**The Final Meltdown:**

**A Rhetorical Analysis of Al Gore’s Speech**

**“Global Warming Is the Immediate Crisis”**

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In September 2006, Vice President Al Gore, reaching out to his fellow americans, at the New

York University School of Law, gave his speech, “Global Warming Is the Immediate Crisis.” He

is trying to persuade a change in how we view global warming and how it will affect our lives

now and in the future. He states: “the world regards us as the natural leader of the community

of nations. If we lead the way as a nation the rest of the world would start to follow.” (Gore,

2006, Gore, pg. 3, para. 4). “The ice caps in the north pole represent the earth’s coolings

system. These polar caps are melting away at a quick rate. The continuance of their melting

over a long period of time is depleting the earth’s cooling source. Global warming happens

when the earth’s temperature increases gradually over time, due to the increased levels of

carbon dioxide and other pollutants. This in turn is called the greenhouse effect.” (Gore, 2006,

pg. 1, para. 1). Vice President Al Gore is on a mission that every man, woman and child be able

to live in a healthier and secure environment. “We need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions

throughout the world in order to stop the rising temperature of the earth. Otherwise, the caps

will keep melting and the sea levels will keep rising. This warming will cause more severe

storms in some regions and wildfires due to drought ridden areas.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 1, para.1)

As a country who is depended on oil we need to understand the larger picture, the economic

picture. Vice President Gore states: “We borrow money from China to buy oil from the Persian

Gulf, in which this oil is one of the main causes of the pollution that is destroying the earth’s

climate.” (Gore, 2006, pg.2, para. 6). “As one of the leading countries we should show by

example and start utilizing the knowledge we already have for cleaner alternative energy. We

should be making it more economical for companies and for the individual in order to persuade

them the need to use cleaner energy. Most countries are apart of the “Kyoto Treaty”, “which

sets mandatory limits on greenhouse emissions. The American companies that have their

business in these countries already follow this protocol.” (Gore, 2006, pg.4, para. 4). He instills

in us as a country, a moral obligation to the future generations to protect this world in which we

live. If we ban together as a united front so the unconcerned and disbelievers would take

notice. We all could follow on the road together to recover the earth.

**Aristotle's Three Concepts of Rhetoric**

“Identifies three types of artist proof used in persuasion: **Ethos** - Charter of the speaker,

**Pathos** - emotional attachment with the audience, and **Logos** - the voice of logic and

reason of argument.” (Palczewski, Ice & Fritch, pg. 15, para. 2)

**Ethos of The Man:**

The rhetor is responsible for persuading their audience into action for their cause. They

take on many roles like an actor playing a part. They play the part of “**Ethos**”, which is

their authority, professionalism, education, humanity and character. The rhetor uses these

different variables and combines them as a whole, in the hopes of persuading their audience

into motivation towards their cause. Al Gore states in his speech “having served almost

three decades in elected office, I believe I know one thing about America’s political system that

some of the pessimists do not: it shares something in common with the climate system; it can

appear to move only at a slow pace, but it can also cross a tipping point beyond which it can

move with lightning speed.” (Gore, 2006, pg 2, para. 5). This statement show his knowledge,

authority and trust, for almost three decades they elected him to serve in congress as well as

Vice President of the United States. He States: “Many of our leading businesses, leaders

among unions - particularly steel workers, are already making dramatic changes to reduce their

global warming pollution. General Electric, Dupont, Cinergy, Caterpillar, and Wal-Mart are

among the many who are providing leadership in helping us devise a solution for this crisis.”

(Gore, 2006, pg. 9, para.5-6). This shows the backing he has of the prominent business leaders

Here in the United States and around the world.

“Moreover, the American religious community, including a group of 85 Conservative evangelicals

and especially the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, has made an extraordinary contribution

to this entire enterprise. To the insights of science and technology, it has added the

perspectives of faith and values.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 9, para.9). These countless supporters give

his position of character a high standard of integrity to his ethos.

Albert Arnold Gore Jr. “was an elected Senator of Tennessee and served from1985 to 1993.

He became the 45th Vice President from 1993-2001 for President Bill Clinton and is an

American Politician. He is the founder of the Alliance for Climate Protection. His main goal is

solving global warming and is very much an environmental activist.” (Gore, Wikipedia). “This

No-man’s land - or no politician zone - falling between the farthest reaches of political feasibility

and the first beginnings of truly effective change is the area that I would like to explore in my

speech today.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 2, para. 1).

**Voice of Reason:**

**“Logos”** isthe voice of reason, symbolic action and the facts rhetor has to backup their

argument. Vice President Gore being tied to the science community, working together they

use logos to give support to his cause with significant facts, extensive data, and images. This

Support and information as a whole shows a solid and strong case to back up his rhetoric.

“Due to the world's consumption and waste, we are headed for a meltdown of epic proportions.”

(Gore, 2006 pg. 1, para. 1). He offers some solutions and incentives to evoke his audiences

into action. “The scientist have evidence that the perennial ice of the polar ice caps are melting

at an alarming rate and if nothing is done to help slow this process down, or even stop it, it could

destroy one of the earth’s principal mechanisms for cooling Itself.” (Gore, 2006, pg 1, para.1).

“The icebergs that are melting contain global warming pollution, that if released would double

the pollution that is already in the atmosphere. The coal Industry is one of the dirtiest fuels to

burn and release CO2 into the atmosphere. He and the scientific community state that due to

the ever increasing temperatures on the earth and the warming of the oceans surfaces causing

the melting of the Icebergs in which giant pieces break off and falls into the sea, causing sea

levels to rise. The combination of all these things together in turn causes the increased

numbers of severe hurricanes, stronger destructive thunderstorms, tornadoes appearing in

places that have never had them before and massive wildfires are burning up vast amounts of

land.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 1, para. 2). These accounts show the stability of his logos with this

backing of the scientific data and gives us a visual image.

**Hegemony** “is the dominant ideology of a society, exerting social control over people without

the use of force.”(Palczewski, Ice & Fritch, pg. 29, para. 4). We rely on the oil industry and so

the transportation we use releases bad emissions into the atmosphere. He makes us aware

that being dependant on the oil companies puts our national security at risk for terrorist attacks.

We are indebted to other countries, such as China, financially to pay for this energy. Hegemony

falls with the Persian Gulf, China and the owners of the big oil companies. Vice President Gore

states: “Our current ridiculous dependence on oil endangers not only our national security, but

also our economic security. Anyone who believes that the international market for oil is a “free

market” is seriously deluded. It has many characteristics of a free market, but it is also subject

to periodic manipulation by the small group of nations controlling the largest recoverable

reserves, sometimes in concert with companies that have great influence over the global

production, refining, and distribution network. It is extremely important for us to be clear among

ourselves that these periodic efforts to manipulate price and supply have not one but two

objectives. They naturally seek to maximize profits. But even more significantly, they seek to

manipulate our will. Every time we come close to recognizing the wisdom of developing our

own independent sources of renewable fuels, they seek to dissipate our sense of urgency and

derail our effort to become less dependent.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 6 para. 5 & 6). These statements

show that we rely on these countries and also show the power it gives them over us.

Vice President Gore also uses metaphors to describe his outrage on the dependence.

**Metaphor** “is a figure of speech in which two dissimilar things are said to be similar, offering a

new perspective on a known issue.” (Palczewski, Ice & Fritch, pg. 51, para.4.) He uses: “ It is

in other words, time for a national oil change. That is apparent to anyone who has looked at our

national dipstick.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 6, para.5). “Our natural role is to be the pace car in the

race to stop global warming.” (Gore, 2006, pg.3, para.5). Using these metaphors he refers to

the fact that we need to change to cleaner energies and show that we as the leaders of the free

world should set the norm.

Vice Presidents Gore uses **Claim of Policy** as a part of his logos to lay out his solutions to

combat global warming. A claim of policy “is a claim that addresses what should be done.

(Palczewski, Ice & Fritch, pg. 111, para.1). He states: “shifting to a greater reliance on ethanol,

cellulosic ethanol, butanol and green diesel fuels will not only reduce global warming pollution

and enhance our national and economic security, it will also reverse the steady loss of jobs land

income in rural america.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 6, para. 7). “The farmers could be given incentives

to grow “switchgrass and saw-grass” to make cleaner fuels and using crop rotation as well as

Planting more trees. Extend harvest cycles on timber and put a policy in place for replanting of

trees for every tree removed, give incentives for the use of wind energy and solar photovoltaic

energy to make it cost effective. Have codes for builders to construct more efficient and

economical Buildings.” (Gore, 2006, pg. 7, para. 2 - 5). These are just a few of their ideas to

help slow down global warming. He has been studying this process for along time and reason

shows that if you show how knowledgeable you are and use pure determination, this is a sure

way to persuade your audience. In showing solutions with incentives it sways the audience to

look towards reasonable answers for the future of our planet.

**Passion for a cause through emotion:**

**Pathos**, which is the human side of the argument. Relies on the audience’s emotions and their

empathy. When one hears the words global warming, the person who comes to mind is Vice

President Al Gore. He has made this his life passion. He wants to have a cleaner and safer

environment for our future generations. He used a passage from T.S. Eliot’s “The Hollow

Men”as an example for passion in his fight to save the planet: “Between the idea and the reality,

between the motion a the act Falls the Shadow. Between the conception and the creation,

between the emotion and the response Falls the Shadow.” (Gore, 2006, pg.2 para.3). He uses

the idea to persuade by giving american people credit for wanting something better for

themselves and their future family generations by appealing to their sense of pride. “Many

americans are now seeing a bright light shining from the far side of this no-man’s land that

illuminates not sacrifice and danger, but instead a vision of a bright future that is better for our

country in every way - a future with better jobs, a cleaner environment, a more secure nations,

and a safer world.” (Gore, 2006, pg.2, para. 5). He pleads on the emotion of a person or

persons’ financial stability. The average american works hard for their money and many

question how and where their tax money is being used. “After all, many Americans are tired of

borrowing huge amounts of money from China to buy huge amounts of oil from the Persian Gulf

to make huge amounts of pollution That destroys the planet’s climate. Increasingly, American

believe that we have to change every part of that pattern.” (Gore, 2006, pg2. Para. 6). He gets

their attention through using the word “huge” several times with in his statement. “He is creating

an echo in the minds of his audience by repeating the word “huge”. (Noden, pg. 58, para. 4).

This in turn gives it emotional power.

**Conclusion:**

In Summary, Al Gore’s, *Global Warming is the Immediate Crisis* has many multitudes of rhetoric

throughout his speech. He shows this with his years of knowledge, vast experience in the

political field, the many groups that support him in his efforts and through his words you can

feel his passion to make this world a healthier and safer place for the many future generations

to come. The hegemony of the oil company's, refinery owners, the lenders and some

politicians try to use their powers to hinder the advances needed in help global warming.

As Vice President Gore’s title to his book states it’s: “An Inconvenient Truth” (Gore, Al). To sum

up in his words, “This is an opportunity for bipartisanship and transcendence, an opportunity to

find our better selves and in rising to meet this challenge, create a better brighter future - a

future worthy of the generations who come after us and who have a right to be able to depend

on us.” (Gore, 2006 pg.10, para. 4). This gives him power, merit and persuasion, because we

as americans take pride in our country and in caring and doing the just and right thing. He is

relied on his audiences patriotism. How can we not react and demand a cleaner and safer

environment?

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