

What Self-Made Really Means

By [Alexis Collins](#) • PSU Contributor • [News](#) March 31, 2019 at 3:50pm

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The concept of self-made is an interesting one, and at times it can be subjective. Dictionary.com defines self-made as “having succeeded in life unaided,” but in the case of 21-year-old cosmetics mogul Kylie Jenner, Forbes redefined it as “someone who built a company or established a fortune on her own, rather than inheriting some or all of it.” This came after Jenner graced the cover of Forbes magazine’s American Women Billionaires issue and was ranked No. 27 on last year’s list of [America’s Richest Self-Made Women](#). On Tuesday the magazine once again highlighted Jenner’s success by dubbing her “[The Youngest Self-Made Billionaire Ever](#),” dethroning Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who previously held the title when he reached the 10-digit accomplishment at the tender age of 23.

If you didn’t know, Forbes is facing a lot of backlash over the cover, not because Jenner is currently with the greats (Oprah, Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, etc), but because of their... choice of words. People feel like Jenner’s privilege, connections and family name gave her a leg up in life, thus eliminating the notion that she’s self-made. I mean, how can someone who’s a member of the Kardashian-Jenner clan, who was seemingly riding the coattails of her older sister Kim, be considered “self-made.” Frankly speaking, Forbes’ definition is very broad, and I think they were only using it to accommodate to Jenner and avoid the social media retaliation. Their definition takes away from how hard some people had to work to get the success they had. I mean, Oprah experienced poverty and substantial hardships and made her way up from nothing, Zuckerberg created Facebook out of his dorm room. Let’s be real, if Kylie were a relatively-unknown girl from some lowkey town in the U.S. and she was selling these products, she would have to work twice as hard for half the credit.

To accommodate for this discrepancy, Forbes created a ranking scale from 1-10 based on the [400 richest list of Americans](#) in 2014 in terms of how self-made they were. According to the scale, someone who scores a 1, inherited everything, meanwhile someone who not only grew up in poverty, but also experienced difficult situations, scored a 10. Oprah, given her humble circumstances, scored a 10, Jenner, who leveraged her celebrity for profit, [ranks a 7](#).

I'm not saying Jenner didn't make a come-up for herself either. She capitalized off of her fame and made a billion-dollar empire out of it. She also displayed excellent branding skills by creating a social media presence of more than 129 million Instagram followers. She has used smart marketing strategies to get her product across to consumers, even posting a video of herself teaching her cute baby Stormi how to say Kylie Cosmetics, but she is definitely NOT self-made. Forbes needs to stop throwing that term around loosely because it discredits those who are authentically living the American Dream.