Press Release: Thursday, 5th November 2015
This House believes that the American Dream is colour-blind
“To stop at an incomplete dream is no dream at all.” –Rev. Jesse Jackson

Proposition 1: Bonnie Greer
The first speaker of the proposition opened the debate by stating that the American dream “is the root of the civil rights movement”. The American Dream doesn’t have to be a universal concept but rather it is deeply personal. She believes that “the pathway to the American dream is colour-blind, but the idea itself is not”. It is possible for African Americans as herself in the United States to claim the American dream as their own. She describes her father, who, thanks to the American dream, was able to buy a house and raised her and her siblings to “believe in the American dream and believe that we owned it”. Even in the impossibility of attaining the American dream, they never gave it up because it belonged to them. They owned the American dream and she would never give it up. Her elders despite all odds made it possible to stand in front of the Union today and be Chancellor of a University. She concluded her speech by quoting Reverend Jesse Jackson: “the American dream is why we must keep hope alive”.

Opposition 2: Reverend Jesse Jackson
After a long applause from the Chamber, Reverend Jesse Jackson opened the case for the opposition by claiming that the American dream is not colour-blind since it was built under white supremacy. This American dream defined exclusively for white males was upheld in the past by terrorist organisations like the KKK and to this day remains a reality, by example upheld by the criminal justice system of the United States. He stated that “America is not a colour blind society, it is extremely colour conscious” but only since it segregates against non-whites. Rev. Jackson quotes a Supreme Court Judge who said that “the American dream must choose inclusion over exclusion”. He believes Americans need to break the broken pieces of their past. Though we have seen some great progress, with America’s first African American President, the truth is “we have come a long way but we have so much further to go”. He urges the members of the audience to take no longer be blind to the suffering of people today. He concluded his speech with the powerful statement that “to stop at an incomplete dream is no dream at all”.

Proposition 2: Evan Tarte
The speaker stated that Reverend Jesse Jackson and himself agreed on the fact that America is not a utopia. There are large inequalities and segregation against non-whites however the American dream means that American citizens, regardless of ethnicity, can believe that race is not an insurmountable barrier to success and that they can have better opportunities than their parents. He states that “the American dream is imperfect for everyone” since it was never meant as a dream of equality but as a dream of opportunity. There has been tremendous progress for non-whites in the United States in their claim to the American dream. In 1965, segregation defined the American workforce with less than 1% of the workforce being African American of Hispanic. Today, both these groups represent 7% of the workforce respectively. The speaker says he believes that “race is no longer a disqualifying factor” as can be seen by the fact that minorities are at the top of the political and corporate ladder. The speaker concluded by saying “let's rejoice in the progress that’s been made and salute Americans of colour”.

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Opposition 2: Mark Mardell
As a BBC correspondent covering the 2012 American election, the speaker recalls that one woman he interviewed said that all he needed to know about Obama was in the movie Omen, which depicts the Anti-Christ. He remarks that for this woman and for many people “a black man in the white house couldn’t fit the American Dream”. It is from the original sin that the American dream is flawed. He claims it is much harder for African Americans to succeed in the United: they must be twice as good to succeed. In the United States, there is an automatic assumption that a black man is up to no good and that his life is not quite as good as that of a white person. The speaker powerfully states, “you can’t dream when you’re dead”, referencing the countless incidents of African Americans being shot down by police. He goes on to talk about the black areas that exist in a lot of cities. When he moved to Washington DC, white people told him not to go certain places: “when I was told an area was sketchy, it was black”. The struggle for African Americans wishing to attain the American dream against all these obstacles is that “the entrance price to the dream is that your parents are twice as good and your path needs to be straighter”.

Proposition 3: Nina Davuluri
Nina started by defining the American dream, which for her means that “regardless of race, gender or sexuality you can become anything that you want to be as long as your work hard for it”. Both her parents came to America in search for that dream. The fact that she is the first Indian American Miss America is a testament to the American dream. She recalls that when September 11th happened, her family went from being the little Indian family in the neighbourhood to the terrorist on the block. The night she won Miss America, the same thing happened: “I was mistaken for Muslim, seen as a terrorist”. She believes that America is still a very young nation and efforts can be made to make the American dream more diverse as “the diversity and tapestry of American evolves”. She is lucky to stand up as a leader thanks to the American dream and concludes her speech by saying: “I’ve been granted that opportunity and I’m really proud of that”.

Opposition 3: Sabby Dhalu
The last opposition speaker closed the case by saying that “an ideal that was built on slavery can never be colour blind”. Martin Luther King said he had a dream because his dream was different to the American dream. The American dream alienates black people. It does not apply to them. Of course America has seen progress with its first black President however Blacks and Hispanics enjoy still ¾ of the life quality that whites do. The speaker believes that “we wouldn’t need a Black Lives Matter movement if the American dream was not colour blind”. The movement wouldn’t have to exist if people truly believed that black lives mattered as much as white ones. When black lives are lost, they are not treated the same as when a white life is lost. Every 28 hours in America a black person is killed by police yet people seem to show apathy. The speaker concluded her speech stating that “there is no evidence that one can actually point to to show that the American dream is not colour blind”.

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For footage of the event go to https://www.youtube.com/user/cambridgeunionsoc