

# Rhetoric



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Rhetoric can be termed as a way or method through which different individuals attempt to convey their messages to their audience. Rhetoric in itself is an art that one has to employ; individuals use it skillfully to motivate, inform, and persuade (Wheeler). Rhetoric can also be used by different individuals when they try to analyze other people's work. Through rhetoric analysis, individuals attempt to examine different pieces of work to see the author's intent or understand the expected message. Aristotle is an influential writer in this field. According to his observations, the rhetoric can be termed as involving both the fields of politics and logic. Aristotle mainly divided the use of rhetoric into three appeals, namely ethos, logos, and pathos. Obama, in his inaugural speech, managed to intertwine the three appeals effectively. The use of the three appeals reinforced his message, except in some few instances. Below is an analysis of how effectively the three rhetoric appeals have been used in Obama's inaugural speech.

Pathos was widely used by the President in his inaugural speech. Pathos appeals to the emotions of readers or listeners to be able to see in a perspective that the author wants the audience to see. Pathos appeals to such emotions as anger, laughter, and sorrow. An example is whereby the speaker appeals to anger so as to be able to address an injustice that has been committed. This technique works well when individuals arrange their words in such a way as to stir individual's emotions indirectly.

In his inaugural speech, President Obama also used pathos as an effective tool to pass across his message. All throughout his speech, the appeal to audience's emotions can be clearly seen. At the beginning, Obama starts by thanking the outgoing President (The New York Times). The people were

extremely jovial of the exit of George Bush as the President of America. They were hopeful on the election of Barrack as the President; they viewed Bush as having misled the country. The mention of the ex-president can be termed as an appeal to emotions, as many people were dissatisfied by Bush at the end of his reign. They were in a celebratory mood that at last Bush had exited from power.

Barrack went on to talk about equality for everyone. Obama reiterated that before God, everyone was equal. He went on to add that everyone deserved a chance to enable them to pursue their dreams and ambitions to the maximum of their ability or happiness. The President, later on, mentioned how previously a man, such as his father, could not be served in a restaurant (The New York Times). In a country previously faced with so much discrimination, this was an emotional moment for the minorities. There were many minority groups that had been previously discriminated. To see Obama raise to power was a big sign of hope for America, and for them in particular. In this instance, equality was overtly mentioned by the President. This excessive usage derailed the full effect of the appeal. In his instance, excessive appeal to discrimination was not effective.

Later on in his speech, the President mentions America's spirit of endurance. This fact seemed to settle well with the crowd; Americans are patriotic at heart. The President stated that the American spirit was strong beyond reprieve. As such, no matter what any individual tried, America would prevail. Americans overtly pride themselves in their will and resolve to outwit any circumstances. They can and are willing to sacrifice anything to serve to

their country (The New York Times). The mere mention of America's might and perseverance seemed to stir the crowd emotions.

In the President's speech, there is a widespread use of logos. In general, logos mean to appeal to logic. One reasons and comes with a conclusion from an available or given scenario. There are two approaches in the appeal to logic: deductive and inductive reasoning. For deductive reasoning, one starts with a conclusion and follows through to prove it. Inductive reasoning works in the opposite way (Wheeler). The next few paragraphs will illustrate the appeal to logic on the part of Barrack Obama in his speech.

Early in his speech, Obama applied deductive reasoning to pass his message. The President stated that America was undergoing through a crisis. This can be termed as the conclusion. He goes on to give the reason for the crisis. Some of the causes of the crisis, as Obama said, were war, unstable economy, and rising unemployment (The New York Times). Obama clearly uses this logical reasoning to pass across the intended message. The President, through logical appeal, was able to paint a grim picture and hope at the same time.

Another instance of appeal to logic is seen where the President states that the journey to greatness is not a given one. One must earn greatness; that of America was not earned through shortcuts (The New York Times). The President went on to support his claim through the appeal to all that Americans had undergone through to build the country. The President paints a picture of hardship in his arguments to drive his point home. This appeal to logic has been used effectively to paint a people's history as it should be.

This signifies that it is not through lack that America prevailed, but through hard work. Logic has, thus, been used effectively in the President's inaugural speech.

In addition, Obama used ethos in his message to pass across his message. Ethos can be termed as a method whereby individuals appeal to their self image to pass across their intended message. Ethos is the most important of all appeals. This is due to the weight that people put on the character of an individual. No matter how much a speech is moving, no one will put any importance to it if the presenter's character is damaged. Ethos encompasses the motive, character, and competence of the presenter or author.

The President started his inaugural speech by appeal to ethos. Obama reiterated his being humbled by the people's bestowed trust in him (The New York Times). This reflected Obama's character as that of a person beyond reproach. This aided in the delivery of his speech as it reflected the people's trust in Obama. As such, much of what the President said could be trusted. The ability to trust someone is the making or breaking factor in the delivering of a speech. In this instance, appealing to ethos was effectively used.

The President goes on to talk of equality before God and all. Previously, in America, there was widespread, rampant discrimination of individuals. The election of a black President could be taken as an end to discrimination. The discrimination in America could be taken as common knowledge to everyone. In this instance, the use of ethos was not needed. The information presented was already common knowledge to all.

Further on in his speech, the President states that the country would terminate all unresponsive programs that were being run by the country (The New York Times). This appeal to ethos was not necessary. It is the President's and the government's mandate to address issues that do not enhance development. This is due to them the authorities are being elected by the people to represent them.

The use of appeals, generally, aids in the passing of the intended message with ease. This also makes the message easier to understand to the concerned individuals. However, the different appeals should be used with caution. Too much of the appeals might derail the intended message or deflect the intended message. An example is where the usage of pathos might lead to the damage of one's credibility. Pathos is well used if the audience is illiterate; they cannot be able to countercheck facts. As such, appeals should be used in the right way and correctly.