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ETHOS

Throughout “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr which is a response to the clergymen criticize about King`s work. He uses ethos, logos, and pathos to get his point across. Ethos is found throughout the text for example when he states, “My Dear Fellow Clergymen: While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.” King begins the letter my saying “My Dear Fellow Clergymen” to show that he is apart of them not only as a member of the church but a minister. “I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago, the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came, we lived up to our promise. So, I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here. But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here.” He is responding to the clergymen saying that he is an “outsider” King is letting them know that he is in Birmingham due to him being invited, having organizational ties there, and injustice in Birmingham.

LOGOS

Logos is a rhetorical appeal used to persuade readers with logic and reasoning. Which is also used a lot throughout this letter for example King says, “Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with.” King is letting them know that our protest did not create the problem instead it just brought more attention to the injustice that African Americans are facing in these times. He also says, “If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So, let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the

city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So, I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist." African Americans have a voice and they demand to be heard the nonviolent action that have taken place from the marches to the freedom rides are all necessary for a change that has been a long coming.

PATHOS

The last appeal used in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is pathos which is used to persuade readers with emotion. When King says, "Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger-lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation." Not only are blacks affected by this but also whites that support the movement they see that it is necessary for a change and will fight for blacks despite what society throws at them. He also states, ". Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." This statement talks about how Blacks are forced to tell their kids the harsh reality of society not liking them due to their skin color and how they can't do things the white kids are doing, no one wants to tell their kids that a race dislikes them over something they can't control. He also talks about how African Americans aren't respected or treated the same as whites instead they are constantly put down by harsh signs of "whites only" or "no colored people allowed."