**“Coming to America”** --by Neil Diamond

Far  
We've been travelling far  
Without a home  
But not without a star  
  
Free  
Only want to be free  
We huddle close  
Hang on to a dream  
  
On the boats and on the planes  
They're coming to America  
Never looking back again  
They're coming to America  
  
Home, don't it seem so far away  
Oh, we're travelling light today  
In the eye of the storm  
In the eye of the storm  
  
Home, to a new and a shiny place  
Make our bed, and we'll say our grace  
Freedom's light burning warm  
Freedom's light burning warm  
  
Everywhere around the world  
They're coming to America  
Every time that flag's unfurled  
They're coming to America  
  
Got a dream to take them there  
They're coming to America  
Got a dream they've come to share  
They're coming to America  
  
They're coming to America  
They're coming to America  
They're coming to America  
They're coming to America  
Today, today, today, today, today  
  
My country 'tis of thee  
(Today)  
Sweet land of liberty  
(today)  
Of thee I sing  
(today)  
Of thee I sing  
(today)  
  
(today)  
  
(today)  
  
(today

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| Cue/Commentary | Notes |
| Sets the scene, immigrants coming to America  Outlines reasons to come to America  References Statue of Liberty  Methods of immigration, and satisfaction upon arrival  Eye of the storm – calm and safety  Religious references, warmth upon arrival  America as a symbol of freedom around the world  American Dream brings them here  Patriotic references | “We’ve been traveling far / without a home / but not without a star” (lines 2-4)   * Illustrates the immigrant experience, with America being the guiding beacon of hope (star) * Could also apply to Americans who have had little comfort, in terms of wealth and/or property   “Only want to be free / We huddle close / Hang on to a dream” (lines 6-8)   * For foreigners, the American Dream is not so much one of material wealth, but of freedom and the opportunity to lead a happy life * Also speaks to the opportunity to improve your physical and financial situation * For many, the dream is that their children will have a better life * Reminiscent of the quote at the base of the Statue of Liberty:   "Give me your tired, your poor,  Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.  I lift my lamp beside the golden door."  “On the boats and on the planes / They're coming to America / Never looking back again” (lines 9-11)   * America is so wonderful that those coming here never look back – not sure that this is true…   “Home, don't it seem so far away / Oh, we're travelling light today / In the eye of the storm” (lines 13-15)   * This line seems to suggest some great upheaval that the speakers are fleeing from, leaving everything/everyone behind (traveling light today), trying to discover some peace and hope and stability (eye of the storm) * Traveling light might also refer to their hearts, lightened by the prospect of escape and freedom in America   “Home, to a new and a shiny place / Make our bed, and we'll say our grace / Freedom's light burning warm” (lines 17-19)   * Focuses on the positive (home, new & shiny, light burning warm) * Shows gratitude (say our grace)   “Everywhere around the world / They're coming to America / Every time that flag's unfurled / They're coming to America” (lines 21-24)   * America is a beacon of light to the world, as referenced by the Puritans – “a City on the hill” (John Winthrop, written in 1630) * Everyone around the world is impressed with America and wants to come here – again, a bit idealistic.   “Got a dream to take them there / They're coming to America / Got a dream they've come to share” (lines 20-22)   * Dreams of a better life drive them to come here, a dream that is shared by the many who have come before   Song wraps up with lines from the patriotic song “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”   * Draws upon feelings of history and patriotism, focusing on liberty and all this land has to offer |
| **Summary**: This song shows and extremely positive and uplifting view of people coming to America, coming for freedom from tyranny and for the opportunities this land has to offer. It focuses on the benefits, and doesn’t really discuss any of the challenges facing the newcomers. It is an encouragement and welcome to all to join us in this American Dream. Neil Diamond makes use of repetition, allusion, and imagery to help the listener feel proud to be an American. He partners these stirring lyrics with an upbeat musical cadence, providing an overall positive feeling about coming to America and pursuing the American Dream. This song was written in the 1980’s, during a period of prosperity in America, but also in a time in which there were international tensions, particularly with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. It provides a historical view of immigration, circa 1900, as well as addressing contemporary immigration, where defections from the Soviet Union and other areas of oppression were widely celebrated. This was a pre-9/11 world, where immigration was not seen as bad, and there was less fear of foreigners coming to America. While this song depicts some truths about the freedoms offered in America, it is Pollyannaish in its portrayal of the ease of “coming to America” and the reception that many immigrants receive upon their arrival. America has always been idealistically seen as a safe harbor for those fleeing oppression, although the reality has often fallen short of this principle. | |