

Rhetorical analysis of native american poverty politics essay



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Despite the alarming data used to convince the reader that the plight of the Native Americans in poverty is due to government neglect, inattention and lack of aid, Tom Rodger's fails to succeed in his argument for more support. This rhetorical analysis, using a number of sources will counter Rodger's arguments that the government has failed to support and protect the Native Indian and provide more than adequate aid for the success and betterment of this group of indigenous peoples.

Introduction

Driving through virtually any Native American reserve, one can see the poverty that this group faces. Despite the beauty of this culture and the sense of community, it is not an easy existence. Nowhere has the distance between the haves and have-nots been more evident than on the native reserves of North America. Native Americans are suffering from a dearth of jobs, high poverty rates, and little education. " The poverty rate among Native Americans is 28. 4%.

For the nation as a whole, the corresponding rate was 15. 3 percent" (United States Census Bureau, 2011). With this poverty have come the inherent poor housing, inferior education, lack of jobs, poor health conditions, and host of other problems typically seen in struggling communities.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was established to promote agricultural and economic development, provide health programs, social services and Native American schools. However, in recent years Native Americans have begun actively protesting their dissatisfaction with the bureau and have accused

the government of mismanaging the monies to be given to the tribes and directly contributing to the dire poverty on the reservations.

In Tom Rodgers piece, he declares that “ Poverty is both the cause and consequence of all the ills visited upon Native Americans. Failure to address poverty causes deprivation and hardship in these communities today, and robs the next generation of any opportunity to succeed and thrive tomorrow” (Rodgers, 2008). Rodgers, a Native American and member of the Blackfeet tribe, is an advocate who works on the behalf of tribal governments, and a previous congressional staffer to a senator. Rodgers has declared that Native Americans are living in untenable situations and that it is time for the US government to make good on its promises of support. His piece goes on to say that “ although we have moved beyond wanton neglect and violence, our national response to the problem of poverty in Native American communities remains woefully inadequate” (Rodgers, 2008). Rodgers tells us that Native Americans are some of the poorest in the entire nation and feels that support is needed for basic services and that the United States, although one of the wealthiest nations of the world, has not adopted the United Nations proposal for “ adoption of the Declaration on the Right of the Indigenous Peoples” (Rodgers, 2008). Rodgers deems that there is a need to expand formal rights and a better federal performance. Essentially Rodgers decries the level of awareness and recognition of Americans and the need for more aid.

While one would never suggest that historically the Native Americans did not lose much when they were stripped of their lands, one could submit that ongoing government subsidies have perpetuated the cycle of poverty seen <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-analysis-of-native-american-poverty-politics-essay/>

today on native reserves. In this piece, Rodgers neglects to show that funds given to tribes have been woefully mismanaged, fraudulently spent by the native councils, and have directly contributed to a general decline. “

Government officials designed many programs to alleviate conditions of desperation and poverty among America’s indigenous populations”

(Thompson, 2005). The result of Rodgers ignoring the fact that Native

Americans have historically been one of the most funded groups in North America undermines his suggestion that more aid is the answer.

Rodgers taps into our moral outrage and tries to evoke our sympathy using pathos by citing an example from 1862. In a time of starvation in a Dakota Sioux tribe, members were told, when the U. S. government failed provide the money owed to them by an Indian Agent, “ If they are hungry, let them eat grass or their own dung” (Rodgers, 2008). While anyone would agree that this is a most heinous statement in response to rampant starvation, it is taken from a statement made 152 years ago! This is in no way a current sentiment, and just manages to underline Rodgers use of past transgressions to absolve natives from responsibility for the situation they are in today. This non sequitur, while shocking, does nothing to explain the situation as it exists today and leaves the reader wondering if this substantiates or gives credence to any argument that natives are not well funded and thereby neglected by The US government. In fact, in a piece written by John Stossel, he maintains that “ Yes, the government signed treaties with the tribes that make Indians special. But that specialness has brought the Indian socialism. It’s what keeps them dependent and poor” (Stossel, 2011).

Rodgers argues that it is the due to Native Americans for more aid. He reasons that ethically and historically it is their appointed right. Yet, it is interesting to note that Africa, a nation amongst the poorest in the world, has adopted a new tradition of trade not aid. On the Good African website it states, “ We passionately believe that Trade is the only viable strategy for Africa’s economic and social development. Africa has received over US\$ 500 billion in Aid over the last 50 years and yet despite these huge inflows, the continent remains mired in poverty, disease, and systemic corruption. There are many problems in using Aid as a vehicle for development. This is because handouts have never been an effective way to achieve economic transformation” (Good African, n. d.). The website explains that aid undermines independence, erodes accountability and leads to dependency on donors. Whoever can say they have pride in something they did not earn?

Rodgers does not take the time in his article to examine the generations who have received aid, and why despite the monies received, this society has been seemingly irrevocably broken down. By only stating that more aid is needed, it does not address the reasons why, “...when tribes as virtual wards of the state,” and who have a government that “... manages their land, provides their healthcare, and pays for housing and child care, still manages to have “ the highest poverty rate, nearly 25 percent, and the lowest life expectancy of any group in America” (Stossel, 2011). His “ part for the whole” argument cannot stand when we see that while Africa’s solution of no longer relying on aid seems counterintuitive, it’s working, while the standard of giving aid to the natives in North America is not. “ Socialism will destroy America the same way it has destroyed the American Indian. If we are going

to learn anything from the tribes and nations, it should be that the experiment has failed” (American Indian Tea Party Nation, 2010).

Rodgers’ rally cry in his missive is his statement that “ The invisibility, silence, and neglect must end” (Rodgers, 2008). His belief that Native American’s have no recognition of their plight bears no witness. The article further expresses his wish that as “ Barack Obama ascends to the White House, now is the significant moment to address the many problems Native Americans endure, including systematic poverty” (Rodgers, 2008). This provokes the reader to believe that there is simply no recognition of the problem at hand, however, if one reads John Stossel’s depiction of the treatment of North American Natives; he debunks Rodgers statement with, “ The US government has “ helped” no group more than it has helped the North American Indians. It stuns me when President [Barack] Obama appears before Indian groups and says things like, “ Few have been ignored by Washington for as long as Native Americans” (Stossel, 2011). Clearly, the Native American issue has not only been recognized, it has been acknowledged by government as high as the President of the United States. To state that there is no awareness or recognition as Rodger’s has done is a fallacy and one that falls flat as the reader realizes that Rodgers has not succeeded in his argument and in fact only magnifies the embarrassment of riches that the Native American has received by comparison of any other group of people in the United States.

Tom Rodgers does manage to evoke thought and compassion in the Native’s plight. It awakens the reader to become more informed in regards to the extreme poverty issues surrounding this group of peoples. Where he fails to <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-analysis-of-native-american-poverty-politics-essay/>

convince the reader that society is basically ignorant to the issues, and would have us believe no aid is forthcoming, he would have bettered his argument by relying on facts rather than playing on our sympathies. No one would deny the problem, but perhaps this piece would have been better received if solutions were put forth, rather than blame. There is and has always been aid provided, the tribes have been recognized, and every level of government has conceded that there are problems which continue to perplex. Rather than divisive argument to what devolves into finger pointing, it would behoove us to be creative in our solutions and continue to work together despite Rodgers conviction of our current inaction.