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"BIG LOVE"

Introduction

In the song “BIG LOVE” by the Black Eyed Peas, rhetorical criticism is used to convey a tone of aggravation and bitterness towards the current state of gun violence in the American school system. Repetition, rhyme, allusion, metaphor, simile, symbolism, and personification, are pieces of figurative language used throughout the song. Though the lyrics themselves are very direct in their meaning, each aforementioned tool helps to emphasize the intentionally critical mood. The chosen artifacts are the lyrics and music video of the song “BIG LOVE”. The way the song is formatted gives it the ability to reach a broad community, in order to diminish ignorance, promote love among people, and instigate change for the betterment of our society.

Artifact Description

“BIG LOVE” is a song written by the Black Eyed Peas. The Black Eyed Peas are an American musical group founded in 1995, and they have had many members over the years. The current members are will.i.am, apl.de.ap, and Taboo, however they often feature other artists in their songs like Macy Gray, Sierra Swan and Fergie. Their seventh studio album, which features “BIG LOVE”, titled, *Masters of the Sun Vol. 1*, was released October 26, 2018. Their song, “BIG LOVE”, came out in September 2018 and was released as a single before the album was released in its entirety. The song focuses on social justice issues like gun violence, drugs, and government wrongdoings. The focus of this paper is to understand and analyze the song’s

message about gun violence within schools, which is shown throughout the lyrics and the music video of the song. The intended audience seems to be society itself, as the song addresses many problems society has today. The main message of the song draws attention to what society needs today, which is love and openness, otherwise nobody will ever be willing to listen, talk or solve the problems society has.

This message is shown through the use of rhyme, repetition, allusion, metaphor, simile, symbolism, and personification. The artifact is formatted as song lyrics, and uses symbolism within the lyrics and music video images. As stated above, the song recognizes and acknowledges issues within society today, mainly gun violence. It's extremely relevant to today's world, as just this weekend there were two major shootings, one in a synagogue and one at a cookout. The song's topic could be considered controversial as in a government perspective, but overall the song addresses the fact that kids and adults are dying because of violence, and only love can stop it.

Critical Analysis of the Artifact

From analyzing the lyrics of the song "BIG LOVE" by Black Eyed Peas, there is evidence of repetition, rhyme, allusion, metaphor, simile, symbolism, and personification. Starting from the beginning of the lyrics, these 3 lines, "everybody watching ya, people love to stare at ya, everybody's greedy ain't nobody tryna share with ya," share repetition of the word "ya" at the end of each verse. This repetition leaves a harsh and aggravated tone which displays the individualistic and bitter point of view society has towards each other. The following lines, "our leaders are embarrassing, I think they need some parenting, tell me why they playing with the fire and the kerosene," rhyme with the last word in each verse. The connection between these

words: embarrassing, parenting, and kerosene, is that they share a negative connotation. This shared connotation, can create a message that the individuals responsible for creating a safe atmosphere for others are causing destruction to it because of their ignorance.

The next verse after the chorus is, “power to the people.” This is an allusion because of the cultural expression, political slogan, and popular use of the saying. By implementing this allusion in the song, it sabotages the strength behind the saying and gives a sarcastic tone to the verse since it is used in a song where the overarching message of the lyrics is that people have lost control to the government and violence. Personification is shown in the line, “it takes you and I to keep the hope alive.” It is personification because of the idea given, that hope has the ability to die or stay alive even though it is only a feeling. The purpose of making hope an animate object is to convey a concerned tone towards people’s responsibility to remember that, coming and staying together as a community can stop school shootings.

There are two metaphors in the lyrics, one is, “life is a blessing.” This is a metaphor because the song is stressing the importance that life is not given and can be taken away anytime, therefore people should cherish it and work to protect it. This metaphor changes the mood from helpless to grateful. The other metaphor is, “knowledge is a weapon,” this is a metaphor since knowledge is an inanimate object but is being characterized as a physical object that can cause harm. The importance of this metaphor comes from the message it gives, which is that people should become educated on how to keep schools and communities safe from gun violence in order to stop school shootings. The line, “candle in the darkness, help change the heartless,” has symbolism from the candle representing the good citizens left in a world where careless and selfish people create harm (heartless). This symbolism creates a compelling visual that brings an

optimistic tone and message that there is still good in the world and as a unit, people can be effective in changing the course of these dangerous individuals. Another line incorporates symbolism: “here's love to guide you.” This is symbolism because of the inference made, that love is a map. Making love be a map for others to use as guidance instead of a feeling, enhances the underlying meaning of the song, that love is needed to change destructive people. A simile is seen in the following verse, “we’re like in a rowboat, swimming up the river,” which makes a direct connection between people and a rowboat. From the simile comparing the effort made for gun control laws to being the same as a rowboat swimming upstream, depicts the reality of the static place the US is in, for they can’t keep guns away from reckless individuals, leaving the situation to feel out of control. The line, “together we’re united,” is an allusion because it originates from the *Pledge of Allegiance*, which has the intention of saying one is loyal to the United States. However, when used in this song it creates more than just the message of loyalty to one's country, it connotes to meaning everyone is united only if we are connected, but not if we stand as solely individuals. This strengthens the song’s additional message, that only as a group can change be made, because it prompts the concept of drifting away from being an individualistic society in order to effectively advocate for change.

The chorus uses repetition and repeats three times. The gathered meaning of the chorus is direct and says that people are made of love, and love is needed and essential in any situation. Overall, the song is simple and informational. It is informational rather than factual because people are aware of the current issues going on in America and the song is written from experience and inferences. The song is simple rather than complex because of the word choice and the clear message of the song. Though there are undertones of other meanings, none are

hidden in the song. All the messages from the song construct the general goal of the song: that the US needs love and a gathered community to prevent losing control over gun violence, drug use, and the government.

In the music video of “BIG LOVE”, there is only one person singing a part of the chorus in the beginning and middle of the video, “that's all that we are, that's all that we are, that's all that we are, is big, big love, is big, big love.” Towards the end of the video, there is a noticeable shift in the amount of people who sing that same part of the chorus. Instead of one person, there are large groups of kids, cops, parents, and other members of the affected community, gathered and singing the lyrics as a whole. This alteration in the visual influenced and intensified the chorus’s lyrics meaning. When only one person would sing it, people continued to lose their lives. This unveiled how weakness controls a situation when there is a lack of support. In comparison, when sung by an abundance amount of people, the tone changed from defeat to hopeful and empowering. Now the message of the song altered to how being equipped with other people brings value to controlling a situation.

The overall visuals were intense enough that the lyrics and the video could stand on their own and replicate the same message. Schools today are becoming more educated on paying attention to the actions and character of others around. The video hints as to whom the shooter is, which is shown in the beginning with the male. He is overlooked by the female once her boyfriend takes her away. The former male’s minor negative action, right after this happens, builds the idea that he will be the shooter. This is an essential moment that is subtle and is overlooked in reality just like it was when it occurred in the video. Lastly, the moment when the gym teacher raises his hands to communicate that he surrenders but instead is shot, is

meaningful. It is meaningful because it occurs during the lyrics, “cause we're living in a time where you're fighting to survive and all we need is love.” The relation of the lyrics to the shooter’s action towards a forgiving person, in this moment, symbolizes the pattern America faces where violence, particularly guns, overrides the power of love and forgiveness.

There are a couple of audiences that would respond positively to specifically the music video. One audience is the media. The media has already spoken on behalf of the video, and what draws them in is the imagery. Though the imagery is gut wrenching and emotional, it is real, current, and raises the question of why the government has the power to take kids away from parents but not guns away from kids. The frequency of school shootings, and the ongoing debate over gun control laws are all represented in the video, which allows the media to take this artifact and turn it into a reminder that there is room for and need for change with gun laws. Another audience that would respond positively is the community. Whether it is a community that has experienced a school shooting tragedy or one who is fearful and passionate about the topic. Either community would appreciate the compelling visuals and insights into what nightmare is experienced during a school shooting. Also, the picture created by the united group of people at the end of the video, carries an emotion that could facilitate the audience to feel a sense of optimism towards the idea that, they could be the catalyst for the change in gun control laws and the safety of people.

An audience that may respond negatively to the music video could be those against strict gun control laws such as Libertarians and/or Republicans. Since the artifact portrays the negative and demonic side of the power a gun can have, when placed in the wrong persons hands, they could feel offended. Though in agreement that school shootings are disasters, the exploitation of

guns as only dangerous in the video, seems to disregard and override the benefits of owning guns.

The cultural value embedded in the music video is the reality that people are still uneducated about gun violence and naive to red flags about possible suspects. The visual that the US does not take gun control serious enough is clear because another school shooting occurs. Though the music video was beyond emotional and leaves viewers uneasy, it does not leave the viewer shocked because school shootings have unfortunately become common. A social value embedded in the video was the need to remember kindness. In today's society, where the government, leaders, and the general public are not on the same page, positivity, communication and love can only strengthen the movement towards change. Everyone is distracted nowadays, yet wants to make a pivotal step towards improving the safety within the community. The depressing headlines about war, government, drug addiction, and control contrasted with an optimistic chorus leads to the social value of if a community comes together to heal one another and be kind, the fate of society lies in the direction we lead it depending on our outlook.

The overall impact of the music video and lyrics slightly differ. For the music video, the impact is the struggle and the journey that the US still is on to create safe and kind environments for schools. The representation of how people only come together once a tragedy or disaster occurs, yet are separated and bothered by one another when life sits still is influential for those who have fallen in the 'follower' category to become a leader. Also, this visual in the video formulates a self-reminder to those watching that continuing to feel passionate and strong about a current issue with a group of people, throughout life, is the only way to advocate for change effectively. Once people carry that mindset, there will be a depletion in the frequency of active

shooter events and an expansion of gun control. The lyrics' impact is the ignorance of Americans in today's society, specifically the government. The government is lying to the citizens and they are falling static in a time where control over those who do not follow the rules is needed.

Everyone in the general public is eager to be a critic, but loses the motivation and strength to be a leader and be outspoken for a positive matter. Violence and drugs is the easy way out, but too many people are choosing that route over working together because it has become a norm. The impact of the message in the lyrics comes from the blunt truth that is forgotten. Showing such a negative but raw side of America can leave people inspired enough, from the disgust our country's state is in, to begin working on fixing the corruptness.

Conclusion

"BIG LOVE" takes a look at the difficult but necessary changes that need to be made in America. With so much going wrong in a society that has become accustomed to mass shootings and violence against innocents, shows there is a lot that must be done in order to change America for the better. The tension that "BIG LOVE" brings forth with its repetition and other figurative language, creates what seems to be a hopeless tone but then changes to a message of hope rather than despair. Since music is commonly heard in the media, it is a useful platform to advocate for change. It sends a powerful message, and advocates for a hopeful future to a wide audience. With such a broad audience, the Black Eyed Peas have taken advantage of the media, with this song, in order to get this message out: America needs to fix the amount of school shootings occurring.

References

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