By: Kila Gray, Taylor Carneal, Valarie Fridley

English 400-17: Common Good Project

Dr. Guler

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***Rationale Statement for Prison Reform:***

*\*Our Website’s Address:* http://prisonreformers.strikingly.com

• **Ethos-** Ethos is an ethical appeal and it, “establishes the speaker’s or writer’s credibility and trustworthiness,” (Glen & Gray. Pg. 162). As college students, we have limited experience within the judicial system, and with the correctional institution, however, our example of ethos is that we were able to interview a correctional officer who was a credible source and gave us a good sense as to what prison overcrowding is like and how it affects our society. This interview can be found under the Personal Guard Perspective, on our website *http://prisonreformers.strikingly.com*. We were also able to find a plethora of reliable sources that built our credibility and trustworthiness. These sources also included interviews from both guards and prisoners, and these people were able to depict their real-life struggle within the American justice system. We described the hardships these men and women face during our presentation as well as published some of the reliable data on our website. Our goal in including this information is to ensure our audience that although we have limited personal experience within this specific area, as college students, we are expert researchers and have worked hard to develop a well-researched and reliable project.

• **Pathos-** Pathos is an emotional appeal and it, “involves using language that will connect with the beliefs and feelings of the audience,” (Glen & Gray. Pg. 162). Our example of pathos can be found in both our website and brochure. The pictures that we used which can be found in our brochure, like the picture on the back of our brochure of the prisoners being overcrowded, shows their obvious discomfort and evokes feelings of sympathy and pity. We also have a picture on the inside of our brochure of a torn American flag that is being viewed through barbed wire. This picture alludes to the brokenness of our justice system and ignites a longing to fix our broken policies. The website’s use of celebrity endorsement which can be found under the Celebrity Reformers tab works as both pathos and ethos. It works as ethos because our audience will be more inclined to trust well-known people who are supporting our cause. The celebrity endorsement works as pathos because they can influence our viewers based on their stardom. Their endorsement has played a pivotal role in ensuring that we can successfully persuade our audience on the importance of prison reform because people look up to celebrities and want to be like them. If a celebrity that our viewers admire supports prison reform, our audience is more likely to mimic these celebrities and follow their lead. We were able to use the bandwagon appeal to appeal to our audiences’ emotions by claiming that these celebrities support prison reform, so they should support it too. We strengthened our emotional appeal by evoking feelings of not wanting to be excluded and wanting to be a part of the in-crowd in our audience. We were also able to emotionally appeal to our audience by making prison reform personal. Not everyone is passionate when it comes to integrating prisoners into our society or shortening their sentences, but most people can be persuaded when their livelihood is involved. By mentioning on our website under the solutions column that “if the sentencing of nonviolent drug-related offenders is decreased by just 20%, taxpayers will save around 1.3 billion dollars,” we are speaking money to our audience and appealing to our audience’s ego by making prison reform about them. This emotional appeal helps to convince our audience because it evokes feelings of selfishness and desire. We can all agree that 1.3 billion dollars is a lot of money and by making prison reform personal our audience can be persuaded to change their stance on prison reform to receive extra money in their bank account. Our goal in including this information is to prove to our audience that yes prison overcrowding affects prisoners and guards, but it also affects themselves. Furthermore, our goal of appealing to our audiences’ emotions throughout our project is to make our audience feel the need for prison reform and create the emotional memory that change in our justice system is not only necessary but essential to fundamentally change and better the lives of every single American.

• **Logos-** Logos is a logical appeal and it, “demonstrates an effective use of reason and judicious use of evidence,” (Glen & Gray. Pg. 162). Our example of logos can be found on our website under Graphs where we provide a specific line graph and a pie chart of statistics involving prisons in the United States. This information proves that America’s current justice system is broken. We hope that by including easy to follow visuals for our audience that they can better comprehend the current problem in America’s justice system and that it will encourage our audience to get involved as an advocate or make a well-educated vote on prison reform. Also, because of the simplistic nature of the graphs, it allows any viewer, including those who are at a low reading level or those who are illiterate, to see the obvious problems going on within our correctional system.

• **Logical Fallacy from the Opposing Viewpoint**- In class, we learned that a logical fallacy is a flaw in reasoning. We decided that a flaw in reasoning that many American’s makes when it comes to prisoners is that all prisoners are bad people because they committed a crime and therefore we shouldn’t care about them or their rights. This flawed logic is called an unqualified generalization, and it means that a general belief or observation is applied to a population and is considered universally valid regardless of whether or not it is actually true. This logical fallacy from the opposing viewpoint is detrimental to prison reform and creates a negative stigma of all prisoners. Because of the war on drugs, there has been a mass incarceration epidemic, which means that a lot of the prisoners who are serving long sentences are in jail because of non-violent drug-related arrests. A lot of these men and women are either addicts, or people who are merely struggling in their day-to-day lives, and use drugs as either a coping mechanism, or as a way to make a living. Although people agree and disagree as to which drugs should be legal, the fact is that these non-violent offenders should not be deemed as horrible and scary people because of an addiction or mistake that they have made. We advocate in the humanization of these criminals, and we wish to remind the public that the only time we can make an unqualified generalization without it being a flaw in our reasoning is that we as human beings make mistakes. We all make mistakes, and these mistakes should not necessarily define our character or worth for the rest of our lives. Our goal in debunking this logical fallacy is to give a voice to the voiceless and prove to our audience that there are flaws in the system starting in the way we view prisoners.

*Works Cited:*

Glenn, C., & Gray, L. S. (2017). *The writers Harbrace handbook*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.