Meaning And Concept Of The Statue of Liberty

Yearning to Breathe Free

The illustration issued by The New Yorker for July 2nd, 2018 edition by Barry Blitt shows five people hiding behind the Statue of Liberty. Judging from their facial features, the people in the cartoon are most likely immigrants as they do not show typical traits of a natural American- white, black, or blonde. The immigrants look fearful, hence highlighting that they could be facing an imminent threat to something of their importance. A bronze plaque on the bottom of the statue by Emma Lazarus states, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me; I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” Using the Statue of Liberty as a hiding figure, we can safely assume that the statue represents freedom. Therefore, implying that the immigrants could be having their freedom to live at stake.

Barry Blitt is a Connecticut based, (though) Canadian raised illustrator. Since 1992, He has earned a reputation for his satire works in The New Yorker as a top political cartoonist in the country. In this cartoon, Barry Blitt emphasizes on the possible deportation immigrants face in the United States. Since Trump took office in 2016, the U.S. Immigration policy has undergone radical policy changes. Two of the most significant transformations are canceling the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which is currently providing temporary relief from deportation to unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children (Pierce & Selee); and the unconstitutional arrest of non-criminal immigrants. This would mean that even immigrants that have lived in this country for decades would still face deportation, such as Amer Othman - a naturalized citizen for roughly 39 years (Al Jazeera). In the 2018 publication (two years after the stop of the DACA program), Blitt stresses the irony why someone who has been living law-abidingly for generations is suddenly “ripped away” from a country he has deemed to be a haven for almost a lifetime.

Blitt's cartoon is highly effective in telling its message as he uses his irony and his appeal to pathos as a smoking gun. The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the French Republic as a symbol for breaking “the oppression of slavery.” It is originally conceived as an emblem of the friendship France and America and a sign of their mutual desire for liberty. It is the Mother of Exiles, greeting millions of immigrants and embodying hope and opportunity for those seeking a better life in America. It stirs the desire for freedom in people all over the world. It represents the United States itself (“The Statue of Liberty”). However, in Blitt's illustration, there is an ambiance that rather expresses disparity as these immigrants are on the edge of losing their homes. Ironic as “The Green Lady” supposedly an icon of freedom, bravery, and hope of a better life, contradicts itself by showing the hiding immigrants. The irony focuses on Blitt's intended message about the deportation threat with immigrants losing their home behind a statue that represents “an embodiment of hope.”

Barry utilizes his illustration as pathos to make audiences feel pitiful towards the immigrants potentially facing deportation. His usage of the dark clouds on the top adds the further ambiance of darkness and sadness, highlighting the severity of the issue these immigrants face. The dark clouds above could represent that the current issue has no “silver lining”; in other

words, their deportation could be inevitable. A report from Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) shows that there are 287,741 immigrant deportations by ICE in 2018, the highest since 1992 (Smith). CNN also reported that there was a 41% increase in the number of undocumented immigrants arrested in 2017 compared to 2016. Most of these people do not even have legible reasons for why they were deported (Kopan). This evidence shows that unlawful deportations are in conduct, proving that there is abuse in power, causing the immigrants to feel insecure. Therefore, this is why the pathos of the dark clouds is to instill a sense of sadness to the audience, to make them genuinely aware of the inevitable danger they are facing.

This illustration not only affects an already supportive audience but also to those who oppose the idea of welcoming immigrants. The fact that many deportations involve innocent immigrants, a person with rudimentary logic should see this as an act of social injustice-especially if someone has been here 39 years and suddenly kicked out of his home. Our national anthem stated, “O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?” (“Star-Spangled Banner”); should this act of inhumanity be an example of what our great nation should possess? True democracy is achievable through the practice of equal rights. These immigrants have lived, worked, and died for this country. Some have even given their children’s right to live in this country. The audience who opposes the cartoon should view this as very unjust and barbaric for the government to freely revoke those inalienable rights they deserve to have-just like any other American.

Blitt is highly effective in criticizing our immigration policy. His use of cartoons is so simple and concise that executes its message flawlessly. The Statue of Liberty is a National Icon and sight every American would know, and the word “Liberty” is easily related to “freedom.” The sight of fear faces, and a statue associated with “freedom” shows high contrast that any audience from different age groups will easily comprehend. They would ask themselves, “Why a symbol that is supposed to represent the constitution of the United States is a century-old lie.”

This illustration could be biased, however. Being initially a Canadian, this puts Barry Blitt directly into the group of people that are involved in this political scenario. We can safely presume that his decision-making judgment on his illustration was heavily one-sided. Blitt is also known for his critical works only, he has rarely drawn an illustration that supports a political view. Blitt has particularly shown that he is extremely harmful towards Trump and his administration. As immigration in 2018 was completely under Trump’s control, we can also assume because of the two-points mentioned above that he is extremely biased in this cartoon. Therefore, the credibility of this cartoon should be judged by the extent of the audience's thoughts about this issue.

In a time when America is supposed to be “Great Again”, Barry Blitt’s illustration communicates with readers showing how dirty politics can lead to unnecessary consequences. People simply do not have the concern over these unfortunate immigrants because these problems are often not featured in headlines- but rather sidelines. Political cartoons such as Blitt’s utilizes its simple-to read techniques to instill an irony pathos among the audience. With the irony and pathos appealing to potentially thousands of readers, this cartoon could be the first step in spreading the common word of a critical problem that desperately needs a solution.