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Why Did We Fight For Education?

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Why Did We Fight For Education? : An Analysis of Bill Cosby's Address at the NAACP on the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Brown V. Board of Education

An African American kid was shot for being suspicious, but all he had was a can of Arizona Iced Tea and Skittles – the man who shot him was let free, leaving the public in an outrage, yet why is it that often times, the African American youth end up in such tragedies and violence. This is no coincidence, this is simply a stereotype that has become the norm through the generations of the ignorance of education. That is why Bill Cosby concluded the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Brown V. Board of Education ushering the realization of how the African American youth has become the epitome of stupidity and why incompetent parents and children have led to a perpetual cycle of high dropout rates, violence, and a horrible future. Bill Cosby, a famous African American actor, would effectively confront these issues through his address by revealing the truth of the morbid reality through his use of the informal fallacies, the past and the future, and last but not least an aggressive and demeaning tone towards the parents of the future generations.

Bill Cosby was selected to close out the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Brown V. Board of Education case for being a prominent figure in the African American community and an activist in educating the youth of society. Cosby's address's main goal is to astonish the audience of mature African Americans by constantly revealing the mistakes of the African American youth. His aggressiveness would make a one sided statement rather than an argument. Never did Cosby acknowledge the reasoning for the faults of the other side. He simply picked out the faults and mistakes of the youth and ranted about them. The predominant illogical fallacy that could be derived from the address would be ad hominem. In the introduction to his address, the final sentence that would strike the parents of the corrupt youth was "...listen to me. It's not what he's doing to you. It's what you're not doing". His use of the ad hominem fallacy attacks the more mature audience for they are the ones that do not believe in the direction of their youth, however they were the ones that should have manipulated and molded their children into the right direction. Nonetheless, there was never a clear argument from the other sides of this argument of why parenting has failed, rather Cosby is begging the question by assuming the answer because of the fact that if teenage parents exist, that those teenage parents would be inadequate parents due to that being the standard. Would Cosby's words about African Americans and how their youth are walking down the wrong path, enrage them because their best efforts are not formidable or does it bring them to a greater realization that you could have done something better?

Cosby was never the brightest student, but would eventually obtain his doctorate in education at Amherst and write a hit sitcom about an average African American family. He has witnessed and heard many stories and incidents that would help him grow and reflect on the truth of the African American community. Cosby's life depicts his ethos and how he understands the

nature of his community and how important education is. The third paragraph would reveal the source of the issues stemming out of the community – that issue being the lack of parenting. Even through his experiences he stated that “in the neighborhood that most of us grew up in, parenting is not going on...” and that lack of parenting would be the problem for the African American youth. The details of bad parenting would be further explained in detail through paragraphs five and eight, where he discusses how the parents are too reliant on praying for a better future. However instead of waiting for a miracle, the parents should be taking the initiative and start helping their children. Cosby continues by emphasizing that the parenting is very poor, by stating that “They’re buying things for the kid -- \$500 sneakers -- for what? They won’t buy or spend \$250 on Hooked on Phonics”, thus displaying the lack of priority in education that these parents have. This miracle of a better future that will not present itself by years of praying, but will surely come from passionate parents who will guide their students on the paved road of success through education and opportunities that our Nation has to offer after how hard the African Americans fought for their rights in education.

Cosby would connect his experiences with slippery slope fallacies. The 14<sup>th</sup> paragraph would cover a very sensitive topic with Cosby stating that “By the time you’re twelve, you could have sex with your grandmother, you keep those numbers coming. I’m just predicting”. It is very extreme to be talking about twelve year olds engaging in sexual activities, but in his example he takes it further by predicting it in an incestuous way with a grandparent and a grandchild. This extremity would evoke to the emotions of many in the audience as frightening and disgusting. These morals that Cosby is crossing to achieve pathos in his address towards the audience are very drastic, but they exist to leave an everlasting impression on the parents, so that as grandparents they can help guide their children to guide their grandchildren. As a parent when

hearing about underage pregnancies, one can only imagine the terrifying reality that their children's could face. Cosby explains that not only are the amount of irresponsible and inadequate parents growing, but that girls are facing bullying and ridicule for not being pregnant which to many parents will be shocking.

Throughout the Address, Bill Cosby goes into detail on why parenting has failed dramatically for the last half of the century. Despite obtaining greater rights and a greater education, the children are not taking advantage of such. The blame cannot solely be the child's fault however, because there is also a lack of parenting and guidance that the child needs to develop in society. Most of these shortcomings pass on through every generation, with each parent's lacking of guidance passing down every child. This fight towards a better future is not the fight of parents themselves however, but as a strong and united African American community. Cosby believes that "we have to begin to build in the neighborhood, have restaurants, have cleaners, have pharmacies, have real estate, have medical buildings instead of trying to rob them all" and by building an educated youth that did not have to evade to crimes for sustainability, the dream might eventually come true. If African American parents were to take a step forward and try to help their children, than perhaps their children will begin a new revolution, a new wave of parents that focus on nurturing their children and guiding them towards to the pack of education rather than the path of corruption.

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