

launching into her viewpoint presents herself as courteous and reasonable. The ethos she establishes is as a person who cares deeply for the future of America and is moved to speak out because she believes that the country is at a crossroads (“this is one of those singular moments that nations ignore at their peril”).

Although she does not offer facts and figures nor cite expert sources, Morrison develops a logical argument. She addresses two counterarguments: (1) Senator Clinton is the better candidate, and (2) her support of Obama is driven primarily by race. In paragraph 3, she concedes and refutes both. She points out that she has “admired” Senator Clinton over the years and offers reasons; gender is not, however, among them. She effectively makes that argument also serve as evidence that she would not support Obama purely because of race, saying, “I would not support you if that was all you had to offer or because it might make me ‘proud.’” In paragraph 4, Morrison provides reasons for her support of Obama. She acknowledges that he is a person of “keen intelligence, integrity, and a rare authenticity,” yet those qualities are neither her only nor her chief reasons for supporting his candidacy. She claims that she sees in him “a creative imagination which coupled with brilliance equals wisdom.” Once Morrison makes this point, she addresses another counterargument: that Obama is too young. She refutes that belief by claiming that wisdom is not necessarily a matter of age.

Morrison continues to develop her reasons for supporting Obama as she adds appeals to pathos. By asking a series of rhetorical questions, she calls up the shared values of the country; for instance, she asks when the country was actually guided by “[s]omeone whose moral center was un-embargoed.” She chooses language likely to evoke emotions, such as her distinction between “courage instead of mere ambition.” By the end of the letter, she uses images of birth (“the glory of that future will require a difficult labor, and some may be so frightened of its birth they will refuse to abandon their nostalgia for the womb”) and language that pulls at our heartstrings, such as “Our future is ripe, outrageously rich.”

She draws the conclusion, again appealing to logos, that given all the evidence presented in the letter Senator Obama is “the man for this time.” Morrison closes with a final appeal to ethos as she emphasizes that she is an integral part of the community of the country: “Good luck to you and to us.” The “us” is decidedly not just African Americans but all Americans.

• ACTIVITY •

Select one of the following rhetorical situations, and discuss how you would establish your ethos and appeal to logos and pathos.

- You are trying to persuade your skeptical parents that a “gap year” — taking a year off between high school graduation and college — will be beneficial.

- You have been asked to make a presentation to your school’s principal and food service staff to propose healthier food choices in the cafeteria at a time when the overall school budget is constrained.
- You are making the case for the purchase of a specific model and make of car that will best fit your family’s needs and resources.
- You are the student representative chosen to go before a group of local businesspeople to ask them to provide financial support for a proposed school trip.