

Fred Rogers-Pope
Age 13
Essay

We used to have something labeled the “American dream.” It was the hope of a shiny, plastic world. Even something full of seemingly joyous prospects, that dream was more of a nightmare than anything else. It represented repression and fear. People were forced to fit into the mold of a life that wasn’t their own, only for a chance at that impossible dream. We now know that can’t happen. We, as a society, are crippled by this disease of emptiness. Searching for an escape to something so precious as life, our very foundations are losing stability. My question is this: why continue to shamle forward? Why should we keep fighting the same battles to gain the impossible? The world is not kind; it’s not something we’re proud of. People are discriminated against, ignored, silenced, and for what? Even though we’ve accepted that a utopia is an imaginary concept, we still fight for it. No matter how pointless it is, humans can never accept defeat. We are blinded by hope. It may be a silly thing, but striving for something greater than ourselves is beautiful. So here is my “American dream.” No, this is not limited to the slice of the world that we call America, this is my dream for the globe. This is the simple thought that I hope to one day light up the minds of the world, to start a blaze in our fleeting lives. I want the world to be a safe space. There are pockets where, yes, people are welcomed. The problem is, those are few and far between. Take gender, for example. There is no such thing. A man is a social construct, same as woman, same as nonbinary, same as genderfluid, same as everything else. These ideas are nothing more than the manifestation of our societal pressures. If those could be erased, if we could just let people *be*, then we would have a better world. I wish there was a world where we would care, where we were chivalrous. Chivalry. Many people hear that word and tie it back to the knights of old. Some think of the heroes they saw in movies. Few think of real human beings. That is because we have never achieved that title. There are always ulterior motives, a darker side. We can’t do things for the benefits of others. Yet, I still think of that shiny idea. A world that is purged of all the hate and discrimination. A utopia is fake. We will never achieve a perfect world, because perfection is unreachable, imperfect. That is not my dream. Mine is a world where we all try: Try to better understand each other, try to do the best we can. We’re trying. That is all I ask. So, I implore you, try. Try to be a better person than the one you were yesterday. Try to give a little. Try, and the world will be brighter for it. That’s my dream.