Final Exam

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Longwood University: English 400

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*I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.*

**Introduction**

The Community Prayer Breakfast at the Robert Russa Moton Museum was the perfect setting for our class project. After spending the semester learning about the rhetoric of apologies and civic discourse in relation to the history of Prince Edward County, speaking at the Moton Museum to numerous community members was the most successful way to end our semester together. In order to determine the extent that the Community Prayer Breakfast was a successful civic event, it is necessary to first define a civic event, determine the level of knowledge needed to effectively communicate, and name the exigence, constraints, and audience.

**Civic Event versus Community Event**

The Community Prayer Breakfast is hosted by the Robert Russa Moton Museum on the first Tuesday of every month to bring Prince Edward County community members together for a meal. This event is considered a community event because it promotes community gathering once a month. Our role in this event at the beginning of December turned a community event into a civic event, which is an event that accomplishes something for the common good. Our attendance at this event, speeches about why we each wanted to attend the event, and prayer all helped to close the divide between Longwood University students and Prince Edward County residents. By showing our understanding of the history of the county and the inaction by Longwood students during the period of the school closings, as well as our desire to bring about change, we aided in the journey to reconciliation within Prince Edward County.

**Knowledge and Communication**

In order for a rhetor to communicate well and effectively, it is important to know as much as possible about the topic being discussed. It is necessary to know the details, including the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the situation at hand. For our class to effectively communicate at the Community Prayer Breakfast, it was essential for us to know and understand the history of Prince Edward County and the Robert Russa Moton Museum. To achieve proper communication, a rhetor must know their audience and design their speech in a way that will reach this population. In preparing our speeches for the Community Prayer Breakfast, each of us knew the audience we would have and the location we would be speaking in. Having numerous speakers throughout the semester helped our class achieve these two necessary components to effective communication: understanding the detailed history of the county and location of the event, as well as knowing our audience and understanding their perspectives.

**Bitzer’s Framework**

**Exigence**

Our attendance, introductory statement, and explanations for why we wanted to attend the Community Prayer Breakfast addressed the exigence. Exigence is something that has the ability to be changed through discourse and is defined by a defect and urgency. The defect was the need for Longwood University students to show their understanding of the history of Prince Edward County and support to those who were affected both directly and indirectly in an effort to bring reconciliation between Longwood and the surrounding community. This is something that has been lacking in this county, as there is not much community involvement from Longwood University students, which adds to the urgency. The urgency is that now that we have the knowledge about the history of Prince Edward County and the understanding of apologies and civic discourse, we wanted to share our knowledge, understanding, and support as soon as possible.

**Constraints**

Constraints can be positive or negative and hold power over the actions and decisions needed to implement change. Constraints stem from people, objects, events, and relationships, and can include facts, beliefs, attitudes, motives, etc. Some positive constraints for our attendance and speeches at the Community Prayer Breakfast include the following: being allowed to speak at the event, having enough time to prepare for the event, having a unanimous vote in class to attend the event, and positive responses from community members. Some negative constraints include the following: not being able to advertise as much as hoped and the possibility for negative feelings towards Longwood University students from community members due to the inaction from Longwood, lack of community involvement from students, and idea that this is only for a class project.

**Audience**

According to Bitzer’s framework, the audience must have the ability to be influenced by discourse and initiate change. The audience of our speeches at the Community Prayer Breakfast included community members, Moton Museum employees, and Longwood University faculty, staff, and students. All of these people are reachable through civic discourse because they have a strong understanding of the history of Prince Edward County. They were also curious to hear what Longwood University students had to say and why we were there. The individuals who made up our audience can act as mediators of change by influencing other community members and those who were affected by the school closings that did not attend the Community Prayer Breakfast. Many county residents are involved in community organizations, which increases their ability and likelihood of initiating and mediating change and reconciliation.

**Conclusion**

The success of the Community Prayer Breakfast has been analyzed using the definition of a civic event and knowledge needed to communicate effectively, as well as exigence, constraints, and audience. Based on these findings previously discussed, our attendance and speeches at the Community Prayer Breakfast were successful in relation to rhetoric and civic discourse. Our attendance and spoken words were well-accepted by our audience and a few individuals approached us to show their gratitude and appreciation for what we did. Each document written for the event itself and to promote the event were well-written and allowed for different perspectives from each student to be shown. Overall, this was a civic event because we did it for the greater good of the community and to mend the relationship between Longwood University students and Prince Edward County residents.