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Analysis Essay

The first month of 1929 was born a revolutionary man who would later on dramatically change the course of our history in the United States of America. ­­Martin Luther King, Jr. had many great accomplishments in his life: received a Nobel Peace Prize for his, “I have a dream” speech and obtained a leadership role at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (“Martin Luther King Jr.”). Among many motivational and inspirational speeches, King delivered his “I’ve been to the mountaintop” speech exactly one day before his assassination. In this speech, King explains to the audience why he would choose to live his life just a few more years to see what is to come in the future. King continues to describe how “the nation is sick. Trouble is in the land; confusion all around.” King abruptly switches the topic to shed light on such a dark topic. He preaches that all people are children unified by God, and he and his people are lucky to be where they are in the world. He goads the audience to stand up for themselves and protest peacefully by marching downtown or halting the support of companies who don’t support their workers. King concludes his speech by comparing a story from the bible to a letter he received from a white, high school female, who expressed compassion and regard for equality. This speech is a great example of how King was able to influence so many people with emotion (pathos), authority (ethos), and reasoning (logos).

King’s appeals to reasoning helps build his moral character. He brings all the darkness of inequality to light by stating, “It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; its nonviolence or nonexistence. That is where we are today” (King). He is making a connection to the amount of peaceful protests that have ended with violence or death from the opposing supporters. If people protest with violence, than they will die. King does not ask but instead tells his audience there will be no violence because it would end with bad repercussions. Reassurance is present when he states that “We aren’t engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men” (King). He is using reasoning to explain how his people are not men even though they are not acting negatively. The way King uses words to emphasize the logical meanings he wants to portray, helps build his sense of logical morals.

The appeals to emotion that King uses in this speech helps reveal the true darkness and hardships within the unequal society. Fear and hatred was a major contributor to the society’s view on King and his people. Although his people don’t have the human rights they deserve, they are important and deserve to be treated like human beings. King states that “if something isn’t done, and done in a hurry, to bring the colored peoples of the world out of their long years of poverty, their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed”. He is explaining how the world would fall apart without his people. King makes a connection to the fact that his people are doing the hard manual labor jobs all around the world. He uses appeals to emotions when he says, “thirteen hundred of God’s children [are] here suffering” (King). King is using the audience’s emotions to force people to see how his people are God’s children too and that they are truly suffering.

Works Cited

King Jr., Martin Luther. “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop.” American Rhetoric, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkivebeentothemountaintop.htm>. Accessed 6 September 2018.

“Martin Luther King Jr. Biography.” Biography, 18 Jan. 2018, <https://www.biography.com/people/martin-luther-king-jr-9365086>. Accessed 11 September 2018.