

Plan – Synthèse Centrale « The American Dream »

- I. The American Dream : An illusion of meritocracy
 - a. Strong belief in equal opportunities and social mobility thanks to hard work
 - b. However, eroding trust (doc1):
 1. in view of low paid jobs. doc3
 2. And declining social mobility doc3, doc5
 - c. Meritocracy encourages competition and individualism: school system
 1. The children of the elite are encouraged to study hard doc5
 2. However: money helps: inherited money lays the groundwork for future success doc5
- II. Ongoing inequalities and new tensions
 - a. When you were born into the rich white elites:
 1. it is clear that money has bred money (even though you have worked hard doc5
 2. Worse, many from rich white elites benefit from other privileges, which does NOT even pretend to be meritocratic
 - university admissions: legacies, faculty doc2 and doc 5.
 - In the past, free land, free labor (doc4)
 - b. Racial minorities (and women)
 1. Facts: fewer connections (doc3), so less money, more victims of violence
 2. The history of discrimination:
 - Slavery and discriminatory laws doc4
 - Tensions against an unfair system (doc 2, doc 3)
- III. What needs to be done
 - a. Current attacks against legacies doc 2. Doc5
 - b. More complicated:
 1. The controversy about affirmative action and the ongoing debate. Doc2, doc 4 (the white man?)
 - The Asian minority “squeezed” between people benefiting from different forms of preferential treatment (Blacks and affirmative action, rich often white legacies) as they are, thus, less likely to see their merit rewarded Doc 1
 - The conservatives at the origin of Proposition 209 that struck down affirmative action quotas. Doc 3
 - The white youth that has been groomed for power, by working very hard is less likely to accept being regarded as entitled and lazy doc5
 2. Equity versus meritocracy doc 5
 - Need to boost opportunities doc 5
 - Financial support, subsidies doc3
 - Improving the school system. Doc5
 - Change our perception of the job market doc 5
 - c. True to their reputation, there is still a majority of Americans who believe in social mobility. Doc1