

Criminal without actually committing a crime?

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



The essay titled “ Black Men In Public Spaces” according to the credits was published in the year 1986 in a women’s magazine named Harper’s magazine. The essay was written by a journalist named Brent Staples who holds a PhD in psychology and is also a member of the New York Times editorial board. In the essay “ Black Men In Public Spaces” Brent Staples effectively persuades the reader to empathize with his personal experience being seen as a threat to society, he demonstrates this through his effective utilization of rhetorical strategies, explicit examples, word choice, and effective essay structure. Brent Staples uses a minimal amount of rhetorical strategies that effectively help him to persuade the reader into diligently considering his point of view. Staples takes a very interesting approach when it comes to implementing these persuasive techniques.

The constant use of anecdote is the technique that is the most apparent in the essay. Staples tends to narrate the majority of his personal experiences to better connect with his audience. Staples does this by using his experiences to mirror the thesis presented in the essay. According to Staples, it can be said that he believes whenever there is room for fear and weapons the possibility of death becomes more prevalent. Staples uses his experience to not only intrigue his audience emotionally but, to better contrast his experiences with his thesis.

Staples speaks of his experience as a child and seeing many childhood friends put away in jail or either found dead because they too had been feared by the world and misunderstood. Staples used the situation that his former friends were put in to further prove the point made in his thesis that when the world fears a person or a particular group of people, then they are

<https://assignbuster.com/criminal-without-actually-committing-a-crime/>

not only seen in a negative light by society but, they associate negativity with that group automatically prosecuting them based on the simple fact that their physical appearance poses a threat. The use of anecdotes in the text further allows the reader to gain comprehensible insight on the topic, this meaning that the more the reader understands the more credible the author becomes. Seeing that Staples uses a lot of anecdotes in his supporting paragraphs means that he also effectively gains more credibility with his audience.

There is another rhetorical strategy that is used by Staples which is character appeal. Staples effectively demonstrates character appeal in the essay by specifically stating “ As a softy who is scarcely.... and dismayed all at once” This meaning that he would not be capable of hurting anyone, the quote was used to effectively try to convince the readers that because of who he is as a person society should not view him as a threat (155). Staples uses very explicit examples to strongly support his point of view and to also demonstrate to the reader why they should empathize with his experience with being seen as a threat to society. Staples constant examples throughout the essay which can be described as disturbing allows the reader to vividly visualize how the people around him are negatively impacted by his presence. According to Staples keeping in mind the time frame in which the essay was written it can be said that women are more likely to be victims of street violence, he also notes that black men are often seen as the predators that contribute to this violence against women, this making every male who is apart of this demographic a suspect to all crimes committed against innocent individuals in society.

Staples also expresses how crimes being committed by African-American males is a major issue in society, and due to this being an issue it affects all men including him, who belong to this group, seeing that it allows people room to stereotype all black men as being criminals or predators, which is why Staples expresses within the essay that he is "...surprised, embarrassed, and dismayed all at once" because regardless, it means nothing to the people around him in society during this time frame how educated he is; the mere factor that he is a black man strolling about at night, he is seen as a threat because of all the other men who look like him who have all committed crimes reflect upon him, making him a suspect too due to his appearance disregarding the fact that he may be innocent. This making the reader consider if Staples is being treated this way by society due to it being a race issue among women or it just being a matter of genuine fear, this causing an emotional response from the reader. Staples uses the example "One day, rushing into the office of a magazine...mistaken for a burglar...someone who knew me" which vividly explains that he was almost arrested by the police much like his childhood friends as previously explained due to his appearance, this creates a picture for the reader and allows them to empathize with his predicament because not only was he going to be arrested without committing a crime the possibility of death was among him, keeping in mind the thought that the office manager could have been armed and could have killed him is not only a disturbing thought but, further proves his belief that when there is room for fear and weapons the possibility of death becomes more common.

Staples effectively uses explicit examples to captivate his audience and to spark emotion in them allowing his literary piece to become more memorable among his readers. Staples uses very specific and clear word choices that allow him to effectively convey his message to his audience. According to the introductory paragraph that introduces the essay written by Staples, he holds a PhD in psychology and is a member of the New York Times editorial board. It can be said the Staples is a very accomplished person and well educated. Staples makes it a priority in his writing to convey to the audience that he is educated by using very professional diction. Staples tends to use words such as “ congenial, discreet, and tyranny” to provide the audience with a clear explanation of his point of view all while giving off the interpretation that he is a professional individual.

Staples also uses an interesting way of delivering his message adding some level of excitement to his writing by misleading the reader to having one impression of what he is about to discuss then leading the reader to believe something else along the way, all due to his unique word choice. Staples exudes a professional manner about his tone within the essay he not only, effectively explains his point of view but he delivers it with an enormous amount of professionalism and finesse, in a manner that does not point any fingers at specific people who made him feel the way he did, but gracefully brings attention to the issue. Due to his word choices, it gets the reader excited about what he is about to uncover about the topic.

The only downfall that Staple’s word choice has is that he can only relate to one group of people in the sense that his essay only reaches out to a crowd

that is predominantly educated as opposed to educated which does not leave much room for his essay to be universal in terms of appealing to people who can read but do not have more than a high school education. Overall, his word choice is appropriate for his audience which can be assumed to be educated women. One may also conclude that based on the word choice that Staples decided to use that he is very qualified to speak on the topic as well give a first-hand point of view on the topic being an educated black man. Staples has a very clear essay structure it can be said that he arranges his thoughts in a very cyclical manner.

Staples chronologically organizes his thoughts throughout the essay, he uses this to effectively display his point of view to the reader keeping in mind the simple fact that people appreciate timelines of how events occur. According to Staples, he was walking late at night in a deserted town in Chicago when a woman was frightened by his appearance causing her to remove herself from his presence, then Staples makes a point about how he was also instilling fear within the people he was working around in New York. Staples starts off the story by telling it from his point of view describing an area from which he came from, then he makes the effort to describe a place to where he recently moved to. This significantly impacts the essay because it allows the reader to draw the conclusion that no matter where Staples goes he is faced with adversity because of his appearance. This chronological order also gives the reader the opportunity to compare the beginning of the essay to the end, allowing a lot of conclusions to be drawn, taking into consideration the overall quality of the essay and the message it portrays .

Staples also uses a compare and contrast effect in his writing, throughout the essay he talks about what is happening around him and how the people around him react he describes how it affects him as a functional member of society. Staples also makes the effort to state an example describing what happened in that situation and moves on to explaining its effects on him and his feelings.

In Conclusion, Brent Staples effectively persuades the audience to empathize with his experience with being seen as a threat to society, by using rhetorical strategies, explicit examples, word choice, and effective essay structure. Staples is not only able to convey his point of view effectively but, reveals an important message throughout his essay. Staples reveals that nobody should be feared because of the colour of their skin. Staples also reveals that society must not associate one group of people with common crimes that can be committed by anybody with negative intentions regardless of skin colour or appearance. Staples makes it a priority to state that he believes whenever there is room for fear and weapons the possibility of death becomes more prevalent.

This statement made by Staples proves that the essay can not only be applied to how society was structured during the time period of the essay's release, but we can find that the essay can also relate to current controversial topics such as police brutality which is also a retaliation of fear by police officers. The essay is very important because even though it was written in the 1980s, it still reveals a lot of issues that are very current today which is what truly makes this essay special.