

Student Sample # 3

English 2-16

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Logic Is Not Always Reasonable

Logic, by definition, is the application of formal principles of reasoning. Rhetoric, on the other hand, includes appeals that motivate humans above and beyond logic. In two chapters of *Walls: Travels Along the Barricades*, the author Marcello Di Cintio reveals how an appeal to authority can be equally justified by two conflicting nations; in other words, people on both sides of the walls Di Cintio visits believe that their cause is the one worth fighting for. Di Cintio spends time in the Western Sahara, where he sees the rich tradition and culture of the Saharawi people while also seeing the militaristic opposing force of Morocco, which is solely in the Western Sahara for its rich phosphate deposits, displacing the Saharawi from the land on which they had lived for generations. Marcello Di Cintio also spends time delving into the issues of the West Bank. Here, we see Palestinians whose way of life is intertwined with that of the land and the olive trees of Israel while also confronting the culture of Israelites and their manifestation on the Holy land based on scripture. In many cases, logic can be a great way to reason with one another and come up with solutions that work for all parties. However, in both Western Sahara and the West Bank, different peoples have varying long-standing cultures and traditions that give them what they believe is just reasoning to belong in their corresponding regions; these appeals to different authorities clash on the basis of different histories, producing a polarized conflict that logic cannot abate.

The Western Sahara is a land region of Northwest Africa that became an occupied colony of Spain in the late 19th century. The Spaniards displaced the native Saharawi people from the land in which they had created a thriving civilization for many generations. Spain, deciding to step out of the region, gave way for the Moroccan government to claim the territory as theirs. Due mainly to the rich phosphorus deposits, Morocco saw this land as an asset to their economy and began taking militaristic control over the area to keep out the Saharawi peoples desperate to claim what they believe is their land, ““The Morrocans care only about the resources. They do not want to build a new Sahara”” (29). This quote implies two interesting things: for one, not only do the Moroccans intend to keep the land they have obviously taken from the Saharawi people, but they plan on abusing it and making a profit, and secondly, it’s a sign of the logic of the Moroccans as indicative of all plundering nations. The world is run by money. We see that the focal point of the Morrocans staying in the Western Sahara is profits, and they’re enabled to do this because of the rest of the world economies and the United Nations.

When the Spanish phosphate conveyor belt was broken by ‘terrorists’, first world countries quickly stepped in to back the Moroccans and get their operation running smoothly once again. The militarization of the zones in the Western Sahara has been justified by many nations across the world because of its claim to further human advancement and because it helps the world economy. For example, the Moroccan government entices its citizens to occupy the disputed territories to make it harder for Saharawis to remain connected to their land: “The only new homes belong to Moroccans from northern cities The Moroccan government lured these settlers to the Western Sahara with tax breaks and high wages in an effort to populate the disputed territories with non-Saharawis” (29). The Moroccan claim to authority is through wealth and power, and that power is backed by first-world militaries and economies. This is most

unlike the seemingly helpless Saharawi peoples who claim the land is theirs under the logic that they had been thriving in that region for many generations and have developed rich tradition and culture coexisting with the land.

The Moroccans don't have a strong cultural and traditional connection to the land and animals of the Western Sahara like the Saharawis do: "Saharawis have a close relationship with camels. For centuries, camels have provided transport, meat, leather, and bone. The animal symbolizes the Saharawi culture. The theft and abuse of the herd by Moroccan soldiers deeply offended their nomadic blood" (36). This shows us the two conflicting points of logic: for the Morroccans, they justify their right to rule with profits and wealth while the native Saharawis see tradition and cultural connection to the land as a valid reason to put up a fight for the Western Sahara. To a certain extent, Di Cintio sympathizes with the Saharawi people because he sees that these people have been oppressed and are now refugees without a nation. However, even the logic of Di Cintio's sympathy is flawed. Coming from a Canadian background, the type of cultural and traditional uprooting that the Saharawis are dealing with is something that he hasn't had to experience in Canada. Canada is a capitalist country, and Canada is part of the United Nations; the UN is the very organization that enables the Moroccan government to abuse the land of the Saharawi people for the exportation of phosphate, and the two main corporations who do this (Potash and Agrium) are Canadian (*Briarpatch*).

Capitalist countries raise citizens with capitalist mindsets, often a mindset that values money and profits over tradition and culture. Not that Di Cintio is hypocritical, but Di Cintio is playing a role as a mediator that's supposed to be on the fence (or wall) between this conflict. The fact that he fails to mention that his country and many other capitalist countries are partly responsible for the suffering of the displaced Saharawis makes his sympathetic position suspect. Furthermore,

one can't apply the same logic to different groups because the roots of their logical reasoning are coming from completely different trees. The Saharawi peoples have a deep connection to the Western Sahara through culture and tradition, not economic value. The Moroccans have no connection to the land but are happy to make huge profits from it. Something capitalism is great at doing is setting aside cultural traditions for the greater good of an economy.

An example of this would be the United States: throughout all of its histories, minimizing the importance of Native American traditions with the goal of using their land for something that's deemed for the "greater good" of the country. Di Cintio sympathizes with the Saharawis even though he was raised with a capitalist mindset, which in the end supports the Morroccans displacing the Saharawis. So, we cannot apply the logic of any of these parties and decide who gets the land. Instead, the party with the biggest military and economy will tend to be the party that gets what they want. The situation in the Western Sahara will likely drag on for many years; however, the Saharawis are fighting an uphill battle against a changing world that values money and prosperity more than the traditional values of ancient cultures.

Along the same lines, Di Cintio travels to the West Bank to explore yet another region that has been divided by a monstrous wall. The Jewish people became refugees after World War II, and after all of the suffering that the Jewish people went through, Jewish people believed they had a god-given right to uproot the Palestinians of the West Bank to create a new nation: Israel. However, the people of Palestine have a deep connection to the land and have created a culture that is intertwined with the olive trees of the Mediterranean: "Mohammed knew every inch of these hills. His family-owned olive groves not far from here, and he used to camp beneath the trees with his brothers when they were all boys... Both Mohammad and his tree

reached adulthood in unison from Jayyous's fertile soil" (101). This illustrates how the culture of the Palestinians is deeply rooted in the West Bank, just like the olive trees.

Palestinians make a living from the olive trees that thrive in the West Bank's fertile soil, and the culture of their peoples had become centered around the cultivation and caretaking of these trees. This is important because olive trees take many generations to reach adulthood and can live to be very old. These are the very same trees that the Israelis are uprooting to make room for the wall around Israel: "More than this, though, the olive trees represented the Palestinians' enduring presence and stewardship of the land. The trees and the Palestinians shared the same roots. Ripping out the trees symbolized a spiritual expulsion" (119). The significance of this quote is the fact that these trees were likely planted by the ancestors of the Palestinians currently living in the West Bank. The Palestinians claim that the land of the West Bank is rightfully theirs and the appeal to tradition and culture is rooted in these trees that the Israelis are removing.

It's symbolic that the Israelis are uprooting these olive trees that they could use for themselves because not only are they removing the Palestinians from the land they are intertwined with, but they are also removing the deepest bond the Palestinians share with the West Bank. Generations of hard work and nurturing of the olive trees that the Palestinians took upon themselves for years are rendered futile by the Israelis. On the other hand, it's understandable that the Israelis would want to build a sanctuary for their people after all that their race had been put through: "Most Israelis refer to the wall as a separation barrier or an anti-terrorist fence. The barrier was built to save innocent lives, its proponents claim. Certainly, a nation has the right to secure its borders and the duty to protect its populace" (102). Yes, terrorism is a constant issue that both Israelis and Palestinian deal with every day, but the very

reason for this terrorism is the establishment of the wall. It's interesting that the device intended to induce safety and borders is the instigator of the current issues in the West Bank.

Whenever possible, Di Cintio takes in perspectives from both sides of the wall. However, he decisively portrays the stories of the Palestinian prior to that of the Israelis in an attempt to create a bias in favor of the displaced Palestinians: "I wanted to join him. I believed in this cause. I wanted to be a part of this rebellion rather than a mere witness. The barrier these men fought against inspired me to write about walls in the first place" (106). This is a crucial point of view to understand the author while reading this book because it shows that Di Cintio begins his writing already sympathetic towards the Palestinians. Di Cintio shows a similar sympathy in his time in the Western Sahara, strategically placing the same sympathy in his readers prior to showing the perspective of the Israelis on the other side of the wall. When Di Cintio visits the Israeli family, he clearly shows his opinions on the West Bank Wall: "The Wall annexes Palestinian land, displaces farmers, and uproots olive groves to make room for settlements like these. The settlements are immoral. But even certainties grow complicated when confronted by individual souls" (117). This indicates Di Cintio's feelings towards the wall, and it's understandable that he shows sympathy towards the Palestinians.

The Israelis evicted the Palestinians from their land they were so deeply intertwined with... right? But the Israelis have suffered through tragedies that no other community could understand, and they have the god-given manifestation to the land of the West Bank... right? "International law deems the settlements illegal, and even most Israelis believe the settlements stand as barriers to real peace. If the Islamic jihadists represented extremism on the Palestinian side of the struggle, then the settlers represented extremism on the Israeli side" (114). This is crucial to my point that logic is not practical when it comes to walls; although both civilizations

on both sides of the wall have valid logic to claim authority over the land, their bipolar logic is simply causing terror and creating a schism through the disconnection of the people and the land. It's easy to sympathize with the Palestinians, but once again the tale holds true; the Israelis are backed by the United Nations, and especially the United States because of their religious connection to the West Bank. Christianity is engraved into the Constitution of the United States, and the US government deems the holy land safer in the hands of the Israelis than in the hands of Palestinians whom they deem extremists. In the end, the side that gets what they want is the side backed by the strongest military and strongest economy.

In summation, logic is proved to not be practical in the complex issues of the West Bank and the Western Sahara because the fate of the land is not in the hands of the people with the best logic or best cultural connection to the land. Instead, the land is in the hands of the peoples backed by the strongest and wealthiest of nations. Not only does popular religion play a role in the occupation of these disputed territories, but money and capitalism are catalysts in the support of occupiers. Di Cintio's mission was to observe the deep-rooted issues that these walls create; however, Di Cintio seems to minimize the true effect that wealthy countries have on the settlements of these regions. All in all, the party with the stronger logic is not always the party that wins, and oftentimes, the logic they possess is not a validation of their settlement. A cruel truth to the world is that money and power rule the world, and the issues in the West Bank and Western Sahara validate this truth.

Works Cited

Di Cintio, Marcello. *WALLS: Travels Along the Barricades*. Softskull Press, 2013.