

Florence Kelley Speech Rhetorical Analysis Essay Example

Introduction

Florence Kelley's 1905 speech, "*The Subject of Child Labor*," delivered at the National American Woman Suffrage Association, remains one of her most compelling addresses advocating for labor reform. In this speech, Kelley makes an impassioned plea for the protection of children from the exploitative practices of labor, utilizing powerful rhetorical strategies such as ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade her audience. Through her credibility, emotional appeals, and logical arguments, Kelley effectively communicates the urgency of child labor reform and inspires action.

Kelley's use of **ethos**, or credibility, is central to the persuasive power of her speech. As a prominent social reformer and leader of the National Consumers League, Kelley had firsthand experience with the issues she was discussing. She establishes her authority early on by recounting her work with factory investigations and child labor laws in Illinois. Kelley's personal involvement with the labor movement gives her credibility and positions her as an expert on the subject. Her audience is more likely to trust her recommendations because of her background in advocating for vulnerable workers and her dedication to child welfare.

Pathos, or emotional appeal, is a key rhetorical device Kelley employs throughout her speech. She vividly describes the harsh conditions under which children worked in factories, painting a stark image of their suffering. By describing the physical toll that long hours and dangerous jobs took on children, Kelley evokes empathy and anger in her listeners. She appeals to the audience's emotions by highlighting the injustices faced by children, using descriptive language to draw attention to their pain and hardship. This emotional connection compels the audience to take action, not just on an intellectual level, but from a moral standpoint as well.

In addition to ethos and pathos, Kelley uses **logos**, or logical reasoning, to support her argument. She provides statistical evidence on the extent of child labor and its harmful effects on children's health, education, and future potential. Kelley explains how child labor undermines the nation's future by robbing young people of a proper education and a healthy upbringing. She uses facts and figures, such as the high rates of workplace injuries and illnesses

among child workers, to emphasize the need for legislative intervention. By presenting logical evidence, Kelley appeals to the audience's sense of reason, making it clear that child labor is not only a moral issue but a societal one that needs to be addressed through policy changes.

Conclusion

Florence Kelley's speech "*The Subject of Child Labor*" effectively utilizes ethos, pathos, and logos to create a persuasive and emotional appeal for child labor reform. Through her credible expertise, powerful emotional connections, and logical reasoning, Kelley urges her audience to recognize the severity of the issue and act in favor of legislative reforms. Her speech not only highlights the dire conditions of child labor but also emphasizes the moral responsibility of society to protect its youngest and most vulnerable members. In doing so, Kelley made a lasting impact on the labor reform movement and helped pave the way for greater protections for children in the workforce.