

(create a topic based
on source provided)

Linguistics, English



A Time of Challenge This brief response essay will analyze the effectiveness, main points, key strengths and weaknesses, communication style, and desired goals of United States President Barack Obama's 2011 speech entitled, " This is No Way to Run the Greatest Country on Earth". The speech itself is concentric on laying out a case for the Democratic Party and President Obama's economic plan as it relates to the debt ceiling and the strife that was centered on raising the debt ceiling during 2011.

The technique that the President uses to address the topic harkens back to the fireside chats that Franklin D. Roosevelt become so famous for. The introduction is very telling of the way the President views the American populace and his overall reliance on their support to accomplish the goals he sets out. Obama's speech begins, " Good evening. Tonight I want to talk to you about the debate we've been having in Washington over the national debt - a debate that directly affects the lives of all Americans" (Obama, 2011 p. 302). By reaching out to the people and speaking with them as equals as well as presenting to them the struggles and hardships that government faces, FDR was able to gain the buy-in of the populace and became one of the most beloved presidents in American history. President Obama follows the same approach in this speech. Additionally, in these first few lines, the President is both able to lay out the topic at hand and paint a very clear picture of the issue as it relates to each and every American on both sides of the political spectrum. Additionally, by making use of the first person plural pronoun we throughout the speech, the President is further able to quietly show the combined and shared burden that each and every citizen has with relation to the actions that the government partakes.

Another powerful technique that the speech employs is even though the topic at hand is deadly serious and has the potential to affect the future lives and welfare of Americans well into the next several decades, the President is slow to ascribe blame to either party. Says Obama, “ Because neither party is blameless for the decisions that led to this problem, both parties have a responsibility to solve it” (Obama, 2011 p. 303). This powerful admission that he does not intend to ascribe blame gains the trust of the audience and commands their respect as the issue is further explained.

One drawback that the speech has is that it does not provide anything resembling equal time to the two ways forward the President mentions in the opening statements. The President’s plan, which is incidentally backed by elements within the Republican Party is contrasted to a more extreme plan by other elements of the Republican party. However, even though a full page and a half is devoted to the President’s plan, less than one paragraph is devoted to that of the opposition. Although it is understandable why this might be the case, it does not do the President’s plan any service as it calls into question why he chooses to so quickly dismiss the plans of his rivals without providing any resemblance of equal time or rationale for debunking them.

Notwithstanding this singular drawback, the power of the speech is undeniable. Additionally, the candor and honesty with which it is presented worked to achieve the “ buy in” of the American people for the issue at hand. Furthermore, the President’s unwillingness to ascribe blame to a particular party, even though it may well have been deserved, provided a welcome break from the partisan mudslinging that has become such a staple of

American political life. As such, the ethos and logos of the President were well defined and helped to win the support and understanding of the audience.

Reference

Obama, B. (2011, September). This is no way to run the greatest country on Earth. *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 77(9), 302-304.