



We're all familiar with the American Dream, but what about the American Nightmare? *English Matters* travels to the darker corners of US culture to illuminate what Americans find scary, irksome and downright nasty.

America's pop culture often glorifies the glamorous Hollywood lifestyle and the lofty goals Americans aspire to. Just like any society, however, there is a gritty underbelly to the United States that rarely receives as much fanfare. While they may try to keep their worries hidden, Americans have their fair share of

troubles, making them no different from the rest of us.

A Government Gone Bad

Americans cherish their esteemed democracy, so it's no wonder that threats to or from their government deeply agitate them. Any hint of corruption or political misconduct typically sends Americans reeling. Scandals garner substantial media

- o to be familiar with sth | być zaznajomionym z czymś
- nightmare | koszmar
- to illuminate sth | tu: rzucać światło na coś
- scary | straszny
- irksome | denerwujący, męczący
- downright | wprost
- nasty | paskudny, obrzydliwy
- 1 glamorous | pełen blachtru
- lofty | szczytny, wzniosły
- goal | cel
- gritty | tu: nieupiękuszony, naturalistyczny, daleki od ideału

underbelly | tu: czuły/newralgiczny punkt, ciemna strona

to receive fanfare | otrzymywać fanfary

to keep sth hidden | trzymać coś w ukryciu, ukrywać coś

worry | zmartwienie

fair share of sth | dużo czegoś

2 government | rząd

to cherish sth | cenić sobie coś

esteemed | poważany, szanowany

it's no wonder | nic dziwnego

threat | groźba

deeply | głęboko, tu: mocno

to agitate sb | poruszać kogoś, powodować czyjeś wzburzenie

hint | tu: przejaw

misconduct | niewłaściwe zachowanie, złe prowadzenie się

to send sb reeling | sprawić, że pod kimś nogi się uginają

to garner sth | zgarniać coś

substantial səb'stænʃl | tu: duży

attention, and the public will not readily forget political improprieties. Americans take their patriotism seriously and understand that their democracy stretches far wider than any individual politician.

Even with this love of country, there are certain boundaries which Americans will not permit their government to cross. One such case involves the right to own guns. Gun ownership is a constitutional freedom that goes hand-in-hand with the birth of the USA. Americans contend that they must be prepared to overthrow tyrants. That's why no sensible politician would advocate stripping Americans of their firearms. Most countries have completely banned handguns, but Americans would flip out if anyone dared prize their precious guns from their hands.

At times, America's obsession with its government manifests itself as flat-out paranoia. During the Cold War, neighbour turned on neighbour as rumours of a communist overthrow abounded. Today, those same fears of espionage and subversion can rear their ugly heads. Americans could easily turn on one of their own if they feel a scape-goat is

needed. Immigrants, religious minorities or political outsiders are periodically targeted. Those with contentious viewpoints, like sympathisers of Edward Snowden, may receive the scorn of the American public as well.

An Evolving America

Another fear tinged with a hint of xenophobia concerns the USA's demographic shifts. Two fears strike at the heart of more conservative Americans. First, there is the prognosis that the United States will inevitably lose its white majority. Higher birth rates amongst Asian and Hispanic communities are modifying the cultural make-up of the United States. Illegal ►

3 impropriety | niestosowność

to stretch | rozciągać się

boundary | granica

to permit sb to do sth | pozwolić komuś na coś

to cross sth | przekraczać coś

case | sprawa

to involve sth | *tu*: dotyczyć czegoś

to own sth | posiadać coś

gun | broń

gun ownership | posiadanie broni

to go hand in hand with sth | iść ramię w ramię

to contend that... | *tu*: utrzymywać, że...

to overthrow sb | obalać kogoś

tyrant 'taɪrənt | tyran, despota

sensible 'sensəbl | rozsądny

to advocate sth | popierać coś

to strip sb of sth | *tu*: odbierać komuś coś, obdzierać kogoś z czegoś

firearms | broń palna

to ban sth | zakazać czegoś

handgun | krótka broń palna

to flip out | wściec się, stracić nad sobą kontrolę

to dare | ośmielić się

to prize sth | wywyżczyć, podważyć coś, *tu*: wytrącić coś

precious 'preʃəs | cenny

flat-out | *tu*: AmE wręcz, wprost

neighbour | sąsiad

to turn on sb | zwracać się przeciwko komuś, skoczyć na kogoś, (za)atakować kogoś (słownie)

rumour 'ru:mə(r) | plotka

overthrow | obalenie (np. rządu)

to abound | obfitować, *tu*: być liczny

fear | lęk, obawa

espionage

'espiəns:ʒ

| szpiegostwo

subversion

| propaganda

wywrotowa

to rear one's ugly head

| (znowu) dawać o sobie znać

scapegoat | kozioł ofiarny

4 religious minority | mniejszość religijna

targeted | na celowniku

contentious | *tu*: kontrowersyjny

viewpoint | punkt widzenia

scorn | pogarda, lekceważenie

evolving | rozwijający się, ewoluujący

tinged with sth | lekko zabarwiony czymś

xenophobia, /zenə'fəʊbiə /, /zenə'fɒbiə

| ksenofobia, niechęć do lub/i starch przed ludźmi z innych krajów

to concern sth | dotyczyć czegoś

shift | przesunięcie, zmiana

inevitably ɪn'evɪtəbli | nieuchronnie

majority | większość

birth rate | wskaźnik narodzin

community | społeczność

make-up | *tu*: skład, struktura

Gun ownership is a constitutional freedom that goes hand-in-hand with the birth of the USA.

Buzzword

Of all the things that startle Americans, one bizarre worry stuck out in 2016: coulrophobia. The term denotes an extreme fear of clowns. In last year's waning summer months, unsettling clown sightings were reported in towns across the USA. After a few weeks, the inexplicable "creepy clown craze" gripped the nation. Coulrophobia became a favourite utterance for journalists during the ordeal, and Oxford Dictionaries even shortlisted the word for its 2016 Word of the Year compilation. Hopefully, this year won't bring another wave of menacing clowns.

to **startle sb** | straszyć kogoś, napawać kogoś obawą/lękiem
bizarre | dziwny, dziwaczny
 to **stick out** | wysuwać się na prowadzenie
 to **denote sth** | oznaczać coś
waning | zanikający, ubywający, *tu*: upływający
unsettling | niepokojący
sighting | sytuacja, w której coś jest widziane; dostrzeżenie czegoś, zobaczenie
creepy | *tu*: przyprawiający o gęsą skórę
craze | szal, szaleństwo
 to **grip sb** | s/chwytać kogoś, *tu*: przen. porywać kogoś, wciągać kogoś
utterance 'ʌtərəns | *tu*: wyrażenie
journalist | dziennikarz
ordeal ɔːˈdi:l / ˈɔːdi:l | męka, gehenna, epidemia
 to **shortlist sth** | umieścić coś na krótkiej liście (np. finalistów, słów roku itp.)
wave | fala
menacing | groźny



immigration, which is a stirring issue all its own, brings in countless ethnic minorities too. Demographic trends indicate that whites in the USA will become a minority by 2044.

Second, these shifts are hurting the primacy of the English language in America. Over 40 million Americans are native Spanish speakers. Moreover, Spanish classes are becoming a staple in numerous primary schools across the country. Whether it's due to racial or linguistic alterations, a new breed of culture shock will likely hit old-fashioned Americans in the coming years.

Monetary Maladies

If you run into your average American, you may hear the age-old adage that the United States is the greatest country on Earth. Whether you believe that idea or not, many Americans buy into it. As is such, success is highly valued in American culture. This is usually tied to financial wealth. The downside is that failure to attain a certain standard of living puts numerous Americans on edge. Their obsession with money is toxic.

America's number one financial fear is not having enough money for the future. It's fair to call America a workaholic culture. Americans work longer hours and have shorter holidays than their European counterparts. However, you won't hear them complaining about it. It's essential

5 **stirring** | palący
issue | kwestia
 to **bring in sth** | wprowadzać, wnosić coś
countless | niezliczone
ethnic minority | mniejszość etniczna
 to **indicate that...** | wskazywać, że...
primacy | prymat, pierwszeństwo
moreover | ponadto
staple | *tu*: ważna część (nauczania), stały element
numerous | liczne
primary school | szkoła podstawowa
whether | czy
 due to **sth** | z powodu czegoś
breed | *tu*: typ, rodzaj
 to **be likely to** | być prawdopodobnym
 to **hit sb** | uderzyć kogoś
malady | *tu*: bolączka, problem społeczny

to put in hard work to ensure a secure financial future. Losing your job, or even hauling in less cash than your associates, can be disastrous in numerous American circles. Apart from making day-to-day life tougher, missing out on affluence may also bear a sizeable social stigma.

America's worries over money can be exacerbated because they are often coupled with another significant stressor: steep health care costs. The United States has the world's priciest health care network, and large portions of the population aren't covered by any medical insurance plan. Many Americans dread illness and injuries

to **run into sb** | wpaść na kogoś
average | przeciętny
age-old | stary jak świat
adage | porzekadło, maksyma
 to **buy into it** | kupować to
tied to sth | związany, powiązany z czymś
wealth | bogactwo
downside | minus
failure | porażka, niepowodzenie
 to **attain sth** | zdobywać coś
 to **put sb on edge** | doprowadzać na skraj załamania nerwowego
enough | wystarczająco
counterpart | odpowiednik
however | jednak/że
 to **complain about sth** | narzekać na coś
 6 to **ensure sth** | zapewnić (sobie) coś
secure | stabilny, pewny, bezpieczny
 to **haul in** ˈhɔːl ɪn | zarabiać coś, wyciągać
associate | współnik; współpracownik
disastrous | katastrofalny
apart from sth | oprócz czegoś
 to **miss out on sth** | stracić okazję do czegoś
affluence | dostatek, dobrobyt
sizeable 'saɪzəbl | znaczny, znaczący
exacerbated | pogorszony, zaostroszony, *tu*: powiększony
coupled with sth | w połączeniu z czymś, w parze z czymś
steep | stromy, *tu*: wysoki
health care costs | koszty opieki zdrowotnej
covered | pokrywany
insurance plan | plan ubezpieczeniowy
 to **dread sth** | obawiać się czegoś
illness | choroba
injury | uszkodzenie, uraz, kontuzja

because a prolonged hospital visit could break the bank. Prices for prescription drugs can be astronomical as well. Most countries provide their citizens with state-run health programmes, but Americans face a unique set of headaches when their health is jeopardised.

Similar Scares

Just because US culture looks a little quirky doesn't mean Americans don't possess a lot of the same fears as the rest of us. A glimpse at the most common phobias reveals that pockets of Americans are petrified by enclosed spaces, public speaking and heights. Yes, even spiders and snakes inspire their fair share of revulsion. Death, both that of a family member and your own, is a top fear.

Falling victim to crime is another prime concern. Violent crimes like murder or assault sound terrifying enough. Property crimes, including robbery, fraud and identity theft plague American citizens as well. Statistically speaking, the USA is slightly more dangerous than the major countries of Europe, but it is safe enough that many of these fears seem unfounded. Extreme

apocalyptic events like earthquakes or nuclear attacks also weigh on the minds of Americans, however farfetched that may seem.

A final threat to the USA that also alarms the rest of the world is that of terrorist attacks. Never before have the countries of the world been on such high alert to prevent terrorism of all kinds. The anniversary of 11 September holds a special place in the hearts of Americans, and the country remains as vigilant as ever to wipe out terrorism. Still, attacks around the world continue to make headlines, so Americans are all too aware of the danger posed by terrorist activities.

A Human Emotion

Even though Americans possess their unique blend of fears and aversions, many of their concerns stem from fundamental human emotions. Fearful Americans are often just looking to preserve their way of life. They love their country and their families, and want to protect them as best they can. Fear may not be the emotion we are most proud of, but it's certainly something that unites us all. ■

7 prolonged | przedłużony

to break the bank | tu: kosztować krocie

prescription drug | lek na receptę

to provide sb with sth | dostarczać komuś czegoś

state-run | państwowy

to face sth | z/mierzyć się z czymś, stawiać czoła czemuś

jeopardised | 'dʒepədaɪzd / 'dʒepədaɪzd | w niebezpieczeństwie, zagrożony, narażony na szwank

scare | strach, trwoga

quirky | osobliwy

glimpse at sth | rzut oka na coś

common | powszechny

to reveal sth | ujawniać coś

pocket | tu: grupa

petrified | przerażony

enclosed space | zamknięta/ograniczona przestrzeń

height | wysokość

revulsion | wstręt

to fall victim to sth | padać ofiarą czegoś

concern | troska, zmartwienie

violent | gwałtowny

assault | napad

terrifying | przerażający

property crime | zawłaszczenie

robbery | rabunek, kradzież

fraud | oszustwo

identity theft | kradzież danych osobowych

to plague sb | to plęgać 'sambadl | nękać kogoś

slightly | lekko

to seem | wydawać się

unfounded | pozbawiony podstaw

8 earthquake | trzęsienie ziemi

to weigh on sth | ciążyć na czymś

farfetched | wybiegający w przyszłość

to prevent sth | zapobiegać czemuś

anniversary | rocznica

vigilant | 'vɪdʒɪlənt | czujny

to wipe out sth | z/likwidować coś

to make headlines | trafiać na pierwsze strony gazet

aware of sth | świadomy czegoś

blend | mieszanka

to stem from sth | wynikać z czegoś

to preserve sth | zachować coś

to unite | łączyć, jednoczyć

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