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### Rhetorical Analysis: “Coming Home Is the Real Battle” by Army Stress

The essay written by Army Stress, entitled “Coming Home is the Real Battle,” argues that veterans need to have better benefits and care from the United States government. This essay does not effectively employ all three rhetorical devices in order to persuade the audience that VA benefits are currently insufficient. This author perceives that the issue of veterans’ benefits *is* in need of rehabilitation and that there are deficiencies in the way that the government treats veterans; however, this author also concludes that the essay written by Army Stress abuses pathos in order to persuade the audience. For this reason, the essay is not an effective argument and could be improved with reliable citations and an approach that is grounded in logos and ethos.

**Pathos.** The essay is effective in creating a panic in the reader to change the way that VA benefits are disseminated; however, the essay uses too much pathos, and this makes the argument one-sided. This argument does not consider other perspectives and viewpoints. Calling legislators “lazy” (Army Stress) does not seem to take into consideration the obstacles to legislation. The VA administration offers a website (US Dept. of Veterans Affairs Website Editors) that is accessible to all veterans and is not based on “antiquated, paper driven adjudication system” (Army Stress).



According to Purdue OWL, pathos is an argument that is based upon an emotional appeal: “An argument should never use emotion to misrepresent the topic or frighten people” (Purdue OWL). The problem with the essay’s argument is that much of it is based upon the appeal to pathos instead of breaking down the legitimate obstacles to VA benefits. After performing some additional research, it is clear that the main obstacles to VA benefit access is not “laziness” on behalf of the government (Dao; US Dept. of Veterans Affairs Website Editors).

It seems that the author assumes that the reader believes that the government *conspires* to prevent veterans from accessing their benefits and does little to support this position aside from condemning the government for treating veterans inhumanely and for “toss[ing] them away like stray dogs” (Army Stress). Furthermore, the first paragraph ends in an appeal to pathos that incites fear in the audience: “...when they [veterans] put their gun in their mouth and pull the trigger it is sad to say that sometimes the real battle is not fought over seas...” (Army Stress). This appeal to pathos avoids the real issue and argument at stake and defaults to fear tactics.

Problems with the appeal to pathos in this essay is that there are not any clear individual cases that are cited, just broad statistics and broad references to a huge population of veterans. Purdue OWL suggests using individuality in an appeal from pathos in order to “give a human face to the numbers” (Purdue OWL). A good example of this approach is found in the article written by James Dao, “After Combat, the Unexpected Perils of Coming Home,” because this author individualizes the argument with specific cases: Sgt., Cpt. and Pvt. Officers who have difficulty in coming home due to their individualized circumstances (Dao). Army Stress fails to ethically present the argument because of the abuse of pathos throughout the essay.

**Ethos.** The author does not establish ethos with the audience. There are no clear citations in the work; aside from citing some sources, these sources are not introduced or explained



(Purdue OWL). Furthermore, there are a variety of typos: to is only a letter “t”, or “te,” the word “they” is misspelt as “hey” (Army Stress). These errors undermine the author’s credibility (Purdue OWL). Furthermore, the author is anonymous, and Army Stress is not a known group. The author’s name gives evidence of the pathos that usurps any ethos in the argument as well. For these reasons, the author lacks credibility and is unable to effectively establish ethos.

**Logos.** Because of the abuse of pathos in this argument, the logos suffers. There are slippery slope arguments, as evidenced in the introduction that ends in the idea that veterans commit suicide often. Purdue OWL defines this fallacy as a conclusion that equates the end result with the problem, when in fact there could be many variables that contribute to veterans committing suicide (Purdue OWL). Army Stress assumes that veterans commit suicide but begs the question as to the causes of the suicide—thus insinuating that lack of VA benefits is the major contributor. This is a logical fallacy.

### **Conclusion**

Army Stress argues a perspective that most people agree upon: Veterans deserve better benefits and access to these benefits. However, Army Stress fails to present these arguments in a logically consistent manner. The essay argues to an audience that already agrees and does little to present new and compelling facts of statistics that could help solve the problem. Instead, Army Stress relies on inciting emotional stress in the reader in order to upset the audience. These appeals to pathos are ineffective at persuading the audience since the audience is likely on the side of the author anyway. What is needed to form an effective argument is a foundation of ethos from which logos can incite the audience to produce change. The author needs to provide the audience with a valid perspective and empower the audience to further change. Instead, this



essay falls short of true persuasion and instigates pity for the state of our veterans through blatant abuse of pathos.



### Works Cited

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