

# A Brief History of the American Dream



**"Don't tell me you never had a chance!"**



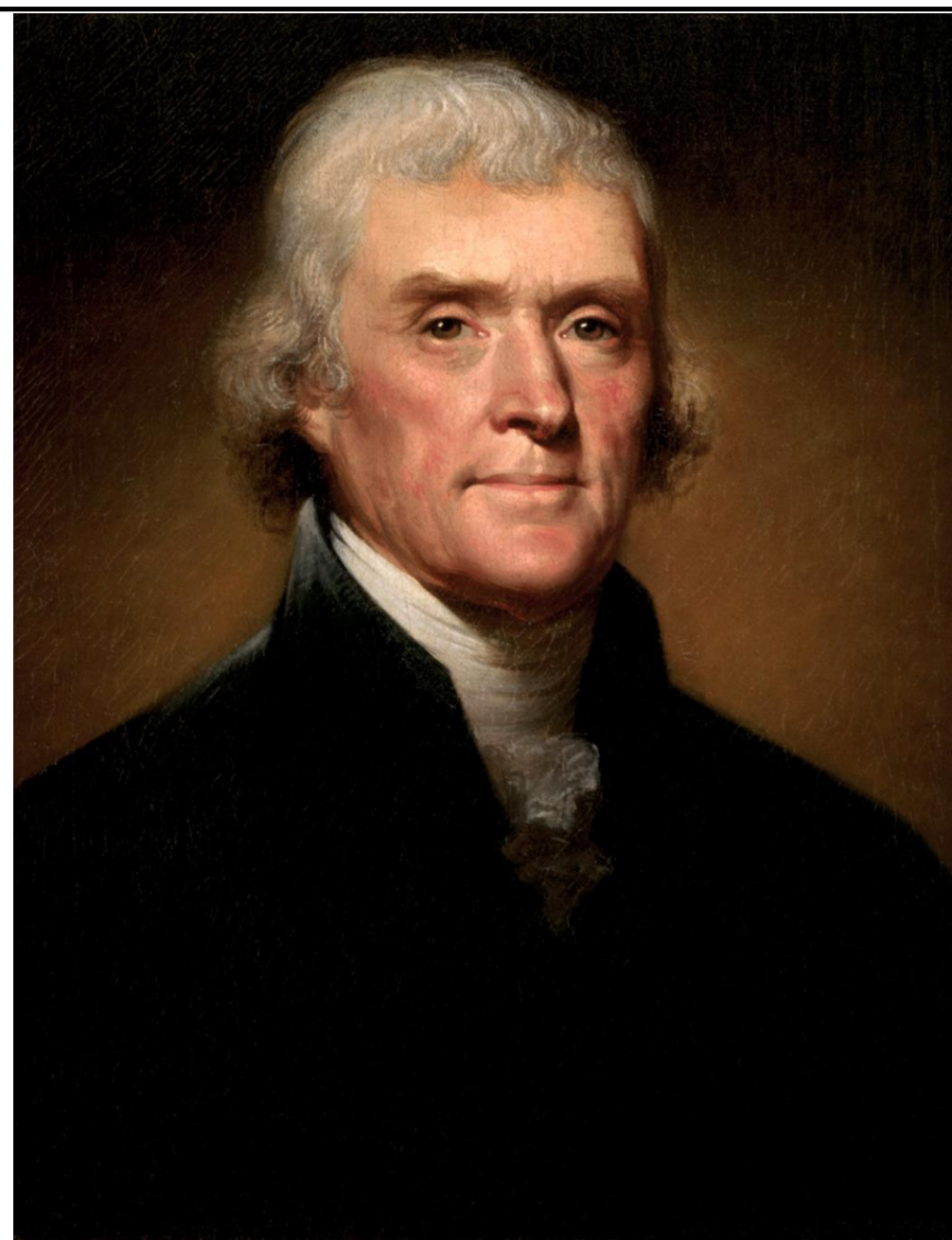
# The Jeffersonian Dream: A Nation of Independent Producers



Edward Hicks, The  
Cornell Farm, 1848



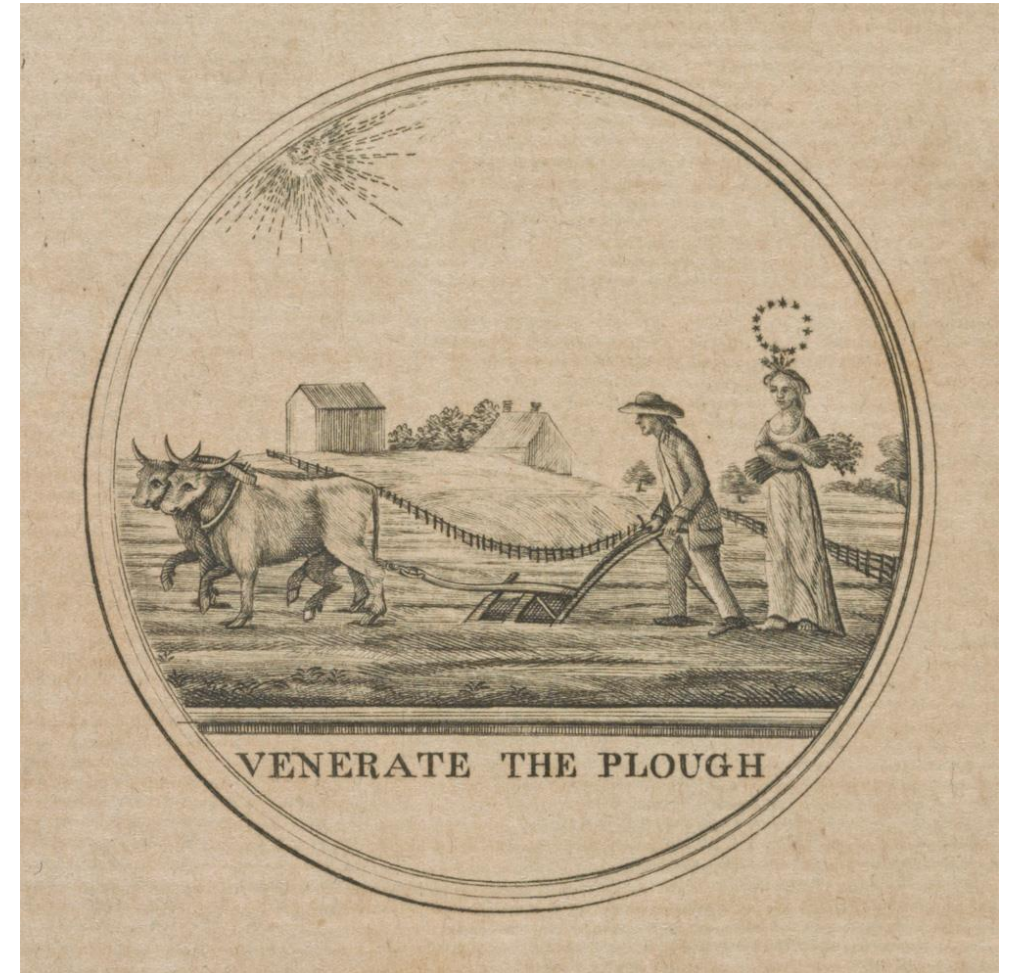
**From *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1787, p. 175**



Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phænomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on the casualties and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition. This, the natural progress and consequence of the arts, has sometimes perhaps been retarded by accidental circumstances: but, generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unfound to its healthy parts, and is a good-enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff. Carpenters, masons, smiths, are wanting in husbandry: but, for the general operations of manufacture, let our work-shops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles. The loss by the transportation of commodities across the Atlantic will be made up in happiness and permanence of government. The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body. It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution.



## The Yeoman Farmer – the republic's backbone





John Neagle, Pat Lyon at the Forge, 1829





Abraham Lincoln, 1860: When one starts poor, as most do in the race of life, free society is such that he knows he can better his condition; he knows that there is no fixed condition of labor, for his whole life. I am not ashamed to confess that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat-boat -- just what might happen to any poor man's son! [Applause.] . . . That is the true system.





But....

Junius Brutus Stearns, *Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon*, 1851



# African American as the Antithesis of Whiteness



MR. T. RICH  
OR  
THE ORIGINAL JIM CROW  
New York Pub. by E. RILEY No. 29 Chatham St.

Sheet music, 1832







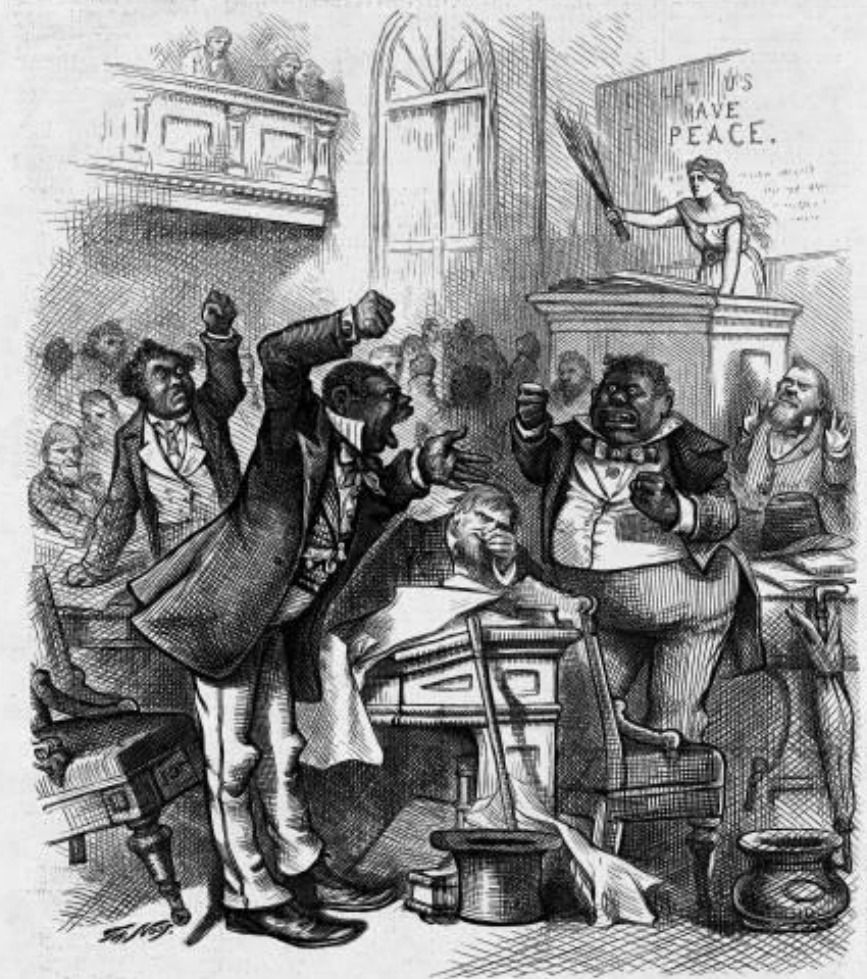
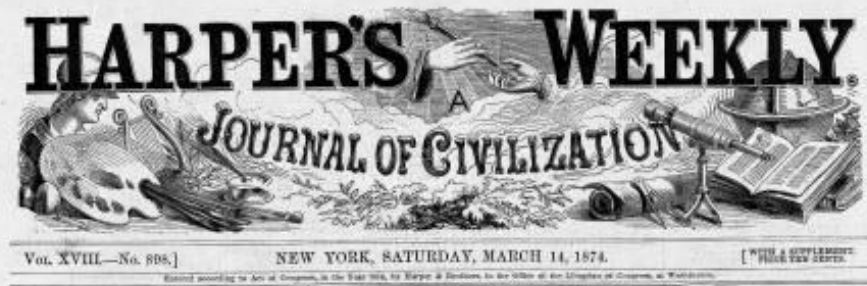
Emancipation might have offered African Americans some sense of inclusion....

**WEB DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 1935:** The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell; and in the third century they arose from the dead, in the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions which this world had ever seen. It was a tragedy that beggared the Greek; it was an upheaval of humanity like the Reformation and the French Revolution. Yet we are blind and led by the blind. We discern in it no part of our labor movement; no part of our industrial triumph; no part of our religious experience. Before the dumb eyes of ten generations of ten million children, it is made mockery of and spit upon; a degradation of the eternal mother; a sneer at human effort; with aspiration and art deliberately and elaborately distorted. And why? Because in a day when the human mind aspired to a science of human action, a history and psychology of the mighty effort of the mightiest century, we fell under the leadership of those who would compromise with truth in the past in order to make peace in the present and guide policy in the future.





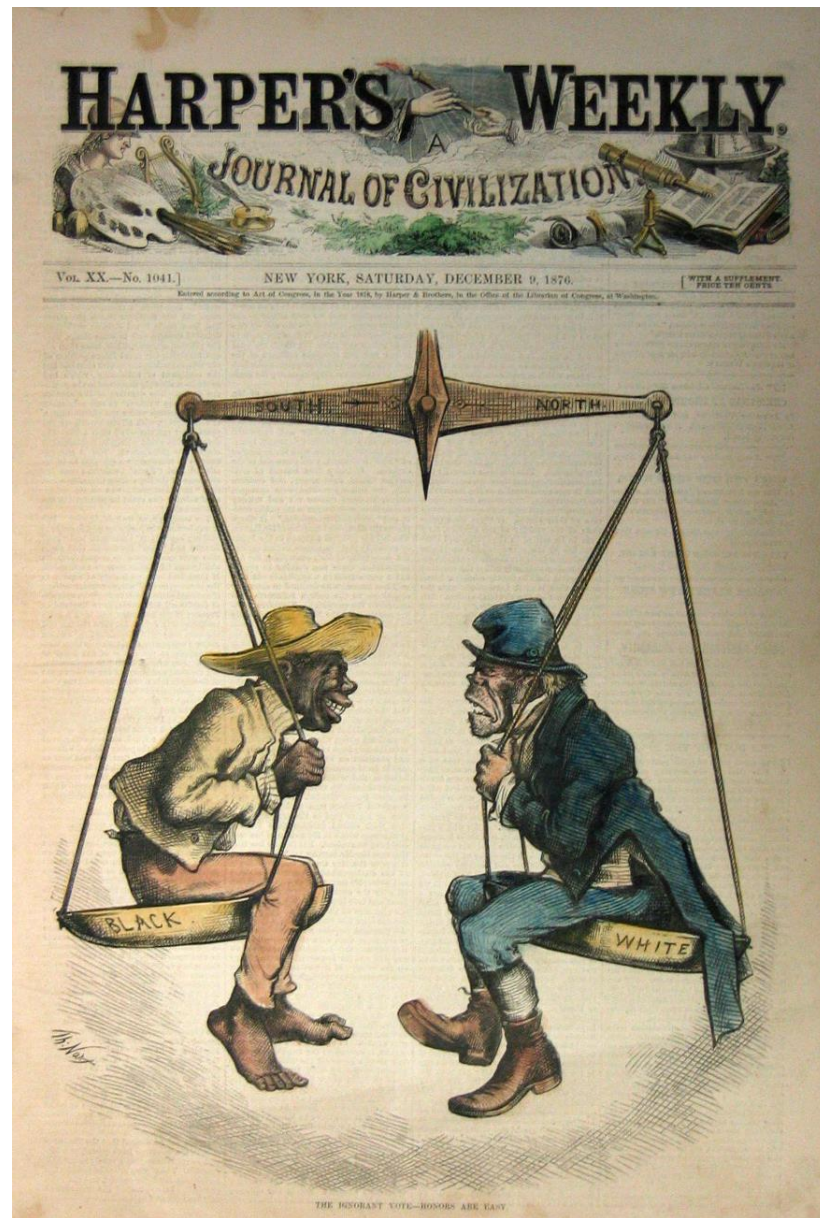




COLORED RULE IN A RECONSTRUCTED STATE.—(See Page 242.)  
(THE MEMBERS CALL EACH OTHER THIEVES, LIARS, RASCALS, AND COWARDS.)  
COLUMBIA. "You are spying the latest Whites. If you disgrace your Race in this way you had better take Back Seats."

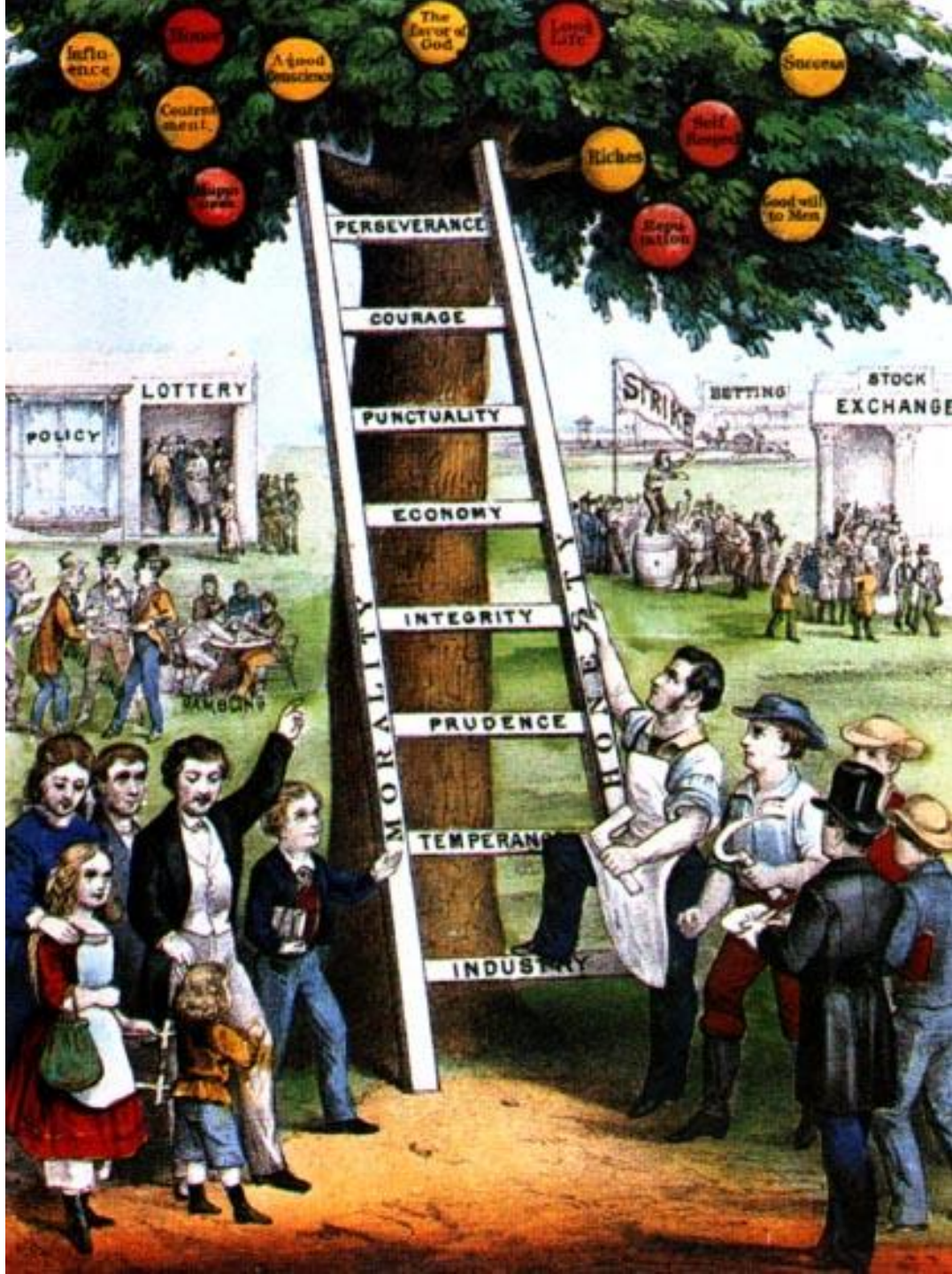
Thomas Nast cartoons reflect white America's hardening racism towards African Americans in the years after the Civil War.

...and immigrants



THE DISOBEDIENT VOTE—HONORS ARE EASY.





Meanwhile..

Victorians Redefined the Jeffersonian Creed for New Urban Realities

Currier and Ives lithograph, 1877

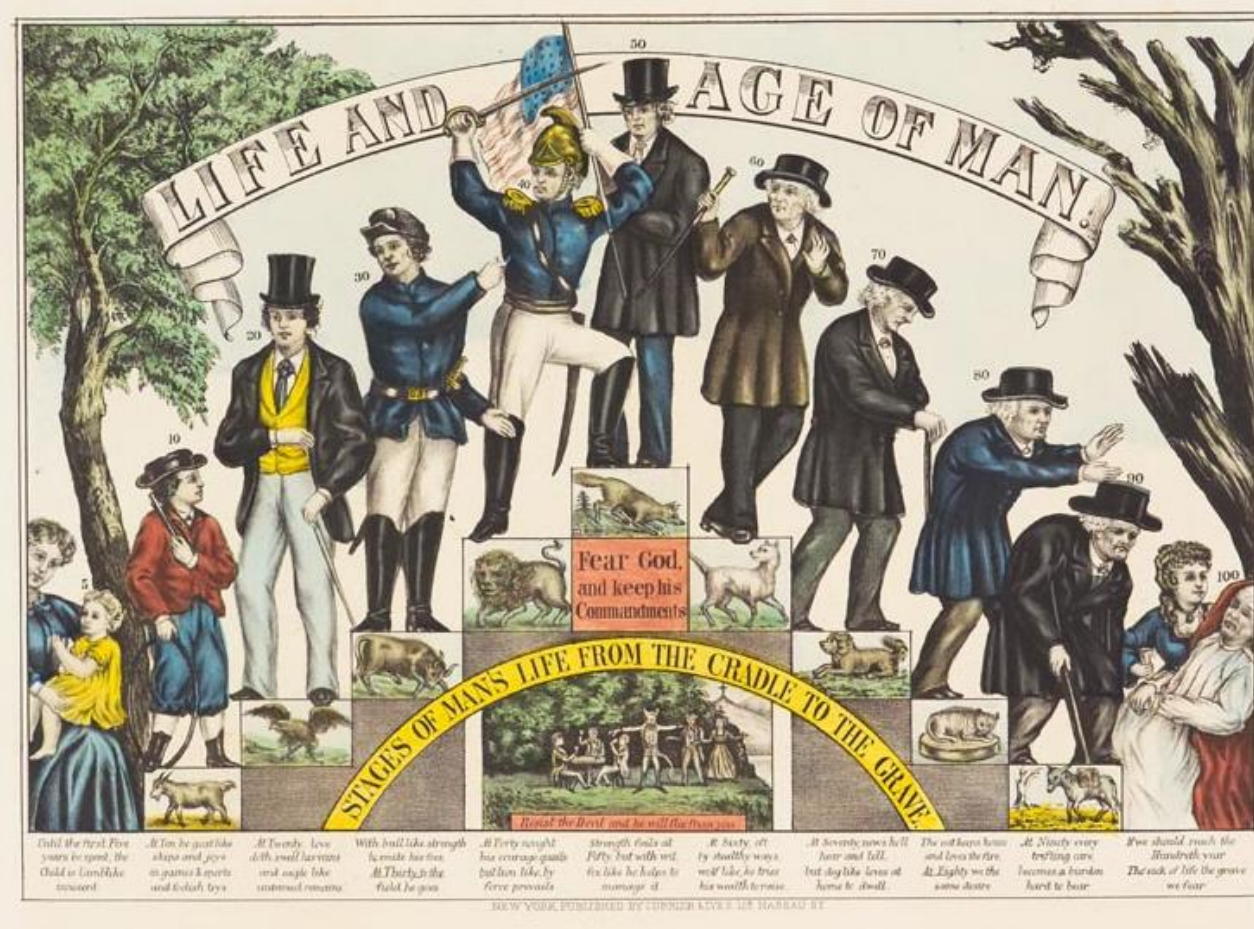


And added something new:  
The Domestic Ideal





# Gendered Expectations





# Native Americans



John Gast,  
*American Progress*, 1872



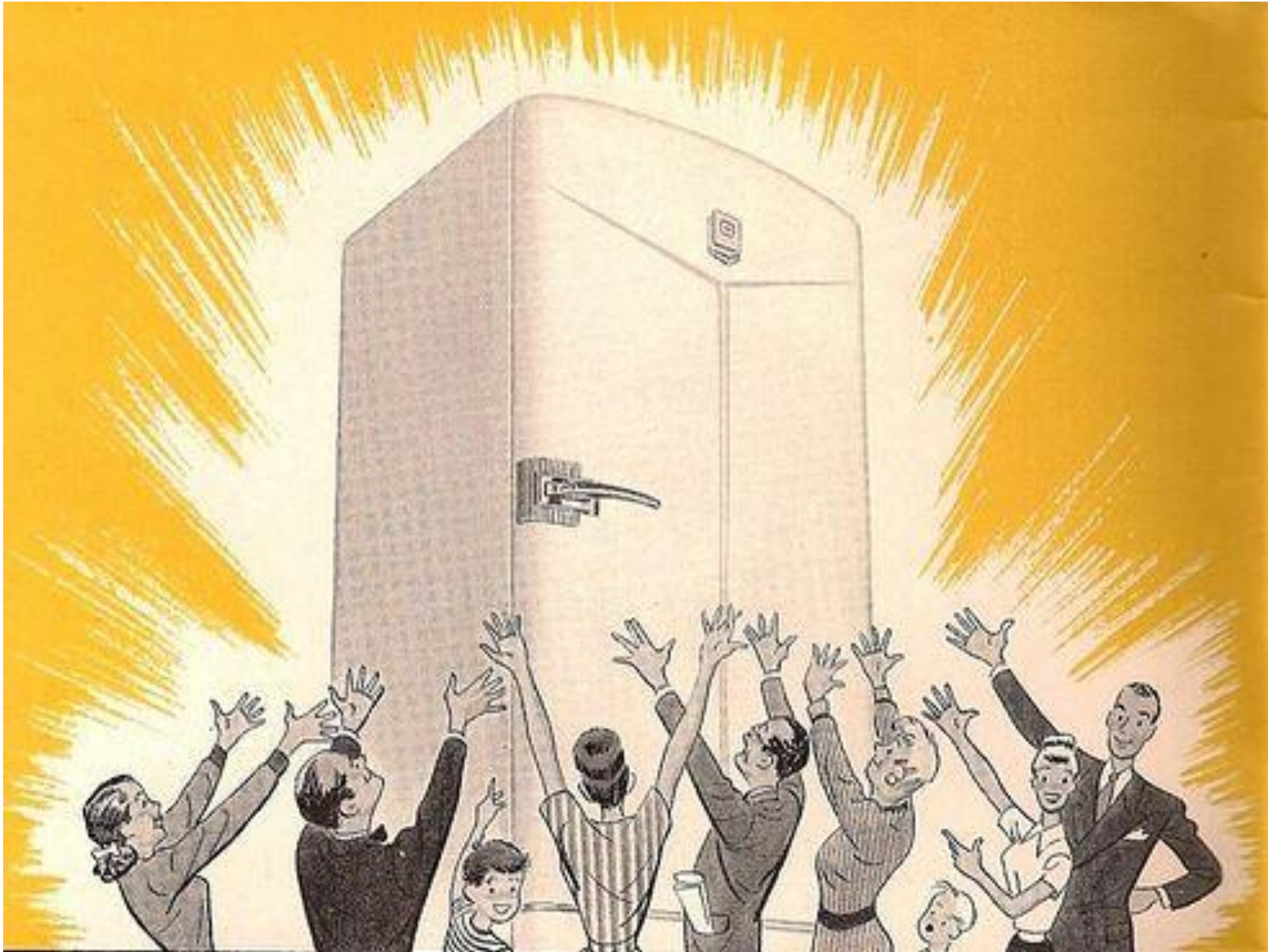


Wounded Knee Massacre,  
1890

Close to 300 indigenous  
men, women, and children  
were killed in the last  
major military action of  
the Plains Wars.



# The American Dream in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century





How did we get here – to this point in which material possessions largely define our self worth?





# The Advertising Revolution of the 1920s

“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ...We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ...In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons...who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.”

— Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda*

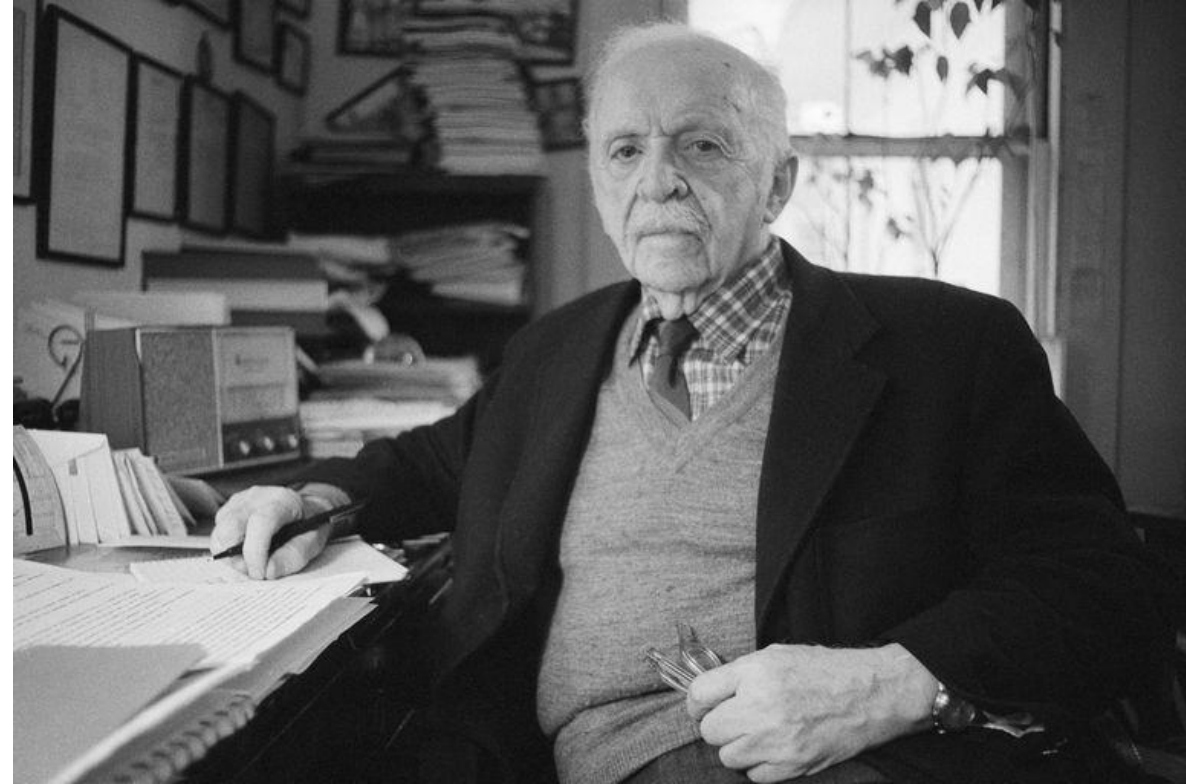


**Edward Bernays**, father of  
“Public Relations,” his  
euphemism for propaganda;  
author of *Propaganda*, 1928



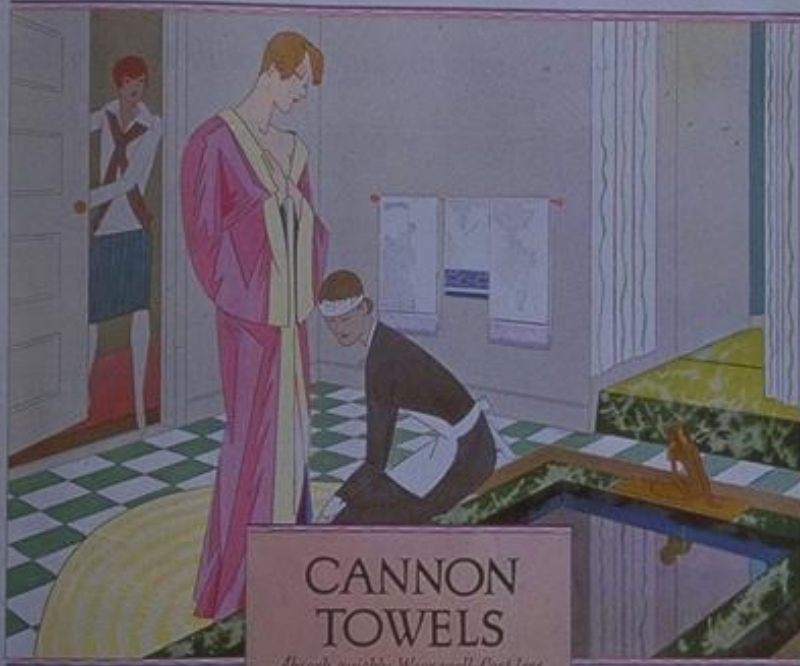
“Universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his environment. Once he could read and write he would have a mind fit to rule. So ran the democratic doctrine. But instead of a mind, universal literacy has given him rubber stamps, rubber stamps inked with advertising slogans, with editorials, with published scientific data, with the trivialities of the tabloids and the platitudes of history, but quite innocent of original thought. Each man's rubber stamps are the duplicates of millions of others, so that when those millions are exposed to the same stimuli, all receive identical imprints. It may seem an exaggeration to say that the American public gets most of its ideas in this wholesale fashion. The mechanism by which ideas are disseminated on a large scale is propaganda, in the broad sense of an organized effort to spread a particular belief or doctrine.”

## More Bernays





..AND ALSO IN THIS COUNTRY HOUSE  
with its tradition  
of lavish hospitality



**CANNON  
TOWELS**

*Absorb quickly—Wear well—Cost less*

Peculiar these days know how to live a leisurely, gracious life in the country. . . . Fine estates in the Berkshires and at Newport, in the Adirondacks and Maine, many delightful places everywhere, testify to a keen appreciation and enjoyment of sports, congenial company, and comfort.

The mistress of a really well-equipped modern country house is concerned with every particular of entertaining. And most important among the luxurious details to which she gives careful attention are bath salts, soaps, toilet waters, face cloths, towels and bath mats for the splendid bathrooms of her country mansions. Cannon towels and bath mats have the air of belonging in immaculate, decorative bathrooms. Women accustomed to the finest household linen choose them instinctively. With the sensible economy of the well-to-do, they are glad to find high quality at most reasonable prices.

Other housekeepers on a grand scale, many of the famous hotels of America, appreciate the merits of Cannon towels. They know that the good looks and the hardiness of these

excellent towels are in keeping with the finest appointments. Their shrewd business sense tells them that in every sense Cannon towels are a good investment. . . . The original cost-price is less than for any other towels of equal quality. The service is eminently satisfactory—they wear wonderfully well and withstand constant laundering.

Ask to see a selection of Cannon towels appropriate for "cottages" and camps. Great marvelous bath towels, with whales and dolphins to add a picturesque finish to the daily swim! Handy little huck towels and small sized Turkish towels too. Big bath mats. Capacious bath sheets. Whatever colors suit your fancy. All white, plain stripes or unusual designs—as you prefer. . . . Cannon towels and bath mats are on sale in good stores everywhere, priced from 25¢ to \$1.50. Cannon Mills, Inc., 30 Worth Street, New York City.



The Cannon "Flying Dolphin" towel and bath mat. Available for about \$1.

\*NOTE: All colors in Cannon towels and bath mats are guaranteed absolutely colorfast.

# The Art of the Sell: Modern Advertising Defines the Dream

**Advertiser Bruce Barton preaches a consumer ethic of instant gratification:**

Consumers should discard "the old-fashioned notion that the chief end in life is a steadily growing savings account, and that one must eliminate all pleasures from the vigorous years for possible want in old ages....Life is meant to live and enjoy as you go along...If self-denial is necessary, I'll practice some of it when I'm old and not try to do all of it now. For who knows? I may never be old."



# Conspicuous Consumption

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899:

The basis on which good repute in any highly organized industrial community ultimately rests is pecuniary strength; and the means of showing pecuniary strength, and so of gaining or retaining a good name, are leisure and a conspicuous consumption of goods.



Pretty Substantial People, no doubt,  
in the New Brick House"

You know you *are* somebody, living in a house of Face Brick, and so does everybody else. Face Brick construction is one of the accepted finer things, which, fortunately, exacts no real premium.

With a *total* cost of only a few hundred dollars for *all* the Face Brick in even a large house, any extra cost over ordinary materials is ridicu-

lously small. Then there are the savings in upkeep, insurance and depreciation, piling up year after year. The economies of Face Brick multiply themselves!

Then who wouldn't choose the permanent beauty, the endless color variety and interest, the modern style and impressiveness combined only in Face Brick?

AMERICAN FACE BRICK ASSOCIATION, 2136 City State Bank Bldg., CHICAGO  
If you live in Canada—26 QUEEN STREET EAST, TORONTO, ONTARIO

PERMANENTLY EVER-BEAUTIFUL

Check here for free copy of "The Story of Brick," full of home building data and valuable comparative data on costs.  
"Face Brick Bangalows and Small Home Plans" covers in four editions—each 25c. Please check:  
☐ 14 Rooms ☐ 5 Rooms  
☐ 6 Rooms ☐ 7 & 8 Rooms  
Entire Set \$1.00.  
Check here—send 50c for "The Home of Tomorrow," 50 price plans for 2-story 6-room houses.  
"The Home First" gives you the latest in face brick. 25c.  
Free Book—"A New Home for the Old." The best information on modernizing.  
Check items wanted and write name and address.



# Advertising defines the Dream....but also offers new nightmares

## For Women.....



**Often a bridesmaid but never a bride**

EDNA's case was really a pathetic one. Like every woman, her primary ambition was to marry. Yet of the girls of her set were married—or about to be. Yet not one possessed more grace or charm or loveliness than she.

And as her birthdays crept gradually toward that tragic thirty-mark, marriage seemed farther from her life than ever. She was often a bridesmaid but never a bride.

That's the tedious thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath). You, yourself, rarely know when you have it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some degenerated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant.

It kills food fermentation in the mouth and leaves the breath sweet, fresh and clean. Not by substituting some other odor but by really removing the old one.

The Listerine odor itself quickly disappears. So the systematic use of Listerine puts you on the safe and polite side.

Your druggist will supply you with Listerine. He sells lots of it. It has dozens of different uses as a safe antiseptic and has been created as such for a half a century. Read the interesting little booklet that comes with every bottle.—Listerine Pharmaceutical Company, Indianapolis, U.S.A.

**HALITOSIS** **MY LISTERINE**

*"Don't stare at me like that"...*

**H**ER OWN HUSBAND, who hadn't known for years whether a gown was worn for the first or twentieth time, staring at her—a hard, appraising stare that hurt.

"What's the matter with your face?" he asked in the kindly way of husbands. "Looks rough. Your face and neck used to be as smooth and young as your shoulders."

If he had noticed, what about the critical world? Was that why other men seemed less interested—why other women were no longer envious?

Many a woman keeps up a joyous front when in reality she's terribly dismayed about this first break in her youthful looks. Her face, which has always been so dewy fresh, is beginning to look parched—actually coarse in spots. "Why is it?" she thinks worriedly. "And what can I do about it?"

When you come right down to it—why does the face grow old so much earlier than the shoulders? Because it's exposed. It weathers! The texture of the skin on the protected part of your body is exquisitely smooth and soft, isn't it? Compared with it, your unprotected face and hands and neck look years older. Weathering has made that difference. Weathering ages everything.

*Suncorch is a violent form of weathering*

At this time of year the skin is exposed to the sun. Sunshine in moderation is good—but violent sunburn parches the skin of its natural moisture. Dries it of its lustrous youth. Makes it harsh and old-looking.

When your skin gets suncorched, smooth it on Hinds Honey & Almond Cream. It takes out the heat. Makes the skin soft and fresh once more.

But better even than that, Hinds Cream prevents suncorch. Before going out just smooth on Hinds Cream. And powder over it. Then, though your skin may turn a glorious golden tan, it will never get painfully red and suncorched. It will keep its softness and freshness.

Hinds Cream protects from all other weathering, too—from dust and wind, from cold and heat, from smoke and grime.

This fragrant liquid cream sinks deep, deep into the skin. It cools and relieves yes. But it also softens and freshens down to the deep, underlying tissue of your skin as softly, naturally moist meant it to be—and keeps it so. Cream today, tomorrow, every day need never fear the aging effects of weathering. And if your skin has become rough, a little coarse, a little old, find that Hinds Cream puts back moisture and so makes your face clear and smooth once more.

*Hinds Cream is simple to use*


Before going outdoors, use it as your powder. (It gives a marvelous finish.) Smooth it into your skin again in the morning—all your skin soaks. During the day, when fresh go over your face with it. It's the simple, the common-sense way of day-by-day exposure.

And your hands and neck—do them. They weather just as much as your face. Hinds Cream softens and protects even as it does your face. When on your face, smooth it on your neck, too. Then your skin will be weathering cannot damage the protected by Hinds Cream.

*Send for the sample bottle*

If you wish, we will gladly send you a free sample bottle of Hinds Cream. You see how fresh, how sweetly so your skin, we know you will be. Even a week will show some improvement, although, of course, it is the continuous day-by-day use that brings real results. So send for a coupon now, while you think of it. It's your free sample bottle of Hinds Cream.

*"Lobs & Fink Sincerely"—W. J. and 14 other stars with the National Broadcasting Company—every p. m., Eastern Standard time; 6 p. m., Central Standard time.*



**HINDS** Honey & Almond Cream

Large & Fine, Inc., New York  
Dept. 40, Bloomingdale  
Please send me a free sample bottle of Hinds Honey & Almond Cream, the most penetrating cream for the skin.  
(PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

This coupon not good after \_\_\_\_\_  
Lobs & Fink Inc.  
500 Madison Ave.  
(Mail coupon)



# And for men...



THEY didn't pass you when your car was bright and new—and you still don't like to be left behind. So just remember this: *The next best thing to a brand new car is your present car with Ethyl.*

If you buy a new high-compression car, you'll of course use Ethyl. But if you must make your old car do, give it Ethyl and feel lost youth and power come back as harmful knock and sluggishness disappear.

These days, when we have to do without so many things, we can at least make the most of our cars. And even if you don't measure the fun of driving in dollars and cents, you'll find that Ethyl makes real money savings in lessened repair bills. Ethyl Gasoline Corporation, New York.



*Ethyl fluid contains lead.* © R. G. C. 1933



#### BEWARE OF IMITATIONS

All Ethyl Gasoline is red, but not all red gasolines contain Ethyl fluid. The color is for identification only and adds nothing to performance. Look for this Ethyl emblem on the pump (or its globe).

The all-round quality of Ethyl is doubly tested: at the time of its mixing, and through inspection of samples taken from pumps. Ethyl's margin of anti-knock quality over regular gasoline is greater today than ever before.



He had to fight himself so hard...  
*he didn't put it over.*

YES, he was his own worst enemy. His appearance was against him and he knew it. Oh why had he neglected the bath that morning, the shave, the change of linen? Under the other fellow's gaze it

was hard to forget that cheap feeling. There's self-respect in soap and water. The clean-cut chap can look any man in the face and tell him the facts—line when you're clean, your appearance fights for you.

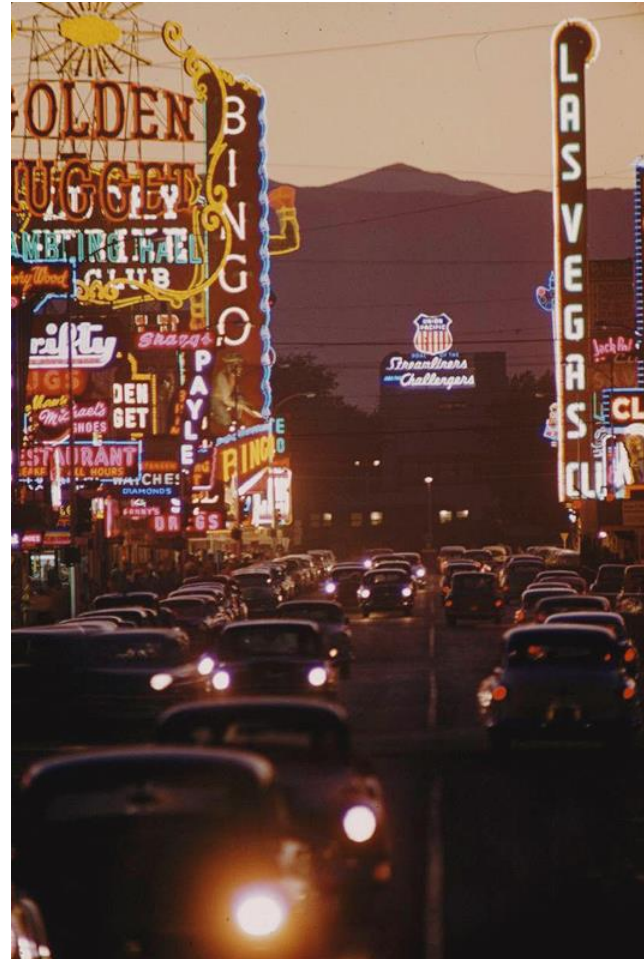
*There's self-respect in* **SOAP & WATER**

RECOMMENDED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN SOAP AND GLYCERINE PRODUCERS, INC., TO AID THE WORK OF CELLULOSIS INSTITUTE

NEXT TIME STOP AT THE **ETHYL** PUMP



# Post World War II Abundance





We feel the effects of all this as we try to define the American Dream for ourselves

1. Success Has Become Supersized







6.5 oz.

# THE GULP SCALE



Coke can: 12 US fl oz.

The Big Gulp: 32 US fl oz.

Super Big Gulp: 44 US fl oz.

Double Gulp: 64 US fl oz.

Extreme Gulp: 54 US fl oz.

Team Gulp (not shown): 128 US fl oz.

The average adult stomach can hold approximately 32 oz. of fluid at one time





## Fifth Third Burger

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: Huge  
Servings 1

Amount Per Serving

**Calories 4889**

	% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b> 299.5g	460%
Saturated Fat 119.2g	597%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 744.6g	248%
<b>Sodium</b> 10887.9mg	454%
<b>Total Carbs</b> 354.9g	118%
Fiber 17.9g	72%
Sugars 37.3g	
<b>Protein</b> 198.7g	397%
<b>Total Flavor</b>	1000%

\*Percent Daily Value are based on a diet of other people's secrets.

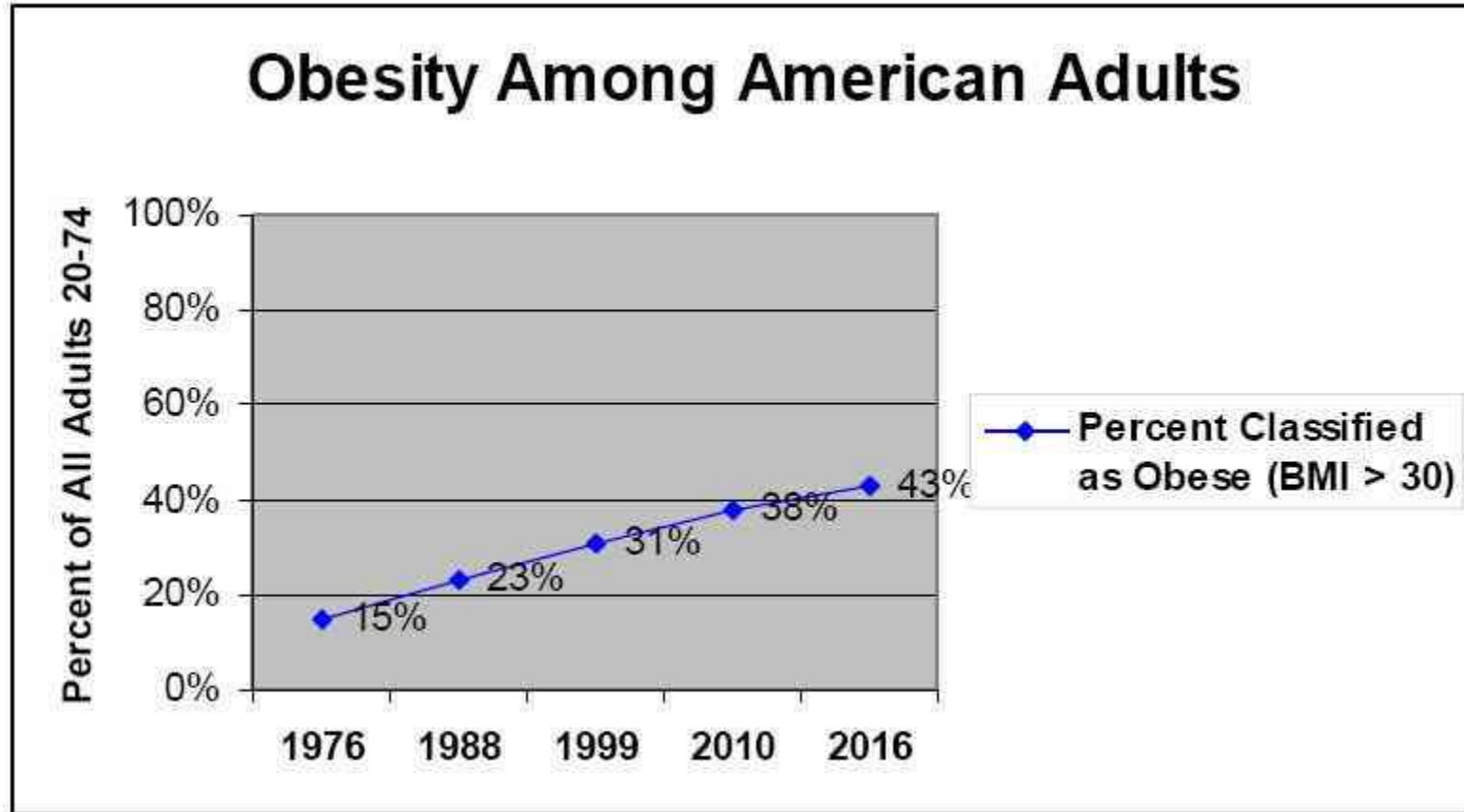


# Fenton's Ice Creamery: Oakland, California





# Super-sized Adults











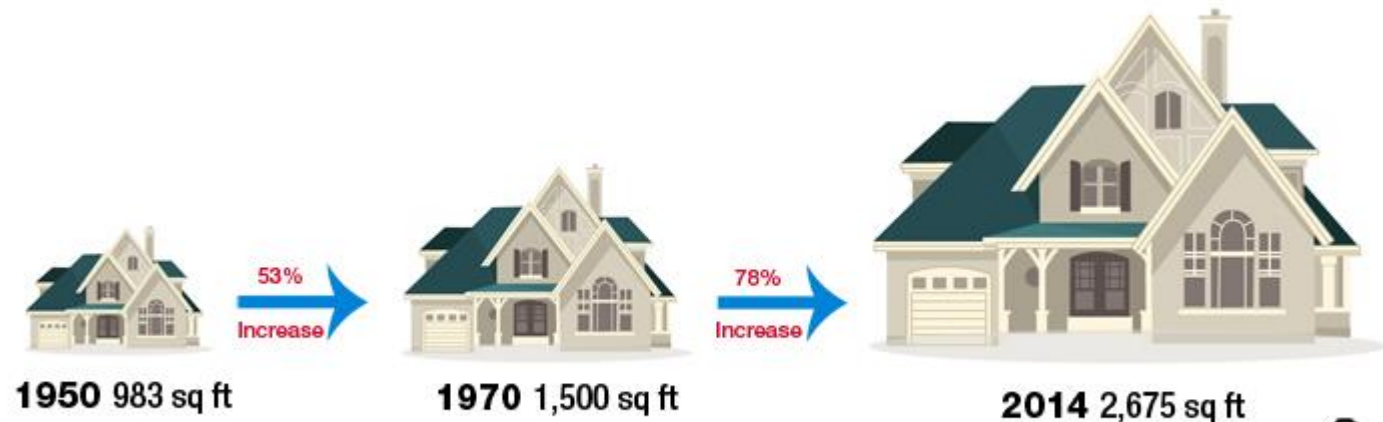


# The Shrinking Family v. The Growing Home Size

Year	# in HH	Sq Ft	Sq Ft/Person
1950	3.38	1,000	296
1960	3.29	1,200	365
1970	3.11	1,400	450
1980	2.75	1,570	571
1990	2.63	2,080	791
2000	2.59	2,200	849
2007	2.55	2,400	941

Source: Census Bureau

## Average Size of a New U.S. Home







McMansions – Palm Springs





Holton-Hooker Center at Grand Valley State University circa 1968



The dorm is being replaced by the living center.

Niemeyer Living Center, GVSU







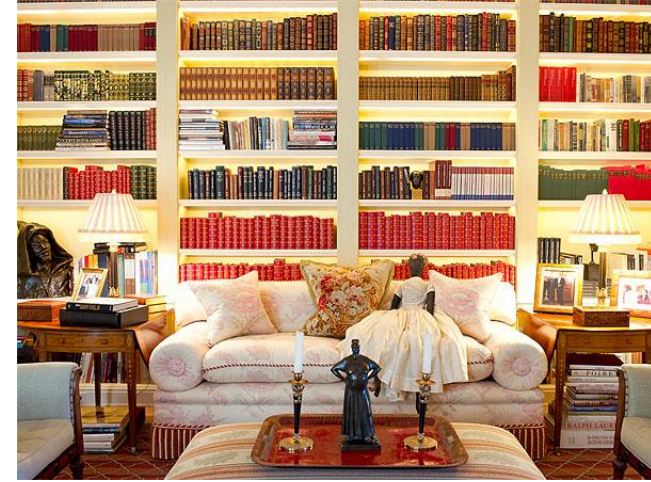
My ancestral home



Transformed into a McMansion



# Oprah Winfrey's Estate



# Toys For the Rich: c. 1990



*The Kingdom 5KR* (formally *The Trump Princess*) is 282 feet long, cost \$100-million to build, and was once owned by Donald Trump. When it was delivered it had five decks, a disco, a cinema with seats for 12 and 2 double beds, 11 opulent suites, a helipad on top (its smoke stacks are sloped outward to avoid interference with the helicopters), a pool with a water jet on top in front of the heliport, 2 Riva tenders, a crew of 48, a top speed of 20 knots, and cruising speed of 17.5 knots



# Toys For the Rich: Now



590 feet long

Cost: \$600 million

Rumored to have a 6,000 square foot lounge, 50 suites, a submarine, and a missile defense system.

Owner: the president of the United Arab Emirates

To avoid taxation, the yacht is listed as a charter yacht, though it is not available for charter.



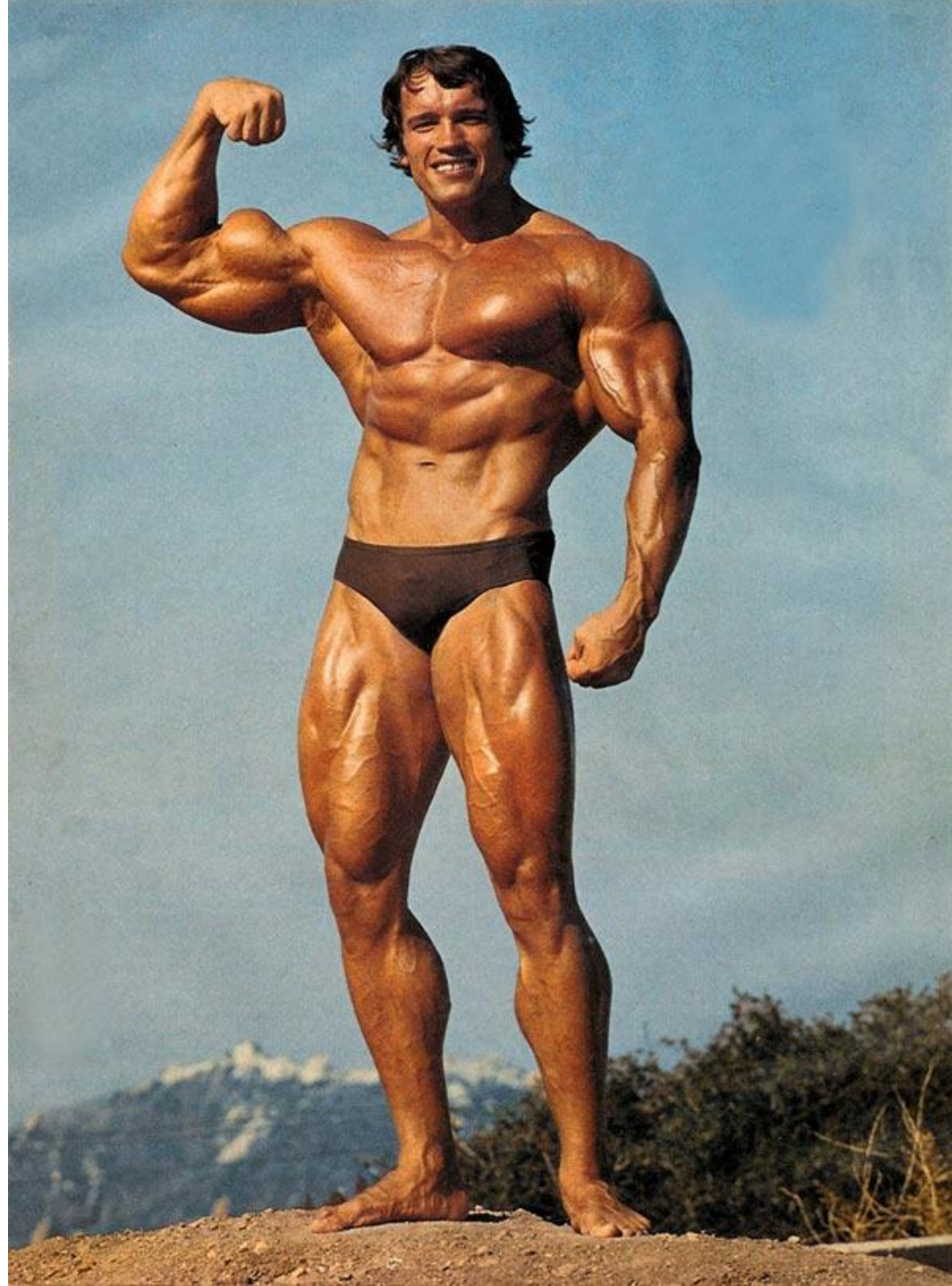
Gulfstream 700: The largest and most expensive private jet in the world.

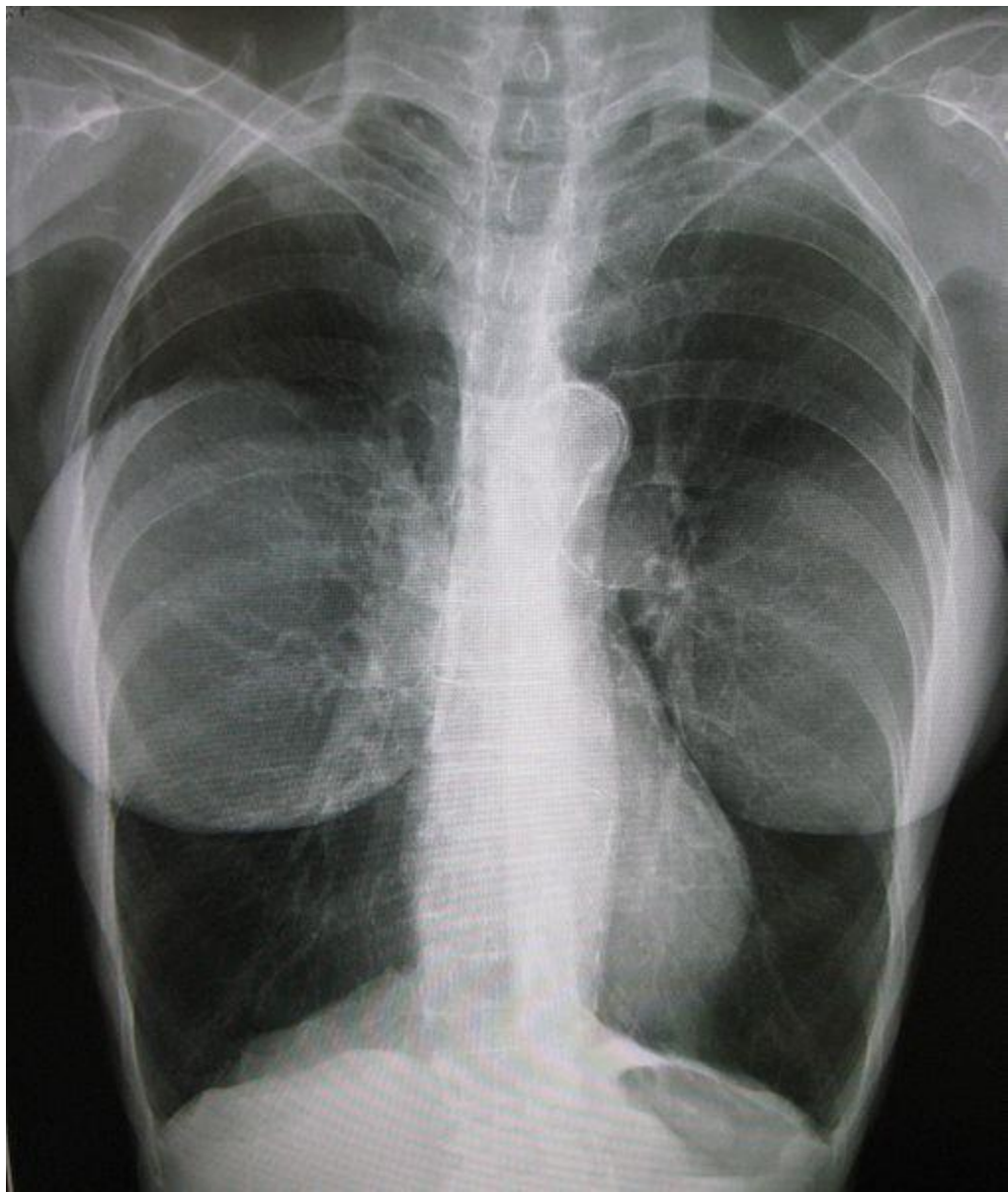
Cost: “75 million

Betsy DeVos family owns 12 private jets: 1 Boeing Business Jet, 5 Gulfstream G550's, 1 Gulfstream G450, 2 Bombardier Challenger 350's, 3 Cessna Citation CJ4's.

The family also owns 4 helicopters and ten yachts. All the yachts are registered in the Cayman Islands to avoid taxes.

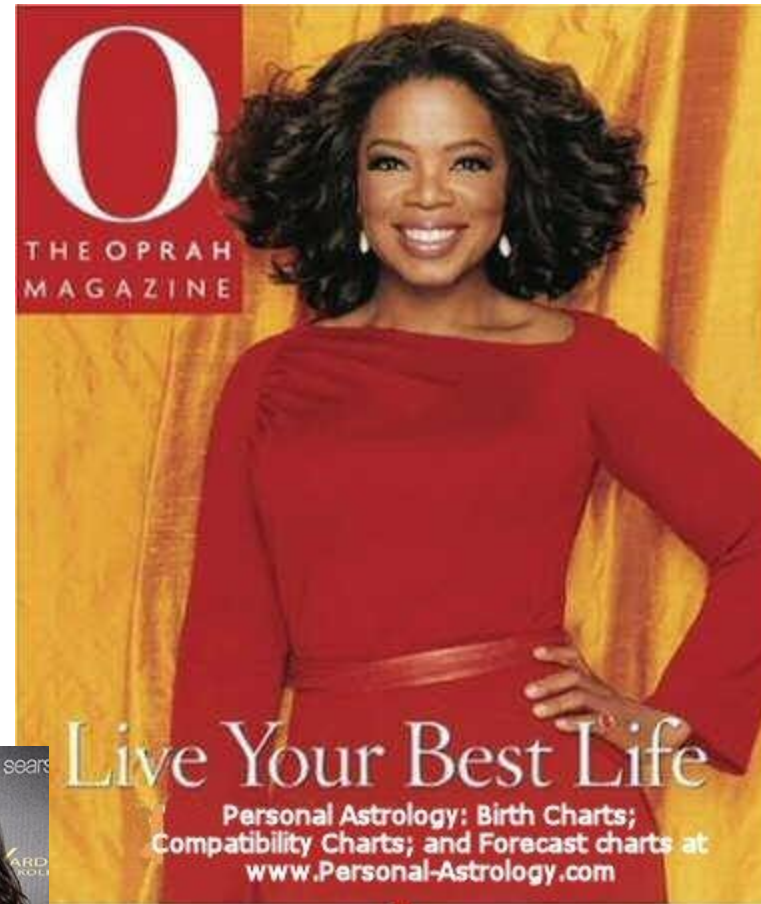








# Super-Sized Egos?



# What does it all mean?

- Inequality and exclusion have been basic features of the American Dream from the nation's outset
- BUT at least the American Dream was once connected to and helped bolster basic notions of American republicanism.
- American Dream once encapsulated values of character and altruism as much as material reward
- Materialism has become the centerpiece of the Dream, at least in much of our popular culture.
- We accept gross inequalities – inequalities that run counter to our basic values of fairness and justice – for the sake of the Dream. As such, pursuit of the Dream may actually harm the republic
- Time to reformulate the Dream?