

Inauguration speech analysis

Business



President Barack Obama's inauguration address at the beginning of his second term came at a time when the United States is becoming more diverse than ever before, when the divide based on political opinion is greater than in recent memory and the country is in the midst of major changes in the way our country is functioning both at home and abroad. Massive government spending and borrowing over the last two decades, the war on terror that began after the 9/11 attacks in New York and

Washington DC, immigration issues that are coming to a boil and a divided nation on political, racial and economic issues give Obama democratic political base rational to change the way our country operates, and his foes on the right rational to explain why we should return to traditional values.

It is in this incredibly volatile environment that the President used the stage of the inauguration to speak to the American public, in an attempt to pacify his friends, and to attack his foes as well as to bring countries abroad together in the spirit of friendship and togetherness.

Many might think that Obama's speeches have the most partisan tone of any president in recent history, but in fact the partisan mood within the nation has been festering for many years. A major contributing factor in the partisan polarization is a result of both Asian and even more, Hispanic immigration and the resulting battle for support from these groups.

Politicians of both parties make decisions with the intent of attracting voters, either for or against the particular issues with Democrats looking to expand immigration and immigrants' rights and Republicans trying to restrict immigration, especially immigration of the undocumented. Surprisingly,

Obama is also facing a nation further divided racially than it was four years earlier. A 2012 AP poll found that racial bias was slightly higher than it was at the start of Bush's presidency, and that was against both blacks and Hispanics.

But the divide was not only white voters against black, in voting, an incredible 96% of African American females voted for Barack Obama exemplifying the extent that the black population voted based on race. These divisions based on race and ethnicity have further popularized the nation's politicians cater to their base, attacking otherwise good ideas from politicians of the other side of the aisle, popularizing the nation further away from the center and refusing to compromise in most circumstances.

It is with this backdrop of political division that the Obama inauguration was given, and the President finding it more and more difficult to unify this divided nation, result on rhetoric that solidifies his progressive position with supporters and disparages the conservative ideas of his political adversaries. Obama is considered a master at rhetoric, and this speech did not disappoint. This speech appealed directly to issues that matter particularly to minority groups, including gay and lesbians as well as young voters to which liberal ideas have stronger appeal.

Obama was unapologetic and made few attempts to bridge the gap with the opposing party, while at the same time complaining that the GOP's particular immigration reform and gay rights.

Presidential speeches have traditionally been times when the President attempted to "unite the nation", filled with rhetorical attempts either true or
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not, but this speech was clearly more of an attempt to “mobile the party”. Some analysis’s say that Beam’s speech was laden with false choices, or if not X then Y, but what about the choice of Z?

Obama talks about climate change and said “ America cannot resist this transition, we must lead it. “, and when discussing more assistance for the poor, to do it “ not out of mere charity, but because peace in our time requires”. This type of rhetoric is not uncommon in presidential speeches, but it is a false choice, and it is designed to pre- mat any discussion against the ideal. It is meant to warn others not to attack the ideals but chastising any potential rebuttal in advance.

This type of rhetoric is not new or “ off limits”, it is merely an effective strategy that speakers use to convince their audience, and one that Obama has used very effectively throughout his presidency and again here in this speech.

An effective speech also needs to have ethos, and Obama does so throughout the speech with various strategies. He takes the opportunity several times to align himself regularly with the founding fathers, offering to phrases like “ We the people” and “ We hold these truths to be self evident”.

He aligned himself with Kennedy and Lincoln referring to phrases in their speeches and refers to “ allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago. ” He attempts to establish goodwill with as many viewers as possible by using terms like “ fellow Americans” and “ you and I as citizens”, when in other section he clearly distanced himself

from others who did not share his same ideologies. Obama appeals to his base throughout the speech using pathos as well.

When referring to children who were brought illegally to the United States as children he points to soldiers who have signed up for active duty and “realize their dream”. This example dramatically pulls in Americans of all political persuasions because everyone can associate with a man or woman who put their life on the line to protect us, whether here legally or not. There will always be political divisions and speeches will play on these divisions in order to further the ambitions of the party. Obama’s speech clearly set his political goals for the next 4 years on a number of fronts.

He warned his political adversaries that intolerance for diversity would not be permitted, and that they would need to change in order to conform to the country new and progressive trends, particularly in minority rights, wealth redistribution, climate change and immigration reform.

Obama has long been recognized for his oratory skills and this speech does not disappoint. He drew his primary audience, his Democratic base and his secondary audience, foreign friends into his plans with compassion and vision and demonized his political foes and uncaring and out of touch with reality.