

Uniting A Nation: A Close Textual Analysis Of Barack
Obama's Inaugural Address

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Thomas Michael Gatta

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Introduction

“Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met. On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.” Obama is a man who represents hope and change for our nation during these hard times. On January 20th, 2009, a new era began for our country. President elect Barack Obama spoke to a crowd of over a million, and millions more watching at home. Obama had a clear message. The message was hope. The message was change. The message was despite the difficult tasks before us, as a nation together we can overcome these tough times. There were a combination of factors that contributed to the utter significance and high expectations of Obama’s inaugural. It was one of the most anticipated speeches in American political history. There were a myriad of issues currently in America. On that frigid day in Washington D.C. the atmosphere was heating with a sense of optimism through this man’s words. Obama’s inaugural speech was unlike any other in American Politics. It was an historical speech given that it was a change of presidency in these excruciatingly bad times, and it marked the first time an African-American took office as the President of the United States.

The Inauguration of Obama set a record for attendance for anything held in Washington D.C. It marked the commencement for the four-year term for President Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden (Bensinger). An Inauguration is a formal ceremony to mark the beginning of a leader's term of office (Anderson). The “Inaugural address” is the speech given by the president with his intentions of what he will do as a leader. Obama addressed the nation in front of almost two million in attendance. There were a wide range of citizens at the event including

primary political figures and celebrities. The sheer numbers made the event one of the most viewed global events in history (Bensinger). One could argue based on the numbers who watched the speech, the state of our nation, and an African-American taking the world's most important position that this was one of the most recognizable and important addresses of all-time. His words must exude confidence and intelligence in boosting the morale of a nation. There were very high expectations for Obama's speech. As an orator, Obama had the duty of delivering an important address to the nation. Obama used a precise style of form and content to enunciate a symbol of "us" and "we" in his Inaugural Address to represent the transition into a new era of hope for our nation.

Literature Review

There were enormous expectations for Obama because of his track record and experience as an orator. Obama developed an excellent skill set. People were enamored and drawn in by his passion, intelligence, sensibility, clarity and calmness when he spoke. When Obama was on stage he took command of the stage. The words that he spoke were important and influential. John Smith of the *National Review* noted,

He is a charismatic speaker who promises to change the nation's divisive and often dysfunctional politics. His youth and energy have drawn comparisons to John F. Kennedy, whose daughter, Caroline, endorsed him on Sunday and whose brother Ted is expected to do so today. **Obama** is the first African-American candidate with a real shot at the presidency, an inspirational possibility in a nation with a legacy of racial discrimination (Smith).

Obama's youthful presence was exciting to the American people. He represented a new age of American politics. There were high expectations as he was supposed to bring a new charismatic

and substantive voice to the nation. Obama does not speak just to persuade people, he speaks from his heart. James Nelson of the *Economist* notes how people are drawn in to Obama and feel as though he is speaking to him/her directly,

Mr. **Obama** eventually moseys onto the stage and starts massaging the crowd with his seductive baritone. He calls for a new, less selfish, less timid politics that "reflects the core decency of the American people". The crowd is too wound up in loving him to wonder what, in practice, that might actually involve...Mr. **Obama** is by far the best orator. People feel that he is addressing them individually (Nelson).

Despite the expectations raised because of Obama's race, one can argue the oratory and speaking skills Obama has provided us has increased the anticipation of his Inaugural just as much.

Americans were drawn in to this situation because of the historical ramifications and the excellent skills of Barack Obama.

It is important to gather references of other pieces of rhetoric of Obama and capture the element of his rhetorical style. A critic can see similar patterns in different literary pieces and figure out the motives and styles that Obama shows. An element that shows up in other literary pieces and was the backbone to his presidential campaign was a sense of 'hope.' Deborah F. Atwater, a professor from Penn State University discusses in her scholarly article titled, "The Rhetoric of Hope and the American Dream" Obama's rhetoric 2004 Keynote Democratic National Convention Speech and his book, *The Audacity of Hope*. In her analysis Atwater claims Obama exhorts his core values of hope and prosperity and how this important rhetoric reaches the American audience (Atwater 2). In the Keynote Democratic National Convention Speech she examines how Obama relates the hope in the American Dream using historical references,

It's the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs. The hope of immigrants setting out for distant shores. The hope of a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta. The hope of a mill worker's son who dares to defy the odds. The hope of a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too. Hope in the face of difficulty. Hope in the face of uncertainty. The audacity of hope!

Atwater notes how Obama seems to always end his rhetoric in a resounding fashion for a persuasive effect. In *The Audacity of Hope* Atwater acknowledges that Obama's rhetoric of hope may also be applicable to a new rhetoric in politics. In his novel Obama relates,

And we need to remind ourselves, despite all of our differences, just how much we share: Common hopes, common dreams, and a bond that will not break. I imagine that they are waiting for a politics with maturity to balance idealism and realism, to distinguish between what can and cannot be compromised to admit the possibility that the other side might sometimes have a point.

Obama is using his core values of hope in his rhetoric to unite America to have more motivation for their say in politics and the American dream (Atwater 4). This sense of uniting the people together and changing for the betterment of society is apparent in his Inaugural Address.

The approval rating for former President Bush was at an excruciating low point as people were concerned over their next pay check, or if their house would go into foreclosure. Economically, we were nearing a point of the Great Depression of the 1930's and questions were raised of why we were fighting over seas. Why were we in a war where there seems to be no victory possible? Was it worth it to be losing men and women everyday? Questions and concern engulfed our country. A leader was needed. A changing of the guard was needed. We

had to be inspired that we can pull together and come out of this stronger. President elect Barack Obama was that leader. Errol Lewis, a columnist for the *New York Times* notes, "He's got to calm the nation. I think he's got to reassure the nation and let people know that we are in it for the long haul" (Anderson). The speech was significant in that his address needed to provide a lift and inspiration to a nation that needed a boost.

Obama had to overcome this enormous pressure and deliver an effective speech. He was the first black man in centuries to be our nation's leader and the address would be an integral part of American history. CNN expert David Gergen notes, "He's got to give that great, soaring speech. I think the pressure is really on because of the historic nature of this presidency and also because of the extraordinary moment in which we find ourselves with this terrible recession" (Anderson).

In a speech so closely anticipated, watched and scrutinized there was a wide range of reactions. Obama had an enormous and historical responsibility to deliver a speech that would resonate with the American people and the citizens across the world. Many Americans were inspired and felt a sense of pride after hearing Obama's words. Steve Simpson, a former director of the Port of Harbor reacted,

For a long time, we had lost our core values as a nation. Obama and his family reminded us of the values that link us together: love, family and connection to each other in our community. We really have turned the corner, I feel called to come back into service for the community because it's our turn. We all need to work together to bring about the change.

Much of the public in attendance and watching across the world felt this type of sentiment in reacting to Obama's speech. One could argue that many Americans were caught up in the moment and the atmosphere upon their reactions compared to focusing on the dialect of Obama's words. However, political experts and analysts had differing opinions. John King, CNN's chief correspondent noted,

In this speech it may not had [sic] been the most lofty rhetoric given, but there is now a lot in which he will be judged over the next 100 days and over the next four years. He laid out the foundation: This is what I want to do, and a lot of people tell me I can't do all this, that the country won't stand for it, the Congress won't move fast with me. If you read it, it's a pretty bold agenda, an ambitious agenda... (King).

John King credits how Obama's rhetoric by itself did not create a huge impact; however, he was looking at it in more of big picture ideal. He relates how Obama had to lay out his foundation and his core values he was going to instill into America. Obama was laying out a bold plan to inspire this country that the words are not as important as the actions after them. However, Jeffrey Toobin, CNN senior political analyst was not a huge proponent for the speech. His reaction was quite critical,

I thought this was an extraordinary event; I didn't think this was an extraordinary speech. I thought there were a lot of different ideas presented in the speech, but there was no theme. But most importantly there was no rhetoric, no phrase that stuck in my mind. And as far as I can see, there's no phrase that stuck in anyone's mind. And to be a speech that has a life beyond the immediate, you need something like that...And this was more like a speech that I think will be perishable (Toobin).

Jeffery attacks the organization of the speech enunciating that there is no theme or rhetoric. He attacks the resonation of the speech that there was nothing that will be stuck in the peoples' minds. Jeffery felt Obama needed to leave an impact with the people that could not be forgotten in this historical speech. Many of the political figures (especially the Republicans) felt Obama's rhetoric did not reflect David Gergen's proclamations that Obama had to give a soaring speech.

However, I do not agree with these reactions, especially Jeffery Toobin's. This was an Inaugural Address, not a campaign speech. Obama had the duty of transitioning the nation into the next era, as it was not a speech where he was trying to gain votes and persuade people to his side. He had already won. An Inaugural is a coronation of a president taking office and control of the nation. Obama had the responsibility to help ease our nation and deliver a plan of action so Americans would feel more secure. Obama understood the ramifications going on in our nation and he treated this speech more business-like. It was not a speech of celebration as the problems in front of us were not comforting. However, as Obama relates, they will be met. This speech was to be one that was told in composure and confidence. I disagree with Jeffery that this speech lacked a theme. This speech had a central theme in that 'we' the people are all in this together. He used the term several times and the audience took away a central theme that to solve our problems we must work together. The words should be analyzed by how Obama got his message across to millions across the country, not the loftiness of the rhetoric. Obama had the duty that day of relaying his values and creating a theme that would enable Americans to hold their convictions true that they had chosen the right leader.

Obama's Rise

As a rhetorician Obama used many influences that attributed to his persuasive style. Born to a white mother and a father from a province in Kenya, Obama was influenced by different cultures. Referring to his childhood Obama says, “The opportunity that Hawaii offered to experience a variety of cultures in a climate of mutual respect became an integral part of my world view, and a basis for the values that I hold most dear” (Reyes). Much of his rhetorical work signifies that different cultures are good for society, and that we must push for equality. He was born to parents who were not of the same race and this was a major proponent into his thinking of equality between blacks and whites. Obama notes, “It's not about rich versus poor; young versus old; and it is not about black versus white” (Mendell). As an orator he speaks with great intelligence and fortitude. Beyond his culturally unique background he was always smart as he was always academically gifted and attended Columbia University and Harvard Law School. Experts note Obama’s excellent rhetorical skills. Obama was as a [constitutional law](#) professor at the [University of Chicago Law School](#), a Lecturer from 1992 to 1996, and a Senior Lecturer from 1996 to 2004 (Mendell). These experiences as a lecturer at fine institutions attribute to his excellent oratory skills as a political leader. One can visualize the wisdom in his rhetoric. His days as a community organizer in the streets of Chicago opened the doors for his experiences in civil rights. Obama’s experiences dealing with troubled youths and poverty of the inner-city directly links to his ideals of civil rights in his speeches (Obama). Obama has spoken out in the past against government lack of concern in the growing economic class divisions, calling on both political parties to take action for the poor (Mendell). Obama’s motivations for equality amongst different classes are invoked in his rhetorical style. His political affiliation affects his rhetoric as he pushes more liberal notions to correlate with his democratic status. Obama’s rhetoric is down-to-earth in that he invokes his principles, yet they are easy to

understand. He is not using superior or 'elitist' language to the extent where it is hard to understand his message. Obama is one for the people. Growing up in a multi-diverse culture and working with the troubles of the inner city have made an impact on his life. His experiences and philosophy from childhood to his days as a U.S. President have attributed to his rhetorical style.

Besides the huge crowd that flooded Washington D.C. to see the Inaugural Address of Barack Obama, there were more who were able to capture the spectacle on television, the radio or the internet (Bensinger). The combination of that and the monumental occurrence allowed it to set a record as one of the most viewed events in our nation's history (Bensinger). The crowd was roaring with anticipation as they were about to witness the first African-American to be sworn into office as President of the United States. People came in from not just from all over the country, but all over the world. There was a very diverse crowd in terms of racial, social status and economic status. There were many celebrities and people of high-status witnessing the event including Oprah Winfrey and Denzel Washington. African-Americans, Caucasians, and Latin Americans all came in to witness history (CNN). This was a moment for the people of America to capture. There were a wide range of emotions flooding the audience. Particularly African-Americans felt a sense of pride and hope seeing Barack Obama being sworn in as the new leader of the free world. Others felt a sense of joy knowing that there was a new leader for our nation and a changing-of-guard for a country that was down at the moment. Obama's intended audience was not only the nearly two million in attendance, but millions around the world who believed in the principles of America. He spoke to the leaders of Washington, old and new, that now is the time to unite as a nation. He intended to speak to those who believed in a sense of hope and change.

In a day that will be remembered in history, the Inauguration marked the commencement of the four-year term for Obama and Biden. It is the start of Obama's presidential administration. Before Obama addressed the nation he was sworn into office. Using the Lincoln Bible he was sworn in by John G. Roberts, Chief Justice of the United States (Kelley). Obama held up his right hand and proudly recited the words of the presidential oath.

Standing at the podium in front of the U.S. capitol Obama delivered the speech to the country. Barack's wife Michelle Obama was present on stage with him. There was a clear bullet-proof glass protecting the president. It was a chilly day in Washington D.C. That did not stop almost two million people from showing up for this historic moment. People flooded the streets and surrounding areas of the nation's capital. The address lasted for over twenty minutes. There were over thirty paragraphs in the speech (CNN). Obama used many pauses for effect and the crowd broke into applause as well. It was not the resounding enthusiastic type of speech that was more evident on Obama's campaign trail. Rather Obama was composed throughout the entire speech. He spoke with confidence in his rhetoric. One could argue that now he has been elected as president he understands the responsibility that comes with it and the tasks before the nation.

Obama would soon become the most important leader in the world. He was being inaugurated at a time when the nation was at a low point. People's spirits were down and they were ready for a new leader. President Bush's eight years in office had worn out its welcome. Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King preached the ideals of equality for our nation. At this moment, on the footsteps of our nation's capital, that moment was apparent. . It was a star-studded event in which the anticipation ran high and tickets were hard to find. Obama was to be sworn in and introduced as the President of our great country. His address was to be the

principles that would lay out the work that needed to be done to restore our great country.

Obama's words were to be spoken to the world and the pressure was on to deliver the message of hope. The age of change and equality has stepped up to the nation's footsteps. Obama had the duty of using his rhetoric to unite and inspire our country as his Inaugural address was to be a defining moment in our nation's history.

My analysis of Obama's Inaugural address is going to correlate with a 'Close Textual Analysis'. Close textual analysis studies the relationship between the inner workings of public discourse and its historical context in order to discover what makes a particular text function persuasively. It looks to reveal the precise, hidden mechanisms that rhetoricians use to have an effect on the intended audience. The focus is on the text, but other elements still matter (Burgchardt 363). I am going to analyze how Obama uses particular nuances in his address that has a certain effect on the audience. He uses many stylistic elements including referring to aspects of historical context to symbolize his sense of change in his speech. I am going to analyze how Obama organizes his speech and how that contributes to the impact of his rhetoric. Obama used his particular theme of "us" and "we" in his Inaugural Address as way to unite Americans into a new era of hope for our nation.

Close textual analysis, or 'close reading,' is a literary criticism that aims to reveal the hidden mechanisms and meanings found in the discourse. A critic must pay attention to the particulars, rather than the general meanings of the literary piece. One will focus on individual words, syntax, and the order in which sentences and ideas are told (Burgchardt 563). It was originated by [I.A. Richards](#) and his student [William Empson](#) (Russo 36). It can be argued that Richards was one of the pioneers of contemporary study in the study of literature. His work with close reading among other literary innovations led to it being a fundamental method of modern

criticism by the mid-twentieth century (Russo 38). It is an important type of analysis in rhetorical criticism. Rather than analyzing the piece in a general perspective it allows a reader to examine a close connection with the author. A critic is able to focus on the particular discourses the author uses throughout his speech. One can explore the author's mind and how he/she is using literary devices to have a certain effect on the audience based on the situation (Burghardt 53). Close reading is more of a particular analysis in that instead of asking, "What was the author saying?" The critic will explore, "Why did he/she say that?" or "How did he say that?" or "How has the rhetoric changed that this line was here in the passage?" The style and choice of diction has much more emphasis. Orators or authors have a rationale in the words they choose and how they relay them. Mastery of close reading enables the critic to explore how the author deciphers his/her discourse to have a persuasive effect.

Michael Leff analyzed Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and named his critique, "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural." Leff uses 'time' as the centralized theme of his analysis. He argues that the speech is not only organized chronologically but time plays a focused role in the speech (Burghardt 564). Leff relates that Lincoln uses a clear pattern of temporal organization. The opening line references the past, present, and future and Leff argues how those three elements reappear in the body of the speech in their own element (Burghardt 564). Leff shows how Lincoln's progressions of time are used more as a literary device for effect, rather than a chronological distinction in the discourse. (Burghardt 565). He notes how this extinguishes Lincoln's excellence as a stylist. This piece is directly related to my criticism of Obama's Inaugural Address. First it gives me a glimpse of a close reading approach to a political discourse, particularly an Inaugural Address. It relates to a political spectrum of how the orator, in this case Lincoln, uses different nuances to appeal to the

audiences' emotion. Secondly, Leff's assertion of Lincoln using a centralized theme of 'time' is relatable to my analysis of Obama using a centralized theme of 'we' for a particular effect in the rhetoric.

Continually, I will follow a procedure for my close reading of Barack Obama's Inaugural Address. First, I will closely read Obama's speech and annotate the text. By annotating, I mean I will highlight particular phrases of the speech that strike me as significant or raise questions of what Obama is trying to do in that particular instance. I will look for historical, cultural, political, religious, and audience references in the text. This step distinguishes an outline of the important aspects that I will focus on.

The second step of the close reading procedure is very important step where I will look for particular patterns of speech, contradictions, metaphors, and similarities. This is the step where I will tie in my thesis statement. I will look for how Obama incorporates his central theme of 'we' and 'us' into his speech. I will explore the hidden meanings of the words, allusions, and expressions used. It is important to ask questions such as, "What kinds of metaphors and other figures of speech does the passage employ?" or "Is that passage similar to or different from others; If so, how?" As a critic I will analyze the detail of the language and how stylistic techniques or patterns are used to enunciate the symbol of togetherness in the rhetoric.

Finally, the last step will be used to analyze the implications of the central theme in his rhetoric. Questions will be answered regarding the rhetoric of Obama and his motivations for using this technique. Conclusions will be made regarding the effectiveness of Obama's stylistic techniques and the effect it had. I will analyze how Obama presented his symbol of 'us' and 'we' and the impact it made given the surrounding occasion and audience.

Inside His Words

Obama opens his Inaugural addressing the humbling tough task before 'us.' He uses the word 'us' to signify how we are all in this together as citizens. He thanks George Bush and credits historical ancestors who have sacrificed for the ideals that America holds its values on today, "My fellow citizens: I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation." Obama thanked President Bush for a few reasons. First Obama wanted to be respectful of the situation and thank Bush for his services to the country for eight years. Secondly, I feel as though Obama used that point as the transition from Bush to Obama. One could see after Obama thanked Bush and said the word 'nation' that it was his nation now, and he wanted to reassure the audience that he and his administration were in charge now. Many Americans were unhappy with Bush's eight years and were ready to move on. Lastly, Obama used this pedestal to invoke his "we" and "us" ideal again. It does not matter if you are Republican or a Democrat we are all in this together. A fine thing about this sentence is the use of the word "our." It shows that Obama is keeping with the element of association struck in his central theme. If Obama had wanted to distance himself further from Bush, he could have said "service to the nation." The chain of command has changed from the past eight years but we are all still on one team.

He references many historical instances to both appreciate where we have come from and where we must progress to as a nation to uphold the principles of our nation. Obama uses words such as 'forefathers', 'ancestors' and 'generations' as a stylistic quality to signify the historical roots of our nation. This rhetoric is effective as the audience can relate to this quality as each and every one of them can appreciate their ancestors have shaped their lives. Obama uses faith and religion as a theme that we are a nation of different believers, but we are all united in the

prosperity of America, “We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth... America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.”

Another theme Obama highlights is regarding the naysayers, the corrupt, and those whom are against the vision of change and hope for our nation. Those who are against the visions and ideals of the American way will not be tolerated or taken lightly. This is a uniting tool bringing the nation together in the symbols of peace and tranquility. The central theme to Obama’s rhetoric is that as a nation succumbed with problems we must be inspired and strive for a sense of change and hope. Obama relates, “On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.” He highlights his speech using the power of the American spirit that we can change as a nation and have the hope and confidence that our goals will be met and we will get over these tough times.

Obama illustrates his central theme of America being in this fight together throughout the speech. He inputs the words ‘us,’ ‘we,’ ‘our’ and ‘together’ many times in the speech. In fact, he uses those words combined over 100 times. Obama effectively uses these words to leave a lasting impression with audiences’ minds and hearts. The principle leaves an impression that we are all in this together. It is not Republican vs. Democrat, Black vs. White, and Lower-class vs. Upper Class. It is America. We are all part of the same land. We are all fighting the same fight. That is your brother and sister next to you and our differences will no longer get in the way of the prosperity of America. Obama wanted to put those differences aside for America,

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances

and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics.

Obama uses the word 'I' or 'Me' no more than a few times. He is not about himself in this extraordinary personal moment. Obama is about the American People. The countless references to 'us' and 'we' is a symbol that for America to uphold its value systems and get back to prosperity we must all do it together.

Obama wanted to send a strong message to the citizens of the world. He wanted to send a message to the nation that he is relaxed, yet focused on the task at hand (CNN). It was not as much a speech of celebration, but more of a speech a coach would give before a big football game. There is an understanding that there is work to be done. Obama addressed many themes throughout the speech including uniting over conflict, hope over fear, strength of America, and references to historical pieces (CNN). Our nation's past achievements and progressions show that we can overcome the worst of times. Obama used religious themes in his speech to connect it to the faith we must show as a nation. Another theme Obama used throughout this speech was references to Abraham Lincoln and his ideals of continuity and national unity (Kelley). In his Inaugural Obama used many literary techniques and a clear speech to deliver his message to the audience.

Obama's rhetoric is both intelligent and insightful as he uses particular stylistic qualities such as patterns of speech and metaphors to have a persuasive effect on the audience. In the fifth passage Obama relates for the audience, "The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms." This is an effective metaphor as he is illustrating to the audience how

the oaths of former presidents have been taken during good times and bad times. He is alluding how he is taking the oath during bad times, or “gathering clouds and raging storms.” This enables the audience to understand the status quo and picture the storm of times we are in right now. Obama continues, “At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forebears, and true to our founding documents.” He signifies the tough times we are in using the metaphor but brings the sense of optimism how America has risen over rough times in the past. It was interesting to see that he used ‘We the People’ as that is a direct reference to the text of the Constitution. It enunciates the preservation of the values of the forefathers and the confidence in these values holding strong today. Obama relates that in the only way we can change as a nation is to push through and work hard. It will not be easy and it will be a journey, “In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less.” This passage was strategically placed towards the beginning of the speech to signify to audience that it will not be a quick and easy journey but one of hard work and time. It adds credibility to Obama’s rhetoric as he is acknowledging that the problems of the nation will not be fixed by tomorrow. Instead it will be a steady process of working together in all capacities to change the status quo of our nation. He is noticeably confident that America will change, “The state of our economy calls for action: bold and swift. And we will act not only to create new jobs but to lay a new foundation for growth...Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.” The audience is captured in his oratory and his motion for change. They believe in him as a leader because of his confidence and the motion for change is absorbed as they feel they can stand behind his leadership. Obama’s words exude with

the accountability that the nation needs right now. An effective rhetorical technique he uses is another metaphor towards the end of the speech, “America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words; with hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come.” It is another metaphor using the weather as a way to signify the hard times, but that we can overcome the hard times as a nation. This strategically placed metaphor (opposite of the other one chronologically) places an ever-lasting impression on the audience that we can endure and change as a nation.

Obama used his central theme of ‘we’ and ‘us’ to leave an impression on the audience. The impression was that despite the hard times we are enduring we can overcome and change our own fortunes. Through hard work and determination we can achieve prosperity. He used effective stylistic techniques and a sensible pattern throughout the speech. Obama uses a chronological pattern throughout his speech. First, he references President Bush to signify the past term and that we are moving forward. He invokes historical significances such as our ‘Founding Fathers’ of country and the values they instilled in our nation. Obama references the sacrifice of the soldiers fighting for our freedom,

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn. Time and again, these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

From there Obama comments on the status quo in America and shows the audience that he recognizes the current crisis in America,

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

Obama does not shy away from the unrelenting problems in our country. The economy, health care system, and environmental issues have not been this detrimental to our country in quite some time. He does not beat around the bush and avoid the issues and understands the concerns of the citizens. Obama shows credibility by not shying away and letting the American people know he understands the issues. Following his chronological pattern Obama follows his status quo implications by implementing a plan of action. Obama's plan is that Americans will roll up their sleeves and meet these problems head on. It will not be short or easy but America will overcome these problems. He invokes ideals such as the troops will come home, jobs will be formed, and outside forces of hate will not be tolerated. America will not stand pat and let the nation deteriorate and we will continue to be the most powerful nation in the world,

But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions -- that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America. For everywhere we look,

there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act -- not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. And all this we will do.

Again at the end of that passage one can see Obama instilling his theme of 'we.' It is a symbol that together we can come over these hardships. America has never been a country that does not prevail in the end. We will overcome adversity. Obama has a direct plan of action that we will go to work and not be down for long, and if we strive together prosperity is in our sights.

It is an effective strategy by Obama to use this chronological pattern. First, it is easy for the audience to understand his message and follow along with him. He references the past, talks about the current state and forecasts into the future. Secondly, it enables himself to be credible with the audience. He understands our history, acknowledges our current issues and has a plan to solve them. These are important qualities for the American president, especially a president in this historical situation.

Conclusion

Obama effectively used historical, religious, and political references to signify the status quo and propose where we will go from here. He strategically placed literary devices such as

metaphors to enunciate his sense of change and hope with the audience. Obama captured the audience with the confidence in his rhetoric to relay his symbols of 'we' and 'us' in the speech. Given the historical and unprecedented pressure of the address, Obama effectively used his tools as a rhetorician to provide an ever-lasting effect on his audience.

“All this we can do. All this we will do.” Obama invoked these words in his Inaugural Address. Through his words Obama had to lift the spirits of the nation that was going through hardships not seen in decades. Obama's rhetoric had to persuade the American people that he was the right leader for this transition of times. He had to persuade them with a strong message that he had a plan to improve the economy, fix the health care system, get the troops out of Iraq, and uplift the pulse of the nation. An Inaugural address is meant to be an overview and a transition from the old president to the new one. There is not enough time to address each problem in the speech. As an orator, Obama addressed each of these issues with a simple message. A message of change. A message of hope. A message that 'we' the people are all in this together. Through his words Obama pleaded these ideals to the thousands in attendance and millions more watching around the world. His rhetoric was very effective and resonated all across the world.

An Inaugural Address represents the transition from one president to another. One can argue given the state of our country, and the historical significance of an African-American taking office that this was one of the most important addresses in American political history. Obama was under enormous pressure on this grand stage to deliver his speech. However, he did not flinch and he spoke his words true to the rhetoric he had demonstrated in the past, that of hope and the pursuit of liberty. Obama used effective rhetorical strategies to get his message

across on that day. His message resonated from icy Washington D.C. to parts all over the world.

The message was that together America will be great once again.

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