

# Example of dateclass essay

Countries, United States



## **Rhetorical Analysis of Cofer**

Judith Ortiz Cofer believes that the combination of her gender and ethnicity is the perfect storm to create a very specific type of discrimination, which is often accidental as her anecdotes show. Cofer makes her argument through anecdotal evidence and then lays out her conclusions in plaintive language at the end of her essay, “ For them life is a struggle against the misconceptions perpetuated by the myth of the Latina as whore, domestic, or criminal.” As an analysis of her essay “ The Myth Of Latin Women” yields, Cofer does not go outside of her personal experience to make her claim. She writes in a way to win the reader over by sharing in her pain. It is not surprising that Cofer is also a poet since she writes in a lyrical, confessional style. She appeals to the reader’s pathos and relies on that to make her argument since she brings to qualitative data to the table. This is a rhetorical choice, since there is most certainly data available that could support her argument of that there are specific and embedded stereotypes white, upper middle class Americans have about Latina Women.

Laura Green, at the beginning of her essay entitled “ Stereotypes” warns against using anecdotal evidence without backing it with data. She writes, “ As human beings, we naturally evaluate everything we come in contact with” (Green, 1).

Cofer begins her essay with a story about how a man sang a Latin song to her, “ Maria” on the bus. This story establishes her ethos as a Latin woman, but is related in order to convince the reader through pathos, since this story and the others portray Cofer as a victim. She relates the story of other passengers clapping because the man had a nice singing voice. She assumes

that this sort of thing does not happen to white women but that it is something that happens all too often to women of Latin American decent. But whether or not that is true, the author leaves her audience to trust her ethos as a Latin American woman because she brings no other outside data to the discussion.

Cofer then tells the reader the story of what it was like growing up in a Latin American culture. This further establishes her ethos, but scores another point for her pathos. Her narration of the story includes a comparison to her childhood compared to non-Latin cultures. She notes that the dress was much more vibrant for her and her female relatives owing to the fact that their style of dress came from a colorful island culture. On this Island, there are Catholic virtues at play and this keeps woman showing a lot of skin protected from an unwanted elements who would see this as an opportunity. A daughter's virtue is a part of family honor, Cofer explains, and therefore part of the problem for Latin women is that they are misunderstood when that dress is applied to another culture.

Throughout the essay, Cofer paints herself as a victim. Often, she strives to understand the mentality that is victimizing her, and this paints her as forgiving of her oppressors. But what she does not bring to the table is that as immigrants into another culture, the virtue of assimilation rests with the person trying to fit a foreign culture. This does not mean that Cofer need break with her roots, but it does change the landscape of the playing field where Cofer situates her argument.

Cofer laments the fact that the society at large seems unable to see past the cultural stereotypes. Here again Cofer uses pathos to get her readers on her

side, and relies on her ethos as a Latin Woman for her reader to trust her that there are subtleties to her victimization that a non-Latin woman would not understand. She relates another anecdotal story to support these. She tells about the time a drunk, white, upper-class man sang to her and a friend “ Don’t Cry for Me Argentina.” The man it seems was drunk. The situation, as related by Cofer, was awkward. While such a situation—the situation of a drunk man crossing the line of socially acceptable behavior—could happen to anyone, Cofer argues that her being a Latin American woman is why such things happen and similar episode would not happen to a white woman. Whether or not that is true, Cofer leaves it to her audience to trust her. Her argument is centered upon her ethos as being a Latin American Woman and the pathos of well-written stories of things that happened to her in her life. She makes a compelling argument, but it would be more convincing if she brought some actual data to the table to back up her anecdotal evidence.

## **Works Cited**

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