# Rhetorical Analysis of Angelina Jolie’s Speech on World Refugee Day

For many individuals living in first world countries the threat of war, hunger, and shelter rarely come to mind. It is often seen that it is in human nature to focus on one’s own problems before others, yet there are certain individuals that strive to bring forth the importance of looking beyond one’s self and into the lives of others who are not so fortunate. Angelina Jolie, a popular American actress and humanitarian, is one of the forerunners in recognizing the refugee crisis of the twenty first century. In her 2009 speech for National Geographic on World Refugee Day, she shares her message of hope for a better life for those less fortunate and encourages others to help by allowing refugees into their lives and their countries. She is able to convey such a persuasive message through her effective usage of all three rhetorical devices to ensure that her message hits home with her audience.Firstly, Angelina’s powerful message is directed to the leaders of first world countries who have the power to make decisions regarding refugee entry laws as well as the power to influence their countries residents in believing that refugees do possess skills, knowledge, and resources that can benefit a country’s economy and growth. She also conveys to the first world leaders how important it is for larger and more powerful countries to see refugees not just burdens, but as survivors and individuals who are worthy of a meaningful and enjoyable life. She further adds that it’s our moral obligation as a country to offer these people a place of refuge and provide them with an education to better themselves. By addressing why countries should take in refugees, Angelina hopes to convince leaders of all countries to open up their hearts and their borders in welcoming refugees into their countries and to hopefully negate negative misconceptions and attitudes towards them.

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borders in welcoming refugees into their countries and to hopefully negate negative misconceptions and attitudes towards them.

Another audience that Angelina hopes to persuade are the inhabitants of first world countries who are against refugees entering into their countries. By Angelina discussing the reasons as to why refugees flee from their countries due to war, poverty, terror, or persecution, it puts into perspective for the potential host country the struggles refugees are faced with each day. Her speech shows that refugees are not just entering a country to be an economic burden to society, but are individuals who can contribute to societies services in order for a country to prosper. Angelina further suggests that a country is stronger with cultural diversity since diversity presents people with an opportunity to learn and grow from one another in gaining new skills and knowledge. In order for Angelina to persuade her audiences to allow refugees into their countries, she shares personal stories that explain how refugees want no more than to give themselves and their families a better life.

Angelina first makes usage of the rhetorical device “ethos” to persuade her audience in believing that she is a credible source on the topic of refugees. First, it is important to note that humans are by nature attracted to people who share similar characteristics to themselves. So by sharing similarities with the audience like race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, personality, age, or gender, it can help the audience trust and be more open minded to what is being discussed. That being said, Angelina Jolie is also viewed as an accomplished actress who in 2001 became a Goodwill Ambassador and later was given the title of Special Envoy to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in 2012. Additionally, Angelina has devoted 9 years of her life traveling the globe witnessing first hand the hardships refugees face on a daily basis adding to her credibility. With her expertise on raising awareness for the fight for refugees, she calmly and confidently retells personal stories about the refugees she has encountered while on her travels in both Tanzania and Pakistan. These stories allow the audience to see her as a more credible figure because she has seen first hand the hardships and struggles that these refugees face and therefore is a primary source of information that people can believe in when it comes to the topic of refugees.

Angelina secondly makes usage of the rhetorical device “logos” by giving statistics concerning the refugee crisis. Her first point is to demonstrate how many poorer countries are seen with bigger hearts as they take in refugees despite not having the funds or resources to support them. She supports this claim with the fact that, “More than 80% of all refugees are hosted and have been for years and years in the poorest developing countries.” This statistic is effective towards the audience as it shows members of first world countries that there is no excuse concerning economic hardships as a result of refugee expansion in the country as many other poorer countries face this hardship but allow refugees in anyway. Angelina furthers her claim stating, “Pakistan, a country now facing a crisis with over 2 million of its own people displaced is still hosting 1.7 million Afghans.” This fact is also effective on the audience as it disproves another myth about countries not having enough room for more people because the population is already too high in comparison to housing and other accommodations. The fact that other poverty-stricken countries are taking in refugees proves that they are willing to help others even in hard times and makes first world countries question their own motives.

Lastly, Angelina relies most on “pathos” to create an emotional response from her audience by recounting some of her experiences while visiting refugees in different countries. By sharing these stories and experiences, it allows her to paint a picture for the audience of how refugees

are not only seen as the most ill-fated people on earth, but that they are the toughest people who survive the most horrendous circumstances. This perspective on refugees is noted in her story about a parentless little girl who was left to look after her baby brother after her parents were killed during a war, as well as in her story about a paralyzed, fifteen year old, Tanzanian boy who was shot in the back and denied asylum in another country due to many countries not accepting refugees. Despite the suffering that these children were faced with, they still found the strength, courage, and happiness to continue on, a trait that Angelina admires and encourages others to admire too. By sharing her stories with the world, Angelina touches the hearts of individuals by not only making people feel remorseful for the children in these conditions, but also reminded that there are places in the world where people are living in fear and hardship with few places that will accept them. Another personal anecdote that Angelina shares is of a pregnant Afghan woman in Pakistan who lived in a house with no roof and no food for her son, yet was willing to giving the last bit of tea to those more fortunate than her. This story has an emotional appeal to the audience as they feel disheartened that people have to live an impoverished lifestyle lacking even basic necessities. Angelina also appeals to her audience by making them aware of the kindness and generosity that refugees possess going as far to say that, “Those that have the least, give the most.” Lastly, while sharing these stories Angelina’s tone is of a person who has a passion for her cause, yet is sympathetic and desperate for her audience to share her passion in changing refugee’s lives.

In conclusion, Angelina’s speech was an admirable way of persuading leaders of first world countries as well as individuals who are against refugees entering their home countries to not only understand the magnitude of the refugee crisis but to also want to take a part in helping out. Angelina is able to persuade her audience to believe that all refugees are deserving of having a better life by effectively using her credibility to share facts and emotional stories to bring a major world issue into the hearts of her audience.