

# The Lies of America – Exposing America's False Narratives

## **Introduction:**

The United States is often referred to as "The land of the free, home of the brave." The dream of freedom and endless job opportunities has led the United States to become the ideal destination for many foreigners. In 2019 the United States Census reported that 44.9 million immigrants reside in America. Because of this, the United States has the largest immigration population in the world (Hanna, Mary, et al). Since the formation of the United States in 1776, the US has always been at the forefront of promoting individual freedoms and democratic governments. For many years Autocratic governments were vastly more popular and established than Democratic States. In the late 1900s, about 60% of global governments identified as Autocratic, whereas only 25% of countries were recognized as being Democratic. Post-World War II reconstruction, global development, and strong United States influence have resulted in more than 57% of governments classifying as Democratic as of 2019 (DeSilver). With the global rise of Democracy, freedoms are becoming ever popular in global societies. Although freedoms and democratic states are more prevalent than ever before, America remains the most sought-after country in the world. Why is this? How does the United States attract a far greater number of immigrants than any other country worldwide? The answer lies in the creation and utilization of false narratives that exploit minorities and attracts migrant workers. Through the creation of false narratives, US companies and governmental agencies are able to successfully exploit and abuse the freedoms of migrant workers and minority citizens. This essay will discuss and examine how US companies and forms of government

create and use narratives that allow for the exploitation of minorities and enables the inequitable treatment of migrant workers.

## **The American Narrative:**

Some of the earliest accounts of American history come from the first settlers looking to colonize North America. Individuals such as Jane Dickenson wrote stories about how families would sign contracts of indenture in order to pay for the voyage from England (Ariel and Dael). Although these settlers did not know it at the time, they would become the first Americans to be exploited for their labor. In the early years of the United States, millions of Africans were forced into the American slavery system. As the United States further developed and Westward expansion began, thousands of Asian workers were required to work on the construction of the transcontinental railroad. The use of minorities for cheap labor is rooted deep in the history of the United States. However, the exploitation of minority workers in America is not just a shameful element of US history. Still, it remains at the forefront of how the US operates to this day. By examining Lisa Nakamura's "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture" and Brian Jefferson's "Digitize and Punish: Computerized Crime Mapping and Racialized Carceral Power in Chicago, it is evident that US companies and Governmental institutions continue America long history of minority exploitation through the creation of false and unethical narratives.

When examining Lisa Nakamura's "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture," the unfair exploitation of Indigenous American Indians by Fairchild could not be more evident. Fairchild, one of the largest chip manufacturers in America at the time, created the narrative that Indigenous Indians possessed "creative

cultural skills" and would-be ideal workers in a chip manufacturing plant (Nakamura). As a result, in 1965, the Navajo Tribe and Fairchild reached an agreement that would permit Fairchild to construct a chip manufacturing plant on the Navajo land. Fairchild preached in yearly reports and quarterly brochures that the Navajo Tribe's long history of "weaving and silversmithing" allowed the Indigenous Indians to be "a good fit for the job" (Nakamura). However, at the first opportunity to better their bottom-line, Fairchild moved operations overseas. Fairchild is just one of many examples of American companies exploiting low minority labor costs to maintain high profits. In later reports, it was found that Fairchild sought out Indigenous land and workers because of "quality and low cost of Indian labor" coupled with "liberal government loan and tax reliefs" (Nakamura). Fairchild successfully created the narrative that Indigenous workers were ideal candidates for chip manufacturing. However, this was far from the reality. Like many times in America's short history, Fairchild created and abused a narrative that misleads minorities into abuse and malpractices. American companies to this day create false narratives that allow them to better their profits at the expense of minority laborers. By using misleading or simply false information, United States companies like Fairchild are able to continuously abuse their power by creating narratives that attract, abuse, and profit on the work of minority laborers.

Companies are not the only organization in America that has the ability to exploit minorities. The United States Government, and its vast number of agencies, have a long history of abusing governmental power. One of the most infamous examples of the United States exploiting minorities occurred during the "Trail of Tears." During the United States Westward expansion, many indigenous Indians were forced to desert their native lands. Similarly, Chicago

was one of the first US cities to introduce Crime Mapping software in the mid-1990s. In Brain Jefferson's "Digitize and Punish: Computerized Crime Mapping and Racialized Carceral Power in Chicago," it is apparent that the Chicago Police Force successfully created a harmful narrative towards the African American population that allowed for the adoption of policing software. The Chicago Police Department used phrases such as: "street war against gangs," "onslaught of violence," "bloody battlegroups," and "neighborhoods under siege" when describing the African American community (Jefferson). The harmful racialization of African Americans created the narrative to locals that the need for digital policing surveillance was an absolute necessity. Although many Chicagoans initially opposed the introduction of policing software, by abusing their power and creating racial stigmas about the African American population in Chicago, the Chicago Police Department was able to exploit neighbors and fellow citizens in Chicago to accept the adoption of new policing software. The Police Department was able to successfully abuse its power by using forms of local governments in order to promote and advocate the need for policing software. Furthermore, the Chicago Police Department not only stereotyped the African American community as dangerous, but they called upon residents to report suspicious residents (Jefferson). The Chicago Police Department abused its governmental power in order to create a negative narrative of the African American community. After creating this harmful narrative, the Chicago Police Department was able to introduce technology that would further exploit and single out minority residents. Fairchild and the Chicago Police Department are both overt examples of US entities creating a racialized narrative that allows for the harmful exploitation of minorities.

## The Deceptive Dream:

Along with narratives that are created to implement invasive technologies or manufacturing plants, many US companies and governmental organizations capitalize on preexisting misinformed narratives that migrant workers possess about work in America. Rather than examining definitive examples of narratives that American establishments created, this section will focus on the method in which governmental policies coupled with worker maltreatment allow for the American Dream narrative to be used to sustain wealth inequality. To understand how US companies, with the help of governmental policies, maintain wealth inequality in America, one must first understand the current situation of the United States wealth distribution. In the recent 2019 documentary *The Great American Lie*, many misconceptions about the American Dream are exposed. *The Great American Lie* reveals how the demographic of the top 1% of the wealth in the United States is distributed vastly different than the overall population demographic of the United States. The film explains how 89% of individuals that make up the top one percent are White (Newsom). Furthermore, the documentary discusses how the wages of the top 1% have increased 135% since 1979, whereas middle- and low-income wages have decreased or remained constant over the same period (Newsom). Although many migrants and illegal immigrants believe the American Dream is achievable for all, the reality is that White America can capitalize on two different factors that allow for the ongoing wealth inequality among migrant workers. The two factors that allow for the American Dream narrative to be the source of migrant wealth inequality are governmental policies and the leverage of deportation. By correlating current government policies exposed in *The Great American Lie* and the mistreatment of illegal immigrants highlighted in a 2009

report "Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers," clear connections can be brought to light on how US organizations instill wage inequality among migrant workers.

One recent governmental program that allows for the manipulation of foreign workers is the Immigration Act of 1990. As discussed in *The Great American Lie*, this Act, signed by George H.W. Bush, created a lottery system that would be used to regulate H1-B visas for foreign workers (Newsom). Further, the film discusses how the application process only allows for the most talented applicants to be admitted into the program (Newsom). By creating a program that only accepts overly qualified applicants, US companies are able to create the narratives that H1-B workers are seeking out the American Dream. Further studies show that individuals with an H1-B visa make on average \$21,000 less than their White counterparts (Costa). Policies enacted by the United States Government work in favor of companies who are attempting to profit off the labor of migrant workers. The Immigration Act of 1990 sells migrant workers on the idea that they are "lucky to be here" and that paying H1-B workers less than their American-born peers is a price one must pay to chase the American Dream narrative.

Many illegal immigrants seek job opportunities in America by fleeing their homelands in search of better job opportunities and overall well-being. Although illegal immigrants are not viewed as US citizens, they make up roughly 6% of the labor force in the United States (Passel and D’Vera). The 2009 report titled "Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers," shed light on many of the issues faced by illegal immigrant workers in the United States. This 2009 report surveyed over 15,000 illegal immigrant workers in the United States. The report concluded that "26 percent of workers were paid less than the legally required minimum wage in the previous work week" and "60 percent of workers were underpaid by more than \$1 per hour." In addition

to massive pay discrepancies, the report found that "43 percent of participants experienced one or more forms of illegal retaliation from their employer" (Annette Bernhardt et al.). Many industries are able to maintain inequitable salaries for illegal immigrants by leveraging the status of illegal immigrants. Because illegal migrants lack US citizenship, companies can mistreat, overwork, and underpay illegal immigrants. "Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers" further highlighted the vast difference in views of illegal immigrants before and after working in the United States. A majority of workers (79%) stated that they were treated worse than expected, and 83% of workers claim to have a "bad experience" working in the United States (Bernhardt et al.). The mistreatment of illegal immigrants is just another example of how United States companies can profit off the work of migrants. By having unrealistic expectations of what the American Dream is, illegal immigrants blindly migrate to the United States to seek a more prosperous life. In reality, illegal migrants are treated with unfair working conditions, illegal wages, and expectations that are far from met. The American Dream has created a narrative that attracts migrant workers to the United States and allows for inequitable practices to be used without any form of retaliation. In both cases, H1-B visa workers and illegal immigrants show a population that attempts to seek out the American Dream narrative, is met with vast compensation inequality, and is left powerless. The narrative that the American Dream is achievable is used to create the want to work in the United States. However, this demand for jobs in the US is used by companies and governmental organizations to be able to profit off inequitable practices. It is clear that recent government policies such as the Immigration Act of 1990, the pay inequity among migrant workers, and the rising wealth of White America are all connected. White Americans have successfully capitalized on the narrative that the American

Dream is alive and well in order to benefit from foreign labor. The inequality and exploitation of migrant workers in America directly results from US companies banking on foreign workers believing they can achieve the American Dream.

## **Conclusion:**

To this day, it is evident that US companies and Governmental organizations create, abuse, and profit off false narratives that allow for the exploitation of minorities and foreigners. Fairchild and the Chicago Police Department were successful in creating false narratives about minority populations that allowed them to be able to implement and profit from the suffering of the Native American and Black Community. Further, US regulations and the inequitable pay among illegal immigrants, and migrant workers demonstrate how companies and governmental institutions can profit from false ideologies that migrant workers have about the American Dream. Fairchild's culture-based narratives which enabled them the ability to exploit and profit off Indigenous Indians land and labor, the Chicago Police Departments adverse narrative of the Black community used to implement invasive technologies, the Immigration Act of 1990 lottery narrative that permitted US companies to profit off inequitable salaries without retaliation, and the immoral labor practices used to capitalize on illegal migrants attempting to achieve the American Dream narrative are all akin. These four recent examples all demonstrate how either US companies or Governmental institutions are able to profit off false narratives. America is frequently referred to as "the land of the free" and "home of the brave." Although this phrase is often coupled with a picture of George Washington, it is important to remember that even he was a slave owner. The false narratives used to profit and exploit migrants and minorities run



deep in the history of The United States. Because of this, the United States has never been anything more than "the land of the exploitative" and "home of the false narratives."

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