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# Cal Thomas: Is the 'American dream' over?

by Cal Thomas | November 23, 2010 12:00 AM

For generations, parents have told their children about "the American dream." Basically it has meant building a life based on the foundational principles that created and have sustained America for more than 200 years. By doing so, one might reasonably expect a new generation to achieve a better life than their parents and grandparents experienced. But what defines "better"?

In modern times it has been defined as achieving greater prosperity and consuming more material goods.

At least one liberal writer is channeling Jimmy Carter, implying our best days are behind us and this version of the American dream is over. Writing recently in the New York Times, columnist Bob Herbert says:

"However you want to define the American dream, there is not much of it that's left anymore. Wherever you choose to look -- at the economy and jobs, the public schools, the budget deficits, the nonstop warfare overseas -- you'll see a country in sad shape. Standards of living are declining, and American parents increasingly believe that their children will inherit a very bad deal."

Herbert does not assess blame for this, so I will. His version of the American dream -- as opposed to the original dream, which remains for those who would embrace it -- is over for a very good reason.

Setting aside war, which was imposed on America, the eclipse of liberalism's American dream has been largely caused by expanding, encroaching, over-taxing, over-spending and over-regulating government.

This has produced a country of government addicts with an entitlement mentality. These twin maladies have eroded self-reliance, individual initiative and personal accountability. A monopolistic government school system keeps the poor from achieving their dreams, as many remain locked (thanks to Democrats and their union supporters) in failing government schools, producing graduates (if in fact they do graduate) who lag behind other nations in subjects that matter.

Herbert claims, "We have become a hapless, can't-do society." He says it's "embarrassing."