

**Rhetorical Analysis Essay on Emma Watson's Speech "Gender Equality is Your  
Issue Too"**

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Best-known as playing Hermione Granger in the film *Harry Potter*, Emma Watson has now transformed her image from a clever wizard to Women Goodwill Ambassador of the UN advocating gender equality. Out of everyone's imagination that a young and popular actress would stand out for public issues, Watson decided to make good use of her popularity and take up responsibility as an advocate to awaken the public's awareness toward gender equality. Taking place at a special event for the HeForShe campaign at United Nations Headquarters in New York, Watson's speech went virus immediately after launched online. Broadly acclaimed, the persuasive speech "Gender equality is your issue too" by Emma Watson turned out to be a gutsy, inviting, and moving take in which the idea of feminism is perfectly reminded and aroused to her audience (Abramson).

Starting with the very beginning of the speech, Watson wasted no superfluous words but straightly cut to the chase by stating: "Today we are launching a campaign called 'HeForShe'. I am reaching out to you because I need your help. We want to end gender inequality—and to do that we need everyone to be involved (Watson)." Using the sense of pathos, Watson's tone was found humble and sincere yet meanwhile

fairly firm. Later, since it was the debut of the campaign and in order to draw the audiences' attention, such strong verb as "galvanize" was used in her saying "we want to try and galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for gender equality (Watson)." Therefore in terms of propagating UN's mission and goal, Watson has undoubtedly initiated a well done opening.

While some might have started to question whether or not Watson was qualified as UN's ambassador, she indirectly proved to her audience through her speech. According to Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, the reason why Emma Watson was suitable for the appointed role lies in her "embodiment of UN Women's value" as well as her "intellect and passion that will enable UN Women's messages to reach the hearts and minds of young people globally (UN website)." However, in Watson's speech we find neither her own exaggeration nor citation from Mlambo-Ngcuka; simply we can only find her recalling her own inspiration since the appointment: "I was appointed six months ago and the more I have spoken about feminism the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop (Watson)." By expressing her genuine feeling may Watson allow the speech to be convinced and persuasive to her

audiences at the first stage.

Next, Watson decided to provide logical effects by clarifying the definition of feminism: “The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes.” The meaning of “feminism” may easily be looked up in dictionaries or websites online, for example, the Women and Gender Studies of Eastern Kentucky University explained that “Feminism is a multi-disciplinary approach to sex and gender equality understood through social theories and political activism (EKU website).” However, as previously mentioned, since Watson has recognized the fact that most people misunderstood feminism, she wisely rendered the audiences clear information which not only strengthened the idea of her speech but also help them develop a correct concept of feminism.

Then Watson moved on by sharing her own experiences to establish ethos, which however at the same time led to dispute. Julia Zulver, an Oxford graduate student whose upcoming thesis focuses on women’s mobilization in EL Salvador commented that Watson’s “girl-next-door experience is not good enough (Zulver).” In the speech Watson mentioned, “I started questioning gender-based assumptions when at eight I was confused at being called ‘bossy’, because I wanted to direct the plays we would

put on for our parents—but the boys were not (Watson).” Later at her 14, 15, and 18 she again and again encountered similar situations. What Zulver questioned was that such “candor added real emotional appeal to her message”; nevertheless, it did not seem so important comparing to pertinent issues such as child marriage and femicide (Zulver). Here we may see that Watson was being frank and emotional, but such tactic may not be able to lay strong enough emphasis on her speech as it appeared trivial and personal.

Later on Watson again used pathos by making self-reflection. She began, “Apparently I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and, unattractive. Why is the word such an uncomfortable one? (Watson)” In this way Watson pointed out more misunderstandings that people in the society thought, which is, those women who stand up for their rights were often seen extremists who go against men in all ways. Through questioning why “feminism is an uncomfortable word”, it allowed Watson’s audiences to reflect upon themselves as well. Moreover, to grab people’s attention Watson firmly said, “I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the

same respect as men. But sadly I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights.” The repetition of “I think it is right that...” was designed to show people what should have been considered important, while “but sadly...” suddenly overturned what has been said; therefore, Watson deepened her audiences’ impression.

Approximately in the middle of the speech Watson cited a well-known public figure to support her point of view while at the same time expressed sadness once again: “In 1995, Hilary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women’s rights. Sadly many of the things she wanted to change are still a reality today.” This is a means of logos which Watson used to echo the speech conveyed 20 years ago and to remind the present audiences 20 years later how less women’s right has been attached importance. And she later brought up a question: “But what stood out for me the most was that only 30 per cent of her audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation? (Watson)” By continuously responding to the predecessor’s speech allowed Watson to emphasize the seriousness and the lasting of the issue on feminism.

Shortly after the echoing of Clinton's speech, Watson again converted her tone from logos to pathos appealing to men: "Men—I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is your issue too (Watson)." Here it was the first time Watson mentioned her speech title "Gender equality is your issue too", which she should have been done many more times since the beginning. Yet the invitation was made perfectly as it could be seen as a coherency to her mentioning Clinton's speech. Plus, the persuasion was thus made stronger.

Then Watson appeared to be aware that the audiences (mainly they were very well-educated and prestigious) might have started to wonder the candor of her giving the speech, so she made fun of herself while at the same time highlighted her ardent involvement: "You might be thinking who is this *Harry Potter* girl? And what is she doing up on stage at the UN. It's a good question and trust me, I have been asking myself the same thing. I don't know if I am qualified to be here. All I know is that I care about this problem. And I want to make it better. And having seen what I've seen—and given the chance—I feel it is my duty to say something (Watson)." Here Watson's joke may not be seen inappropriate as it was composed of truthfulness which strengthened her presence in UN conference.

When the speech was near the end, Watson established logos once more:

“Because the reality is that if we do nothing it will take 75 years, or for me to be nearly a hundred before women can expect to be paid the same as men for the same work. 15.5 million girls will be married in the next 16 years as children. And at current rates it won’t be until 2086 before all rural African girls will be able to receive a secondary education (Watson).” The statistics and prediction in the speech made Watson’s calling more convinced. Such tactic did not rely on rhetorical words to make people believe; the numbers were the best warning to every listener.

Last, Watson wrapped up her speech by using pathos, which allowed the ending powerful enough to be remembered in the mind of the audiences: “We are struggling for a uniting word but the good news is we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to step forward, to be seen to speak up, to be the "he" for "she". And to ask yourself if not me, who? If not now, when? (Watson)” Mentioning the name of the campaign “HeForShe”, Watson made all her effort to implement the very word to people’s thought. Though she indeed was an actress and had no political experience or (not yet or not loud a) voice, through her speech she showed her audience how much concerned she was regarding the issue of feminism—gender equality.

Now that Emma Watson's wizard's robe has been replaced by a formal suit and the power came from real action instead of the spell and magic wand. This whole speech since launched in 2014 has won loads of applauds and still remains influential in the present time. Undoubtedly, the whole Watson speech representing the UN Women was a delicately-designed combination of ethos, pathos, and logos. Moreover, the language used cannot be simpler and more understandable; therefore, every listener shall be able to catch the core idea Watson conveyed. All in all, the speech "Gender equality is your issue too" was a successful one which helped the United Nations propose its campaign, as well as bring up again one of the most essential issues happening in everyone's daily life all over the world.

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