

“AIDS – Under Five” Commercial

Theses

In the “Aids Under 5” commercial, the United Nations incorporates ethos, pathos, and logos by unashamedly portraying children under the age of five struggling to survive without adult care while the world turns a blind eye to the collateral effects of AIDS’ fatalities. (Cody Ames, Dawn Hanks, Melanie Lasater).

As children operate in adult behaviors amongst abandoned and desolate cityscapes, this commercial evokes a post-apocalyptic atmosphere, supporting the statistical evidence that over fourteen million children are victims of the AIUDES epidemic, and that apathy is “lethal” if solutions are not supported by the general audience. (Eason Campbell)

Analyses

This ad appeals to the audience on several levels, but mainly pathos. Some examples of pathos visual images of children being denied a childhood because they are forced into survival mode. Because of AIDS, these orphans are portrayed as neglected, homeless, dirty, and totally abandoned. A specific example of abandonment is when the small girl abandons the baby in the stroller at the end of the ad. Several children were shown crying. The music was haunting and added to the emotional appeals. The purpose of the ad is shown through a combination of pathos and ethos when the narrator says, “apathy is lethal,” persuading us to care about AIDS victims and its consequences. Ethos is also evidenced in the credibility of the authors (the United Nations and the Ad Council) and the celebrity endorsement of Richard Dreyfuss as a narrator. Logic is found in the statistical reference of 14 million orphans due to AIDS and easy to remember contact information (866-AIDSFUND). (Rachel Sullinger, Kristi Bass, and Katie Hamilton)

The United Nations Foundation television advertisement “Under Five” appeals to the audience through logos, ethos, and pathos. Logos appeals include the statistical analogy between “14 million,” the number of children in American—the wealthiest nation on earth—and the number of children worldwide left orphaned by AIDS. The visual words “AIDS is preventable. Apathy is lethal” is an appeal to the both the logical opinion of a health organization regarded as an expert and the audience’s ethical and humanitarian nature. However, pathos is the most powerful device used. Pathetic appeals appear in the music, visuals, and spoken words. The selection of music in conjunction with the child’s melody evokes a deep sadness for the abandonment of these children. Even the camera angles evoke pathos. The perspective begins with a bird’s-eye view of a city that is empty, and a tiny child runs through the street. Gradually, the perspective of the camera shifts to an intimate view of children bathing in a river, washing their clothes, making meals out of a can of beans cooked over an open fire, interspersed with images of children in the acts of normal childhood play. The juxtaposition of these children as children versus children functioning as adults in roles of caring for themselves and each other creates in the viewer a powerful image of what children should be and what these children do not have. The visuals are the majority of the one minute commercial, but the spoken words are also filled with a profound strength in the lines, “with no one to watch over them,” culminating in an appeal to ethos: “Please, won’t you help?” The one-minute ad emphasizes the squalid conditions and the efforts of the children to tend to their own needs and look after one another—one small girl zipping the dress of a younger one, while the littlest holds aside her hair. These pathetic images set in the backdrop of an abandoned and deserted city filled with refuse, a pack of wild dogs, and suffering, helpless children touch the viewer’s heart and make a personal connection. (Samantha Hazell-O’Brien, April Butler, and Vivian Blair)