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Ethos, Pathos, and Logos:

How They Affect Arguments about Racism

Racism in America is a widespread problem, but trying to persuade some people that it even still exists is hard. Doing that without offending readers is even more difficult. Carol Anderson, author of "White Rage" and Garnette Cadogan, author of "Black and Blue," both prove that racism is still active, and they both show how it has affected perception of African Americans in this society. Both Anderson and Cadogan have effective credibility for and emotional response from readers; however, Anderson's logical appeal is weaker than Cadogan's.

Both Anderson and Cadogan have effective ethical appeal in relation to their audience through their trustworthiness and personality. In "White Rage," Anderson uses her extensive knowledge to argue her case; therefore the audience trusts her opinion, especially in her discussion of violent white backlash against *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Her knowledge of court cases makes her credible to her audience. On the other hand, Anderson's personality makes her credibility weaker. Her intense tone that shows her passion for the topic of racism in America; however, her passion comes off as too harsh. As she talks about white response to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, she describes whites throwing bricks at schools, and the creation of the Southern Manifesto which led to whites being able to continue their education while

“Black children were left to rot with no viable option” (85). While factually true, her article’s personality will attract people who already side with her, but her anger maybe too intense for others, perhaps even alienating some potential supporters of equality. Therefore, Anderson’s ethos is not completely effective even with her extensive knowledge, which forms the backbone of her credibility.

Cadogan’s ethical appeal is based on personal experience rather than external knowledge; as a result, he relates to a wider audience and a larger number of people. The audience trusts Cadogan because he describes events of his own life in Kingston, New Orleans, and New York City. As in Anderson, readers sense Cadogan is telling true facts, but his personality makes him more credible than she is. For one thing, his personality is a lot more relaxed than Anderson’s. Cadogan’s tone is calm, inviting and he goes with the flow in his writing. He talked about how he was “especially unprepared for the cops. They regularly stopped and bullied (him)” (133). Some people might have used a word like ‘tortured’ or ‘beaten’ in place of ‘bullied’; Cadogan’s word choice makes readers sense he is not exaggerating his experience with the police. When he also mentioned he was “astonished at how safe the streets felt” (136), the word ‘astonished’ makes his writing seem sophisticated yet charmingly naive. This positivity and thoughtfulness in his tone makes him credible. In fact, throughout Cadogan's article, the only negativity comes when he reports what others said to him, and then the tone is theirs not his. One example is when he talks about seeing a white man’s wheelchair stuck in a crosswalk in New Orleans. Cadogan tried to help him, and the man “threatened to shoot (him) in the face, then asked a white pedestrian for help” (133). This event is horrible to readers, but because Cadogan himself does not judge the man and

maintains his positive attitude, readers trust that he is not exaggerating the experience.

Therefore, Cadogan's overall ethical appeal is more credible with his audience making his ethos stronger than Anderson's.

Both Cadogan and Anderson employ pathos in their articles to inspire emotional reaction in readers. Anderson's appeal to pathos is largely ineffective because she makes readers angry in the wrong way. Instead of inspiring people to act, the stories she tells about white backlash against black advancement just make readers mad. For instance, when she claims that the election of Barack Obama led to laws based on racial profiling such as "stop and frisk laws" (85) and "stand your ground with laws" (85) most people will be filled with disgust, not with a feeling of inspiration to change. The way she describes the situation, readers feel there's nothing they can do about it. On the other hand, Cadogan's pathos is overwhelmingly effective. His article is more of a traditional narrative, and his warm storytelling style makes readers like him. Even his negative details, such as being arrested for waving hello to a cop, strike readers as essentially friendly and likable (134-35). His description of Jamaica as "a map of complex... cultural and political and social activity" inspires people with curiosity (131). Readers just love this article more than "White Rage," and that's because of Cadogan's more effective use of pathos.

Anderson and Cadogan both use logical organization that appeals to reason for their readers. Anderson's structure in "White Rage" is set by her thesis, stated in the third paragraph, but she later trails off topic, which loses the audience and weakens her logos. Anderson starts by talking about the Civil War, then goes into *Brown vs. Board of Education*, but when she starts talking about Obama ascending to the White House readers lose the thread, which leads to

confusion. Cadogan, on the other hand, has a flowing article that portrays to his favorite activity, walking. Cadogan does not use a thesis statement because his article is more narrative than argument, but he sticks to the theme of the story throughout. He talks about how he loves to walk, and as he goes through his story, it is like he was walking through his life and the audience followed after him. Therefore, Anderson's logos is weaker than Cadogan's because her structure disintegrates, which makes readers get confused. Since Cadogan stays on track, he has a stronger appeal to logos.

Anderson and Cadogan try to persuade their audiences that racism occurs to this day through their use of ethos, logos, and pathos. Overall, Cadogan had a stronger and more relatable article because of his narrative style which puts the audience in his shoes throughout the story. Anderson's "White Rage" is less successful. Even though she provides hard facts from the past to the present, her negative tone weakens her argument. Racism is terrible, and if people try to ignore it, it will get worse. Hopefully in the future racism can be resolved once and for all. These two authors have taken a step towards that goal.

Works Cited

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