

Interview with Tessa Fairey

What would you say your definition of the American Dream would be?

For me, for my personal story of coming here, it was looking for something that wasn't really available where I came from. Like, the kind of dance I wanted to do, the kind of industries, and how open those opportunities are here, as opposed to back home. So for me, it was wanting to go where they had what I wanted. In a more general sense, maybe that's more of the "American Myth" rather than the American Dream – "They have everything there!" I don't think that's necessarily true, but I think that's the idea of the American Dream. Like, everything is there and you can do everything.

What would you say are qualities of one country that you think the other country lacks?

I think England--it's awkward because it's changed a lot lately, but England and Europe and the UK at large have cool things like free health care and a slightly less contentious political situation. Right now it's pretty contentious, but overall, there's a little more care for citizens, which I guess is a little more socialist, which is good in my opinion. We have free health care and more educational care taken of people. And then just things like, the countryside! It's really pretty and nice. But what I like about here that isn't so much about English culture, is that people are a bit more... There's less etiquette and rules. It's a younger country. There isn't the same kind of social hierarchy, I guess. I mean, England still basically has some form of class system and that doesn't really exist here because it's not an old enough country to have one, so that's nice.

What don't you like about the United States?

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I don't like the crazy party divides between Democrats and Republicans. I don't like the president. I don't like the amount of religious evangelism that is used as an excuse for things. And that happens, also in the UK, but not as much.

Was it an easy transition to get here?

Yeah. For me, I was pretty lucky because I'd been here for periods of time before. I'd been here for 2 month periods of time twice before. So when I moved here fully, I knew what was up, what was going on. And because New York City is such a cultural icon, everyone, or at least a lot of people, have some degree of familiarity with it even if they've never been here.

Do you personally believe in the American Dream?

Yeah, I believe in mine, because I've been pretty fortunate that it's mostly going the way I thought it would and the opportunities I thought would be here are here. I don't think I believe in the traditional American Dream, because I think that was one dream dreamed up by one very specific group of people and that's not who's here now so it doesn't count anymore.

Do you think it's possible for you to attain your dream here?

Yeah, I think so. A lot of people come here to do this exact thing, especially in the creative arts. There are a lot of us, but still, somehow, there's room for everyone. So far, at least.

Do you think it's easier for you to achieve your dream here or in England?

Sometimes I think England would be a lot easier just because there are so many advantages to being on your home turf. You maybe have more of a support system there already, and things like free health care, that's good. But for now, it's just fine to be here, but I'm very aware that this isn't the simplest journey. I could've stayed in England, stayed at home, but that wasn't what I wanted to do.

Interview Analysis

I interviewed Tessa Fairey who came here from Winchester, England. Tessa came here to study dance. The excerpt from our interview that I chose is mainly about the American Dream and whether it's still attainable or not.

Tessa defines the American Dream-- that anyone who comes here can achieve anything that they want to-- as an "American Myth." Tessa understands that is not true for everyone, but she believes in that dream as it applies to her: that there are more opportunities and resources here for creative arts. Tessa came here with a goal but she also understands that this country has its limitations and faults, and realizes that this is not the only country with opportunity. Finally, Tessa distinguishes between a "traditional" American Dream and the current American Dream. She thinks that the traditional dream is more of a myth than a reality because it "was one dream dreamed up by one very specific group of people and that's not who's here now so it doesn't count anymore" (Fairey). She believes that since the creation of the American Dream it has evolved and is widened to include more people.

The other thing Tessa talks about in this excerpt is the differences between England and New York. Tessa likes the fact that because the United States is a younger country, she feels there is not as much social hierarchy, which means that people can change their social status – they can attain a higher status over time. However, Tessa does not like the political divide in the United States and religious evangelism being used in politics. . I think it is important to learn from someone who has lived in two countries what makes these countries unique, and how no place is perfect. Here, Tessa's view is important because it shows the gap between the American Dream and the American reality, as she sees it.