Essay #5: Bearing Witness

When atrocities occur in society, it’s important for survivors and witnesses to tell their stories and experiences, in other words to “bear witness.” Especially when issues impact oppressed or marginalized communities, they may be ignored by the media and when they are reported on, incidents are often told from the perspective of privileged parties. This is one of the reasons it’s important for people to “bear witness” to these issues—to document incidents, describe stories, to give voice to the voiceless. We’ve already read several examples of people bearing witness to oppression that communities experience—“Between Perfection and Invisibility,” Melanie and Jonathan’s stories from the This American Life podcast, Michelle Gonzales’s The Spitboy Rule, and some of the songs we looked at in the last essay are all great examples of people bearing witness to issues that impact communities. In this essay, you will get the chance to bear witness to an issue that impacts a community you belong to or care about.

The Prompt:

Write a 5-6 page essay that describes a problem that impacts a community and explains why it is so important to solve this issue.

In the essay, make sure to include background information on the issue, and explain what’s happening—In addition to describing the issue and including facts and statistics, make sure to add specific incidents and stories. You should also explain who the issue impacts and how it impacts them, and explain why it’s so important to solve this problem. To explain the importance of solving the problem, you can emphasize the consequences for the community that it directly impacts, you can explain the consequences it has for other communities or society in general, and/or you can explain the positive impacts of solving this problem. You should not propose any solutions and should only discuss past solutions if you prove that these solutions were insufficient (i.e., have not solved the problem).

Length Requirements: 5-6 pages (at least 5 full pages)

Source Requirements:
- 3-5 reliable, credible, and relevant sources
  - At least one of your sources must be an academic/peer-reviewed source
- 10-20% originality (revise your essay based on your originality report on Canvas)
- No instances of plagiarism

Format Requirements: MLA format with a works cited page (not counted in page count)

Minimum Requirements: An essay that...
- Is at least 5 full pages
- Includes an introduction with a thesis, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion
- Responds to all parts of the prompt
- References and quotes from multiple sources that are cited
- Makes relevant points and includes support for those points
- Is clear and organized enough for the reader to understand