

AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

The United States of America are a confederation of 50 states and 1 federal district : District of Columbia (DC) with the federal capital, Washington DC.

American people are very proud of their constitution. The American constitution was written by Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton and it was adopted in 1787. The American constitution is based on the doctrine of the separation of powers between the executive (the Presidency), the legislative (the Congress) and the judiciary (Supreme Court). Therefore each institution has got limited and specific power.

THE EXECUTIVE POWER

The President of the United States of America is not elected directly, but by an electoral College. He is elected for a term of 4 years and can only be re-elected one more term. He symbolizes the unity of the U.S.A.. He heads the executive branch which has responsibility to carry out the law. He is the "Supreme Commander" but only Congress can declare war.

The President is not responsible to Congress but the constitution stipulates that "he shall from time to time give to the Congress information on the State of the Union".

He wields considerable powers -especially in military, diplomatic and civil matters such as the appointment of all sorts of "officers of the USA", i.e. civil servants.

THE LEGISLATIVE POWER

The legislative branch, the Congress, consists of 2 houses :

- The House of Representatives (435 members elected for 2 years : the Representatives have to keep constantly in mind the problem of the re-election)
- The Senate (100 members, 2 per State)

Both houses are elected by the direct vote of the people.

THE JUDICIAL POWER

The Supreme court : the judges of the Supreme court are appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate. Once chosen, the judges cannot be removed. The Supreme court has the mission of acting as the guardian of the Constitution. The Supreme court has the right to decide whether the laws are in conformity with the Constitution or not and to interpret the Constitution. As we know, interpreting a text is a subjective matter : thus, the judges could be in favour of increasing the powers of the Federal Government to the prejudice of the States or vice versa.

FEDERALISM AND THE STATES

The drafters of the Constitution have decided in favour of the supremacy of the central government. Thus, if there is a conflict between the law of a particular state and a federal law or the Constitution, the latter must have the upper hand.

Certain powers belong concurrently to the states and to the federal government, for example in matters of education, health, public order etc...

All states are equal. The Constitution also specifies that the federal government *"shall guarantee to every state in this union a republican form of government and shall protect each of them"*.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Two main parties alternate in power :

- The Democratic party, which has existed since the beginning of the 1800's (its symbol is a donkey)
- The Republican party which was founded in 1854 (its symbol is an elephant)

President Bush is a Republican. He won a second term in November 2004. His predecessor, Bill Clinton was a Democrat.

The American Dream

The American Dream is the idea held by many in the [United States of America](#) that through hard work, courage and determination one can achieve prosperity. The American dream is associated with the [Protestant work ethic](#) : hard work allows one to not only achieve financial success, but, through that success, reveals God's grace. These were values held by many early European settlers, and have been passed on to subsequent generations. What the American Dream has become is a question under constant discussion.

The American Dream, along with escape from persecution or war in one's home country, has always been the primary reason for [immigrants](#) wanting to come to America. One component of the American Dream seems, however, to be fairly consistent: the quest for money. Few will deny that Americans are intently focused on the "almighty dollar." Many early American [prospectors](#) headed west of the [Rocky Mountains](#) to buy acres of cheap land in hopes of finding deposits of gold. The American Dream was a driving factor not only in the [gold rushes](#) of the mid to late 1800s, but also in the waves of [immigration](#) throughout that century and the following.

Impoverished western Europeans escaping the [Irish potato famines](#) in Ireland, the [Highland clearances](#) in Scotland and the aftermath of [Napoleon](#) in the rest of Europe came to America to escape a poor quality of life at home. They wanted to embrace the promise of financial security and constitutional freedom.

Throughout the 19th century, immigrants fled the [monarchies](#) of [Western Europe](#) and their post-[feudal](#) economies, which actively oppressed the peasant class. These economic systems required high levels of taxation, which slowed development. The American economy, however, was built up by people who were consciously free of these constraints. Settlement in the new world provided hope for egalitarianism.

By the turn of the 20th century, the promise of the American Dream had begun to attract substantial numbers of immigrants from [Eastern](#) and Southern Europe. Huge numbers of Italians, Poles, Greeks, Jews, Russians and others came to find work in industrial cities such as [New York](#), [Chicago](#), [Philadelphia](#) and [Detroit](#). This wave of immigration continued until the outbreak of [World War I](#). Following the war, there were new restrictions on immigration, which would continue until 1965.

The American Dream appears to have enduring appeal to many in other countries. The United States remains a magnet for immigrants today, receiving 1 million legal entrants annually--the highest such rate in the world. Whereas past

generations of immigrants tended to come from [Europe](#), a majority of contemporary immigrants come from [Latin America](#) and [Asia](#). Unknown numbers of illegal immigrants also enter the country annually, chiefly from across the southern border with [Mexico](#).

The American Dream today

Since the end of [World War II](#), young American families have sought to live in relative comfort and stability in the [suburbs](#) that were built up around major cities. This led to the rise of the relatively conservative [1950s](#), when many pursued the "perfect family" as a part or consequence of the American Dream. This period was shattered by a new generation of young people who embraced the hippie values of the [1960s](#), denying traditional values such as the American Dream. In modern times, the American Dream is seen as a possible accomplishment, as all children can go to school and get an education.

Nowadays, through the television entertainment industry, state-based lottery marketing drives, or legal advertisements, Americans are told again and again that the road to the financial success of the American Dream is more a matter of luck than hard work. For example, lotteries undercut the ethic of work and achievement, replacing it with an ethic of luck

Most Americans would like to achieve the American Dream of financial independence. There are unquestionably many Americans who continue to continue to believe in hard work and determination and in doing so are rewarded for their efforts.

However there are some limits to the American dream :

In the U.S. it is sometimes difficult for children of poor families to attend college. Not attending college sets upper limits on their career success.

Genetic lottery and discrimination - research has suggested that features like height and race may give certain people some advantages over others.

TD 1

CALL ME ARNOLD



I was born in a little Austrian town, outside Graz. It was a 300-year-old house.

When I was ten years old, I had the dream of being the best in the world in something. When I was fifteen, I had a dream that I wanted to be the best body builder in the world and the most muscular man. It was not only a dream I dreamed at night. It was also a day-dream. It was so much in my mind that I felt it had to become a reality. It took me five years of hard work. Five years later, I turned this dream into reality and became Mr Universe, the best-built man in the world.

“Winning” is a very important word. There is one that achieves what he wanted to achieve and there are hundreds of thousands that failed. It singles you out: the winner.

I came out second three times, but that is not what I call losing. The bottom line for me was: Arnold has to be the winner. I have to win more often the Mr Universe title than anybody else. I won it five times consecutively. I hold the record as Mr Olympia, the top professional body-building championship. I won it six times. That's why I retired. There was nobody even close to me. Everybody gave up competing against me. That's what I call a winner.

When I was a small boy, my dream was not to be big physically, but big in a way that everybody listens to me when I talk, that I'm a very important person, that people recognize me and see me as something special. I had a big need for being singled out.

Also my dream was to end up in America. When I was ten years old, I dreamed of being an American. At the time I didn't know much about America, just that it was a wonderful country. I felt it was where I belonged. I didn't like being in a little country like Austria. I did everything possible to get out. I did so in 1968, when I was twenty-one years old.

If I believed in life after death, I would say my before-life I was living in America. That's why I feel so good here. It is the country where you can turn your dream into reality. Other countries don't have those things. When I came over here to America, I felt I was in heaven. In America, we don't have an obstacle. Nobody's holding you back.

You have to choose at a very early date what you want: a normal life or to achieve things you want to achieve. I never wanted to win a popularity contest in doing things the way people want me to do it. I went the road I thought was best for me. A few people thought I was cold, selfish. Later they found out that's not the case. After I achieve my goal, I can be Mr Nice Guy. You know what I mean?

California is to me a dreamland. It is the absolute combination of everything I was always looking for. It has all the money in the world there, show business there, wonderful weather there, beautiful country, ocean is there. Snow skiing in the winter, you can go in the desert the same day. You have beautiful-looking people there. They all have a tan.

I believe very strongly in the philosophy of staying hungry. If you have a dream and it becomes a reality, don't stay satisfied with it too long. Make up a new dream and hunt after that one and turn it into reality. When you have that dream achieved, make up a new dream.

I am a strong believer in Western philosophy, the philosophy of success, of progress, of getting rich. The Eastern philosophy is passive, which I believe in maybe three per cent of the times, and the ninety-seven per cent is Western, conquering and going on. It's a beautiful philosophy, and America should keep it up.

A. SCHWARZENEGGER

Studs Terkel, *American Dreams: Lost and Found*, 1980

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« CALL ME ARNOLD »

SUMMARY

This text is a script of an interview with Arnold Schwarzenegger made in 1980 and printed in a book dealing with the American dream, American Dreams: Lost and Found, by Studs Terkel. Studs is now in his 80's. He had an early career in acting and radio. He has interviewed many celebrities and is nicknamed "*the man who interviews America*".

First of all, Arnold Schwarzenegger introduces himself and says what his dream was and how he managed to achieve it. In the second part of the interview, the actor asserts that America was the only country where he could succeed, where anyone can succeed. The third part deals with his philosophy and the way he applied it to his own life. And eventually the last part deals with the American Dream and the various possibilities one has in that country.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, an Austrian who emigrated to the U.S. when he was 21, had a dream which was almost like an obsession : he dreamed of being the best body builder in the world and he worked hard so as to become Mr Universe in 1967. He actually won the title 5 times and the title of Mr Olympia 6 times. He was so strong and well-built that no-one wanted to compete against him. In the interview, he expresses a feeling of pride about his position. Therefore, his much desired dream (being singled out) was achieved.

Going to the USA was Arnold's second dream, his own "American Dream". He believed that nothing was impossible in such a country, provided one is willing enough. According to Arnold Schwarzenegger at the time of the interview, California seemed to be a Paradise on Earth : all the opportunities were there and the people were even good-looking !

Eventually, Arnold Schwarzenegger speaks about his philosophy of life : once a person has achieved a dream, this person should make up a new one straight away. Moreover, Arnold Schwarzenegger strongly believed in the American dream of getting rich and of climbing the social ladder.

This text is both a summary of Arnold Schwarzenegger's life and his ideas about life. This text is also about the American Dream and Arnold Schwarzenegger perfectly embodies the successful man who has believed in that dream and has achieved to be rich and famous. We now know that Arnold Schwarzenegger has managed to be a worldwide famous actor specializing in action films. We also know that the Hollywood action-movie star has succeeded in becoming California's governor, the governor of his dream state.

But we may wonder what his next dream will be... Does he now want to become President of his dream land ? Or will he simply want to retire and have a peaceful life in the USA ?

Even if Arnold Schwarzenegger is a successful example of the American Dream, we may also wonder what happens to those who cannot achieve that dream, those who fall and don't climb the social ladder. Is the American Dream only for the "happy few" ?

TENSE REVIEW

Complete the gaps in the following texts with a suitable form of the verb in brackets.

Immigration hitting record

Despite tougher border scrutiny after 9/11, a total of 7.9 million immigrants (*come*) to the USA since 2000 according to figures released on Monday.

The report comes as a heated immigration debate looms this week in Congress. The House (*expect* - au passif) to tackle a Republican bill that aims to strengthen border security and increase penalties for illegal immigration. An estimated 11 million immigrants live illegally in the USA.

The nation's immigrant population (*hit*) a record 35.2 million in March 2005, 2½ times the number at the peak of the last great immigration wave of 1910. The analysis shows that 31% of adult immigrants (*complete* - negative form) high school. A third (*lack*) health insurance.

Adapted from an article published in USA Today on December 12th , 2005

★ *Voir correction page suivante*

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