Outline of the paper

1-Opening Introduction

2-summarizing paragraphs

3-yes/no/okay/but…

4-and yet

5-commentary on writer's motivation moves

6-who cares?

7-so what

8-naysayers/skeptics in your text

9-Conclusions

The American Dream has been something that our country has prided itself in offering to those who decide to live in America. This was the tagline that pulled many immigrants to come to America in historical waves of immigration. “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” the Statue of Liberty reads. Our country has seen as the land of opportunity for decades. The notion that if someone works hard and is consistent, they too can flourish in the successes that this country has to offer, has been the promise. The American Dream has been seen as a prize at the top of ladder, promising a better and easier lifestyle. However, in reality it has remained an impractical ideal that is limited for a selected few to enjoy. Even those who find themselves in America today, millions are held back from achieving the ideals of the American Dream, often for reasons out of their control such as race, socioeconomic class, inequality, and family situation. This issue affects students, lower class families, middle class families and workers.

The essay “The Upside of Income Inequality” by Gary S. Becker and Kevin M. Murphy examines the benefits between economic inequalities. Beck and Murphy contend that “In the United States, the rise of inequality accompanied the rise in the payoff to education and other skills” (582). They argue those who graduate with college degrees earn significantly more money than those who do not. Becker and Murphy contend that not having higher education is the main reason for not succeeding in attaining the American Dream. The Pew Research Team complied statistics and graphs about the progress, or lack thereof, in the black and white experience in America in their research entitled: “King’s Dream Remains an Elusive Goal; Many Americans See Racial Disparities.” This research suggests there has been some progress over the past decades, but many aspects of life remain unchanged for African Americans and other minorities, especially in regards to achieving the American Dream. The Pew Research Team points out that although the gap in graduation rates between whites and blacks has decreased, gaps between homeownership, median household income, and median household wealth have increased significantly. This suggests that there is disparity in economic attainment between whites and blacks, regardless of education. The income gap between white and black households has increased from $24,000 to $40,000 (Pew 630).

There has been extremely little progress in the removing inequalities that minorities have in America, minorities have always been held back from achieving the American Dream. The Pew Research Team highlights these inconvenient realities by pointing out that the homeownership gap between whites and black increased from 25 percent in 1980 to 30 percent in 2012 (Pew 632).When contrasted with the fact the high school graduation gap has closed between whites and blacks, from 24 in 1960 percent to 7 percent in 2012, this points to a remarkable phenomenon in our society today (634). So how is it with an increasing rate of educated whites and blacks, does America continue to have an increasing income gap between these two communities? The argument of Becker and Murphy that those who are lower on the socioeconomic hierarchy of America chose to be there because they did not take on the sacrifices and struggles of going through college is not supported by the data. They contend that, “the rise in returns on investments in human capital is beneficial and desirable” (Becker, Murphy 582). They fail however, to mention or explain why there is such vast income inequality in the first place, and how it affects those with less money. Even so they contend that “An American with a college degree earned about 30 percent more than an American who stopped education at high school” (Becker, Murphy 582). How then do they expect those with lower income, who cannot risk taking on the financial burdens accompanied with college, to have the same opportunities that are promised in the American Dream? If having a college degree is the first step in achieving the American Dream, those who keep our country afloat by working the low-paying blue collar jobs are the ones at a disadvantage for achieving that dream.

The authors of the two essays I selected present conflicting arguments about achieving the American Dream. Both essays leave out vital information that could assist their readers in arriving at their own conclusions about how achievable the dream really is for many Americans. A lot has happened since Pew conducted its Research in 2012 and even more since Becker and Murphy published their article in 2007. As Cornell professor Noliwe Rooks and journalist, Kai Wright, have reported, black college enrollment has increased at nearly twice the rate of white enrollment in recent years (Appel, Taylor 1). However, many blacks are attending for-profit colleges, which appear at first glance to have a less daunting price tag, but which are targeted at single mothers and minorities. These schools are giving out golden tickets with inescapable debt sentences, insufficient quality education, and with scams written in the fine print. So if in the recent years it appears that more blacks are attending college to achieve the American Dream, why do the objective statistics on the growing income gap between black Americans and whites continuing to widen?