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Rhetorical Analysis Essay

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Where is the Love?

“What’s wrong with the world, mama, people livin’ like they ain’t got no mamas.” The Black Eyed Peas open their song “Where is the Love?” and catch the audience’s attention with this line. Starting off with a question grabs the audience’s attention by making them have to think and realize something important that’s going on in our world today. Even though this song debuted nine years ago in 2003, it is still relevant to the world we live in today. That’s how big of an impact this song has had on people for them to still listen to it today. Three concepts that appear in the lyrics of this song are logos, ethos and pathos. Logos being the basic logic that people can gain from something, ethos is the credibility of the piece being discussed and pathos the emotional factor and touching people in some way, good or bad.The Black Eyed Peas’ song “Where is the Love?” contains evidence of logos, ethos, and pathos appeal in order to impact its audience in a more effective way. The evidence of logos throughout the song is seen through rhetorical and historical examples within the lyrics. The use of ethos is apparent throughout the lyrics when considering the definition of situated ethos. The pathos appeal is a very big portion of this song and is portrayed through Aristotle’s three criteria to arouse emotions from the audience.

The logos appeal is all about finding the logic in something. The logos in the lyrics of this song are brought to light through the use of rhetorical and historical examples. Rhetorical examples can be used to dig up memories or experiences the audience has gone through before. A good lyric from the song that supports this point is “overseas, yeah, we try to stop terrorism, but we still got terrorists her livin’ in the USA, the big CIA, the bloods and the crips and the KKK”. I think people can relate to these lyrics here because of the problems our country has had with terrorism in the past. People have gone through this kind of chaos and are stuck with memories they would rather not be stuck with the rest of their lives. The logic behind this lyric is that we are trying to stop all the horrible terrorism that goes on in our country, and even around the world, but no matter how hard we try we cannot defeat them all. There will still be terrorists living in our country, passed down from terrorists before. The audience that has experienced and gone through some type of monumental event in their lives can definitely relate to this logic more than someone who does not have any special connection. Another aspect of the logos in the lyrics can be accounted for through historical examples. “A war is goin’ on but the reason’s undercover” is an example of an historical example in the lyrics of this song. Our war going on in Iraq right now is discussed in these lyrics using logos because it is making people really think about why we went there in the first place and why we are still there now. While these lyrics portray evidence of logos, the song also contains evidence of ethos.

Ethos is known as the credibility the song holds and to what extent the audience believes in what is trying to be said. Ethos is prevalent in this song, prominently by using situated ethos. Situated ethos is defined as having previously established stereotypes or reputations of people. In this song, situated ethos is shown in a few places. One can be related to the lyrics, “most of us only care about money makin’, selfishness got us followin’ our wrong direction”. This simply describes the stereotype that most people only care about money and material things, rather than giving to others. The United States in particular has this reputation around the world. The stereotype that we are all greedy, materialistic, selfish people that only care about what gets us to the top, even if it means bringing others down along the way. Some stereotypes in our culture can be detrimental to kids, who are very easily influenced by the media. “Infecting the young minds faster than bacteria, kids wanna act like what they see in the cinema” is the perfect quote to go along with this point. Kids are the most easily influenced out of everyone and the media knows this and uses it to their advantage. The Black Eyed Peas are using this to get the point across that all these negative headlines and images kids are seeing on television and in magazines and on the internet are influencing the way kids see and think about themselves. This could really end up affecting these kids as they grow up and could hinder them in the future. While there is quite the amount of ethos displayed throughout the song, pathos is the most used out of the three.

Pathos is all about the emotion and how a person feels as he or she is listening to this song. The pathos appeal in the song is the most prevalent and can be shown through Aristotle’s three criteria to stimulate emotions from the audience. This song does a great job of bringing out the audience’s emotions and feel really connected in some way or another. One thing that I realized this song accomplishes after reading the lyrics thoroughly, is making people feel like they want to get involved and make a change. This goes along with our discussion in class about civic engagement and just supports that idea even more. I know I felt like I wanted to help the world in some way after listening to this song over and over. We hear about awful things going on everyday in the news and we think we can do nothing about it, but this song in a way brings out the audience’s emotions to want to try to make some sort of a difference. “Can you practice what you preach and would you turn the other cheek” is asking a person if you see all these terrible events going on are you really just going to forget and do nothing about it? The three criteria Aristotle mentions in the book are understanding the state of mind of the audience, who can excite these emotions, and understanding the reasons for people becoming emotional. A good quote to analyze for this purpose would be the start of the chorus when it says, “people killin’, people dyin’, children hurt and you hear them cryin’”. I think the type of people this would hit hardest would be parents or parental figures because the thought of children in any situation as the song suggests is just unimaginable. This would be understanding the mind of the audience and what could make them emotional thinking about their child in any such situation. The reason for why people would get emotional during this part of the song is self explanatory in that it is about the harming of innocent children. No one likes to hear about children getting hurt or killed, but all around the world this is happening, which brings us back to the civic engagement part of it all. Later on in the song, it says, “Nations dropping bombs, chemical gasses fillin’ lungs of little ones”, basically just another way to grab the audience and make them want to make some sort of a difference. Logos, ethos and pathos all work together in the end in order to get the proper reaction from the audience.

Overall, this song contains a great deal of all three: logos, ethos and pathos; pathos probably more than the other two. The three concepts work together to catch the attention of the audience listening and feel like there is something they could do to help the situations the Black Eyed Peas sing about. Using logic, credibility and emotion this song was successful in the way that it definitely caught the attention of many people around the world after it was placed in the top 10 hits list. Music is a very important part of people’s lives. It always has been something that makes people feel some sort of emotion when listening to whatever type of music it may be and the lyrics also play a big role in that, too. I think this song did a great job in each of the areas of logos, ethos and pathos and will definitely be a memorable song for years to come. Hopefully, more and more people will hear it and start to realize that if people work together things could be accomplished. After all, “we only got one world.”