

# Yes we can

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Greg Oberschelp CAS 137 1 PM Dr. Freymiller “ Yes We Can” The word rhetoric is widely thrown around by many different people in today’s age. Many people don’t understand the real context of the word, but that does not mean it is not any less common. Rhetoric is all around us, whether it is on television, in a paper, or, just in an advertisement. For most people, rhetoric is most widely seen during election season, especially during the Presidential election. Candidates rely heavily on rhetoric to get their ideas out there, showcase their list of credentials, and really paint themselves as the next President of the United States.

For most campaigners, the most effective way to do this is through simple advertisements, basically flyers. Barack Obama was exceptional at using these small advertisements to his advantage during the 2008 election. In taking a look at one of his 2008 “ Yes We Can” ads, one can analyze the ethos, pathos, logos, and audience of the piece and its effectiveness in using rhetoric. In this political ad, Barack Obama uses his patented pathos to further his campaign. For President Obama, pathos or emotional appeal has been his bread and butter for his political ads, and this poster is no different.

The pathos conveyed here speaks to the entire nation, with the simple words “ yes we can. ” On the surface, “ yes we can” seems to say that we, as the people of the United States, can elect Mr. Obama over his opposition. It goes much deeper than that though, as the message varies depending on the person reading it. For one, it speaks to the people that they can make history and elect the first African American president. This appeals to a section of Americans, (mainly African Americans) who can make the once pipedream of having one of their own as the commander-in-chief a true reality.

To the average reader though, “ Yes we can” also symbolizes the rough times America had been in and how the country was not run effectively as it could’ve been. The economy was in a recession, the house and senate were deadlocked, and nothing proactive was being done to change it. Mr. Obama, along with the help of voters, could get the United States out of the difficult times and successfully turn the country around. “ Yes we can” improve the outlook for our country and help make a better future for families and ourselves by electing Mr. Obama. Lastly, “ Yes we can” symbolizes hope. This speaks to all readers of the ad.

Hope in our great country that we can elect someone to bring America back. Hope that our President can finally be an African American and break the color barrier in the country. Hope that a better future lies ahead for the United States under President Obama. “ Yes we can” starts with the American people. We can do all of these things; it all starts with the election of Barrack Obama (in January of 2008). The ethos in the political ad is greatly conveyed and shines Mr. Obama in an extremely positive light. Starting with the visual aspect of the ad, it portrays the President in a serious tone.

He looks as if he is pondering what can be done, as his head is arched slightly up towards the sky. He is thinking, the outline of his face is in red, white, and blue, which we all know are the colors of the United States. This, coupled with his serious expression, makes the ethos or credibility of the ad very clear. It displays Mr. Obama as a thinker, someone who will go outside the box to fix the problems of the country. He seems to be in a position of great knowledge, since a great stream of confidence is drawn across his

face. People are drawn to this, as one would quickly look at the ad and instantly associate Mr.

Obama with credibility. Even without knowing his long list of credentials, (his graduation from Columbia University and Harvard Law School, past as a civil rights attorney, and Illinois state senator) people can clearly see that he is being displayed as a qualified leader. With this association of qualification, people then associate his credentials with trustworthiness. In this ad, Mr. Obama seems like someone that this nation could trust to lead the American people back to the country's former glory. The ethos of this ad makes the reader buy into Mr. Obama as a qualified, trustworthy leader.

One who will be the next President of the United States. The message in this ad is clear. Yes, we can. The simple campaign ad uses a very logical argument. The main message is stated, "yes we can". We, the people of the United States, can elect Barack Obama. The minor premise is also easily drawn from the message, Barack Obama is a better fit for the country than what we had. The conclusion ties all of these ideas together in that under Barack Obama, America will see a great change as a country and the people will be much better off in voting for him. Very effective idea in the implicit of the message, a vote equals an election. An election will in turn equal a great future for the country, and a good fit will lead to a better future for the people. As previously stated, simplicity is key to this logical argument. This poster/flyer was seen by millions of people, but only for a short period of time. It was a passing glance, something that people saw as they walked by, usually with other things going on in their heads. This ad had to stand out to

get the minds of readers jolted and provide the layout for which the readers could effectively draw a conclusion from the ad.

Obama's portrait, the colors of the American flag, and the simple message, are all effectively connected to the main idea. Elect Barack Obama for the President of the United States, we can do it. He is the "best" fit for the country and will lead the country into a new, better dawn. Finally, the last proof of the ad is in the audience. The audience is a certain group of people, a demographic that the ad is targeting. In breaking down the ad's intended targets, it starts with the American people.

First and foremost, the people of the United States are the ones that directly choose their next leader. The red, white, and blue colors of the President in the portrait help to strongly display that message. The colors obviously represent the great nation and in turn can be attributed to the great people who make it up. As the message becomes analyzed in more depth, the American people are broken down into smaller groups. The next target group in my eyes is the people of the Democratic Party. Next are the majority of African Americans, and finally the people who consider themselves progressive.

These groups are all targeted in the tagline of the ad "Yes we can" and fall under the general category America people. Like before, the Democratic Party can gain the control of the country once again with President Obama's initial election. They could put their ideas on how to run the country into action, further the ideals of the party. For the African Americans, they can finally elect one of their own to give themselves a majority voice of the minority in the US. Their fortunes can be reversed, as they, along with the

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rest of the American public, can better their lives and shape their bright futures.

Lastly, the tagline targets progressives. These are the people who don't side with a party in the election, the vote with who will push the US into the proverbial "new frontier". To them, they can change history, vote for an African American for the first time ever as the President. They can politically, socially, and economically progress their great nation to put it on the forefront of progress in the world. Progressives, African Americans, Democrats can pull together as the American people and change the whole the future course of their homeland.

In this advertisement, ethos, pathos, logos were all effectively used by Barack Obama's 2008 campaign. Being one of the more rhetorical presidents of our time, this should come as no surprise. He was able to spark emotion, display his credibility, and make himself the logical choice for the presidency all in a simple ad. The "Yes We Can" ad meticulously targeted certain groups while still appealing to all American people and voters. The vast, far-reaching audience propelled Mr. Obama to victory and he has his campaign to thank for the support of the people. "Yes We Can", yes they can, and yes we did.