

Richard nixon's pardon rhetorical analysis

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President Gerald Ford's Pardon of Richard Nixon Former President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford gave a speech pardoning his predecessor, former President Richard Nixon, of all offenses against the United States that he may have committed during his presidency. The announcement was made live on September 8, 1974. The speech was written to persuade the country to agree with the pardoning of Nixon and forgive him for the crimes he had committed against his country.

Ford states that " Theirs (Nixon's Family) is an American tragedy in which we all have played a part. It could go on and on and on, or someone must write the end to it. I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must. " President Ford argued that the pardoning of Richard Nixon isn't only for Nixon and his family's fate but for the country's well-being. Throughout Ford's speech he makes evident the use of Logos, Ethos and Pathos appeals. He uses the appeals evenly, convincing his audience while still being well-supported and reasonable.

Ford opens up his speech with many reasons why he, as the President and as a person, should be trusted, and that he thinks that what he is doing is the right thing to do in the situation. He proceeds to admit that his job is a difficult one and that he has made mistakes in the past. Doing so helps him bond with his audience and let them know that he, too, is a person, just like them; and they can count on him, also known as the ethos appeal. He states " My customary policy is to try and get all the facts and consider the opinions of my countrymen and to take council with my most valued friends.

But these seldom agree, and in the end, the decision is mine. " This statement subtly creates the idea that the decision he had to make was a

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hard one, and it ultimately came down to Ford having to take the responsibility. He proceeds to tell his country all of the options that he had, as if to make them feel like they were a part of the process; "To procrastinate, to agonize, and to wait for a more favorable turn of events that may never come..." President Ford then makes himself seem very credible by promising to uphold the constitution, to do what God has asked him, and to do "the very best for America. In making himself credible, Ford establishes trust with his audience therefore making his argument easier to agree with. When he establishes his credibility, he moves to the pathos appeal to introduce his thesis. He plays to the audience's emotions by referring to Nixon's situation as "an American tragedy in which we have all played a part... someone must write the end to it." Thus making the audience feel bad for Nixon and his family, making his audience feel like they are at fault for their "tragedy. He makes his thesis statement in a powerful way, saying "I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must." Imperceptibly making the audience thankful for taking away their burden and making things right, so they don't have to. He again uses the listeners' emotions and morals to support his opinion in order to create empathy for Nixon by referring to how the allegations have "threatened his health" and that he is now "trying to reshape his life." He also makes it obvious that Nixon spent most of his life "in the service of this country," making Nixon a hero, not a criminal.

This statement also institutes reliability for Nixon, correspondingly benefiting Ford's argument. He continues to get sympathy from his audience by conveying that the situation they were dealing with was uncharted territory

and they didn't know how to resolve it. " There are no historic or legal precedents to which I can turn in this matter, none that precisely fit the circumstances of a private citizen who has resigned the Presidency of the United States. " By saying this, he lets the audience know that the circumstances are fairly new, and he is the first to resolve them.

This makes the audience feel more sympathetic for Gerald Ford and by admitting his faults; the listeners would feel like they can trust him more. The President goes on to say " But it is common knowledge that serious allegations and accusations hang like a sword over our former President's head... " After Ford had established sympathy for himself, he makes this statement to show the audience that Nixon is also dealing with guilt and regret for what he did to his country.

By referring to Richard Nixon as " former President" it brings attention to the fact that Nixon was once a President of The United States, and that he should be respected and possibly even forgiven; because he was once in charge of the country and was once trusted by the entire country. Gerald Ford uses the logic of his reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence to convey why it is so important that he pardons Nixon now, rather than let the Supreme Court deal with the matter.

He announces, "...many months and perhaps more years will have to pass before Richard Nixon could obtain a fair trial by jury in any jurisdiction of the United States under governing decisions of the Supreme Court. " He uses the Supreme Court, the highest of all courts, to support his claim that pardoning Nixon was the best decision; and he does this by affirming that the Supreme Court would take too long and if they couldn't make a decision, no other

court in the United States would be able to make a decision. Making it palpable that he is the best option and nothing else would suffice.

Later in the speech President Ford also brings forward the idea that, if the process of fair trial were to be brought out, the wait would only open old wounds and the people would “ only be polarized in their own opinions. ” This statement was said to make the listeners feel as if their negative opinions, if any, of Richard Nixon were strong and unnecessary. It also makes the audience know that Gerald Ford is watching out for them and he realizes they are hurt, and doesn't want the situation to continue to hurt him. By saying these things, the people's feelings of trust and faith in the president are confirmed. I deeply believe in equal justice for all Americans, whatever their station or former station. ” After possibly differing with the audience in the previous statement, Ford uses this to restore his credibility with the people and prepare them for more facts and reasons why he formed his opinion. Gerald Ford influences the audience again by using emotion to guilt-trip them into feeling sorrow for Nixon by saying “... it is not the ultimate fate of Richard Nixon that most concerns me, though surely it deeply troubles every decent and every compassionate person. Saying that a decent and compassionate person should care about what happens to Nixon makes the audience feel like they, too, should care about his fate. And doing so would restore the need for them to feel that they are a compassionate and decent human being. ” In this, I dare do not depend upon my personal sympathy as a long-time friend of the former President, nor my professional judgment as a lawyer, and I do not. ” This statement tells the audience that he sees both sides of the argument.

Because of his background, as a lawyer and as a friend of former President Nixon, he is forced to see the logical side and the emotional side. Therefore, it seems as if the decision President Ford has to make is going to be made in a thoughtful and well-rounded way. " As President, my primary concern must always be the greatest good of all the people of the United States who servant I am. " Saying that he is a servant to his country seems as if he is saying that the decision isn't only his, and he is trying to do what is best for his country, and what his country would think is best in the situation.

The statement implies that he wouldn't do any harm to his country and if he is an honorable man, like he has already convinced the audience, then he should be trusted with this decision also. President Gerald Ford proceeds to talk about how his conscience is telling him to make this choice and that it is his duty, as President of the United States, to " firmly shut and seal this book. " This statement made the audience feel like the pardoning of Richard Nixon is an honorable thing, and that Gerald Ford is brave to do it.

It also implies, by bringing up his conscience, that he listens to his inner thoughts and always tries to do the right thing; and this is something he does regularly. By doing this he once again makes the audience see that he is a credible and honest man. Gerald Ford felt that "...Richard Nixon and his loved ones have suffered enough..." The use of the phrase " loved ones" instead of the word " family" makes a strong connection with the audience and makes Nixon look more vulnerable and innocent. Ford then takes advantage of the warmth towards Nixon and says " we, as a great and good nation, can come together and make his goal of peace come true. The reflection of the people as a " great and good nation" brings the audience

together and brings forth the idea that “ we are all in this together”, making Ford’s opinion seem like it was the entire audience’s, too. Also, pointing out that Nixon had a goal of “ peace” makes him, again, look like a very respectable man, which reflects well on President Ford. Gerald Ford uses the right amount of emotions, facts and credibility to endorse his opinion, and he does it very well without fault. He plays on the audiences emotions through making them sympathetic for Nixon by pointing out his losses.

Ford uses the facts of Richard Nixon’s trial to make his decision more reasonable. He also uses his credibility to establish trust. He influences the viewer’s opinions very discreetly, so the audience conform their opinion to his without realizing it. Overall, Gerald Ford does a really good job talking to his audience and making them feel like a part of his decision. He uses the appeals to his advantage and wins the audience over; making it easier for them to believe that he is making the right decision.