from? And what does it mean, really? This series of documentaries will examine the ways in which the American dream continues to influence the stories of contemporary citizens who live, work, and hope in communities across the nation.

History

The phrase has probably been in existence in some form since the country’s earliest years, but the first time it occurred in print was in “The American Epic” by James Truslow Adams in 1931. Writing during the depths of the Great Depression, Adams (no relation to President John Adams) made enough money on Wall Street to retire to life as a historian. His one volume history of the United States defined the American dream as “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.” He further explained that the dream isn’t about acquiring material riches and doesn’t depend on social or economic status. It means that any American can be the best possible person based on individual talents and hard work.

The essence of the American dream is certainly implied in the Declaration of Independence in which the authors proclaimed that they held “these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among them are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

With that phrase “the pursuit of happiness” in mind, citizens have defined the American dream in constantly shifting terms. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of the American dream was Abraham Lincoln, who rose from rural obscurity to the presidency. Ever after, many aspirants to that office have tried to prove their own worth by demonstrating a corresponding rise from humble origins. As pioneers moved West across the continent, the dream of owning land and providing for families predominated, although it was not always realized. As historian Frederick Jackson Turner commented:

No grave social problem would exist while the wilderness... opened wide its portals to all who were oppressed, to all who with strong arms and stout heart desired to hew a home and a career for themselves.

After 1890, when Turner announced that the frontier was officially closed, immigrants coming to the New World found the dream in a second chance of a life without hunger and

the threat of oppression and opportunities to move up and out of poverty.

After World War I, women had finally achieved their own part of the dream—the right to vote and to have the opportunity to be a real voice in our democracy. The end of the war opened up a new age of prosperity and good times for many. However, the bubble burst on October 29, 1929 and millions of innocent victims of the stock market crash discovered that their dreams had turned to nightmares.

Shortly after Adams wrote his definition of the dream, President Franklin D. Roosevelt presented his own version in his New Deal programs that promised citizens a “better and richer and fuller life,” by promoting programs that provided safety nets for the poor, elderly, and unemployed. FDR also called for citizens to join the war against fascism by defending America’s guarantee of Four Freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom to worship God, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Following World War II, returning veterans celebrated their victory (and survival from the horrors of that conflict) by taking advantage of the GI Bill (1944) which provided federal financial support for going to college, buying a house and starting a business. As these benefits produced new members of a burgeoning middle class, the dream became tied to material comforts: a house in the suburbs, automobiles, televisions, and college for their children.

Ironically, it was the generation that received many of the benefits of post World War II prosperity that questioned the reality of the dream when they saw how unequal its benefits were to citizens of color, especially African Americans but also to women and gays. This inequity was clearly expressed in a poem by Langston Hughes, a Midwestern transplant to New York City. In his poem “Harlem” (1951) he asked:

What happens to a dream deferred
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
....
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights movement’s leader, referred to these questions in his iconic speech “I Have a Dream,” delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the end of the 1963 March for Freedom and Jobs: “It is a dream deeply rooted in



“The American Dream is a term that is often used but also often misunderstood.”

- Marco Rubio
2016 Presidential Candidate

the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. For King and for many civil rights activists, the American dream was still a dream, yet to be achieved. And many women who listened to that speech believed that they should be included as well.

While some progress has been made in making the dream more of a reality for all Americans, many argue there is still much to be done. Economic trends toward the end of the last century promoted substantial benefits to some, but also created a growing gap with those trapped in the lower end of the wage scale. For the winners in this race, the dream has become elusive as there is a constant fear of falling behind, along with the sense that there is never enough. For those at the bottom, the dream is either a bright lure to escape to higher ground or it may seem to have disappeared entirely. Immigrants to this country remain the most consistent supporters of the American dream and none more so than the children who were brought here and live in the shadows of the undocumented. Calling themselves the Dreamers (actually an acronym for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) they have organized nationally to promote justice for all immigrants.

The reason for the longevity of the phrase “American Dream” is that it can mean many things to many people. A common definition is that anything is possible if you are willing to work hard. Another way of understanding it may come close to Alexis de Tocqueville’s phrase “the charm of anticipated success.” Hollywood films provide infinite interpretations of the dream: from Frank Capra’s film “It’s a Wonderful Life” to Arthur Miller’s play “Death of a Salesman.” Songs from Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land” to Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the U.S. A.” speak to the ubiquity of the dream. But its endurance is also enhanced by its ambiguity. There are always questions: Who’s living the dream? Who isn’t? Why them? And why not me? And if I’m living the dream, will it last? The American dream has been a way to unite disparate citizens to a commonly shared ideal. Yet it is also a call for the revitalization of hopes to achieve higher goals and grander visions for a better future for all Americans.

Sources

John Blum, “The Promise of America”

Jim Cullen, “The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation.”

James Patterson, “Great Expectations: The United States, 1945-1975”

Warren Susman, “Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century”



FILMMAKER STATEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

KCPT began production on Re: Dream following a partnership with production company Brainroot on the collaboration of “Your Fellow Americans,” a similar web-based series focusing on race, immigration, and the American dream.

After a “Your Fellow Americans” panel discussion turned into a restless town hall in February 2015, it became clear that people wanted to talk about these issues.

On this bet, KCPT pitched a large-scale nationwide series to Thinkshift, an initiative of the DeBruce Foundation, and Re: Dream was born.

In an age much different from the idyllic 50s, when the ultimate American dream was packaged and sold with a white picket fence, our hope is that Re: Dream will leave you encouraged, thoughtful, and inspired.

Be encouraged by the opportunities immigrants have for an improved life because of our country’s political, financial, and educational systems. Be thoughtful about all the factors that have enabled you, your family, or your community to be successful. Be inspired by the fact that when enough people really want something, it happens despite the barriers, cost of entry, or obstacles placed in the way.

So we ask: “What is success to you? What barriers keep you down? And what is your re-dream?”

Thanks for joining the conversation.

- Carla McCabe, Executive Producer, KCPT
- Christopher Cook, Series Producer, Brainroot
- Nathaniel Bozarth, Associate Producer, Brainroot



Carla McCabe / KCPT



Christopher Cook / Brainroot



Nathaniel Bozarth / Brainroot

HOW TO BECOME A RE:DREAMER:

It's easy!

Re: Dream is about having productive, respectful conversations within and across differences about opportunity, obstacles, and the American dream. You can gather people together at your home, place of work, religious organization or, heck, in the corner at a park. Use the questions in this guide to kick-start some good conversations.

But before you do that, go to ReDreamProject.org to search for the video you want to use to get everyone's mind mulling on some deep issues. And if the video you want to use hasn't been released quite yet, send an email to contact@redreamproject.org and we'll get you access.



“For many, the American dream has become a nightmare.”

- Bernie Sanders
2016 Presidential Candidate



FOUR ONE-SHEET VERSIONS

We've developed variants of a quick-reference one-sheet that explains the Re: Dream project to different audiences: Classroom Teachers, Community Organizers, Student Broadcasters, and the General Public. These PDF's are available in the following Dropbox folder:

Re: Dream One-Sheets

A photograph of a speaker on a stage in front of an audience. The speaker is a man in a light-colored suit, standing on the left side of the stage. Behind him is a large projection screen displaying a close-up of a man's face, likely a historical figure. The audience is seated in rows of chairs, facing the stage. The lighting is focused on the speaker and the screen. The text "COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT" is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters across the middle of the image.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AROUND RE:DREAM



Re:Dream is meant to be the nexus of a conversation about opportunity, obstacles, and the American dream in the 21st century. That conversation is happening online, in the comments beneath our videos, on social media platforms, and in person at community and private events.

We're having conversations about social mobility, college debt, childhood dreams, and more.

Some suggested events:

- **Round-table discussion:** Re:Dream has been created with discussion in mind. 60- to 90-minute events can be conducted around Re:Dream videos (each around seven minutes) with time for discussion between each video. Discussion takes place around tables with or without table moderators.
- **Panel Discussion:** Re:Dream videos can be selected by theme with expert panelists selected for Q&A following each video.
- **Re:Dream Parties:** Large blackboards, whiteboards, or sheets of butcher paper can serve as canvasses for attendees to respond to prompts pertaining to opportunity, obstacles, and the American dream. Possible prompts include: "What dreams do you chase?" "What was your childhood dream?" and "What is your dream for the future of your city?"

And in the classroom:

- **ESL Classes:** Re:Dream videos featuring immigrants may function as a template project for immigrant ESL students. After watching videos, students are to write their one story in similar fashion to Re:Dream videos.
- **Humanities Classes:** Re:Dream videos cover a variety of social issues including SES mobility, immigration, gender and sexuality issues, unequal opportunity and more. These 7-minute videos are excellent to give a human face to issues discussed throughout the course of classroom instruction. (See attached episode breakdown for complete list of issues covered.)
- **Broadcast/Journalism Classes:** Broadcast and journalism students are encouraged to create their own original content, print or multimedia, mimicking the style of Re:Dream. Students' work can be published on the "Explore" tab of ReDreamProject.org if desired. (The Explore section of the website will feature articles, videos, and other resources associated with Re:Dream but not produced by the Re:Dream team.)

Find an event near you or register your event at redreamproject.org/events.

A NOTE ON PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION:

-Dr. Mary Ann Wynkoop

First, remember that being in a discussion group involves both speaking and, just as important, listening. Too often we get so focused on what we want to say that we forget to listen to what others are contributing.

Second, even if you have well thought out opinions about the topic to be discussed, try to keep an open mind so that you actually hear what others are saying, rather than dismissing them at the outset.

Third, keep in mind that we all have different backgrounds and experiences that shape our attitudes and opinions. If a member of your group expresses ideas that are different from yours, try to see it from their perspective. Or to put it another way, try to walk in their shoes for just a while so that you might be able to understand their point of view.

Fourth, and while this might seem obvious, you are in the group to discuss, so even if you are usually somewhat quiet, make an effort to join in when appropriate. On the other hand, if you seem to be monopolizing the conversation, back off and let others into the conversation. A discussion should be an exercise in sharing ideas so that everyone has a chance to be heard.

Finally, a good mantra for any discussion is “No one has all the answers; everyone has something to say.” A goal for any experience like this is to come away from it feeling that you’ve learned some new facts, considered some alternative points of view, and, hopefully, made some new friends.



GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Define: What is the American Dream? What is success? What does it look like?
- Do all Americans have the same opportunities to succeed?
- Is the American Dream achievable today? Is upward mobility something that is possible for Americans today?
- Does your identity (your ethnicity, nationality, gender, etc.) affect the opportunities available to you?
- What has enabled you to be successful? Or kept you from success?
- Do you think that you have a better life than your parents? Will your kids have a better life than you? Why or why not? What is a “better life”?
- What kind of opportunities are available to people in America today? Are they drastically different from opportunities in the 20th century? Are our communities and schools preparing residents for today’s opportunities, or 20th century-style opportunities?

TOPICAL QUESTIONS

Some of the themes across the series include:

- **Upward Mobility**
 - Can “hard work” overcome poverty?
 - What role does luck play in “making it”?
- **Downward Mobility**
 - Is the proliferation of the payday loan industry evidence of the American dream at work, or is it quite the opposite?
- **Fulfillment**
 - Has the loss of industrial jobs been outweighed by the creation of Internet and computer-based jobs?
- **Entrepreneurship**
 - Are entrepreneurs treated like heroes to 21st century society? If so, does this treatment veil the deep struggles inherent in entrepreneurship?



- **Community**

- Scholars have lamented the breakdown of community in the United States.
 - Is this true for your life? If this is true, what does this breakdown mean as far as Americans achieving their dreams?
 - Is it tied to the economic changes/pressures we've seen over the last 40 years?

- **Giving Back**

- Is the American dream about self- or community-fulfillment?

- **Economics**

- Would you be where you are today if you hadn't had access to credit (from family or from a bank) at some point in your past? If your parents hadn't?
- How do the financial institutions in the U.S. impact our opportunities?

- **Mentorship**

- "It's hard to be what you can't see." Agree or disagree?
- Can "hard work" overcome a lack of education and role models?

- **Immigration**

- Most immigrants featured in Re:Dream have boldly proclaimed the universal achievability of the dream. Why might their perspectives be more positive than non-immigrants?

- **College debt**

- How does the rising cost of higher education (and the implicit near-necessity of incurring debt) affect the American dream?

- **Education**

- How does quality of education affect youth's pursuit of the American dream?





VIDEO DESCRIPTIONS & QUESTIONS

VIDEO DESCRIPTIONS & QUESTIONS:

Following is a breakdown of all 40 episodes of Re:Dream. Each description includes a list of themes that are addressed by that video, a description, and the week of release.

Note: Educators and community organizations may request access to any video before it is released by emailing contact@redreamproject.org.

WETA - Washington, D.C.



Valerie Conners and Ayaz Nanji

Debuts week of 2/29

Themes: Millennial, White, Asian, Fulfillment, Tech Economy, Internet Era, Fulfillment, Travel, First Generation

By all outward appearances, Valerie Conners and Ayaz Nanji seemed to be living the dream – great jobs and an upscale lifestyle in New York. However, for these two internet marketers, something was missing. Four years ago, they gave up their home and most of their possessions to live and work location-independently as “digital nomads.” Consistent with their personal mantra, “Let’s go have an adventure,” they move to a new location every few months in attempt to experience as much of the world as possible.

- **How does technology create opportunities for success? What obstacles does it create?**
- **What is the importance of geographic stability in attaining community?**



Billy Johnson

Debuts week of 3/7

Themes: Baby Boomer, Role Models, ExCon, Downward Mobility, African American, Second Chances, Hope

A self-described “career hustler”, Billy Johnson spent a total of 25 years behind bars on various drug, weapons, and robbery charges. Homeless and still using drugs after getting out of prison, he had to

give up parental rights to his son. When his son's mother died, he pledged to seek help and get clean. He's now been sober for five years while pursuing a career in culinary arts with the help of D.C. Central Kitchen. He hopes to have his own food truck one day and reconnect with his son.

- **Why/How does having children seem to have such a positive effect on personal responsibility?**
- **How does being an ex-con create obstacles to success?**
- **What is the importance of family in attaining success?**
- **If you could re-dream the penal system, what would it look like?**



Laura Sharkey

Debuts week of 3/14

Themes: White, LGBTQ, Generation X, Fulfillment, Small Business, Healthcare, Education, Socio Economic Segregation, Who You Know

Growing up “poor in a neighborhood that was not poor” on Long Island, Laura Sharkey was the first person from her family to go to college and earned a Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology. However, life in the lab wasn't all it was cracked up to be and she found herself searching for something more. She's found success and fulfillment running her own dog training business and hopes to provide opportunities to those she employs so that they, too, can get ahead.

- **What affect does interacting with folks financially better off than you have on achieving upward social mobility?**
- **What effect does intra-school segregation have on keeping the poor in poverty and the well-off wealthy?**
- **How does having a wide network of relationships create opportunities to success?**



Jhamal McKee

Debuts week of 3/21

Themes: Fulfillment, Millennial, Hope, Arts, Unemployment, African American

Jhamal McKee grew up in a single-parent family and dreamed of owning his own home someday. After accomplishing that goal at age 26, he lost his job and, subsequently, the house he had worked so hard to buy. Now at his “hungriest” and “most creative,” this aspiring filmmaker is working on a web series, which he hopes will launch a career where he can call his own shots.

- **What effect does exposure to various career paths have on achieving success?**
- **What is the importance of home ownership in attaining your dream?**
- **If you could re-dream home ownership, what would it look like?**
- **Have you been “at your hungriest” before? Did it push you to be creative? Or push you into despair? What do you think made the difference?**



Tim Ma and Joey Hernandez

Debuts week of 3/28

Themes: Asian, Hispanic, Generation X, Business Owner, Luck

In the midst of the 2008 economic crisis, Tim Ma and Joey Hernandez gave up their jobs and risked all their savings to chase the dream of opening a restaurant. Not realizing how much they didn't know about the industry, they were one day from going bankrupt when they found out they were pregnant with their first child. A combination of hard work, luck, and the support of others helped turn things around. Seven years later they have three children and three successful restaurants, and he has been recognized as one of the top chefs in Washington, D.C.

- **What affect does luck have on achieving success?**
- **How does having a child seem affect motivation?**



Tabias Wilson

Debuts week of 4/4

Themes: Millennial, LGBTQ, Community, Hope, Upward Mobility, African American, Activism, Racism, Home Ownership

Tabias Wilson grew up in Kansas facing poverty plus discrimination for his skin color and sexual orientation. His grandmother opened his eyes and mind at a young age, and he carried a passion to effect change to Tufts University and beyond. He is pursuing a career in advocacy in the BlaQueer community through law, public speaking, and action and hopes to help create a world where everyone's individuality and humanity is respected.

- **How do the boxes that others create for a given identity create obstacles to success?**
- **What is the importance of knowing one's heritage in attaining purposeful living?**
- **What does it mean to be free?**



Ngawang and Tenzin Samphel

Debuts week of 4/11

Themes: Millennial, Refugee, Family, Religion, Hope, Asian, Music

The sons of Tibetan immigrant parents, these two aspiring electronic dance music producers dream of touring the world and performing for the masses. Living at home with their parents, Ngawang and Tenzin Samphel draw strength from their Buddhist faith and their Tibetan culture while also embracing a very Americanized lifestyle. They are optimistic about their prospects for musical success but still must balance pursuing their dreams with their regular 9-to-5 jobs.

- **How does ethnicity create obstacles to success? Opportunities?**
- **Why is assumed by the interviewer that the Samphel brothers struggle with some sort of ethnic dilemma as Tibetan Americans?**
- **How does living at home with your family create opportunities for success?**
- **What keeps people from pursuing their dreams when there aren't obvious obstacles in the way?**



Brennan Mullaney

Debuts week of 4/18

Themes: Baby Boomer, Male, White, Veteran, Giving Back

Brennan Mullaney was a plebe at the U.S. Military Academy when the Twin Towers fell and became part of the West Point class known as the "Class of 9/11." After four years preparing to lead soldiers into battle, he deployed to Iraq for two tours of duty. When he left the Army he faced the same challenge so many returning soldiers face: What's next? Driven by his own experience and what he saw in the men he led, he devoted his professional life to engaging with veterans and creating opportunities for them.

- **What effect does exposure to warfare have on achieving post-war success?**
- **If you could re-dream life for veterans after the military, what would it look like?**



DPTV - Detroit, MI



Tsehaya Smith

Debuts week of 2/29

Themes: Baby Boomer, Black, Economics, Arts, Mentorship, Home Ownership, African American, Financial Insecurity

Tsehaya Smith is an accomplished dancer and choreographer. Her career was thriving until her mother passed away, leaving her a house drowning in debt. With the help of Detroit Eviction Defense, she found triumph in court by proving that the loan on the house had been illegally predatory. Tsehaya continues to teach and mentor young dancers in her New York-based dance company.

- ***What is the importance of access to credit in attaining wealth?***
- ***If you could re-dream the costs associated with the death of a loved one, what would it look like?***



Kyle Smitley

Debuts week of 3/7

Themes: Millennial, White, Education, Fulfillment, Not For Profit, Wealth, Business Owner, Mentorship, Role Models, Who You Know

By her late 20s, Kyle Smitley had seemingly achieved the American dream as owner of an organic clothing company, but something was missing. Propelled by a desire to pursue something more meaningful, she sought to lend her experience and talents to closing the achievement gap in an urban school in Detroit. When she couldn't find a school doing that work, she decided to start one—Detroit Achievement Academy.

- ***What affect does socioeconomic status have on achieving good test scores?***
- ***What affect do good test scores have on your economic opportunities?***
- ***What is the relationship between skin color and opportunities for upward mobility?***
- ***What is the importance of giving back in attaining personal fulfillment?***
- ***If you could re-dream the education system, what would it look like?***



Dave Bing

Debuts week of 3/14

Themes: *Baby Boomer, Role Models, Politics, Athlete, Upward Mobility, Giving Back, African American, Mentorship*

After 12 years in the NBA and seven All-Star appearances, Dave Bing hung up the high tops and traded them in for dress shoes. He founded Bing Steel then, at the age of 64, became mayor of Detroit. His fourth career has brought him the most enjoyment. Dave now mentors African American youth in the Detroit area at Bing Youth Institute.

- **What effect does being black have on achieving success?**
- **How does starting a career in athletics create obstacles and/or opportunities to success?**
- **If you could re-dream the political process, what would it look like?**



Rashida Tlaib

Debuts week of 3/21

Themes: *Generation X, Muslim, Politics, Fulfillment, Religion*

Rashida Tlaib's mother was pregnant with her when she stepped off the plane arriving from Palestine. Rashida dreamed of working on international human rights issues, but realized there was plenty of work to do here at home. She found political success as the first Muslim woman elected to a state office. Now she's working to fight ignorance and a rising Islamophobia in her own backyard.

- **What effect does being Muslim have on achieving success?**
- **How does being Muslim create obstacles to success? Any opportunities?**
- **What is the importance of faith in attaining personal fulfillment?**



Andre Watson

Debuts week of 3/28

Themes: *Generation X, African American, Financial Literacy, Education, Economics, Lower Income*

Andre Watson was one of three children living with a single mother in northwest Detroit. The daily struggles he faced—neighborhood violence one of the most prevalent—never deterred him from his goals. Learning from his mother's determination, Andre excelled in

academics, eventually winning more than 20 scholarships in high school to help pay for college. In college he studied finance, a subject which showed him the pathway to his American dream—a pathway he also wants to share with the African American community around him.

- **How often does lack of financial literacy prevent upward social mobility?**
- **What is the potential of education to aid in upward social mobility?**



Raquel Castañeda-López

Debuts week of 4/4

Themes: Millennial, Hispanic, Community, Politics, Lower Income, Financial Insecurity, Upward Mobility

Raquel Castañeda-López beat poverty and personal tragedy to become the first Latino ever elected to Detroit's City Council. But she had to overcome her own self-doubt about her abilities to win an election and represent the district she grew up in. Now, she's dedicated to helping each and every one of her constituents achieve success in their own lives by fighting for equal opportunity for all.

- **What is it that allows someone to have greater success than the people around them in similar surroundings?**
- **What is the relationship between living in a poor community and opportunities for upward mobility?**
- **What is the importance of political representation in the improvement of a community?**



Robbie Johnson, Jr.

Debuts week of 4/11

Themes: Millennial, Biracial, Hope, Arts, African American, Low Income

Robbie Johnson's father was an educator who told his son to follow his passion. Robbie succeeded in school, graduating from a renowned performing arts high school and enrolling at the University of Michigan to study theatre. His father's untimely death as he started college was a setback. Now he's 31, trying to work off his college debt, excelling at appliance sales despite a soul-killing commute. Recently offered a position in management, Robbie faces a difficult choice: corporate success or pursuing his dream of acting full-time?

- **How does working full-time in a non-passion career create**

obstacles or opportunities to success?

- **What is the relationship between access to credit and opportunities for upward mobility?**
- **What is the importance of public transportation in providing access to opportunity?**
- **If you could re-dream the retail career, what would it look like?**



Lavan and Vannel Johnson

Debuts week of 4/18

Themes: Teenage, Fulfillment, Athlete, Hope, African American, Education

Lavan and Vannel Johnson are high school students and boxing champions. Lavan, currently ranked first in his age class, wants to box professionally. His brother Vannel wants to be an architect. They cite extracurricular programs as a key to success.

- **What affect do extracurricular activities have on future life success?**
- **Why does extracurricular involvement seem to have such a positive effect on teenage behavior?**
- **Is it right for high schoolers to place such emphasis on the possibility that they might go pro, when, in reality, thousands of high schoolers or college graduates are disappointed every year?**
- **If you could re-dream your high school experience, what would it look like?**

GPB - Atlanta, GA



Will Johnston

Debuts week of 2/29

Themes: Millennial, White, LGBTQ, Community, Fulfillment, Activist, Consumerism, Self Determination, Homeownership, Security

After finishing college and moving into corporate America, Will Johnston found himself disillusioned and burned out. Will discovered his version of the American dream in eschewing the suburban home white picket fence dream. He now is the leader of Tiny House Atlanta and lives a minimalist life, yearning for the close-knit community that can come from a life not laid slave to debt and keeping up with the Joneses.

- **Why does travelling seem to have such a positive effect on self-actualization?**
- **How does having no debt create opportunities for success?**
- **If you could re-dream community life in America, what would it look like?**



Dave Moody

Debuts week of 3/7

Themes: Baby Boomer, Role Models, Upward Mobility, College Debt, Wealth, Business Owner, Giving Back, African American, Homeownership

Dave Moody and his newlywed bride moved from Michigan to Atlanta for a business opportunity. Just months later, the company declared bankruptcy. Out of the ashes, Dave built his own company, eventually finding extraordinary success.

- **How does failure create opportunities to success?**
- **What is the importance of debt in attaining success?**
- **If you could re-dream upward social mobility without debt, what would it look like?**



Nasiha Mujkanovic

Debuts week of 3/14

Themes: *Baby Boomer, White, Refugee, Education*

Nasiha Mujkanovic left Bosnia as a refugee as a child. She and her family were moved from country to country in refugee camps for some time until they finally came to the United States. Now, this country is her home. She works as an elementary school teacher where she is passionate about emphasizing to other ex-pat children like herself the great opportunity that lies in the land of milk and honey.

- **How does being a refugee differ from being an immigrant to the United States and how does that change one's dreams?**
- **What effect does education have on opportunities for success?**



Sallie Ann Robinson

Debuts week of 3/21

Themes: *Baby Boomer, Black, Opportunities, Community, Author, Community, Upward Mobility*

Sallie Ann Robinson grew up poor on Daufuskie Island, just off the coast of Georgia. Nursing became a natural fit for her as a way to carry on the same values of community care that she learned growing up. Outside of her full-time work, Sallie Ann has authored two cook books and dreams of having her own cooking show.

- **What stands in the way of people pursuing their most far-fetched dreams?**
- **What is the relationship between family culture and career choices later in life?**



Carrie Christie

Debuts week of 3/28

Themes: *Millennial, White, Fulfillment, Arts, Stability, Community*

Carrie Christie has been involved with the performing arts most of her life. After spending several years after college in the pandemonium of full-time performance, she was burned out. She welcomed the security of a 9-to-5 administrative job. Then, an unlikely opportunity and a Tony relit her passion for the stage.

- **What is the relationship between being white and opportunities for upward mobility?**
- **What is the importance of stability in attaining happiness?**



Lynn Chopp

Debuts week of 4/4

Themes: Family, Fulfillment, Education, Immigrant

Coming to America felt like the fresh start Lynn Chopp had always dreamed of, until her happily-ever-after was turned upside down. After ending an abusive marriage, she set out to take charge and learn how to manage her money. Now this single mother of three is following her dreams by finding the balance between family, work, and finally finishing her psychology degree after over 20 years- and she's never been happier.

- **How does home life affect opportunities for happiness?**
- **How are women empowered in the United States compared to other countries?**



Hope and Steve Dezember

Debuts week of 4/11

Themes: Millennial, White, Community, Disability, Internet Era, Social Media

After six months of dating, Steve Dezember was diagnosed with ALS. He tried to send Hope away, but she said she'd never leave- and Hope For Steve was born. Living with ALS is a constant struggle, but this couple sees it as an opportunity to share their story, thankful for the technology that makes it possible. They dream of lifting people up, spreading awareness, and reminding the world that all we need is love... and to never lose hope.

- **What affect does physical disability have on achieving happiness?**
- **How does the internet create new opportunities that did not exist 50 years ago?**



Ashlee and Tom Cleveland

Debuts week of 4/18

Themes: Millennial, White, Rural Life, Simplicity, Keeping Up

After growing up in Fort Valley, Tom Cleveland knew he'd never choose to leave his farm. Ashlee Cleveland thought she wanted a journalism career, but found that her happiness was rooted in the country as a family photographer. They agree that living in a small town has provided the opportunity to be successful and love what they do, and that they'd rather work 80 hours a week for themselves than 40 hours for someone else.

- **How does working for yourself create opportunities for success? Obstacles?**
- **What is the relationship between rural-living and opportunities for upward mobility?**

KCPT - Kansas City, MO



Roger Espinoza

Debuts week of 2/29

Themes: Millennial, Hispanic, Role Models, Athlete, Immigration, Upward Mobility, Latino, Mentorship

Roger Espinoza met his father for the first time when he, his mother, and his siblings moved to Colorado when he was 12. Soccer, mentors, and the support of his family helped Roger to acclimate to his new life in the United States. Eventually, Roger was recruited to play soccer professionally for Sporting KC. After playing all over the world, Roger is the most soft-spoken athletic superstar you will ever meet.

- **What effect do male role models have on achieving success?**
- **How does immigration create obstacles or opportunities to success?**
- **What is the importance of athletics in immigration?**
- **If you could re-dream the path to sports for youth, what would it look like?**



Thi Wynn

Debuts week of 3/7

Themes: Generation X, Fulfillment, Refugee, Business Owner, Entrepreneur, Asian, Family, Mentorship, Home Ownership

Thi Wynn came to the United States with her sister and mother as a refugee from the Vietnam War. Working three jobs through high school, Thi was poised to go to college. A scholarship letter was lost in the mail, however, and she never made it there. But that didn't stop her from starting her own businesses.

- **What affect does mentorship have on achieving success?**
- **How does not having a college degree create opportunities or obstacles to success?**



Justin Curry

Debuts week of 3/14

Themes: Millennial, Black, Role Models, College Debt, Music, Racism, African American, Financial Insecurity

A comfortable life in the suburbs around successful role models taught Justin Curry from a young age that college was the obvious next step after high school. Now, with the worry of debt weighing over him, and working toward producing music full time, Justin wonders whether college was worth it after all.

- **Why does exposure to successful people seem to have such a positive effect on achievement?**
- **How does college debt create obstacles to success?**
- **How does a college degree create opportunities for success?**
- **What is the importance of urging your children to attend college in parenthood?**



David and Janet Hemme

Debuts week of 3/21

Themes: *Generation X, White, Economics, Rural Life, Family, Keeping Up*

David and Janet Hemme have found that in order to keep up with the economy, the only constant is change. After years of dairy farming, where weekends don't exist and sickness must be ignored, they are starting a creamery.

- **What affect does the continual move towards mass production have on small family-owned business?**
- **How does constant change affect the achievability of the American dream?**
- **What is the relationship between farming and opportunities for upward mobility?**



Elliott Clark

Debuts week of 3/28

Themes: *Baby Boomer, Economics, Downward Mobility, African American, Finances, Giving Back, Home Ownership, Financial Insecurity*

Elliott Clark and his wife owned their own homes, had stable jobs; everything seemed on the up-and-up. Then, a "pre-existing condition" led to insurance denying a claim, compelling Elliott and his wife to turn to a payday loan. From there, things spiraled out of control.

- **How does lack of access to credit create obstacles to success?**
- **What is the relationship between race and access to credit?**
- **What is the importance of credit in attaining success?**
- **If you could re-dream small-term loans, what would they look like?**



Star Palmer

Debuts week of 4/4

Themes: Millennial, LGBTQ, Role Models, Fulfillment, Family, Religious, Discrimination, LGBTQ, African American

Becoming homeless forced Star Palmer to drop out of school and enter into a less-than-ideal lifestyle. Several years later, she picked herself up, got her GED, and enrolled in college. While there, she met the mother of her son, and struggled through a legal system that resisted granting her custody due to her sexuality. Now, she's found success as an LGBTQ advocate working to help teens who face struggles similar to her own.

- **What affect does parenthood have on success?**
- **How does sexual orientation create obstacles to or opportunities for success?**
- **What is the importance of meaningful work in attaining success?**
- **If you could re-dream youth services, what would they look like?**



Rory O'Connor

Debuts week of 4/11

Themes: Generation X, White, Business Owner, Immigration, Family

Administrators kicked Rory O'Connor out of college in his home country of Ireland. Shortly after, he decided to move to the United States where he not only succeeded at college, but was granted a full scholarship to Princeton. Now he owns a successful construction company in what he says is the greatest city in the world.

- **How does immigration create obstacles to success?**
- **How does immigration create opportunities for success?**
- **What is the relationship between being Western European and opportunities for upward mobility?**
- **What is the importance of second chances in attaining success?**



Tammy Edwards

Debuts week of 4/18

Themes: Generation X, Role Models, Upward Mobility, African American, Mentorship, Home Ownership

Tammy Edwards' parents insisted from her birth that she and her sister would earn graduate degrees. In high school, a mentorship

program, Inroads, helped her to make meaningful network connections. Now successful, her pursuit of happiness is one of pursuing new experiences through travel and vacation with her family.

- ***What affect does mentorship have on achieving upward mobility?***
- ***What affect does parenting have on achieving success?***
- ***Why does mentorship seem to have such a positive effect on upward mobility?***
- ***How does geography create obstacles to success?***
- ***What is the relationship between being black and opportunities for upward mobility?***



Sandra Romero

Debuts week of 2/29

Themes: Baby Boomer, Hispanic, Community, Business Owner, Community, Latino, Politics, Giving Back, Who You Know

As a single mother on welfare at age 14, Sandra Romero was almost forced to leave school and give up on her dreams. But with the help of a mentor, she decided she wanted more from life and finished school and started working with the community. She soon partnered on a venture to help turn an at-risk community around through a kitchen incubator and vending program. She co-founded Mama's Hot Tamales, becoming not only "mama" of the restaurant, but of the entire community.

- **Why does indigenous dress lead to people not taking you seriously?**
- **How does allegiance to one's indigenous culture create obstacles to success? Opportunities?**
- **If you could re-dream a vacant space in your neighborhood, what would it look like?**



Marlene Calderon

Debuts week of 3/7

Themes: Millennial, Asian, Fulfillment, Career Change, First Generation, Self Determination, Who You Know

Marlene Calderon was growing in a corporate setting, but found herself stressed out and burned out. With her husband's encouragement, she quit her job. Marlene dreams of blossoming in a new business of her own.

- **What affect does culture have on defining and achieving success?**
- **How does workplace stress create obstacles to success?**
- **If you could re-dream your workplace, what would it look like?**



Telisa Sanders

Debuts week of 3/14

Themes: Teenager, African American, Education, Technology

Telisa Sanders' high school went from raucous and unruly to

elite when it became a magnet school. She has been given the opportunity to test out real business models in one of her more advanced classes. She hopes this experience will translate directly into the real world after she completes college.

- **How do non-traditional classroom arrangements help prepare youth for life after 18?**
- **If you could re-dream your high school experience, what would it look like?**



Adriana Aguilar

Debuts week of 3/21

Themes: Teenager, Hispanic, Latino, Immigration, Education

Adriana Aguilar and her parents are undocumented immigrants. Adriana is pursuing success and opportunity in spite of her legal status.

- **What affect does your migrant status, have on achieving mental stability?**
- **How does fear create obstacles to success?**
- **If you could re-dream immigration, what would it look like?**



Robin Sukhadia

Debuts week of 3/28

Themes: Millennial, Asian, Role Models, Arts, First Generation, Asian, Music

Leaving India, Robin Sukhadia's parent's determination to be Americans led to an early life of instability, full of secrets after they came to the United States unauthorized. Growing up in a small hotel with no other person of color around, Robin fell into depression and shut the world out. Music became a light in his life and helped him through tough times, and now continues to keep him rooted to his Indian heritage through playing Tabla. Now, he works with a program that helps at-risk teens stay focused through exposure to the arts and looks to create a stable environment in order to allow his own son's creative ambitions to flourish as well.

- **What effect does having a fulfilling outlet/hobby, have on achieving success?**
- **Why does art seem to have such a positive effect on socio-emotional function?**
- **How does frequent relocation create obstacles to success?**
- **If you could re-dream the immigration process, what would it look like?**



Iram Parveen Bilal

Debuts week of 4/4

Themes: Millennial, Asian, African American, Immigration, Arts, Religion, Fulfillment

Iram Parveen Bilal was born in the United States but grew up with her parents in Nigeria and Pakistan. Using her U.S. Passport, she came to the United States looking for opportunity in college. After having a successful career as an engineer, Iram now seeks to create social change via film production.

- **What effect does starting a new career – long after your peers have established themselves – have on achieving success in that new career?**
- **How does being biracial create opportunities for success? Obstacles?**



David Cooley

Debuts week of 4/11

Themes: Generation X, White, LGBTQ, Fulfillment, Business Owner

David Cooley moved to Los Angeles as he was experiencing being gay for the first time, because West Hollywood was known as a safe place to be out. However, most bars still had entrances in the alley and weren't open spaces. After a little success in banking, David took a risk and opened up a coffee shop in West Hollywood, making sure it was an open and welcoming environment. He never looked back and now The Abbey Bar and Grill has expanded four times and is one of the most recognized establishments in the country.

- **What effect does being homosexual have on achieving success?**
- **What is the importance of place in attaining success?**
- **If you could re-dream a system where business ownership wasn't tantamount to giving your outside life away, what would it look like?**



Peter Daniels

Debuts week of 4/18

Themes: Baby Boomer, White, Religion, First Generation, Upward Mobility

Peter Daniels is a Holocaust survivor. He was physically abused by his mother when he came to the United States. He fled, travelling doing contract labor across the U.S. He eventually would get his

GED and a college degree.

- ***What affect does childhood physical abuse have on achieving success later in life?***
- ***Why does finishing coursework, including a GED, seem to have a positive effect on achievement?***
- ***If you could re-dream child services for children coming out of abusive homes, what would it look like?***

RESOURCES:

We've got the stories. Want the data? Check out the resources below.

Recommended Reading:

- "Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis" by Robert Putnam
- "The American Dream" by Jim Cullen
- "The Epic of America" by James Truslow Adams
- "Place, Not Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America" by Sheryll Cashin
- "Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" by Peggy McIntosh
- "Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age" by Clay Shirky

Partner and related organizations:

Camp Fire - campfire.org

Camp Fire, as a part of their mission to "light the fire within" youth across the United States, has incorporated Re:Dream curricula into their after school programs and camps to encourage youth to dream.

Big Brothers Big Sisters - bbbs.org

Big Brothers Big Sisters matches at-risk children from one-parent homes with caring, adult mentors. These one-to-one professionally-created and professionally-supported friendships last a minimum of one year, however, the effects of these friendships last a lifetime.

Many of the individuals interviewed in the making of Re:Dream cited mentorship as key to their personal and professional development. We recommend Big Brothers Big Sisters as a premier source of formal mentorship for youth across the country.

Opportunity Nation - opportunitynation.org

Opportunity Nation is a campaign to increase opportunity for all Americans through quantitative data collection, bipartisan policy recommendations, and the convening of cross-sector groups.

Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity: The Source for News, Ideas, and Action - spotlightonpoverty.org

Spotlight on Poverty is a non-partisan group dedicated to advancing anti-poverty and pro-opportunity policy through a continuous exchange of information.

American Public Square - americanpublicsquare.org

American Public Square convenes community conversations in cities across the country to examine issues from both sides of party lines towards building better understanding among disparate opinions.

Related online projects:

American Dreams - theatlantic.com/special-report/american-dreams/

In autumn of 2015, The Atlantic compiled stories, photos, and essays documenting different visions of the American dream.

Chasing the Dream - chasingthedreamproject.org

Chasing the Dream is a public media initiative to examine what effect poverty has on American life.



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