

Obama's acceptance speech and victory speech, a comparison



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One of the primary weapons held by any political candidate is his ability to speak publicly. A weapon wielded by President Elect Barack Obama even in victory. The two speeches of Obama subject of this paper both held victory in their own respect. Obama's acceptance speech was victorious for being nominated by his party. Obama's victory speech was victorious for being elected next President of the United States of America. Nevertheless despite being celebrations Obama still sought to persuade members of his audience to support him. Thus the fascination in the two speeches lies in the fact that both were victory speeches and yet both were executed flawlessly, recognizing the need to convince the people in attendance despite victory.

He recognized the need to persuade each and every democrat for their support in his acceptance speech and the need to persuade each and every American across party lines: republican or democrat in his victory speech for them to unite as one. Such wisdom has carried him to the presidency. In his victory speech he said: " This victory alone is not the change we seek — it is only the chance for us to make that change." In his acceptance speech he said: " I believe that as hard as it will be, the change we need is coming. Because I've seen it. Because I've lived it." Through stressing the need for change he continues to persuade all Americans for support. Through this clever use of rhetoric he has successfully personified himself as a symbol of change. He has presented himself to be the kind of change the American people need.

Upon carefully reading the two speeches Obama's Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention and Obama's Victory Speech after being elected the next President of the United States of America. A statement

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made by Brent Staples from the New York Times in his article *Savoring the Undertones and Lingering Subtleties of Obama's Victory Speech* is instructive: " Like many great orations, Barack Obama's victory speech on Tuesday night was deceptively simple. As powerful as it was to hear, the hidden complexities and import of the president-elect's words surface only after we re-read the text and think back on the moment."

Indeed the same view is shared with Staples. Great speeches are always at first instance deceptively simple but powerful. However if we go deeper and analyze the very content of the speech we can see the complexities that the deceivingly simple speech held. The same characteristic of simplicity is evident on both speeches. Obama was able to bring out simplicity through using words so simple to give messages so complex. The clever use of three simple words was very effective. These three simple words he used in his victory speech eight times are: Yes we can! He made a point and ended it with these three simple words:

"...the times we were told that we can't and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes, we can."

"...stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot. Yes, we can."

"...new jobs and a new sense of common purpose. Yes, we can."

"...a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved. Yes, we can."

"...told a people that " We Shall Overcome." Yes, we can."

"...she knows how America can change. Yes, we can."

"...with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can."

Obama continued on to make several statements ending it with: " Yes, we can!" He then went on to claim that these three simple words as the American Creed. The same subtle simplicity was used in his Acceptance Speech at the Democratic National Convention. In his acceptance speech instead of ending it with three simple words he started it with four simple yet strong words. These four words are " Now is the time!" In his acceptance speech he said:

" Now is the time to end this addiction..."

" Now is the time to finally meet our moral obligation..."

" Now is the time to finally keep the promise..."

" Now is the time to help families..."

" Now is the time to change our bankruptcy laws..."

" And now is the time to keep the promise..."

Never have three simple words repeated eight times " Yes, we can!" and four simple words repeated six times " Now is the time" made such an impact. Brilliantly Obama instilled these words to our minds and into our hearts. The timing and consistency was also flawless it was as if the four simple words " Now is the time" in his acceptance speech was answered in his victory speech by " Yes, we can!" If we put these words together the message we get is that from the day he was nominated " Now is the time" and he found conviction when he was elected and said " Yes, we can!" Hence now is the time and yes we can! A subtle message that has unconsciously been instilled in our minds a clever use of rhetoric.

A careful comparison of the two speeches brings out fascinations and revelations which cannot be easily absorbed by simply listening to the speeches. One such revelation is the consistency of Obama's style and message he wants to convey. Andrew Sullivan of the Huffington Post had something to say about Obama's style in his acceptance speech: "It was a deeply substantive speech, full of policy detail, full of people other than the candidate, centered overwhelmingly on domestic economic anxiety."

As correctly pointed out by Sullivan it was indeed a deeply substantive speech. Obama's style is that he concentrates on the people rather than concentrating on talking about himself. He has repeatedly done so in both his acceptance speech and victory speech he centers his speech on the people. He was also consistent with the message he conveyed and this was unification. James Wood of the New Yorker in his article Victory Speech shares the same view he said: "On Tuesday night, Obama returned to his cherished theme, the perfection of the Union." Truly this was the consistent message Obama wanted to convey the perfect union. He has established this theme in both his acceptance and victory speech. In Obama's victory speech he said:

"For that is the true genius of America — that America can change. Our union can be perfected. And what we have already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow."

Obama expresses that this union can be perfected. His victory on the presidential elections alone was not the end of the perfect union. It was simply the beginning toward the goal of a more perfect union. The idea of such perfect union was also established in his acceptance speech. He said:
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“ It is that promise that has always set this country apart - that through hard work and sacrifice, each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family, to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams as well.”

He establishes that America no matter what comes together as one American Family. This notion of a union was a consistent message he conveyed throughout his campaign and after.

The consistency in the message of his speeches speak well of the ability of Obama to make effective speeches. This was a strong sign of a good public speaker. The ability to convey a message relies on the consistency of the one conveying the message. For an idea to be clearly established a public speaker must convey of one message consistently. Barack Obama has flawlessly achieved this and such is evident upon careful comparison of both of his speeches. Obama's style was also very effective. He did not center on himself he did not brag on his achievements. He never exalted himself in both speeches. Instead he went on to concentrate on the people. He delivered what they wanted to hear.

The people wanted to hear what he could do and what he would do. What sets him apart from the other candidates and can he bring about the call for change silently crying in the hearts of the American People. He was able to answer this call through his speeches. He is indeed a very effective public speaker. This weapon of public speaking was only one of his weapons in his arsenal. But like all other weapons he had to win this presidency he used public speaking so effectively. He brilliantly used words to imply simplicity.

He had his own style of speeches focusing on the people instead of him and he consistently conveyed the message of unification.

Conclusion

The ability to effectively speak in public is a trait shared by almost all American Presidents. Indeed it would be impossible for any candidate to win the presidency without properly wielding this weapon of public speaking. President Elect Obama is one of the most effective public speakers among all the Presidents in the History of America. Obama's eloquence is incomparable the delivery of his speeches are impeccable. Hand in hand with such eloquence is his clever use of rhetoric in order to personify himself as the symbol of change. His consistency and choice of words are also worthy of our attention. Obama's Acceptance Speech and his Victory speech will no doubt be remembered for eternity.

This kind of appreciation for his speeches is well deserved. Even in the face of victory he recognized the need for persuasion even in the face of victory he called for change. By personifying himself as change, every time he calls for change he calls for people to support him. His words are so subtle and so brilliant that some of us may not even be aware that whenever he calls for change he draws support to himself because this is what he has instilled in the minds of everyone. Obama has shown us that the most powerful weapon any candidate can wield is the ability to effectively speak in public.