

Compare essays baldwin and emerson



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The focal point of this paper is to compare and contrast the essays, James Baldwin's 'In Search of a Majority: An Address' and Ralph Waldo Emerson's 'Race'. Both the writers investigate into the aspects of race and communities and reveal their faith in accordance to their argument. James Baldwin states that to understand and evaluate the aspects of racial differences it is important to understand the true nature of minorities and majorities in a given state or nation.

He believes that once the majorities of a country or region is identified it would be logical to understand the reason behind the social strata of the majority. In other words, James Baldwin indicates, according to his thesis or discussion, that "the only useful definition of the word "majority" does not refer to numbers, and it does not refer to power. It refers to influence." (Baldwin, 2006) On the other hand, Emerson believes that race is the fundamental influence and ingredient of success. For his argument, he has constructed his text and taken the English as a model of most influential race.

According to his belief the English people are the most dominant and influential race and to prove that he states, "How came such men as King Alfred, and Roger Bacon, William of Wykeham, Walter Raleigh, Philip Sidney, Isaac Newton, William Shakspeare, George Chapman, Francis Bacon, George Herbert, Henry Vane, to exist here? What made these delicate natures? was it the air? was it the sea? was it the parentage?". (Emerson, 2006) Thus, Emerson tries to prove that race is the inbuilt and fundamental aspect of success.

Thus, both these essays can well be related to each other in the sense that both the writers are trying to find out the fundamentals of racism and the dominant features of a social stratum. However, both the writers are looking at the same elements of sociological confluence but from the opposite directions. While, Baldwin feels that the most powerful group of people are those who are the most influential in a given society Emerson feels that the most influential human group in a given society are the one who are the most racially powerful and distinct.

Emerson's claims of dominance of the Englishman starts with their ancestral background of the Germanic origins during the roman era and whom the Romans too found very difficult to handle and impossible to dominate. Then he imposes historical data like the details of the British Empire and the demographic supremacy of the empire at its zenith. To prove his point he indicates, " It is race, is it not? that puts the hundred millions of India under the dominion of a remote island in the north of Europe.

" (Emerson, 2006) On the other hand, Baldwin looks into the matter of arguments in a more contemporary sense. He indicates that there is only a sense of paranoia in the context of xenophobia in modern US. He indicates that, as the population of the Negro community is less influential in US society it is obvious that " It is only too clear that even with the most malevolent will in the world Negroes can never manage to achieve one-tenth of the harm which we fear. " (Baldwin, 2006)

If the two arguments are compared in this context we would find that Baldwin's arguments are induced by a sense of humane appeal and he suggests that all human races have the chance to be powerful and influential

at a given condition and thus he suggests that every human race has a fair chance to dominate at a given point of time and at a given point of space. On the other hand, Emerson's arguments are more fundamentalist in nature and at times it appears that his only intention of writing is to prove English superiority as a race.

He tends to forget the entire human history and just focus on the last two hundred years where the English dominated most of the world population. Nevertheless, such conditions came and went for most of the races of the world. There were the Egyptians and Mesopotamians. The Greeks and the Persians were at a high. The Romans, Huns, Mongols and French all had their days in the sun. So, what makes the English better than the rest?

The author fails to answer this and chooses to keep these questions out of his text. However, if we take the two arguments together we would find an interesting observation that we could not by approaching them each individually. If that is done we would find that there are some specific notions of success for a race and if the situation and surroundings are in complete alignment with each other there are possibilities that any race can become the dominant race of the world, at least for a period.

This is the fundamental revelation of these two arguments that has not been mentioned once in these texts. References: Baldwins, James; (2006); In Search of a Majority: An Address Emerson, Ralph Waldo; (2006); Race; The Complete Works Of Ralph Waldo Emerson; www. davemckay. co. uk; Retrieved on 07. 04. 2008 from <http://www. davemckay. co. uk/philosophy/emerson/emerson. php? name= emerson. 05. english. 04>