

The Elephant in the Room

Since my freshman year of high school, I have known that I want to be an attorney. Growing up, I excelled in the humanities – history and English were always my favorite subjects, so when my high school prompted us to begin thinking about our careers at the beginning of freshman year, it seemed natural that I would gravitate towards a career in law. But, around junior year, I began to show a real interest in human rights law. In the summer of 2019, I volunteered with a local organization from my hometown called iCare, which supports victims of sex trafficking. iCare’s goal is to partner with survivors in providing medical care, housing, and career advice, while also educating the general public on the signs of human trafficking and how to avoid ever falling into that situation. Through my experience with this organization, I became aware of the massive presence of trafficking in my own hometown of Augusta, Georgia, and of the potential impact I can make on the lives of others by representing survivors in court after I finish law school. Since then, I have passionate about using my career as an attorney to do my part in ending modern slavery, especially in my hometown, and I have thus decided to specifically focus on practicing human rights law.

So, when it was time to choose a local issue to investigate in my papers for English 1101, I immediately knew I was going to write about human trafficking. I have a fierce passion for the subject, and I thought the topic would be very relevant considering that a UGA student had been arrested just this semester outside of Park Hall on human trafficking charges. In addition, human trafficking had been the focus of much of my studies within my “Intro to Global Issues” course, so I thought investigating the subject further in my English class would be effortless and straightforward. However, I discovered very quickly that this was not the case. Because human trafficking is a clandestine affair, there is an enormous lack of information on the subject. Most

statistics concerning the number of people trafficking globally are estimates, and data concerning human trafficking in any one city, excluding massive metropolises, is normally nonexistent. Likewise, published media concerning the matter is seriously wanting – because there is so little knowledge about the issue, it is hard to produce written communications about it. So, naturally there is no agreed upon solution for the problem either, which even further convolutes any discussion around human trafficking.

Consequently, as this semester progressed, I grew increasingly aware of the elephant in the room: I was researching and writing about a subject that is somewhat obscure and unclear. Truthfully, I panicked after Paper 1; given the amount of stress I experienced just in finding sufficient evidence for a general research paper, I had no idea how I would manage to rhetorically analyze a published communication concerning the topic, and much less suggest a solution to the issue. However, after much thought and deliberation, I decided to stick with my chosen topic. While I knew the process would not be easy, I decided that since I sincerely desire to practice human rights law, it is important for me to learn how to communicate about the matter confidently. By making this decision, I unknowingly took a giant step both as a writer and a future attorney – I allowed myself to be motivated by the significance of my message. Every argument and every essay has some particular message that it is seeking to convey to its audience – and, if that message is important enough, the author will take the necessary steps to communicate this idea to his audience, no matter how painstaking. Because I feel so strongly about abolishing modern day slavery, I was willing to do the hard work, and I carried this mindset into every essay I wrote for this class.

In my two revised essays, “*Trafficked in America – Forced Labor and American Obligation*” and “*Augusta, Georgia: Home of The Masters and Human Trafficking*” I was faced

with the tasks of both finding adequate and reliable figures and of expounding on these facts correctly. For my Paper 2, “*Trafficked in America*”, this entailed scouring the Internet for a documentary from a credible source – and, after discovering PBS’s *Trafficked in America*, I realized that in order to rhetorically analyze a 55 minute film, I must closely watch the documentary multiple times. Likewise, writing Paper 3, “Augusta, Georgia: Home of The Masters and Human Trafficking” required delving deep into academic journals and finding little-known statistics about Augusta, Georgia. Once this data was gathered, I was required to carefully synthesize the figures with my own position to present a workable solution for human trafficking specifically in Augusta. Although both of these essays required a substantial amount of time and effort, the end result was two papers that I am immensely proud of. I successfully analyzed a human trafficking documentary and proposed a unique solution for human trafficking in my hometown, in a sophisticated, cohesive manner.

While my peer review and revision exhibits only display excerpts of my own writing, the same determination and perseverance can be seen in both of these pieces. The peer review exhibit, “Going the Whole Nine Yards” showcased the superb effort in which I reviewed my peers’ essays. I was intentional in leaving specific comments, while also praising the best qualities of their work, in order to most effectively help them improve their essays. Similarly, my revision exhibit, “Back to the Drawing Board”, detailed my intense dislike for self-reflection and correction. “Back to the Drawing Board” follows the development of my Paper 1, “Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery in Athens, Georgia”, which I utilized as my wild card selection to display my growth as a writer. After I overcame the pains of revision and accepted the critiques of my peers and professor, I was able to edit my Paper 1 successfully, producing a much clearer, better written essay. Because of my extra effort in the peer review and revision processes

during the semester, I was able to reap the benefits of aiding my classmates, improving my own work, and, ultimately, receiving grades on my assignments that I was very satisfied with.

To conclude, English 1101 has produced so much improvement in both the quality of my writing and in the attitude that I approach writing with. I have undoubtedly learned how to eliminate redundant, wordy adjectives, complete fragmentary ideas, and research effectively through the assignments in this course. I have even learned how to organizationally improve my arguments, which is even more impressive. However, the most important idea I have learned is that if what I have to say matters enough, I will do whatever it takes to communicate my message – and, this determination is something I can carry beyond English 1101. With this attitude, I can break the shackles of apathy in my personal life and, perhaps, even the real shackles that tens of millions of human trafficking victims experience daily.