American Dream Convention

Congratulations! You have been selected to present at this year’s American Dream Convention, where multiple visions of the American Dream will be debated and voted on. You will be responsible for convincing your audience that your vision of the American Dream is more compelling, beneficial, motivational, and so on, than the other visions presented and should be the new “Official American Dream.” Here’s how the convention will work:

The Presenters: The presenters are all important figures from American history. You and your group will be assigned to one of these people. You will research the person, read his or her work, and figure out what his or her vision for America was. How would this person have explained the American Dream? You’ll decide this with your group, and you will craft a presentation that you think will convince your audience that your character’s vision is the one to vote for as the “Official American Dream.”

The Audience: Each character comes from a different place and time period in history. They each argued to convince a different audience with different concerns. You, however, will all be arguing to persuade the same audience: modern American teenagers. You’ll need to figure out how to convince your peers that your character’s vision should be the official one.

The Presentations: Your group will have a lot of leeway in deciding how you want to present. Will you film a video? Write a speech? You’ll think about what form would best convince your audience.

The Evaluation: When you present, you will be in character, acting as a particular person from history. When you are an audience member, you will be yourself—a modern American teenager. After all of the presentations are complete, you will vote on what you think is the most convincing vision, and you will write an explanation of why you think so.

After the convention, you will write a paper explaining what your personal vision of the American Dream is. You can use the arguments you heard and evaluated to help you form your opinion.