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The Unity of Division: A Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Speeches from Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign

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THE UNITY OF DIVISION:
A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF SELECTED SPEECHES FROM
BARACK OBAMA'S 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Writing

Reymond Levy

Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, Division of Humanities

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/R.L.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Why Examine Obama's Rhetoric?

In a nation that is riddled with social grievances on all sides, emerging from such factors as collective memory of a past filled with civil-rights struggles and a checkered record on minority concerns that continues up until today, I find it imperative to study the accomplishment that the election of the first African American president represents. It is commonplace to say that rhetoric contributed to what many saw as the potential success of Barack Obama's presidential run—but tougher to contemplate is how and why—despite the differences that are so clearly present across the multi-culturally, politically and socially diverse electorate—Obama was able to tailor his language to make the remarkable feat of his win possible. What is it about the rhetorical style of a one-term Senator with a foreign-sounding name and a background so different—at least on the surface—from that of the majority of American voters that made him appealing? Through what skills of eloquence did a relatively unknown, mixed-race politician place himself at the center of American culture? How did he ultimately employ his authorial talent to persuade the voters of the fact that he was the right choice at this point in history?

Biographical Sketch

Despite the high premium placed on diversity in the United States population, all of our presidents before Obama had been white males, so part of the obstacle he faced in running was the double-edged sword that his background constituted.

By now, Obama's life story is well-trod ground, with his two memoirs, and the multiple books released during the campaign and beyond—such as David Mendell's

Obama: From Promise to Power, Steve Dougherty's *Hopes and Dreams: The Story of Barack Obama*, and Christopher Anderson's *Barack and Michelle: Portrait of an American Marriage*—providing its essential details. Still, it is useful to keep in mind the basics, which I will run through in this section.

Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961, the child of a Kenyan man and Kansan woman who later separated. Obama's mother got remarried, and he moved with her and his stepfather to Indonesia. At age 10, Obama returned to Hawaii to live with his grandparents. He eventually attended Occidental College, later transferring to Columbia University. Obama next moved to Chicago, where he worked as a community organizer before beginning his studies at Harvard Law School in 1988, becoming the first African American president of the *Harvard Law Review*. After landing jobs as an associate at a couple of law firms, Obama returned to Chicago in 1992, registering voters there and being hired as a constitutional law professor at the University of Chicago Law School, as well as starting work as an associate at a law firm specializing in civil rights. That year, he also married Michelle Robinson.

In 1995, Obama's first book was published: *Dreams from My Father*, a memoir of coming to terms with growing up as a mixed-race fatherless child. It showcased Obama's capability as a writer of great sensitivity and his craft of capturing, through words, concerns central to the human condition—with his own willingly shared story as the vehicle for it. It would become a bestseller when he burst onto the national political scene.

Obama's political career began shortly thereafter, when he was elected as a Democrat to the Illinois State Senate in 1996, serving until 2004. While he lost a

Congressional primary for the U.S. House of Representatives in 2000, he won the U.S. Senatorial race in 2004, both on the strength of his stance against the Iraq War and due to the favorable public profile he acquired by delivering the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. This made him the fifth black senator in American history. In October 2006, Obama's second book, *The Audacity of Hope*, was released to popular success, and he announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States in February 2007, going on to win the Democratic nomination, and ultimately the presidency, in 2008.

The Significance of Obama's Contribution to Political Campaign Rhetoric

Obama's unique candidacy offers an opportunity to analyze the political verbal acrobatics that go into battling for the land's highest office. As literary scholar Stanley Fish would suggest, since all language is discourse, and all meaning is communally signified and non-intrinsic (Fish 1621), Obama's efforts were effective due to their dexterous rhetorical appeal to the electorate. Looked at against the backdrop of the contests with such political veterans as Vietnam war hero Senator John McCain and his earlier matchup against then-Senator Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primary, Obama's election embodies a moment to watch how language works in the real world, in the sense that linguist Martha Kolln describes as "functional": that of studying language formation in a given situation (28).

In this manner, rhetoric, since it is employed for the exchange of ideas to facilitate understanding between people, can be interpreted and comprehended through the organizational framework of Obama's campaign speeches. By examining the interplay of rhetorical technique and context, one can analyze how Obama used his candidacy partly

to address such cultural fissures as race, through the prism of subtly fostering black/white cultural awareness and explicating the racial divide experienced in the black community itself. This, at least, is evident, for instance, from Obama's address in Philadelphia after his pastor Reverend Jeremiah Wright's controversial remarks surfaced, over the course of which Obama most directly spoke to the racial problem. In like fashion, throughout his campaign, Obama accomplished the rhetorical work needed for putting into context the language of conciliation, complexity, and consensus that formed the core of his appeal to the public at large. As Martin Luther King did, Obama seemed to think of his role as that of an interpreter, and to believe, as he also stated in his Philadelphia speech, "that America can change" (Appendix 3, "More Perfect Union," line 284), while evincing a sense of understanding toward those with grievances across the racial spectrum.

The nature of Obama's ability to do this and thereby win the presidency is therefore clearly important: what are the particular features of his rhetoric that stood out from the rest of the pack, and why? What did his linguistic performance and his campaign presentation represent to the different segments of the electorate? How was he able to use his skills to speak to the race issue, and how did it work to solidify popular support?

As I will show, Obama's deliberative rhetorical style was designed to place him at the center of the American dialogue on race and racism and of the polarized political spectrum, so as to appeal to a majority of the voters. Actually, the degree to which his suitability as the embodiment of change was established in an election that was defined by a societal desire to chart a new yet pragmatic course emerged from Obama's attention to language by way of his writing capabilities. Understanding his skillful deployment of

rhetoric to bridge political and social divides leads to a fuller appreciation of the role that verbal strategy played in this historically barrier-breaking campaign.

This study's significance consequently lies in its look at Obama's campaign as an exemplar of using rhetoric to establish consilience, defined by rhetoric academics David A. Frank and Mark Lawrence McPhail as "an approach in which disparate members of a composite audience are invited to 'jump together' out of their separate experiences in favor of a common set of values or aspirations" (572). I will examine Obama's strategy for mediation through rhetoric, and explore precisely how it is that he is able to harness emotion by addressing it in a logical way. This is especially important for understanding, on a detailed level, how rhetoric can achieve results across cultures, by illustrating its applicability at critical moments. Furthermore, this study demonstrates a specific interplay between words and action.

Focus of Study

Part of why Obama achieves his successful effect on audiences can be explained through his employment of the traditional rhetorical devices of contrast, division, and opposition, in this case designed to persuade voters. For example, in his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Obama states: "There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America." Here, he divides the population into distinct categories before synthesizing them in a unified whole. While such techniques are not unique to him, my purpose is to explore the question of if (and if so, how) these signature ways of separating and categorizing items, concepts, and groups—whether by class, race, political affiliation, or gender, for comparison to, or contextualizing of each within, a

corresponding idea going beyond or opposed to it—played a role in bridging divides and convincing the electorate to choose Obama. Obama is lauded for his ability to inspire others to believe in the hopeful ideal of unity—though his rhetorical practice makes remarkably frequent use of such contrarities, both on a small and large scale, and in short and extended form, so it is worthwhile to investigate why.

As my research indicates, Obama’s speechmaking skills position him as working in what rhetorical scholar James A. Herrick posits as the pragmatic Aristotelian tradition, treating rhetoric as *techne*, or a “true art” (76), by which an individual can systematically utilize and inculcate orderly knowledge with the aim of—if not exactly enumerating all positions on a specific issue—then at least alluding to them in rebuttal fashion in one’s own argument, for the purpose of conveying a deliberative style meant to persuade an audience that the speaker’s stance is the truth, or truthful (Herrick 78).

Thus, in terms of how I will go about analyzing Obama’s speeches, the way Aristotle’s idealist mentor Plato has Socrates define the art of speechwriting in *Phaedrus* might serve as a helpful guide: that of a person knowing what he or she is talking about, along with epistemologically itemizing objects to reveal their similarities and differences (Plato 158). Unlike his suspicion of rhetoric as delineated in *Gorgias*, in *Phaedrus* Plato appears to be more ambivalent toward its uses—acknowledging, according to rhetorician Jacqueline de Romilly, “another kind of rhetoric ... a science of dialectics” (Herrick 64) that has as its goal properly situating itself in relation to justice, as opposed to being merely a Sophistic tool of deception and manipulation. In other words, as per Herrick, Aristotle’s more practical and organized approach to rhetoric is actually an elaboration on

how to achieve the knowledge and practice of a properly true rhetorical art devoted to virtuous ends that Plato began in *Phaedrus* (68).

As I will show in my analysis, Obama's formal and structural use of Aristotelian rhetorical stylistic devices—mindful as it is of Socrates' contention, as illustrated by Plato, of combining the divisive features of dialectic and the unifying properties of rhetoric—demonstrates how the then-candidate tried to strike a balance between the Platonic and Aristotelian outlooks on rhetoric, applying them to influence audiences on both a rationally argumentative and emotionally resonant level. Specifically, I decided to analyze the following speeches: the announcement of Obama's candidacy; his concession after the New Hampshire primary; his speech on race in Philadelphia in the midst of the Jeremiah Wright controversy; his acceptance of the Democratic nomination; and his victory speech upon being elected. As I detail later, not only did they take place at pivotal moments in the campaign, but all are marked by what McPhail calls "coherence ... [or] a conscious understanding and integration of difference in order to transform division" (Frank and McPhail 572) that concisely encapsulates what is at the heart of Obama's rhetorical appeal.

Chapter II

Theoretical Foundations

The Question of Dialectic vs. Rhetoric in Classical Theory

I theorize a conception of Obama's rhetoric grounded in classical rhetorical devices of contrast, opposition, and division, employing the previous academic work around these categorizing techniques—and their impact on one's linguistic ability—to identify its significance to Obama's success as a political communicator, and how he has used specific rhetorical techniques to convey a crucial characteristic of deliberative knowledge to audiences.

As recently as in his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, now-President Obama employed this technique of contrast, including its intrinsic division and opposition, in a way that resulted in his signature rhetorical effect. In order to address the criticisms that had been leveled at him upon the announcement that he would accept the award, he used his speech to directly respond to the charges that he was too new to office to merit receiving the award for any serious accomplishments, and that it did not make sense that he had received the Nobel for peacemaking, since he has decided to escalate the troop commitment to Afghanistan (Obama, "Nobel Prize for Peace Acceptance"). By specifically incorporating the devices for which he became celebrated during the campaign, Obama managed to get at the ironies with which the situation was infused in the style that has always been central to the appeal of his linguistic strategy. Obama demonstrated that he understood the complexity of the issues at stake by making such statements as "the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace. ... [W]e do not have to think that human nature is perfect for us to still believe that the

human condition can be perfected. We do not have to live in an idealized world to still reach for those ideals that will make it a better place” (Obama, “Nobel Prize for Peace Acceptance”). His establishment of terms went on to serve an explanatory purpose, showing how the categories of war and peace intersect—even depend on—one another.

Obama’s rhetoric combines the rhetorical enthymeme—a truncated version of syllogistic deductive reasoning—of opposites with that of division. In language scholar Lane Cooper’s translation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states:

[If there are two things, one of which (B) is said to be true of the other (A), then] we must observe whether the opposite of A is true of the opposite of B. If it is not, you upset the original proposition [that B is true of A]; if it is, you establish the original proposition. For example: ... as in the Messenian oration [of Alcidas (see 1.13, p. 74)]: “If war is the cause of our present evils, it is peace that we need to correct them.” (Bk. 2, Ch. 23)

Later on in Book 2, Chapter 23, Aristotle states, of division: “Thus you may argue: ‘All men do wrong from one of three motives, A, B, C. In my case, the first of these two motives are out of the question; and as for the third, C, the prosecution itself does not allege this’” (*Rhetoric*). Taking these explanations of two rhetorical devices together, it is clear that division is intrinsic to opposition.

The intrinsic nature of division is also present in Book 2, Chapter 23, in what Aristotle describes as the formulation of

contrary alternatives ... [:] here the things contrasted are opposites. For instance, the priestess urged her son not to engage in public speaking: ‘For,’ said she, ‘if you speak honestly, men will hate you; if you speak dishonestly, the gods will

hate you.’ ... And for this form of argument we have the term ‘criss-cross’ ... when each of the two opposites has both a good and a bad consequence opposite respectively to each other. (*Rhetoric*)

The display of the comprehension of categorization is precisely at the heart of how Plato’s *Phaedrus* has Socrates define the art of speechwriting: that of a person demonstrably knowing what he or she is talking about, in particular by epistemologically categorizing objects to reveal their similarities and differences (Plato 163).

The economy of such classification is akin to Aristotle’s pointing out, in Book 2, Chapter 22, the helpfulness of enthymemes to rhetorical method:

you must not begin the chain of reasoning too far back, or its length will render the argument obscure; and you must not put in every single link, or the statement of what is obvious will render it prolix. These are the reasons why uneducated men are more effective than the educated in speaking to the masses—as the poets say ... that the unlearned “have a finer charm ... for the ear of the mob.”

(*Rhetoric*)

Aristotle’s dictum on the effectiveness of adapting complicated arguments for rhetorically persuasive simplicity adheres to Plato’s trumpeting of making such stark delineations.

It is in the tension, then, between Plato’s and Aristotle’s respective explications of the relation between rhetoric and dialectic that such public discourse as Obama’s becomes significant. As Herrick notes, Aristotle points out “it is the duty of rhetoric to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon ... [Particularly] about things that could not have been, and cannot be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature

wastes his time in delineation” (qtd. in Herrick 15). In other words, it is precisely the capacity of rhetoric to deal with contingent issues by its testing of ideas and discovery of facts that contributes to its knowledge-shaping function, and gives it the ring of truth, making it persuasive (Herrick 15-6, 21-2, 24). This pragmatic approach toward rhetoric by Aristotle went beyond Plato’s notion of an idealist search for Truth, and seems to counter Plato’s otherwise suspicious stance toward rhetoric by stressing its status as a *techne*, which Aristotle’s mentor had himself pointed out in *Phaedrus* (Herrick 74).

Indeed, the status that redeemed rhetoric for Aristotle emerged from its being “the counterpart of dialectic,” or analogous to it (qtd. in Herrick 75). Whereas dialectic was intended for discussion of philosophical questions between two individual experts to get at a truth, rhetoric was meant as a public performance that employed emotional and character appeals (Herrick 75). What each practice shared, in Aristotle’s view, was their Sophistic-influenced willingness to study different sides of an issue (Herrick 76), making them “two complementary arts of reasoning to probable conclusions on a wide range of topics” (Herrick 75). Indeed, according to Herrick, even Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as “the faculty ... of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (qtd. in Herrick 75) indicates his stress of its “inventional (creative) rather than practical (oratorical) considerations ... principally as a study of finding persuasive arguments and appeals, and not as a technique for making persuasive and impressive speeches” (75-6). In this, Herrick writes, Aristotle’s method differed from the Sophists, who went about trying to achieve the same ends by the more fundamental means of “imitation and practice” (76).

The question becomes that of what knowledge it is, exactly, that the orator must possess in order for rhetoric to be a *techne*. Along these lines, in *Phaedrus*, Socrates details the envisioning of the soul as a charioteer leading two horses. As Plato writes:

We will liken the soul to the composite nature of a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the horses and charioteers of the gods are all good and of good descent, but those of other races are mixed; and first the charioteer of the human soul drives a pair, and secondly one of the horses is noble and of noble breed, but the other quite the opposite in breed and character. (Plato 149)

Socrates considers all sides of the soul as integral not only to understanding the balance between rationality and emotion that the savvy speaker must strike, but also as to helping one go about composing one's message in order to appeal to one's audience as much as possible in those two aspects (Plato 153).

The need for balance is clarified in Socrates' contention later on:

when the orator who does not know what good and evil are undertakes to persuade a state which is equally ignorant, not by praising the 'shadow of an ass' under the name of a horse, but by praising evil under the name of good, and having studied the opinions of the multitude persuades them to do evil instead of good [it should then come as no surprise that the] harvest ... his oratory will reap thereafter from the seed he has sown (Plato 156-57)

is not good. From Socrates' perspective, therefore, the demonstration of such knowledge is achieved in rhetoric in "the art by which a man will be able to produce a resemblance between all things between which it can be produced, and to bring to the light the resemblances produced and disguised by anyone else" (Plato 157). In other words, a

mastery of rhetoric, as per *Phaedrus*, requires both the ability to categorize items and the skill to expound on them in such a way as to convince others of the categorizations, explaining to them why this is so in a persuasively constructed argument.

As characterized by Plato, Socrates goes on to describe, in a lengthy passage that it is nevertheless helpful to excerpt extendedly:

Since it is the function of speech to lead souls by persuasion, he who is to be a rhetorician must know the various forms of soul. Now they are so and so many and of such and such kinds: these we must classify. Then there are also various classes of speeches, to one of which every speech belongs. So men of a certain sort are easily persuaded by speeches of a certain sort for a certain reason to actions of beliefs of a certain sort, and men of another sort cannot be so persuaded. The student of rhetoric must, accordingly, acquire a proper knowledge of these classes and then be able to follow them accurately with his senses when he sees them in the practical affairs of life ... But when he has learned to tell what sort of man is influenced by what sort of speech [Socrates goes on to recap and list all other characteristics necessary for effective rhetoric] ... then, and not till then, will his art be fully and completely finished. (Plato 163-64)

From the viewpoint of the audience member, by the same token, “he who is to deceive another, and is not to be deceived himself, must know accurately the similarity and dissimilarity of things” (Plato 158). Plato’s points here are significant for their detailing of how, in order to be an effective speaker and listener, it is imperative to be able to make these distinctions and properly articulate them in speech implicitly expressing it.

Still, these categorizations can be problematic—especially if one disagrees with another’s characterization of what should and should not be considered within the realm of appropriate placement under a specific group. For this reason, Plato’s Socrates emphasizes that the speaker must be able to anticipate such hurdles: “he who is to develop an art of rhetoric must first make a methodical division and acquire a clear impression of each class, that in which people must be in doubt and that in which they are not” (Plato 158). He brings more of this feature to the fore by a comparison of healing and rhetoric: “In both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner, not merely by practice and routine, to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses and training to give to the soul the desired belief and virtue” (Plato 163). This process of thinking about counterarguments and objections in advance, and finding a solution to rebut—or at least acknowledge—them is part and parcel of audience analysis, and thereby ties in to Socrates’ earlier elaboration of the soul.

Moreover, Plato has Socrates state, “Until he has attained to all this [knowledge of soul, division, and classification, among the other communication-enhancing practices of structure, order, and arrangement], he will not be able to speak by the method of art, so far as speech can be controlled by method, either for purposes of instruction or of persuasion” (Plato 167). This deliberative process, as I mentioned above, has dialectical antecedents that later emerge in Aristotle’s pragmatic conception of rhetoric.

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* too delves into the deliberative manner of speaking in its definition of antithesis as being constituted “when the style is built upon contraries” (255), and division as that which “separates the alternatives of a question and resolves

each by means of a reason subjoined, as follows: ‘Why should I now reproach you in any way? If you are an upright man, you have not deserved reproach; if a wicked man, you will be unmoved’” (271). As additionally suggested in the *Rhetorica*: “the comparison is used for embellishment, so as to secure a certain distinction for the style. It is moreover presented in the form of a contrast. For a comparison in the form of contrast is used when we deny that something else is like the thing we are asserting to be true” (275). Such a comparison can be adapted “[i]n the form of a negation and for the purpose of proof” (275) through a “detailed parallel” (275). That is why, as in the *Rhetorica*, it is important, “that when we present the corresponding idea for the sake of which we have introduced the figure we use words suited to the likeness” (276). In sum, it is for the successful establishment of all of these deliberative stylistic devices that the orator, as per Cicero, must be knowledgeable (297), and as Obama does, demonstrate said knowledge by means of employing them.

Recent Approaches to Rhetoric vs. Dialectic

For amplification on the deliberative aspect of rhetorical practice, it is instructive to turn to rhetoric scholar Richard Weaver, whose study of rhetoric as being steeped in the contrasting practices elucidated by Plato can help one more fully understand not only its aforementioned properties of division, but also how it can facilitate the resolve of unity by its deliberative style, in this case behind a certain presidential candidate.

In his article “The *Phaedrus* and the Nature of Rhetoric,” Weaver raises the modern suspicion of rhetoric’s being a form of mere superficiality. Referring to Plato’s *Phaedrus* as a justification for love, which in itself is a kind of madness, Weaver places

“all speech having persuasive power” (Weaver 1366) under this rubric. In fact, from this foundation, Weaver insists that therefore

[i]n any general characterization rhetoric will include dialectic ... Dialectic is a method of investigation whose object is the establishment of truth about doubtful propositions ... Thus Socrates indicates that distinguishing the horse from the ass is a dialectical operation, and he tells us later that a good dialectician is able to divide things by classes “where the natural joints are” ... Such, perhaps, is Aristotle’s dialectic which contributes to truth and knowledge. (1366-67)

Weaver thus strikingly explains how the *Phaedrus* seems to be stating that—while not private and thus strictly dialectical in nature—well-constructed persuasion should bear the hallmarks of objective truth-seeking. The consequences of this are to make speech sound more nuanced and thoughtful in the presentation of complex issues, and by this very process more appealing, through the force of imposing a pleasing formal aesthetic of logical order and systematic approach to perceiving the topic at hand.

Again, it is helpful to turn to Weaver for greater illumination:

The education of the soul is not a process of bringing it into correspondence with a physical structure like the external world, but rather a process of rightly affecting its motion ... What Plato has prepared us to see is that the virtuous rhetorician, who is a lover of truth, has a soul of each movement that its dialectical perceptions are consonant with those of a divine mind. (1367)

Here, Weaver suggests that what Plato means to demonstrate is that the most insightful practitioner of rhetoric is one who is able to honestly adapt the intangibles of emotion and

empathy into considered intellectual terms, to the extent that each of these sides in such an equation is—if not inconceivable—then ineffectual without the other.

By extension, the logical sensibility of contrarities and division is not superior to the pulling of the heartstrings that comes with harping on unity and togetherness, but they are at their best when appropriately combined. This is why the idea of figurative speech in the form of contrasts serving as negative analogical comparisons is rhetorically effective. Therefore, as Weaver describes it, “There is ... no true rhetoric without dialectic,” since more than the recitation of logical concepts is needed for persuasion—it also calls for a demonstration of considered categorization that comes when the speaker “passes from the logical to the analogical, or it is where figuration comes into rhetoric. ... It is by bringing out these resemblances that the good rhetorician leads those who listen in the direction of what is good” (1367-68). Succinctly, Weaver points out that this is exactly what Socrates utilizes in the *Phaedrus* when he resorts to the analogy of the charioteer and his horses as an allegory for the facets of the soul (1368). This analogy is further illustrative for its divisive properties, which in my view is another hallmark of the deliberative rhetor.

Alluding to the habit of dismissing rhetorical skill as empty eloquence, and of casting it as mere beautiful wordplay divorced from reality, Weaver explains that “exaggeration [is actually fulfilling the role of] prophecy; and it would be a fair formulation to say that true rhetoric is concerned with the potency of things. ... [P]otentiality is a mode of existence, and...all prophecy is about the tendency of things” (1368). Here, Weaver is suggesting that, properly delineated, rhetoric can serve the purpose of effecting action by persuading listeners to consider such action possible. This

tendency correlates directly with the habit of some during the campaign to depict Obama's verbal facility as mere rhetoric, such as in a British news commentary that asked leadingly, "For all Sen [sic] Obama's appeal and eloquence—and taking nothing away from the scale of his achievement in securing the nomination—will America entrust its future in such dangerous times to a man who has been in the Senate for just three years?" (Hughes)

Still, Weaver articulates that what makes the deliberative rhetorician truly persuasive is his or her cultivation of an insightful persona, as he argues was the case with Winston Churchill's exhortations to his fellow countrymen to have hopes of peace in the darkest moments of World War II:

Now if one had to regard only for the hour, this was a piece of mendacity such as the worst charlatans are found committing; but if one took Churchill's premises and then considered the potentiality, the picture was within the bounds of actualization. His "exaggeration" was that the defeat of the enemy would place Europe in a position for a long and peaceful progress. At the time the surface trends ran the other way ... Yet the hope which transfigured this ... was not irresponsible, and we conclude by saying that the rhetorician talks about both what exists simply and what exists by favor of human imagination and effort. (1369)

It is the insightful persona formed by the implied oppositional discrepancy between potential and realization that helped Churchill appear credible in the face of what could be extreme opposition to his message, as well as of the long odds. Weaver's conception of this could as easily be applied to Obama.

Because of the emphasis on potential, Weaver stresses, “rhetoric passes from mere scientific demonstration of an idea to its relation to prudential conduct. A dialectic must take place *in vacuo*, and the fact alone that it contains contraries leaves it an intellectual thing. Rhetoric, on the other hand, always espouses one of the contraries. This espousal is followed by some attempt at impingement upon actuality” (1369). Weaver subsequently explains rhetoric as being more complete than dialectic as it pertains to the force of language, with rhetoric encompassing both the dimensions of feeling and intellect that culminate in a successful call to action (1369).

As he ends his piece, Weaver encapsulates his thinking: “So rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for” (1371). It is this duality that masterful rhetoric addresses, both in form and content. Indeed, effectively deliberative communicators can harness their ability to speak to the ambiguities of reality and figure out how to simultaneously verbalize them and make complexity itself part of a rhetorical structure, so as to identify it as an intellectual problem to work through on an explicit level, and incorporate it as part of a subliminal pattern that audiences find aesthetically appealing.

The aesthetic appeal is in this way due to its dialectical undercurrents. As rhetoric scholar Edwin Black writes:

Plato [in the *Phaedrus*] turns the collective and divisive resources of dialectic on “real” rhetoric ... The collective definition is: “Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words, not only in

courts of law and other public gatherings, but in private places also?” And further on: “The function of oratory is in fact to influence men’s souls.” (368)

Much of this delineation has already been referred to, but Black’s iteration of it concisely names the issues raised by Weaver.

Specifically, as per Black, “Plato conceived a true art of rhetoric to be a consolidation of dialectic with psychogogia—applicable to all discourse, public and private, persuasive and expository. . . . Dialectic was Plato’s general scientific method; rhetoric is a special psychological application of it” (369). One can extrapolate the centrality of rhetoric in Plato’s view of politics “as the only means of social control besides coercion which the statesman can exercise” (375). Additionally, according to Black, Plato believed “[t]he state is to be organized and governed after metaphysical principles, yet metaphysical knowledge cannot be apprehended by unmetaphysical minds. Hence, it is justifiable to simplify complex truths and to present them appealingly” (375). Simply put, complicated notions of paradox and conflict can be addressed rhetorically through such devices of contrast, division, and opposition so as to at least seem—by the demonstration through speech of their speaker’s understanding of them—to be resolvable, or at least surmountable. In turn, this affects the listeners by instilling in them a sense of unification based on their appreciation of such knowledge, so artfully expressed—hence rendering realizable the type of paradox at issue.

Yet, according to English-language professor Oscar L. Brownstein, Plato would find problematic the idea of simplification, because he considered dialectic “as the art of discourse which meets the requirements for a true art of speech” (396), with its

methods of *synagōgē* (combination or collection or synthesis, apparently the perception of the principle, or Form, which embraces a diversity) and *diarexis* (analysis or division, the perception of the particular which “participates” in a Form) ... by *definition* (in other words that it is dialectic which has been expanded to subsume the whole of the area of scientific human discourse, not rhetoric expanded to include dialectics). (396)

Brownstein’s take on dialectic and discourse thus harks back to Aristotle’s understanding of rhetoric as dealing with particular facts at hand, and dialectic with broader philosophical questions (Herrick 75).

The denigration of rhetoric is true of Plato, as far as Brownstein is concerned, especially due to the fact that “Phaedrus is made to comment that he is convinced now that what has been described is dialectic, but he still wonders what rhetoric is” (396). Nevertheless, though Brownstein’s take on Plato differs, it is notable for its inclusion of such devices as opposition, contrarities, and division as quintessential speaking techniques. On a practical level, the end is still that of a deliberative sense of unification that serves—not coincidentally—to gather the audience’s allegiance to the speaker and message.

Contemporary Literature on Rhetoric

Since, as philosopher James E. Broyles posits, the situation of contrarities I have been elucidating as oppositional and juxtaposing—conveyed for the purpose of first breaking down an object, only to then re-form it—would, in logical terms, be understood as the two respective stages of “division” and “composition” (108), it is perhaps best to first set aside notions of these concepts being strictly logical. As Broyles explicates:

We see then that the role of form in regard to these fallacy classifications is complicated not only by the fact that there are valid deductive arguments having these forms [division and composition], as [W.L.] Rowe has argued, but also because these forms are shared by perfectly acceptable non-deductive arguments as well. Such considerations raise serious questions about the real significance of these traditional fallacy classifications. (113)

In relation to and for the purposes of the present study, then, it matters little whether the status of truth afforded these devices arises out of their status as sound dialectical practice. What matters is that they possess the ring of verisimilitude.

Further according to Broyles:

An argument may have the required form of composition or division and be either (a) a valid deductive argument; the premise entails the conclusion, or (b) a satisfactory non-deductive argument; the premise gives us a reason for accepting the conclusion, or it may be (c) a fallacious argument; the premise has little or no bearing on the conclusion at all. In the latter case whether the argument is to be regarded as an invalid deductive argument or an unsatisfactory non-deductive argument will depend upon the person's intentions. Was he trying to give a deductive argument or a non-deductive one? (112)

Broyles then goes on to enumerate such rhetorical indicators (with the terms “proves” and “gives us reason to believe” as respective demonstrations of the first two argument types) (113).

But Broyle’s allusion to the intentions of the individual in making persuasive arguments is echoed in communication scholar Rodney B. Douglass’ view of key

attributes of rhetoric as being its “socio-psychological” and “deliberative” dimensions, among others (83). Douglass continues:

At the core of Aristotelian analysis of rhetorical communication is a notion of “argument” as deliberative human interaction. That is, Aristotle's notion of rhetorical arguing is not to be understood as designating a behavior subject to the formalization and logical rigor commonly connoted by “argument” and “argumentation”; rhetorical argument, for Aristotle, was not formal, and the argumentative process was not the “logic” of demonstration or even of dialectic. Therefore, I use the term “deliberative” to suggest persuasive socio-psychological argumentation. ... The most basic unit of analysis in a rhetorical communication is the person deliberatively involved; i.e., a person knowingly and calculatively engaged with others. For Aristotle the fundamental paradigm of rhetorical communication was the assertive-judgmental transaction implicit in a real or apparent instance of “persons deliberating.” (83)

In other words, it is the process of deliberative reasoning epitomized by epistemological categorization that seems to be critical to successful rhetorical practice.

The emphasis on the appearance of deliberation rather than on deliberation per se is due to the fact that “[a] single-minded search for regularly predictable, cause-effect relationships or for supposedly dependable technical procedures may screen one from the very potentialities of rhetorical communication” (85) that are Aristotelian in nature. For Douglass, contemporary writing on rhetoric fails to take this understanding of Aristotle into account, and it should (87). His pinpointing of potentiality is reminiscent of Weaver’s take on rhetoric.

For communication professor Rollin W. Quimby, Plato's perception of rhetoric experienced just such a paradigmatic shift, enabling Plato to expand his understanding of it. As Quimby writes, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato was able to outline "all the elements of a true rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art by which leaders who discern the truth guide men toward the good" (78). It is

this division [of true and false rhetoric that] allowed Socrates to assign the observed evils to sham rhetoric and to see clearly the benefits of true rhetoric.

Having determined the nature of true rhetoric, Plato could describe its unique and useful subject matter (the nature of the soul and the ways of influencing it for the better) and thereby qualify rhetoric as an art akin to dialectic. Instead of merely castigating rhetoric, he was now ready to harness it in the service of philosophy and truth. (78)

Plato's evolving ideas on rhetoric make possible the redirecting of it toward insightful analogies, antitheses and contrarities.

Communication scholar Carl B. Holmberg and classics expert James S. Murray further expand on the notion of Platonic rhetoric as revised by Aristotle, with the former stating that, in his understanding, "The determination of Being [metaphysical truth], traditionally dialectical or of dialectical dialectic or pure dialectic or pure logic, can now occur as a rhetorical dialectic ... for now only rhetorical ways of doing dialectic or rhetoric can give unconcealing experience of the truth of Being" (Holmberg 241). The two forms are interdependent.

Murray apparently agrees, writing that though "for Plato to use either the 'disputation' of rhetoric or the 'collection and division' of dialectic was tantamount, on

the traditional view, to his rejection of the other member of the pair” (280), “*Phaedrus ... does not need to be taken as the portrayal of a rhetorical method which is being displayed only for the purpose of being rejected* with the advent of the twin processes of collection and division, but rather as the erection of a structure (albeit rhetorical) which *requires as its foundation* the dialectical processes” (281, italics in original). The rhetor’s depth of knowledge and integrity is an essential indicator of his or her grasp of dialectic, since it is through the processes of collection and division that “rhetoric demonstrates its status as art” (286). For rhetoric to be true, there must be “a clear view of divisions [which] gives the rhetor clarity in his own speaking, as well as a tool to unravel the rhetoric of his opponent by catching him using a notion which wrongly conflates two separate and distinct things” (286). It is the capacity to establish a set definition via his deliberations that forms “the basis of right understanding of forms [with which] can one be sure that he is using words correctly, and thereby speaking well” (286). Bearing this in mind, it is fair to ask how this understanding of dialectical forms can ensure “rightness.”

English-language professor Scott Consigny provides an answer, stating that Aristotle’s rhetor

relies upon a “reality” comprising the realm of deliberation and choice. That is, he requires a knowledge of human psychology, and about the nature of reasoning, deliberation, and choice ... the rhetor must recognize that he is an integral part of the “reality” he confronts and that his actions in it may dramatically alter ... reality in the rhetorical domain [which] is a product of cultural framework and its discourse. (286)

The rhetor's recognition, Consigny explains, comes through judicious "discernment of commonplaces, development of enthymemes and examples, and articulation of new metaphors" (286). Such a grouping makes a connection between the processes of composition and division which comprise dialectically informed rhetoric and that of metaphor which we will see, upon closer inspection, gains more resonance.

Rhetorician Kenneth Burke's dramatisitic Pentad—act, agent, scene, purpose, and agency—is cited by rhetoric academic Timothy W. Crusius as a metaphorically inflected dialectic of rhetoric (Crusius 27). For Burke, according to Crusius, "identification [is] the key term, the implications of which expand the field of rhetoric well beyond persuasive discourse" (28). Since Burke defines "substance" dialectically as "what is covered over, what is not said" (26), the Pentad's systematic analyzing of rhetoric sheds light on its relation to dialectic, which Crusius characterizes as interdependent: "Identifications are constructed out of oppositions, that is, dialectical substance. ... Every 'us' requires a 'them'; otherwise we cannot define ourselves. ... Thus, identifications rest on substance, rhetoric on dialectic" (29)." One advantage of this Burkean system that Crusius gets at is that it "may be applied to any discourse" (32), including media imagery and forms that are not classically dialectical, such as metaphor.

The preoccupation with metaphor and other figurative forms of speech is described by jurisprudence scholar Alessandro Guiliani as part of the Aristotelian theory of the dialectical definition: "The metaphorical language is in a certain sense ordinary language to the extent that it makes up for the gaps in the language; and dialectics is, in a certain sense, logic of the figurative language" (131)." Using figurative speech, then, to stress contrast is consistent with Aristotle: "The philosopher, as a dialectician, tends

towards opposition, confutation. A dialectical definition implies an accusation, or a defense of a value; that is, it always assumes an opponent” (Guiliani 135). It is the ability to construct arguments that is at stake in the proper use of rhetorical devices.

As Guiliani elaborates:

To understand Aristotle’s theory, it is necessary to free oneself of the preconception that rhetorical figures are a mere ornament. We are in the realm of reasoning based on similitude; the real problem is to eliminate the abuse of the metaphor. And similitude is one of the instruments—if not the most important one—of dialectical and philosophical investigation ... Similarity must be determined in a contradictory situation, in relationship to the case. The true metaphorical language stands intermediate between the bad metaphor and ordinary language. (138)

Metaphor and other uses of rhetorical tropes and figures of speech can therefore serve as the basis for making one’s case, such as by the employment of antithesis.

Communication scholars John E. Fritch and Karla K. Leeper examine just what such “tropological argument” entails in their study contrasting Burke’s theory of metaphor with philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s. While they state that they “may accept Burke’s initial premise that metaphor creates as well as conveys truth, we have little idea of how to evaluate an individual’s use of metaphor” (Fritch and Leeper). Their inability results from Burke’s description of adhering to form as the skill of arousing and satisfying audience desires, rather than “if it conforms to the rules governing the construction of the form,” and is mainly due to the question of “[h]ow should [students of

this theory] decide if and why some metaphors appropriately arouse audience expectations?” Because of this deficit, they turn to Ricoeur.

It is in their exploration of metaphor as posited by Ricoeur that metaphor’s linkage to antithesis can be seen:

Part of the secret of metaphor lies in its ability to recontextualize two ideas to create meaning. Just as Burke believes that metaphors could help create truth through an understanding of multiple perspectives—including perspective by incongruity—Ricoeur argues that metaphor functions as a trope of invention in the original sense of the word—discovery and creation. ... From the perspective of argument, metaphor must be seen as semantic innovation rather than mere ornament. (Fritch and Leeper)

The idea of its persuasive force is rooted in an understanding of rhetorical devices similar to Guiliani’s. As Fritch and Leeper go on to suggest, “The mediating efforts of resemblances generate tensions between the symbols used on a variety of levels ... two concepts rooted in different segments of reality are joined, creating tension which is resolved, selecting qualities of each element introduced by the presence of the term. The end product becomes a metaphorical truth.” And just as well, it might be added, an antithetical one.

I arrived at this last thought based on Fritch and Leeper’s explication of just how it is that Ricoeur’s theory of form makes metaphor more accessible to evaluative validation:

the key ... lies in examining the tensions created between the terms of comparison. ... [T]he comparison of two unrelated ideas in metaphorical form

argues that one “is like” the other. The critic must expose the contrary “is not” which is implied within the metaphorical structure ... Any evaluative attempt must center on understanding the nature of the meaning created and the symbolic tools used to create that meaning.

The mastery of the craft involved in the metaphorical equation seems to be at issue here.

As opposed to fulfilling audience desires, Fritch and Leeper write:

Ricoeur would argue that the use of metaphor violates the expectations of the audience ... The appropriate means of evaluating metaphors takes this violation of audience expectations into account and examines the nature of the meaning created. This meaning should include what the relationship between the two concepts is and what it is not; metaphorical tension resides in the relationship between these two meanings.

There is a deliberately antithetical streak intrinsic to the metaphorical form, based on this account, which becomes more explicit and therefore accessible to evaluation in straightforward antithesis.

Such an evaluation of antithesis is attempted by English-language scholar Thomas J. Farrell, who writes of it as constituting part of the “male mode” of rhetoric, in contrast to the “indirection” of the “female mode”: “The male mode of rhetoric seems to assume that antagonism is all right because intellectual life presumably proceeds agonistically. Antithesis is integral to this approach: the speaker or writer is for one thing and against another. The tendency of the male mode to polarize seems to imply that it is impossible to win over the whole audience, so why try” (916). In contrast,

the female mode ... seems to avoid unnecessary antagonism or

differentiation ... That the entire audience cannot be won over is understood, but the female mode usually does not seek to entertain sympathizers or irritate opponents in the same delightedly deliberate manner that the male mode does. Instead of accentuating differentiation, solidarity with the audience is stressed. (916)

Though perhaps objectionable in its labeling of certain characteristics by gender stereotypes, Farrell's study of the devices in question is relevant due to his outlining of what he sees as the "potentially integrative" qualities of indirection and the "divisive" aspects of antithesis (917).

Farrell then states "that rhetoric is a movement of hope that is preoccupied with unifying, which probably accounts for its presence in protest movements. But it unifies speaker and audience in a common struggle *against* another somebody or something and is thus in the larger context differentiating" (918). However, Farrell explains that a playful rendition of oppositional contrasts can result in a fruitful "seeing if other alternatives exist" (918). This latter use of antithesis for the insightful, more beneficial aims of synthesis tends to undermine Farrell's argument that the male mode is representative of "developing personalized ego-consciousness" (918), as opposed to the reconciliation of opposites ... necessary for the development of the integrated self ... only a rhetoric intended to reconcile rather than accentuate opposites (antitheses) could be related to the psychological stage represented by the re-birth of the transformation of the hero, because this is the stage of integration rather than differentiation—or more precisely, the stage of the differentiated whole, the integrated self. (919)

Just in case one misses his point as to female and male psychological maturity, Farrell spells it out: “Accepting, dealing with, digesting, working through, or growing beyond are processes more in harmony with the female than with the male mode of rhetoric” (919). Again, though antiquated, the notion of the sexes being opposite is understandable heuristically.

More illuminating in the present context is another point Farrell makes: “It is notable that speakers and writers who are particularly adept with [the female] mode of rhetoric convey an assured sense of self” (919). Later on, he concludes, “It is possible to blend the best features of the two modes of rhetoric, but to do so requires even more conscious control than what either mode in itself requires, for blending the best features necessitates consciously and knowingly choosing those features and then using them effectively” (920-21). Farrell recognizes Virginia Woolf as a successful practitioner of rhetorically modal blending (921). Though I subscribe more to theories submitting deliberation and dialectically informed knowledge as the forces underlying the impact of division and antithesis in rhetoric, I would situate Barack Obama as successfully practicing rhetorically modal blending too: skillful in presenting antitheses culminating in syntheses on a host of issues.

Analyses of Obama’s Rhetoric

Obama’s rhetorical skills have drawn attention since he first came onto the national stage in 2004. The aforementioned rhetoric scholars Frank and McPhail, presenting differing critiques as to the merits of his speech, both point to his 2004 Democratic National Convention keynote address as employing discursively the “rhetoric of consilience” and “coherence” that extrapolates a sense of unity from stated divisions

and opposition (Frank and McPhail 572), with Obama's purpose being to "foster reconciliation" (572) and attempt to get beyond the "trauma" (574) of the American experience with race. Favorably contrasting it with Al Sharpton's speech at the same convention, which "fails to sufficiently acknowledge that many whites in the audience were suffering from the aftershocks of their own traumas" (Frank and McPhail 577), Frank points to how Obama "acknowledged the trauma experienced by nonblacks, doing so without diminishing the need to address African American exigencies" (578) in a manner that was "multiracial" (577).

Not just the content, argues Frank, but how Obama weaves "an elegant paring of contraries (red and blue states, Democrats and Republicans, gay and straight, prowar and antiwar Americans)" stresses Obama's "challenges [to] the binary thinking at the root of racism and other pathologies" (Frank and McPhail 579). Indeed, according to Frank, "[t]he nuance inviting attention is his refusal to obliterate difference or put the individual in the service to the many. Most important, he links the suffering of others to his own fate, displaying a rhetorical model of empathy necessary for transformation" (579). Moreover, writes Frank, "To effectively work through the traumas faced by blacks, Obama features the 'American nation' and the 'American society' as the agent of rectification rather than 'white people'" (580). In other words, Obama simultaneously employs the devices of division and unification in concert to provide his message with the force of persuasion.

On the other hand, McPhail argues that it is precisely these devices that prevent the speech from being able to "reveal a new trajectory within African American discourse" (Frank and McPhail 584), and instead have it act as "a compromise between

the acquiescence of assimilationist rhetorics and the oppositionality of revolutionary rhetoric” (584). McPhail regards Sharpton’s address as the true “call for coherence, one fundamentally grounded in the tradition of spiritually inspired militancy that articulates a strategy of reconstruction for the transformation of race in America” (584). Whereas the rhetorical purpose of inspiration might be accomplished, McPhail states that

[b]ecause Obama celebrates the abstractions of the social contract while ignoring the realities of the racial contract, his message is unlikely to effect in practice the values it embraces in principle. The connection between these is ultimately the best indication of rhetoric’s transformative power, and the greatest impediment to that power is the silence of self-interest and the absence of dialogue. (Frank and McPhail 588)

An analysis such as the present one of Obama’s success with the rhetorical devices at issue functions, then, more as an examination of its power to garner fealty to an individual in the form of electoral support, rather than as a determination of his capacity to effect conscious policy change at a collective level.

Within such a rhetorical paradigm, Obama’s language—via its cultivation of juxtaposing techniques—functions to do the work of what theorists of political rhetoric Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones describe as “recasting the American Dream” (425). They detail Obama’s 2004 keynote as developing “a narrative that balanced personal and societal values and in so doing made the American Dream more accessible to liberals, thereby laying the groundwork for reclaiming the narrative center of American politics for the Democratic party” (434). Obama’s shifting between “individual” and “communal responsibility” (427), playing on the interdependence of his

signature oppositional and reconstituting techniques, privileged both types of responsibility, rather than the former over the latter, as was the case with the version of the Dream that conservatives had claimed as their own at least since the ascendancy of Ronald Reagan to the presidency (427, 432).

With the aid of Kenneth Burke's concepts of identification, scene, agency, and agent, Rowland and Jones also explain how "[f]or Obama, the scene in American society is not ... defined merely by limitless opportunity ... [but also] by the essential similarity of the American people" (435). This is key, since "[w]hen identification is stronger among all Americans, societal values are likely to dominate" (435). That is why, state Rowland and Jones, "Obama used a series of small stories to show how individuals were fulfilling their responsibilities, but society was not. ... Thus, he recast the concerns of particular groups of Americans in terms of the whole society" (436, 437). Toward the end of his address, Obama introduced the concept of hope—which would become the linchpin of his own presidential campaign—"as a way of pulling together the plot, scene, and characters defining his American Dream narrative. Hope is Obama's metaphor for a balance between individualism and communal responsibilities" (Rowland and Jones 442). It is this type of balance that comprises many of the particular items and objects that Obama deploys in his contrasting and oppositional, yet ultimately unifying, rhetorical categorizations. Additionally, hope, it is helpful to recall, is a term Weaver identifies as one of transfiguration, implying as it does the potential in an initially contradictory situation.

Both communication expert Robert E. Terrill and, again, David A. Frank see another instance of balance in the manner in which Obama used religious tropes to

confront the issue of race in his “A More Perfect Union” speech. Terrill argues that, via means of his invoking the “Golden Rule” (365), Obama used his address to give audiences “a way of speaking about race in America. Specifically, Obama invites his audience to experience double consciousness, however temporarily” (364). In particular, “He asks his listeners to view themselves through the eyes of others, a tactic that critiques the cultural limitations of ‘oneness’ by constituting divided selves through which to confront our bifurcated culture. This is a productive alienation that promotes two simultaneous points of view” (Terrill 364). As with his 2004 convention speech, Obama presents himself as the embodiment of this cognitive multiplicity (Terrill 369), along with providing an academic and a more prescriptive analyses of race in America (Terrill 370, 372).

The impression that accrues as a consequence is that “perhaps the public Obama is imagining does not cohere *despite* its diversity, but *because* of it” (Terrill 373): as “the Golden Rule requires us to see ourselves as the potential recipients of our own potential actions ... [so] he urges us to recognize our ‘common stake’ in one another, and to experience the sometimes uncomfortable sensation of seeing ourselves through their eyes” (Terrill 374). Thus, Obama creates a “discourse of productive duality” (Terrill 378), and of “productive division” (Terrill 380). Terrill emphasizes the unity, or “more perfect union,” that is the end result, as—if not perfect per se—then authentically integrative.

Similarly dualistic in nature, Frank writes that Obama’s aim in his race speech was to present to the public a rationale for how he could both coherently condemn and yet embrace his pastor’s prophetic tradition (Frank 178). Ultimately, Obama does this by

highlighting those aspects of Wright's belief system that he disagreed with, namely, "a melancholic and fatalistic dimension to [Wright's] thinking about America ... inconsistent with his theology of hope" (Frank 190). In point of fact, Obama did this by placing the speech itself within "the prophetic tradition, with its fundamental assumptions that all human beings are made in the image of God, that the traces of God are found in the face of the other, and that humans have an obligation to recognize and care for their brothers and sisters" (Frank 190). Wright's controversial remarks, according to Frank, are in contrast with Wright's own professed explanation of "the prophetic tradition, as it is practiced in the black church, [which] seeks liberation, transformation, and reconciliation ... based on hope, a value that requires faith despite a reality of oppression and great suffering" (190). It is through the oppositional moves needed for the understanding of hope that Obama's inclusive message thereby merges perfectly with the theological tradition in question.

Finally, communication scholar James Darsey suggests the multiple meanings of the American journey that Obama's campaign played on, all at the same time, as yet another paralleling of the kind of inclusive message that emerged precisely out of the disparate interpretations by which supporters were encouraged to understand it. For Darsey, "if Obama can succeed in making his campaign a journey that is coincident with our collective journey, then his campaign is refigured: not the race of one man for the presidency of the United States but a vehicle for our common striving to get the country back on the right track toward our common destiny, the American dream" (94). As a vehicle, Obama personifies all of these separate ideas by virtue of many of the strategies for coherence that have heretofore been reviewed.

Interestingly, Darsey as well studies Obama's tendency to present "fork in the road"-type choices, such as at a rally in which the candidate asked: "Will they [future generations] say this was a time when America lost its way and its purpose? ... Or will they say that this was another one of those moments when America overcame? When we battled back from adversity ... ? This is one of those moments" (99). Once again, here we have the contrarily stated elements combining to form a unified whole. It is the specific divisional techniques and oppositional devices that link all of these overarching conceptualizations of Obama's rhetoric that my study elaborates on and supplements.

Chapter III

Analysis

Methods

To pinpoint the intricacies of his paradox- and complexity-highlighting rhetorical skills, I studied transcripts of five of Obama's presidential campaign speeches for their use of contrast and opposition to construct a persuasive sense of deliberation, identifying particular instances of them, and their significance to his communication abilities. While such factors and devices as his enthusiastic delivery, idealistic content, use of metaphor, and the evocations of double consciousness to form an identification with audiences that transcends race—as well as multiple other social differences—are also rhetorically significant, his use of antithesis and opposition does not merely differentiate him from his opponents, but it is constantly deployed to unite his supporters in a mediating manner. I looked at the sheer number of examples of antithesis and opposition—as crafted by the candidate and those on his campaign staff who may have also contributed to the authorship of his speeches—with an eye as to how they qualify as major textual features that convey holistically and consistently an overall impression of notions such as inclusiveness and consensus.

I searched for the potential to firmly situate Obama's style in rhetorical tradition, approaching the endeavor through my understanding of classical sources, including the already cited Plato's *Phaedrus*, with its envisioning of the soul as a deliberative charioteer leading two horses, and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Furthermore, I kept in mind modern thinkers like Richard Weaver, whose study of rhetoric as being supplemented by the dividing and contrasting processes in order to be effective in its impact is particularly

instructive regarding this issue, along with Edwin Black and James A. Herrick's respective contributions to my understanding of rhetoric, and such writers as Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones' analysis of Obama's rhetoric in particular.

I examined the speeches in order to get at the purpose underlying the contrasting pattern, along with its effectiveness. Contrast, a rhetorical device, functions—regardless of whether it is presented outright, or left unstated—as a technique that separates and categorizes items, concepts, and groups—whether by class, race, political affiliation, or gender, for comparison to, or contextualizing of each within, a corresponding idea going beyond or opposed to it. What is remarkable about Obama's employment of it is how constantly he takes the divisive features of dialectic, epistemologically categorizing objects to reveal their similarities and differences, and combines them with the unifying properties of rhetoric, in order to bridge divides and gather the assent of his audience. The resulting impression is akin to a mathematical formula, frequently leaving the audience member to work out through thought or action the point Obama wants to get across, after his having guided the listener through possible choices, in a way that seems logically inevitable, arising from understanding the options and coming to a consensus. It is the animating force behind such statements as “there is not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America,” from Obama's breakthrough address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention, and, more recently, his declaration at his presidential inauguration: “The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works.”

I analyzed the addresses for their persuasive strategies of contrast at crucial moments. Though there were many instances during the campaign that merit interest—

such as Obama's triumphal remarks after winning the Iowa caucus and his debate performances—I have chosen to focus on two moments of adversity— Obama's speech after losing the New Hampshire primary and his "More Perfect Union" address on racial relations—as well as three moments of success: the announcement of his presidential candidacy, his acceptance of the Democratic Party nomination, and his election-night victory speech.

These addresses, running the gamut from the beginning to the end of the campaign, constitute pivotal rhetorical situations throughout its course. Obama's official announcement was cited by the *Washington Post* as one in which not only were the "goals set high," but also as an important opportunity to start "the process of both laying out his professional experience and arguing that experience in Washington is not a requirement for becoming president" (Balz and Kornblut). Moreover, his reaction after the New Hampshire loss was significant due to the primary itself having become considered by such political correspondents as Anne E. Kornblut and Shailagh Murray to have gained much more currency as to what it could mean for his candidacy in the aftermath of his Iowa win ("Clinton, Romney on Offensive").

Further, according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, an *L.A. Times* editorial posited Obama's speech on race in Philadelphia in the midst of the Jeremiah Wright controversy, in which he had to tackle head-on both the issues of his race and of not being a known quantity on the political landscape so as to defuse them as potential liabilities, as his "Lincoln Moment," explicitly depicting his handling of it as a chance to show presidential attributes in dealing with divisive issues ("Two Campaign Speeches").

Obama's acceptance of the Democratic nomination, at which time he again had to introduce himself and his policies for the benefit of members of the general electorate who were not as tuned into the primary and so were only now considering him seriously as an option, was important in how, as the *Washington Post* headlined, it managed to draw "sharp contrasts with [John] McCain" and get into "policy specifics ... [as] the final hurdle in a two-month pivot to general-election mode" (Weisman and Murray). Finally, as *The New Yorker's* James Wood writes of his election-night speech, "Any victorious election speech must turn campaign vinegar into national balm, must move from local conquest to national triumph, and Obama cunningly used this necessity to expand epically through American space and time." Thus, Obama's first address as president-elect had its own rhetorical purpose to fulfill by marking the shift from campaigning to governing.

Foremost, then, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign was a demonstration in the ability of persuasive language, as employed through speeches, to draw on the power of instilling in an audience a desire to respond to a candidate by affirming one's fealty to that individual. Unlike Obama, for instance, George W. Bush relied primarily for rhetorical effect, explicitly and implicitly, on evoking cultural fissures and on characterizing dissent as to the question of how to handle terrorism in a polarizing manner, such as when he ran in 2000 on the platform "to restore honor and dignity to the White House" (*CNN Insight*)—an implicit dig at the previous Democratic president's marital indiscretions—or when, after 9/11, Bush told potential opponents of American foreign policy "you're either with us or against us in the fight against terror" ("Bush"), respectively. Yet enthusiasm for Obama initially emerged, and was cultivated over time,

out of the candidate's skill at crafting ideas in such a way as to mobilize his supporters to envision themselves as a unified coalition working toward a purpose.

The uniqueness of Obama's use of language was at the root of this loyalty, and so it is singularly worthy of understanding why it worked. One causal aspect could be that, more than was the case in the lead-up to other elections in recent memory, Obama's was predicated on empowering voters—not solely through promises of societal improvements if he was elected, but in the very way in which his campaign discourse—disseminated through its theme, slogans, and paraphernalia—was constructed to revolve around the concept of voters' willingness, intelligence, and capacity to think through particular issues with him and come to the same conclusions, or at least to arrive at the decision that his was the mindset needed in a leader to deal with our problems.

This empowerment took the form of a specific running thread. From signs proclaiming CHANGE (from the status quo), UNITY (with its inverse term, DIVISION, being presumably what people holding them were against); to chants of YES WE CAN (with their unspoken opposing rejoinder, NO WE CAN'T); and even to Obama's Gandhi-inspired line delivered after the Super Tuesday round of primaries, "We are the ones we've been waiting for" (CQ Transcripts Wire)—its paradoxical juxtaposition implicitly highlighting the contrary notion that we need not wait—it is an empowerment manifested through force of structural contrast, division, opposition. Even "hope" was advanced by Obama as in contrast to "fear" in his victory speech following the Iowa caucuses ("Barack Obama's Caucus Speech"). Its persuasive power lies not just in its contrary structure, however, but in the way that the structure subtly reinforces Obama's broader rhetoric of unity (through such devices as anecdotes and illustrative examples) and self-

empowerment (through such metaphors for voting as a decision-making fork-in-the road, as well as the Gandhi allusion pointed out above). While these other techniques are definitely present, it is Obama's deliberately contrasting patterns—for the objective of rhetorically mediating the decisions of voters from all walks of life—that are most consistent, and which comprise his signature rhetorical move.

Bearing this methodological rationale in mind, let us turn to an analysis of contrast in transcripts of the five speeches. At certain junctures, I have italicized key points and contrasts in order to more easily identify them in my analysis. Additionally, all the line numbers herein correspond to the transcripts included as appendices to this study.

Speech Analysis

Official Announcement of Candidacy for President of the United States

Delivered February 10, 2007, in Springfield, IL, at the Old State Capitol

Overview

On February 10, 2007, Barack Obama stepped officially onto the national stage to announce his presidential candidacy. In doing so, he introduced Americans to the major themes his campaign would consist of, as well as to the rhetorical strategy of contrast he would employ throughout its duration.

Examples

The contrast device is evident from the very first moments of Obama's speech on that day. One sentence in particular lays the groundwork: referring to the motivations of those present to witness the proceedings, he states, "It's humbling to see a crowd like this, *but* in my heart I know you didn't just come here for me. You ... came here because you believe in what this country can be" (Obama, "Official Announcement of

Candidacy,” lines 8-10—italics added to stress contrast). The way in which that thought is constructed—a general assertion, followed by contradiction, and then by another general assertion—provides the impression of the initial two ideas (the clause containing “humbling,” followed by one beginning with “but”) gradually synthesizing into the third (“You ... came here because you believe in what this country can be”), which sounds akin to its logical result.

The thought construction subtly cues the listener in to the formulation of what immediately follows, when Obama states, “In the face of war, you believe there can be peace. In the face of despair, you believe there can be hope. In the face of a politics that shut you out, that’s told you to settle, that’s divided us for too long, you believe that we can be one people, reaching for what’s possible, building that more perfect union” (Obama, “Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 10-14). The impact of that latter passage thus becomes more understandable. By that point, the candidate has indicated the audience should wait for the next major beat of emotional release to come after he’s asserted the list of present flaws in the establishment, alongside the potentiality of the contradictory counterpart for each—slowly building up the anticipation of a grand cumulative finish, in the same fashion in which his first sentence synthesized juxtaposed elements.

The rhythm is built into the passage structure as well as its overall content, as the reinforcement of the toxic political environment in the first half of the third sentence—which employs three phrases stressing the negative—is paralleled by positive aspects in the second half. The total effect is one of an inexorable force gathering disparate influences in an echo of the ideal that composes the last word of the thought: “union.”

The efficient establishment of this oppositional device permeates the rest of Obama's claims throughout. At times, he switches the syntactic order, with the resulting synthesis coming first, followed by a list of divided characteristics placed in contest with one another to reinforce the main point. For instance, talking about his experiences as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side, Obama says:

I saw that the problems people faced weren't simply local in nature, that the decisions [sic] to close a steel mill was made by distant executives, that the lack of textbooks and computers in a school could be traced to skewed priorities of politicians a thousand miles away; and that when a child turns to violence—I came to realize that—there's a hole in that boy's heart that no government alone can fill. ("Official Announcement of Candidacy," lines 25-30)

In addition to the divisional parsing informing the initial overall assertion, the length of this sentence emphasizes the distance which is the theme of the first couple of statements, thereby also lending an air of far-off impossibility to the imagery of a child's hole-ridden heart being assuaged by governmental programs.

Obama later makes his signature rhetorical move of using contrast to highlight commonality: "I saw all that is America converge—farmers and teachers, businessmen and laborers, all of them with a story to tell ... all of them clamoring to be heard" ("Official Announcement of Candidacy," lines 41-43). This again primes the listener to his next significant premise, which is similarly articulated: "It was here [in Springfield] where we learned to disagree without being disagreeable; that it's possible to compromise so long as you know those principles that can never be compromised; and that so long as we're willing to listen to each other, we can assume the best in people instead of the

worst” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 45-48). In the cacophony of seemingly counterintuitive, juxtaposing notions of this last sentence, what stands out is the idea of listening to cut through all the noise—which is, one suspects, part of the point, with the core of compromise being the capacity to listen, and with his having expressed people’s desire “to be heard” a couple of sentences earlier.

Continuing on the path of verbalizing competing interests to render them as ultimately overlapping, Obama details past successes, harnessing them to future possibilities:

[T]hat’s why we were able to give health insurance to children in need; that’s why we made the tax system right here in Springfield more fair and just for working families; and that’s why we passed ethics reform that the cynics said could never, ever be passed. ... And that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a house divided to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still live, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States of America. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 50-62)

He paints a portrait of obstacles overcome, even referring to an aphorism of the Great Emancipator’s that corresponds to Obama’s own leanings toward contrarities, while invoking the tragic specter of slavery.

Playing off this idea of what he later depicts as “impossible odds” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” line 81), Obama manages to inscribe the seeming futility of effecting change as a reason for attempting to do so: “I know that I haven’t spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I’ve been there long enough to know that

the ways of Washington must change” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 66-68). Indeed, he describes his paradoxical vision of America’s purpose:

The genius of our Founders is that they designed a system of government that can be changed. ... In the face of tyranny, a band of patriots brought an empire to its knees. In the face of secession, we unified a nation and set the captives free. In the face of Depression, we put people back to work and lifted millions out of poverty. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 70-74)

Thus, it is a vision amenable to—if not dependent on—change as an essential requirement of progress.

Adding to this remarkable litany of factors counteracting each other, Obama leaves it to the listener to participate and fill in the countervailing entities to other problem-riddled enterprises: “We welcomed immigrants to our shores. We opened railroads to the west. We landed a man on the moon. And we heard a King’s call to let ‘justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream’” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 74-77). In naming these, he is stating his belief that audacious impulses have always been agents of positive social change.

Delving into his previous allusion, Obama says

That’s what Abraham Lincoln understood. He had his doubts. He had his defeats. He had his skeptics. He had his setbacks. But through his will and his words, he moved a nation and helped free a people. ... It’s because men and women of every race, from every walk of life, continued to march for freedom long after Lincoln was laid to rest, that today we have the chance to face the challenges of

this millennium together, as one people—as Americans. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 82-89)

He guides his audience yet again to the idea of unity and consensus overwhelming divisiveness.

All this, however, is prelude to a more involved rundown of national woes and how they should be addressed, accomplished in Obama’s trademark formula of listing assertions, their opposing tensions, and a resulting synthesis:

[W]e’ve been told that our mounting debts don’t matter. We’ve been told that the anxiety Americans feel about rising health care costs and stagnant wages are an illusion. We’ve been told that climate change is a hoax. We’ve been told that tough talk and an ill-conceived war can replace diplomacy, and strategy, and foresight. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 103-107)

It is in the conclusion that Obama finally suggests: “The time for that kind of politics is over. ... It’s time to turn the page” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 117-118). This is the culmination to which he has been building.

Obama goes on in this oppositional way:

But Washington has a long way to go, and it won’t be easy. That’s why we’ll have to set priorities. We’ll have to make hard choices. And although government will play a crucial role in bringing about the changes that we need, more money and programs alone will not get us to where we need to go. Each of us, in our own lives, will have to accept responsibility. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 125-129)

And after detailing what that responsibility entails, by repeating the words, “let’s be the generation that” (Obama, “Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 145, 155, 162—see Appendix 1 for more instances) to preface such promises as alleviating poverty, becoming oil-independent, and fighting terrorism (see Appendix 1 for detail), he returns to the oppositional tense to mention war issues: “But all of this cannot come to pass until we bring an end to this war in Iraq. ... Letting the Iraqis know that we will not be there forever is our last, best hope to pressure the Sunni and Shia to come to the table and find peace” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 173-182). Through his language, he demonstrates that his take on these issues grows out of the mindset in which he frames the war.

In his summation, Obama takes the time to reassure his supporters of the righteousness of their agenda, in the form of a contrastingly worded plea:

I know there are those who don’t believe we can do all these things. I understand the skepticism. After all, every four years, candidates from both parties make similar promises ... But too many times, after the election is over ... all those promises fade from memory ... That’s why this campaign can’t only be about me. It must be about us. It must be about what we can do together. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 188-199)

He thereby asks them to accept the difficulties that they will face.

Obama then reprises in this section the idea of pushing against the current, proclaiming that “few obstacles can withstand the power of millions of voices calling for change” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 203-204), before making a final

contrast between his vision of the country’s potential and its current desultory state that is laden with internally placed juxtapositions (italics added for emphasis):

if you feel destiny calling, and see as I see, the future of endless possibility stretching out before us; if you sense, as I sense, that *the time is now to shake off our slumber, and slough off our fears, and make good on the debt we owe past and future generations*, then I am ready to take up the cause, and march with you, and work with you. (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 227-231)

On a broader level, he thus pits the first two sentiments on “destiny” and the “future” against the proceeding two on “slumber” and “fears”—extending them in a final synthesis, about paying back our generational debt, before concluding by framing their preparedness as what he will ask of his supporters throughout the campaign.

Summary

Atop that rhetorical crescendo, Obama hoists one more juxtaposition after evoking the unity with which their mission will imbue his listeners: “Together we can *finish* the work that needs to be done, *and usher in* a new birth of freedom on this Earth” (“Official Announcement of Candidacy,” lines 232-233, italics added). The import of the sentence’s last clause (italics highlighting its contrast with the word “finish” that is also part of the internal contrariety of the statement prior) thereby comes to seem synonymous with Obama’s call for advocacy on his behalf—as synonymous as his antithetically informed speech patterns would become with his famed deliberative style.

New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech

Delivered January 8, 2008, after being defeated by Hillary Clinton

Overview

In the wake of Obama’s loss to Senator Hillary Clinton on January 8, 2008, his message to supporters after the New Hampshire primary—coming as it did in the face of his defeat—was meant as a morale-booster, and notable for the official rollout of what would become the campaign slogan: “Yes, we can” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” line 58). He spends the speech building on the sense of community through the structural division that was also present in the announcement of his candidacy.

Examples

Obama’s purposeful framing is present at the start:

no one imagined that we’d have accomplished what we did here tonight ... For most of this campaign, we were far behind. We always knew our climb would be steep. *But in record numbers*, you came out, and you spoke up for change. ... you made it clear that at this moment, in this election, there is something happening in America. (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 6-11—italics added)

Again, the italics represent the juxtaposition of the contrarities present, making an implicit contrast between the amount of people who voted, as Obama details in the same speech, “in the snows of January [despite having] to wait in lines that stretch block after block because they believe in what this country can be” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 13-15), and the earlier skepticism of his critics. It is the last assertion on the nation’s potential that emanates as a result of the disparate elements that Obama expounds on, comprising what he describes as what is “happening in America” (“New

Hampshire Primary Concession,” line 25)—also emanating in a synthesis—and that is part of thinking “what ... can be” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 14-15), thereby binding the citizenry to it.

Obama spends the rest of the speech depicting this diverse, multicultural and yet united citizenry. As he states: “There’s something happening when people vote *not* just for the party they belong to, *but* the hopes that they hold in common” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 20-21—italics added, to emphasize contrast). Explaining their richness of variety, he adds: “whether we are rich or poor, black or white, Latino or Asian, whether we hail from Iowa or New Hampshire, Nevada or South Carolina, we are ready to take this country in a fundamentally new direction. ... [C]hange is what’s happening in America” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 22-25). In doing this, he rhetorically links this coalition’s willingness to support him with the country’s hopeful beliefs that we can make society better.

Describing them as forming the “new American majority” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” line 26), Obama goes through their number in a method that contrasts through categorization: “We can bring doctors and patients, workers and businesses, Democrats and Republicans together” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 27-28). Here, he is playing the divisional feel against the content of what he says.

The contrasting approach also appears in Obama’s notice to the drug and insurance companies in the speech that “while they get a seat at the table, they don’t get to buy every chair” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 29-30), and in his implied admonition of the previous administration: “we will never use 9/11 as a way to

scare up votes, because it is not a tactic to win an election. It is a challenge that should unite America and the world against the common threats of the 21st century” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 43-45). This oppositional pairing evidences itself throughout, such as in the following passage: “We can *stop* sending our children to schools with corridors of shame and *start* putting them on a pathway to success. We can *stop* talking about how great teachers are and *start* rewarding them for their greatness by giving them more pay and more support. We can do this” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 33-36—italics added). The technique reflects a push/pull mentality that Obama wants to instill in his listeners for their assent to join him in his electoral fight against the likelier, establishment-set odds.

In the closing section, the candidate gives much more concrete shape to the idea of embodying impossible odds and fighting against resisting forces: “We know the battle ahead will be long. *But* always remember that, no matter what *obstacles* stand in our way, *nothing* can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 47-49—italics added). As the italics show, there are contradictory deliberations in the second sentence of that idea, as well as internal contradictions in the last section. This serves as a foundation for his next major reflection, preparing his audience to be attuned to the aural contrariety of his insight that “in the *unlikely* story that *is* America, there *has never been* anything *false* about *hope*” (“New Hampshire Primary Concession,” lines 53-54—italics added). Here, the italics stress the contradictions, and how Obama manages to make “false” and “hope” seem diametrically opposed to each other at the end of the sentence by structuring the rhythm within it so as to have that be its net impact on the listener.

Obama then runs down the signal moments in our country's progress, demonstrating their unlikely nature, and, again through juxtaposition, incorporating many of the same elements he did in his announcement: "slaves" and their fight for "freedom" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," lines 63-64); "immigrants" from "distant shores" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," line 65); "pioneers" who braved the "unforgiving wilderness" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," lines 65-66); "women who reached for the ballot" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," line 67); "a president who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king who took us to the mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," lines 67-69). It seems as if he does this in order to liken it to his own presidential run and situate himself within that history, as he stated earlier: "For when we have faced down impossible odds, when we've been told we're not ready or that we shouldn't try or that we can't, generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can" ("New Hampshire Primary Concession," lines 54-58). Furthermore, his use of "sums" indicates Obama's understanding, consciously or otherwise, of how the expression he is presenting could help achieve a new synthesis out of the reality of his having just been beaten in New Hampshire (after having won the Iowa caucus, no less, supplying a tangible case of contrariety, with a positive assertion being followed by a negative one).

Summary

"Yes, we can" perfectly encapsulates how overcoming long odds calls for being able to envision the capacity to do so and voicing the determination to take them on, despite evidence to the contrary. Simply put, the expression punctuates the result Obama

wants the speech to have on his audience—a reaction antithetical to the present situation (his loss), but consistent with the import of the contrasting devices intrinsic in his message (the belief in his capacity to win the nomination).

A More Perfect Union

Delivered March 18, 2008, in Philadelphia, PA, at the Constitution Center

Overview

Obama's speech on race provides more fodder for the theory that his message stresses an analytical method of breaking down items or terms in parts to understand the whole, with the process of division resolved in order to accentuate the culmination of ideas for the developing and extending of the significance of connectedness—enveloping it over, and placing it in the context of, a broader narrative swath. In the case of his “A More Perfect Union” address at Philadelphia's Constitution Center on March 18, 2008, Obama employs this technique for the purpose of describing how intrinsic in the Founders' aspiration toward “a more perfect union” was the complex, if not contradictory, reality that our union was not already self-contained and sufficiently perfect.

Obama's portrayal of the Constitution as needing to live up to its promise was called for by the exigency of his having to control the public relations damage that the racially tinged comments of his former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, had wrought on his campaign. It is important to note that Obama's association was seen as problematic because of the fact that Wright had only stopped being his pastor when he retired from the church a short while before the address, and Obama had not publicly denounced

Wright's statements blaming America for its problems and suggesting the country deserved them due to its policies.

Primarily, the speech strikes a note of reassurance by tying the candidate's story, along with that of his race, to the larger history of the United States, and weaving it into the complicated fabric of racial relations in America: how racism was allowed to thrive in what was allegedly a democratic union, and how the legacy of that reality has served to divide the country, eventually making space for the limited reconciliation that has brought us so far to make the progress needed, yet not far enough to overcome all imperfections. Mostly, he suggests that his life, and the larger African American experience, form part of an imperfect organism, setting his own persona firmly against the backdrop of American society, and so depicting himself as existing within it.

Examples

Once more, the message is conveyed in both the content and the structure. Referring to the Constitution, Obama states, "The document they produced was eventually signed, but ultimately unfinished. It was stained by this nation's original sin of slavery, a question that divided the colonies and brought the convention to a stalemate until the founders chose to allow the slave trade to continue" (Obama, "More Perfect Union," lines 12-15). Typically, he presents in the first sentence two opposing assertions, and synthesizes them in his next sentence—that together they made up a "stalemate."

Elaborating on the imperfection that materialized out of this state of things, the candidate says, "Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our Constitution—a Constitution that had at its very core the ideal of equal citizenship under the law" (Obama, "More Perfect Union," lines 16-18). Here, he makes

apparent the hypocrisy regarding slavery at the root of a nation that had independence and freedom as its founding mission, and foreshadows the veritable mass of contrasts that form the body of this particular talk. Indeed, the piece is a panoply of coordinating clauses and conjunctions (*not, but, yet*), as well as the occasional articulation of choices between two extremes, indicating its oppositional undertones.

For example, according to Obama in the next major section, which contrasts items: “And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and obligations as citizens of the United States” (Obama, “More Perfect Union,” lines 21-23). In the next thought, he captures the long civil rights battle as the resolution to the discrepancy between the America of dream and that of fact: “What would be needed were Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part—through protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and civil disobedience, and always at great risk—to narrow that gap between the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time” (Obama, “More Perfect Union,” lines 23-27). Indeed, as if to remind the audience that taking these actions to overturn age-old beliefs was not easy, he places, as obstacles, the fights that people had to wage in the process of fighting these outdated customs, between the sentence’s contrarian situations—neatly recapitulating his more extended rhetorical tactic on a smaller scale.

In the section following, Obama makes explicit the comparison between the hardships of the past and that of his campaign, stating:

This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this campaign ... I chose to run for President at this moment in history because I believe deeply that

we *cannot* solve the challenges of our time *unless* we solve them *together*, unless we perfect our union by understanding that *we may have different stories, but we hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction: **towards a better future for our children and our grandchildren.*** (Obama, “More Perfect Union,” lines 28-36—italics added)

In this passage, internal contrast is italicized, leading to the statement on the unity of what the speaker envisions as our commonly desired destiny, which is also in bold.

This wedding-together of differing conceptions is likewise at work in Obama’s invocation of his own multi-cultural upbringing, here similarly italicized:

I’m the son of *a black man from Kenya* and *a white woman from Kansas*. I was raised with the help of a white *grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton’s army during World War II*, and a white *grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas*. I’ve gone to *some of the best schools in America* and I’ve lived in *one of the world’s poorest nations*. (Obama, “More Perfect Union,” lines 39-44)

The connotation of marriage that made up the first two sentences of that excerpt—transferring it to the third (the circumstances of his upbringing, which his parents and grandparents were responsible for in some form or another)—is brought to the forefront in the subsequent sentence.

The merging effect occurs because it is also meant to illustrate the wide-ranging influences on his personality, which Obama explains at some length in the rest of his autobiographical introductory section (see Appendix 3). Obama next continues to tie

himself in more deeply with American patriotic notions in this oppositional style: “It’s a story that hasn’t made me the most conventional of candidates. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts—that out of many, we are truly one” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 48-51). It is this last aphorism that he uses to bring up the unity represented by his supporters, comprised as they are of “a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans” (Obama, “More Perfect Union,” lines 56-57). This unification is one of his major thematic and rhetorical devices.

Then, proclaiming the “divisive turn” (“More Perfect Union,” line 65) the campaign has taken, Obama launches into tackling head-on the issues that have come up, structuring this segment of his speech as contrarily as he has all that has come before:

On one end of the spectrum, we’ve heard the implication that my candidacy is somehow an exercise in affirmative action ... On the other end, we’ve heard my former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, use incendiary language to express views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide, but views that denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation and that rightly offend white and black alike. (“More Perfect Union,” lines 65-72)

Notable for its skillfulness is Obama’s merging of the races in that last phrase, united (at least) in their reaction to Wright, despite the presence of their divisions as well.

Moreover, as if to replicate in his analysis the alienating nature of the comments in question, Obama goes on to list the faults in Wright’s remarks:

[T]he remarks that have caused this recent firestorm weren’t simply controversial. They weren’t simply a religious leader’s effort to speak out against perceived

injustice. Instead, they expressed a profoundly distorted view of this country ... As such, Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems ... problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all. ("More Perfect Union," lines 81-94)

Of significance here is that, along with its constant use of contrast, this passage repeats words such as "divisive" and "problems" at the beginning of each of its major beats, emphasizing their importance. Indeed, each beat turns out to constitute the representing of combination of ideas that Obama posits as the solution to the current problem, or as the proper framework within which to view it.

Obama, after listing Wright's perceived sins, uses contrariety to complicate the situation: "But the truth is, that isn't all that I know of the man. The man I met more than twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith ... He is a man who served his country as a United States Marine ... and who over 30 years has led a church that serves the community by doing God's work here on Earth" ("More Perfect Union," lines 103-109). Here, he is implicitly suggesting his affinity with such a complex persona as that of his pastor.

Playing out Wright's affiliation with his Trinity United Church of Christ congregation, Obama later states:

The church contains in full the kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance, the struggles and successes, the love, and, yes, the bitterness and biases that make up the black experience in America. And this

helps explain, perhaps, my relationship with Reverend Wright. As imperfect as he may be, he has been like family to me. ... He contains within him the contradictions—the good and the bad—of the community that he has served diligently for so many years. (“More Perfect Union,” lines 133-143)

Before delving into what I believe is the centerpiece of the candidate’s address, it should be noted that this previous passage is also a touchstone in that it employs not only contrasting dualities but the idea of imperfection, to which Obama anchors the theme of the speech as a whole (perfecting our imperfect union) in order to evoke empathy from the audience toward Wright.

Obama intends that, by its end, the viewer will take away a distinct association of both Wright and Obama other than the one they have to each other: that of their both being familiar with imperfection. This works due to the extent to which the speech calls, both structurally and in its content, for the audience to conflate the contexts under which the concept of imperfection arises.

Then, however, Obama makes his crucial rhetorical move, saying,

I can no more disown *him* [Wright] than I can disown *the black community*.

I can no more disown *him* than I can disown my *white grandmother*, a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, *but* a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed her by on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe. These people are part of me. And they are part of America, this country that I love. (“More Perfect Union,” lines 144-151—italics added)

With this last expression of national solidarity, Obama accomplishes what his entire speech has been building up to: as the italics above indicate, he is contrasting these people's numerous experiences, along with their own internal contradictions, to then synthesize them with each other, himself and the country.

These four sentences are designed to blend gradually together, with the listener following the logic that Obama, his pastor, his grandmother, and all sorts of people are—by virtue of the multiplicity and multi-dimensionality of their layers of character—just as American as the Founders who established this “imperfect” union. Once more, without saying it in so many terms, Obama makes the case for reconciliation, trusting the listener to appreciate it, if only subconsciously.

The call for a willingness to address social disparities appears in Obama's eventual summing up of the views of those who might disagree with him, and his response to them that “race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now” (“More Perfect Union,” line 158). He explains the controversial statements, linking them to the history he has alluded to, and how they “reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through, a part of our union that we have not yet made perfect” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 162-164), juxtaposing it against all we would leave unsolved if we were to “walk away now” (“More Perfect Union,” line 164). He states, in his trademark oppositional parallelism, “We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist between the African American community and the larger American community today can be traced directly to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 170-174). Comparably, he states later

on, “What’s remarkable is not how many failed in the face of discrimination, but how many men and women overcame the odds, how many were able to make a way out of no way for those like me who would come after them” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 196-199). These structural parallels preface his diametrical listing of the resentments each side has of the other.

Returning to the “stalemate” he referenced early on in historical terms, Obama caps off each race’s grievances toward the other subsequently by saying,

This is where we are right now. It’s a racial stalemate we’ve been stuck in for years. Contrary to the claims of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naïve as to believe that we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle or with a single candidate ... particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own. But I have asserted a firm conviction ... that, working together, we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that, in fact, we have no choice –we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

(“More Perfect Union,” lines 254-262)

Once more, Obama rhetorically presents himself as the embodiment of imperfection. He does so to make clear that he does not place himself above the nation’s stalemate status, but rather as part of it, and as such, as determined to work in the tradition of the imperfect Founders, and alongside today’s diverse citizenry, in all its imperfections, to help perfect the country as much as possible, since, as he emphasizes a bit afterward, “it can always be perfected” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 341-342).

Actually, Obama gives voice to his vision of a nation in a never-ending, seemingly impossible, quest for perfection when he declares:

The profound mistake of Reverend Wright’s sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It’s that he spoke as if our society was static, as if no progress had been made, as if this country ... is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. What we know, what we have seen, is that America can change. That is the true genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope—the audacity to hope—for what we can and must achieve tomorrow. (“More Perfect Union,” lines 278-286)

Paradoxically, and yet quite fittingly, Obama’s argument that in America, anything is possible, rests on the premise that in order for this to be so, we must overcome, counter-intuitively, what might be initially insurmountable odds. The “genius” of “change” is in itself a contrariety: as he has mentioned in earlier speeches, Obama believes there cannot be progress without recognition of the flaws in the status quo. Our greatest asset, from this point of view, is acknowledging our deficits.

To do this, Obama implores both the black and white communities to look inward and keep improving. Toward the end of the speech, he therefore literally gives the audience two options to choose from, the essential parts of which are as follows:

For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division and conflict and cynicism. ... We can do that. But if we do, I can tell you that in the next election, we’ll be talking about some other distraction, and then another one, and then another one. And nothing will change. That is one option. Or, at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, “Not this time.” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 303-317)

He proceeds to run down seemingly intractable problems, such as “This time we want to talk about the fact that the real problem is not that someone who doesn’t look like you might take your job; it’s that the corporation you work for will ship it overseas for nothing more than a profit” (“More Perfect Union,” lines 329-332—see Appendix 3 for more instances of this), in calculated oppositions that demonstrates how such issues can be reframed if we vow to “take them on ... together” (“More Perfect Union,” line 326).

Ending on an anecdotal note, Obama tells a story of a white campaign worker and an African American man who connect at a campaign volunteer meeting by realizing that in fighting to make the world better for each other, they are fighting for themselves, for their common humanity. And then, still in contrary mode, Obama points out:

[B]y itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. ... But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the 221 years since a band of patriots signed that document right here in Philadelphia, that is where perfection begins. (“More Perfect Union,” lines 377-382)

And so, returning to the point where it started, Obama’s speech ends, with his last call being for the listener to go forth and start participating in the American experiment of self-perfection.

Summary

The speech’s bookending of the concept of America’s needing to fulfill its Constitutional promise is meant to unite not only its themes of the ever-continuing process of unity as articulated through oppositional and divisional devices, but also to

gather the listeners around the notion of each individually doing his or her part to fulfill the promise of “a more perfect union.” Just as it took human effort to perfect the union’s abstract goal of equality, it will take collective will on a small scale to follow through on that ideal, as each of us recognizes that the ability to constantly change is its own type of perfection, or the closest society will get to it, as per Obama’s establishment of it in his rhetorical use of internal contrariety.

Democratic National Convention Presidential Nomination Acceptance

Delivered August 28, 2008, in Denver, CO, at Invesco Field

Overview

Obama’s speech at the 2008 Democratic National Convention verbalizes the United States’ vision of itself as a beacon of hope and freedom while at the same time juxtaposing this against its need to change in order to fill in the gap between its aspirations and its reality. Delivered on the 45th anniversary of Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream,” Obama uses the occasion to delve into, at another key moment at which the eyes of the nation are on him, the reasons he should be President, indirectly suggesting it would be realizing a part of the promise King saw in his American dream.

Examples

At the start, Obama sets up the many challenges the nation confronts, before launching into a plethora of contrasts, expertly cultivating suspense in the listener: after all, if the structure of the address is to begin with the status quo, then at some point, one cannot help but anticipate that he will situate himself, and the policies he would enact in office, as the solution to social ills. In this way, and already somewhat familiar with his style, the audience can at once feel the shape the narrative of the speech will take:

depiction of troubles, a positive vision for the future, and persuasion as to why he is the better candidate. To wit:

Tonight, more Americans are out of work and more are working harder for less. More of you have lost your homes and even more are watching your home values plummet. More of you have cars you can't afford to drive, credit cards bills [sic] you can't afford to pay and tuition that's beyond your reach. These challenges are not all of government's making. But the failure to respond is a direct result of a broken politics in Washington and the failed policies of George W. Bush. America, we are better than these last eight years. We are a better country than this. (Obama, "Democratic National Convention," lines 36-46)

Within this oppositional framework, variations of these elements appear to varying degrees, in one arrangement or another.

Running with the implied contrast of the country's potential, Obama fleshes it out:

This country's more decent than one [where a] woman in Ohio on the brink of retirement finds herself one [illness away from] disaster [sic] ... We're a better country than one where a man in Indiana has to pack up the equipment that's [sic] he's worked on for twenty years and watch as its [sic] shipped off to China ... We are more compassionate than a government that lets veterans sleep on our streets, and families slide into poverty; that sits ... on its hands while a major American city drowns before our eyes. ... And we are here ... because we love this country too much to let the next four years look just like the last eight. ... On November

4th, we must stand up and say: “Eight is enough.” (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 46-63)

In these last two sentences, he drives home a Euclidean mathematical-type logic that gives the rest of the oppositional passage a heft of forceful persuasion.

Referring to how his opponent John McCain’s economic adviser, Phil Gramm, said America was “a nation of whiners,” Obama again utilizes division:

A nation of whiners. Tell that to the proud autoworkers at a Michigan plant who, after they found out it was closing, kept showing up everyday ... Tell that to the military families who shoulder their burden silently as they watch their loved ones leave ... These are not whiners. They work hard and they give back and keep going without complaint. These are the Americans I know. (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 84-91)

He thus counteracts Gramm’s statement by sheer contrast.

Alluding to McCain’s familiarity (or lack thereof) with these issues, Obama further uses a structure of contrariety, as follows: “Now, I don’t believe that Senator McCain doesn’t care what’s going on in the lives of Americans. I just think he doesn’t know. ... It’s not because John McCain doesn’t care; it’s because John McCain doesn’t get it” (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 92-101). Paralleling the reality of the different examples he enumerated with the policies McCain has ostensibly endorsed, Obama eviscerates him:

Why else would he [McCain] define “middle-class” as someone making under five million dollars a year? How else could he propose hundreds of billions in tax breaks for big corporations and oil companies but not one penny of tax relief to

more than one hundred million Americans? How else could he offer a health care plan that would actually tax people's benefits, or an education plan that would do nothing to help families pay for college, or a plan that would privatize Social Security and gamble your retirement? ("Democratic National Convention," lines 93-100)

Explicitly, he fulfills briskly the purpose behind this instance of his contrasting rhetoric: to show how oblivious the Republican is.

Later on, Obama launches into another harangue starting with "You don't defeat a terrorist network that operates in 80 countries by occupying Iraq" ("Democratic National Convention," lines 257-258—see Appendix 4 for detail), using this introductory formulation to distinguish McCain's flawed approach to a host of foreign policy issues from his own, via a method that makes McCain's lack of good sense seem self-evident.

Expanding on what he deems the "discredited Republican philosophy" ("Democratic National Convention," line 103) of trickle-down economics, Obama uses antithetical statements: "In Washington, they call this the 'Ownership Society,' but what it really means is that you're on your own. Out of work? Tough luck, you're on your own. No health care? The market will fix it. You're on your own. Born into poverty? Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, even if you don't have boots" ("Democratic National Convention," lines 105-108). The structural force of these examples is meant to carry over into later instances.

This carry-over becomes readily apparent in the candidate's next major section, when he contrasts the vision he and his fellow Democrats have of the American promise with that of the Republicans', explaining, "We measure the strength of our economy not

by the number of billionaires we have or the profits of the Fortune 500, but by whether someone with a good idea can take a risk and start a new business” (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 119-121—see Appendix 4 for more detail).

Thus, Obama uses the strategy of systematically juxtaposing the situation of the well-off in the United States with that of the not-so-well-off.

Prior to listing what he intends to accomplish as President, Obama further states, “America, now is not the time for small plans” (“Democratic National Convention,” line 197), and before each of the succeeding items he wants to implement, he uses the clause, “Now is the time” (“Democratic National Convention,” line 197—see Appendix 4 for more detail). This has the effect of both stressing what he’s for while simultaneously pointing out what Republicans presumably would be against.

Still, going beyond bashing Republicans, Obama eventually finds fault in some of the Democrats’ excesses as well:

Yes, we must provide more ladders to success for young men who fall into lives of crime and despair. But we must also admit that programs alone can’t replace parents, that government can’t turn off the television and make a child do her homework, that fathers must take more responsibility to provide love and guidance to their children. (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 233-237)

All this leads to the characteristic culmination of his rhetoric: “Individual responsibility and mutual responsibility, that’s the essence of America’s promise” (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 237-238). This is a fusing of both conservative and liberal values.

Likewise, after surveying opposing sides and positing a consensus for various controversies such as abortion, gun control, same-sex marriage, and immigration, he says, “this [consensus] too is part of America’s promise, the promise of a democracy where we can find the strength and grace to bridge divides and unite in common effort” (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 311-312). The conciliation is rhetorically built from contrast, in the tradition of many others he poses.

Summary

As he closes, Obama mentions how the promise of consensus directly ties in to the day’s historical significance:

And it is that promise that, 45 years ago today, brought Americans from every corner of this land to stand together on a Mall in Washington ... The men and women who gathered there could’ve heard many things. They could’ve heard words of anger and discord. They could’ve been told to succumb to the fear and frustrations of so many dreams deferred. But what the people heard instead—people of every creed and color, from every walk of life—is that, in America, our destiny is inextricably linked, that together our dreams can be one. (“Democratic National Convention,” lines 362-369)

Here, Obama’s use of contrast extends from its rhythmic structure to its content, informing the theme of joining different forces to achieve the country’s potential. Or, rather, the contrasting style is part and parcel of that message, and its relation to the substance of it is just as inextricable as how Obama defines our collective destiny. It is the type of rhetorical contrast that he has been employing all throughout, demonstrating

through language that such a process of mediating our problems is possible—even integral—to the American promise.

President-Elect Victory Speech

Delivered November 4, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, at Grant Park, after defeating John McCain in the general election

Overview

Echoing the major themes of Martin Luther King’s civil disobedience movement for the equal rights of African Americans, Barack Obama’s address upon his election as the 44th president of the United States on November 4, 2008, marks the barrier-breaking nature of the occasion with tonal nods to King, reprising many of the issues raised by the candidate in the campaign, along with casting the event as partly a fulfillment of what Obama referred to in his DNC nomination acceptance as “America’s promise.”

Examples

Initiating his oration by showcasing the oppositional frame with which his expressive language gains the force of logic, Obama states, “If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 2-4). And so, his characteristic use of contrasting pairs (both to each other, as in the first part of that sentence, and with the first part itself in tension to the second half of the sentence) is foreshadowed in the very first moments.

Later on, Obama returns to the systematic contrasting rhythm that has informed both the rhetorical form of his own campaign and of his counter-establishment message:

I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to. It belongs to you. ... I know you didn't do this just to win an election. And I know you didn't do it for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. ... The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even in one term. But, America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. ("President-Elect Victory," lines 50-77)

Here, Obama has made three sets of juxtapositions—transferring the success and causes of his election onto that of his supporters, and stressing the overwhelming difficulties that need overcoming, before, in his last pivot, declaring that we will prevail.

As if to reinforce the hard work that will take, he goes on in this methodical assertion of negative points before positive ones:

There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with every decision or policy I make as President. And we know that government can't solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. ... What began 21 months ago in the depths of winter cannot end on this autumn night. This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It can't happen without you. ("President-Elect Victory," lines 78-88)

This echoes the description of Lincoln's tribulations that he provided in announcing his candidacy.

The newly elected President then goes on to elucidate some of that mental framework that needs adjusting, using oppositional constructions to remind us to "look

after not only ourselves but each other” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 90-91), and “that, if this financial crisis taught us anything, it’s that we cannot have a thriving Wall Street while Main Street suffers. In this country, we rise or fall as one nation, as one people” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 91-93). The latter, positive points have the pride of place that comes with being in a sentence’s stress position.

Summary

Obama’s victory speech is most notable for the perspective it provides on the evolution of, and variations on, Obama’s major points of interest and their articulation throughout the campaign. Some of it plays like a compilation of his most famous lines, such as his expounding on the response to the cynics that his election comprises:

It’s the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different; that their voices could be that difference.

It’s the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled—Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America!

(“President-Elect Victory,” lines 6-15)

Here, he weaves into his address the themes of consensus arrived at by people from across the social spectrum that is consistent with both his message and its juxtaposing

construction, in such speeches as the announcement of his candidacy and his concession speech in New Hampshire, and even going back to his 2004 DNC keynote address.

Seeking to instill fortitude in his constituents, Obama requests they join together in common cause: “I will ask you to join in the work of remaking this nation, the only way it’s been done in America for 221 years—block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by calloused hand ... [while] summon[ing] a new spirit of patriotism” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 81-89). Doing so, he applies the reality of their present win in an oppositional way to the task of governing.

Echoing the “More Perfect Union” speech, Obama also later states: “That’s the true genius of America: that America can change. Our union can be perfected. What we’ve already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must achieve tomorrow” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 117-119). In listing other numerous trials that Americans have endured in order to build up to a closing reprise of the “Yes we can” motto, he positions his election as one of those moments, expanding on his earlier veiled reference to MLK’s “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” that “we will get there” (“President-Elect Victory,” line 77), all by force of placing his victory, and the long road ahead, alongside them, with the penultimate one being as follows: “She [Ann Nixon Cooper, an African American who voted for him] was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that ‘we shall overcome’: Yes we can” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 139-141). Finally, he says, “And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change: Yes we can” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 144-

146). Obama's victory is thus subtly cast as one in a long line of singular historical accomplishments that includes the civil rights movement.

In his closing statements, then, on his campaign's success, Obama's election emerges as akin to King's call for action not only in rhetorical form ("we shall overcome" is analogous to "yes we can"), but also due to the grassroots nature of the forces that fueled both endeavors. As Obama states, "America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. *But* there is so much more to do. ... This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time" ("President-Elect Victory," lines 147-151, italics added to emphasize contrast). His is a sentiment layered with the additional impact of the more obvious contrast that, whereas King advocated for civil disobedience, Obama's electoral win came as the result of the civil process of transition in an orderly democracy. This is a win the nature of which Obama indicates as emanating from the synthesis between the history of our country's struggles and the recognition of the need to address its contemporary difficulties, culminating in this being "our moment ... our time"—the fact of his election itself thus representing a historic achievement in juxtaposition to past hardships.

As this study has illustrated through specific examples, much of the force of Obama's rhetoric emerged from his propensity for contrast—including through such specific methods as division, opposition, and contrarities—that managed to convey to the electorate the complexities of situations in ways that were simultaneously logically and aesthetically inflected. In general, Obama employed contrast the objective of which was to depict variety before characterizing consensus as being possible, through a verbal synthesis of antithetical statements. He frequently uses the division intrinsic to contrast to

break down an initially proffered synthesizing statement into its constituent parts, thereby inverting the pattern.

Most significantly, there is a rhetorical—if not necessarily moral—equivalence engendered by Obama’s consistent pitting of contrarities that reaches its apex, as described previously, in his “A More Perfect Union.” During its key passage explaining his relationship with Jeremiah Wright, Obama distinguishes his pastor from the larger African American community, as well as from Obama’s own grandmother, to make the point that he cannot disown either, before suggestively coalescing both with himself, and then with the country. He thereby synthesizes not only them, but himself—through a process of logical transference and inferred unity—as “part of America, this country that I love” (Appendix 3, lines 150-151).

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Ultimately, Obama's success owes much to his verbalizing the reasons for why he should be elected in a manner that resulted in a majority of the electorate wanting to do more than just vote for him: people worked on his behalf, canvassing and organizing to make sure others voted for him as well, attesting to the presence of a stimulation borne out of a factor beyond sheer charisma. Presenting the casting of a vote for him in the guise of a unity that could only be achieved, paradoxically, by recognizing our differences—or at least by accepting his interpretation, characterizations, and categorizations of them—and by electing him to help us overcome them, he used contrast rhetorically to demonstrate he knew what he was talking about, persuading the electorate of the same.

A potential avenue for further research, then, might be to study how common this technique is for politicians in general. Contrast, division and unity are endemic in campaign discourse precisely because political races involve running against someone else, but as I have shown, Obama's take on these devices applies to complex issues that have to be distilled to their essence for a mass audience, while maintaining the integrity of the subject matter and being adequately explicated. Issues are often divisive and so must be presented as such, yet care is taken to instill a consensus in the audience that the speaker's viewpoint is the correct one, and should be adopted—the result of this being, in the present case, throwing support behind a candidate. This consensus is achieved, then, on a linguistic level, so as to be perceived by and responded to in kind by the listener.

As an illustrative comparison, there is Hillary Clinton, another politician, who most notably employed antithetical structure at a crucial moment in the 2008 campaign. Though her oratory was not as pronounced, and therefore not as remarked-upon, a feature of her campaign discourse as that of her principal rival for the Democratic nomination, the fact remains that in the time between her loss in the Iowa caucus and her win in the New Hampshire primary, a critical point for Clinton's image in the media came by way of a stop at a café at which she was asked how she handled the stress of being in the public eye.

Her response—commenting on the difficulty of constant scrutiny and on her willingness to undergo it because of her dedication to doing right by the nation that had given her so many opportunities—was followed up with the following remarks:

You know, *this is* very personal for me. *It's not* just political ... *it's not* just public. I see *what's happening*, and we have to *reverse it*. ... Some people think elections are *a game*, they think it's like who's up or who's down, [*shaking her head*] *it's about our country*, it's about our kids' futures, and it's really about all of us together ... You know, some of us put ourselves out there and do this against some pretty difficult odds, and we do it, each one of us, because we care about our country, *but* some of us are *right* and some of us are *wrong*, some of us *are ready* and some of us *are not*, some of us *know what we will do* on day one and some of us *haven't really thought that through enough*. (“Teary Hillary,” italics added)

While most of the press attention centered on her emotional affect (Snow), I have italicized above what I find intriguing about the way she outlines her thoughts, which are

structural variations on the antithetical technique that I have looked at in Obama’s rhetoric—such as assertion followed by contradiction and another assertion, choices between extremes, lists of disparate characteristics followed by their synthesis, implied contrasts, or detailed parallels. Most significant, from my perspective: she won the primary.

Thus, the strategy of negative comparison could in this way be expanded to include rhetoric that expressly displays deliberative purpose. In Obama’s case, such examples from his presidency include that of his first press conference, where he stated, “I’m happy to get good ideas from across the political spectrum, from Democrats and Republicans. *What I won’t do* is return to the failed theories of the last eight years that got us into this fix in the first place” (Sweet, italics added). Also, in his first official State of the Union address to Congress, the following passage stands out:

We’ve already identified 20 billion dollars in savings for next year. To help working families, *we’ll extend* our middle-class tax cuts. *But* at a time of record deficits, *we will not continue* tax cuts for oil companies, for investment fund managers, and for those making over 250,000 dollars a year. We just can’t afford it. (Obama, “First Presidential State of the Union,” italics added)

In both of these examples, Obama’s proclaiming his actions in the negative—“won’t do”; “will not continue”—as opposed to the positive— with “will avoid” and “will stop” as respective ways he could do so—might also point to larger issues of how even when the antithesis is not prolonged, but consists of a key phrase, that is sufficient for persuasive force. Determining how people in general adapt this technique in shorthand into everyday conversation might shed even more light on its communication-enhancing qualities.

There are also a couple of types of antitheses, the further understanding of which would be helpful to a more comprehensive analysis of political rhetoric. Rhetorician Edward P.J. Corbett points out the explanation in *Rhetorica ad Alexendrum* that, according to Corbett, antithesis “can reside either in the words or in the ideas or in both” (430), with the first category contrasting terms like “rich” and “poor”; the second contrasting actions such as “I tended him when he was sick, but he has been the cause of very great misfortune to me”; and the third contrasting both words and actions, such as in “It is not fair that my opponent should become rich by possessing what belongs to me, while I sacrifice my property and become a mere beggar” (qtd. in Corbett 430). The listing of the differing aims of antithesis could be commensurate with the many overarching theories, as my survey of other scholars’ analyses of Obama’s rhetoric indicates, as to the power behind his antithetically constructed discourse.

Whether it be Frank and McPhail’s emphasis on its force of coherence and its explication of the prophetic tradition; Rowland and Jones’ interpretation of it as a way to recast the American Dream; Terrill’s examination of the double-consciousness-raising accomplished by its verbal and structural dualities; or Darsey’s study of Obama’s application of it to the American journey metaphor, there has been much work done by those who have tried to put the discursively antithetical technique in its proper context. Combining any one of these with a more sustained investigation into Obama’s consistently deliberative discursive pattern might yield wider understanding as to its intrinsically appealing characteristics.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the Associated Press has identified the now-President’s most-oft used expression as “let me be clear” (Feller). Juxtaposed against

Obama's propensity toward antithesis, the premium he places on clarity might be due his awareness of the extent to which the effectiveness of conveying his message to the American people has contributed to his success. White House spokesman Josh Earnest describes it thusly: "While some in Washington seek political advantage by hiding behind ambiguity ... the president regularly seeks to make it clear where he stands and what he intends to do" (Feller). However, the expression of wanting clarity does not in itself just help along this professedly sought-after straightforwardness, but it supplements Obama's antithetical style, considering that his contrariety-laden remarks frequently follow them.

Obama is definitely attempting to make complicated issues more digestible, for instance, with such statements as "Let me be clear ... I do not view it [winning the Nobel Prize] as a recognition of my own accomplishments, but rather as an affirmation of American leadership on behalf of aspirations held by people in all nations" (Feller) or "Let me be clear: Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile activity poses a real threat, not just to the United States, but to Iran's neighbors and our allies" (Feller). Underlying these examples is an implicit logic that he displays at the rhetorical level by a direct rendering of the facts at hand in a deliberative manner.

As cited previously, Obama's deliberative, antithetical mode of articulation is likewise present in his election-night victory speech, in which, illustrating the meaning of his campaign slogan by way of analogy, he points to the problems that one specific black, female 106-year-old voter lived through as a case study in American history: "I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America—the *heartache* and *the hope*; *the struggle* and *the progress*; the times we were told that *we can't*, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: *Yes we can*" (Obama, "President-Elect," lines 127-

130—italics added). Continuing by putting a range of obstacles—from women’s suffrage, to the Great Depression, to World War II—in direct coupling with their solutions—such as “When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 136-137), and following them each with “Yes we can” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 137-138—see Appendix 5 for more detail)—Obama gives form to the paradoxical idea that there is no progress without challenge. When, in his closing section, Obama reiterates that “where we are met with cynicism and doubt and those who tell us that we can’t, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can” (“President-Elect Victory,” lines 155-157), the slogan yet again becomes the ultimate synthesis of all the facets of his message to voters.

And it is at this point that Obama’s implication becomes clearer, and as reasonable-sounding as his many verbalized juxtapositions, if not directly causal. This time, the synthesis of antithetical statements is borne out of more recent historical precedent: Obama instills in the listener the dawning realization that the expression “yes we can” is now more plausible than ever because of the slightly different, if not exactly diametrically opposed, assertion that “yes we did.” His election therefore resonates not only as the culmination of his persuasively framed message of hope and change, but—through its deliberately presented wording as the demonstration of the achievement of a huge accomplishment in contrast with its unlikely odds—as the indicative, even logical, product of that message.

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Appendix 1

Official Announcement of Candidacy for President of the United States

[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

1 Hello Springfield! ...Look at all of you. Look at all of you. Goodness. Thank you
2 so much. Thank you so much. Giving all praise and honor to God for bringing us
3 here today. Thank you so much. I am -- I am so grateful to see all of you. You
4 guys are still cheering back there? [to audience on left.]

5 Let me -- Let me begin by saying thanks to all you who've traveled, from far and
6 wide, to brave the cold today. I know it's a little chilly -- but I'm fired up.
7

8 You know, we all made this journey for a reason. It's humbling to see a crowd
9 like this, but in my heart I know you didn't just come here for me. You...came
10 here because you believe in what this country can be. In the face of war, you
11 believe there can be peace. In the face of despair, you believe there can be hope.
12 In the face of a politics that shut you out, that's told you to settle, that's divided us
13 for too long, you believe that we can be one people, reaching for what's possible,
14 building that more perfect union.

15 That's the journey we're on today. But let me tell you how I came to be here. As
16 most of you know, I'm not a native of this great state. I -- I moved to Illinois over
17 two decades ago. I was a young man then, just a year out of college. I knew no
18 one in Chicago when I arrived, was without money or family connections. But a
19 group of churches had offered me a job as a community organizer for the grand
20 sum of 13,000 dollars a year. And I accepted the job, sight unseen, motivated then
21 by a single, simple, powerful idea: that I might play a small part in building a
22 better America.

23 My work took me to some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. I joined with
24 pastors and lay-people to deal with communities that had been ravaged by plant
25 closings. I saw that the problems people faced weren't simply local in nature, that
26 the decisions to close a steel mill was made by distant executives, that the lack of
27 textbooks and computers in a school could be traced to skewed priorities of
28 politicians a thousand miles away, and that when a child turns to violence -- I
29 came to realize that -- there's a hole in that boy's heart that no government alone
30 can fill.

31 It was in these neighborhoods that I received the best education that I ever had,
32 and where I learned the meaning of my Christian faith.
33

34 After three years of this work, I went to law school, because I wanted to
35 understand how the law should work for those in need. I became a civil rights
36 lawyer, and taught constitutional law, and after a time, I came to understand that
37 our cherished rights of liberty and equality depend on the active participation of
38 an awakened electorate. It was with these ideas in mind that I arrived in this
39 capital city as a state Senator.

40

41 It -- It was here, in Springfield, where I saw all that is America converge --
42 farmers and teachers, businessmen and laborers, all of them with a story to tell, all
43 of them seeking a seat at the table, all of them clamoring to be heard. I made
44 lasting friendships here, friends that I see here in the audience today. It was here -
45 - It was here where we learned to disagree without being disagreeable; that it's
46 possible to compromise so long as you know those principles that can never be
47 compromised; and that so long as we're willing to listen to each other, we can
48 assume the best in people instead of the worst.

49

50 That's why we were able to reform a death penalty system that was broken; that's
51 why we were able to give health insurance to children in need; that's why we
52 made the tax system right here in Springfield more fair and just for working
53 families; and that's why we passed ethics reform that the cynics said could never,
54 ever be passed.

55

56 It was here, in Springfield, where North, South, East, and West come together that
57 I was reminded of the essential decency of the American people -- where I came
58 to believe that through this decency, we can build a more hopeful America. And
59 that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on
60 a house divided to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still
61 live, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the
62 United States of America.

63 Now -- Now, listen, I -- I... -- thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. [to
64 audience chanting "Obama"]

65 Look, I -- I...recognize that there is a certain presumptuousness in this, a certain
66 audacity, to this announcement. I know that I haven't spent a lot of time learning
67 the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways
68 of Washington must change.

69

70 The genius of our Founders is that they designed a system of government that can
71 be changed. And we should take heart, because we've changed this country
72 before. In the face of tyranny, a band of patriots brought an empire to its knees. In
73 the face of secession, we unified a nation and set the captives free. In the face of
74 Depression, we put people back to work and lifted millions out of poverty. We
75 welcomed immigrants to our shores. We opened railroads to the west. We landed
76 a man on the moon. And we heard a King's call to let "justice roll down like
77 waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

78 We've done this before: Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and
79 done what's needed to be done. Today we are called once more, and it is time for
80 our generation to answer that call. For that is our unyielding faith -- that in -- in
81 the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it.

82 That's what Abraham Lincoln understood. He had his doubts. He had his defeats.
83 He had his skeptics. He had his setbacks. But through his will and his words, he
84 moved a nation and helped free a people. It's because of the millions who rallied
85 to his cause that we're no longer divided, North and South, slave and free. It's
86 because men and women of every race, from every walk of life, continued to
87 march for freedom long after Lincoln was laid to rest, that today we have the
88 chance to face the challenges of this millennium together, as one people -- as
89 Americans.

90
91 All of us know what those challenges are today: a war with no end, a dependence
92 on oil that threatens our future, schools where too many children aren't learning,
93 and families struggling paycheck to paycheck despite working as hard as they
94 can. We know the challenges. We've heard them. We've talked about them for
95 years.

96
97 What's stopped us from meeting these challenges is not the absence of sound
98 policies and sensible plans. What's stopped us is the failure of leadership, the
99 smallness -- the smallness of our politics -- the ease with which we're distracted
100 by the petty and trivial, our chronic avoidance of tough decisions, our preference
101 for scoring cheap political points instead of rolling up our sleeves and building a
102 working consensus to tackle the big problems of America.

103 For the past six years we've been told that our mounting debts don't matter. We've
104 been told that the anxiety Americans feel about rising health care costs and
105 stagnant wages are an illusion. We've been told that climate change is a hoax.
106 We've been told that tough talk and an ill-conceived war can replace diplomacy,
107 and strategy, and foresight. And when all else fails, when Katrina happens, or the
108 death toll in Iraq mounts, we've been told that our crises are somebody else's fault.
109 We're distracted from our real failures, and told to blame the other Party, or gay
110 people, or immigrants.

111
112 And as people have looked away in disillusionment and frustration, we know
113 what's filled the void: the cynics, the lobbyists, the special interests -- who've
114 turned our government into a game only they can afford to play. They write the
115 checks and you get stuck with the bill. They get the access while you get to write
116 a letter. They think they own this government, but we're here today to take it
117 back. The time for that kind of politics is over. It is through. It's time to turn the
118 page -- right here and right now.

119 Now look --

120 [Audience chants "Obama...Obama...Obama"]

121 Okay. Alright. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
122

123 Look, look, we have made some progress already. I was proud to help lead the
124 fight in Congress that led to the most sweeping ethics reforms since Watergate.
125 But Washington has a long way to go, and it won't be easy. That's why we'll have
126 to set priorities. We'll have to make hard choices. And although government will
127 play a crucial role in bringing about the changes that we need, more money and
128 programs alone will not get us to where we need to go. Each of us, in our own
129 lives, will have to accept responsibility -- for instilling an ethic of achievement in
130 our children, for adapting to a more competitive economy, for strengthening our
131 communities, and sharing some measure of sacrifice.

132 So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation.
133 Let us be the generation that reshapes our economy to compete in the digital age.
134 Let's set high standards for our schools and give them the resources they need to
135 succeed. Let's recruit a new army of teachers, and give them better pay and more
136 support in exchange for more accountability. Let's make college more affordable,
137 and let's invest in scientific research, and let's lay down broadband lines through
138 the heart of inner cities and rural towns all across America. We can do that.

139 And as our economy changes, let's be the generation that ensures our nation's
140 workers are sharing in our prosperity. Let's protect the hard-earned benefits their
141 companies have promised. Let's make it possible for hardworking Americans to
142 save for retirement. Let's allow our unions and their organizers to lift up this
143 country's middle-class again. We can do that.
144

145 Let's be the generation that ends poverty in America. Every single person willing
146 to work should be able to get job training that leads to a job, and earn a living
147 wage that can pay the bills, and afford child care so their kids can have a safe
148 place to go when they work. We can do this.
149

150 And let's be the generation that finally, after all these years, tackles our health care
151 crisis. We can control costs by focusing on prevention, by providing better
152 treatment to the chronically ill, and using technology to cut the bureaucracy. Let's
153 be the generation that says right here, right now: We will have universal health
154 care in America by the end of the next President's first term. We can do that.

155 Let's be the generation that finally frees America from the tyranny of oil. We can
156 harness homegrown, alternative fuels like ethanol and spur the production of more
157 fuel-efficient cars. We can set up a system for capping greenhouse gases. We can
158 turn this crisis of global warming into a moment of opportunity for innovation,
159 and job creation, and an incentive for businesses that will serve as a model for the
160 world. Let's be the generation that makes future generations proud of what we did
161 here.

162 Most of all, let's be the generation that never forgets what happened on that
163 September day and confront the terrorists with everything we've got. Politics
164 doesn't have to divide us on this anymore; we can work together to keep our
165 country safe. I've worked with the Republican Senator Dick Lugar to pass a law
166 that will secure and destroy some of the world's deadliest weapons. We can work
167 together to track down terrorists with a stronger military. We can tighten the net
168 around their finances. We can improve our intelligence capabilities and finally get
169 homeland security right. But let's also understand that ultimate victory against our
170 enemies will only come by rebuilding our alliances and exporting those ideals that
171 bring hope and opportunity to millions of people around the globe.

172 We can do those things.

173 But all of this cannot come to pass until we bring an end to this war in Iraq. Most
174 of you know -- Most of you know that I opposed this war from the start. I thought
175 it was a tragic mistake. Today we grieve for the families who have lost loved
176 ones, the hearts that have been broken, and the young lives that could have been.
177 America, it is time to start bringing our troops home. It's time -- It's time to admit
178 that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies
179 at the heart of someone else's civil war. That's why I have a plan that will bring
180 our combat troops home by March of 2008. Let the Iraqis know -- Letting the
181 Iraqis know that we will not be there forever is our last, best hope to pressure the
182 Sunni and Shia to come to the table and find peace.

183
184 And there's one other thing that it's not too late to get right about this war, and that
185 is the homecoming of the men and women, our veterans, who have sacrificed the
186 most. Let us honor their courage by providing the care they need and rebuilding
187 the military they love. Let us be the generation that begins that work.

188 I know there are those who don't believe we can do all these things. I understand
189 the skepticism. After all, every four years, candidates from both Parties make
190 similar promises, and I expect this year will be no different. All of us running for
191 President will travel around the country offering ten-point plans and making
192 grand speeches; all of us will trumpet those qualities we believe make us uniquely
193 qualified to lead this country. But too many times, after the election is over, and
194 the confetti is swept away, all those promises fade from memory, and the
195 lobbyists and special interests move in, and people turn away, disappointed as
196 before, left to struggle on their own.

197
198 That's why this campaign can't only be about me. It must be about us. It must be
199 about what we can do together. This campaign must be the occasion, the vehicle,
200 of your hopes, and your dreams. It will take your time, your energy, and your
201 advice to push us forward when we're doing right, and let us know when we're
202 not. This campaign has to be about reclaiming the meaning of citizenship,
203 restoring our sense of common purpose, and realizing that few obstacles can
204 withstand the power of millions of voices calling for change.

205
206 By ourselves, this change will not happen. Divided, we are bound to fail. But the
207 life of a tall, gangly, self-made Springfield lawyer tells us that a different future is
208 possible.

209 He tells us that there is power in words.

210 He tells us that there's power in conviction.
211
212 That beneath all the differences of race and region, faith and station, we are one
213 people.
214
215 He tells us that there's power in hope.
216
217 As Lincoln organized the forces arrayed against slavery, he was heard to say this:
218 "Of strange, discordant, and even hostile elements, we gathered from the four
219 winds, and formed and fought to battle through."¹
220
221 That is our purpose here today. That is why I am in this race -- not just to hold an
222 office, but to gather with you to transform a nation. I want -- I want to win that
223 next battle -- for justice and opportunity. I want to win that next battle -- for better
224 schools, and better jobs, and better health care for all. I want us to take up the
225 unfinished business of perfecting our union, and building a better America.
226
227 And if you will join with me in this improbable quest, if you feel destiny calling,
228 and see as I see, the future of endless possibility stretching out before us; if you
229 sense, as I sense, that the time is now to shake off our slumber, and slough off our
230 fears, and make good on the debt we owe past and future generations, then I am
231 ready to take up the cause, and march with you, and work with you -- today.

232 Together we can finish the work that needs to be done, and usher in a new birth of
233 freedom on this Earth.

234 Thank you very much everybody -- let's get to work! I love you. Thank you.

Appendix 2

New Hampshire Primary Concession Speech

[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

- 1 Thank you, New Hampshire. I love you back. Thank you. Thank you. Well, thank
2 you so much. I am still fired up and ready to go.
- 3 Well, first of all, I want to congratulate Senator Clinton on a hard-fought victory
4 here in New Hampshire. She did an outstanding job. Give her a big round of
5 applause.
- 6 You know, a few weeks ago, no one imagined that we'd have accomplished what
7 we did here tonight in New Hampshire. No one could have imagined it. For most
8 of this campaign, we were far behind. We always knew our climb would be steep.
9 But in record numbers, you came out, and you spoke up for change. And with
10 your voices and your votes, you made it clear that at this moment, in this election,
11 there is something happening in America.
- 12 There is something happening when men and women in Des Moines and
13 Davenport, in Lebanon and Concord, come out in the snows of January to wait in
14 lines that stretch block after block because they believe in what this country can
15 be.
- 16 There is something happening. There's something happening when Americans
17 who are young in age and in spirit, who've never participated in politics before,
18 turn out in numbers we have never seen because they know in their hearts that this
19 time must be different.
- 20 There's something happening when people vote not just for the party that they
21 belong to, but the hopes that they hold in common.
- 22 And whether we are rich or poor, black or white, Latino or Asian, whether we hail
23 from Iowa or New Hampshire, Nevada or South Carolina, we are ready to take
24 this country in a fundamentally new direction. That's what's happening in
25 America right now; change is what's happening in America.
- 26 Our new American majority can end the outrage of unaffordable, unavailable
27 health care in our time. We can bring doctors and patients, workers and
28 businesses, Democrats and Republicans together, and we can tell the drug and
29 insurance industry that, while they get a seat at the table, they don't get to buy
30 every chair, not this time, not now.

31 Our new majority can end the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs
32 overseas and put a middle-class tax cut in the pockets of working Americans who
33 deserve it. We can stop sending our children to schools with corridors of shame
34 and start putting them on a pathway to success. We can stop talking about how
35 great teachers are and start rewarding them for their greatness by giving them
36 more pay and more support. We can do this with our new majority. We can
37 harness the ingenuity of farmers and scientists, citizens and entrepreneurs to free
38 this nation from the tyranny of oil and save our planet from a point of no return.

39 And when I am President of the United States, we will end this war in Iraq and
40 bring our troops home. We will end this war in Iraq. We will bring our troops
41 home. We will finish the job -- We will finish the job against al-Qaida in
42 Afghanistan. We will care for our veterans. We will restore our moral standing in
43 the world. And we will never use 9/11 as a way to scare up votes, because it is not
44 a tactic to win an election. It is a challenge that should unite America and the
45 world against the common threats of the 21st century: terrorism and nuclear
46 weapons, climate change and poverty, genocide and disease.

47 We know the battle ahead will be long. But always remember that, no matter what
48 obstacles stand in our way, nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions
49 of voices calling for change.

50 We have been told we cannot do this by a chorus of cynics. And they will only
51 grow louder and more dissonant in the weeks and months to come. We've been
52 asked to pause for a reality check. We've been warned against offering the people
53 of this nation false hope. But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never
54 been anything false about hope. For when we have faced down impossible odds,
55 when we've been told we're not ready or that we shouldn't try or that we can't,
56 generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the
57 spirit of a people:

58 Yes, we can.

59 Yes, we can.

60 Yes, we can.

61 It was a creed written into the founding documents that declared the destiny of a
62 nation -- yes, we can.

63 It was whispered by slaves and abolitionists as they blazed a trail towards
64 freedom through the darkest of nights -- yes, we can.

65 It was sung by immigrants as they struck out from distant shores and pioneers
66 who pushed westward against an unforgiving wilderness -- yes, we can.

- 67 It was the call of workers who organized, women who reached for the ballot, a
68 President who chose the moon as our new frontier, and a king who took us to the
69 mountaintop and pointed the way to the promised land -- yes, we can, to justice
70 and equality.
- 71 Yes, we can, to opportunity and prosperity.
- 72 Yes, we can heal this nation.
- 73 Yes, we can repair this world.
- 74 Yes, we can.
- 75 Together, we will begin the next great chapter in the American story, with three
76 words that will ring from coast to coast, from sea to shining sea: Yes, we can.
- 77 Thank you, New Hampshire.
- 78 Thank you. Thank you.

Appendix 3

A More Perfect Union

[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

1 Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.
2 Thank you. Let me begin by thanking Harris Wofford for his contributions to this
3 country. In so many different ways, he exemplifies what we mean by the word
4 “citizen.” And so we are very grateful to him for all the work he has done; and
5 I’m thankful for the gracious and thoughtful introduction.

6 “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union.” Two hundred and twenty
7 one years ago, in a hall that still stands across the street, a group of men gathered
8 and, with these simple words, launched America’s improbable experiment in
9 democracy. Farmers and scholars, statesmen and patriots who had traveled across
10 the ocean to escape tyranny and persecution finally made real their Declaration of
11 Independence at a Philadelphia convention that lasted through the spring of 1787.

12 The document they produced was eventually signed, but ultimately unfinished. It
13 was stained by this nation’s original sin of slavery, a question that divided the
14 colonies and brought the convention to a stalemate until the founders chose to
15 allow the slave trade to continue for at least 20 more years, and to leave any final
16 resolution to future generations. Of course, the answer to the slavery question was
17 already embedded within our Constitution – a Constitution that had at its very core
18 the ideal of equal citizenship under the law; a Constitution that promised its
19 people liberty and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over
20 time.

21 And yet words on a parchment would not be enough to deliver slaves from
22 bondage, or provide men and women of every color and creed their full rights and
23 obligations as citizens of the United States. What would be needed were
24 Americans in successive generations who were willing to do their part – through
25 protests and struggles, on the streets and in the courts, through a civil war and
26 civil disobedience, and always at great risk – to narrow that gap between the
27 promise of our ideals and the reality of their time.

28 This was one of the tasks we set forth at the beginning of this presidential
29 campaign: to continue the long march of those who came before us, a march for a
30 more just, more equal, more free, more caring, and more prosperous America. I
31 chose to run for President at this moment in history because I believe deeply that
32 we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together, unless
33 we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we
34 hold common hopes; that we may not look the same and may not have come from
35 the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction: towards a better

36 future for our children and our grandchildren. And this belief comes from my
37 unyielding faith in the decency and generosity of the American people. But it also
38 comes from my own story.

39 I'm the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was
40 raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in
41 Patton's army during World War II, and a white grandmother who worked on a
42 bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to
43 some of the best schools in America and I've lived in one of the world's poorest
44 nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of
45 slaves and slave owners, an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters.
46 I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles, and cousins of every race and
47 every hue scattered across three continents. And for as long as I live, I will never
48 forget that in no other country on earth is my story even possible. It's a story that
49 hasn't made me the most conventional of candidates. But it is a story that has
50 seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its
51 parts – that out of many, we are truly one.

52 Now throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the
53 contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of
54 unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens,
55 we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in
56 the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate flag still flies, we built a
57 powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans. This is not to say
58 that race has not been an issue in this campaign. At various stages in the
59 campaign, some commentators have deemed me either "too black" or "not black
60 enough." We saw racial tensions bubble to the surface during the week before the
61 South Carolina primary. The press has scoured every single exit poll for the latest
62 evidence of racial polarization, not just in terms of white and black, but black and
63 brown as well.

64 And yet, it's only been in the last couple of weeks that the discussion of race in
65 this campaign has taken a particularly divisive turn. On one end of the spectrum,
66 we've heard the implication that my candidacy is somehow an exercise in
67 affirmative action; that it's based solely on the desire of wild and wide-eyed
68 liberals to purchase racial reconciliation on the cheap. On the other end, we've
69 heard my former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, use incendiary language to express
70 views that have the potential not only to widen the racial divide, but views that
71 denigrate both the greatness and the goodness of our nation and that rightly offend
72 white and black alike.

73 Now I've already condemned, in unequivocal terms, the statements of Reverend
74 Wright that have caused such controversy, and in some cases, pain. For some,
75 nagging questions remain: Did I know him to be an occasionally fierce critic of
76 American domestic and foreign policy? Of course. Did I ever hear him make
77 remarks that could be considered controversial while I sat in the church? Yes. Did

78 I strongly disagree with many of his political views? Absolutely, just as I'm sure
79 many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests, or rabbis with which
80 you strongly disagree.

81 But the remarks that have caused this recent firestorm weren't simply
82 controversial. They weren't simply a religious leader's efforts to speak out against
83 perceived injustice. Instead, they expressed a profoundly distorted view of this
84 country, a view that sees white racism as endemic and that elevates what is wrong
85 with America above all that we know is right with America; a view that sees the
86 conflicts in the Middle East as rooted primarily in the actions of stalwart allies
87 like Israel instead of emanating from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical
88 Islam.

89 As such, Reverend Wright's comments were not only wrong but divisive, divisive
90 at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come
91 together to solve a set of monumental problems: two wars, a terrorist threat, a
92 falling economy, a chronic health care crisis, and potentially devastating climate
93 change – problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather
94 problems that confront us all.

95 Given my background, my politics, and my professed values and ideals, there will
96 no doubt be those for whom my statements of condemnation are not enough. Why
97 associate myself with Reverend Wright in the first place, they may ask? Why not
98 join another church? And I confess that if all that I knew of Reverend Wright
99 were the snippets of those sermons that have run in an endless loop on the
100 television sets and YouTube, if Trinity United Church of Christ conformed to the
101 caricatures being peddled by some commentators, there is no doubt that I would
102 react in much the same way.

103 But the truth is, that isn't all that I know of the man. The man I met more than
104 twenty years ago is a man who helped introduce me to my Christian faith, a man
105 who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another, to care for the sick
106 and lift up the poor. He is a man who served his country as a United States
107 Marine, and who has studied and lectured at some of the finest universities and
108 seminaries in the country, and who over 30 years has led a church that serves the
109 community by doing God's work here on Earth – by housing the homeless,
110 ministering to the needy, providing day care services and scholarships and prison
111 ministries, and reaching out to those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

112 In my first book, *Dreams From My Father*, I described the experience of my first
113 service at Trinity, and it goes as follows:

114 *People began to shout, to rise from their seats and clap and cry out, a forceful*
115 *wind carrying the reverend's voice up to the rafters.*

116 *And in that single note – hope – I heard something else; at the foot of that cross,*
 117 *inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of*
 118 *ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and*
 119 *Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion’s den, Ezekiel’s field of dry bones.*

120 *Those stories of survival and freedom and hope became our stories, my story. The*
 121 *blood that spilled was our blood; the tears our tears; until this black church, on*
 122 *this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into*
 123 *future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at*
 124 *once unique and universal, black and more than black. In chronicling our*
 125 *journey, the stories and songs gave us a meaning to reclaim memories that we*
 126 *didn’t need to feel shame about – memories that all people might study and*
 127 *cherish and with which we could start to rebuild.*

128 That has been my experience at Trinity. Like other predominantly black churches
 129 across the country, Trinity embodies the black community in its entirety – the
 130 doctor and the welfare mom, the model student and the former gang-banger. Like
 131 other black churches, Trinity’s services are full of raucous laughter and
 132 sometimes bawdy humor. They are full of dancing and clapping and screaming
 133 and shouting that may seem jarring to the untrained ear. The church contains in
 134 full the kindness and cruelty, the fierce intelligence and the shocking ignorance,
 135 the struggles and successes, the love and, yes, the bitterness and biases that make
 136 up the black experience in America.

137 And this helps explain, perhaps, my relationship with Reverend Wright. As
 138 imperfect as he may be, he has been like family to me. He strengthens my faith,
 139 officiated my wedding, and baptized my children. Not once in my conversations
 140 with him have I heard him talk about any ethnic group in derogatory terms or treat
 141 whites with whom he interacted with anything but courtesy and respect. He
 142 contains within him the contradictions – the good and the bad – of the community
 143 that he has served diligently for so many years.

144 I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more
 145 disown him than I can disown my white grandmother, a woman who helped raise
 146 me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as
 147 much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her
 148 fear of black men who passed her by on the street, and who on more than one
 149 occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe.

150 These people are part of me. And they are part of America, this country that I
 151 love.

152 Now, some will see this as an attempt to justify or excuse comments that are
 153 simply inexcusable. I can assure you it is not. And I suppose the politically safe
 154 thing to do would be to move on from this episode and just hope that it fades into
 155 the woodwork. We can dismiss Reverend Wright as a crank or a demagogue, just

156 as some have dismissed Geraldine Ferraro in the aftermath of her recent
157 statements as harboring some deep – deep-seated bias.

158 But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now.
159 We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his
160 offending sermons about America: to simplify and stereotype and amplify the
161 negative to the point that it distorts reality. The fact is that the comments that have
162 been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the
163 complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through, a part
164 of our union that we have not yet made perfect. And if we walk away now, if we
165 simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together
166 and solve challenges like health care or education or the need to find good jobs
167 for every American.

168 Understanding – Understanding this reality requires a reminder of how we arrived
169 at this point. As William Faulkner once wrote, “The past isn't dead and buried. In
170 fact, it isn't even past.” We do not need to recite here the history of racial injustice
171 in this country. But we do need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities
172 that exist between the African-American community and the larger American
173 community today can be traced directly to inequalities passed on from an earlier
174 generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow.
175 Segregated schools were, and are, inferior schools. We still haven't fixed them, 50
176 years after *Brown versus Board of Education*. And the inferior education they
177 provided, then and now, helps explain the pervasive achievement gap between
178 today's black and white students.

179 Legalized discrimination, where blacks were prevented, often through violence,
180 from owning property, or loans were not granted to African-American business
181 owners, or black homeowners could not access FHA mortgages, or blacks were
182 excluded from unions, or the police force, or the fire department meant that black
183 families could not amass any meaningful wealth to bequeath to future generations.
184 That history helps explain the wealth and income gap between blacks and whites
185 and the concentrated pockets of poverty that persist in so many of today's urban
186 and rural communities. A lack of economic opportunity among black men and the
187 shame and frustration that came from not being able to provide for one's family
188 contributed to the erosion of black families, a problem that welfare policies for
189 many years may have worsened. And the lack of basic services in so many urban
190 black neighborhoods – parks for kids to play in, police walking the beat, regular
191 garbage pick-up, building code enforcement – all helped create a cycle of
192 violence, blight, and neglect that continues to haunt us.

193 This is the reality in which Reverend Wright and other African-Americans of his
194 generation grew up. They came of age in the late '50s and early '60s, a time when
195 segregation was still the law of the land and opportunity was systematically
196 constricted. What's remarkable is not how many failed in the face of
197 discrimination, but how many men and women overcame the odds, how many

198 were able to make a way out of no way for those like me who would come after
199 them.

200 But for all those who scratched and clawed their way to get a piece of the
201 American Dream, there were many who didn't make it – those who were
202 ultimately defeated, in one way or another, by discrimination. That legacy of
203 defeat was passed on to future generations – those young men and increasingly
204 young women who we see standing on street corners or languishing in our
205 prisons, without hope or prospects for the future. Even for those blacks who did
206 make it, questions of race, and racism, continue to define their world view in
207 fundamental ways. For the men and women of Reverend Wright's generation, the
208 memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away, nor has the
209 anger and the bitterness of those years.

210 That anger may not get expressed in public, in front of white co-workers or white
211 friends, but it does find voice in the barbershop or the beauty shop or around the
212 kitchen table. At times, that anger is exploited by politicians to gin up votes along
213 racial lines or to make up for a politician's own failings. And occasionally it finds
214 voice in the church on Sunday morning, in the pulpit and in the pews. The fact
215 that so many people are surprised to hear that anger in some of Reverend Wright's
216 sermons simply reminds us of that old truism that the most segregated hour of
217 American life occurs on Sunday morning.

218 That – That anger is not always productive. Indeed, all too often it distracts
219 attention from solving real problems. It keeps us from squarely facing our own
220 complicity within the African-American community in our own condition. It
221 prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to
222 bring about real change. But the anger is real; it is powerful, and to simply wish it
223 away, to condemn it without understanding its roots only serves to widen the
224 chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races.

225 In fact, a similar anger exists within segments of the white community. Most
226 working and middle-class white Americans don't feel that they've been
227 particularly privileged by their race. Their experience is the immigrant
228 experience. As far as they're concerned, no one handed them anything; they built
229 it from scratch. They've worked hard all their lives, many times only to see their
230 jobs shipped overseas or their pensions dumped after a lifetime of labor. They are
231 anxious about their futures, and they feel their dreams slipping away. And in an
232 era of stagnant wages and global competition, opportunity comes to be seen as a
233 zero sum game, in which your dreams come at my expense. So when they are told
234 to bus their children to a school across town, when they hear that an African
235 American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college
236 because of an injustice that they themselves never committed, when they're told
237 that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudice,
238 resentment builds over time.

239 Like the anger within the black community, these resentments aren't always
240 expressed in polite company. But they have helped shape the political landscape
241 for at least a generation. Anger over welfare and affirmative action helped forge
242 the Reagan Coalition. Politicians routinely exploited fears of crime for their own
243 electoral ends. Talk show hosts and conservative commentators built entire
244 careers unmasking bogus claims of racism while dismissing legitimate
245 discussions of racial injustice and inequality as mere political correctness or
246 reverse racism. And just as black anger often proved counterproductive, so have
247 these white resentments distracted attention from the real culprits of the middle
248 class squeeze: a corporate culture rife with inside dealing, questionable
249 accounting practices, and short-term greed; a Washington dominated by lobbyists
250 and special interests; economic policies that favor the few over the many. And
251 yet, to wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided
252 or even racist without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns, this,
253 too, widens the racial divide and blocks the path to understanding.

254 This is where we are right now.

255 It's a racial stalemate we've been stuck in for years. And contrary to the claims of
256 some of my critics, black and white, I have never been so naive as to believe that
257 we can get beyond our racial divisions in a single election cycle or with a single
258 candidate, particularly – particularly a candidacy as imperfect as my own. But I
259 have asserted a firm conviction, a conviction rooted in my faith in God and my
260 faith in the American people, that, working together, we can move beyond some
261 of our old racial wounds and that, in fact, we have no choice – we have no choice
262 if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union.

263 For the African-American community, that path means embracing the burdens of
264 our past without becoming victims of our past. It means continuing to insist on a
265 full measure of justice in every aspect of American life. But it also means binding
266 our particular grievances, for better health care and better schools and better jobs,
267 to the larger aspirations of all Americans – the white woman struggling to break
268 the glass ceiling, the white man who's been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed
269 his family. And it means also taking full responsibility for our own lives – by
270 demanding more from our fathers, and spending more time with our children, and
271 reading to them, and teaching them that while they may face challenges and
272 discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or
273 cynicism. They must always believe – They must always believe that they can
274 write their own destiny.

275 Ironically, this quintessentially American – and, yes, conservative – notion of
276 self-help found frequent expression in Reverend Wright's sermons. But what my
277 former pastor too often failed to understand is that embarking on a program of
278 self-help also requires a belief that society can change. The profound mistake of
279 Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's
280 that he spoke as if our society was static, as if no progress had been made, as if

281 this country – a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to
282 run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black,
283 Latino, Asian, rich, poor, young and old – is still irrevocably bound to a tragic
284 past. What we know, what we have seen, is that America can change. That is true
285 genius of this nation. What we have already achieved gives us hope – the audacity
286 to hope – for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.

287 Now, in the white community, the path to a more perfect union means
288 acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist
289 in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination – and current
290 incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past – that these things are
291 real and must be addressed. Not just with words, but with deeds – by investing in
292 our schools and our communities; by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring
293 fairness in our criminal justice system; by providing this generation with ladders
294 of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. It requires all
295 Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my
296 dreams, that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown
297 and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.

298 In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more and nothing less than what all
299 the world’s great religions demand: that we do unto others as we would have them
300 do unto us. Let us be our brother’s keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister’s
301 keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our
302 politics reflect that spirit as well.

303 For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division
304 and conflict and cynicism. We can tackle race only as spectacle, as we did in the
305 O.J. trial; or in the wake of tragedy, as we did in the aftermath of Katrina; or as
306 fodder for the nightly news. We can play Reverend Wright’s sermons on every
307 channel every day and talk about them from now until the election, and make the
308 only question in this campaign whether or not the American people think that I
309 somehow believe or sympathize with his most offensive words. We can pounce
310 on some gaffe by a Hillary supporter as evidence that she’s playing the race card;
311 or we can speculate on whether white men will all flock to John McCain in the
312 general election regardless of his policies. We can do that. But if we do, I can tell
313 you that in the next election, we’ll be talking about some other distraction, and
314 then another one, and then another one. And nothing will change.

315 That is one option.

316 Or, at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, “Not this
317 time.” This time we want to talk about the crumbling schools that are stealing the
318 future of black children and white children and Asian children and Hispanic
319 children and Native-American children. This time we want to reject the cynicism
320 that tells us that these kids can’t learn; that those kids who don’t look like us are
321 somebody else’s problem. The children of America are not “those kids,” – they

322 are our kids, and we will not let them fall behind in a 21st-century economy. Not
323 this time. This time we want to talk about how the lines in the emergency room
324 are filled with whites and blacks and Hispanics who do not have health care, who
325 don't have the power on their own to overcome the special interests in
326 Washington, but who can take them on if we do it together.

327 This time we want to talk about the shuttered mills that once provided a decent
328 life for men and women of every race, and the homes for sale that once belonged
329 to Americans from every religion, every region, every walk of life. This time we
330 want to talk about the fact that the real problem is not that someone who doesn't
331 look like you might take your job; it's that the corporation you work for will ship
332 it overseas for nothing more than a profit. This time – This time we want to talk
333 about the men and women of every color and creed who serve together, and fight
334 together, and bleed together under the same proud flag. We want to talk about
335 how to bring them home from a war that should've never been authorized and
336 should've never been waged. And we want to talk about how we'll show our
337 patriotism by caring for them, and their families, and giving them the benefits that
338 they have earned.

339 I would not be running for President if I didn't believe with all my heart that this
340 is what the vast majority of Americans want for this country. This union may
341 never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be
342 perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about
343 this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation – the young
344 people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made
345 history in this election.

346 There's one story in particular that I'd like to leave you with today, a story I told
347 when I had the great honor of speaking on Dr. King's birthday at his home
348 church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Atlanta. There's a young, 23-year-old woman, a
349 white woman named Ashley Baia, who organized for our campaign in Florence,
350 South Carolina. She'd been working to organize a mostly African-American
351 community since the beginning of this campaign, and one day she was at a
352 roundtable discussion where everyone went around telling their story and why
353 they were there. And Ashley said that when she was 9 years old, her mother got
354 cancer. And because she had to miss days of work, she was let go and lost her
355 health care. They had to file for bankruptcy, and that's when Ashley decided that
356 she had to do something to help her mom.

357 She knew that food was one of their most expensive costs, and so Ashley
358 convinced her mother that what she really liked and really wanted to eat more
359 than anything else was mustard and relish sandwiches – because that was the
360 cheapest way to eat. That's the mind of a 9 year old. She did this for a year until
361 her mom got better. And so Ashley told everyone at the roundtable that the reason
362 she had joined our campaign was so that she could help the millions of other
363 children in the country who want and need to help their parents too.

364 Now, Ashley might have made a different choice. Perhaps somebody told her
365 along the way that the source of her mother's problems were blacks who were on
366 welfare and too lazy to work, or Hispanics who were coming into the country
367 illegally. But she didn't. She sought out allies in her fight against injustice.

368 Anyway, Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks
369 everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different
370 stories and different reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally they
371 come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time.
372 And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he doesn't bring up a specific issue. He
373 does not say *health care* or *the economy*. He does not say *education* or *the war*.
374 He does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to
375 everyone in the room, "I am here because of Ashley." "I'm here because of
376 Ashley."

377 Now, by itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl
378 and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the
379 sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children. But it is where we start. It
380 is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to
381 realize over the course of the 221 years since a band of patriots signed that
382 document right here in Philadelphia, that is where perfection begins.

383 Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you.

Appendix 4

Democratic National Convention Presidential Nomination Acceptance

[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

1 Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Thank you everybody.

2 To -- To Chairman Dean, and my great friend, Dick Durbin, and to all my fellow
3 citizens of this great nation, with profound gratitude and great humility -- I accept
4 your nomination for the presidency of the United States.

5 Let me -- Let me express -- Let me express my thanks to the historic slate of
6 candidates who accompanied on this journey, and especially the one who traveled
7 the farthest, a champion for working Americans and an inspiration to my
8 daughters and yours: Hillary Rodham Clinton.

9 To President Clinton -- To President Bill Clinton, who made last night the case
10 for change as only he can make it, to Ted Kennedy, who embodies the spirit of
11 service, and to the next Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, I thank
12 you. I am grateful to finish this journey with one of the finest statesmen of our
13 time, a man at ease with everyone from world leaders to the conductors on the
14 Amtrak train he still takes home every night, to the love of my life -- the next First
15 Lady, Michelle Obama; and to Mahlia and Sasha, I love you so much and I am so
16 proud of you.

17 Four years ago, I stood before you and told you my story of the brief union
18 between a young man from Kenya and a young woman from Kansas who weren't
19 well-off or well-known, but shared a belief that in America, their son could
20 achieve whatever he put his mind to.

21
22 It is that promise that's always set this country apart -- that through hard work and
23 sacrifice each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as
24 one American family, to ensure that the next generation can pursue their dreams
25 as well.

26
27 It's why I stand here tonight. Because for two hundred and thirty two years, at
28 each moment when that promise was in jeopardy, ordinary men and women,
29 students and soldiers, farmers and teachers, nurses and janitors -- found the
30 courage to keep it alive.

31
32 We meet at one of those defining moments -- a moment when our nation is at war,
33 our economy is in turmoil, and the American promise has been threatened once
34 more.

35
36 Tonight, more Americans are out of work and more are working harder for less.
37 More of you have lost your homes and even more are watching your home values
38 plummet. More of you have cars you can't afford to drive, credit cards bills [sic]
39 you can't afford to pay and tuition that's beyond your reach.
40
41 These challenges are not all of government's making. But the failure to respond is
42 a direct result of a broken politics in Washington and the failed policies of George
43 W. Bush.
44
45 America, we are better than these last eight years. We are a better country than
46 this. This country's more decent than one woman in Ohio on the brink of
47 retirement finds herself one disaster after a lifetime of hard work.

48 We're a better country than one where a man in Indiana has to pack up the
49 equipment that's he's worked on for twenty years and watch as its shipped off to
50 China, and then chokes up as he explains how he felt like a failure when he went
51 home to tell his family the news.

52 We are more compassionate than a government that lets veterans sleep on our
53 streets, and families slide into poverty; that sits -- that sits on its hands while a
54 major American city drowns before our eyes.

55 Tonight -- Tonight I say to the people of America, to Democrats and Republicans
56 and Independents across this great land: Enough!
57
58 This moment -- This moment -- this election is our chance to keep, in the 21st
59 century, the American promise alive. Because next week, in Minnesota, the same
60 Party that brought you two terms of George Bush and Dick Cheney will ask this
61 country for a third. And we are here -- we are here because we love this country
62 too much to let the next four years look just like the last eight. On November 4th -
63 - On November 4th, we must stand up and say: "Eight is enough."
64
65 Now -- Now let me -- let -- let there be no doubt: The Republican nominee, John
66 McCain, has worn the uniform of our country with bravery and distinction, and
67 for that we owe him our gratitude and our respect. And next week, we'll also hear
68 about those occasions when he's broken with his Party as evidence that he can
69 deliver the change that we need.
70
71 But the record's clear: John McCain has voted with George Bush ninety percent of
72 the time. Senator McCain likes to talk about judgment, but really, what does it say
73 about your judgment when you think George Bush has been right more than
74 ninety percent of the time? I -- I don't know about you, but I'm not ready to take a
75 ten percent chance on change.

76 The truth is on issue after issue that would make a difference in your lives -- on
77 health care and education and the economy, Senator McCain has been anything
78 but independent. He says that our economy has made great progress under this
79 President. He said that the fundamentals of the economy are strong. And when
80 one of his chief advisors -- the man who wrote his economic plan -- was talking
81 about the anxieties that Americans are feeling, he said that we were just suffering
82 from a mental recession, and that we've become -- and I quote -- "a nation of
83 whiners."

84 A nation of whiners.

85 Tell that to the proud autoworkers at a Michigan plant who, after they found out it
86 was closing, kept showing up everyday and working as hard as ever because they
87 knew there were people who counted on the brakes that they made. Tell that to the
88 military families who shoulder their burden silently as they watch their loved ones
89 leave for there third or fourth or fifth tour of duty.

90 These are not whiners. They work hard and they give back and they keep going
91 without complaint. These are the Americans I know.

92 Now, I don't believe that Senator McCain doesn't care what's going on in the lives
93 of Americans. I just think he doesn't know. Why else would he define "middle-
94 class" as someone making under five million dollars a year? How else could he
95 propose hundreds of billions in tax breaks for big corporations and oil companies
96 but not one penny of tax relief to more than one hundred million Americans?

97 How else could he offer a health care plan that would actually tax people's
98 benefits, or an education plan that would do nothing to help families pay for
99 college, or a plan that would privatize Social Security and gamble your
100 retirement?

101 It's not because John McCain doesn't care; it's because John McCain doesn't get it.
102 For over two decades -- For over two decades, he's subscribed to that old,
103 discredited Republican philosophy: Give more and more to those with the most
104 and hope that prosperity trickles down to everyone else.

105 In Washington, they call this the "Ownership Society," but what it really means is
106 that you're on your own. Out of work? Tough luck, you're on your own. No health
107 care? The market will fix it. You're on your own. Born into poverty? Pull yourself
108 up by your own bootstraps, even if you don't have boots. You are on your own.
109 Well, it's time for them to own their failure. It's time for us to change America.
110 And that's why I'm running for President of the United States.

111 You see -- You see, we Democrats have a very different measure of what
112 constitutes progress in this country. We measure progress by how many people
113 can find a job that pays the mortgage, whether you can put a little extra money

114 away at the end of each month so you can someday watch your child receive her
115 college diploma. We measure progress in the 23 million new jobs that were
116 created when Bill Clinton was President, when the average American family saw
117 its income go up 7,500 dollars instead of go down 2,000 dollars, like it has under
118 George Bush.

119 We measure the strength of our economy not by the number of billionaires we
120 have or the profits of the Fortune 500, but by whether someone with a good idea
121 can take a risk and start a new business, or whether the waitress who lives on tips
122 can take a day off and look after a sick kid without losing her job, an economy
123 that honors the dignity of work.

124 The fundamentals we use to measure economic strength are whether we are living
125 up to that fundamental promise that has made this country great, a promise that is
126 the only reason I am standing here tonight.

127 Because, in the faces of those young veterans who come back from Iraq and
128 Afghanistan, I see my grandfather, who signed up after Pearl Harbor, marched in
129 Patton's army, and was rewarded by a grateful nation with the chance to go to
130 college on the G.I. Bill.

131 In the face of that young student, who sleeps just three hours before working the
132 night shift, I think about my mom, who raised my sister and me on her own while
133 she worked and earned her degree, who once turned to food stamps, but was still
134 able to send us to the best schools in the country with the help of student loans
135 and scholarships.

136 When I -- When I listen to another worker tell me that his factory has shut down, I
137 remember all those men and women on the South Side of Chicago who I stood by
138 and fought for two decades ago after the local steel plant closed.

139 And when I hear a woman talk about the difficulties of starting her own business
140 or making her way in the world, I think about my grandmother, who worked her
141 way up from the secretarial pool to middle management, despite years of being
142 passed over for promotions because she was a woman. She's the one who taught
143 me about hard work. She's the one who put off buying a new car or a new dress
144 for herself so that I could have a better life. She poured everything she had into
145 me. And although she can no longer travel, I know that she's watching tonight and
146 that tonight is her night, as well.

147 Now -- Now , I don't know what kind of lives John McCain thinks that celebrities
148 lead, but this has been mine. These are my heroes; theirs are the stories that
149 shaped my life. And it is on behalf of them that I intend to win this election and
150 keep our promise alive as President of the United States.

151 What -- What is that American promise? It's a promise that says each of us has the
152 freedom to make of our own lives what we will, but that we also have obligations
153 to treat each other with dignity and respect.

154 It's a promise that says the market should reward drive and innovation and
155 generate growth, but that businesses should live up to their responsibilities to
156 create American jobs, to look out for American workers, and play by the rules of
157 the road.

158 Ours -- Ours is a promise that says government cannot solve all our problems, but
159 what it should do is that which we cannot do for ourselves: protect us from harm
160 and provide every child a decent education; keep our water clean and our toys
161 safe; invest in new schools, and new roads, and science, and technology.

162 Our government should work for us, not against us. It should help us, not hurt us.
163 It should ensure opportunity not just for those with the most money and influence,
164 but for every American who's willing to work.

165 That's the promise of America, the idea that we are responsible for ourselves, but
166 that we also rise or fall as one nation, the fundamental belief that I am my
167 brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper.

168 That's the promise we need to keep. That's the change we need right now.

169 So -- So let me -- let me spell out exactly what that change would mean if I am
170 President. Change means a tax code that doesn't reward the lobbyists who wrote
171 it, but the American workers and small businesses who deserve it. You know,
172 unlike John McCain, I will stop giving tax breaks to companies that ship jobs
173 overseas, and I will start giving them to companies that create good jobs right
174 here in America. I'll eliminate capital gains taxes for the small businesses and
175 start-ups that will create the high-wage, high-tech jobs of tomorrow. I will --
176 listen now -- I will cut taxes -- cut taxes -- for 95 percent of all working families,
177 because, in an economy like this, the last thing we should do is raise taxes on the
178 middle class. And for the sake of our economy, our security, and the future of our
179 planet, I will set a clear goal as President: In 10 years, we will finally end our
180 dependence on oil from the Middle East.

181 We will do this.

182 Washington -- Washington has been talking about our oil addiction for the last 30
183 years. And, by the way, John McCain has been there for 26 of them. And in that
184 time, he has said no to higher fuel-efficiency standards for cars, no to investment
185 in renewable energy, no to renewable fuels. And today, we import triple the
186 amount of oil than we had on the day that Senator McCain took office. Now is the
187 time to end this addiction and to understand that drilling is a stop-gap measure,
188 not a long-term solution, not even close.

189 As President -- As President, I will tap our natural gas reserves, invest in clean
190 coal technology, and find ways to safely harness nuclear power. I'll help our auto
191 companies re-tool, so that the fuel-efficient cars of the future are built right here
192 in America. I'll make it easier for the American people to afford these new cars.
193 And I'll invest 150 billion dollars over the next decade in affordable, renewable
194 sources of energy -- wind power, and solar power, and the next generation of
195 biofuels -- an investment that will lead to new industries and five million new jobs
196 that pay well and can't be outsourced.

197 America, now is not the time for small plans. Now is the time to finally meet our
198 moral obligation to provide every child a world-class education, because it will
199 take nothing less to compete in the global economy.

200 You know, Michelle and I are only here tonight because we were given a chance
201 at an education. And I will not settle for an America where some kids don't have
202 that chance. I'll invest in early childhood education. I'll recruit an army of new
203 teachers, and pay them higher salaries, and give them more support. And in
204 exchange, I'll ask for higher standards and more accountability. And we will keep
205 our promise to every young American: If you commit to serving your community
206 or our country, we will make sure you can afford a college education.

207 Now -- Now is the time to finally keep the promise of affordable, accessible
208 health care for every single American. If you have health care -- If you have
209 health care, my plan will lower your premiums. If you don't, you'll be able to get
210 the same kind of coverage that members of Congress give themselves. And -- And
211 as someone who watched my mother argue with insurance companies while she
212 lay in bed dying of cancer, I will make certain those companies stop
213 discriminating against those who are sick and need care the most.

214 Now is the time to help families with paid sick days and better family leave,
215 because nobody in America should have to choose between keeping their job and
216 caring for a sick child or an ailing parent.

217 Now is the time to change our bankruptcy laws, so that your pensions are
218 protected ahead of CEO bonuses, and the time to protect Social Security for future
219 generations.

220 And now is the time to keep the promise of equal pay for an equal day's work,
221 because I want my daughters to have the exact same opportunities as your sons.

222 Now, many of these plans will cost money, which is why I've laid out how I'll pay
223 for every dime: by closing corporate loopholes and tax havens that don't help
224 America grow. But I will also go through the federal budget line by line,
225 eliminating programs that no longer work and making the ones we do need work
226 better and cost less, because we cannot meet 21st-century challenges with a 20th-
227 century bureaucracy.

228 And, Democrats -- Democrats, we must also admit that fulfilling America's
229 promise will require more than just money. It will require a renewed sense of
230 responsibility from each of us to recover what John F. Kennedy called our
231 intellectual and moral strength. Yes, government must lead on energy
232 independence, but each of us must do our part to make our homes and businesses
233 more efficient. Yes, we must provide more ladders to success for young men who
234 fall into lives of crime and despair. But we must also admit that programs alone
235 can't replace parents, that government can't turn off the television and make a
236 child do her homework, that fathers must take more responsibility to provide love
237 and guidance to their children. Individual responsibility and mutual responsibility,
238 that's the essence of America's promise. And just as we keep our promise to the
239 next generation here at home, so must we keep America's promise abroad.

240 If John McCain wants to have a debate about who has the temperament and
241 judgment to serve as the next Commander-in-Chief, that's a debate I'm ready to
242 have.

243 For -- For while -- while Senator McCain was turning his sights to Iraq just days
244 after 9/11, I stood up and opposed this war, knowing that it would distract us from
245 the real threats that we face. When John McCain said we could just muddle
246 through in Afghanistan, I argued for more resources and more troops to finish the
247 fight against the terrorists who actually attacked us on 9/11, and made clear that
248 we must take out Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants if we have them in our
249 sights. You know, John McCain likes to say that he'll follow bin Laden to the
250 gates of Hell, but he won't even follow him to the cave where he lives. And today
251 -- today, as my call for a timeframe to remove our troops from Iraq has been
252 echoed by the Iraqi government and even the Bush Administration, even after we
253 learned that Iraq has 79 billion dollars in surplus while we are wallowing in
254 deficit, John McCain stands alone in his stubborn refusal to end a misguided war.

255 That's not the judgment we need; that won't keep America safe. We need a
256 President who can face the threats of the future, not keep grasping at the ideas of
257 the past. You don't defeat -- You don't defeat a terrorist network that operates in
258 80 countries by occupying Iraq. You don't protect Israel and deter Iran just by
259 talking tough in Washington. You can't truly stand up for Georgia when you've
260 strained our oldest alliances. If John McCain wants to follow George Bush with
261 more tough talk and bad strategy, that is his choice, but that is not the change that
262 America needs.

263 We are the Party of Roosevelt. We are the Party of Kennedy. So don't tell me that
264 Democrats won't defend this country. Don't tell me that Democrats won't keep us
265 safe.

266 The Bush-McCain foreign policy has squandered the legacy that generations of
267 Americans, Democrats and Republicans, have built, and we are here to restore
268 that legacy.

269 As Commander-in-Chief, I will never hesitate to defend this nation, but I will
270 only send our troops into harm's way with a clear mission and a sacred
271 commitment to give them the equipment they need in battle and the care and
272 benefits they deserve when they come home. I will end this war in Iraq
273 responsibly and finish the fight against Al Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan. I
274 will rebuild our military to meet future conflicts, but I will also renew the tough,
275 direct diplomacy that can prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and curb
276 Russian aggression. I will build new partnerships to defeat the threats of the 21st
277 century: terrorism and nuclear proliferation, poverty and genocide, climate change
278 and disease. And I will restore our moral standing so that America is once again
279 that last, best hope for all who are called to the cause of freedom, who long for
280 lives of peace, and who yearn for a better future.

281 These -- These are the policies I will pursue. And in the weeks ahead, I look
282 forward to debating them with John McCain.

283 But what I will not do is suggest that the senator takes his positions for political
284 purposes, because one of the things that we have to change in our politics is the
285 idea that people cannot disagree without challenging each other's character and
286 each other's patriotism. The times are too serious; the stakes are too high for this
287 same partisan playbook. So let us agree that patriotism has no Party. I love this
288 country, and so do you, and so does John McCain. The men and women who
289 serve in our battlefields may be Democrats and Republicans and independents,
290 but they have fought together, and bled together, and some died together under
291 the same proud flag. They have not served a red America or a blue America; they
292 have served the United States of America. So I've got news for you, John
293 McCain: We all put our country first.

294 America, our work will not be easy. The challenges we face require tough
295 choices. And Democrats, as well as Republicans, will need to cast off the worn-
296 out ideas and politics of the past, for part of what has been lost these past eight
297 years can't just be measured by lost wages or bigger trade deficits. What has also
298 been lost is our sense of common purpose, and that's what we have to restore.

299 We may not agree on abortion, but surely we can agree on reducing the number of
300 unwanted pregnancies in this country.

301 The -- The reality of gun ownership may be different for hunters in rural Ohio
302 than they are for those plagued by gang violence in Cleveland, but don't tell me
303 we can't uphold the Second Amendment while keeping AK-47s out of the hands
304 of criminals.

305 I know there are differences on same-sex marriage, but surely we can agree that
306 our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters deserve to visit the person they love in a
307 hospital and to live lives free of discrimination.

308 You know, passions may fly on immigration, but I don't know anyone who
309 benefits when a mother is separated from her infant child or an employer
310 undercuts American wages by hiring illegal workers.

311 But this, too, is part of America's promise, the promise of a democracy where we
312 can find the strength and grace to bridge divides and unite in common effort.

313 I know there are those who dismiss such beliefs as happy talk. They claim that our
314 insistence on something larger, something firmer, and more honest in our public
315 life is just a Trojan Horse for higher taxes and the abandonment of traditional
316 values. And that's to be expected, because if you don't have any fresh ideas, then
317 you use stale tactics to scare voters. If you don't have a record to run on, then you
318 paint your opponent as someone people should run from. You make a big election
319 about small things. And you know what? It's worked before, because it feeds into
320 the cynicism we all have about government. When Washington doesn't work, all
321 its promises seem empty. If your hopes have been dashed again and again, then
322 it's best to stop hoping and settle for what you already know.

323 I get it. I realize that I am not the likeliest candidate for this office. I don't fit the
324 typical pedigree, and I haven't spent my career in the halls of Washington. But I
325 stand before you tonight because all across America something is stirring. What
326 the naysayers don't understand is that this election has never been about me; it's
327 about you.

328 It's about you. For 18 long months, you have stood up, one by one, and said,
329 "Enough," to the politics of the past. You understand that, in this election, the
330 greatest risk we can take is to try the same, old politics with the same, old players
331 and expect a different result. You have shown what history teaches us, that at
332 defining moments like this one, the change we need doesn't come from
333 Washington. Change comes to Washington. Change happens -- Change happens
334 because the American people demand it, because they rise up and insist on new
335 ideas and new leadership, a new politics for a new time.

336 America, this is one of those moments.

337 I believe that, as hard as it will be, the change we need is coming, because I've
338 seen it, because I've lived it. Because I've seen it in Illinois, when we provided
339 health care to more children and moved more families from welfare to work. I've
340 seen it in Washington, where we worked across party lines to open up government
341 and hold lobbyists more accountable, to give better care for our veterans, and
342 keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists.

343 And I've seen it in this campaign, in the young people who voted for the first time
344 and the young at heart, those who got involved again after a very long time; in the
345 Republicans who never thought they'd pick up a Democratic ballot, but did.

346 I've seen it -- I've seen it in the workers who would rather cut their hours back a
347 day, even though they can't afford it, than see their friends lose their jobs; in the
348 soldiers who re-enlist after losing a limb; in the good neighbors who take a
349 stranger in when a hurricane strikes and the floodwaters rise.

350 You know, this country of ours has more wealth than any nation, but that's not
351 what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military on Earth, but that's not
352 what makes us strong. Our universities and our culture are the envy of the world,
353 but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores.

354 Instead, it is that American spirit, that American promise, that pushes us forward
355 even when the path is uncertain; that binds us together in spite of our differences;
356 that makes us fix our eye not on what is seen, but what is unseen, that better place
357 around the bend.

358 That promise is our greatest inheritance. It's a promise I make to my daughters
359 when I tuck them in at night and a promise that you make to yours, a promise that
360 has led immigrants to cross oceans and pioneers to travel west, a promise that led
361 workers to picket lines and women to reach for the ballot.

362 And it is that promise that, 45 years ago today, brought Americans from every
363 corner of this land to stand together on a Mall in Washington, before Lincoln's
364 Memorial, and hear a young preacher from Georgia speak of his Dream.

365 The men and women who gathered there could've heard many things. They
366 could've heard words of anger and discord. They could've been told to succumb to
367 the fear and frustrations of so many dreams deferred. But what the people heard
368 instead -- people of every creed and color, from every walk of life -- is that, in
369 America, our destiny is inextricably linked, that together our dreams can be one.
370 "We cannot walk alone," the preacher cried. "And as we walk, we must make the
371 pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."

372 America, we cannot turn back, not with so much work to be done; not with so
373 many children to educate, and so many veterans to care for; not with an economy
374 to fix, and cities to rebuild, and farms to save; not with so many families to
375 protect and so many lives to mend.

376 America, we cannot turn back. We cannot walk alone.

377 At this moment, in this election, we must pledge once more to march into the
378 future. Let us keep that promise, that American promise, and in the words of
379 Scripture hold firmly, without wavering, to the hope that we confess.

380 Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

Appendix 5

President-Elect Victory Speech

[AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio]

1 Hello, Chicago.

2 If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all
3 things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our
4 time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.
5

6 It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in
7 numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four
8 hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this
9 time must be different; that their voices could be that difference.
10

11 It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and
12 Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight,
13 disabled and not disabled -- Americans who sent a message to the world that we
14 have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of Red States and
15 Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America!
16

17 It's the answer that -- that led those who have been told for so long by so many to
18 be cynical, and fearful, and doubtful about what we can achieve to put their hands
19 on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day.

20 It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in
21 this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.

22 A little bit earlier this evening, I received an extraordinarily gracious call from
23 Senator McCain. Senator McCain fought long and hard in this campaign, and he's
24 fought even longer and harder for the country that he loves. He has endured
25 sacrifices for America that most of us cannot begin to imagine. We are better off
26 for the service rendered by this brave and selfless leader. I congratulate him; I
27 congratulate Governor Palin for all that they've achieved, and I look forward to
28 working with them to renew this nation's promise in the months ahead.
29

30 I want to thank my partner in this journey, a man who campaigned from his heart
31 and spoke for the men and women he grew up with on the streets of Scranton and
32 rode with on the train home to Delaware, the Vice President-elect of the United
33 States, Joe Biden.
34

35 And I would not be standing here tonight without the unyielding support of my
36 best friend for the last 16 years, the rock of our family, the love of my life, the

37 nation's next First Lady: Michelle Obama. Sasha and Malia, I love you both more
38 than you can imagine, and you have earned the new puppy that's coming with us
39 to the White House. And while she's no longer with us, I know my grandmother's
40 watching, along with the family that made me who I am. I miss them tonight, and
41 I know that my debt to them is beyond measure. To my sister Maya, my sister
42 Alma, all my other brothers and sisters -- thank you so much for the support that
43 you've given me. I am grateful to them.

44 And to my campaign manager, David Plouffe -- the unsung hero of this campaign,
45 who built the best -- the best political campaign, I think, in the history of the
46 United States of America. To my chief strategist David Axelrod -- who's been a
47 partner with me every step of the way. To the best campaign team ever assembled
48 in the history of politics -- you made this happen, and I am forever grateful for
49 what you've sacrificed to get it done.

50 But above all, I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to. It belongs to
51 you. It belongs to you. I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't
52 start with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in
53 the halls of Washington. It began in the backyards of Des Moines and the living
54 rooms of Concord and the front porches of Charleston. It was built by working
55 men and women who dug into what little savings they had to give 5 dollars and 10
56 dollars and 20 dollars to the cause. It grew strength from the young people who
57 rejected the myth of their generation's apathy, who left their homes and their
58 families for jobs that offered little pay and less sleep. It drew strength from the
59 not-so-young people who braved the bitter cold and scorching heat to knock on
60 doors of perfect strangers, and from the millions of Americans who volunteered
61 and organized and proved that more than two centuries later a government of the
62 people, by the people, and for the people has not perished from the Earth. This is
63 your victory.

64 And I know you didn't do this just to win an election. And I know you didn't do it
65 for me. You did it because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead.
66 For even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will
67 bring are the greatest of our lifetime: two wars, a planet in peril, the worst
68 financial crisis in a century. Even as we stand here tonight, we know there are
69 brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of
70 Afghanistan to risk their lives for us. There are mothers and fathers who will lie
71 awake after the children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage or
72 pay their doctors' bills or save enough for their child's college education. There's
73 new energy to harness, new jobs to be created, new schools to build, and threats to
74 meet, alliances to repair.

75 The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one
76 year or even in one term. But, America, I have never been more hopeful than I am
77 tonight that we will get there. I promise you, we as a people will get there.

78 There will be setbacks and false starts. There are many who won't agree with
79 every decision or policy I make as President. And we know the government can't
80 solve every problem. But I will always be honest with you about the challenges
81 we face. I will listen to you, especially when we disagree. And, above all, I will
82 ask you to join in the work of remaking this nation, the only way it's been done in
83 America for 221 years -- block by block, brick by brick, calloused hand by
84 calloused hand. What began 21 months ago in the depths of winter cannot end on
85 this autumn night.

86 This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make
87 that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It can't
88 happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice. So
89 let us summon a new spirit of patriotism, of responsibility, where each of us
90 resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves but each
91 other. Let us remember that, if this financial crisis taught us anything, it's that we
92 cannot have a thriving Wall Street while Main Street suffers. In this country, we
93 rise or fall as one nation, as one people. Let's resist the temptation to fall back on
94 the same partisanship and pettiness and immaturity that has poisoned our politics
95 for so long.

96 Let's remember that it was a man from this state who first carried the banner of
97 the Republican Party to the White House, a Party founded on the values of self-
98 reliance and individual liberty and national unity. Those are values that we all
99 share. And while the Democratic Party has won a great victory tonight, we do so
100 with a measure of humility and determination to heal the divides that have held
101 back our progress. As Lincoln said to a nation far more divided than ours: "We
102 are not enemies but friends..." "Though passion may have strained, it must not
103 break our bonds of affection."

104 And to those Americans who -- whose support I have yet to earn, I may not have
105 won your vote tonight, but I hear your voices. I need your help. And I will be your
106 President, too.

107 And to all those watching tonight from beyond our shores, from parliaments and
108 palaces, to those who are huddled around radios in the forgotten corners of the
109 world, our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared, and a new dawn of
110 American leadership is at hand.

111 To those -- To those who would tear the world down: We will defeat you. To
112 those who seek peace and security: We support you. And to all those who have
113 wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright: Tonight we've proved once
114 more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or
115 the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy,
116 liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope.

117 That's the true genius of America: that America can change. Our union can be
118 perfected. What we've already achieved gives us hope for what we can and must
119 achieve tomorrow.

120 This election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations.
121 But one that's on my mind tonight's about a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta.
122 She's a lot like the millions of others who stood in line to make their voice heard
123 in this election except for one thing: Ann Nixon Cooper is 106 years old.

124 She was born just a generation past slavery; a time when there were no cars on the
125 road or planes in the sky; when someone like her couldn't vote for two reasons:
126 because she was a woman and because of the color of her skin.

127 And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America --
128 the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told
129 that we can't, and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes we
130 can.

131 At a time when women's voices were silenced and their hopes dismissed, she
132 lived to see them stand up and speak out and reach for the ballot: Yes we can.

133 When there was despair in the dust bowl and depression across the land, she saw a
134 nation conquer fear itself with a New Deal, new jobs, a new sense of common
135 purpose: Yes we can.

136 When the bombs fell on our harbor and tyranny threatened the world, she was
137 there to witness a generation rise to greatness and a democracy was saved: Yes we
138 can.

139 She was there for the buses in Montgomery, the hoses in Birmingham, a bridge in
140 Selma, and a preacher from Atlanta who told a people that "we shall overcome":
141 Yes we can.

142 A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was
143 connected by our own science and imagination.

144 And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her
145 vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the
146 darkest of hours, she knows how America can change: Yes we can.

147 America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more
148 to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves -- if our children should live to see the next
149 century; if my daughters should be so lucky to live as long as Ann Nixon Cooper,
150 what change will they see? What progress will we have made?

151 This is our chance to answer that call. This is our moment. This is our time, to put
152 our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore
153 prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American dream and
154 reaffirm that fundamental truth, that, out of many, we are one; that while we
155 breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubt and those who
156 tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the
157 spirit of a people: Yes, we can.

158 Thank you.

159 God bless you.

160 And may God bless the United States of America.