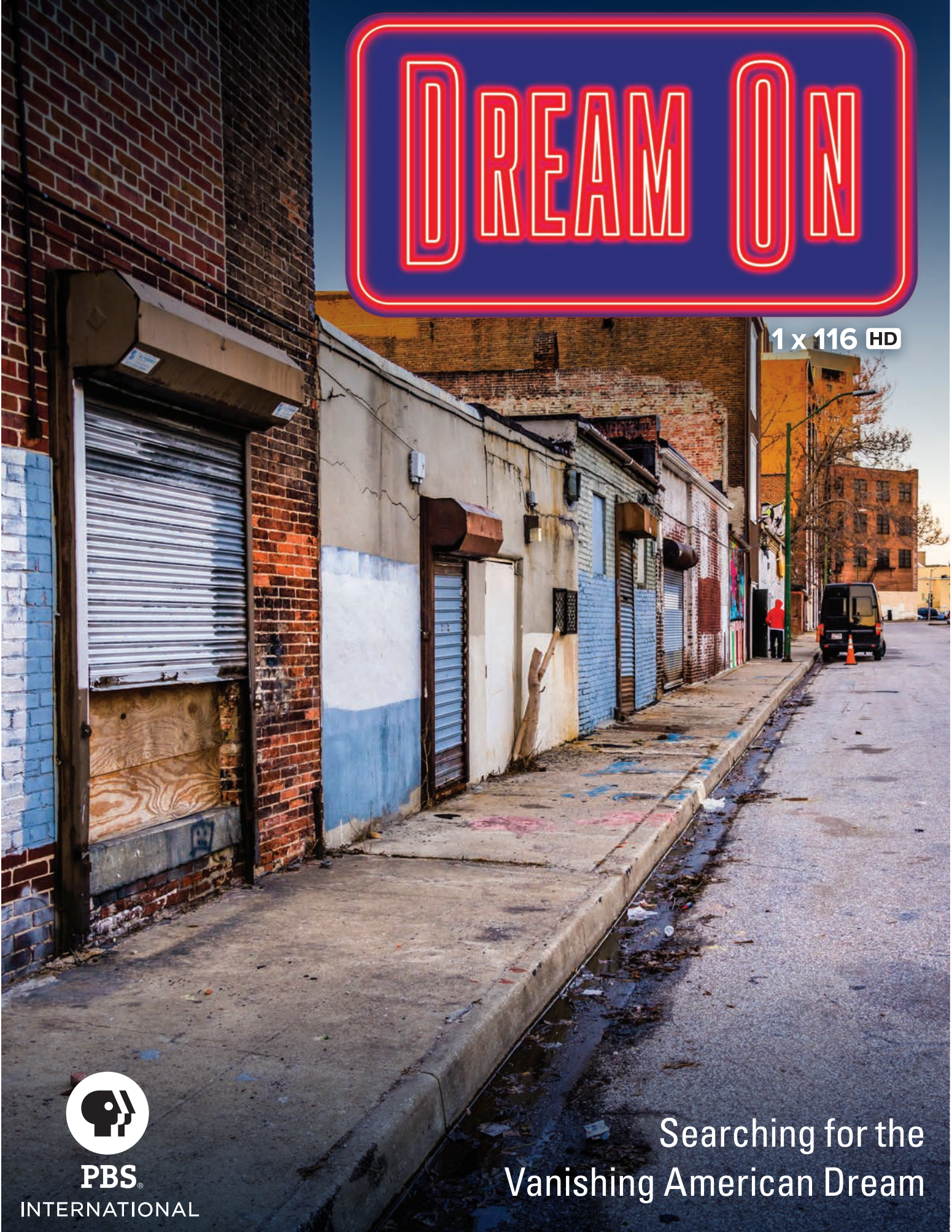


# DREAM ON

1 x 116 HD



PBS  
INTERNATIONAL

Searching for the  
Vanishing American Dream

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1 x 116 HD

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*Dream On* investigates the perilous state of the American Dream after decades of rising income inequality and declining economic mobility. In an epic road trip, political comedian John Fugelsang retraces the journey of Alexis de Tocqueville, whose 1831 study of the United States of America came to define the country as a place where anyone, of any background, could climb the ladder of economic opportunity. Following in the Frenchman's footsteps, Fugelsang asks whether the optimistic spirit of the American Dream that Tocqueville popularized is alive and well in the twenty-first century, or whether George Carlin was right when he famously quipped, "It's called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it."

Compared to people from countries where class boundaries are cemented at birth, Americans cling to the belief that the U.S. offers unfettered upward mobility to anyone willing to work hard and play by the rules. This conviction that anyone can get ahead in the world became known as the American Dream, and has inspired countless generations of Americans to seek a better standard of living for their children. Yet, in recent years, the venerable American Dream has become an empty promise for an increasing number of citizens. Millions of middle-class Americans are now unable to maintain the standard of living that they took for granted growing up, and more low-income families than ever before are unable to lift themselves out of poverty. As countless Americans struggle with diminished prospects for the future, their core beliefs about the value of work, the inevitability of progress, the fairness of the system and America's standing in the world are being shaken. Reviving the American Dream has now become one of the most critical challenges facing the nation.

By revisiting the places Tocqueville wrote about in 1831 and capturing the stories of a diverse group of Americans struggling to support their families, *Dream On* puts an intimate human face on the endangered American Dream. This timely documentary features stories of hardworking people trapped in poverty; senior citizens who have lost their pensions; blue-collar workers whose jobs have disappeared; homeowners fighting foreclosure; once-prosperous families struggling with hunger and homelessness; fast-food workers fighting for a living wage; non-violent drug offenders in prison for decades; undocumented immigrants fighting deportation; low-income communities struggling with poverty-related disease; rust belt cities recovering from deindustrialization; educators trying to reform our failing public schools; and social entrepreneurs designing new models to reduce intergenerational poverty.

To add some sorely needed levity and political irony, John Fugelsang's reflections on his Tocqueville odyssey are captured in a stand-up comedy monologue woven throughout the documentary. As a comedian, actor, writer, talk show host and pundit, Fugelsang's eclectic background allows him to bring equal doses of wit and wisdom to the search for the increasingly elusive American Dream.

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## CREDITS

*Producer and Director:* Roger Weisberg

*Writers:* John Fugelsang and Roger Weisberg

*Photo:* Jon Bilous

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