The American Dream is an illusory ideology unwittingly created by Puritans (as well as other Christian sects) who fled religious persecution, economical crisis and tyrannical governments in the 1630’s. Puritans believed that the New World offered wealth, plentiful resources, abundant land, and freedom, thus, painting the original portrait of the American Dream. Unfortunately, freedom is rarely free or easy. The cost of the Puritan's freedom and privilege to the American dream was steep, and the consequences to the individuals forced to pay it, grave. Tragically, Native Americans and African slaves fell victim to the Puritans' realization of their own goals, hopes, and American Dreams.

A rising population, religious persecution, and lack of jobs created a tense economic environment for England in the 1500's. In 1548, John Hales of Central England lamented enclosure practices that forced farm owners off of their land to make room for cattle and sheep, a practice that demonstrated the amount of conflict in England. Hales believed that this practice would be the downfall of England and viewed these practices as self-serving and thoughtless.\footnote{"Objections Against Enclosure," in \textit{Documents to Accompany America's History. Volume One: to 1877}, Sixth Edition, Melvin Yazawa, ed. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008), p. 14-15.} Already economically disadvantaged, Puritans grew angrier at Queen Elizabeth's diplomacy to
Protestant, Lutheran and Catholic belief systems.\textsuperscript{2} The massive immigration of Puritans to the Americas between 1620 and 1640 became inevitable. With them, they brought cargo filled with illusions of grandeur.

The Puritans soon found that their hopes and dreams did not come as easily as expected. John Smith recounts settling as being a generally uncomfortable experience. Natives angered by encroaching whites, threatened the safety of Puritan colonists. Smith notes that famine, sickness, and death were common occurrences among the settlers.\textsuperscript{3}

The Puritans unwittingly landed in the New World with more than just their American Dreams. With them came various diseases for which the natives had no immunities. Influenza was just one of the many diseases that would decimate the native populations who continued to encounter the immigrants. The disease factor resulted in the death of undocumented numbers of native inhabitants. In addition, the diseases themselves altered their perception of the invaders further to the Native's detriment in an already unequal conquest.

Thomas Harriot, a scientist who travelled to Roanoke in 1585 and studied the natives, reported the devastating impact that the illness of Native Americans had on, not only their population, but also their belief systems. The natives, who encountered colonists, witnessed a great number of deaths in their communities due to mysterious illnesses, the likes of which they had never previously experienced. While none of the colonists died or became gravely affected by the illness, the natives most often died. Harriot reported that European resiliency to the


\textsuperscript{3} Yazawa, "A True Relation of Virginia", p. 27.
diseases that rampantly spread among the native peoples only furthered racial notions of
superiority, both among whites and the natives who he said began to view the newcomers as
immortal.  

Perceptions of racial inequality increasingly disadvantaged native populations who
endured their new roles in the New World. As early as 1552, Spanish settlers intended to take the
natives as servants and slaves and convert them to Christianity. This desire was not unique to
Spaniards, and with native beliefs about white men changing, the Puritans found it much easier
to convert and coerce them to serve Puritan purposes. Praying town settlements contained over
1,000 natives by 1670 that surrendered their culture and freedom. Not all tribes, however,
accepted Puritan rule as readily.

Pequot warriors resisted Puritan encroachment, and in 1636, they attacked farmers
attempting to their land. Puritans did not tolerate impeding the American dream of land,
freedom and wealth. Determined to realize their desires, Puritans retaliated fiercely. Captain
John Underhill, who was involved in the attack, reported that Captain John Mason initiated the
attack on a Pequot village consisting chiefly of elders, children, and women. The Puritans set fire
to the village and shot and killed anyone who attempted to escape the flames. Upwards of 300
native Pequots were massacred in under an hour. It is clear that Puritans believed that Native
American "savages" reserved no rights to contentment, peace, or even life, and certainly not


6 Henretta, p. 59.

dreams. However, the colonists use and destruction of others for their personal gain did not restrict them to the subjugation and murder of the natives of the land they invaded. Puritans captured natives of other counties, who also clearly savored no dreams, so that Puritans could achieve their own.

Europeans used Native Africans as slaves as early as the fifteenth century. During colonization, many Europeans, some being Puritans, brought their African slaves with them to the Americas. Thomas Phillips, an employee of The Royal African Company, shared his experience of the initial capture and transport of slaves. He indicated that native Africans often drowned themselves to resist enslavement and relocation to the New World; Europeans dismembered resistant natives to set an example to other Africans. The horrific trauma and conditions that the slaves endures during capture and transport, if they endured, proved to be only the beginning of the misery of the life they would come to know.

In order to maintain steam of the path to the American dream, unruly slaves needed governed to ensure maximum efficiency and obedience. Thus, brutal and stringent laws existed regarding the treatment of African slaves in America. Slaves suffered public whippings for a first offense of theft, having their ears cut off or a brand placed in their forehead for a second, their noses cut open for a third and death for a fourth. In 1658, General Symon Overzee was acquitted for acts against his slaves including: chaining, whipping, beating with a hot shovel, and

8 Yazawa, "But What Warrant Have We to Take That Land," p. 44.


bludgeoning to death.\textsuperscript{11} This case is evidence that, yet again, the lives of others is a small cost to be paid to achieve the American dream.

Puritans and other colonists did move forward in droves to attain their American dream. They religiously attended their right to freedom, their right to their religious beliefs, their right to individual prosperity including land and riches. Those goals were attained by taking away those same rights of those whose home they had invaded and of those who could not defend themselves from their tyranny. Not unlike their oppressive and autocratic monarchs in England, the Puritans seeking their hypocritical American dream, had undoubtedly for others, become an utter nightmare.

\textsuperscript{11} Yazawa, "Conflicts between masters and Slaves: Maryland in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," p. 57-59.