

Situational rhetoric obamas 2004 democrats convention speech essay examples

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The rhetorical situation refers to the context of rhetorical event that consists of many events at play that include the issue at hand, the audience, and several constraints. Scholars provide two different schools of thoughts on the audience. One school of thought argues that situation determines the situation, which also creates the rhetoric. Conversely, the other situation argues that rhetoric creates a situation by making issues subjects to the situation. In this paper, we take the situation as an important player in rhetoric analysis using Obama speech at the 2004 Democrats convention in Denver.

Blitzer's argument on rhetoric posits that rhetorical situation only come into reality as a reply to a situation. Similarly, answers come to provide a solution or to present a solution to a problem. In relation to Barack Obama's speech at the Democratic Convention in Denver in the year 2004, Obama emphasized the values that America stood for in order to respond to the situation that at hand. In my view, Obama's speech was aimed at responding to the reality of a black senator, delivering a speech at Democratic convention. The point here was to a reaffirm the traditional values that America stood for these values as Obama described them as the foundations of America. " We gather to affirm the greatness of our Nation --, not because of the height of our skyscrapers, or the power of our military, or the size of our economy. Our pride is based on a remarkably straightforward premise, summed up in a declaration made over two hundred years ago" (Obama, 2004). The rhetoric is to provide the sentimental value to the attendance to achieve of nostalgia about American values. The values are also made be viewed in awe how they made it possible for the unusual candidacy of

American society: Barack Obama to address the Democratic Convention in Denver.

Another principle of the speech that Blitzer makes is that rhetoric is usually a function of the situation. Without situational significance, the rhetorical significance diminishes. In the words of Blitzer, " Rhetorical situation invite a fitting response, a response that fits the situation" (p. 2) Let us examine Obama's speech using the dynamics of the situation. Does that make it fit into Blitzer's argument of situational significance? The anecdotes of Obama's 2004 conventions speech sounds like a speech he had been working for a whole life. In the speech, Obama gives examples of people he had met in his life from an early age to adult hood. He also talks of his mother's love for perseverance, his father's desire to seek education from Kenya where he was a goat herding village kid and the sufferings of people of Illinois whose jobs have been shipped to Mexico. There are two things that these personal analyses do to the rhetorical aspect of the speech. Obama connected with the audience by giving a personal history and by highlighting significant aspects that the audience wanted to hear. Second, the layout of the first section of the speech made it relaxed- something like a storybook. The message becomes rhetoric because the grand plan is to send a message of hope. Moreover, this message of hope is encapsulated in values of the Democratic Party that John Kerry stands.

Another element of rhetoric that Blitzer makes is that a rhetorical only exists out of the existence of circumstance of rhetorical discussion; this is comparable to a question that must be in place a prerequisite for an answer. In that case, without a question, there is no answer and without a discourse

or discussion, then rhetoric becomes absent. In 2004, there was a considerable discussion going on in America about the divisive politics of the Red and Blue pitying Democrats and Republicans. Obama's speech was a response to the discourse of dividing the country between party lines was healthy for America's wellbeing. Obama belonged to the school of thought that argued that unifying the country was better than having a country disintegrated into blue and red states. President Bush had been the embodiment of the evident party division that has characterized American politics. Obama's convention speech was a response to the divisive issues such as racial issues, divisive politics, and the need for dialogue on immigrations. The following excerpt of the speech demonstrates this aspect: Now even as we speak, there are those who are preparing to divide us -- the spin masters, the negative ad peddlers who embrace the politics of "anything goes." Well, I say to them tonight, there is not a liberal America and a conservative America -- there is the United States of America. There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America -- there's the United States of America.

Obama's speech is a response to the discussion on the need for politics of issues and not hard party line politics. This is the reason it conforms Blitzer's assessment of a need for a discourse for the occurrence of a rhetorical situation.

Blitzer's comparison of rhetoric also becomes even more fascinating when he argues that just like many questions having no answers and many problems going unsolved, rhetorical situations can mature and decay without being fully exploited. A cautious scrutiny of the speech will demonstrate aspects of

Obama's speech that generated elements of rhetoric analysis that went unnoticed. However, these elements of the speech have resurfaced to haunt him as president now. While the events decayed at this time, they have come back to be of significance to Obama at his presidency. Obama birth story, of his mother a white Kansas woman and father, black man from Kenya has become subject of debate from doubters like Ronald Trump who have fondly named themselves the birthers—in an entirely new dynamic, the birthers have generated a controversy over Obama's place of birth. One can see the connection between Obama's place of birth and the meaning and the passion that this speech arouses. The question is, did the subject decay at this time?

Accordingly, Blitzer defines rhetoric as an instrument of altering reality that do not use direct objects. Instead, rhetoric uses developing discussions that change people's perception of thought and actions. This change ultimately becomes a mediator of change (p. 1). How this definition does fit Obama's convention speech of 2004? Let us use certain aspects and facets of Obama's speech to see how it is a jig saw fit to Blitzer's description. Obama's convention speech of 2004 brought a combination of intelligence and charisma to politics of America. It altered the American perception of reality because America had been starving of an enchanting personality and vibrancy in the political arena. In addition, American politics needed a generational change that would bring into bandwagon a majority of the American youths that were getting disgruntled by mainstream politics. Because of this, Obama speech represented a different direction that required a shift in thought. Obama was the first African American senator to

deliver a convention speech, and it was a challenge to the status quo. His speech not only reemphasized American founding values but also reminded Americans that hope was still alive amidst all the challenges. I think that these dynamics fit so well with Blitzer's argument that rhetoric employs people's perception of truth to change their view of reality.

Using Obama's convention speech, one comes to the realization that situation is what defines rhetoric. The situation is composed of conglomeration of things that include many facets such as timing, audience, environment, individuals, and delivery. All these elements combine to form a delicate situation that defines the meaning of rhetoric. In the case of Obama's speech, the political environment, the personality of Obama, and the readiness of Obama to talk to America were some of the influential factors that made his work look like a rhetorical speech about issues he felt close to his heart. Still does this explain Obama's exigency? In Blitzer's Rhetorical Situation, he argues that exigence is the influential factor that pushes something to move on. It is the creator of urgency (p. 7). In Obama's convention speech, one can argue that his exigence was an inborn personal desire to speak to America. His speech was an embodiment of his lifelong desire to prove himself and to channel not only political energy but also personal desire as a show of his appreciation to America.

The audience did play a prominent role in the success of Obama in delivering his speech. In Obama's speech, the audience was not sure of what to expect. Obama brought the rhetoric to them and had think about them. It took four years for the audience - The American people to realize their own exigency on how to deal with Obama. Obama's constrains on this day of the speech

was that he had to talk about John Kerry and not himself. In my view, this was the biggest constrain that Obama faced.

Works Cited

Bitzer, Loyd. *The Rhetorical Situation*. Professor of Speech, University of Wisconsin,,: Wisconsin, 1968. N. pag. Print.

Obama, Barack. "Obama's convention speech, 2004." *American Rhetoric* . Online speech Bank, 2012. Web. 19 June 2012.