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Rhetorical Analysis

The connection between mental health and violent crimes is a huge issue in the United States, especially when it comes to mass shootings. Carmela Epright's Ted Talk, "*Most Mass Shooters Are Not Mentally Ill*" uses emotion, statistics and factual evidence to convince others that mass shooters are not mentally ill. Her Ted Talk consists of facts from the shooting to facts about the shooters and their intentions. She tries to convince her audience to stop believing that only mentally ill people would commit heinous crimes that are not just mass shootings. She mentions white collar crimes, rape, and any other kind of violent crime. Towards the end of her Ted Talk, Epright uses emotional appeal to convince her audience to believe what she is saying.

Throughout Epright's Ted Talk she discusses why people should not associate mental illness with violent crimes. She first goes on to explain what criminal mental illness actually is: Did the person know that the crime they committed was wrong when they while they were doing it? If the answer is no, then that usually means that the person was in a state of psychosis, which is defined as severely mentally ill. She then goes on to say that mass shooters should not be classified as mentally ill because it is insulting to those who are mentally ill themselves. She says that it makes every mentally ill person seem "crazy" as the public sees. She then goes on to say

that using the “mentally ill card” gives us less of an understanding of why the shootings occur in the first place.

Epright’s sense of reliability is on the weak side. She throws out facts and statistics, but has no sources to back them up. She states in the video that forty-five million people suffer from mental illness, but does not have any source to back it up. She also brings up “facts” about the mass shooters and how they are supposedly racist and/or hate-filled. This once again, is not backed up by anything, not even a social media post that she could have definitely used. This is where this video can be unreliable because she mainly uses emotions to try and convince the audience of something. When an author/speaker does not have any facts to back up their point, what they are saying may as well just be pointless. No one is going to believe or want to listen to something that has no credibility.

Although Epright’s logic is not backed up by statistics, she uses a lot of pathos throughout the entire speech. Her raw emotion shows through the words she speaks and the tone she uses. She states that mentally ill people do not deserve to be in the same category as mass shooters. She believes that mass shooters are not mentally ill at all because according to her, you would have to be in a state of psychosis in order to be able to plead insane. She goes on to say that these shooters were indeed not in that state, they premeditated their actions, so therefore they should not be able to plead insanity. She uses this tactic in order to make the audience think and feel raw emotion.

In addition to making the audience think about why exactly people plead insane, she also brings up how mentally ill people are more at risk of being a victim rather than an offender of a violent crime. This is an intelligent move on her part because she gets the audience to feel sorry

for those who are mentally ill. Getting the audience to think about mentally ill people being victims of violent crimes helps persuade them of her main point that the mass shooters they see on the news are usually not going to be mentally ill.

Carmela Epright is a professor of philosophy at Furman University and a Clinical Professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of South Carolina. She has a PHD in philosophy, so she is more than qualified to talk about this topic. Her morals seem to be in the right place, but this is a mostly opinionated argument. Her main points have no evidence to back them up therefore what she says is not very credible. Because this is a Ted Talk, her audience could just be random people in the room who are there for many different reasons. But, because this speech is broadcasted on the internet, people searching for it may be the ones that agree with her.

Because this speech is so opinionated, it is easy to say which side she has the most positive ethos with. She is completely against calling mass shooters mentally ill and she constantly belittles the shooters and the people who call them mentally ill or feel bad for them in any way. She feels no sympathy or regard for those who she believes are ignorant to what mental illness is and what the difference between that and severely mental ill is. She is completely on one side and not at all the other. This could stem from her strong morals that she learned before she got her PHD and her knowledge as a professor.

In conclusion, Carmela Upright's Ted Talk, "Most Mass Shooters Are Not Mentally Ill" uses strong opinions and emotions to try and convince her audience to not mix mentally ill people with people who commit violent crimes. Throughout her speech, she explains what mental illness is and why people should not associate it with violence. This argument is mainly

emotion based with no facts or evidence to back it up. She lacks in the logos area but tries to help herself out by using a lot of passion and emotion. Overall, it is a bit unreliable, but her passion is strong and she probably convinced some people to believe what she was saying in her Ted Talk.

Bibliography

Upright, Carmela. "Most Mass Shooters Are Not Mentally Ill." *Youtube*. TedxGreenville. 21 May 2016. Web. Accessed 28 Sept 2018