

Obama's Speech That Changed The World

Tracey A. Cook

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Ms. Noel

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A speech can either make or break you but in this case, Obama's keynote address is what made him and potentially got him into the white house. Barack wrote this speech by himself because he wanted to seize the opportunity to tell his story as part of the American story. He did have some small revisions done by a few people who are, David Axelrod and Jon Favreau. The Illinois Senate candidate's story consisted of his working class family and urged the nation to elect Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, stating how he would ensure more educational and economic opportunities for everyone. Obama begins building his credibility with personal facts and reputable sources, citing convincing facts and statistics, and successfully employing emotional appeal.

In his speech, Obama starts off by persuading voters to vote for John Kerry and John Edwards. He proceeds to give his outlook on America and the people in it and why he thinks things need to change for the better. He states how Americans don't expect the government to fix all their problems but that they know the government has the power to change a few things to make their lives a little easier. He then says that John Kerry and John Edwards are guys that will do everything they can to promise a better America.

Throughout his speech, Obama uses many strong sources that strengthen his credibility and appeal to ethos, as well as build his argument. These sources include everyone that he has encountered in his lifetime, one specific person he talks about is a young man named Shamus. Using all the information that he has gotten from the people he has met, especially Shamus boost his credibility by showing that he really takes an interest in the people of America and used their information to help make their voices heard. He also uses personal examples from where and

how he grew up to introduce and support the issue, which shows that he has a personal stake in and first-hand experience with the problem.

Adding to his ethos appeals, Obama uses strong appeals to logos, with many facts and statistics and logical progressions of ideas. He points out facts about how America is unfair to majority of the people who live there; “A belief that we are connected as one people. If there’s a child on the south side of Chicago who can’t read, that matters to me, even if that’s not my child. If there’s a senior citizen somewhere who can’t pay for her prescription and has to choose between medicine and rent, that makes my life poorer, even if that’s not my grandmother. If there’s an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil liberties. It’s that fundamental belief - I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper - that makes this country work.” These facts introduce and support the idea that America can be a better place for all. The details build an appeal to logos and impress upon the reader that this is a problem worth discussing.

Along with strong logos appeals, Obama effectively makes an appeal to pathos in the beginning, middle, and end. His introduction is full of emotionally-charged words and phrases that create a sympathetic image; Obama notes that both his parents grew up living not the best life but made the best out of their lives and he specifies how they grew up in two totally different locations and countries but has similar background stories. He also states how his parents had big hopes and dreams for him, then exclaimed how they are both passed away now but he knows they are looking down on him with pride. The image he evokes the challenges and vulnerabilities of being an average American at the time effectively introduce the argument and it’s seriousness. His goal is to make it known that he understands first-hand how hard it can be an average

American. Those statements help establish the unfairness that majority of the U.S. population has to face on a day to day basis.

However, the end of his speech lacks the same level of effectiveness in the appeal of ethos. For example, when Obama talked about the troops and the war. When he said, “I thought of families I had met who were struggling to get by without a loved one’s full income, or whose loved ones had returned with a limb missing or with nerves shattered, but who still lacked long-term health benefits because they were reservists,” and also when he said, “When we send our young men and women into harm’s way, we have a solemn obligation not to fudge the numbers or shade the truth about why they’re going, to care for their families while they’re gone, to tend to the soldiers upon their return, and to never ever go to war without enough troops to win the war, secure the peace, and earn the respect of the world,” he gave good examples on this subject but lacked how it tied into what he was just talking about previously and with trailing off like he did it damages the strength of his credibility and his argument.

Additionally, his last statement in his speech he refers back to John Kerry and John Edwards in a way that helps strengthen his argument. While returning to the introduction’s hook in the conclusion is a frequently used strategy, Obama chooses to return to his discussion of why people should vote for John Kerry and John Edwards in a unique way: Obama discusses pride and gratitude, and here he says “If we do what we must do, then I have no doubt that all across the country, from Florida to Oregon, from Washington to Maine, the people will rise up in November, and John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come.” Returning to his own thoughts about John Kerry and John Edwards is

an appeal to ethos or personal credibility, and while that works throughout the speech, in the conclusion, it really helped strengthen the speech and also gave the speech a more serious outlook that the topic deserves and was given earlier in the speech.

Though Obama begins the speech on a more personal note, he gains his power to persuade the audience to vote for John Kerry and John Edwards towards the middle and end of the speech. His audience can see why they should vote for those two men and also why they should all have a different perspective on the world; however, his shift from personal to professional makes the audience take what Obama has to say a lot more seriously in the end. Obama did a great job overall with the speech and used logos, ethos, and pathos in a very professional way that really helped persuade his audience to vote for John Kerry and John Edwards, but also it helped with introducing himself to the world.

References

- Obama, Barack. "Keynote Address." *Democratic National Convention*. 27, Jul. 2004.
- News, PBS. "Barack Obama's Keynote Address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention." *PBS News*. n.d.