

Rhetorical analysis



Freedom from Child Labor Through Women's Rights " We have, in this country, two million children under the age of sixteen years who are earning their bread" (1-3). Throughout Florence Kelley's speech to the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, she emphasizes the injustice of child labor laws and the need for women to take a stand by fighting for the right to vote. Kelley is one of many inspirational leaders who fought for women's rights. She reaches out to a group of women so that they might call to mind their right to petition.

In doing so, Kelley is persuading the audience to fight for their right to vote to change child labor laws. Kelley uses several rhetorical devices such as imagery, diction, and pathos to pull her audience into the issue and invites them to join her efforts. Florence Kelley shows sympathy through images she depicts to the audience when she explains how girls at the mere ages of six and seven " who are just tall enough to reach the bobbins" work close to eleven hours day or night (33-34). In doing so, she instills an image in her listeners' minds of children no more than four feet tall.

Also, she describes " the deafening noise of the spindles" to the audience to plant a spine-chilling feel for the work conditions children must endure (line 20). Additionally, Kelley mentions that a girl just turning thirteen leaves for work " carrying her pail of midnight luncheon as happier people carry their midday luncheon" (50-51) to show the differences in working during the day versus all night. Stating that " happier" people work during the day instills an image of depressed young children heading off to work all night long.

Kelley describes how these young children “ carry bundles of garments from factories to the tenements” (75-76); by doing so, she is trying to instill the picture of girls six and seven years of age knocking on doors with bundles of clothes unlike the free children who would normally skip from door to door selling Girl Scout cookies. In addition to using images to convey her message, Kelley uses her choice of words wisely to reach out to her audience to fight for their right to vote to free the children.

Kelley continuously describes how young and innocent these children are so that the audience can better understand that this is no place for young children to be working. By using the racial word “ white” to describe the girls Kelley is appealing to her audience, which is primarily upper class white women (29). In doing so, she shocks the audience into realizing this could be their children. Furthermore, Kelley declares, “ nor is it only in the south” that this is happening, which suggests to the audience that this is a national issue and is probably occurring in more than just the six states she mentioned (36).

Consequently, Kelley condemns the New Jersey legislature by using the word “ shameful” in describing the repeal bill that allows girls as young as fourteen years of age to work all night (60). She calls these children “ beasts of burden” to emphasize how the people in America no longer treat children as blessings, but as inhuman as “ beasts,” as well as stating “ of burden” to show that there is a great load that is overpowering young children (76). Furthermore, she explains how children have been “ robbed” of their education and socialization in school so they can be little slaves.

Kelley uses the word “robbed” to emphasize that the right to education belongs to children, and is being stolen from them. Throughout this speech Kelley uses phrases such as “our socks,” “our stockings,” and “our knitted underwear” simply to show that everything the audience is wearing is made by these young girls (66-68). By using the word “our,” Kelley renders the point that the audience cannot “feel free from such participation” (65-66). After describing the horrible nature of legislature that enables girls fourteen years of age to work all night, Florence Kelley draws her supporting evidence to her actual goal, women’s rights.

Pursuing this further, Kelley uses pathos to gain sympathy from the audience for young and innocent children when she repeatedly states “tonight while we sleep” (18-35). The idea that “while we sleep” children are working in horrible work conditions so that the audience may have shirts to clothe their backs and shoes to warm their feet instills pity and disgust in the audience (35). When Kelley states “we do not wish this” (78), she is sympathizing with the audience by including herself in this statement.

In addition, expressing to the audience the fact that “we are almost powerless” indicates there is something the audience and herself can do to take a stand (79-80). She asks the audience, “Would the New Jersey Legislature have passed that shameful repeal bill enabling girls of fourteen years to work all night, if the mothers in New Jersey were enfranchised? (59-63). Kelley asks this question to make the audience realize being mothers themselves, if they were able to vote such laws would favor the children. Kelley continues, by asking the audience “What can we do to free our consciences? (85). In doing so, she wants the audience to think about the <https://assignbuster.com/rhetorical-analysis-rhetorical-analysis-samples-5/>

question to engage them into a very important line in this speech: “ We can enlist the workingmen on behalf of our enfranchisement...as we strive with them to free the children” (87-89). When she tells the audience to evoke their right to petition, she is basically telling them the only step they can take is to fight for their right to vote. Florence Kelley’s passion was to fight for the right for women to vote and, in doing so, she wants the audience to vote to change child labor laws.

Kelley believes that people need to fight for women’s right to vote as well as the freedom of children, as all humans should be treated as equals and no child should endure “ the pitiful privilege of working all night” (44-45). Kelley lets the audience know that “ no labor organization in this country ever fails to respond to an appeal for help in of freeing the children” (89-91). By doing so, Kelley is attempting to assure the audience nothing they say will go unheard, with high hopes that one day because of the speech and the audience, women will be free to vote and the children will be free from “ toil” (96).