Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Kategoria	4
Apologia	8
Conclusion	17
Works Cited	19

Introduction

Running for political office is fraught with controversy for the candidate seeking the highest office in the land. That which was once miniscule becomes paramount in importance in the search for the President of the United States. In the election for the 2008 President of the United States, Barack Obama faced his fair share of opposition. Running as the Democratic Party candidate, Obama was confronted with issues concerning race from the beginning of his campaign. As the potential first African-American president, the media tried to relate most of his campaign to the issue of race. Obama, who was not one to be cornered, did not accentuate the significance of his race over the importance of other issues pertaining to America's state of affairs. In a time when people were seeking a new start after a costly war and an economic crisis, Obama's campaign ran on the slogans "hope" and "change." Obama's chose to transcend race during his campaign in order to focus more on America's similarities instead of its differences. "Obama is an iconic figure who embodies and at the same time seeks to transcend race and speak to the nation's common destiny" (Daniel).

Although Obama's transcendence of race during the campaign seemed like a good idea, for some it looked like he was ignoring the real racial inequalities that still exist. One such person who continued to speak adamantly about racial injustices was Reverend Jeremiah Wright. A key controversy during Obama's campaign was his ties to the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. As a long time member of the Trinity United Church of Christ, Obama's relationship with Jeremiah Wright went back twenty years. Obama met Wright while a community organizer in the late 1980's and Wright officiated the wedding of Barack and Michelle Obama (*ABC News*). The title of Obama's highly popular autobiography *The Audacity of Hope* comes from one of Wrights sermons. Clearly influenced by Wright, Obama appointed him to the African American religious leadership committee. A year into Obama's election candidacy, ABC released a story about Jeremiah Wright in which he denounced the United States and accused the government of crimes against people of

color. Wright had said, "God damn America" for its racism and "for killing innocent people" (*ABC News*). Wright's sermons often had a blunt political message that is not so overtly common in many pastor's teachings. After these videos were played Obama condemned Wright's statements and said he strongly disagreed with many of his points. Obama felt that he did not illustrate his disapproval of Wright thoroughly enough so he went on to deliver the speech "A More Perfect Union." In this speech Obama distances himself from Wright and his ideology of hate. In this speech Obama "resolves the political-personal crisis surrounding his racial politics by rhetorically presenting himself as a post racial candidate" (Utley). Obama addressed the needs and inequalities of the African-American community, but also spoke about resolving tensions and not holding onto bitterness and hate.

The speech "A More Perfect Union" was given at the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The exigency of this speech was Obama's reaction to the statements made by his former pastor Jeremiah Wright. The speech was thirty-seven minutes long and delivered on March 18, 2008. The title of the speech is taken from the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States. Obama spoke of the dichotomy of the freedom offered by the constitution, and the slavery that pervades our nation's history. He spoke both of the civil war and the civil rights movement, relating our nation's long struggle for equality and Obama's desire to continue that dream. Obama spoke on the divisiveness of Wright's rants and how this nation was unified in its desire for change. He spoke about his church, relating it to the wide spectrum of the African American community. He then recalled the racial inequality that exists today in the form of poor education and access to jobs. Obama also related the white communities concerns of working hard yet losing jobs and education to affirmative action. Obama's speech as whole is a call for a unified look at the nation's problems, and not just our own separate communities.

Obama uses the speech "A More Perfect Union" as a speech of defense for himself and for

Jeremiah Wright. I will be analyzing Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech as a work of *apologia* or a speech of defense. I will first set up more of the rhetorical situation preceding the speech. I will present the accusations or *kategoria* that Obama faced before he gave the speech. I will then proceed to analyze "A More Perfect Union", looking for elements of *apologia* and how Obama constructs his case for himself, and the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Finally, I will conclude with closing thoughts on the speech, and further application of the work.

Kategoria

Unknown to most, the controversy surrounding the Reverend Jeremiah Wright started at the very outset of Obama's presidential campaign. On February 10, 2007, the day of Senator Obama's Presidential announcement, Obama dis-invited Wright to pray at the ceremony. Back in January, Obama had asked Reverend Wright if he would begin the event by delivering a public invocation. The night before, Wright received a call rescinding the offer. At the time, Obama's campaign team was fearful of criticism over Wright's teachings, which were seen as overly Afrocentric to the point of excluding whites. Since Obama made his presidential ambitions clear, conservatives have drawn attention to his close relationship to Reverend Wright and to the church's emphasis on black empowerment. Tucker Carlson of MSNBC called the precepts "racially exclusive" and "wrong" (New York Times). On the Fox News program "Hannity and Colmes" Erik Rush, a conservative columnist, called the church "quite cultist, quite separatist" (New York Times). According to the Wright, Obama told him, "You can get kind of rough in the sermons, so what we've decided is that it's best for you not to be out there in public" (New York Times). A statement by Obama said that he wanted to avoid negative attention brought by Wright. Not wanting to cut all ties, Obama still had Wright come to the ceremony and pray for him personally. The controversy surrounding Jeremiah Wright did not end there.

In March of 2008, ABC released a series of videos from sermons of the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. These short video clips were played on loop to highlight the racist and anti-American

remarks made in the sermons. These remarks were made during the sermons called "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall" and "Confusing God and Government." Much of the accusations that came towards Obama were related to the nature of his relationship with Wright. Reverend Wright married Obama and his wife Michelle, baptized their two daughters and is credited by Obama for the title of his book, *The Audacity of Hope*. The media criticized Obama for having a relationship with a Wright, who was seen as nothing more than a hateful and prejudiced preacher. The Reverend Jeremiah Wright was Obama's pastor for twenty years at Trinity United Church of Christ on Chicago's south side. According to ABC News, "Reverend Wright has a long history of what even Obama's campaign aides concede as inflammatory rhetoric, including the assertion that the United States brought on the 9/11 attacks with its own terrorisms"(ABC News). Wright had been involved in Obama's life for quite some time. By the very nature of his role, Wright was in the position to influence Obama with his rhetoric and theology. Not only was Wright's name being dragged through the mud, but Obama was being dragged down with him.

An ABC News review of dozens of the Reverend Wright's sermons, offered for sale by the church, found repeated denunciations of the U.S, based on what Wright described as his reading of the Gospels and the treatment of African-Americans. "The government gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless America.' No, no, no, God damn America, that's in the Bible for killing innocent people" (*ABC News*). Reverend Wright said these comments in the sermon called "Confusing God and Government." Based on the racial injustices that exist, Reverend Wright called on the wrath of God against America. Blasting the name of God against America, Wright used a highly patriotic song's title and twisted to curse America. The Reverend Wright proceeded to say "God Damn America for treating our citizens as less than human, God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and is supreme" (*ABC News*). In addition to damning America, he told his congregation on the Sunday after Sept. 11, 2001

that the United States had brought on Al Qaeda's attacks because of its own terrorism. "We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more that the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye" (ABC News). The Reverend Wright said these remarks in the sermon "The Day of Jerusalem's Fall." These comments further the anti-American stigma that pervades Wright's sermons. One of the clips that were repeated often included this sound bite by Wright: "We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost," he told his congregation (ABC News). This clip came from a speech delivered shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center. In a time where there was fervor of patriotism and desire for revenge, Wright said that we deserved what we got.

It didn't take long for Obama to respond to the controversy surrounding his pastor. Obama denounced some of Wright's sermons, telling CNN's Anderson Cooper "These are a series of incendiary statements that I can't object to strongly enough" (CNN). "I categorically denounce any statement that disparages our great country or serves to divide us from our allies" (CNN). Obama wrote on the Huffington Post "I also believe that words that degrade individuals have no place in our public dialogue, whether it's on the campaign stump or in the pulpit," Obama continued "In Sum, I reject outright the statements by the Reverend Wright that are at issue" (CNN). Obama said he had never witnessed Wright making such statements, even though he has been a member of Trinity United for the past 20 years. "Had I heard those statements in the Church, I would have told the Reverend Wright that I profoundly disagree with them" (CNN). Obama said, adding "What I have been hearing in Church was talk about Jesus and talk about faith and value and serving the poor" (CNN). "When these statements first came to my attention, it was at the beginning of my presidential campaign. I made it clear at the time that I strongly condemned his comments," Obama

wrote (*CNN*). "But because the Reverend was on the verge of retirement, and because of my strong links to the Trinity Faith community, where I married my wife and where my daughters were baptized, I did not think it appropriate to leave the church" (*CNN*). This interview with CNN addressed many of the points related to the controversy, but still Obama felt that he hadn't properly defended his case. He proceeded to write an article on Huffington Post, further explaining his relationship with the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and his view on faith.

"As I have written about in my books, I first joined Trinity Church of Christ nearly twenty years ago. I knew The Reverend Wright as someone who served this nation with honor as a United States Marine, as a respected biblical scholar, and as someone who taught or lectured at seminaries across the country, from Union Theological Seminary to the University of Chicago" (Huffington Post). Obama went on to say that Wright also led a diverse congregation that was and still is a "pillar of the south side and the entire city of Chicago" (Huffington Post). Obama assured his audience that Trinity Church was "a congregation that does not merely preach social justice but acts it out each day, through ministries ranging from housing the homeless to reaching out to those with HIV/AIDS" (Huffington Post). "Most importantly, The Reverend Wright preached the gospel of Jesus, a gospel on which I base my life. In other words, he has never been my political advisor; he's been my pastor. And the sermons I heard him preach always related to our obligation to love God and one another, to work on behalf of the poor, and to seek justice at every turn' (Huffington Post). This point was very important, and Obama would return to it later in the "More Perfect Union" speech. It was important for Obama to distinguish between someone who would lead him spiritually, and someone politically.

Obama continued in his article saying "Let me repeat what I've said earlier. All of the statements that have been the subject of controversy are ones that I vehemently condemn. They in no way reflect my attitudes and directly contradict my profound love for this country" (*Huffington*

Post). "With The Reverend Wright's retirement and the ascension of my new pastor Rev. Otis Moss III, Michelle and I look forward to continuing a relationship with a church that has done so much good. And while The Reverend Wright's statements have pained and angered me, I believe that Americans will judge me not on the basis of what someone else said, but on the basis of who I am and what I believe in; on my values, judgment, and experience to be President of the United States" (Huffington Post). While Obama clearly stated his opposition to Wright's views, it was evident to Obama that he had not properly cleared his name. Obama knew that there was much more to the Reverend Jeremiah and the issue of race in America, and so he decided to embark on the most important speech of his campaign. Throughout his time on the campaign trail, Obama was presented with questions regarding the importance of his race to progress. Because of his relationship with the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Obama knew that there was more to the man than the media's portrayal. He also knew that there was a reality for the issues the Reverend was arguing for. Obama faced the difficult decision of outright denying the importance of his relationship with the Reverend Wright, or confronting the controversy outright and defending Wright. In the speech "A More Perfect Union", Obama makes an apologia for Wright, and by proxy makes a speech of defense for himself.

Apologia

Obama starts off his speech delivering the first line from the Preamble to the Constitution. The phrase "to form a more perfect union" has been construed as referring to the shift in power from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution. In this transition, the "Union" was made "More Perfect" by the creation of a federal government with enough power to act directly upon citizens, rather than a government with narrowly limited power that could act on citizens only indirectly through the states. Obama is establishing his ethos as a defender of the Constitution, and a reformer who seeks to bring unity to America. The Preamble of the United States Constitution is a brief introductory statement of the Constitution's fundamental purposes and guiding principles. It

states in general terms the Founding Fathers' intentions regarding the Constitution's meaning and what they hoped the Constitution would achieve. A major theme throughout this speech is Obama call to make America more perfect, or more complete. The Constitution was a much more complete document that gave America a stronger governing body to ensure national unity. It was in the Pennsylvania State House that the nation's forefathers' drafted the Constitution. Obama gives his speech "A More Perfect Union" at the National Constitution Center across the street. The National Constitution Center is an organization that seeks to expand awareness and understanding of the United States Constitution and operates a museum to advance¹ these purposes. Obama gave the speech on March 18, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The opening paragraph of Obama's speech inspires unity in the face of "tyranny and persecution." The men who drafted the constitution came from all backgrounds. They were "farmers and scholars; statesmen and patriots." They had different lifestyles but were unified in a simple idea. The Constitution was "signed but ultimately unfinished." Put another way, it was completed but not perfected. Much is the same with forming a "More" Perfect Union. To be perfect means "excellent or compete beyond practical or theoretical improvement." The constitution created a union, but there was need for improvement. The issue of slavery was "this nation's original sin."

This biblical allusion to the fall of man leaves an opening for a call to redemption. Using the bible, Obama transitions his speech to introduce the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Obama hopes to use this speech to "redeem" Wright and by proxy, himself as well. "Of course, the answer to the slavery question was already embedded within our constitution." Obama continued, saying: "a union that could be and should be perfected over time." This paragraph identifies that we have the potential to perfect this union, and we should be constantly improving it over time. "And yet words on parchment would not be enough...What would be needed were Americans in successive

¹ All quotes from Obama come from the Washington Wire's text of the speech "A More Perfect Union" unless noted otherwise

generations who would be willing to do their part." The need for reformers is established by

Obama. In order to form a more perfect union, the people need to do their part. "Through protests
and struggle, on the streets and 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."

Unknown to the audience, Obama is building the credibility of the Reverend Wright who he will
later identify as one of these great reformers. The civil war and civil disobedience marked times of
divide, when people fought for the ideals promised by the constitution in a time where fellow

Americans fought against racial equality.

This leads to highlighting Wright's position as a reformer. "A march for a more just, more equal, more free, more caring and more prosperous America." The use of anaphora of the word "more" illustrates Obama's point of desiring better for our nation. "We cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together." We cannot improve this nation alone; we must perfect it with unity. "Unless we perfect our union by understanding that we may have different stories, but we have common hopes;" This precedes what Obama will say about Wright and his life. Wright, who Obama wants people to understand in a different light, has the same hopes as everyone else. Obama strongly uses differentiation in order give an alternative perspective of the Reverend Wright to the media. "The presence of differentiation as an important factor in apologia is often signaled by the accused's request for a suspension of judgment until his actions can be viewed from a different temporal perspective" (Ware & Linkugel). "That we may not look the same and we may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction." Transcending race, Obama calls the nation to seek a common goal, regardless of who they are. *Transcendence* is not usually used so strongly in a speech of defense, but Obama shows its importance in dealing with America as a whole. "Transcendence takes in any strategy which cognitively joins some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not

presently view the attribute" (Ware & Linkugel). Obama strongly uses identification to show himself as someone who comes from all sorts of backgrounds. As much more than an African-American man, Obama shows his diverse background as rich and poor, black and white. "As long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible." Much of what Obama is doing in this speech is identifying himself and the Reverend Wright with positive attributes. "Bolstering refers to any rhetorical strategy which reinforces the existence of a fact, sentiment, object, or relationship. When he bolsters, a speaker attempts to identify himself with something viewed favorably by the audience" (Ware & Linkugel). Obama uses bolstering to identify with a grandfather who survived the depression and served in WWII and also a grandma who served on a bomber assembly. "This nation is more than the sum of its parts—that out of many, we are truly one." Obama shows that he hopes to transcend race and seek unity with his campaign.

Obama won victories in white dominate states like South Carolina where race was not the issue that led to Obama's victory. Obama uses denial to put the Reverend Wright's comments in his sermons in the polar extreme. "Denial consists of the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience" (Ware & Linkugel). Obama addresses the issues of race as a false reason for his ascension to presidential candidate. He also puts Wright in the position of deepening the divide of racial tensions, denying association with such comments. Obama mixes up his speech by denying the Reverend Wrights stagnant view of race, while on the other hand using differentiation to give a more complete picture of the Reverend Wright. Using differentiation, Obama says that we all have people in our lives that say comments we don't agree with. Obama identifies the fact he was aware of some of the controversy surrounding Wright, but he identifies with audience by saying that "I'm sure many of you have heard remarks from your pastors, priests, or rabbis with which you strongly

disagreed." Obama goes on to lay out the charges against the Reverend Wright. Although a strong use of denial seems present, it is Obama who is laying the charges against Wright. Holding nothing back, Obama establishes ethos by fairly assessing Wright. He could minimize Wright's comments to lessen his burden of redeeming Wright, but he doesn't. Obama wants to show that there is more to the Reverend Wright, and in order to argue that, Obama needs to seem unbiased on the issue.

Obama uses differentiation to paint Wright as a flawed character. While he condemns the comments circulating in the media, Obama purposes to make Wright more relatable and identifiable with the audience. Obama calls the media's portrayal of Wright a caricature. "I confess that if all that I knew of the Reverend Wright were the snippets of those sermons that have run in an endless loop on the television" Obama says: "there is no doubt that I would react in much the same way." Obama further establishes his ethos by explaining that he would feel the same way as the media if all he knew of Wright was in those videos. Obama makes a point to be fair with his audience because he understands that Wright is a complex character, and the audience will need a lot of patience to understand the man more fully. Obama then proceeds to use bolstering and differentiation to make an apologia for himself and the Reverend Wright. Obama puts Wright in a completely different light, opposite that which the media portrays him as. Obama gives a complete picture of a man who is involved in his community, who has served his country in war, who helps the sick and poor. Wright is a man who led Obama to his Christian faith, and thereby establishing their connection. Obama frames their relationship by associating Obama with the positive qualities of Wrights life. Obama defends his relationship with Wright by bolstering Wright's image. By defending Wright, Obama is also making an apologia for himself. "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 introduced me to my Christian faith, a man who spoke to me about our obligations to love one another; to care for the sick and life up the poor."

Obama is explaining Wright's life story, which is full of the pain from racial discrimination. "Those stories—of survival, and freedom, and hope—become our story, my story; the blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears; until this Black church, on this bright day, seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world." Obama identifies himself with the church and re-frames the churches identity. He uses differentiation to paint a more complete picture of Trinity Church. "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 bias that make up the black experience in America." Obama relates the fullness of what the church represents and what Reverend Jeremiah stands for. As Obama explains his relationship to the church, he also relates it to his relationship with Jeremiah Wright. A flawed character, Wright exemplifies the Christian teaching of "hating the sin but loving the sinner" for Obama. "As imperfect as he may be, he has been like family." Obama then addresses the relationship that the Media has criticized him for having. The majority of the media criticized Obama for his association to the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. The politically savvy move would be to cut all ties with the Reverend Wright. Obama further establishes his ethos by showing he doesn't take the easy road. Making this speech defending the Reverend Wright is difficult, but it is the right thing to do when you understand how influential Wright has been in Obama's life. Obama explains how intricately Wright is attached to him and he could cut him out of his life no more than he could his Grandma. Obama uses differentiation to explain that he loves his Grandma very much but even she "on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe." Obama goes on to say that "these people are a part of me, and they are a part of America, this country that I love."

Obama whose relationship with his pastor has been criticized shows how Wright and his grandma are not just his problem. They are a part of America and should not be ignored. Obama

acknowledges that he could have simply denied Wright and his comments, but he points out that there is much more going on here. Obama asserts that to ignore race relations is to make the same mistake Wright made. Obama uses the exigency of Wright and his comments to launch an argument on a much grander scale. Just as there is more to Wright and his comments, so there is a much deeper history with America's race relations. Obama argues that race relations have not been resolved, and that if we walk away now, we won't be able to accomplish anything. For those who would like to downplay the importance of race in America, Obama insists that deeper ramifications exist. We will not be able to solve other problems if we can't work together on race relations. The disparities that exist today are a direct result of inequalities from Jim Crow Laws and Slavery. Obama explains that legalized discrimination and lack of economic opportunity for African-American men has shaped the minds of people like the Reverend Jeremiah Wright. There are those who succeeded despite the odds. But for many "clawed their way to get a piece of the American Dream: they were ultimately defeated. For both men and women who overcame the discrimination and those who were defeated by it, they passed on this mentality to future generations. "For the men and women of the Reverend Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and bitterness of those years." Sometimes this anger is used by politicians, and other times it finds its way into church. "That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems; it keeps us from squarely facing our own complicity in our condition, and prevents the African-American community from forging the alliances it needs to bring about real change. But the anger is real; it is powerful; and to simply wish it away, to condemn it without understanding its roots, only serves to widen the chasm of misunderstanding that exists between the races."

The issue of race is still a problem that exists today and its history is present in the anger of many African-Americans. It cannot be ignored and to push it aside is to oversimplify the situation.

Obama moves on to say that such racial anger exists with whites as well. For those who see themselves as immigrants, they also have a history of fighting for the American dream. They have reason to resent anyone who gets an advantage of their expense, especially if they aren't responsible for injustices against African-Americans. These resentments lead to an oversimplification of race relations in America. They dismiss arguments for legitimate racial injustices and inequalities that still exist today. But to label whites as racist for their resentment ignores the fact that they have legitimate concerns. Obama seeks to be a post racial candidate, to transcend the racial inequalities and focus on the issues that unify the country. He acknowledges both sides of the divide and calls for unity in order to achieve a more perfect union. He recognizes that he cannot achieve this in a single candidacy, and calls his own candidacy "imperfect", again increasing his ethos to portray himself as humble and willing to work hard. Obama says in order to form a more perfect union; African-Americans need to believe "that though they may face challenges and discrimination in their own lives, they must never succumb to despair or cynicism; they must always believe that they can write their own destiny." Obama states that this view is held by the Reverend Wright but with one exception. Wright "failed to understand that embarking on a program of self-help also requires a belief that society can change." Obama builds the case that Wright has the morals to build a more perfect union, but can't see past the racial inequalities that he has experienced. Obama says the problem with Wright's sermons is not because he speaks about racism in society. The problem is that Wright believes progress cannot be made.

Obama shows that his run for the president of United States is a milestone on the road towards change. Obama says "what we already achieved gives us hope—the audacity to hope—for what we can and must achieve tomorrow." The phrase "the audacity to hope" comes from one of Wright's sermons, and is the name of one of Obama's books. Obama continually uses differentiation to show that Wright has all the qualities to seek progress; he is just carrying the anger of racial

injustice that in his eyes has not been resolved. Obama shows that he is willing to fight for progress while Wright is unwilling to acknowledge the progress that has been made. Obama argues that the issues raised in black community don't just exist in the minds of African-Americans. The problems are real and they must be addressed. As it would seem, the media's portrayal of race relations does not do justice to the validity of the inequalities that exist. The Reverend Wright's comments have reawakened racial tensions that whites thought have faded away. In order for healing to occur, Obama says that it "requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper." Obama argues that we can address the controversy with the Reverend Wright like we did with the OJ trial, as a spectacle, or after a tragedy like Katrina. Obama argues that we can see Wright as a distraction and not treat the racial inequalities as a real issue. Or we can do the difficult thing and address the real issues that result in racial tensions such as failing school systems.

Obama seeks to transcend race in order to find common issues that all Americans are effected by. "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." Obama distinguishes himself from Wright by saying he is fighting for change, and his hope is in the coming generations "the young people whose attributes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election." Wright on the other hand believes race relations are static.

Obama ends his speech with a story about a girl named Ashley. Ashley's mother had cancer and she lost her health care and job. Because they were poor, Ashley had to convince her mother that she liked mustard and relish sandwiches more than anything in the world. They survived, and after a couple of years her mom eventually got better. Ashley joined the Obama campaign because she wanted to help millions of other children who had sick parents. Obama says that Ashley could have

blamed her problems on African-Americans and welfare, or Hispanics and illegal immigrants. But she didn't and she "sought out allies in her fight against injustice." An elderly African-American man was at the meeting and said he was there because of Ashley. This means that he believes in a younger generation, who regardless of race will fight for justice. Obama says that moment is "where the nation starts on its road to progress." It is this change that leads to a more perfect union. Obama aligns his campaign with the slogan of change. He contrasts this against Wright's inability to change his ways. Wright's credibility has been defended, but his unwillingness to continue fighting for progress is criticized by Obama.

Conclusion

It was quite clear after Obama gave the speech "A More Perfect Union" that it had wide reaching effects on his campaign, and on rhetorical history. Already a finely established orator, this speech cemented Obama's reputation as being skilled in rhetoric. Taking the controversy around Jeremiah Wright, Obama used this rhetorical situation to address a much larger issue. As it played out in the media, the controversy was nothing more than a distraction during a campaign trail. For Obama, he made it his opportunity to show America that racial inequalities and injustices still exist to this day. For most, this speech was a wakeup call to the plight of African-Americans, but Obama was not content to stop there. Seeking to transcend race, Obama argued on issues that would unite the country, and form "A More Perfect Union." Twenty four hours after the speech was given, there was 1.2 million hits on YouTube for the video, and 2.5 within the first couple days (Morning Edition). The speech also had effects on the media landscape. "In the days after the speech, links to the video and to transcripts of the speech were the most popular items posted on Facebook" (Stelter). Additionally "The New York Times observed that the transcript of the speech was emailed more frequently than their news story on the speech, and suggested that this might be indicative of a new pattern in how young people receive news, avoiding conventional media filters" (Stelter). For the most part, people saw Obama's speech as an honest look at a controversial man.

Obama came off as truthful while explaining the nature of his relationship to Wright. Obama gave a fair analysis of the Reverend Wright's character, something the media did not do. As to the effect on voters, many polls were taken after the speech. "A Fox News poll taken immediately after Obama's speech on the evenings of March 18 and March 19 found that 57 percent of respondents did not believe that Obama shared the views of the Reverend Wright while 24 percent believed he did share Wright's views. 36 percent of Republicans, 20 percent of independents, and 17 percent of Democrats believed that Obama shared Wright's views" (Blanton). One of the highest praises for the speech came from Obama's speech writer who said after reading the speech "This is why you should be president" (Draper).

Works Cited

- Associated Press. "Obama Denounces Former Pastor Politics Decision '08 Barack Obama News - Msnbc.com." *Msnbc.com - Breaking News, Science and Tech News, World News, US News, Local News- Msnbc.com.* MSNBC, 29 Apr. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011.
 http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24371827/ns/politics-decision_08/t/obama-strongly-denounces-former-pastor/.
- Adubato, Steve. "Obama's Wright Reaction Was Wrong Msnbc Tv MSNBC TV Commentary

 Msnbc.com." *Msnbc.com Breaking News, Science and Tech News, World News, US News,* Local News- Msnbc.com. MSNBC, 21 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011.
 http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23745283/ns/msnbc_tv-msnbc_tv_commentary/t/obamas-reaction-wright-too-little-too-late/.
- 3. Blanton, Dana. "FOX News Poll: More Than Half Believe Obama Doesn't Share Views of Pastor Wright Polls | AP Polls | Gallup Poll | Opinion Polls FOXNews.com." *FoxNews.com Breaking News* | *Latest News* | *Current News*. Fox News, 21 Mar. 2008. Web. 07 June 2011. http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,339949,00.html.
- 4. Burgchardt, Carl R. *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*. 4th ed. State College, PA: Strata Pub., 2010. Print.
- 5. Burnham, Linda. "A Black Scholar Readers' Forum on President Obama": Obama's Candidacy: The Advent of Post-Racial America and the End of Black Politics?" *Black Scholar* 38.4 (2008): 43-46. *Academic Search Elite*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- 6. Daniel, G. Reginald. "Race, Multiraciality, and Barack Obama: Toward a More Perfect Union?" *Black Scholar* 39.3/4 (2009): 51-59. *Academic Search Elite*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- 7. Dilanian, Ken. "USATODAY.com." *News, Travel, Weather, Entertainment, Sports, Technology, U.S. & World USATODAY.com.* USA Today, Mar. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011. http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20080319/1a_cover_wright19_dom.art.htm.

- 8. Draper, Robert. "Barack Obama's Work in Progress: Politics: GQ." *GQ Magazine Online: Look Sharp, Live Smart: GQ*. GQ, Nov. 2009. Web. 07 June 2011. http://www.gq.com/news-politics/200911/barack-obama-writing-books-writer-robert-draper.
- 9. Kantor, Jodi. "Disinvitation by Obama Is Criticized New York Times." *The New York Times Breaking News, World News & Multimedia. The New York Times*, 6 Mar. 2007. Web. 26 May 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/06/us/politics/06obama.html.
- 10. Mooney, Alex. "Controversial Minister off Obama's Campaign CNN." Featured Articles from CNN. CNN, 14 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011. ">http://articles.cnn.com/2008-03-14/politics/obama.minister_1_obama-campaign-reverend-wright-sermons?_s=PM:POLITICS>">http://articles.cnn.com/2008-03-14/politics/obama.minister_1_obama-campaign-reverend-wright-sermons?_s=PM:POLITICS>.
- 11. Moreno, Ulises. "Obama's apologia: Reassessing the role of transcendence for minority subjects in presidential campaigns." *Conference Papers -- National Communication Association* (2009):
 1. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 28 Apr. 2011.
- 12. Morning Edition. "Obama's Speech on Race Tops YouTube: NPR." NPR: National Public Radio: News & Analysis, World, US, Music & Arts: NPR. NPR, 20 Mar. 2008. Web. 07 June 2011. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88650809.
- 13. Obama, Barack. "A More Perfect Union." *Vital Speeches of the Day* 74.5 (2008): 194-199. *Academic Search Elite*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- 14. Obama, Barack. "Barack Obama: On My Faith and My Church." *Breaking News and Opinion on the Huffington Post*. Huffington Post, 14 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011.
 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barack-obama/on-my-faith-and-my-church_b_91623.html.
- 15. Stelter, Brian. "Finding Political News Online, the Young Pass It On NYTimes.com." *The New York Times Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*. The New York Times, 27 Mar. 2008. Web. 07 June 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/us/politics/27voters.html.
- 16. Ross, Brian, and Rehab El-buri. "Obama's Pastor: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11 -

- ABC News." *ABCNews.com: Breaking News, Politics, World News, Good Morning America, Exclusive Interviews ABC News*. ABC News, 13 Mar. 2008. Web. 07 June 2011. http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/DemocraticDebate/story?id=4443788.
- 17. Utley, Ebony and Amy L. Heyse. "Barack Obama's (Im) Perfect Union: An Analysis of the Strategic Successes and Failures in His Speech on Race." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 33.3 (2009): 153-163. *Academic Search Elite*. EBSCO. Web. 8 Dec. 2010.
- 18. Ware, B.L., and Wil A. Linkugel. "They Spoke In Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59.3 (1973): 273. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 28 Apr. 2011.
- 19. Washington Wire. "Text of Obama's Speech: A More Perfect Union Washington Wire WSJ."

 WSJ Blogs WSJ. The Wall Street Journal, 15 Mar. 2008. Web. 26 May 2011.

 http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2008/03/18/text-of-obamas-speech-a-more-perfect-union/>.