Sample Essay

This is a sample essay in response to the question below (in red). Although the question is a little different from the assignment in HIST 1310 class, you can learn how to make an argument with effective quotes and examples from this paper.

Firstly, discuss leading abolitionist Frederick Douglass’ main argument in the Fourth of July speech. According to the document, how does Douglass discuss the existence of slavery on Independence Day in 1852? Secondly, explain emigrationist Martin Delany’s view of African Americans' condition in the 1850s. Why does he advocate that African Americans should emigrate outside the United States? Lastly, in your opinion, which argument is more compelling, considering the historical background of the 1850s? If you were a scholar during this era, which view would you support? Why or why not?

The main argument of the leading abolitionist Frederick Douglas’s speech was to make all of America aware that they are celebrating freedom but slavery still exist in America. That in itself is a hypocrisy. How can they celebrate the Fourth of July and claim America is the land of the free, where you can pursue Happiness, but turn a blind eye to “the eternal slave trade, the American slave –trade, sustained by American politics and politics and American religion. (Douglas.4) Frederick Douglass began his speech by speaking about the America and its being only 76 years young and therefore having room to improvement. “May he not hope that high lessons of wisdom, of justice and of truth, will yet give direction to her destiny?”(Douglas.1)

 This led him asking the most profound question to his audience, “Why am I called to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with national independence?” (Douglas.3) He asked what message was he supposed to deliver. He stated “The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you not me. This Fourth of July is yours, not *mine*. You may *rejoice*, I must mourn.” (Douglas.3) He gave vivid description of the life of a slave and challenge people to debate with him about it at a later time. He also spoke strongly about the Fugitive Slave Law. He stated that “The Fugitive Slave Law makes mercy to them a crime; and bribes the judge who tries them.” (Douglas. 5) He stated “I take this law to be one of the grossest infringements of Christian Liberty, and if the churches and ministries of our country were not stupidly blind, or most wickedly indifferent, they too, would so regard it.” (Douglass.6) He said that Christianity in this country was lie and is not the true teachings of God. He ended by basically saying that what is done in the dark will come to the light and now no nation can hide its wrong doings or from the surrounding worlds finding out what is happening and interfering. He stated “Let there be Light.” (Douglas.8)

The emigrationist Martin Delany’s view was that Colored people can’t receive equality in the United States. He stated that “it was expected that anti –slavery, according to its profession, would extend to colored persons.” “But in all this we were doomed to disappointment, sad, sad disappointment.” (Delany. 189) Martin Delany said that although a few colored youth have received jobs, it does not compare to what Colored people were promised. He felt that Colored people needed to be more proactive, stop praying without putting any effort forward.. He stated “The colored races are highly susceptible of religion; it is a constituent principle of their nature, and an excellent trait in their character. But unfortunately for them, they carry them, they carry it too far. Their hope is largely developed, and consequently, they usually stand still, hope in God, and reality expect Him to do that for them, which it is necessary they should do themselves.” (Delany. 190)

He provided an example of two colored families, whereas one family was able to earn a living by getting low level jobs, such as teachers, shop keepers and farmers and the other family was only able to get jobs by being hired from the first family. However they all received the same education. He said this was an example of how colors who lived in America were treated all of time, compared to whites. He said that “We are slaves in the midst of freedom, waiting patiently, and unconcernedly, indifferently, and stupidly, for masters to come and lay claim to us, trusting to their generosity, whether or not they will own us and carry us into endless bondage.” (Delany. 191) He believes that while others have been successful with their emigration, it is not possible for colored people to emigrate from their native homes to the United States. He thinks that the colors should prepare themselves for usefulness, starting with parents and education because colored people have often gone in advance of themselves and that’s a mistake, the young people must be of usefulness to prepare for the elevation is at hand.

While I could see the validity in both arguments, they were very written and I could only imagine the power in the speech,; I tend to think that Frederick Douglas Fourth of July argument was more compelling. While reading his speech I begin to get a visual as he described the horrors that African American slaves faced every day. I could relate to their pain, as my current status in life is a direct result of the pain and suffering and deaths, sweat and tears, the lack of respect that they received and because they were not even seen or treated as humans being, men or women. I thought that showed a lot of courage to write and give a speech like that on a Fourth of July celebration and to so many white people, I almost was afraid for him. The speech was eloquent written and it covered many issues, it spoke about America and the founding fathers, the hope for a change in the near future, the ignorance of slavery, the hypocrisy of Christianity, the constitution and about the Light being shined on these horrible atrocities.

So if I was a scholar during this era I would support Frederick Douglas, he was well educated and his augment seemed to cover everything that was happening during that era. I don’t think I would want to migrate, however I would like to fight for equality. I don’t migration would have gotten me equality either, I think that constantly shinning the light on this the brutality and discrimination that African Americans slaves were facing, would cause things to gradually change things.