

Free rhetorical analysis half baked: uc berkeleys diversity machine loses its ess...

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The essay “ Half Baked: UC Berkeley’s Diversity Machine Loses Its Mind Over Cupcakes,” written by Heather MacDonald, is an interesting one when analyzed from the perspective of a progressive mindset. The article works to denounce and laugh off claims that a bake drive created by a Young Republican organization at UC Berkeley was offensive. In essence, MacDonald says that the controversy, in spite of its negative attention, “ has nevertheless served one useful function: it has clarified just what Berkeley’s vice chancellor for equity and diversity does for his whopping \$194, 000 annual salary” (765). This essay is full of flawed arguments and appeals to pathos, though they are clearly written for an already sympathetic audience in mind – conservatives who already rankle at the idea of affirmative action. To that end, the essay is an ineffective one in terms of convincing outsiders to buy its arguments, but it remains effective in those with a confirmation bias toward the material.

Heather MacDonald is a writer for the City Journal, and is intended to be posted on its website, implying an extremely localized audience for the paper. The website is focused primarily on urban affairs, and has a very conservative attitude in many of its articles, implying a publication that is meant to feed talking points to conservatives looking for evidence of liberal overreach and overly progressive attitudes on social issues. MacDonald’s conservative writing speaks to an audience that is currently sympathetic to the values contained within her works, agreeing before reading the article that liberal culture is far too concerned with political correctness and is effectively whining about small things in order to get offended. Because of that, it is difficult to discern a great deal of compelling argumentation in

MacDonald's article, instead simply coloring the story as written with enough charged language to imply her position, doing little investigation or actual persuasion to convince readers; it is assumed that the readers already agree with her.

In terms of MacDonald's use of ethos, she uses a very selective criteria to employ it; the article is very one-sided, not even attempting to claim that the other side has a valid point. Right from the beginning, she points out the controversy and outrage as "ludicrously clueless," taking a very snide and dismissive tone to her ideological opponents (765). While she does take the time to elaborate on the facts of the case, pointing out the exact thing that people are objecting to (in essence, implying that affirmative action just gives minorities an unfair advantage in life by charging less to minorities to buy their baked goods), she does not try to understand the other side of her argument (which is that institutionalized racism makes things like affirmative action to help level the playing field in college admissions and job prospects) (Petersonn, 2011). Instead, she takes the time to point out the faculty and staff that are involved in the outrage, quoting them without proper context. Because of that, it is hard to imagine a great deal of credibility to her arguments, as her statements are analogous to simply pointing at whomever she is annoyed by and assuming you are in on the joke as well. Her blatantly partisan tone just confirms a certain attitude instead of convincing someone of her credibility.

Pathos is the chief weapon in MacDonald's arsenal, as the vast majority of her arguments are simply based on emotion. The emotions are play are incredibly politically conservative, as they are all based on the idea that

those who are upset by the bake sale do not see the validity of the organization's statement, that the faculty in question actually make their substantial salaries by drumming up controversy, and so on. MacDonald's writing is full of emotional outrage and insults to the dissenter's intelligence, as the controversy is dismissed as " what one can only hope is willful misreading" (MacDonald 765). By saying this, she essentially argues that people are inventing a problem in order to paint conservatives in a bad light, or saying that they are too stupid to see what they are trying to say. The students' complaints about the bake sale are not taken seriously, being labeled as " melodramatic self-pity," indicating that she has a dim opinion of them and believes them to just be thin-skinned (766).

Though pathos can be an effective argument in many cases, her use of it is poor – she merely makes flagrant assumptions about the character and motivations of those she objects to, without actually backing this up with data. Instead, she puts words in peoples' mouths, presumes her own argument is the correct one, and fails to actually argue it. Her negative characterization of those who oppose her is meant to be her chief method of persuasion; by focusing on the things that bug her about the people who are upset, MacDonald forgets to actually inform the reader why she thinks their argument is wrong. Its wrongness is merely presumed, and the discussion moves on to her outrage at the outrage. The students are described as " delusional" and " hyperventilating," as if those adjectives alone are provable and compelling (766). The use of clever-yet-slandorous portmanteaus like " campus diversocrat" seek to paint people arguing for diversity and democracy in a negative light, without doing the work to convince us why

diversity is bad (766).

The emotional appeals used within this article are almost unbelievable, MacDonald resorting to lazy stereotypes to make her nonexistent points. MacDonald takes great steps to constantly remind the reader that her opponent makes a lot of money, and “ an enormous piece of taxpayer largesse, commanding an expensive office of 17 staffers,” insufficiently linking the apparent unfairness of their income with the wrongness of their argument (766). She even takes potshots at minority students, saying that the mere act of attending a prestigious college means they are immune from discrimination, saying minorities “ flatter themselves that by attending [university]they are braving unspeakable threats to their ego and even to their personal safety” (766). These are not sufficiently compelling arguments, but back-room gossip based on alienating stereotypes that are unsatisfactory to everyone but those who already agree with them.

Heather MacDonald’s article on the backlash against an ill-advised affirmative action demonstration completely fails as a piece of rhetoric. The only arguments used are based on a clumsy sense of pathos that essentially amounts to lazy name-calling and character assassination. Instead of actually arguing why affirmative action is bad, MacDonald simply demonizes those who are outraged as being entitled, manipulative, government leeches who take taxpayer money and justify their jobs through these controversies. The article, to that end, just functions as a scare piece against political correctness meant only to be read and responded to by people who already look down on liberals, diversity and the government. While it is perfectly

suited to that audience, it is utterly incapable of convincing anyone outside those circles, who would merely see it as odious and mean-spirited.

Works Cited

MacDonald, Heather. "Half Baked: UC Berkeley's Diversity Machine Loses Its Mind over

Cupcakes". *Everything's an Argument*, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. pp. 765-766.

Peterson, Latoya. "Cal's 'Affirmative Action Bake Sale': I Want My Free Cookies."

Racialicious. <http://www.racialicious.com/2011/10/05/cals-affirmative-action-bake-sale-i-want-my-free-cookies/>. October 5, 2011.