
A More Perfect Union

On March 18, 2008 Senator Barack Obama and Senator Hilary Clinton were at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The two were battling off for the Democratic Party presidential nomination when Senator Barack Obama delivered the speech A More Perfect Union. In his speech he responded to the attention that his former pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright had been receiving from social media and news outlets discussing the racial comments made towards America and Israel. Obama also addresses racial tension in America and how it cripples this country while seeking help no matter the race or age. This speech is captivating because it takes the elements of Obama's rhetoric work. In the introduction of Language Is Sermonic it states "Rhetoric...is a positive act with consequences in the world...Every utterance is an attempt to make others see the world in a particular way and accept the values implicit in the point of view" (1348).

Barack Obama's speech copies the rhetorical ideas of ethos, pathos, and logos that are discussed in Aristotle's The Rhetoric. Ethos is how the speaker's character and credibility aid his or her influence of the audience; whereas pathos is a rhetorical device that alters the audience's perception through storytelling and emotional appeals (181). Logos uses reason to construct an argument and to convey an idea (181). Throughout his speech he spoke of all three and expressed them in numerous ways. Ethos is an appeal to ethics, providing traits and reasons, convincing someone of character and Senator Barack Obama does just that. He spoke of information based on historical events and gave spiritual references. Starting his speech off he recites the first line in the U.S. Constitution, "We the people, to form a more perfect union," (Obama, par.2). Senator Barack Obama gives integrity and soundness to his speech and message. The significances he uses while giving his speech is everyone should tune in and follow along. When speaking about his intellectual ethos, Obama states he has "gone to some of the best schools in America" (Obama, par.6).

Senator Obama also gained ethos by talking about his own genetic background, he discusses "I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas ... he also acknowledges "I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents." (Obama, par.6). The audience then applauds, at his exceptional stories, and ethos was attained through the telling of his own personal stories. Senator Obama uses pathos slightly in his speech since it is the poorest form of rhetoric. While using emotions he goes on to tell a yet another story, he tells a story of a young, Southern campaigner Ashley Baia who inspired an old, black southern man to vote (Obama, par.45-46). Obama uses race to bring strong emotions throughout the audience. He changes the thoughts and feelings of the people through pathos alone. Senator Barack uses

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words to captivate the audience and catch their attention. Obama goes on to tell another personal story about his grandfather “who survived a Depression to serve in Patton’s army during World War II” (Obama, par.6). By using the word such as Depression and World War II it brings emotions to the audience, thinking on times of patriotism and being selfless. At this moment the audience is then able to come together and recognize the emotions and humanity.

Throughout his speech Barack explains the issues with race within America. He gives reasoning commitments to the problems. “The anger of Blacks and the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away, nor has the anger and bitterness of those years”, after that he presents resolution and says, “the African-American community must embrace our past without becoming victims of our past” (Obama, par.34). Within a matter of time Senator Barack also acknowledges “a similar anger within...the white community. They feel they’ve worked hard all their lives... They are anxious about their future, and they feel their dreams slipping away and resentment builds over time...” he then offers resolution and advises “the white community must acknowledge that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination exist” (Obama, par.36). From what was said the audience was convinced to respond in a positive way and they’re advised to address the issue of racism.

Senator Barack Obama recognizes the deception of both dilemmas, and asked America not to blame each other but check into and look for the real reasons of conflict in our nation. Finally, Obama speaks out about black churches he states, “black churches across the county embody the community in its entirety, the doctor and the welfare mom, the model student and the former gang banger...Services are full of raucous laughter and sometimes bawdy humor...Full of kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance, the struggles and successes, he loves as well as the bitterness and biases” (Obama, par.18). By analyzing conflict within the African-American church, he analyzed the conflict within America as a whole. The speech Senator Obama spoke that day connected to the viewers through the rhetoric of language.

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