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English 144B

A Blood Diamond is Forever: a Rhetorical and Historical Reading

This spoof argues that diamonds are at the center of a controversy, and it uses the notion of blood diamonds to further its point. At first glance the spoof may be seen simplistic, and its main argument may be seen as simplistic as well. Yet, an educated audience becomes aware of the controversy surrounding diamonds and their acquisition. Even if the audience is not aware of the horrible conditions of the mines, the use of child labor, and the exploitation of the African people, and its fuel for civil war in order to acquire diamonds, the image still creates an emotional connection and logical narrative of the blood diamond. Sided along the Da Beers slogan, “A Diamond is Forever”, the ethos of the spoof produces the audience to think about the visceral image being produced.

The diamond is at the center of the advertisement. This form of symbology calls forth the topic and issue centered on the diamond. Additionally, it is because the diamond is the focal point that the argument topic is clearly known: blood diamonds. Furthermore, the diamond is in the center of an outline of Africa. This purposeful position indicates how this issue is affecting the African continent and the audience becomes situated. The diamond is the focal point of the argument, and thus it is only fit for it to be the focal point of the advertisement as well.

However, there are other rhetorical moves within the advertisement. In terms of the hands, we see two powers conflicting: the offering and the greed. At the bottom of the page there are a set of hands stemming and offering the diamond dripping blood. It is juxtapose with the

hand reaching from the top grabbing the diamond. This hand, however, is depicted as a claw: sinister, evil, overbearing. Yet it is this same conflict that creates tension within the advertisement, and furthers the argument that blood diamonds should not be used.

Additionally, the bottom hands are bare and are a representation of the African people. Yet the claw is clothed. This juxtaposition of the bare against the clothed also furthers the idea of consumerism reaching and exploiting the labor force of the diamonds. According to blogger Michelle Lillie, “Children are also exploited as forced labor in the diamond mines of Angola, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. All three countries have barely recovered from brutal, violent, civil wars and children are often forced to mine for what is commonly known as ‘blood diamonds’ or ‘conflict diamonds,’ where the military or rebel group still controls the diamond mines with machine guns, beatings and death.” While not clearly visible if the offering hands are that of children, what is visible is the sense of purity and innocence that is in conflicting with the visceral corporate image grasping for the diamond that is much more powerful.

All of this in hand creates a strong and emotion filled center. Through the use of juxtaposition and tension, the ethos is heighten. It also creates a question: are the life’s and exploitation of children and adults justified to create a marriage marker that is forever?

In 1938, the De Beers Company (holder of most raw diamonds at the time) started a campaign to change this. They wanted to bring forth the diamond as a symbol that everyone could wear. Partly due to low diamond sales, and partly due to encourage consumerism, the De Beers company came up with “A Diamond is Forever” in all of their advertisements in 1949. The Da Beers Company started campaigns and loaned jewelry pieces to Hollywood starlets and socialites. Also, their advertisement campaigns were targeting an emotion rather than a product. Soon the American audience was captivated by their shine and brilliance and even knew that size

did not matter, but color, clarity, and cut did. Success. Yet this now has a backlash with most sources of diamonds not being regulated.

Fast forward to today, there is now controversy on diamonds and their acquisition. While diamonds may be forever, the life and blood of laborers that mine these stones are not. Additionally, there is a greed that feeds into the mining of diamond and the exploitation of the people of Africa, as seen by the advertisement spoof. According to the LA Times' article "How Diamonds Became Forever", author J. Courtney Sullivan writes that "last year, Americans spent almost \$7 billion on [diamond] rings." However, it is not the case that consumers are not educated on diamonds and their acquisition, but that a brilliant marketing play has sealed the diamond as a must for all engagement rings. Hopefully this spoof can bring forth the issue of blood diamonds, and hopefully diamonds do not become forever.

Works Cited

Lillie, Michelle. "Child Forced Labor Part I: The Mining Industry." *Child Forced Labor Part I: The Mining Industry*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Jan. 2015.

Sullivan, J. Courtney. "How Diamonds Became Forever." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 04 May 2013. Web. 28 Jan. 2015.