



The American Dream: Stories from the Heart of Our Nation

By Dan Rather

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At a time when we are once again talking and thinking about the meaning of America, bestselling author and award-winning journalist Dan Rather provides a powerful look at Americans who struggle to achieve their desires and ambitions. With the stories of ordinary men and women accomplishing the extraordinary, Rather demonstrates how the American dream brings us together and guides us, as it has for more than 200 years.

For some, the American dream is simply to own a home or rise out of poverty. Some wish to serve God, country, or community. There are those who want to learn to read or run their own business. Still others simply wish to exercise fundamental American rights: to openly practice their religion and to speak what is in their minds and hearts.

Stirring and provocative, *The American Dream* illustrates that the basic American desire for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is alive and well. It also confirms what our founding fathers always believed: that we are a country of visionaries, in ways big and small.

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The American Dream: Stories from the Heart of Our Nation By Dan Rather Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Despite years of reporting on tragedies around the world, Dan Rather is clearly an optimist. His take on the American dream, as personified by more than 30 Americans, is an inspiring reminder that the ideals the nation was founded upon are still alive and well. Rather first looked at how Americans pursued the American dream in a yearlong feature for his *CBS Evening News* show. His book takes off where the series ended, with more in-depth stories of those successfully pursuing their version of the dream.

Nosrat Scott came to the U.S. in search of freedom of religion. She was so persecuted for her Bah'ai faith in Iran that she was moved to tears when she realized she could speak openly of her religion in her English-as-a-second-language class. For many, of course, the American dream is all about making it rich. Some traveled long distances only to be surprised by fortune, such as Trung Dung, who escaped Vietnam at the age of 17 and became a multimillionaire with his Internet start-up company. There are those who covet the pursuit of happiness as an end in itself, such as the couple who gave up their high-paying jobs in Southern California to move to a small town in Oregon in order to meet their "*not rich* criteria"--that is, time for family and community. And there are those who have to swallow their pride to get there, like the chef from Georgia who learned to read at age 26. Other dreams are organized under the headings of fame, family, innovation, and service, which could just as easily have been titled the pursuit of justice.

There are few recognizable names here, but the stories of these everyday heroes are a spirited antidote to a creeping national cynicism and a vigorous challenge to seize on the opportunities--and responsibilities--that the dream implies. --*Lesley Reed*

From Publishers Weekly

"Where is the American Dream today?" asks celebrity broadcast journalist Rather in this spinoff from the popular CBS Evening News feature on this question that ran for more than a year. Interviewing people all over the country, he finds a resounding answer: the American Dream is everywhere. By turns inspiring and awesome, the stories of people achieving their dreams of family, education, service, financial success, happiness and even celebrity make a fine tour of the territory. Rather's everyday heroes and heroines overcome illiteracy and become cookbook writers; escape religious persecution to come to the United States; and overcome grinding poverty to become CEOs. Those who fear that a steady stream of such success stories may become saccharine fast will breathe easy once they see Rather shining the spotlight on people like Wayne Ward Ford, who rose from Washington, D.C., juvenile delinquent to Iowa state legislator and testifies, "I could read. I could lead... I could write proposals. Damn, I was scared of myself." Rather himself, by contrast, tends to drone a bit ("[Education] is rightly considered a foundation or point of embarkation for any dream"). Still, with a newscaster's keen eye for an arresting story and engaging characters, Rather brings a surprisingly fresh approach to an old question. (On-sale: May 8)Forecast: While Rather doesn't come close to matching the passion and emotion that Tom Brokaw brought to *The Greatest Generation*, Rather's popularity, the commercial success of his previous books and his reputation for journalistic integrity will no doubt propel him onto the bestseller lists, if only briefly.

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From Library Journal

Only one of the people interviewed for this collection was also the subject of an "American Dream" segment on the CBS Evening News, but each of these stories could well be a TV docudrama: Teachers, writers, politicians, and others overcome mighty obstacles to attain a cherished dream, then turn around and use their wealth, position, or expertise to help others facing similar obstacles. The profiles would have seemed less formulaic if Rather had let the subjects tell their stories in their own words, in the style perfected by Studs Terkel. Instead, he offers a running commentary on these manifestations of the American dream, punctuated by occasional quotes. You can almost hear the stirring patriotic music behind some passages, while others evoke the image of Rather himself, seated at the anchor desk fishing for folksy analogies ("The media grapevine has grown as thick as kudzu"). Still, many readers will find these stories fascinating, and those who can never get enough chicken soup will also find them inspiring. Recommended for public libraries.

Susan M. Colowick, North Olympic Lib. Syst., Port Angeles, WA

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Users Review

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