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## The American Dreamer

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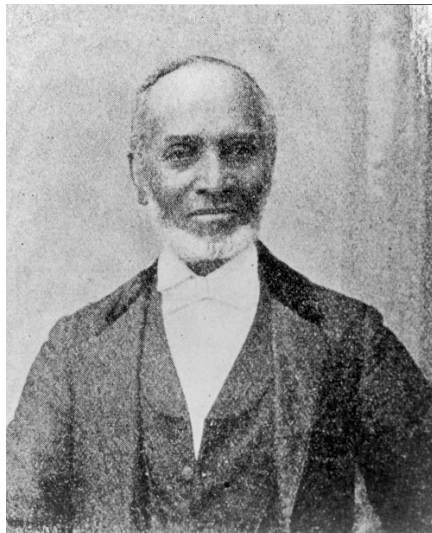
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THE AMERICAN  
DREAMER

By: EsQuir3

Pictured to the left is Reverend Peter Fossett of Cincinnati, a former slave of President Thomas Jefferson—a founding father, author of the Declaration of Independence, and slave owner. Reverend Fossett played an integral role in escorting escaped slaves into and beyond the free state of Ohio on the Underground Railroad.

Thomas Jefferson once said that all men are created equal.  
 About a sector of our people  
*We've*<sup>1</sup> subsequently fought wars, blended families,  
 let *us* not forget, that part was not by choice,  
 Indeed, *we* industrialized, suffered depressions,  
 and extended the vote to more than just boys  
*We've* progressed, built highways, crafted the New York Stock Exchange.  
 The Great Society passed legislation imagining true freedom,  
*We've* since repealed and replaced.  
 America, there is no place like you, so long as you're on the paper chase,  
 But *we've* never really pursued honesty when *we* talk about race.  
 Thomas Jefferson declared that we hold these truths to be self-evident,  
 meaning:  
 Self-explanatory, unnecessary to talk about,  
 foundational in the pursuit of happiness.  
 Yet, *we* enslaved millions of our people,  
*We* strategically segregated black from white,  
 Claiming that in order for us to maintain the façade of freedom  
*We* must uphold the notion of separate but equal.  
 As time crept forward, we Negroes learned to stay in our place.  
 Honestly, after Jim Crow, who could really predict the sequel?

Before we move forward, let us first address the topic of white supremacy  
 Alas, this is how Americans give a conversation any legitimacy  
 Issues of importance have always been handled by white men in charge  
 That was until 2008,  
 When we picked Barack Hussein Obama to run point guard.  
 Obama saved us from the Great Recession, with his economic reforms  
 Those radical Islamic terrorists?  
 He sent Osama Bin Laden to the morgue  
 The Black Man delivered on the Dream of universal health care  
 Only to be met by 2016's election, leaving his plans in a state of disrepair  
 2016 set the stage for the notorious candidate  
 The revival of the old guard was ready to activate

Before we get to *him* let us first analyze some of the effects of white supremacy  
 America, *you* have typically granted all of its perpetrators clemency  
 It used to look like groups of white men in white hoods  
 dispensing white violence on all people of color.  
 It then shifted to mobs stripping Emmitt Till's life away from his mother  
 The sad reality of being black in this country is the realization that at any point

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<sup>1</sup> Where "We," "His," "He," "You," "Us," and "Our" are italicized throughout this piece, the author is referring to the American people who believe themselves to be white and have taken an active or passive role in promoting white supremacy throughout the history of the nation.

State sanctioned violence could lead to your inevitable demise  
 Take for example, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Sam Dubose, or Tamir Rice  
 The cold-hearted truth is that white supremacists asserting power  
 will likely never answer for their crimes.  
 But *he* feared for *his* life!  
 Sure, that's certainly the way *he* plead.  
 But what about my friend, the Black Man,  
 Lying in the middle of the street, dead?  
 Black Lives Matter, a hate group? A threat to veterans? The police?  
 Let *us* not forget *our* history hanging strange fruit from red, white, and blue trees  
 Let *us* not forget *our* history when white men fought for black freedom.  
 Let *us* not forget *our* history when black men fought for *our* freedom.  
 Let *us* not forget *our* history when *our* freedom was all *we* had.  
 These self-evident truths no longer seem so self-evident when *we* treat each other so bad.  
 You see our fates are aligned, like it or not, thanks to Article 3  
 I'm talkin' constitutionally enumerated powers of the Federal Judiciary.  
 Brothers, sisters, my fellow countrymen, I come to elucidate the truth.  
 Desegregation was intended, even if the transition wasn't very smooth.  
 The Court chose to progress, and Negroes rejoiced gladly  
*Loving v. Virginia, Brown v. Board, Shelley v. Kramer*  
 Oh no, we weren't ready for *Milliken v. Bradley*...

Allow me to preface these next few rhythms with full disclosure  
 You see, I believe that the fate of the Negro in this land is dependent upon  
 Equality, Employment, and Enlightenment.  
 Without these three crucial pillars, the fate of black people in this nation  
 may lead to imminent disaster.  
 Therefore, what *Milliken v. Bradley* did to our potential is inexcusable.  
 Hence, the tone of anger in my voice is not without warrant.  
 And I find it astounding that you still approach us in a manner so abhorrent.  
 If we are all supposed to be endowed by our Creator with unalienable rights,  
 Why is it that *we* don't value the first right of the Black Man: life?

Urban zoning and the American Dream,  
 A little-known secret *we* invented to feed into *our* greed.  
 Except, *we* never got around to letting our darker skinned countrymen participate.  
*We* figured the fruits of our labor would be protected if only *we* could mitigate  
 The threat of a black invasion forced upon *us* by the push to integrate.  
 How dare the Supreme Court try to push *us* around?  
 Who do they think they are to issue such a heavy decision like *Brown*?  
 Don't they know what they've done?  
 Can't they see what they've started?  
 That scary man from Birth of a Nation is on the way to impregnate *our* white daughters!  
 Sure, it was fine when *we* raped all their women who worked for *us*,  
 But that was different, in the past, besides look at all the pretty babies it afforded *us*.

Now you want to bring the likes of Lil Wayne, 50 Cent,  
Colin Kaepernick to *my* neighborhood?!

UH UH HELL NAW!

Something about the Civil Rights Movement must have been misunderstood.  
Look, *we* saw on the TV all those *racists* beating up those black college kids,

And you know *we* couldn't condone such blatant harassment of the jigs,

So, *we* agreed that it was time to uplift the descendants of the slaves.

After all, it was not their fault they were brought here in chains.

*We* wanted to give them a chance to prove their worth,

Except it was never a part of the plan to let them move in next door!

So, *we* got into *our* think tanks and referred to *our* notes,

Something had to be done so that *our* communities could stay afloat.

The solution was simple, take control of the land,

spread *our* culture, *our* influence, and even *our* brands.

*We* will build, *we* will prosper, *we* will generate wealth,

But if *we* include those black folks it could be bad for *our* health.

So, *we* must move away, and begin *our* new lives.

Great white flight, sure you could say that,

But remember, federal government, you put *us* into quite a bind.

The issue of state's rights is a guise for local control

It is used to defend against the federal patrol.

The fight for integration in the South was ugly, filled with all kinds of bloodshed.

In the North *we* learned *we* couldn't strong-arm our way into victory over the Feds.

You see, the South fought in the Civil War to maintain their "backward" way of life

While the North wanted to push for industrial progression in order to capitalize.

The North wasn't prepared for the influx of migrants and immigrants from all over

The rise of slums and urban blight led to a "criminal" takeover.

So, *we* mobilized *our* police forces, and then came the riots,

Good God, the 1960s was a time full of violence.

Levittown is calling, on to the suburbs *we* go,

the push to develop new land is now admirable

The violence in the hood must be contained, to keep out those undesirables.

*We* must evacuate the city, before the youth become uninspirable.

Who were the undesirables? The blacks? The Irish? The Italians? The Jews?

I guess it was anybody that was different who could not afford the dues.

Over time the plan proved to be an excellent tactic

A perfect way to stick it to the Feds and restore some order.

Now, to ensure some stability, let's reinforce *our* borders!

The only way to do that is to keep the schools from being compromised

If *we* bus in those black kids, the next generation could get too colorized.

No, *we* can't have that, *we* 've got to solidify the plan

How about *we* pay off those urban districts and strengthen our brand.

*We* 'll bring in more tax dollars, and raise some outstanding students,

No one will notice if *we* legitimize the segregating jurisprudence.  
 Let's try *our* luck in Detroit, and see how this thing will go,  
 Let's hope "*de facto* segregation" will lead to a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.  
*Milliken v. Bradley*, you produced exactly what *we* needed,  
 A security blanket that rendered integration defeated.  
 After the precedent had been set, zoning and schools became interlinked.  
 The path to opportunity for people of color rapidly began to shrink.  
 In modern times, as urban blight has begun to fade away,  
 We see a repeat of history downtown, as the move to gentrify is on full display.

The terms I mentioned are heavy subjects requiring much reflection. . .  
 Perhaps, my fellow Americans, the agenda was never subject to detection?  
 Perhaps *our* racist underbelly was the whole crux behind the results of the 2016 election?  
 Perhaps *de facto* segregation is truly a product of natural selection?  
 Perhaps black on black crime is the product of built up aggression?  
 Perhaps the state of our affairs was set up with good intentions?  
 Perhaps, America, *you* never cared to know  
 the effects of condemning black bodies to the Department of Corrections?  
 Perhaps, America, *you* never envisioned the Negro  
 when you said All *men* are created equal?  
 Perhaps *you* never expected our citizenship to be legal  
 Perhaps *our* country truly does prefer to segregate  
 Perhaps white supremacy is the path necessary to make *our* country great.  
 Of course, you must forgive me for I choose to disagree  
 The beauty of our country is in its appreciation of diversity.  
 Remember, while *you* sent us away to our corners of poverty  
 We harvested a culture that created an economy  
 Hip Hop, Jazz, Rock and Roll, the Blues  
 All of these art forms arose from black culture in spite of your abuse.  
 The souls of black folks in this country have produced unrivaled excellence  
 Yet, we are honored for our contributions with state sanctioned negligence.  
 The current condition of our school systems is separate and unequal  
 It's been this way since 1974 and its effects have been quite lethal.

But *we* had a black president!  
*We* can't be racist; *our* best friend is black!  
 These retorts often miss the mark,  
 Never fear, EsQuir3 here to help *you* pick up the slack

All men are created equal?  
 Do *we* . . . Have *we* . . . Will *we* ever believe those words?  
 When we all have been on the pursuit  
 But those of us with darker skin have often been deterred  
 Don't believe me? Alternative facts you cry? Look them up yourself  
 The true history of us is painful, assuming you aren't protected by wealth.

Still don't think racism built... is building... will build(?) This country?

Let me give you some examples

The scars of equality often illuminate hypocrisy

But that's only the half of the scandal.

SLAVERY, PEONAGE, JIM CROW, THE WAR ON DRUGS

Sources of oppression that turned black children into thugs

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION, SCHOOL SEGREGATION,

POOR ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Need I go on? Or have you been shamed enough by our despair?

GENTRIFICATION, SCHOOL SEGREGATION,

A DESPERATE DEPENDENCE ON WELFARE

Some of the biggest crises of our time in case you may not be aware.

Liberty is the next enumerated right, promised to us by the founding fathers,

But we've yet to achieve freedom when our potential is so often squandered.

*Our* jails are filled with discarded citizens

Products of a school system that is decrepit.

Emerging from slums in the inner city entrapped there due to lack of credit.

The prison industrial complex fuels the beast that is driven by major corporations

These same secured creditors invest in the next big thing; we call it gentrification.

Those once abandoned homes with boarded up entryways and crack-infested walls

Are now owned by our white brothers and sisters

Repurposed due to disastrous urban sprawl.

Before we know it, we get priced out of the market, forced to move if we want to survive,

Meanwhile *they* colonize our communities

Belittling the growing movement for black lives.

Here *they* go again with *their* disrespectful denial of corruption

Yet, we see the shift before our eyes, the strategic black reduction.

EsQuir3, *you* ask, what's your problem with developmental change,

The smell of Starbucks in the air?

*We* prefer nice things to the traditional blight and downtown despair.

I answer, be great Starbucks, push forward, expand *your* imminent domain,

But I ask if *you* 've ever considered that single mom whom you've given so much pain?

I must ask if *you* 've considered all the homeless people on the street

Or have *you* simply ignored the problem

While making *your* profit margins elite?

Have *you* considered the unique culture that made this place so rich?

Or will *you* simply replace it with a yoga studio, frequented by rich white chicks?

Is the profit worth the potential for a child's hopeless fate?

Or was this just an isolated incident in the effort to Make America Great?

It is impossible to discuss liberty without first addressing its alternative;

The notion of American freedom can't be anything but affirmative.

However, I'd be remiss if I didn't share the black mark on American freedom

The mentality has permeated northern thoughts, but its roots were in antebellum

The evils that have plagued our beloved land start and end with slavery,  
 The wretched slave and the powerful planter are emblems of American bravery.  
 The crops that were sown and the lives that were lost were all in the name of freedom  
 The cash crops picked by black field hands built an extraordinary southern kingdom.  
 The reality of slavery is difficult to fathom, particularly in our white-washed history books  
 Yet, the cruelty of the industry and the oppressive laws that followed it  
     has had generations of black people shook.  
 In America, *we* like to boast that our land is the land of opportunity,  
 But we always leave out the part about how *we* normalized hellish cruelty.  
 My dear reader, these next few rhythms are not designed to make you or *you* feel guilty,  
     Rather, my purpose is to give you and *you* some context  
     About an American secret that is filthy.  
 Before there was a stock market, before there was an app,  
     Before there was a mall, a phone,  
 Or before the internet existed as a place to buy all your crap,  
 There was a caste system here in America, that valued the ownership of land,  
 In fact, you couldn't even vote unless you were a powerful rich white man.  
 Back then, *you* had to prove that *you* were a property owner,  
     Something that symbolized wealth and respect.  
 If you were a slave, there was no way to prove that you were anything more than a reject.  
     If you were a slave, you were subject to the whims of your master,  
 If you were a slave, whenever you "acted up" your back would be beaten and battered,  
     If you were a slave, you were typically paid no more than \$19 a year.  
 If you were a slave, you were lucky if you didn't live your life in constant fear.  
     If you were a slave, you could be killed if you ever taught yourself to read,  
     If you were a slave trying to run to "freedom,"  
     Your rebellion might cause you to lose one of your feet.  
 If you were a slave with dreams of doing anything outside of your master's wishes,  
 Then you would be a slave that was next in line for the packed-out public lynching.  
     To be a slave in this country is to display unimaginable strength,  
     To be a slave in this country is to endure pain that goes to great lengths.  
     To be a slave in this country is not for the weak of heart,  
     To be a slave in this country is to submit to an American farce.  
 Slavery ended after the Civil War, but its effects are still very present,  
*You* tell multiple generations they are nothing, and expect them to be pleasant?  
     Then *you* criminalize them if they have no adequate occupation?  
 Yet, *you* used to kill them when they attempted to master literary basics?  
     What land is this that calls itself the land of opportunity?  
     When they treat their slaves as dirt and grime,  
     But expect the slave descendants to be unworried?  
 Slavery is the sin we can never forget, no matter how hard *you* try!  
     The repercussions were too great and have likely been solidified.  
     Even the founding fathers refused to acknowledge it, but never let it die.  
     The ugly truth of our existence is that slavery is as American as apple pie...  
 The final right enumerated by Thomas Jefferson was a lofty goal with a nod at capitalism



The pursuit of happiness is intentionally vague but connotes chivalrous intentions.  
 The characterization of the word pursuit implies that one must acknowledge struggle.  
 Prosperity rarely comes to those who are strangers to the hustle.  
 Happiness is not always found at the bank,  
 But monetary wealth always helps  
 Especially in a land like ours, where the rich are masters of the art of stealth.  
 How does one become so rich in a land notorious for abuse?  
 Must a person sacrifice their values or family, just to enter the pursuit?  
 Is it truly possible to enjoy the riches that this great country of ours has promised?  
 Must we break each other's back? Does acquiring wealth require actors to be dishonest?  
 The thing Jefferson never mentioned when *he* wrote about the pursuit  
 Was the toil of others who built the dream, many of whom were strung up with a noose.  
 That part of the story must never be told, no matter how significant its weight  
 The fact remains that *we* have prospered, and *we* would have to share if we said thanks.  
*We* found *our* happiness, and *we* passed it on to *our* children.  
*We* just can't understand the problem with those Negroes.  
 Don't they know that if they want to be like *us*, they've got to buy and sell people?!  
 Well, I guess that practice is no longer allowed, they'll have to find a new method.  
 But they can't be mad because *we* took advantage while they remained decrepit.  
 If you want to make it in America,  
 You have to get with the pursuit that will make dollars and cents.  
 How else do you think us rich guys get to drive around in our Benz?!  
*We* work, *We* work, *We* work, *We* work  
 Until there's no more work, then we pack up our things  
 And find new places to work until the end.  
 It always helps to start with a cushion from good old mom and dad.  
 Shame on those people that claim *we* are spoiled  
 Because they'll never have the things *we* 've had.  
*We* have a tradition to keep, a legacy to pass down, a culture of American exceptionalism  
 If you aren't willing to get down and dirty,  
 Then be prepared to get swallowed by capitalism.  
 Successful Americans must have grit in this hard knock life we live,  
 Peasant Americans will be content with the pitiful scraps that the petty government gives.  
 Lift yourselves by your bootstraps! That's what we preach, we don't tolerate lazy kids.  
 Yet, we are lagging behind other nations  
 In education, wealth distribution, and achievement.

The American Dream will have to be realized by the rich.  
 If we don't change soon, the fate of *our* nation is in danger of deteriorating  
*We* can't keep hiding the secrets of success from the kids *we* keep berating.  
 The children of the poor have no idea what fate befalls their futures  
 The trajectory of our nation is troublesome if you cannot afford a tutor.  
 The 99% have spoken out and voiced their growing disdain,  
 Yet the 1% are at most indifferent, so long as their happiness can be maintained.  
 Thomas Jefferson said the pursuit of happiness was an unalienable right,

Yet, the poor among us has grown while the rich have grown their pockets in spite  
 Of the schism created by generational wealth being passed while the poor take crumbs.  
 America, I must keep asking you, how will we end this impending fight?

Before we continue down the rabbit hole that good old Jefferson thought to be fool proof  
 We have to get to the bottom of how being rich in America became so darn aloof.  
 The class divide in this country has been in the news a lot as of late,  
 Unfortunately, the current Commander in Chief  
 Embodies none of the characteristics of Americans that have made this country great.  
 The current President inherited a sizeable portion of *his* wealth,  
 The current President expanded *his* empire by mastering the art of stealth.  
 The current President is the chief executive of a massive hotel empire,  
*He* sells vacation packages to people with whom *he* would like to conspire.  
 The gains of the current President are quite admirable in the context of riches,  
 But the gains of the current President are out of reach for the common American citizen.  
 The current President masterfully dictated the terms of the 2016 presidential election  
 The current President dominated the narrative and insured victory over *his* competition.  
 The current President has friends in high places, that dictate many of *his* initiatives,  
 The current President has no interest in bowing down to the causes of the inhibited.  
 The current President is an amalgamation of the doctrine that earned us *our* reputation.  
*Our* reputation across the globe elicits disdain and some vexations.  
 The current President is a dormant monolith  
 Of war, petty disputes, and chauvinistic drama  
 We, the American people, could not have strayed any further  
 From former President Obama.

Yet, the current President is fitting of the common American rhetoric.  
 The dichotomy between him and his predecessor is nothing short of historic.  
 I saved this topic for last, with the hope that you've appreciated my candor,  
 These last few rhythms about our country are sure to aggravate *our* commander.  
 Although, my rhythms are simply for the enlightened few among us,  
 I must admit, while I have the chance, I hope this reaches the masses,  
 But I know too well about our land that heavy topics like these often end up in the trashes.  
 Therefore, I challenge you and *you*,  
 My loyal, inquisitive, skeptical reader  
 To do your part and pass along  
 The truth about our founder,  
 Thomas Jefferson, the old American Dreamer.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashton Hood, who writes under the name EsQuir3, is a graduate of the class of 2019 at the University of Cincinnati College of Law. Prior to writing for the *Freedom Center Journal*, he grew up in Glendale, Ohio, where he attended the Princeton City School District. He was Princeton High School's only African American male from the class of 2010 enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program, where he worked hard both academically and athletically to earn a Division One Football Scholarship at the prestigious Lehigh University. At Lehigh, he majored in Political Science and Africana Studies. Upon graduation, Ashton taught 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics through Teach For America at Dayton Leadership Academy where he encouraged his students to challenge authority every day by becoming critical students of history.

The information discussed in the above piece was obtained largely through reading the works of The Honorable Nathaniel Jones, W.E.B. Dubois, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Richard Rothstein, and Jeff Chang. The rigorous process of increasing consciousness is a journey best travelled independently. The style of this piece and the rhythms that are articulated throughout were largely developed by attending spoken word performances and listening to lyrically charged hip hop over the course of about six months. Special

recognition is owed to the performance poetry troupe, BLVCK SEEDS (Triiibe333!), Cincinnati's creative collection of artists seeking to promote positive urban culture and spawn a new Black Renaissance.

This project is dedicated to my late father, Robert Glenn Hood, who always taught me to never forget where I come from and to always remember, "It gets greater, later." Thank you for reading the piece.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A read-along audio file of *The American Dreamer*, accompanied by music, will be available to stream shortly after the publication of this piece in *The Freedom Center Journal*. Please email the author at [djesquir3entertainment@gmail.com](mailto:djesquir3entertainment@gmail.com) for information about accessing the audio file.

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