
American Dream In Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas

What is the American dream? To some the answer of that question is obvious. However, author Hunter S. Thompson believed that the American Dream wasn't something that could be understood without experiencing it firsthand. In his fictional autobiography *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* Thompson (using the name Raoul Duke) and his attorney Dr. Gonzo set out on a trip to Las Vegas in 1971 to write an article on a race called the Mint 400. Instead the duo is much more concerned with their own quest to find the American dream while tearing through Las Vegas on a drug fueled rampage. *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is an interesting and unique story because it's about finding the author's own kind of American dream.

One of the first mentions of the American dream comes right after Duke calls his superiors to request money to fund the trip. They are only able to get \$300 dollars which isn't enough to please Dr. Gonzo. Duke brings up that before then they had had no money and no plans at all. Now suddenly with the help of the American dream and barely any effort on their part at all, they head to Las Vegas \$300 in hand. This gives us some insight into what Thompson thinks the American dream is. It definitely has to do with opportunity, since this was all brought about by him being given the opportunity to go to Las Vegas and cover the Mint 400. He was given an assignment to do something spontaneously and he jumped at the chance to, possibly because he thinks the American dream favors those who take chances. This would be the first of many amazing opportunities presented to Thompson through the course of this trip.

One of the first examples of the American dream at work came on midnight of a Saturday following the Mint 400. Duke and his attorney ended up getting into a live Debbie Reynolds show without having to pay anything just by saying that they know her personally. This is a unique experience, being able to claim association with fame and being treated differently without anyone checking their story or even questioning them. In a town like Las Vegas where there are famous people all over the place performing all the time, how could they keep track of who knows who? On top of that, why risk angering someone who might have the power to cause them a lot of trouble? They are able to take advantage of this unique opportunity given to them by the place they are at. However, after only a few minutes they are kicked out for causing a scene and go to find a place more accepting of inebriated patrons.

The duo ended up at the Circus-Circus, a 4-story circus themed casino complete with live performances and spectacles. They walked around for a little taking in all the sights, when Duke noted that the atmosphere isn't good for someone in their fragile state of mind, even likening it to the "Sixth Reich" (Thompson 28). When they make it to a spinning Merry-Go-Round bar Dukes's attorney had a sudden desire to leave town. Duke reminded him "We came out here

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to find the American Dream, and now that we're right in the vortex you want to quit" (Thompson 29). At that point they are both heavily intoxicated. His attorney shows signs of extreme discomfort and Duke even believes a seizure may be imminent, so they left. Despite this setback he has found the "main nerve" of the American dream in Las Vegas, and before his story is over, he will return to it.

The next time Duke writes about the Circus-Circus his attorney is gone, having returned to California after finishing their journalistic duties. Duke goes there to meet with his friend Bruce Innes, who is helping him purchase an ape from someone at the casino. Since his first visit he had been there numerous times, so often in fact that the staff recognizes him and even know his name. Duke tells his friend that he's ready to leave, and when he's asked where he found the American dream in Las Vegas, he said it's the Circus-Circus. They had been told a story about the man who owned the casino, apparently, he had always wanted to join the Circus. Now later in life not only was he able to achieve his dreams he went above and beyond what he had ever hoped for.

In a way Thompson's whole adventure to Las Vegas was not only a quest for the American dream. It was his own personal manifestation of it, he was able to bounce around Las Vegas causing chaos and just doing whatever he felt was right. He left California with the intention to cover the Mint 400, while he didn't accomplish that goal, he still achieved much more than he set out to do at the beginning. While he may not have ended up with his own circus, he achieved his own version of the American dream by taking advantage of the opportunities he was given to have this adventure and create this story. Thompson's American dream was getting these opportunities and having all these crazy experiences, then bringing them together into something that people can learn from and enjoy.

Works Cited

- Thompson, Hunter S. Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, and Other American Stories. therustyquill.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/fear-and-loathing-in-las-vegas.pdf.

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