

CIVIL SOCIETY AND CIVIL DISCOURSE: ELOQUENCE AND HOPE IN THE
COMMUNICATIONS OF PRESIDENTS ABRAHAM LINCOLN, FRANKLIN D.
ROOSEVELT, AND BARACK OBAMA

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIRMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, SPEECH, AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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DENTON, TEXAS

May 2020

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful family. To my children, Kathrine and Tristan, who convinced me that it was never too late to go back to school. To my wonderful daughter-in-law, Qiong, who inspired me with her quiet grace as she completed her own Ph.D. And most of all, I would like to thank my amazing husband, Randy. Thank you for never losing faith in me and my abilities and for going above and beyond to help me make my dreams come true. Randy, you are my love, my rock, and my life, always and forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Brian Fehler, and my committee members, Dr. Phyllis Bridges and Dr. Graham Scott, for their guidance and support. Thank you, Dr. Fehler, for your enthusiasm for my topic and your never-ending patience with all of my emails.

My deepest thanks to Tarleton State University's Director of Composition, Dr. Kathleen Mollick for acting as my sounding board during all of our late afternoon coffee breaks. I could not have done this without your support.

I would also like to thank Tarleton State University's Dr. Mallory Young for encouraging me to pursue my doctorate. Thank you for believing in me even when I could not believe in myself.

Thank you also to Dr. Jeanelle Barrett, the Department Head of English and Languages at Tarleton State University for your unwavering support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Julie Chappell and Mr. Hank Jones for your moral support and for encouraging my love of all things Literature.

I am forever indebted to Dr. Ben Sword for the countless hours spent in your office discussing the doctoral experience. Your support and willingness to share your own experiences with your Ph.D. studies was often a shining beacon in a world of darkness.

Special thanks go to Mr. Paul Juhasz who started me on this path when you encouraged me to reach for the stars. I am forever grateful for your never-ending support and faith in me as a student and as an individual. Walking into your Freshman English Composition class so long ago, literally changed my life for the better.

Last but by no means least, thank you to my colleagues and friends at Tarleton State University, North Central Texas College, and Cayuga Community College for their patience and understanding during the long journey towards my Doctorate.

ABSTRACT

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MAY 2020

During times of difficulty, Americans traditionally turn towards the President for guidance and leadership. The trope of hope is a critical part of achieving these goals. Hope is the attitude of mind that is based on the expectation that something positive can happen in relation to one's life, community, or the world at large. During times of crisis, hope can unite the population, encourage new possibilities, and effect change. Through the decades, presidential speeches have tended to posit an epideictic ideal: eloquent expressions meant to bring a diverse citizenry an ideal, if not reality, of unity.

The American presidents Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Barack Obama each combined elements of taste, common sense, sympathy, propriety—and hope to posit an epideictic ideal: eloquent expressions meant to bring a diverse citizenry an ideal, if not reality, of unity. Each of these presidents' style responded to the public values and political shifts of their time to encourage public trust and civil discourse.

This study examines how civil discourse is essential to civil society and argues that a) United States presidents have practiced Stoic principles of rhetoric to unify the

American people, a practice that is understudied, and b) United States presidents have altered and extended those principles to allow room for appeals based on hope. The study situates presidential rhetoric within the larger context of classical rhetoric and Stoicism. This study analyzes several speeches from each of the selected presidents and draws upon PAC to show how these hopeful speeches have worked to evoke a sense of community and purpose for Americans.

Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama combined the eloquence of clarity and coherence in speech, moral dignity in conduct of character and warmth of personality to advance their visions of civic unity during times of crisis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Why should Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and Barack Obama be the focus of a rhetorical study? The reason is that while there is plenty of scholarship on each of these men individually, a recent survey of available scholarship shows very little research combining all three and none that connects the rhetoric of these three men through the trope of hope during times of crisis.

During times of difficulty, Americans traditionally turn towards the president for guidance and leadership. People want to believe that as dire as a situation may be, problems can be solved and things will get better. They want a president who can revitalize America's faith in itself and provide a sense of purpose. The trope of hope is a critical part of achieving these goals. Hope is the attitude of mind that is based on the expectation that something positive can happen in relation to one's life, community, or the world at large. During times of crisis, hope can unite the population, encourage new possibilities, and effect change.

Lincoln's 1862 remarks to Congress famously called the American democratic experiment "the last, best hope on earth." Franklin D. Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address (1933) offered the public hope and a plan of action to a citizenry demoralized by the effects of the Great Depression. Barack Obama's 2004 keynote speech to the

Democratic National Convention rejected the divisive labels of black, white, liberal, or conservative to unite the country under the banner of the United States of America, a theme he later pursued in his book *Audacity of Hope*. What those three great public examples of discourse have in common are the use of taste, common sense, sympathy, propriety—and hope. Did Lincoln think the South would openly embrace his policies on slavery, or did Obama think people would put aside their differences and endorse his vision? Certainly not. Dissent is to be expected in a democracy. Yet, through the decades, presidential speeches have tended to posit an epideictic ideal: eloquent expressions meant to bring a diverse citizenry an ideal, if not reality, of unity.

Aristotle famously stated that rhetoric is using all the available means of persuasion in any given situation. Rhetoric is neither an art nor science, but it is used by all other arts and is concerned with creating a persuasive argument. Rhetoric is primarily used for three purposes: political, forensic or legal, and ceremonial. For this reason, a rhetor must be familiar with all the ways to persuade people, emotional and logical; and he must be a credible speaker. Rhetoric helps a person to see all sides of an argument. However, Aristotle argues that in order for a speaker to be persuasive, he must not only make his argument demonstrative and believable, but he must also present the right type of character and be able to put his audience in the right frame of mind. The three things that inspire confidence in an audience are: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. A good speaker must be able to judge the emotions of his audience as emotion has the ability to change a person's opinion on his judgment. The Roman statesman Cicero argues in *On the Orator* that the best type of public orator is a person who is a

good human being, one who not only lives well but acts accordingly—a person who speaks in a style that has the power to unite, inspire, and educate the people as well as who exhibits rules of acceptable, moral behavior. Although governments changed, and forms of government changed, and democracy eventually evolved and expanded, Cicero's ideas have remained recognizable in the West. Style is an essential ingredient in politics and maintaining civil society through civil discourse. For Cicero, these two activities— oratory and politics—go hand in hand. For Cicero, and for his many readers in the centuries that followed, throughout the neoclassical West, style is important, not as mere flourish but as a glue that holds civil society together.

We see great attention to style from Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama. Lincoln's rhetoric was directed toward the United States itself, to encourage healing; Roosevelt's was aimed at getting the United States to join the world stage, to see itself as a global force for good; Obama's was aimed at internal unity, to encourage citizens to see the United States government as a force for good abroad and at home. Each of these presidents' style responded to the public values and political shifts of their time to encourage public trust and civil discourse.

The Problem

Civil discourse is one of the most important elements for a democratic society. Raymie E. McKerrow argues that discourse “is the tactical dimension of the operation of power in its manifold relations at all levels of society” (98). Civil discourse succeeds when all parties involved try to both understand and be understood by each other. This type of conversation is collaborative and inclusive, and critical thinking skills are valued.

It succeeds when speakers are treated with respect even in disagreement. Jim Leach states that civility “is not simply or principally about manners. It doesn’t mean that spirited advocacy is to be avoided. Indeed, argumentation is a social good. Without [it] there is a tendency to dogmatism, even tyranny” (“The Health of Our Nation” 1). A democratic form of government depends on a civil society wherein citizens can come together and engage in civil discourse. Without some shared language, a civil society, and a democracy, disintegrates. In my study I ask the following questions:

1. What role does hope play in creating a unifying presidential rhetoric?
2. How does understanding Stoicism's *sensus communis* help us understand goals of presidential rhetoric?
3. How is “the trope of hope” an extension or alteration of Stoic rhetoric?
4. How does a rhetoric of hope support civil discourse?

Scope

This study will start in the nineteenth century with the addresses of Abraham Lincoln, and then progress to the rhetoric of Franklin D. Roosevelt and end with the public discourse of Barack Obama. Of the 45 presidents of the United States, this study will consider only those three: Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama. Other presidents, of course, have employed what this study will call a trope of hope, (Bill Clinton, for example, in a famous campaign move, was identified as the “Man from Hope”). These three presidents considered will be studied for two primary reasons: each a) served at a time when the United States was experiencing a crisis of hope (as discussed in the next section), and b) practiced a traditional, Stoic-influenced rhetoric but also a rhetoric that

extended those old Stoic categories to embrace a more emotional appeal, namely a hopeful one.

Method and Literature Review

This dissertation recognizes that civil discourse is essential to civil society and argues that a) United States presidents have practiced Stoic principles of rhetoric to unify the American people, a practice that is understudied, and b) United States presidents have altered and extended those principles to allow room for appeals based on hope. While influences of Stoic rhetoric have been too little studied in terms of presidential rhetoric, the presidential trope of hope has not been studied at all through this Stoic lens. This dissertation, then, will extend the understanding of unifying presidential rhetoric and revived Stoic studies.

To accomplish the stated goals, this dissertation will rely on Lois Agnew's study of the influence of Stoic thought on eighteenth-century British rhetorics. Agnew shows how an eighteenth-century revival of classical rhetoric shaped British political discourse of the time. Agnew's argument is predicated on the Stoic idea of *sensus communis*, which argues that the shared common values of a society create unity.

Agnew argues that sense "becomes both a description of the human ability to make judgments about the world and a shared capacity to develop individual and civic virtue through discovering and promoting shared understanding" (55). Classical Stoic education with its focus on man's individual search for universal truths connects the individual with society as it is a shared understanding of those values which influences the individual's aesthetic judgment, or taste. Part of the individual's virtue is the

sensitivity to others' perspectives. Agnew argues the central tenants of Stoicism “consistently revolve around the need for people to orient themselves towards finding a meaningful place within the divine order...Stoic philosophy emphasized the cultivation of an appropriate response to external circumstances” (9). This includes a sensitivity which allows the speaker to maintain the proper perspective on the distractions of society and the world around them. This propriety combined with responsible language connects the rhetor to the audience in a relationship that encourages sympathy.

Thus, I will be adapting Agnew's categories—common sense, taste, propriety, and sympathy—as expressed by various United States presidents to encourage civil discourse in a civil society at three stages of the development of the United States at times of particular crises of hope: Lincoln in the nineteenth century during the Civil War as he tried to present Americans with a longer view of history, one that looked beyond present troubles; Roosevelt in the twentieth century as the United States was on the cusp of superpower status and international influence; and Obama in the twenty-first century, at a time when the United States stood as the world's great economic and military superpower and still, paradoxically, sought hope. The use of the Stoic elements of *sensus communis* by each of these men in presidential communications allows for the speaker to strengthen the bonds of society by recognizing the common ground among its members.

Key to the success of this study is a shared understanding of the following terms: civil society, civil discourse, and the trope of hope. Civil society consists of the voluntary groups people form to work together towards the best interests of all. It serves as checks and balances against government violation of the public's rights on issues such as

healthcare, the environment, and legislation. Important to the success of a civil society is the right to practice free speech and the ability to connect with each other to discuss issues or monitor the government. Without a civil society, the ability of the people's concerns to be heard is diminished and democracy stifled.

Civil discourse is the ability to engage in conversation that is grounded in the similarities rather than the differences among people or groups. It looks for shared opportunity to develop creative solutions and alternatives to social issues and concerns through debate and interpersonal communication. Civil discourse helps people to understand the different backgrounds and experience that influence our different points of view. As a result, it allows a diverse group of people to live together peacefully despite their cultural or ethnic differences. The lack of civil discourse in a society threatens social unity by breaking down our ability to debate important issues. Instead of understanding, discourse between groups because a fight for each side to gain an advantage over the other. As a result, people are discouraged from engaging in problem solving discourse which leads to fear and misunderstanding.

This study will argue that an important element of civil discourse is the use of the trope of hope. Trope refers to a figure of speech that conveys meaning outside of its literal definition. A trope of hope are words that are combined to create a feeling of expectation or generate a course of action in the audience. For example, the analogy "united we stand, divided we fall" offers hope by illustrating that through unity complex issues can be solved. Hope allows people to endure difficult times and can serve as a catalyst for change by creating and supporting a culture of inspiration and creativity.

Throughout this dissertation, I will situate presidential rhetoric within the larger context of classical rhetoric and Stoicism. For the Ancient Greeks and Romans, the ability to speak well was a requirement for success in the *polis* and especially in the courts. With such a strong focus on orality, the Ancients studied how language can influence the audience. For Aristotle, rhetoric is concerned with creating a persuasive argument and is primarily used for three purposes: forensic (judicial), epideictic (ceremonial), or deliberative (*Rhetoric* I.4-14). Aristotle argues the primary concerns of citizens should be deliberative or political speech. Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos states, “Deliberative rhetoric is unique in that it appeals both to the listener's private interests and the business of the community” (746). For this reason, a rhetor must be familiar with all the ways to persuade people, emotional and logical, be credible, and employ effective style. Cicero argues that at the heart of these abilities is a solid educational foundation. Edward P. J. Corbett argues, “Cicero felt that the perfect orator had to be conversant with many subjects. In order to invent his arguments, the perfect orator must have a command of a wide range of knowledge” (542). To Cicero, extensive liberal education helps the orator understand all facets of human inquiry.

A solid education allows the orator to recognize what is important, how to gather the necessary facts, and be able to make good moral decisions. In *De Oratore*, Cicero identifies three distinct speaking styles: grand, middle, and low. A good speaker is able to blend these three qualities depending on the situation, subject, and audience. Presidential rhetoric is concerned with a national address that attempts to cover everybody in a spirit of goodwill, a reflection of Quintilian’s ideal of a “good man speaking well” (*Institutio*

Oratoria II.34). Cleve Weise argues, “Quintilian defined the ‘good man’ as one who plays the right roles at the right times and who can truly see and feel things from other people’s points of view” (150). Essential to Quintilian’s good man speaking well are a speaker’s delivery skills. Delivery skills are important in creating a connection between the orator and the audience. In fact, Dan O’Hair, Rob Stewart, and Hannah Rubenstein consider delivery skills to be “a critical aspect of the speechmaking process” pointing out that “If your verbal and nonverbal cues violate audience members’ expectations, they lose confidence in your credibility as a speaker” (249). The ability to develop a connection with the audience requires understanding how taste, sympathy, propriety, and common sense can be combined to create civic rhetoric that responds to modern stresses.

The rhetorical concepts of taste, sympathy, propriety, and common sense have their roots in Stoicism. Stoicism is a philosophical doctrine that started with Zeno from 300 B.C and lasted until the 3rd century A.D. in response to the abolition of Greek city-states following the rule of Alexander the Great (Richardson Jr. 1). Prior to the invasions, all societal life is based on societal values established and promoted in the city-states. This includes rules, norms, morals, ethics, and responsibilities of every individual in society. The abolition of the city-states left the people of Greek societies with no guidance for their actions and responsibilities. Thus, Zeno created the philosophy of Stoicism as a beacon of rationality which would enable the people to have a basis for their moral and social actions.

According to Richardson Jr., Stoicism is a philosophy that takes nature as the governing law of the universe (2). Following this perspective, Stoics believe that humans,

as subjects of nature, must also follow these same laws in both moral and rational actions. Thus, the basic tenet of Stoicism is that man must follow the rules of nature and the universe to be able to flourish as a person. Essentially, Richardson Jr. states that understanding mankind and his potentials is a matter of understanding the laws of nature and disregarding aspects outside of nature that can disrupt judgment and personal development (2). In terms of human agency and free will, Richardson Jr. explains that Stoicism asserts that human beings have the capacity to overcome anything because nature has inherently equipped man as able beings (2).

Richardson Jr. emphasizes these distinctions of Stoicism to address the confusion that Stoicism suggests indifferent towards other people due to its orientations towards nature and emphasis on self-reliance and development of self as the guiding figure for human behavior. Instead, Richardson Jr. states that Stoicism emphasizes the mastery of the self through mastery of nature where self-reliance becomes the ultimate achievement (3).

The philosophy of Stoicism leads to the distinction of dichotomy between public and private life and emphasis on the latter instead of the connection between the two spheres as Bator suggests (431). Analyzing the Stoic elements of taste, sympathy, propriety, and common sense through conceptual analysis leads to the analytical deconstruction of understanding of the terminology and concept to understand whether Stoicism does promote private life over public life.

One important element that combines private and public life is taste. Adam Smith proposed a theory of taste that emphasizes its role in the merger between public and

private life. Furuya states that according to Adam Smith, taste is the necessary factor that creates order in a commercial environment because taste is created when people of different and private interests agree to a common ground about aesthetic factors and criteria (40). Thus, theories of taste are a conciliation of the Stoic conception of private interest and ideas of self-sufficiency away from external factors and the ubiquity of the public domain.

Furuya also delves into the concept of sympathy and its role in the interaction between people's private spheres towards creating a public connection between and among individuals. She states that the nature of sympathy is in putting oneself in the situation of others and assessing the situation based on one's values and experiences (45). Through sympathy, people are able to communicate their passions with other people and connect subjective realities, a staple in Stoicism, towards creating an agreement of commonality. Essentially, sympathy creates the connection between individuals that is necessary for creating public life. Thus, sympathy also uses the Stoic conception of inherent sufficiency of private life to sponsor public life.

Moreover, propriety occurs when people can sympathize to one's motives and adhere to the mode of action espoused in the agreement between private interests (Furuya 46). Despite the notion that propriety is submitting one's private interest in a certain socially constructed order, the stoic element of propriety suggests that private interests can merge to create a public connection essential for creating society. Thus, propriety is a decision of an active, subjective agent towards meeting other subjective realities in an agreed-upon social reality.

Lastly, common sense, as Somerville defines, is an implicit judgment composed of common and usual assumptions of individuals towards certain objects and phenomenon (420). Common sense may not be good judgment, but it is sufficient judgment created through internal synthesis of information using personal values and expectations in one's subjective reality (420). Therefore, common sense enables the communication between two subjective entities through commonality in understanding.

Thus taste, sympathy, propriety, and common sense all invoke the subjective realities of individuals in removing the boundaries of private and public life. In the process, it does not attempt to supersede the private with the public sphere; instead, the Stoic elements of the private sphere become incorporated with the public sphere, creating a combination and synthesis of subjective entities within the public domain.

A natural bridge between classical rhetorical theories and Public Address Criticism (PAC) is PAC's largely neoclassical, especially Aristotelian, concerns. The next part of Chapter One will provide selected reviews of PAC studies scholarship establishing the relevance of its application to the selected texts in this study. The importance of public address criticism is derived from the development of the significance of public address and speeches to contemporary society as well as the criticism as a method of rhetorical analysis. Historically, there were various conceptions and perspectives about public address, or rhetoric in general, and the role of criticism as a literary and academic instrument. Ernest J. Wrage argues "From the study of speeches...it is possible to observe the reflections of prevailing social ideas and attitudes" (456).

Craig A. Baird and Lester Thonssen argue that public discourse is vital to the function of democracy. They state that the purpose of PAC is to “express a judgment on a public speech” and that “such judicial appraisal is a derivative of composite judgments formulated by reference to the methodologies of rhetoric, history, sociology and social psychology, logic and philosophy” (134).

Michael Gavin reveals that public address criticism began in the eighteenth century as it played a crucial role in the development of literature that became the foundation of modern literature and development of succeeding types and modes of literature and speech today (666). With the primary lens placed on James Boswell, an eighteenth-century writer, Gavin reveals a first glimpse on the utilization of criticism, revealing the power behind the activity in creating relationships as well as conflicts between and among individuals for the sake of intellectual and literary development. In a certain respect, Gavin states that criticism provided a language of interaction and conflict between writers during the formative years of public address in the eighteenth century (665). With his ostensive use of literary criticism during his time, he was referred to as a controversialist by many of his peers (666). However, Gavin states that Boswell affirms that criticism is a way of socialization with prominent writers and literary figures during his time and also a means to create special relationships. Despite the frequent use of criticism which creates rivalries or forms relationships, Gavin states that criticism also enables the categorization of literature. Ultimately, according to Gavin, Boswell believes that criticism forces issues into the people’s minds, and criticism’s ultimate purpose is to

disturb the people's current understanding and enable shifts and improvements in the literary landscape (677-78).

Moreover, in the latter years of the nineteenth century, public address began to change from elocutionary and oratorical methods of public address to a more democratic and rhetorical mode that concentrates on the conversation and interaction rather than the technical variations of speech. Michael Sproule suggests that criticism in the 19th century marks the separation of speech as a rhetorical device and academic discipline (563). In a certain respect, public address became less problematic and more concerned towards engagements with constituents and marks the beginning of political use of public address. To elaborate on the development of public address from technical to rhetorical, Sproule illustrates the eight modes of elocutionary speeches and places them in contrast with modern public address (566).

Similarly, Norwood Brigrance illustrates the similarity between speech and essay and how the infusion of the two leads to a general improvement on the power of public address (31). Through integration of the two literary devices, a person can demonstrate greater skill in public address and utilize the advantages of criticism to enhance delivery and use public address as a democratic tool to maintain sentiments and identical convictions of individuals (31). Thus, Brigrance emphasizes that public address criticism hones the use of words as warfare tool and increases the effectiveness of rhetoric (35).

A comprehensive history of public address criticism sheds light into the process of development of criticism and its integration in the development of modern curriculum of public address. Martin Medhurst provides a detailed history on this process by

detailing how the first criticism on literary tools was solely based on generalization which lacks objective foundations (496). However, with a renewal of interest in objective public address criticism in the 1970s, people began to use criticism for constructive development (497). In the 1990s, however, a shift in public address concentrated on its intellectual significance and paved the way for a better use for criticism for the improvement of the discipline where scholars use public address to determine the voices of individuals (499). Ultimately, Medhurst believes that these developments in public address criticism will further pave the way for the development of theory and practice in modern curriculums (501).

In terms of the nature of public address criticism, Helen Vendler notes that criticism is ultimately the use of a person's own creative environment to assess a literary output. Without concern for the veracity of statements, Vendler suggest that criticism is more concerned with the use of words to create realities and incite emotions (27). Ultimately, Vendler suggests that criticism is a public good; and it comes from the confidence of a person towards the power of his own words to reflect his reality (29).

Richard Leo Enos, however, offers an alternative description on the nature of criticism that is hinged towards the appropriateness of the literary objective in reflecting the condition of the times (363). Enos explains that traditionally the fundamental rules for classical public address criticism must be based on criticisms on the same theoretical level (361). Thus, classical criticism must take concepts only from classical theories on public address. However, with the development of modern rhetorical tools which enable the criticism of classical theories through new approaches that explore the composing

process, critics are able to create new methods for literary criticism without undermining the significance of a literary tool of its time (364).

This study will analyze several speeches from each of the selected presidents and thus will draw upon PAC to show how these hopeful speeches have worked to evoke a sense of community and purpose for Americans.

As a result, reviewing the selected political communications through an Aristotelian lens will allow me to examine the intentions of the speaker as well as the communication's effect on its audience. The Ancients, though, were often ambivalent about the use of emotions in rhetoric. In contrast, American political rhetoric would be more supportive of emotional appeals, and presidential rhetoric, as this study will show, eventually grew to rely on rhetorics of hope.

Chapter Outline

The second chapter will focus on the nineteenth century and present Lincoln as the "Great Unifier," even in the midst of Civil War. It will open with a historical review of the political and social challenges facing Lincoln and the United States in order to provide context for his hopeful speeches. Next is a review of Lincoln's education with attention to style and classicism. Although Lincoln had very little formal education, he was an avid reader of any books he could get his hands on which included *Aesop's Fables*, Shakespeare, and early American state papers. Ronald C. White states that "Each book that Lincoln read by the fireplace in Indiana became a log in the foundation of the schoolhouse of his mind" (31). Lincoln read everything from grammar primers to lessons on elocution. The result was an education grounded in grammar, eloquent oratory, and

critical thinking. The study then moves towards an examination of Lincoln's First Inaugural Address (1861), his Gettysburg Address (1863), and his Second Inaugural Address (1865). Martha Watson argues, "the epideictic focus of all three speeches is clear: the preservation of the Union and what it stands for is a laudable and crucial goal" (35). In short, he practiced a Stoic-influenced rhetoric of hope, which this study will argue contributed to Lincoln's oratorical success.

Next, the discussion will move to the twentieth century with a historical review of America on the brink of achieving what would be called a *superpower* status. The third chapter will discuss Roosevelt's ability to unite a country devastated by the effects of the Great Depression and fearful of involvement in World War II. In the 1930s, with the memory of World War I still fresh in many Americans' minds, Congress initially took an isolationist stance and argued against United States involvement in any international conflicts. Roosevelt practiced a Stoic-influenced rhetoric exhibiting the elements of common sense, taste, propriety, and sympathy in a conversational, and hopeful style, which allowed him to unite the country, rebuild citizens' trust in the government, and shape the political narrative. For example, Ronald R. Krebs states that FDR's "definition of the adversary on the European front as the Nazi regime, rather than the German people, deeply shaped public discourse" (132). The study then examines Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, the Four Freedoms speech (1941), and the Day of Infamy speech (1941). Halford Ross Ryan argues that Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address "pays tribute to American tradition" while at the same time "attempted...to allay the nation's fear"

(140-41). The chapter will conclude with discussion on the effectiveness of Roosevelt's rhetoric to unite and calm the country, providing hope during some of its darkest hours.

After Roosevelt, the fourth chapter will examine Obama as the first president of African American decent. Obama was uniquely positioned to bring together a racially-divided nation with his targeted messages of hope and change. Manfred Kienpointner argues that Obama adapted his rhetoric "to meet audience demands, for example, while trying to appeal to groups of voters who traditionally vote for Democrats [; Obama] also tries to select topics and argument which are attractive for Republican voters" (362). The chapter will start with reviewing the political and social issues of the twenty-first century and then move to a discussion on Obama's educational background at Columbia University as an undergraduate and later at Harvard Law School. Next, this study will examine select social media posts, Obama's First Inaugural Speech, the State of the Union address (2012), and the "Selma" speech (2015) as well as selected Facebook and Twitter posts. The chapter will conclude with an examination of Obama's rhetorical success as a unifier and advocate of hope.

The fifth chapter will conclude with a final section of analysis placing each of these individual examinations of presidential communication into the larger contexts of PAC studies. The study will then be in a position to consider the successes and shortfalls of the United States presidents' alteration of Stoic, civil discourse to include emotional, hopeful appeals.

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In the mid-nineteenth century, America was a country in crisis. Slavery was firmly established in various states and supported by penal codes which regulated the activities of slaves and free blacks. As America expanded into new territories, the question of slavery became a geographical and political debate discussed in writings and speeches across the country. For example, William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, published anti-slavery poems and essays that argued for the abolition of slavery.¹ William Wilson's essay, "The Great American Question: Democracy vs. Doulocracy," argued that slavery was the greatest question facing the nation, and the 1848 presidential election was a contest between democracy and doulocracy. Wendell Phillip's 1853 speech, "The Philosophy of the Abolition Movement," recognized that anti-slavery groups were fighting against a system supported by economic and political power.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 attempted to defuse the tension between anti-slavery and pro-slavery factions. In 1891, Missouri requested entrance into the Union as a slave state which would tip the balance towards the slave states. To prevent the situation from disintegrating, Congress allowed Missouri in as a slave state, but also included Maine as a free state, thereby maintaining the balance. Congress also included legislation

¹ For more information on anti-slavery discourse, see *From Slavery to Freedom: The African American Pamphlet Collection, 1822-1909*, The Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>; Willie J Harrell, Jr. "A Call to Political and Social Activism: The Jeremiadic Discourse of Maria Miller Stewart, 1831-1833." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, May 2008.; Teresa A. Goddu. "The Antislavery Almanac and the Discourse of Numeracy." *Book History*, Pennsylvania State University Press, vol. 12, Sept. 2009.

that prohibited slavery above the 36°,30' latitude line with the exception of Missouri. The Wilmot Provision of 1846-1850 to outlaw slavery in the newly acquired territory of the southwest increased tensions. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which reversed parts of the Missouri Compromise and allowed the settlers of each state to decide whether or not to accept slavery, resulted in pro and anti-slavery groups resorting to violence in an attempt to sway Congress. The pressure towards war mounted with the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision which found that, as a slave, Scott was property and not entitled to the same rights and protections as an American citizen. The 1860 presidential election of Abraham Lincoln led to a Secession crisis and on December 20, 1860, South Carolina was the first of eleven states to secede from the Union leading to a civil war between the Union and the Southern Confederacy.

Lincoln the Orator

Lincoln's talent as a statesman is well-acknowledged in the academic literature and has contributed to his enduring legacy. Similar to Roosevelt and Obama, Lincoln's speeches reveal him as embodying Stoic rhetorical virtues of *sensus communis*, eloquence, a mythic signature based on unity and hope, and a morally and intellectually developed character. Despite the many hardships Lincoln faced throughout his life and into his presidency, his first declared priority was serving the needs of others.

Previous research has examined Lincoln with a wide range of perspectives. As a few examples, David Herbert Donald's *Lincoln* (1995) provides insight into the life of Lincoln and focuses on how events in Lincoln's life shaped his character and politics. Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Leadership in Turbulent Times* (2018) brings together Lincoln,

Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Lyndon B. Johnson to examine and compares how each of these men recognized leadership qualities in themselves during moments of great personal challenges. George M. Fredrickson reviews Lincoln's speeches, writings, and utterances to examine Lincoln's views on racial equality arguing that Lincoln was neither for nor against racial equality. Fredrickson states, "Lincoln had to make compromises and adjustments, and he was always careful to work within the limits allowable by public opinion at a given time" (40). Martha Watson argues that the major challenges Lincoln faced were interpreting the conflict between the North and South, supporting the North's position, and justifying the sacrifice support of the war entailed. Watson states that review of the 1st and 2nd Inaugural Addresses and the Gettysburg Address is important in understanding how Lincoln's rhetoric evolved in answer to the challenges the young nation faced during the Civil War. Watson states, "Some of [Lincoln's] words have become secular scripture, part of a rhetorical mosaic that shapes our understanding not only of our own history but also of our ideals as a nation" (34). David Bromwich's research examines Lincoln as both a realist and revolutionary. He states, "Lincoln was a moderate, a realist, an effective manager of crosscurrents who entered the Civil War reluctantly, arrived at emancipation late, and held a limited hope for its efficacy as a device to end the war" (Bromwich 2).

David Hirsch and Dan Van Haften study the structure of Lincoln's speeches arguing that it is Lincoln's in-depth study of geometry that provides the verbal structure. Hirsch and Van Haften state that "Structure is the enabler, then credibility and logic push the search for truth along the path to justice. Lincoln functions as a teaching tool

applicable to past, present and future” (xxii). Michael Leff and Jean Goodwin argue that Lincoln’s use of dialectical or dialogical figures play a significant role in the rhetoric of Lincoln’s speeches. Leff and Goodwin state, “*prolepsis* and the related figures of *prosopopeia* and *correctio* ...not only position arguments within a persuasive frame, but they also position arguers within the civic context” (66). The use of these figures allowed Lincoln to address the deep controversies that were dividing the nation.

As previous research shows, Lincoln was able to influence the perspectives of his listeners through the oratorical and rhetorical power of his speeches. This ability was especially useful when arguing for the necessity of the Civil War, as well as an eventual end of the war. Since antiquity, the goal of most political speeches has been to create a sense of unity in the audience. Individuality during a time of war creates confusion as each element works for its own end with the result that very little is actually accomplished. For example, Pericles, the great statesman and general of Athens, on the eve of the Peloponnesian war, stated:

The great wish of some is to avenge themselves on some particular enemy, the great wish of others to save their own pocket. Slow in assembling, they devote a very small fraction of the time to the consideration of any public object, most of it to the prosecution of their own objects. Meanwhile, each fancies that no harm will come of his neglect, that it is the business of somebody else to look after this or that for him; and so, by the same notion being entertained by all separately, the common cause imperceptibly decays. (Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I.139-46)

Pericles argued that the great good, Athens, was more important than individual wants or desires. In the same way, Lincoln's speeches argued for the preservation of the Union over individual state's grievances.

Lincoln used his speeches to deliver messages to both the North and the South regarding the roles and respective perspectives that these areas of the United States held in relation to the war and the future of America. In contrast to earlier research, my research argues that Lincoln's rhetorical genius, as evident in his speeches, ultimately led to a convergence of values for Americans and his speeches were crucial in offering hope and reuniting American citizens in spirit despite the horrors of war. I argue that Lincoln's rhetoric displays republican Stoic elements that reject self-interest and emphasize the interconnectedness of humankind. Agnew states, "From its inception, Stoic philosophy emphasized the cultivation of an appropriate response to external circumstances" (9). Lincoln argued that unity based on a moral foundation was the appropriate response to the increasing divide over slavery². He believed that American prosperity was founded on the principle of liberty to all, stating that liberty was "the principle that clears the path for all—gives hope to all—and, by consequence, enterprize[sic], and industry to all" (Lincoln, *Complete Works*" 169).³ Lincoln argued the Declaration of Independence provided a moral and political standard for the new nation and its argument that all men are created equal provided the goal of liberty for all. In multiple speeches, Lincoln

² The exact date of the "Fragment on the Constitution and the Union" is unknown. No known speech incorporates the fragment; however, researchers suggest that Lincoln wrote the fragment prior to his preparation for his First Inaugural Address.

³ Abraham Lincoln. *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Editor Roy P. Basler, Rutgers University Press, 1953. Referenced throughout the study as *Complete Works*.

referenced the Declaration of Independence to support his argument that the question of slavery should not be determined by might, rather, it should be resolved on the basis of the moral standard our Founding Fathers expressed in the document.

Lincoln's strong rhetorical abilities and dedication to the founding principles of a young nation had their humble beginnings in a small log cabin in the middle of the wilderness.

Lincoln's Background

Young Abe

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, to Thomas Lincoln, a former captain in the Kentucky state militia and later a farmer, and Nancy Hanks. Lincoln was born in a one-room cabin on the Big South Fork of Nolin Creek about twelve miles from Elizabethtown, Kentucky. When Lincoln was two years old, the family moved six miles north to a farm in Knob Creek Valley in search of better farmland. However, the Knob Creek place would not be home for long. When Lincoln was seven years old, due to issues with land titles, the family moved once again, this time across the Ohio River and into Indiana, finally settling in the region near Pigeon Creek. Lincoln learned early that success required everyone's working together to overcome the challenges of the frontier. Lincoln helped his father clear the land, build a cabin, and split wood for fencing. Earl W. Wiley describes how "[Lincoln] worked in fields, and on construction jobs, mauled a few logs reluctantly, served as an impromptu cook in camp, and...voyaged down the Mississippi river on a flatboat" (310). Lincoln's life context and upbringing helped establish in his character Stoic virtues such as industriousness and humility in identifying

himself as equal to others and thus united in the struggle for collective betterment, or, in relation to his political career, a “more perfect Union.”

Lincoln’s Education

Looking at the three men of this study, each with decidedly different backgrounds, we can see a commonalty. All across the country and across time, despite the differences, they share the same values and ideas: the equality of man, preserving individual freedoms while maintaining unity, and acting for the larger good of the nation with an eye towards the future. While their childhood educational backgrounds ranged across class lines, from the very limited, frontier style self-education of Lincoln, to the private prep school education of Roosevelt, and to the middle-class American education of Obama, all three demonstrated the ideals of *sensus communis* that is so infused in the building of American identity and culture.

Higher education in America, from the earliest days of colonial settlements through the late nineteenth century, was founded on a classical curriculum grounded in the study of Greek and Latin as well as the civilizations that gave rise to those languages. Caroline Winterer argues the education system in the colonies reflected their European origins with its focus on classical antiquity. Winterer states, “Classical history provided Americans... with the cautionary tales central to classical republican political theory: that republics were fragile entities suspended perilously in time and that balanced governments depended upon the civic virtue of their citizenry to withstand corruption, private ambition, and dependence, the relentless forces of decay” (19). The study of

ancient Greece and Rome taught the foundations of history, philosophy, and government. as well as provided a model to cultivate ethics, civic duty, and virtue.

The classics defined what it meant to be a virtuous man and the ancient texts such as Plato's *The Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aenid* provided examples of honor, courage, integrity, and virtue. A classical education polished the mind and refined taste as it delved into the achievements of the Greeks and Romans, their thought, literature, art, government, and history. Ancient Greek and Roman thought provided the foundation for many of our laws, societal practices, and deeply held values. This type of education provided a role-model for a civilized world as students studied what made these ancient civilizations great as well as what led to their downfalls.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* taught students the rhetorical appeals of *ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*, and *Kairos* and how to use these appeals for best effect. For example, the ancients understood the importance of understanding one's audience. A good orator tailored his speech towards the type of audience he was addressing. Edward P. J. Corbett states, "Above all other considerations—such as the subject and occasion—the audience was the consideration that gave 'form' to the discourse which dictated the means the speaker would employ to affect his end" (162). Also important to the speaker was education. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* and Cicero's *De Oratoria* discussed the best type of

education to use in developing a good orator starting at birth.⁴ Overall, this neoclassical education contributed to a national identity based on unity and *sensus communis*.

However, Lincoln judged his time in a formal classroom to total less than a year. As a result, Lincoln was in every sense of the word self-educated. In his determination to educate himself, Lincoln read anything he could get hold of, and if he came across something he did not understand or that particularly struck him, he would write it down and ponder it until he understood its meaning.⁵ H. Draper Hunt states that Lincoln “laid the foundation of a liberal education in backwoods Indiana and built on it steadily through life” (106).

As a young man, Lincoln studied surveying texts such as Abel Flint’s *A System of Geometry and Trigonometry, with a Treatise on Surveying* and Robert Gibson’s *The Theory and Practice of Surveying*, both of which drew heavily on Euclid. Later, as he practiced law, he purchased a copy of Euclid’s *Elements* and “set himself the task of memorizing the Greek mathematician’s six geometrical theorems” (White 168). Euclid’s influence can be seen in the logical procession of his speeches as Drew R. McCoy explains: “[Lincoln] characteristically stated propositions and proceeded to prove them, both by adducing documentary or empirical evidence and by deducing them from axioms or self-evident truths” (62). Lincoln’s later political style demonstrated Euclid’s definition-axiom-proposition-proof form.

⁴ For more information on rhetoric and education, see Donald L. Clark’s *Rhetoric in the Greco-Roman Education*, Columbia University Press, 1957.

⁵ For more information on Lincoln’s early years, see Ronald C. White, Jr.’s *A. Lincoln: A Biography*, New York: Random House, 2009 and David Herbert Donald’s *Lincoln*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Researchers such as Douglas L. Wilson, David Zaresky, and Robert Bray also argue that Lincoln would have encountered classical rhetorical strategies through his studies as a youth.⁶ As D. Leigh Henson states, “the tradition of classical rhetoric was a major influence in the work of nineteenth-century Anglo-American rhetoricians, and some of the textbooks and anthologies that Lincoln is known to have read...afforded him the opportunity to learn about classical rhetoric in his formative years” (4). For example, books Lincoln is known to have used, such as Lindley Murray’s *English Reader*, included didactic material from Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*.⁷ The combination of Lincoln’s pursuits for both intellectual and theoretical prowess as well as ethical bearing mark Lincoln as an exemplary man of rhetorical character.

Lincoln the Lawyer

Lincoln approached the study of law with the same determination as he did the rest of his education, often staying up late at night to read law books by the light of a fire. Lincoln started drafting legal documents for his neighbors and quickly progressed to arguing cases before the local justice of the peace, a man by the unique name of Bowling Green. Lincoln became friends with Green and took advantage of the opportunity to read the books in Green’s small law library.⁸

⁶ For more information on Lincoln’s possible exposure to classical rhetoric, see Douglas L. Wilson, *Lincoln’s Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006., 2006.; David Zaresky, “Rhetoric in Lincoln’s Time”, *Lincoln Lore*, Fall 2008, pp. 26.; Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 2008, pp.86

⁷ For more information on Lindley Murray’s use of Blair’s Lectures, see Robert Bray, *Reading with Lincoln*, Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2005, pp 5-6.

⁸ Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 2008, pp. 86.

During Lincoln's 1834 campaign for the Illinois House of Representatives, his lawyer friend, John Todd Stuart, encouraged him to become a lawyer. At this time, there was no regular instruction to be a lawyer; instead, aspiring lawyers learned the profession by working for an experienced attorney. Stuart offered to be Lincoln's guide and gave him full access to his extensive law library.⁹ Less than three years later, in 1837, Lincoln was admitted to the bar and accepted a position with Stuart as his law partner. As a lawyer, Lincoln traveled the Eighth Judicial Circuit arguing cases over everything from chickens to the railroad. Wiley argues that law provided Lincoln with "a prestige advantageous to the practice of politics, and his own expertness in speech satisfied a requirement fundamental to the practice of law" (313).

Lincoln was a captivating speaker. While a gifted writer, his speaking voice was high pitched and often bordered on the shrill whenever he would get excited. Emanuel Hertz states that in a July 19, 1887 letter to Truman Bartlett, Lincoln's last law partner, William H. Herndon, described his voice as "shrill, squeaking, piping, [and] unpleasant" (200). He stood slightly hunched over and with his hands clasped behind his back. However, once Lincoln warmed to his subject, his whole voice and form changed. His voice became "harmonious, melodious—musical" and "his form dilated—swelled out and he rose up a splendid form, erect, straight, and dignified" (Hertz, 200). His eyes lit up and he brought his hands in front of him, occasionally using his right hand to gesture or raising both arms when he wanted to emphasize a point. A major theme running through all of his speeches was a sense of humility and modesty. He spoke as one of the people.

⁹ Ronald C. White, Jr.'s *A. Lincoln: A Biography*, New York: Random House, 2009, p.65.

Waldo W. Braden explains, “It has frequently been said that [Lincoln] understood ordinary citizens because he was one of them and that, consequently, he was able to identify his causes with their aspirations and prejudices” (4). As the son of a poor farmer and a man who knew what hard work was, he shared their values, understood their hopes, and supported their dreams of a country where even the lowest white man could improve his life if he was willing to work hard for it. As a result, Lincoln understood the importance of connecting with his audience so he sought to put people at ease with his speaking style which used stories, humor, anecdotes, and metaphors to create a sense of unity and *sensus communis*.

In 1841, Lincoln ended his partnership with Stuart and entered into a partnership with Stephen T. Logan. John J. Duff argues that no man was more responsible in bringing Lincoln’s abilities to the forefront than Logan (94). Lincoln’s third and final partner before entering into politics was Herndon.

Lincoln’s Historical and Political Context

Entry into Politics

In 1832, the twenty-three-year-old Lincoln made his first foray into politics by becoming a candidate for the state legislature. However, his campaign was interrupted by the Black Hawk War. Lincoln volunteered and was elected Captain by the men of his unit. Although Lincoln's unit did not see any fighting, he would go on to say that his military experience was one of the most satisfying periods of his life. Lincoln returned to New Salem, Illinois, two weeks before the election where he gave one of the shortest speeches of his political career.

Lincoln stated:

Fellow Citizens, I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by my friends to become a candidate for the Legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like the old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal improvement system and a high protection tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected I shall be thankful; if not it will be all the same. (Henry Wilson Scott and John James Ingalls 531)

Lincoln lost the election, coming in eighth in a field of thirteen. However, due to his popularity in Salem, he garnered two-hundred and seventy-two votes out of the three-hundred votes casts in his precinct.¹⁰ Despite the loss, Lincoln was not disappointed as he understood his defeat was due to the fact that he was not known outside of his small community. He would quickly set about to change that. He held jobs as a storekeeper, postmaster, and surveyor. Each job provided him the opportunity to meet a lot of people, and he quickly gained a reputation for both political skill and speaking ability. In 1834, Lincoln decided to run for the Illinois legislature a second time. He used his job as a surveyor to travel the county and give campaign speeches from the stump of a tree. This time he was successful, and he won one of the four seats allotted to Sangamon County. In

¹⁰ Donald, p. 46.

two short years, Lincoln had begun to demonstrate his abilities and leadership and became a rising star in the newly formed Whig party. Lincoln was re-elected as state representative multiple times, serving for a total of eight years. In 1842, Lincoln decided to make a run for Congress, but he was defeated in the primary. However, he was made a delegate and attended the convention where he voted for his primary opponent, Edward Dickinson Baker. Despite losing to Baker, Lincoln would develop a deep and lasting friendship with him until Colonel Baker's death on the battlefield in 1861. In 1846, Lincoln ran for Congress again, this time easily defeating his opponent, Peter Cartwright.

Lincoln's steadiness of character, focus, perseverance, willingness to work with and befriend others are all virtues that helped Lincoln to become a greater leader, but his best asset was a strong sense of justice. Throughout his twelve years in politics before the presidential election, first as a state representative and then as a congressman, Lincoln remained a man of integrity. Indeed, it is remarkable how consistently Lincoln was able to put aside his own agenda and ego in pursuit of the greater ideals of justice and betterment for the Union, as seen for instance in his pursuit of friendship with Colonel Baker. In the upcoming rhetorical analyses of Lincoln's speeches and character, devotion to truth, justice and equality for all stand out as Lincoln's primary motivating drives and form the basis of his *sensus communis* rhetoric.

A House Divided

In 1856, Lincoln rose to national attention during the Illinois Senate campaign against Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas was a nationally prominent spokesman for the Democratic Party and was seeking re-election to a third term in the United States Senate.

Lincoln was running as his Republican opponent. At this time, the slavery issues and the instability of the Democratic and Republican parties created sectional animosity. Douglas had gone against the Democratic leadership by opposing the admission of Kansas as a slave state. Allen C. Guelzo argues that Douglas, a Northern and a supporter of popular sovereignty “as the solution to the problem of slavery in the western territories” was distrusted by Southern Democrats (397). As rumors of a possible Douglas defection to the Republican party abounded and with many former Whigs turned Republican still upset over Lincoln's defeat in 1855, Illinois Republicans responded by calling a state convention in June 1858. This was a turning point for Lincoln’s political career. At the convention, the Republican state committee nominated Lincoln (at a time when senators were not elected by popular vote, but by the state legislature) as the only choice of the Illinois Republicans for the United States Senate (Guelzo 398). In his acceptance speech Lincoln warned that the conflict over slavery would not end until a crisis ensued that would either extend slavery to all United States territories or end it forever.

Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech had several goals. First, it had to minimize the break between Douglas and Buchanan in order to undermine Douglas’ claims as an independent. Next, it needed to clarify Republican principles in such a way as to unite the party and to make evident the importance of this election in order to encourage those who were weakly committed to voting. Lincoln stated in the introduction of the speech:

If we could just know *where* we are and *whither* we appear
to be tending, we could all better judge of *what* to do, and
how to do it. We are now well into our fifth year since a

policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident purpose of putting an end to slavery agitation. (*Collected Works*, 462)

Lincoln uses alliteration in the “wh” sounds in the words “where,” “whither,” and “what” to set out the major points he will cover. The repetition of the same sound emphasizes the importance of each word.

Next, Lincoln uses a literary reference for metaphoric comparison to demonstrate the effect of the nation to constrict while at the same time expand slavery. He states:

However, under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased but has constantly augmented. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. (*Collected Works*, 462-463)

Lincoln uses a Biblical quote “A house divided against itself cannot stand” to demonstrate how the two opposing opinions on slavery is tearing the country apart.¹¹

¹¹ Matthew 12:24-:28.

Lincoln argues the nation cannot stay in this state forever. Instead, it will either demolish the institution of slavery everywhere or it will be legal and spread to every state.

While Lincoln ultimately lost to Douglas, his "House Divided" speech caused Southern Democrats to take the issue of the exclusion of slavery in new states seriously with the fear that it would be the first step to abolishing slavery altogether. David Zarefsky argues that while one should not argue the "House Divided" speech was the direct cause of the South's rising concerns over the continuation of slavery, "it was that speech that focused the slavery controversy not so much on immediate concerns as on long-term tendencies" ("House Divided," 448).

Rising Tide

Due to the extreme political differences, the two political parties of the Whigs and Democrats saw massive transitions, ultimately resulting in the rise of the Republican Party and marking the end of the Whig party. The transformations clearly indicated the rift between the North and the South due to their contrasting stances over slavery. These changes also brought to attention the opposing political goals and ideologies that stood out between the North and the South as they were becoming two different societies. From 1832 to 1850, the two parties maintained an easy peace regarding issues concerning slavery. During this time, each party worked out compromises in respect to slavery so as to please its members.¹²

In the 1840s, massive change developed due to the introduction of labor-saving machines that allowed for easier and faster production. This led to an increase in people

¹² See *Lincoln* by David Herbert Donald, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

moving to the cities in the North. On the other hand, the South viewed industrialization unfavorably. They were tied to the traditional agrarian society and its dependence on slavery. As industrialization held the promise for jobs, it attracted many immigrants to the North. Northern Democrats welcomed these immigrants, while the Whigs feared that immigrants would lower working and economic standards for everyone. As a result, the Whigs pushed to stem the growing immigrant tide.

The weakening of the Whig party meant that the Democrats faced no strong opposition, and this enabled them to take control of both the Congress and the White House. Despite the Democratic Party being a blend of both Southerners and Northerners, the Southerners held the majority; and these Democratic leaders used their majority to reopen the slavery issue. During this time, the government passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.¹³ The act repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and proposed that the states would choose whether or not to accept the practice of slavery by popular sovereignty. This meant a popular vote in each state had to be cast to determine if the states would be slave states or free states. With the act passed, slaveholders were allowed to retain their slaves in any state they chose.

The act brought about a bigger rift between the North and the South since the slavery issue had cropped up again. To limit the power of the Southern states and the expansion and growth of slave trade, all non-Democratic parties came together to form one party, the Republican Party. In the spring of 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the

¹³ For more information on the Kansas-Nebraska Act see the anthology *The Nebraska-Kansas Act of 1854*, Editors John R Wunder and Joann M. Ross, University of Nebraska Press, 2008; R. Drake. "The Law that Ripped America in Two - One Hundred Fifty Years Ago, The Kansas-Nebraska Act Set the State for America's Civil War." *Smithsonian*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2004, pp.60-66.

surprise presidential nominee of the newly formed Republican Party. Little-known outside of Illinois, the nomination catapulted Lincoln onto the center stage of American politics. Americans were curious about this Western newcomer with limited political experience and even less formal education. Lincoln won the presidency, deepening the gap between the North and the South.

Rhetorical Analysis of Lincoln's Speeches

Lincoln is recognized as one of the most skilled orators in American history, and indeed, his four most prominent speeches are acknowledged as some of the greatest speeches delivered by an American president.¹⁴ Rhetorical analyses of Lincoln's speeches reveal the ways Lincoln was able to convey meaning through powerful and persuasive means and to give hope to Americans during a desperate time of war. Moreover, rhetorical analyses of Lincoln's speeches expose the underlying concepts and meanings behind Lincoln's utterances during his speeches as well as the various rhetorical tools used to construct the speeches. This chapter will develop a rhetorical analysis of four major speeches of Abraham Lincoln: The Cooper Union Address, The First Inaugural Address, the Second Inaugural Address, and the Gettysburg Address. Special attention is given to historical context and the way that these speeches relate to

¹⁴ For more information about Lincoln's oratory abilities, see *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech That Made Abraham Lincoln President*. Harold Holzer, Simon & Schuster, 2006, *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches & Writings*. Abraham Lincoln & Don E. Fehrenbacher, 2010. "Abraham Lincoln: The Speaker." Robert L. Kincaid, *The Southern Speech Journal*, vol. 16 no. 4, 1951. *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*. Lincoln, Abraham, and David Lowenthal, Lexington Books, 2012. "What We Can Learn About the Art of Persuasion from Candidate Abraham Lincoln: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Three Speeches That Propelled Lincoln into the Presidency." Michael W. Loudenslager, *Mercer Law Review*, vol. 64, no. 2, Winter 2013, pp. 521–572.

the development of circumstances during the American Civil War which took place between 1861 and 1865.

Cooper Union Address

On February 27, 1860, Lincoln arrived in New York to give his first political speech since leaving Congress in 1849. While his “House Divided” speech had brought him to national attention three years earlier, Lincoln’s address at the Great Hall of Cooper Union for the Young Men’s Central Republican Union of New York provides the opportunity to demonstrate his suitability as a presidential candidate before the elite New York society. The leading Republican candidate was William Henry Seward; however, many in the party viewed Seward as an abolition extremist and argued a more moderate candidate was needed to win the election. Michael W. Loudenslager argues Lincoln agrees to speak “to demonstrate to a demanding eastern audience his command of the slavery question, commitment to Republican principles, and availability as a candidate should Seward falter” (556). Lincoln understood the importance of the occasion and spent the months before the speech researching the voting records of the Founding Fathers, Congressional proceedings, and the Constitution of the United States.

The Cooper Union Address is divided into three clear sections with Lincoln addressing the people of the North, then the South, and finally the Republican Party. The theme of the speech is slavery, and the extent to which the federal government can rightly interfere with the Southern states. The tone of the speech is distinctly rational and logical. Lincoln did not use inflammatory language or excessive emotion, but sought to persuade through reason. Michael C. Leff and Gerald P. Mohrmann argue that, rather than relying

on emotion, Lincoln assumed a “severely rational posture” and outlines principles in a firm, yet moderate manner that “distinguishes him from his chief rivals and solicits an intensified association from Eastern Republicans” (348). The principles of the Constitution are held up as a guiding source of direction, while dissenting factions are removed from the Founding Fathers and the Constitutional principles.

One of the speech’s most prominent stylistic elements is Lincoln’s use of repetition. Most notably, he uses versions of the root word “understand” more than thirty types, most often in the participial form (“understanding;” Leff and Mohrmann 351). The emphasis on “understanding” has the rhetorical effect of drawing dissenting factions together in a mutual effort to seek progress and reconciliation. Similarly, Lincoln uses repetition of the word “fathers” a total of thirty-five times. In doing so, he reinforces the emotional associations of his listeners to the notion of the Founding Fathers and the Constitutional principles of the United States. According to Leff and Mohrmann, Lincoln effectively “creates a subtle emotional nexus between the Republican audience and the founding fathers” (351). The appeals that Lincoln made throughout the speech to the Founding Fathers and the Constitution are an attempt to reconcile these dissenting opinions to create a sense of unity and cohesion.

Lincoln begins the speech with a clearly stated question, “Does the proper division of local from Federal authority, or anything else in the Constitution, forbid our Federal Government to control as to slavery in our Federal Territories?” (*Complete Works* 522). The answer to this question lies at the heart of Lincoln’s speech; and he

clearly demarcates between the Republicans, who answer in the negative, and the Democrats, who answer in the affirmative.

Lincoln constructed his argument around Senator Douglas' declaration that "Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better, than we do now" (*Complete Works* 522).¹⁵ First, Lincoln assumed that Douglas is referencing the signers of the Constitution to which he agreed with Douglas. However, he argued against Douglas' claim that the Founding Fathers did not support the rights of the Federal Government to regulate slavery. Instead, Lincoln argues that twenty-three of the men who signed the Constitution at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 "acted consistently under the belief that the Congress did have the right to exercise power over slavery in the territories" (White 312). To support his argument, Lincoln broke down the legislative voting records of the signers on legislation regulating slavery in the territories on six occasions, from 1784 to 1820. He concluded that almost all who voted on various slavery legislation voted to prohibit it. Next, Lincoln examined the position of the signers who left no record on the issue of slavery and those in the first Congress. Once again, he concluded that "a clear majority of the whole— certainly understood that no proper division of local from federal authority, nor any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control slavery in the federal territories; while all the rest probably had the same understanding" (*Collected Works* 2.532).

¹⁵ Abraham Lincoln. *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Editor Roy P. Basler, Rutgers University Press, 1953. Referenced throughout the study as *Complete Works*.

Next, Lincoln considered whether amendments to the Constitution provide a basis for arguing that federal control of slavery is unconstitutional. He refuted the idea by stating that Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 which prohibited slavery. Lincoln pointed out that the same Congress which passed the Northwest Ordinance worked on the amendments to the Constitution during the same session and asks “Is it not a little presumptuous in any one at this day to affirm that the two things which that Congress deliberately framed, and carried to maturity at the same time, are absolutely inconsistent with each other?” (*Collected Works* 2.534). Lincoln argued that there is no evidence to support Douglas’ argument that the Founding Fathers would prohibit the federal government involvement in the slavery issue. He went a step further and challenged his audience to:

show that any living man in the whole world ever did, prior to the beginning of the present century, (and I might almost say prior to the beginning of the last half of the present century,) declare that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government to control as to slavery in the federal territories. (*Collected Works* 2.534)

Therefore, Lincoln argued again that the actions of the Founding Fathers showed their belief that the federal government did in fact have the power to legislate slavery in the territories. Lincoln openly stated that we are not obligated to follow the Founding Fathers implicitly, rather he argued that if we are going to use their words as an example then we must make sure we do so “upon evidence so conclusive, and argument so clear, that even

their great authority, fairly considered and weighed, cannot stand; and most surely not in a case whereof we ourselves declare they understood the question better than we” (*Collected Works*, 2.535).

In the second section, Lincoln turned his attention to the people of the South. Here, the tone remains consistent in terms of logic and rationality, but Lincoln actively refuted the arguments that might be made in favor of the federal government’s interference with slavery. Lincoln used rhetorical questions to define each charge, and then systematically dismantled the objections in turn. For example, Lincoln stated:

you say you are conservative—eminently conservative—while we are revolutionary, destructive, or something of the sort. What is conservatism? Is it not adherence to the old and tried, against the new and untried? We stick to, contend for, the identical old policy on the point in controversy which was adopted by “our fathers who framed the Government under which we live;” while you with one accord reject, and scout, and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new... You are divided on new propositions and plans, but you are unanimous in rejecting and denouncing the old policy of the fathers. (*Collected Works*, 2.537-38)

The South accused Republicans of being revolutionary; however, Lincoln pointed out that Republicans follow the view the Founding Fathers held as to the government’s right to regulate slavery as evidenced in their voting pattern. The South is the one domain which shows inconsistency in their arguments for slavery and against the precedents set by the Founding Fathers. Lincoln exploits the Southern contradiction by stating the

Southerners should consider “whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge of destructiveness against us, are based on the most clear and stable foundations” (*Collective Works*, 2.539). Therefore, Republicans were demonstrating conservative values and Southerners were the ones acting like radicals.

Next, Lincoln addressed the South’s claim that Republican doctrines and declarations led to slave insurrections and violence such as the Harper’s Ferry incident. First, he argued that there are no insurrections now than there were before the Republican party. Next, he used the South’s argument that slaves care about their masters as proof that the threat of mass insurrection is unjustified. Lincoln stated, “A plot for an uprising could scarcely be devised and communicated to twenty individuals before some one of them, to save the life of a favorite master or mistress, would divulge it” (*Collected Works* 2.540). There is no way that an insurrection could be planned and carried out without someone informed the authorities out of the love and respect they had for their masters or mistresses. He also pointed out that the events at Harper’s Ferry were not an insurrection; rather, it was the efforts of white men to incite a slave revolt, one that the slaves themselves refused to participate in as they knew it would not succeed. As a result, the Southern claim that Republicans would incite mass insurrection cannot be supported.

Next, Lincoln addressed the argument that Republicans wanted to deprive the South of its Constitutional rights by wanting to prohibit slavery. They argue that the United States Supreme Court ruled in the South’s favor by referring to the Dred Scott case in which the Supreme Court ruled against Scott arguing that slaves residing in a free state were not and could never be United States citizens and therefore could not claim

any rights or privileges as citizens.¹⁶ In response, Lincoln stated that the right to have slaves is not a Constitutionally guaranteed right, and in fact, “That instrument is literally silent about any such right” (*Collected Works* 2.543). Lincoln pointed out that the Constitution avoids any direct reference to slaves as property; instead, it refers to slaves as “persons” and only a master’s right to a slave is alluded to only in reference to the right to a slave’s labor. As a result, the Supreme Court’s argument in the Dred Scott decision stating that the Constitution distinctly and expressly affirms the right to slaves as property is in error.

Finally, after appealing to classical values and refuting the potential arguments of the South, Lincoln’s third section of the speech consists of a constructive appeal to his audience in terms of creating unity as a nation. Addressing the Republican Party, Lincoln urged his colleagues to maintain emotional equilibrium and to “do nothing through passion and ill-temper” that could potentially cause discord or a lack of unity. The third section revolves around the contrast that Lincoln created between the Republican Party and the South, or “we” versus “them” (Holzer 121). The contrast highlights the distinction between words and deeds that is pervasive throughout the speech. Lincoln employed antithetical syntax to highlight the difference between the two positions and to

¹⁶ Dred Scott v. Sandford was based on the question of whether or not, slaves whose ancestors were brought to this country, were citizens of the United States and entitled to the same rights and privileges of white citizens including the right to sue the federal government. Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote the 7-2 majority opinion stating that slaves were never intended to be citizens and whether emancipated or not, were subject to the authority of the dominate race. Taney also stated that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional because it argued for the Federal government’s right to take slaveowner’s property without due process. For more information, see Paul Finkelman. “Scott v. Sandford: The Court’s Most Dreadful Case and How it Changed History.” *Chicago-Kent Law Review* no 82, vol 3, 2007, pp 3-48; Dred Scott v. Sandford 60 US 393, 15 L. Ed. 691, 15 L. Ed. 2d 691 - Supreme Court, 1857.

reinforce the notion of logic and calm rationality. He appealed to his part to “calmly consider their demands” and to “not only leave them alone” but “somehow convince them that we do let them alone” (*Collected Works* 2.547). Lincoln acknowledged the near impossibility of doing this, and does not pretend to provide simple answers. Rather, he focused on making a final call to reason and unity, appealing to the Unionist concept of “duty” and a refusal to be deterred “by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves” (*Collected Works* 2.550). Lincoln’s repeated invoking of the Founding Fathers’ principles inspire Republicans to adhere to an anti-slavery position and criticized the South’s inability to use truthful and fair argument in their support of slavery.

First Inaugural Address

Lincoln delivered his first Inaugural Address on March 4, 1861, the day that he assumed the role of President of the United States. In terms of content, the address contained not only the position of the government with regards to their strategies for the next four years, but also outlined Lincoln’s perception about the nature and role of the presidency at a time when the nation was steadily moving towards war. Lincoln recognized that the American people at the time needed more clarity and information on the state of the country. Therefore, the president-elect utilized his address to discuss the condition of the Northern and Southern states with respect to their positions on the Union, specifically regarding the will of the Southern states to secede. In this speech, Lincoln provided legal and social justifications to discourage the Southern states in seceding from the Union, stating that it will only lead to anarchy and despotism. He

stated:

But if destruction of the Union by one or by a part only of the States be lawfully possible, the Union is less perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity. It follows from these views that no State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union; that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence within any State or States against the authority of the United States are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according circumstances.

(Collected Works 4.265)

Lincoln's rhetoric here appeals to the notion of perfection, suggesting that secession would create a crucial flaw in the country's perpetuity. He also states that secession will not lead to anything but the weakening of the country and the impossibility of facing recovery in the near future. Throughout his presidency, Lincoln was astutely aware of the importance of unifying the public, even in spite of leading during a time of such tumultuous tensions that polarized the Union. In Lincoln's First Inaugural Address as well as his other speeches discussed below, it is apparent that his diction and delivery of his speeches are carefully construed with the intent to unify and either avoid or end conflict and polarity in favor of reaching a type of cosmopolitan state of uplift.

The First Inaugural Address differs from the later speeches in relation to Lincoln's approach to slavery. In this early speech, Lincoln adopted a neutral tone and

seemed reluctant to pick sides between sustaining or abolishing slavery. He expressed a belief that it is the right of the states to determine whether they will allow slavery or not, stating: “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe that I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so” (*Collected Works*, 2.263). Lincoln pointed out that slavery, at this juncture in history, is legal under the Constitution of the United States. Thus, as president, Lincoln stated that he had neither the power nor right to undermine slavery. Lastly, Lincoln urged the public to take an attitude of deep introspection on the matter, extending to both slavery and the war, and exhorts the American people to see things in the guidance of time and reason. This latter exhortation takes the form of the questions: “Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?” (*Collected Works* 2.270). In asking these questions, Lincoln appealed directly to the morality of the listeners. He then assured the people that the government will do its best to reunite the divided country and honor the people who fought for their ideals and principles.

Scholars note that rhetorical analysis of Abraham Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address began shortly after the delivery of the speech itself. Bert Bradley states that because of the inherent ambiguity of the speech as far as depicting the current strategies of the government to curb the impending Civil War between the North and the South, the press urged the people to analyze the speech themselves and see whether the speech is intended as a threat to the South or a method of coercion to convince the South to reach an agreement with the North (275). However, in spite of Lincoln’s seemingly neutral

language, some people analyzed the rhetoric in the First Inauguration as a declaration of war. This interpretation was due to the use of words that demonstrated Lincoln's clear objective to preserve the Union and uphold the constitution as much as possible, sustaining perpetuity.

Despite Lincoln's efforts to create a nuanced, neutral speech for the First Inaugural Address, many Southern newspapers at the time did not interpret the speech in a positive light. These sources stated that the speech simply reiterated the objectives of the government that the people wanted to hear; that essentially, using sugarcoated words, the president sought to appeal to the emotions of the people instead of opting for a more objective and impactful mode of delivery (Bradley 279). Complicating matters further, Lincoln's address was "incompletely presented and badly mangled" when it was published by many papers in the South, distorting Lincoln's rhetoric and intentions substantially (Bradley 271). The critical reception of Lincoln's speech reveals the complex tenuousness of the socio-political context. However, though Lincoln found war necessary, his speeches and actions show that he reluctantly believed such a course was the only way of reunifying the country and embodying the higher ideals of American values.

Taken in its entirety, the entire First Inaugural Address demonstrates the use of ideals and words that resonate with the American values to encourage the people to support the current government in its cause to preserve and protect the Union as much as possible (Watson 35). During this historical moment of transition, in response to the conflict and violence of war that plagued America, Lincoln needed to persuade and calm

the people. He attempted to accomplish this feat using rhetorical devices, such as poetic and lyrical language that added a certain distinction and convincing power to his speech. Lincoln's use of poetry is particularly evident in the concluding sentence of the speech when he says:

Though passion may have strained, it must not break our
bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,
stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every
living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will
yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as
surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

(Collected Works 2.271)

Lincoln used several powerful metaphors here, including “the chorus of the Union” and the “better angels of our nature” to make an emotional appeal to his listeners. In this sense, David Zarefsky argues that the First Inaugural Address fulfills its overall purpose: the people needed the president to offer a guided path towards the future, and the First Inaugural Address appealed to emotion and provided the people with detailed information on the situation and how the current government perceives the war and hopes to address it.

Although the First Inaugural Address was arguably not as impactful as the Second Inaugural Address in terms of the contents and the stylistic delivery, it clearly demonstrates the usefulness of rhetoric in calming and reassuring the public. Lincoln's mastery of language, combined with his ethical intent to inspire and unite people, reflects

a kind of rhetoric of hope that is also seen 150 years later in Barack Obama's oratorical skills.

Something that distinguishes the First Inaugural Address somewhat from Lincoln's other speeches is the evidence that the First Inaugural Address underwent numerous revisions and improvements at the hands of Lincoln's advisors and editors to ensure that the delivered speech did not have negative connotations and undertones that might affect the relationship of the government with the American people, especially regarding the government's stance on the war (Zarefsky "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 168). Indeed, Lincoln's First Inaugural Address as well as other speeches illustrate his careful intent in appealing to the long-standing American ideals of freedom, justice, and a unified people. This conscientious and intellectually deliberate approach demonstrates Lincoln's exemplary Stoic virtues of character. Lincoln recognized the significance of the First Inaugural Address in setting the tone for his administration, and spent six weeks writing and preparing the speech; each word, phrase and idea was carefully, meticulously considered (Bradley 271). Lincoln and his advisors worked to ensure that the speech did not contain any words that implied that the government had any intention to seize properties in the South because the use of this rhetoric would inevitably have given the impression that the government aimed to undermine the South, if war were to begin.

Furthermore, the editors advised Lincoln to end the speech in a conciliatory tone rather than adopting the more powerful and forceful tone that most presidents had been accustomed to delivering in their speeches (Zarefsky 168). Thus, the speech became more nuanced and conciliatory, aiming to deliver a speech that was intended to heal the

wounds and follow the voice of reason in the path of reconnecting the divided country. Lincoln recognized that threatening the South would not lead to any positive improvements in the condition of the country. Instead, Lincoln and his advisers chose a calmer approach to the possibility of a war that demonstrated the composure of the newly-elected American president to help persuade the leaders of the Southern states to arrive at an agreement with the government. Lastly, a calmer approach enabled the public to see the government as a peace-oriented and rational government, enabling them to place their trust and support in the government regarding its plans for the future. As an example of the way in which these goals translated into rhetoric, Zarefsky argues that Lincoln utilizes hesitating languages and words such as “in the character of” that demonstrate how the government is taking slow and calm steps towards addressing the South in the Civil War (174). Lincoln also used the term “Civil War” instead of “war among states” to demonstrate that the current situation was not a war among states like a war among countries. Instead, the Civil War was a war by people in a single country divided by different ideals (Zarefsky 174). The use of the phrase “Civil War” denotes that Lincoln still perceives the Southern states as his countrymen and not his and the government’s enemies.

Gettysburg Address

On the 19th of November, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln mounted the steps to the podium at the official dedication ceremony for the National Cemetery of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. He was invited to say a few words honoring the sacrifice made by Americans at the site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. The losses were

heavy on both sides. Twenty-three thousand Union and 28,000 Confederate soldiers either died or were injured or missing after three days of intense fighting. Addressing a crowd of over 15,000 people, Lincoln only spoke for two minutes, reminding his audience of the ideals on which this country was founded, such as the democratic tradition and each American citizen's moral obligation to take the responsibilities of citizenship seriously. Lincoln told the audience, "It is rather for us, the living, to be dedicated here to the great task remaining before us" (*Collected Works* 7.19). In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln again proves his commitment to public service and universal uplift of the country. Like other esteemed Stoic orators, Lincoln uses his mastery of speech and position of leadership to implement a decisively higher ethical vision.

Whereas Lincoln's First Inaugural Address is characterized by attempts to use careful, neutral language that would unite the country and halt the onset of war, the rhetoric of the Gettysburg Address is substantially different in tone. Containing just 272 words, the Gettysburg Address is Lincoln's shortest speech, but arguably his most famous. Critic Barry Schwartz has described the Gettysburg Address as "an unchanging symbol of American democracy" and a "multivalent symbol of industrial democracy, regional solidarity, and patriotism" (395). In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln's primary purpose was twofold: to honor the dead in the war by urging the United States to move forward towards reconciliation, and to espouse the values of peace and freedom that the people of the America wanted and needed during a difficult time. By delivering his address on the land where many soldiers were lost, Lincoln honored their sacrifice to the

great cause of peace and the stability of the nation. The historical moment in which the speech was delivered is critical to understanding its rhetorical impact. Some critics, such as Floyd Bitzer, note that the rhetorical power and eloquence of the Gettysburg Address is directly linked to its historical function: “Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was a most fitting response to the relevant features of the historic context which invited its existence and gave it rhetorical significance” (10).

In rhetorical terms, the Gettysburg Address illustrates how simplicity can be used as an effective rhetorical instrument to express important messages in a non-convoluted manner. Through the effective use of words that resemble the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln demonstrates his constitutional knowledge and political credibility, showing how the war is a product of misinterpretation of the Declaration of Independence and how the war itself is the test of principle for both the North and South (Watson 39). The speech also expresses the value and cost of sacrifice as Lincoln compels the public to acknowledge and honor the deaths of American soldiers, and as part of this honoring process, to work towards solidifying American values (Watson 40).

In addition to mimicking the rhetorical style of the Constitution, Lincoln also employs poetic language that evokes the Bible and great classical works of literature. Glen LaFantasie describes the Gettysburg Address as having rhetorical qualities that resemble a Biblical hymn or a benediction through the structure of words and sentences that compose the speech (75):

The famous opening phrase of the address, ‘Fourscore and seven years ago,’ [is] a fairly ornate method of rendering a

particular historical date that Lincoln could have picked up anywhere, but that must have come from his ready command of the Bible and from chapter and verse, in this case from the “threescore years and ten” and the “fourscore years” found in Psalms 90:10. Lincoln’s reference to “our fathers” in the first sentence is mindful of the Lord’s Prayer. It is also possible that behind Lincoln’s clarion call for a “new birth of freedom” was the idea of rebirth set forth in John 3:3-7. (74)

In combining his effective knowledge of the Bible with his oratorical skills, the president was able to speak directly to the people’s fears and frustrations in the war. The use of Biblical language provided a level of rhetorical familiarity and a sense of gravitas that worked to reassure the people regarding the future of the nation, and to offer the hope of divine providence in a dark period of American history. Lincoln’s Biblical language may be seen as part of the lineage taken up by Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama, as discussed in the last chapter. Indeed, like Obama, Lincoln creates a “rhetoric of hope” that combines secular political values with a religious mythos that grants power, meaning, and inspiration to the political situation at hand. The capacity to inspire in such a way represents the exemplary qualities of eloquence that Stoic rhetoricians encourage.

While LaFantasie focuses on the Biblical and poetic elements reflected in Lincoln’s most famous speech, Harold Zyskind offers a different rhetorical interpretation of the Gettysburg Address, suggesting that Lincoln’s underlying intention for the speech

was to inspire national unity through an appeal to the listeners' emotions. Zyskind's perspective is useful for identifying Lincoln's speech's treatment of *sensus communis* in his capacity to garner fully the context and to communicate effectively with his audience. Using basic metaphors, effective use of parallel structures and progressions, Lincoln was able to make a compelling appeal to the public to take his perspective on the war and transform this dedication towards the reunification of the country into action (Zyskind 212). Also, through the use of broad and inclusive terms, including the repeated use of the pronoun "we," Lincoln was able to avoid further dividing the public in terms of differences in perspective and understanding and was thus able to compel them into a singular mode of action inspired by a singular set of values. J. W. Fesler states, "[The Gettysburg Address] is, commonly speaking, so all-inclusive, so far-reaching in its implications, so lofty in its conceptions, and withal so profoundly moving in every sentence that its creation by one of Lincoln's limited background is beyond understanding" (212).

The Gettysburg Address illustrates Lincoln's profound maturity of thought as he delivered a speech that strikes through to the heart of the spiritual relevance of war in relation to the protection of American values (Fesler 212). Furthermore, the Gettysburg Address is one of the most natural and spontaneous of Lincoln's speeches as he simply constructed the speech in a short time before addressing the public; by some accounts, Lincoln scribbled the words down on the train just a few hours before presenting the speech. Other accounts suggest that he may have been physically ill with the early stages of smallpox, making his rhetorical feat even more remarkable (Goldman and Schmalstieg

104). Thus, the Gettysburg Address is a remarkable rhetorical combination of Lincoln's personal perspective on the war and a reflection of the seriousness with which he treated his political and social responsibility to ensure that the nation remained intact amidst the war, and demonstrates an amazing intellectual wisdom combined with a high sensitivity to his audience that Stoic critics would highly value.

Second Inaugural Address

Alongside Lincoln's First Inaugural Address and the Gettysburg Address, the fourth example of Lincoln's rhetorical skill can be observed in his Second Inaugural Address, delivered on March 4, 1865. In Lincoln's Second Inauguration Address, he does not spend time commentating on the overall condition of the country as he did in the First Inaugural Address. Instead, Lincoln focused on delivering his perspective on the cause of the war, which leads him to focus more intently on the religious mythos of his worldview. The president highlighted the idea of slavery as the ultimate cause of the war; in Lincoln's view, the war is the divine punishment of God for the enslavement of the black people for many years, as evident in his terming the war as "a mighty scourge" (*Collected Works* 7.333). By stressing the theological reasons for the war, Lincoln was able to make sense of the persistence of war and violence in America as a necessary process that the country had to endure to reach stability once again, enacting the "true and righteous" judgments of God (*Collected Works* 7.333). Lincoln ended the speech by advocating for "a just and lasting" peace and honoring the people who sacrificed their lives for the stability of the nation (*Collected Works* 7.33).

The change in tone in the Second Inaugural Address compared with the First

highlights the shifts in Lincoln's perspective of war after four years. Whereas Lincoln and his editors worked to adopt a more nuanced tone in the First Inaugural Address, James L. Huston argues that in the Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln overtly embraced the cause of the slaves and attributed the start of the war to the problems inherent in the institution of slavery (14). It is also evident that Lincoln used more religious undertones in the Second Inaugural Address as compared with the First Inaugural Address. Also, despite the changes in Lincoln's perspective on the war, his attitude towards the reunification of the North and South still prevailed; however, Lincoln's tone had become noticeably stronger and more overt in referring to the "terrible war" that is the "woe due to those by whom the offense came" (Second Inaugural Address). The choice of language here leaves little doubt as to Lincoln's belief that the Southern states were ultimately responsible for the horrors of the Civil War.

In terms of length, the Second Inaugural Address is significantly shorter than the First Inaugural Address. However, many rhetorical analysts argue that the Second Inaugural Address is more powerful than the first because of the presence of strong, intentional rhetorical elements and way in which each of these elements functions in specific ways according to Lincoln's intended effect upon his audience and the whole country. Andrew C. Hansen describes the Second Inaugural Address as one of Lincoln's most eloquent uses of the English language, espousing wisdom and principle: "There is 'lots of wisdom' in the Second Inaugural: along with the Gettysburg Address, it contains the words of Lincoln that most abide" (223). The rhetorical use of words and figures of speech in the speech "subtly and poignantly charm" the listener and enable the audience

to hear the speech in an intended manner (Hansen 223). Like the Gettysburg Address, outstanding Stoic rhetorical qualities are evident, as many critics have noted the poetic and lyrical elements of the Second Inaugural; some have even termed it a “sacred poem” and also point to the durability of the speech, both in its contemporary setting and also over the span of American history (Hansen 223).

One of Lincoln’s most effective rhetorical tools in the Second Inaugural Address is his use of the passive voice. Lincoln’s passive voice in this speech can be interpreted in various ways as seen below, but at the least, it again illustrates Lincoln’s highly developed intellectual and social wisdom in crafting his speeches to achieve a desired influential effect. Researchers agree that the Second Inaugural Address uses passive voice more often than active voice throughout the entire speech. Normally, the use of passive voice is a rhetorical taboo for public speakers; however, Patrick A. Malone explains that the use of passive voice is, in fact, a rhetorical tool that is intended to deflect the attention away from Lincoln, the speaker, and more towards the issue at hand, which is the war and slavery (9). Malone’s perspective illustrates Lincoln’s moral intent of character—it is not for his own gain that Lincoln assumes leadership, but for the good of the collective. Hansen further explains that since the use of passive voice ultimately takes the agency away from the speaker, Lincoln effectively uses this strategy to give the agency to events themselves, such as the Civil War, suggesting that the war happens without human agency (241). Combined with a strong theological tone and emphasis on the workings of Providence, the use of the passive voice in this sense suggests that the war was a divine event that must be perceived as an agent of divine judgment in and of itself. However, as

far as the agency of the speaker is concerned, Hahn and Morlando state that the use of passive voice shows negativity and inaction; it can be argued that the relatively morose and fatalistic tone of the speech reflects Lincoln's own flagging spirits and possible sense of hopelessness in relation to ending the war (277).

Ultimately, Lincoln's use of passive voice enables him to turn the attention away from himself as the leader of the country, and towards the shared values that all American must embrace, whether residents of the North or South (Malone 11). Thus, the rhetoric of the Second Inaugural Address enables the people to sympathize more with the notion of their shared values and similarities rather than focusing on the differences that ultimately caused the country's division in the first place.

Another explanation for Lincoln's use of passive voice throughout his Second Inaugural Address is the way in which the passive voice allows the speaker to appeal to the emotions of the audience. Hansen argues that the speech is intended to charm and persuade the audience to adopt an attitude of unification rather than stressing the possible actions and plans of the government to curb the insurgencies in the South (233). Hahn and Morlando add that Lincoln also uses a tone of compassion rather than bravery and strength in delivering the speech (276). For instance, Lincoln states:

Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither expected that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier

triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.

(Second Inaugural Address)

Thus, while Lincoln suggested elsewhere that the institution of slavery was to blame for the Civil War, he also demonstrated compassion here in noting that neither North nor South could have anticipated the full cost and human toll of the war. Instead of being overly heavy-handed and assigning blame in a forceful manner, the speech appeals to fate and focuses on what the government and the people can do to help the country survive this national catastrophe, which Lincoln portrayed as a divine punishment. This perspective highlights the Stoic rhetorical ideal of a statesman who embodies a highly developed and almost transcendent perspective capable of seeing the complex context of conditions rather than pursuing a more limited and simplistic view of right and wrong or good and bad. In line with the above analyses of Lincoln, his passive voice in this speech may indeed be part of his intention for unification and transcendence of disunifying polarities.

However, review of Lincoln's intentions is still debatable, as Watson explains that a close rhetorical analysis could suggest that Lincoln did, in fact, place blame on the Southern states for the waging of the war. Although some sources say that Lincoln opted to use words that do not spark conflict between the North and the South, some of his words denote that if the war is a divine punishment for the atrocities of man against himself through slavery, then the South has the larger share in punishment as Southerners are the stark supporters of slavery. For instance, Lincoln says, "Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other

would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came” (Second Inaugural Address). The rhetorical nuances here between the word “make” and “accept” create a subtle indictment of the South. As a result, Watson says that Lincoln implicitly suggests that the North is the divinely orchestrated instrument of God for achieving peace in the land (43). From this perspective, one could insist that Lincoln’s Stoic rhetorical qualities elevate him to one who is qualified to make statements on the grand meaning of the greatest state affairs. Indeed, one who is highly intelligent, learned, and practiced in the arts of politics and law would, from a Stoic perspective, be one more attuned to truth in a philosophical or religious sense.

Records of the speeches of Abraham Lincoln indicate that he was a slow public speaker, finishing his Second Inauguration Address in seven minutes at a rate of 105 words per minute.¹⁷ Lincoln’s slow pace in oration shows that Lincoln is aware of the effects of not only the contents of the speech, but also its delivery to the public. Lincoln often uses figures of speech during his speeches, including metonymy and alliteration, to add powerful persuasive elements to his speeches, making him a combination of lawyer and a poet during public speaking (Phillips 156). Examples from previous speeches are noted above; in the Second Inaugural Address, instances where Lincoln draws on poetic elements include the invocation that the war should “continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until

¹⁷ Ronald C. White’s, *Lincoln’s Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural* (2003) discusses the influence, preparation, and delivery of the Second Inaugural address.

every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword” (Second Inaugural Address). Recalling again that the ideal Stoic orator is one of a highly developed mind and who is skilled at bridging the gap between high knowledge and widespread understanding among one’s audience, Lincoln’s usage of poetic prose indeed is another instance of his Stoic rhetorical virtues.

While some critics have stressed the faintly damning tone of the speech, others see the Second Inaugural Address as inclusive. According to Malone, the rhetorical use of inclusive language throughout the Second Inauguration Address supports the notion that fostering inclusivity is Lincoln’s primary strategy. By stressing the commonalities of all Americans, whether they were residents in the North or the South, Lincoln brought Americans together rather than trying to cultivate an aggressive stance in one group towards the other. Malone adds that Lincoln broke the rules of public speaking, such as the usual prohibition against using the passive voice, in order to take public perception of the war on a different level (10). In fact, Lincoln also uses muted language in defining slavery and the South in order to avoid raising aggression on both sides of the war. Malone argues that the efficacy of Lincoln’s speeches teach that people are not persuaded or convinced through logic alone; in fact, sometimes, emotions are more powerful persuasive instruments (11). As discussed prior, inclusivity is one of the highest Stoic ideals of rhetoric. Indeed, the Stoic ideal is to use a higher perspective rooted in truth and ethical veracity to unify the society in the pursuit of a greater state of harmony and comradery.

Another rhetorical characteristic apparent in Lincoln’s speeches are the use of

various verb tenses. There is a development and movement of tenses throughout the Second Inaugural speech. Hansen states that along with the use of passive voice, Lincoln also uses linking verbs which usually demonstrate states of being rather than action (235). Hansen explains that most of the time, use of such verbs illustrates a state of tentativeness and uncertainty on the part of the speaker (235). Phillips, on the other hand, suggests that the Second Inaugural Address has a progression of verb tenses that illustrates Lincoln's mastery of the general structure of his speech (157). At first, Lincoln uses the past tense to denote that explanation of the past including the reasons behind the war. Later, he uses the present tense to give the public a better glimpse of the current situation from a social, political and administrative standpoint. While doing this, Lincoln uses the passive voice to deflect attention towards the situation at hand.

Towards the last section of the speech, Phillips explains that Lincoln transfers the agency towards the public by using the future tense (157). Thus, the use of verb tenses throughout the entirety of the speech is carefully constructed as a rhetorical tool that is designed to compel the public into a mode of thought and action that is beneficial for the improvement of the condition of the country. Similarly, Phillips focuses on the final rhetorical point that Lincoln makes in the Second Inaugural Address which is the portion of the speech that contains strong theological undertones. Phillips explains that the Second Inaugural Address is a combination of concepts of fatalism and free will as well as values and virtues of firmness and charity (159). Lincoln's uncommon rhetorical technique of changing verb tenses demonstrates his extraordinary degree of mastery in influencing his audience. Lincoln was acutely aware of how each word and phrase will

improve connection with his audience, and he had a very specific intent in how he wished to influence the country. On its own, this rhetorical quality could be manipulative, but accompanied by Lincoln's more enlightened set of ethics and intent, this mastery of rhetoric is indeed representative of a Stoic ideal.

Due to Lincoln's rhetorical use of theological arguments in his speech, he is often viewed as the spiritual giant in American history (Watson 34). Kraemer states that Lincoln led the country during its hardest times using the power of rhetoric: as the war had begun to change the perspective of the public on the moral authority of the government, Lincoln's speeches reoriented them to a morally appropriate frame of mind (Kraemer 166). In addition, Dan F. Hahn and Anne Morlando explain that as Lincoln depicts God as the ultimate agent of the Great Civil War, he effectively removed the attention of the public towards placing blame on the North and South for the massive loss of life and property during the war (278). In this manner, Lincoln's powerful rhetoric strove to persuade the people to accept the war and not contribute to the onslaught that would have further led America down to the pit of destruction by taking sides or accentuating the role of both parties in the war; to this end, Lincoln's speeches were broadly effective. Through an analysis of the rhetorical construction of the four speeches, it is evident that Lincoln effectively used rhetorical principles to guide the public's understanding on the nature of the American Civil War and to compel them towards action that would help the nation heal its wounds.

Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of Lincoln's life, including his upbringing, education, and legal and political career, combined with rhetorical analyses of his major presidential speeches, illustrates his Stoic rhetorical virtues of ethical character, eloquence, and *sensus communis*. First, Lincoln's early life and legal career demonstrate his pursuit of knowledge and ethical ideals. A dignified Stoic orator is one who embodies an enlightened intellect that is gained through a rigorous pursuit of learning. One cannot fake this quality of virtue, and neither is this level of development simply representative of skill in wielding language so as to achieve a desired influential result. Rather, the Stoic ideal of education is to be transformed by knowledge and moral development so as to be aligned with a higher understanding of the proper course for the society. Lincoln's educational background and his highly ethical development that led to his reputation as "honest Abe" qualified him to become the great leader and master of rhetoric.

Regarding the specific rhetorical analyses of Lincoln's four major speeches covered above, these speeches demonstrate the fully mature rhetorical master that Lincoln came to be. Lincoln's Cooper's Union speech, his First and Second Inaugural Addresses as well as his Gettysburg Address showcase his remarkable capacity to express a measured understanding of a very complex socio-political moment in history, and to orate in such a way to move his audience toward values of unity, peace, and justice. History has perhaps seen leaders who possess parts of a Stoic rhetorical ideal, as in possessing an enlightened perspective of a context but lacking the capacity to communicate an inspiring vision, or perhaps possessing influential means of speech but

lacking an ethical development. What marks Lincoln as exceptional in regard of Stoic analysis is his display of all aspects of character, wisdom, morality, and capacity to move his audiences. Indeed, Lincoln's eloquence of speech, as seen by his poetic language and other rhetorical tools, is truly a Stoic ideal because it is part of Lincoln's wider ethical and intellectual character. In other words, Lincoln's magnanimity stems from a totally developed character.

In short, Lincoln is remembered as one of the most impressive and important leaders of American history. The United States needed a leader with an enlightened perspective who was capable of using a calm and measured approach to communicate carefully with the American public a vision to resolve the crisis of the Civil War. Lincoln's character anchored him in the very ethical and inspiring values that he communicated; and from a Stoic perspective of rhetoric, this is exactly why he was able to motivate and move the public to align with a vision for unity and peace.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW DEALER: FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln had the uncomfortable position of leading America into its Civil War in the effort to preserve the union, and eighty years later, Franklin D. Roosevelt would face the difficult task of uniting the country behind a global war to protect freedom and democracy around the world.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, also known as FDR, has the distinction of being the only president elected to the office four times. As the 32nd President of the United States of America, Roosevelt brought hope to a nation struggling with the dual effects of the Great Depression and World War II. Through his New Deal policies, he helped restore public faith in the banking system, provide unemployment relief as well as the adoption of cost-effective management in both the public and private sector.

Roosevelt's confident statesmanship provided guidance to a nation unsure of its future and desperate for a leader who could lift it out of the depths of the Great Depression. In 1929, the stock market crashed wiping out over \$30 billion dollars' worth of common stock value over a period of four days and toppling an already fragile American economy. Individual investors as well as businesses lost millions. Banks, which had invested their depositors' savings into the stock market, were now left with dwindling reserves. As panicked customers began to withdraw their money in masses, the

banks quickly folded. By 1933, unemployment had reached a national average of 25% with some areas as high as 80%.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. As a result, Poland's allies, Britain and France, declared war on Germany and World War II began. During the 1930s, with the devastation of World War I still a part of recent memory and the country still recovering from the Great Depression, many Americans pushed for an isolationist stance on the conflict in Europe. Many argued that the cost of American lives was too high and that the only benefits would be to American arms manufactures and banks.¹⁸ As tension over Germany's aggressive maneuvers increased in Europe, Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts which forced United States neutrality. The laws prohibited America from engaging in financial deals with countries at war and prevented American ships from transporting arms to belligerents. Stuart L. Weiss explains that Congress argued "that the nation's security was in no way affected by events abroad, that an embargo against one party to a dispute, even an aggressor, was a gratuitous and war-breeding policy, and that the best means of keeping out of war was to eliminate the friction and pressures which had led us into the World War" (682). The goal of the Acts was to prevent the United States from being drawn into another conflict and repeating the mistakes of World War I.

However, on the December 7, 1941, the Japanese launched an attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii an act which effectively brought the United States into World War II.

¹⁸ H.C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen's *Merchants of Death*. New York: Dod, Mead, and Company, 1934, examines the conflict of countries that wants peace but also wants to defend themselves against outside aggression resulting in the rise of the arms industry. Englebrecht and Hanighen argue that arms manufacturers, due to a combination of nationalistic education, patriotism, imperialism, and capitalistic competition, have played a prominent part in encouraging wars, rebellions, and border raids.

Faced with foreign aggression on the homeland, America could no longer maintain its non-interventionist position. Roosevelt understood that failure to respond to the threat to democratic traditions would result in a new world order.

Roosevelt the Orator

In 1930, the radio provided many Americans with a cheap form of entertainment. Friends and families would gather around a radio in the evening and laugh to comedy and variety shows such as *Andy and Amos* and *George Burns and Gracie Allen*. They eagerly awaited the next installment of adventure and mystery shows such as the *Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow*. Radio also provided the audience the added benefit of up-to-date news. With its ability to broadcast information in real-time, it created a sense of unity as people across the country listened to the same broadcast at the same time. Roosevelt understood radio's ability to inform and persuade the population, and nowhere is that more evident than with his fireside chats.

In 1933, Roosevelt presented the first in a series of fireside chats which allowed him to appeal directly to his American audience.¹⁹ Roosevelt understood that the best way to reach his audience was to explain complex issues and important policies using simple words with clear, easy to follow examples. He created a sense of intimacy by referring to his audience as his friends and addressing them using first person pronouns. Smith argues that FDR's "cultivated delivery and easy manner made the audience feel they were participating directly at the highest level of government" (238). Although

¹⁹ FDR gave between 27 and 31 fireside chats between March 1933 and June 1944 depending on sources. The informal name of Fireside Chats was created by CBS's Harry C. Butcher who used the words in a press release in May 1933. For more information and a list of the speeches themselves, see *FDR's Fireside Chats*, edited by Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, University of Oklahoma Press, 1992.

carefully prepared, Roosevelt's soft-spoken words addressed the audience's fears and concerns over major issues in a seemingly informal manner and offered them hope by explaining what his administration was going to do to solve the issues. Richard E. D. Schwartz argues Roosevelt, "would regularly analyze the problem and suggest a path toward its solution. The paths he suggested were not invariably followed—but the mere suggestion that there was a way to deal with the difficulty helped to focus attention on solving the problem" (220). Roosevelt understood that the best way to reassure the public and encourage a sense of unity was to show them that their concerns were not taken lightly and that the administration was taking an active part in addressing them.

According to Elvin T. Lim, many scholars such as Arthur M. Schlesinger and Patrick Maney tend to characterize Roosevelt's Fireside chats as adopting a particularly intimate tone towards his audience, his listeners. James MacGregor Burns' describes the chats as "fresh, *intimate*, direct, [and] moving" (205 emphasis mine). In this view, the President exchanged views with the people in an informal, relational way. Lim, however, suggests that this common view is misleading, that, when analyzed at further depth, it becomes clear that President Roosevelt's oratorical tone was somewhat harsh and even "castigatory" at times (437). Lim conducted a content analysis of the Fireside Chats and concluded that Roosevelt's style was less intimate than has previously been argued; although the "illusion of intimacy" is established, Roosevelt's tone can be described as "vitriolic and declamatory" (437).

While Lim focuses on the Fireside Chats, Ralph K. White offers a perspective on Roosevelt's speeches between 1935 and 1939. White's view is clearly one that reflects

his position as a historical contemporary of Roosevelt, but nonetheless he offers some keen insight into Roosevelt's speaking style. In particular, White's analysis focuses on the rhetorical similarities between Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler. Like Hitler, Roosevelt sought to persuade his audience by making "frequent appeals to traditional moral values and to ideas of national grandeur" (157). Hitler's rhetoric capitalized on the German ideology of Aryan superiority by persuading the public that the rest of the world viewed Germany as weak. He pointed to the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles as an attempt by the allied forces to subjugate and humiliate the German population. According to Kenneth Burke, this perceived attack against the innate dignity of the German population "puts the sense of dignity on a fighting basis, requiring the conquest of 'inferior races'" (173). Hitler's propaganda presented military aggression as a necessary self-defense against racial and political domination.

Similarly, both leaders used language that emphasized a clear dichotomy between their own nations and the forces that opposed them. However, while Hitler highlighted notions of persecution and the necessity of national strength, Roosevelt's emphasis was somewhat different; the President focused more on economic values as well as moral concern for the welfare of other nations.

While their arguments are different, both men utilize what Walter Ong refers to as secondary orality. Ong defines secondary orality as "the orality of telephones, radio, and television, which depends on writing and print for its existence" (3). Secondary orality is the integration of orality with chirography and is characterized by the electronic means of communication. Ong argues that secondary orality can generate "a strong group sense,

for listening to spoken words forms hearers into a group, a true audience, just as reading written or printed texts turns individuals into themselves. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups immeasurably larger than those of primary oral culture” (133). Both Hitler and Roosevelt recognized radio’s importance as a propaganda tool to unite the population and garner support. German radio broadcasts supported the Nazi’s consolidation of power and demonization of Jews whereas Roosevelt’s fireside chats comforted Americans discouraged by the effects of the Depression and fearful of entry into World War II.

Like White, Jason M. Satterfield also focuses on Roosevelt’s speech style during the time of war and compares Roosevelt’s rhetoric not only with Hitler’s style, but also with two other major world leaders at the time of World War II: Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin. Satterfield’s approach to rhetoric is highly analytical; he places Roosevelt’s speech content within a rubric that measures “explanatory style, integrative complexity, and pessimistic rumination scores” (667). The results of Satterfield’s research suggest that variations in Roosevelt’s oratorical style predicted certain major military and political events. For instance, an increase in optimistic rhetoric and integrative complexity of language frequently correlated with acts of military and risk-taking. Satterfield’s work highlights the relationship between political rhetoric and global events.

In *The Good Neighbor: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rhetoric of American Power*, Mary E. Stuckey argues that Roosevelt’s oratory is one of the most important bodies of political speech in the history of the United States. Roosevelt’s speeches are punctuated by what Stuckey refers to as Roosevelt’s key notion of the “good neighbor,” a

concept that was instrumental in terms of situating the United States within a global framework. The idea of the “good neighbor” is prevalent in Roosevelt’s rhetoric regarding foreign policy, but Stuckey suggests that it informs Roosevelt’s domestic policy to a large degree as well. She points to the example of the Fireside Chats, in which Roosevelt frequently began his speeches with the “homey greeting of ‘My friends’” (32). Whereas Lim suggests that the Fireside Chats feature a hidden degree of vitriol, Stuckey focuses on the fact that Roosevelt seldom uses overtly coercive language. More often, he draws upon persuasive rhetoric: “His political style was personal and could be difficult on those around him, but it was not dictatorial” (Stuckey 34). Roosevelt’s speech style is designed to evoke cooperation and integration at a political level.

Ernest Brandenburg and Waldo W. Braden highlight the fact that the power of Roosevelt’s rhetoric cannot be entirely separated from his voice and pronunciation. The authors note that Roosevelt’s “pleasing voice quality, his highly expressive intonations and inflections, his mastery of the conversational mode, and his direct speaking manner” were all instrumental in creating a powerful and persuasive brand of rhetoric (Brandenburg and Braden 23). Robert Dallek takes a similar view, noting that Roosevelt’s style of speech was often disarming and created a degree of sympathy in his audience; his speeches often indicate a level of performance that is calculated to produce a specific result. Dallek states that the “power of presidential personality—Roosevelt’s charm and warmth, or charisma in current parlance—was also an essential element of his ability to marshal public support during the war” (546). In this sense, Dallek’s emphasis

on Roosevelt's tone of voice and style of delivery is consistent with Brandenburg and Baden's earlier assessment.

Robert Dallek explains that while Roosevelt's charismatic personality benefited his political approach, it also hid the more challenging aspects of his position. Dallek states, "While the public's impressions of him as upbeat and buoyant accurately reflected his general demeanor and mood, he also believed that a degree of role playing was essential to his political success" (199). Roosevelt felt that any show of pressure, exhaustion, or concern would cause the American public to lose faith in the country's economic recovery.

Roosevelt's Background

Childhood

Roosevelt's privileged childhood was the exact opposite of President Lincoln's frontier upbringing. Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882 to the well-to-do James and Sara Delano Roosevelt in Hyde Park, New York. James came from a well-established New York family and was a businessman of considerable but not outstanding wealth. Sara Delano, twenty-six years James' junior, also came from a wealthy background and had been well educated overseas, first in China, then France and Germany. Perhaps due to the difficult birth, Roosevelt was James and Sara's only child. Sara was a doting mother and, in a time when the wealthy allowed experienced nurses and family retainers to care for their children, she preferred to take a major part in the care of Roosevelt. She organized her life around her only child and adopted the same strict regime her parents

used. Every hour of Roosevelt's day was carefully scheduled and supervised from the moment he was awakened at seven am until bedtime at 8:00 p.m.²⁰

Education

Sara homeschooled Roosevelt until he was six years old after which his education was handled by various governesses and private tutors with the study plans always developed by Sara. Roosevelt studied Latin, French, German, history, arithmetic, and penmanship, subjects that align with the core of a classical liberal education. Caroline Winterer argues that in the early nineteenth century, “the rationale for studying antiquity...that it ennobled the self and formed the conscientious citizen, was adopted by other disciplines in the newly constituted humanities—modern literature, history, music, philosophy, art history—[became] central to the ideal of liberal learning” (6). A liberal education allows students to examine multiple points of view and develop critical thinking skills. The broad curriculum pushes students beyond the narrow confines of their own situations and encourages a world-view approach to problem solving. According to Jean Edward Smith, one of the most influential tutors was Jeanne Rosat-Sandoz who “believed in economic reform” and strove to instill “a sense of social responsibility” into young Roosevelt (20). Years later, Roosevelt would give her credit for laying the foundation of his education.

When Roosevelt was fourteen years old, he began attending Groton School, an exclusive Episcopal college preparatory boarding school in Groton, Massachusetts. Since

²⁰ For more information about Roosevelt, see Jean Edward Smith's *FDR*. Random House, 2007; Robert Dallek's *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Political Life*. Penguin Random House, 2012; H.W. Brands' *A Traitor to His Class: The Privileged Life and Radical Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, Doubleday, 2008.

classical antiquity, an elite education focused on turning young men into future leaders and statesmen. George William Curtis argues elite boarding schools such as Groton, St. Paul's, St. Mark's, Choate, and Hotchkiss, gave the republic a scholarly class who could endow national policy with a moral mainspring. Curtis states that "it is people heeding the word of the thinker and the lesson of experience which secures the welfare of the American republic and enlarges human liberty" (703). Founded in 1884 by Rev. Endicott Peabody, Groton's purpose was to cultivate Christian character with an emphasis on the moral, physical, and intellectual development of its students. Mir Zohair Husain, Brian S. Ward, and Daniel Commander state that "Vision, ideology, communication skills, persistence, charisma, and credibility were several qualities that FDR developed while at Groton under the tutelage of Reverend Peabody" (348). As such, the curriculum, with its echoes of classical tradition, prepared its students to be good citizens with strong critical and independent thinking skills and the ability to express themselves in a persuasive manner.

Students at Groton lived a Spartan lifestyle with each assigned to a small cubicle furnished with only a bed, bureau, rug, and chair. Groton's curriculum was based on the classical works of Greece and Rome. Karl Helicher states, "Groton proved an inexorable routine of morning chapel and classes, afternoon sports, and evening chapel and studies" (50). Roosevelt excelled under its rigorous schedule.

Groton allowed Roosevelt to develop an interest in charitable activities, and he joined the Groton Missionary Society, volunteered at the Boston Boys' Club, and ran the Groton Summer Camp. The impact of his social engagement is reflected in his

presidential reforms which target social life through the passing of social security programs as well as the establishment of minimum wage for labor workers.

After Roosevelt's graduation from Groton in spring of 1900, he moved up to Harvard College where his academic record at Groton allowed him to start with 15 college hours already completed. As a result, he was able to complete his undergraduate studies in three years and spent his fourth year on graduate work. The curriculum at Harvard was both brilliant and liberal. President Charles W. Eliot defined education exclusively in intellectual terms and after taking a few required courses in their first year, students were able to enroll in any course they wished. According to L. Leroy Cowperthwaite, Roosevelt majored in History and Political Science and took courses in "ancient and modern European, British, and American History and Government" (37). Roosevelt minored in English Composition and Literature. He also studied the fundamentals of logic with the religious philosopher Josiah Royce. His academic choices would help him establish the right type of background which would inform his leadership instinct and decision-making process.

During his freshman year, Roosevelt was elected to the editorial board of the undergraduate newspaper *The Harvard Crimson*. Halee Morris argues that since he was an industrious editor, Roosevelt developed his communication skills which enhanced his linguistic prowess (16). Roosevelt enjoyed his position with the paper as well as the prestige and responsibility it brought with it. In Roosevelt's third year at Harvard, he was elected editor-in-chief of the *Crimson*. Although he completed his degree in June of his third year, his dedication to his editorial duties inspired him to remain for a fourth year.

While Roosevelt was never a top-tier student academically, he did take his studies seriously and achieved satisfactory grades. J.E. Smith states that Roosevelt's university experience "imparted renewed confidence and enhanced the innate optimism that James and Sara had so carefully nourished" (33).

Roosevelt's Historical and Political Context

Entry into Political Life

In 1910, Roosevelt was asked to run for New York State Senate as a Democrat. The opportunity to be a political leader appealed to his sense of self-worth and his love of new challenges and opportunities. A major influence on his decision to run for office was his admiration for by then former President Theodore Roosevelt, a fifth cousin to FDR. Although distantly related, both men felt their social position and education provided them with a duty towards their fellow Americans. In an August 1894 *Atlantic Monthly* article, Teddy Roosevelt stated:

A heavy moral obligation rests upon the man of means and upon the man of education to do their full duty by their country. On no class does this obligation rest more heavily than upon the men with a collegiate education, the men who are graduates of our universities. Their education gives them no right to feel the least superiority over any of their fellow citizens; but it certainly ought to make them feel that they should stand foremost in the honorable effort to serve the whole public by doing their duty as Americans in the body politic. ("The College Graduate")

Political public service allows individuals to fulfill both forms of republicanism, neo-Aristotelian and neo-Roman. Neo-Aristotelian civic republicanism argues the political forum provides individuals the best opportunity to realize virtue through participation in the democratic process of a community. Neo-Roman emphasizes that freedom of the individual is tied to freedom of the state. Therefore, political engagement allows a person the opportunity to protect the rights and freedom of the individual.²¹

With his family name, wealth, and connections combined with his own enthusiastic energy, Roosevelt campaigned on a platform dedicated to clean up the government. He easily won by over a thousand votes. In the beginning of his political career, Roosevelt concentrated on fighting for the interests of American farmers and harassing the Tammany Hall political machine. For example, he led the campaign against Tammany Hall's choice for the U.S Senate, William Sheehan.

In the early years, Roosevelt's politics were primarily of the progressive, new nationalist variety. Roosevelt firmly believed that government was a vital part of creating and maintaining an equitable and fair democratic society and protecting the individual from the self-interest of wealthy individuals and corporations. In 1912, Roosevelt won re-election to the State Senate; however, he did not complete the term. Roosevelt had supported New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson's successful presidential campaign. It is during this time that Roosevelt met the man who would have a significant impact on

²¹ For more information on the two forms of republicanism see Cécile Laborde and John Maynor "The Republican Contribution to Contemporary Political Theory." *Republicanism and Political Theory*. Edited by Cécile Laborde and John Maynor, Blackwell, 2008. On classical republicanism in general, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, v. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1978, and J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, Princeton University Press, 1975.

Roosevelt's future political career, Louis McHenry Howe. Husain, Ward, and Commander argue, "Howe was a political genius and important political influence on FDR" (346). Roosevelt hired Howe to help him improve his image, and Howe provided Roosevelt with the leadership traits of organizational ability and political organization.

In appreciation of Roosevelt's support, in 1913 when Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels requested Roosevelt as his assistant secretary, Wilson readily appointed him to the position which was confirmed by the Senate.²² Roosevelt excelled as the assistant secretary of the Navy. However, according to Michael G. Carew, between 1914 and 1916, Roosevelt was forced to walk a thin line between pressure from naval command officers who "made clear the deficiencies in naval strength and preparedness while at the same time adhering to Wilson's policy of neutrality" (56). This put Roosevelt in a position where he had to support Wilson in presenting the navy as the nation's first line of defense against attack while limiting to amount of actual support.

While he was serving as assistant secretary, politics were never far from Roosevelt's mind. In 1914, he sought the Democratic nomination for the Senate from New York State which Wilson vetoed. In 1916, he was suggested by the New York Democratic Party as a possible candidate for governor. However, Wilson's re-election campaign buried any movement in that direction.

In 1920, the Democratic Party picked Roosevelt as its vice-presidential candidate. Although presidential nominee James Cox and Roosevelt lost the election to Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge, Roosevelt's performance in the campaign impressed his

²² Jean Edward Smith, FDR, New York: Random House, 2008, pp.100.

fellow Democrats and the country. Roosevelt's political star was rising; however, a tragic personal event threatened to end his career almost before it started.

FDR and Polio

In 1921, Roosevelt vacationed with his family on Campobello Island, filling their days with busy island activity: boating, swimming, and hiking. On August 10th, the family spent several hours fighting a small fire. Afterwards, Roosevelt decided to go for a swim in a lake two miles from their home. He went to bed early but could not sleep and kept trembling despite several blankets. By the next morning he had developed a fever and numbness in his left leg. The following day he was paralyzed from the chest down. Despite being diagnosed first with a bad cold by the family physician, Dr. E.H. Bennett, Roosevelt's condition continued to deteriorate. After an examination by Dr. Lovett, a leading authority on infantile paralysis, there was a verdict. Roosevelt had contracted poliomyelitis—polio (Smith 101). In the 1920s, polio was a devastating disease with no cure. Roosevelt would never recover full use of his legs again and spent the rest of his life primarily confined to a wheelchair.

While the paralysis was permanent, Roosevelt developed several methods to present the illusion of recovery. He was aware of the public's concern over his health and the need to present civic fitness which Kim Neilson describes as “signs of self-government, self-determination, and individual autonomy” (Neilson 269). Roosevelt needed to present a capable and assuring presence to a public already demoralized by the depression. Andrew J.C. Bell states, “In any polity where citizens or subjects have some aesthetic contact with the comportment of their leaders, those leaders will find that some

of their power is dependent upon the spectators' view of them" (1). Roosevelt argued the country would lose faith in him and his ability to lead if he were portrayed as weak and an invalid.

By 1926, Roosevelt could walk a short distance using a cane and crutch; however, with his physical therapist he soon developed the technique of walking in a more natural manner with a cane in one hand and holding onto the arm of a companion with the other. When giving public speeches, Roosevelt would grip reinforced podiums.²³ At the 1926 New York Democratic Convention, Roosevelt was asked to give the keynote address. Roosevelt saw it as a great opportunity to be in the political spotlight once again as well as show the Democratic delegates his improved health. When Roosevelt made his way to the podium with the help of a cane and the arm of his son Elliot, "the 15,000 delegates and spectators roared their approval" (Smith 222). Roosevelt's healthy appearance and positive attitude helped to dispel any rumors about his illness.

In 1928, Democrats, fearing the effects of a Republican win, nominated Roosevelt for governor of New York. Roosevelt had repeatedly declined the suggestion of his nomination stating his desire to focus on his continued recovery. However, Alford E. Smith, Jakob Raskob, and Herbert Lehman persuaded Roosevelt to accept the nomination as the only possible contender who could beat the Republican nominee, Albert Ottinger. Roosevelt won the election and started on the path towards the American presidency. Less than a year into his governorship, the stock market crashed and the country was plunged into the Great Depression.

²³Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*, New York: Random House, 2008, pp. 220.

The Great Depression

Throughout the 1920s, the United States economy was booming, growing an impressive 42% over the decade which resulted in improved living conditions for many. Following the end of World War I, improvements in technology allowed for mass production of products such as automobiles and household appliances which, combined with an increase in wages, led to increased consumer confidence and spending.

The booming stock market was enticing to Americans as well as businesses. Many Americans, excited about the opportunity to make a lot of money in a short period of time started buying stock, often on margin. Buying on margin allowed consumers to buy stock with as little as 10 % down and borrowing the rest from banks or brokers with the stock itself serving as collateral for the loans. Buyers held onto the stock until the price increased and then, selling at a profit, paid off the lender and pocketed the rest. This system worked great so long as there was a bull market. However, the Federal Reserve was concerned over the rampant speculation. The Federal Reserve board and many governors of Federal Reserve banks felt that stock market speculation diverted funds from commerce and industry. The Federal Reserve board argued the “Federal Reserve Act does not ... contemplate the use of the resources of the Federal Reserve Banks for the creation or extension of speculative credit” (Lester V. Chandler 56). Although the Federal Reserve board was concerned there were few regulations in place to protect customers and banks from crisis. The increase in speculation caused stock prices to rapidly inflate. As such growth was unsustainable, the stock market began to falter in the fall of 1929 and concerned investors began to sell off their stock. As the panic began to spread, more

investors tried to sell off their stock, but there were no buyers, and the market began to crash. On October 29th alone, brokers sold over 16 million shares. By 1931, it is estimated that investors lost over \$74 billion.

In 1929, there was overall decline in industrial production that soon followed the stock market decline. There was mass unemployment as a result of the decline in the industrial production throughout the United States. By 1933, over 12 million Americans were unemployed. In addition to unemployment, salaries had fallen by 40 percent and the industrial wages dropped by 60 percent.

Ultimately, the economic, political, and cultural ideas of America in the 1920s would all jointly contribute to the cause of the Great Depression.²⁴ Years of laissez faire ideas about the economy would bring about an end to the Bull Market that had made so much for so many and destroyed them just as quickly.

Rhetorical Analysis of Roosevelt's Speeches

Roosevelt was an accomplished political orator. As demonstrated by his popular fireside chats, he understood the power of using plain, direct speech to build a connection with his audience. His evening fireside radio chats comforted the nation during a time of deep economic and financial insecurity and offered them hope for a better future.

Roosevelt used language to not only comfort the public, but also to inform them of important issues and encourage a sense of unity. This chapter will examine three of Roosevelt's speeches presented at key moments in his presidency. The First Inaugural

²⁴ Galbraith's book was originally published in 1954. For more information on the causes and impact of The Great Depression see John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Great Crash*, Mariner Books, 2009; Murray N. Rothbard's *America's Great Depression*, Create Space, 2013.

Address is important as it presents Roosevelt's plan for raising the country out of the depths of the Great Depression, and it demonstrates the power of plain speaking to encourage an atmosphere of hope in a dejected and demoralized audience. The Four Freedoms speech develops a global sense of unity as it warns against the threat the axis countries of Germany, Japan, and Italy present to democracy. The third speech of this chapter, The Day of Infamy speech, is important as it encourages Congress and the public to support Roosevelt's declaration of war against Japan.

First Inaugural Address

Roosevelt gave his first Inaugural Address on March 4, 1933. Roosevelt intended to persuade the citizenry to offer the support needed to introduce reforms, as he believed these reforms were necessary in curbing and alleviating the effects of the depression which affected various segments of American life. Cognizant of the social-economic context of the Great Depression, Roosevelt crafted his speech to combat the hopelessness felt by many Americans due to widespread poverty stemming from the economic crisis. Roosevelt emphasized inspiring ideas with several statements at the beginning of his speech. He stated:

This is pre-eminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper.

(FDR, "First Inaugural Address", para. 1)

Roosevelt understood that the country needs plain and direct leadership and government transparency to develop trust in the new administration. Davis W. Houck and Mihaela Nocasian point out that, “Roosevelt had just taken one oath with his left hand on the family’s thick Dutch Bible, and this was the second” (661). He was promising that he would lead the country towards better times. Roosevelt acknowledged that times were difficult, but yet he reminded his audience that this was not the first time America has faced such adversity and inspired his citizenry to persevere in the spirit of unity.

Roosevelt restated that there is no need to shrink from facing the conditions that were affecting their country. Roosevelt exhorted Americans not to “fear anything except fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance” (FDR “First Inaugural Address,” para. 1). Roosevelt praised Americans for remaining supportive during the darkest hours of the nation and recognized the peoples’ support of leadership at such hours which was essential to victory. J.E. Smith argues, “For a nation desperate for leadership, Roosevelt had assumed the burden” (302). By praising Americans for the support which they had shown earlier during times of deep crisis, Roosevelt was making a patriotic emotional appeal to the people. Roosevelt’s insistence on highlighting the strength and spirit of unity and perseverance of the American public is part of his rhetoric of hope. Roosevelt’s rhetoric is fashioned with the intent to unify the public through a shared spirit of inspiration.

The president also made a connection to the emotions of the audience by the second statement in his address where he admitted that it was the time to “speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly” (FDR “First Inaugural Address,” para. 1). This

emotional appeal set the tempo of the speech. Roosevelt's commitment to speaking truth to the situation at hand also demonstrates his Stoic rhetorical virtues, in that he possesses qualities of a visionary leadership enabling him to ascertain the real conditions his country faces. Like Lincoln before him, Roosevelt's Stoic rhetorical mastery is made by the marriage of both his enlightened intellectual perspective as well as his capacity to communicate an inspiring vision to the American public.

The heartfelt communication of Roosevelt's vision is particularly important in view of his rhetorical success and is evident as he continues to use pathos throughout the speech. "Our ability to pay has fallen" is one of the statements which is crafted to elicit shared feeling (FDR "First Inaugural" para. 2). The president uses the pronoun "our" instead of "you" in the above statement, thus making the audience feel that he is one of them and is passing through the same experiences. In this same paragraph, the president sympathizes with the farmers of the depression who could "find no market for their produce" and with those whose savings of many years had been depleted by the economic crises (FDR "First Inaugural" para. 2). This statement is agreeable and could make the audience shift its focus on the looming economic condition to the possible solutions. President Roosevelt also acknowledged the high levels of unemployment and low wages which prevent Americans from rising above their struggles. It is a sign of Roosevelt's rhetorical astuteness that he was able to create a shared feeling of crisis among the public.

Even though the United States was composed of various groups experiencing different life conditions based on socio-economic conditions, Roosevelt masterfully

established an ethos of shared suffering which allowed people to set aside their differences and rally under a shared sense of identity. Additionally, by honestly acknowledging the mass suffering of the public, Roosevelt prepared his audience to positively receive the suggestions which the president would offer later in his speech: Roosevelt knew that if the people identified together in the crisis, then they could be easier inspired to support initiatives that support the public good.

In this speech, Roosevelt made several choices of word usage which increased his effectiveness in creating a collective narrative rooted in highly esteemed ethical value, which is indeed characteristic of a virtuous Stoic rhetorical leader. To show how the value system contributed to the economic crises of the time, Roosevelt asserted that values had shrunken to “fantastic” levels (FDR “First Inaugural” para. 2). Simply put, the collective ethical values had dropped significantly, as evidenced by the reckless pursuit of wealth in the 1920s. By using the word “fantastic” instead of the simpler term of low levels, he succeeded in a certain level of sarcasm. The impact of the overall statement is thus made stronger by the right choice of this word. By using the words “the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade” he better brought the meaning of dropped dollar value which had been catapulted by the economic crisis of this time (FDR “First Inaugural” para. 2).

To express his disappointment with the greed witnessed among the unscrupulous businesspeople, the president states that their deeds stood “indicted in the court of public opinion” and that the efforts of those who propagate retrogressive practices had “been cast in the pattern of outworn tradition” (FDR “First Inaugural” para. 5). This puts him on

the right side with the audience. Roosevelt skillfully alluded to the Bible's ethical authority by referring to those in charge of the nation's currency as "money changers." To reprimand those who were self-seeking, he stated that happiness does not lie in the possession of money but in the "thrill of the creative effort" (para.5). Speaking with the authority of a virtuous leader, Roosevelt insisted that money only provides fleeting happiness, but real and long-lasting happiness is a result of one's efforts.

Roosevelt also alluded to the Bible to exhort the audience to adopt a clear national vision by stating that "where there is no vision, the people perish" (FDR "First Inaugural" para. 5). Roosevelt thus combined the intents of the audience to work patriotically with the aim of producing goods and services for the common good of the nation. Roosevelt promoted a vision where money and wealth come through putting others and the country first and not through unscrupulous financial practices. Suzanne M. Daughton argues, "By asking his audience to work harder with him, Roosevelt granted them a sense of control over their lives, and led them to visualize movement toward the ultimate goal, an easing of the economic crisis" (433). Thus, demonstrating his Stoic virtues, Roosevelt established an ethical basis by which he held the nation accountable, thereby inspiring the public to unite toward a higher esteemed way of life.

Recalling that a proper Stoic rhetorical leader is one who embodies a combination of virtuous characteristics such as ethical discernment as well as perceptive intelligence, Roosevelt proved his wholeness of character by utilizing the appeal of *logos* in several instances in his speech, such as when he restated the facts which are well-known by the audience. First, he acknowledged that the economy was in a crisis and that this led to loss

of jobs causing a high unemployment rate. Due to the low earnings, many had resorted to using their savings and some had gone to the extreme of depleting these savings. People who did have jobs, faced low wages. All these facts were attributable to the economic crisis which was facing the United States in 1930s. By stating these facts at the beginning of the address, the President laid a firm foundation from which he would build the rest of his speech.

In his First Inaugural Address, Roosevelt demonstrates *propriety* in grasping the fullness of the rhetorical situation by skillfully chosen words to create the tone, the mood, and to impress the intended attitude to the audience. Roosevelt knew the direness of the economic situation, as well as the needed medicine of inspiring and unifying language. Along with the use of figurative language, the president crafted and arranged his words to create the desired mood. He declares at the beginning of the address that it is the time to “speak the truth.” He also expressed his belief that “the nation will endure as it has endured” to cast out unnecessary fears among the citizenry. The mood set by these statements is that of resilience and optimism. Roosevelt’s words aroused the feeling of boldness and honesty, and the president’s tone accompanying this word usage was one of conviction and urgency. The president believed that the prevailing situation could be resolved by determination and the support by the masses. He also believed that the necessary reforms needed to be done urgently. A great rhetorical leader is one who can speak on behalf of the public the vision that is needed to rally the people forth to inspired action, and Roosevelt proved himself as such a figure.

The Four Freedoms Speech

The next speech under study is Roosevelt's State of the Union Address, "The Four Freedoms" speech delivered on 6th of January, 1941.²⁵ The President took this opportunity to address Congress about the national security of the United States and the threat World War II had on democracy. His speech supported a break from the United States' non-intervention policy upheld since the late 1930s. Roosevelt insisted that the collapse of democracies across the world would impact the United States, and he provided an outline on how the United States could participate in helping the allies to win the war against the aggressors. To lay the ground for his speech, he described the situation in the United States as "unprecedented in the history of the Union" ("Four Freedoms" para. 1). Roosevelt backed this statement by acknowledging that the national security was "seriously threatened from without" and thus an action was beckoning (Kimble 46). True to his form of rhetorical mastery, Roosevelt could describe a crisis situation in such a way that does not cause fear and disharmony, but rather inspiration and movement toward unity.

Roosevelt harnessed different tactics to persuade Congress to support his commitment to the partial support of the allies in the Second World War. Similar to Lincoln who ground his arguments against the institution of slavery in the voting actions of the Founding Fathers, Roosevelt cites other past wars with the European nations and other minor wars in the West Indies, the Pacific, and the Mediterranean. By contrasting a

²⁵ All quotes for Roosevelt's State of the Union Address, "The Four Freedoms" speech are from www.fdrlibrary.org/four-freedoms and referred to in the text as "Four Freedoms".

major war (Second World War) with minor wars such as that with the West Indies, he succeeded in convincing Congress of the critical security situation which they were facing. By stating that the chief reasons for the participation of America in the past wars was to maintain “the American rights and for the principles of peaceful commerce” he narrowed the focus of his speech to the freedoms (“Four Freedoms” para. 3). Just as Lincoln and Obama demonstrate as powerful orators, Roosevelt appealed to civic virtue by inciting appeals to core democratic values of freedom, democracy, progress, and public service. Ira Chernas states, “To win the battle for public opinion, [Roosevelt] had to legitimate his increasingly martial policies by appealing to the public’s desire for personal security” (137). Roosevelt clarified how these deeply important values are at stake because of World War II, and thus the response of the American public should be in service of the greatest ideals that a nation could aspire to.

Roosevelt extensively used pathos in his speech to make the necessary appeal for support of participation in the war, and concurrently expanded the public’s pre-occupation beyond the bounds of individualistic concerns. He mentioned children and said that the rules currently enforce unwarranted isolation of children in both parts of the hemisphere. This isolation, according to Roosevelt, would lock the country in a wall of isolation as “the procession of civilization went past” (“Four Freedoms” para. 4). By mentioning children, the President managed to soften the firm stand which some members of Congress had taken against any form of participation in the war. He encouraged Congress not to think of just their situation but also to cast their thoughts in the future and gauge whether the children of “their children” would benefit from the

ensuing non-participation in war. The statement “thinking of our children and their children” is also paradoxical in its construction (“Four Freedoms” para. 4). The audience could interpret it differently. The first interpretation could imply that the phrase “their children” referred to the offspring of the current children. At the same time, this phrase could be referring to the children of the Americans (our children) and the children of the other democracies in the Eastern hemisphere (their children). Interestingly, both interpretations would fit well in the context of the speech. Roosevelt’s usage of pathos regarding the welfare of the world’s children demonstrated how his motivational capacity as a leader did not merely stem from a skill in manipulating his audience, but rather was deeply rooted in ethical awareness and concern for the welfare of people the world over.

To engage the emotions of the audience further, Roosevelt acknowledged that the democratic life of most nations was being violated. The democracy of America was not much different from other countries’ situations. Roosevelt stated that “the democratic way of life is at this moment being directly assailed in every part of the world—assailed either by arms, or by secret spreading of poisonous propaganda by those who seek to destroy unity and promote discord in nations that are still at peace” (“Four Freedoms” para. 11). This assault on democracy had destroyed several independent nations. To urge the Congress to act on this course of action and prevent the same from happening here Roosevelt warned that “the assailants are still on the march” (“Four Freedoms” para. 11). Through this statement, he poked holes on the validity of non-involvement in the affairs of the other democracies in the world. He thus asserted that the non-involvement of the United States would not leave it unscathed by events which happen beyond American

borders. Roosevelt's quality as a leader was displayed in his capacity to expand continually the scope of the public's concerns beyond the realm of me and mine, and even further beyond the scope of the nation itself. Indeed, Roosevelt ascertained that the fate of the United States was enwrapped in the fate of the world, and that the civic virtues of democracy and freedom transcended the parameters of the United States.

The President went on to arouse the emotions of pride and nationalism among his listeners by referring to the determination of the Americans which extended "over all ... years." This determination, according to Roosevelt was proved during "the quarter century of wars following the French revolution" ("Four Freedoms" para. 5). To show the magnitude of the Second World War, he compared the war of 1812 to the situation at hand. None of the previous wars had the aim of dominating the whole world, but the aggressors in World War II had such ambitions. Thus, this war posed a real threat to the future of the United States. By using these past well-known references, the president made the necessary contrast needed to encourage Congress to support the allies in material and kind while still remaining neutral. To further help Congress see the need for supplying the British with war implements in World War II, he praised the British Navy for being a friendly strength. The repetition of friendly strength twice achieved the intended impact; the importance of the British in protecting the American nation and other democracies in the world from the domination by the aggressors. J.E. Smith argues that such statements shifted the logic from the policy on non-interventionism in war to the perspective of aiding a proven ally who was in dire need of their help (27). Roosevelt's leadership is

thus again rooted in appealing to the valor of the American spirit in defending and standing for the worthiest values of the free world.

Roosevelt used imagery and vivid description to reinforce his points on many occasions within this speech, thus showcasing his oratorical mastery in communicating his inspiring vision with his audience. He urged the audience to be “wary of those with sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal who preach the ‘ism’ of appeasement” (“Four Freedom” para. 17). This was an excellent description of those who are quite vocal in their campaign for the pacification only and opposed any form of aid to the allied nations. He went on to describe another kind of people who only sought to benefit themselves as “selfish men who would clip the wings of the American eagle in order to feather their own nests” (Four Freedom” para, 18). This imagery is effective in illustrating what self-seeking individuals could do to achieve their own ends. Clipping the wings of an eagle will render it unable to fly and thus such a bird will find it difficult to fend for itself. Interpreting it further, those people who harbored selfish ambitions at the expense of the nation were, according to Roosevelt, draining the ability of the nation to sustain itself economically and politically. Through this, the President effectively stigmatized selfishness and espoused a collective nationalism. From a Stoic rhetorical perspective, the capacity to use poetic tools such as metaphor and powerful symbolic imagery evidenced a developed intellect and character. Indeed, mastery of language and intellect are required to both ascertain the political situation at hand, as well as to communicate a transcendent or inspiring vision.

Roosevelt argued that a future secure from the threat of foreign domination would allow for a world based upon the four freedoms:

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—

everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a

healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world. The fourth is

freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide

reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no

nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any

neighbor—anywhere in the world. (“Four Freedoms” para. 83-86)

Roosevelt was laying the foundation for a new world vision where any person, despite their economic, political, or social background, could live in freedom from fear and tyranny. He was arguing the only way to ensure global peace and security was to encourage a world that focuses on doing what is morally or ethically in the best interest of the individual and not just a country. Roosevelt’s repetition of “anywhere in the world” demonstrated that these freedoms were global initiatives and justified American involvement in World War II.

The Day of Infamy Speech

Roosevelt delivered the Day of Infamy speech on December 8, 1941, a day after Japan launched attacks on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.²⁶ With this act, the Japanese Empire had officially declared war on the United States. The immediate audience for this speech was the United States Congress. The rest of the country followed the address through radio stations which broadcasted the speech. The purpose of this speech was to convince Congress and the rest of the Americans that it was the right time to declare war against Japan and other allied aggressors including German and Italy. The speech was important as it was crafted to challenge the earlier reservations which the Americans had towards participation in war.

The speech was carefully worded from the start to raise the necessary emotional charge needed for the occasion. Roosevelt began by describing the previous date of the attack as “a date which will live in infamy” (FDR “Infamy” para. 1). The word *infamy* which in its adjective form is *infamous*, implies a gross evil advanced upon a person or a nation. By using this word, the president succeeded in magnifying the evil which Japan had perpetrated against the United States. By fully detailing the day of the attack (Yesterday, December 7, 1941), the president impresses the significance of the day on Congress and American history. Thus, members of Congress, by supporting the presidential proposition to declare war on Japan, understood they were participating in an event which bears great historical and political weight.

²⁶ All references to the “Day of Infamy” speech are taken from Franklin D. Roosevelt. *Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York Transcript*. 1941. Pdf. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov.

To engage the emotions of his listeners further, Roosevelt formulated the representation of Japan as evil and the United States as an innocent victim of aggression. He used words which would persuade Congress and Americans to view the US as the recipient of unjustified treatment from the government of Japan. He continued this emotional polarization by asserting that “the United States was at peace” with Japan. He backed this assertion by demonstrating to the country that the United States was still conducting diplomatic conversations with the government of Japan, and thus an attack was the highest expression of betrayal. According to Roosevelt, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States delivered a “formal reply to a recent American message” and this communication “contained no threat or hint of war” (FDR “Infamy” para. 2). America had no reason to believe Japan was not negotiating in good faith. Roosevelt renounced the Japanese government as deceptive by stating that Japan “sought to deceive the United States by false statement and expression for hope of continuous peace” (FDR “Infamy” para. 3). Thus, he succeeded in showing Americans that the enemy had been preparing for an attack for a long time while still lying to the American government and stating that all the diplomatic relations were intact. As in his other speeches, Roosevelt demonstrated in “The Day of Infamy” speech a skillful influential force in promoting values of justice and democracy. As a comprehensive leader, Roosevelt grasps the necessity of promoting a difficult path of war as a means of upholding those deeper ethical values.

Roosevelt also used words and phrases which aroused emotions and achieved vivid description. One of these is the phrase “suddenly and deliberately attacked,” which

is used at the introductory paragraph. The perception of the nature of the attack from such word usage is that it was intentional, malicious, and without the awareness of the United States government. Military practices dictate that a country should first declare war against the other country before launching attacks, but Japan did not follow that principle. Thus, Roosevelt intended this attack to be viewed as an act of impunity and aggression. To build more emotional charge, the president identified this attack as a surprise offensive, unprovoked, and dastardly (FDR “Infamy” para. 6). The president also stated that Japan deliberately sought to deceive, implying that the attack was premeditated and the diplomatic messages between Japan and the United States were disingenuous. Braj Mohan argues that Roosevelt’s “Emotionally charged amplifying words like ‘suddenly’ and ‘deliberately’ arouse the audience’s animosity against Japan and amplify the issue of the Japanese attack” (69). By pointing out the unexpectedness of the attack, Roosevelt succeeded in making it clear to his audience that Japan was an unpredictable aggressor that must be met with action by the United States.

Roosevelt continued to appeal to the pathos of his audience by recounting the casualties in the recent attacks. He informed Congress that the attack on the Hawaiian Islands “caused severe damage to the American naval and military forces” (FDR “Infamy” para. 4). He then expressed his regrets over the lives which had been lost in this attack. Herbert L. Caron states, “Roosevelt pointed out, the nature of the attack and the distance of the targets from Japanese bases made it apparent that the operation had been planned ‘days or even weeks ago.’ Thus, we were reminded that the enemy was not merely guilty of temporary insanity but was indeed guilty of premeditated murder” (6).

Roosevelt expresses the gravitas of the situation, connecting on a heartfelt emotional level with the very real pain felt by the victims of the war.

The speech also contains repetition technique which is crucial for achieving emphasis and urgency. To enumerate the attacks which the Japanese Empire was carrying out on different parts of the world, the president utilized repetition. He described the Japanese attacks on Hong Kong, Guam, Philippine Island, Wake Island, and Midway Island. The repetition emphasizes the degree to which the Empire of Japan had gone in carrying out its surprise attacks. It was, therefore, no longer prudent for Congress to take no action and wait until America suffered more attacks. The mood created by this repetition was that a decision needed to be reached fast. J.E. Smith states, “the attack on Pearl Harbor was so unexpected and so devastating that the nation rallied instantly behind the president” (540). Therefore, the obvious decision by Congress would then be to pass a motion approving the declaration of war on Japan.

Roosevelt concluded the speech with a clear call to action. His call to action was to ask Congress to declare “a state of war... between the United States and the Japanese Empire” (FDR “Infamy” para. 12). To the rest of the United States, the call was that Americans should always “remember the character of the onslaught against” the United States (FDR “Infamy” para. 8). The call to action is important as it leaves a clear path which the audience may choose to follow. It clarifies on the essence of the speech and how the speaker expects his audience to respond to the speech. An excellent speech successfully pulls the audience to support the speaker’s call to action while the converse is true. The analysis of this speech reveals salient positive points which would make this

speech effectively persuasive. From historical reference, the speech achieved its purpose since Congress passed the motion authorizing the president to declare a state of war with the Empire of Japan.

Conclusion

More like Lincoln than Obama, President Roosevelt came into leadership of the United States in a time of overt crisis. Not only was the United States suffering from the worst economic crisis of the nation's history, but the world was on the brink of a second world war, a major conflict in which the United States would inescapably become involved. In this extremely critical time, Roosevelt proved himself one of the greatest rhetorical leaders of United States history, as evidenced through the above analyses of three of his major speeches. Like Obama and Lincoln, Roosevelt repeatedly affirmed a rhetoric of hope that called on the American public to embrace a set of civic virtues that compelled the country to aspire beyond the realm of personal agendas and to unite around the shared values of freedom and democracy that are part of the nation's founding philosophy. Roosevelt's success as a Stoic rhetorical leader is seen in the historical facts: The US was able to rally together, persevere through the Great Depression, and rise to the occasion of assisting the Allied countries in defeating the forces of Nazism and totalitarianism.

In his First Inaugural Address, Roosevelt expertly navigated a sensitive social climate by sympathizing with the desperate plights of so many Americans, while also inspiring the country toward a spirit of perseverance and unity. From the Stoic perspective, Roosevelt accomplished this through his character that is grounded in the

very values of civic duty that he promulgates. Stoic rhetorical philosophers would indeed be very impressed with Roosevelt's capacity to use a critical moment in the nation's history to access more deeply the spirit of civic virtues. Roosevelt's emphasis on pathos is what grants him the access point to motivate and inspire the public, which thus demonstrates an astute awareness of how a shared set of sufferings can be a catalyst in transcending one's personal sphere of concerns.

The other two Roosevelt speeches, "The Four Freedoms" and "The Day of Infamy," show a different voice of urgency from the president that demonstrates his skillful leadership in showing strength and certainty in a time of military crisis. Whereas his First Inaugural Address assumes a somber and patient tone that fits the context of inspiring the public to persevere, the other two speeches addressed above carry a spirit of urgency and rising to answer a call of democracy by entering the war. In these two speeches, Roosevelt demonstrates his rhetorical prowess by furthermore unifying the country through means of masterful oration. Recalling that the ideal Stoic rhetorician is one who can move one's audience by communicating an inspiring and ethically grounded vision, Roosevelt proves himself as such a leader by guiding his country in two of the direst times that a leader may experience—economic depression and in war. By standards of ethical and intellectual development as well as the charisma and skillfulness in moving the public, Roosevelt was indeed a great rhetorical leader by standards of Stoicism.

CHAPTER IV

YES WE CAN: BARACK OBAMA

In the mid-nineteenth century, Abraham Lincoln guided the country through one of the darkest times in American history, one in which the country was deeply divided over the question of states' rights and slavery. Seven decades later, Franklin D. Roosevelt helped a struggling America return to economic prosperity and united the country against a common enemy during World War II. In the early twenty-first century, America once again faced internal conflict. Long simmering racial tensions were stoked by the increase in racial and income inequality. Rising energy costs and the subprime housing bust had the American economy teetering on a recession. Many middle-class and poor Americans felt disenfranchised from a political system that seemed to ignore their concerns and instead, cater to the top one percent.²⁷ As a result, the American public was desperate for change, economically, socially, and politically.

At the 2004 Democratic National Convention in Boston, the junior United States Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, gave a seventeen-minute speech that would catapult him onto the national stage and serve notice to the political establishment that change was on the horizon. Tall, slender, and youthful, Obama spoke with an eloquence

²⁷ A major disenfranchised group was the rural population. Katherine Cramer's *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* examines the driving forces in voter decision making in rural communities. Cramer argues that the rural-versus-urban divide is a major factor in American politics. She states that this "rural consciousness" believe that they are ignored by decision makers, do not get their fair share of resources, and that their values and lifestyles are misunderstood by urban citizens (13).

that captured the attention of his national audience with his passion and charisma. For seventeen-minutes, Obama told America about his history as a young half-black man, the importance of bipartisanship in solving the issues facing America, and the need to provide opportunity to all Americans regardless of color, ethnic, or economic background. In the manner of great orators before him, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Martin Luther King Jr., Obama's soaring rhetoric electrified the nation: it also set him on the path to the White House.

Obama the Orator

Obama owes his oratorical success not only to his eloquence, charisma, and intelligence, but also to his campaign's adept usage of the budding social media platforms on the internet. Obama's usage of social media is similar to President Roosevelt's fireside chats: Both orators used the dominant technology of communication to engage directly with their audiences. Indeed, the *kairos* was perfect for a candidate such as Obama, who, as a younger candidate, achieved wide popularity and devotion among his followers because of his usage of social media as a means to spread his inspired rhetoric personally. Indeed, a study of Obama's *Youtube* channel "The Obama White House" as well as his official (not personal) Facebook page shows that Obama frequently posts content that centers on the themes of unity and promoting civic discourse. From an analysis of his content, we find that these two themes of unity and civic discourse are often connected—Obama appeals to the shared identity of being American, as well as to this country's highest values of respecting each other and working together for a greater excellence of the nation.

The following content explored will also demonstrate that Obama's high standards of conduct and character as well as the values of excellence and transcendence that he invokes tend to reach beyond borders and boundaries of different identities and political groups. Indeed, as Obama's *Youtube* videos "Weekly Address," and "Message for American Students," as well as his Facebook content such as his post about honoring Nelson Mandela's international holiday demonstrate, Obama frequently invokes the themes of unity and civic discourse through his characteristic excellent rhetoric in ways that focus on the similar identities and values of various people and groups.

Some of Obama's most central values and strategies in communication center on presenting a vision of excellence which appeals to everyone regardless of political affiliation. Indeed, George Lakoff and Elisabeth Wehling refer to Obama's rhetorical approaches as often expressing an "ethic of excellence" or "a more perfect union," and both of these values can be seen in his presidency's last "Weekly Address" on *Youtube* titled "The Honor of Serving You as President." Obama begins this address by thanking the American people, and then erasing boundaries between different political groups by saying that regardless of whether or not everyone has agreed with him, that he appreciates the communication he has shared with so many Americans. Further, he says that his dialogues with the public made him a better president as well as a better man, and for that, he is grateful. Here we see Obama's attempts at both fostering unity and promoting civil discourse.

As in many other of Obama's communications with the public through social media, the underlying intention of this "Weekly Address" is to promote standards of

excellence which are to appeal to all people, and which Obama relates specifically to the United States at large. This elevation of excellent standards is itself a means of promoting unity, because Obama intends to unite people through demonstrating a higher vision of greatness that all people can applaud, even if they have different views of how to reach it. As Lakoff and Wehling further discuss, Obama's character, which refers to his composure and oratory skills along with other aspects of his moral basis, itself is intended to demonstrate excellence, which once again is a means of unifying people. Indeed, as Obama's *Facebook* page reveals, his posts often garner tens or hundreds of thousands of positive reactions, and the top comments reveal that Obama has inspired supporters who continue to be emotionally moved by the present works of Obama, as well as the memories of his terms as president.

Related to Obama's conduct of character which many have viewed as excellent and inspired, Obama frequently invoked famous leaders and heroes of history in his social media who also transcend political and other identity boundaries. For instance, on July 18, 2019, Obama posted on his Facebook, “#MandelaDay reminds us that when things feel dark, confusing, or impossible—take a look back at his writings. There, we see how a belief in the dignity of every person can be made real, an unwavering hope to steel us along our own long walks toward something better.” Nelson Mandela indeed represented a figure of unity and intensive political engagement to promote a world where everyone is free to participate in politics and social life. Obama's statements on “the dignity of every person” and the “walks toward something better” likewise appeal to core American values that echo the Founding Father's intentions of a nation where

everyone can be free to pursue transcendence and happiness. Obama's citing of Mandela here is not reserved for one group to the exclusion of another, but rather is inclusive of all humanity.

Analyzing the rhetoric of Obama's speeches and his other spoken word discourse that can be found on his *Youtube* channel shows a heavily slanted strategy of diction based on the theme of unity among other themes. As Kevin Coe and Michael Reitzes discuss in a study of 183 speeches from Obama, unity as a thematic appeal appears frequently in Obama's rhetoric as signaled by the frequent usage of words such as "coalition," "reconciliation," "similarities," "together," and "unify." From a random sampling of Obama's speeches on his *Youtube* channel, such as "President Obama's Message for America's Students," these words signaling unity can be observed often several times. In this speech for America's students, Obama talks about how students must work together with their schools, families, and nation at large to fulfil their duties as honorable citizens. He also addresses the issue of bullying and encourages students to find what is similar among all of one's peers, which again is a plea for students to act like members of a civic society rather than as separate individuals with dissimilar interests. In speeches like this one as well as the other material observed in this paper, Obama frequently demonstrated how the theme of unity complements the theme of civic duty. Indeed, these themes are furthermore woven together in this speech to America's students when Obama discusses the purpose of a good education being to cultivate informed members of society so we may have a functional democracy.

President Obama emerged as a political leader in the United States during a pivotal time in which the country not only faced chaos from militaristic, financial, and other social issues, but also when the social media platforms of the internet were beginning to blossom. Social media was the perfect communications technology for Obama because his core values of unification and inspiring civic participation have best been expressed through the massively participatory and decentralized networks of the internet. Indeed, Obama's messages on unity and promoting civic discourse are themselves affirmed by his usage of social media. As discussed, Obama's social media content carries his characteristic rhetoric which not only includes the focus on the content of unity and civic discourse, but also his values of excellence. For Obama, a rhetoric for unity does not just mean using certain diction such as the words "together" and "unify" which were discussed above, but rather it also means bringing to bear a system of values and corresponding vision based on a collaborative effort among Americans to reach for the highest standards of excellence, both as individuals and as a country. These themes of unity and civic discourse can be seen in the above addressed *Youtube* videos of Obama, as well as in the content of his Facebook page.

As examined in "Obama and the Power of Social Media and Technology," a statistical analysis of Obama's social media presence tells the story of how he seized the presidency over his opponent Senator John McCain (Hughes et al. 18). By the election of 2008, Obama had four times as many Facebook supporters as McCain, 23 times as many Twitter supporters, and his videos on YouTube were seen by four times as many people as McCain's videos (Hughes et al. 16). During his campaigns and presidential terms,

Obama regularly broadcasted addresses through YouTube, and engaged with his younger, tech-savvy followers on their chosen sites such as Reddit, Instagram, and Twitter (Hughes et al. 4). Obama's context on social media is important to discern the full effects of his qualities of rhetorical mastery which will be discussed below.

Andrea Andrews' "A Textual Analysis of Barack Obama's Campaign Discourse Regarding His Race," analyzes Obama's rhetoric using nine of his most "noteworthy" speeches, ranging from 2004 to 2009. The nine speeches cover the period in which Obama rose to political prominence, as well as his first presidential campaign. In particular, Andrews focuses on the rhetorical language that Obama used regarding his race, and the inspirational impact that this rhetoric had on his audience. Andrews argues that Obama employs the six key rhetorical devices of "abstraction, democratic speech, conversational speech, valence messages, conciliatory messages and imagery" consistently throughout his work (7). Obama's messages consistently focused the idea of the United States as a "land of possibility," offering his own personal narrative as an example (Andrews 27).

Wolfgang Miedler, writing in *"Yes We Can": Barack Obama's Proverbial Rhetoric* makes a similar observation to Andrews, noting that Obama builds his rhetorical message around the idea that the "American Promise" is still alive and well in the twenty-first century. Obama's "promise for change" is punctuated through the use of "proverb and proverbial phrases," adding to both his rhetorical eloquence and also his approachability (vii). Miedler points out that the use of

proverbs dovetails with instances where the president employs his own brand of “formulaically expressed wisdom,” often creating pithy sound-bites that have the potential to become proverbs in their own right. Obama seldom repeats metaphors, proverbs, or proverbial statements verbatim; rather, he modifies them to make them his own for maximum impact and memorability. For example, in Obama’s First Inaugural Address, he uses the line, “Starting today, we must pick *ourselves* up, dust *ourselves* off, and begin again the work of remaking America” (emphasis mine). Obama makes use of two well-known phrases, *pick yourself up* and *dust yourself off*, and makes them more inclusive by replacing *yourself* with *ourselves*.²⁸

Similar to Miedler, Deborah F. Atwater in “The Rhetoric of Hope and the American Dream,” notes that Obama consistently emphasizes the language of prosperity and hope in his 2004 Keynote Democratic Convention Speech, as well as his autobiography, *The Audacity of Hope*. Obama makes historical references to the notion of the American Dream that has defined much of the United States’ national identity while also applying that same concept to the present. Atwater suggests that Obama often uses repetition to create a cadence that is almost lyrical in tone. For instance, in one short passage in his autobiography, Obama uses the word “hope” eight times. According to Atwater, the focus on “hope” throughout Obama’s speeches and writing is deliberately intended to unite the country and to suggest that Obama could draw the people together in a time of great political division (4).

²⁸ For more information on Obama’s use of proverbial based material see: Wolfgang Miedler’s “Yes We Can”: *Barack Obama’s Proverbial Rhetoric*. Peter Lang, Inc., 2009.

Obama's ability to inspire Americans is based on his rhetorical style which demonstrates the Stoic element of taste. He understands how and when to use language to its best advantage. In "The Oratory of Barack Obama," Robert Lehrman and Andrew S. Crines identify "three core elements" that characterize Obama's rhetorical style: rhetorical technique, oratorical technique, and strategy. The first element relates to "learned or practiced devices in the text," while the second points to Obama's "body language, vocal variety, and other elements of non-verbal communication," as well as Obama's use of Aristotelian rhetoric (Lehrman and Crines 262). The third element, strategy, examines the development of Obama's style over the course of his two presidential campaigns, as well as his deliberate use of language around the issue of race (Lehrman and Crines 262).

The acknowledgement of the racial tension dividing America is obvious in Obama's rhetoric. Robert Terrill, in an article titled "Unity and Duality in Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union,'" picks up on the theme of race and racial unification that other scholars have noted. Terrill argues that Obama draws on the notion of "double consciousness," a motif that has been consistently applied to the topic of race since the early twentieth century and the Harlem Renaissance literary movement. Obama presents himself as an embodied example of double consciousness, but then "invites his audience to share his doubled perspective, and finally models a doubled mode of speaking and acting that is captioned by the well-known maxim, the Golden Rule" (Terrill 363). The "doubling" of rhetoric is a

mirror for the unification that Obama intentionally references throughout his speeches.

A recent 2016 article by Amerrudin Manan et al., titled “Effective Public Speaking Skills: A Case Study of Obama’s Engaging Public Speaking Strategies,” focuses on Obama’s careful use of strategy in his speeches. The authors identify several key elements in Obama’s oratories that appear at first glance to be spontaneous, but in fact, reveal an element of strategy. These elements include the strategic use of humor, word choice, employment of “speech rhythm” and also the use of personal anecdotes to create a sense of vulnerability and approachability. Another common rhetorical element identified in this article is Obama’s careful placement of quotations from famous authors or statesmen: this is also consistent with the findings of Miedler (2009) regarding Obama’s use of proverbs and proverbial sayings and memorable lines.

Obama’s Background

Childhood

Barack Hussein Obama, Jr., was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii to American Stanley Ann Dunham and Barack Hussein Obama Sr., a man from Nyang'oma Kogelo, Kenya.²⁹ While Obama was still a baby, he and his mother moved to Illinois while his father finished his education at Harvard. However, shortly after, it was obvious that his father would not be returning to the family so

²⁹ For more information on Obama’s early years see Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*. Crown, 2007.

after a year, his mother decided to return to Hawaii and move in with her parents. In January, 1964, after Obama Sr. had returned to Kenya and married another woman, Ann filed for divorce. By the time Obama was six years old, his mother remarried and the family moved to Indonesia. Indonesia provided him with an unusual experience of full immersion into a culture different from that of the United States. Obama's exposure to a variety of cultures during his childhood and youth introduced an element of diversity that is unparalleled in the personal lives of previous American presidents. Joann Price notes Obama's statement regarding the influence of his upbringing across a range of different environments: "I was raised as an Indonesian child and a Hawaiian child and as a black child and as a white child...And so what I benefited from is a multiplicity of cultures that all fed me" (9). The attention to the concept of "multiplicity" and a focus on reconciliation between differing points of view is something that is expressed again and again in Obama's speeches. Obama often makes a point of capitalizing on the "unlikely" nature of his own journey to becoming the president of the most powerful nation in the world, holding himself up as an example to others (Price 9).

Obama has also written of his own personal struggles in coming to terms with his African American identity.³⁰ Raised in part by his white grandparents in Hawaii, he was forced to seek a notion of what it meant to be "a black man in America...beyond the given of my appearance, no one around me seemed to know

³⁰ *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, is a book of self-discovery as Obama traces his complex journey to adulthood as a bi-racial, multi-cultural man. *Dreams from My Father* takes a compelling and often poignant look at the insecurities and emotional struggles Obama faced while trying to find a sense of identity as a black man raised in a white culture.

exactly what it meant” (*Dreams from My Father* 76). When the content and delivery of Obama’s speeches are analyzed, it becomes clear that his careful, deliberate, lyrical style is the style of a man who has known personal adversity and has gone through a process of self-discovery and self-authorship. Robert Terrill points out that Obama’s rhetoric features the theme of “double consciousness” that marks the experience of many African Americans in navigating between personal identity and dominant cultural paradigms (363). Agnew argues that this shared sense of identity brings people together due to sympathy as part of *sensus communis*. She states “people are naturally drawn towards the orator whose language touches them, and the virtue of the orator only becomes real through devising language that appropriately meets the needs of the situation and audience” (Agnew 112). At the heart of Obama’s successful rhetoric is a deep understanding of the complexity and contradictions facing African Americans.

Education

While Obama’s personal history offers hints as to the multi-cultural and reconciliatory tone of his oratorical style, his formal education also had a discernible effect in shaping his rhetoric.

Obama first studied in Los Angeles at Occidental College for his freshman and sophomore years of college, then transferred to Columbia University in New York City to complete his undergraduate education. Michael Nelson writes that Obama “read deeply and widely about political and international affairs, graduating from Columbia with a political science major in 1983” (n.p.). Obama spent a year in

New York working as a researcher for a global business consulting firm, but soon took a position as a community organizer, working in Chicago's South Side. The area where Obama worked is predominantly poor and African American in terms of its population. David Mendell observes that the experience of working as a community organizer in Chicago left an indelible impact on Obama's character, giving him "his first deep immersion into the African American community he had longed to both understand and belong to" (64). While working as a community organizer, Obama was tasked with launching the Developing Communities Project, which involved pressuring Chicago's city hall government to improve the conditions of a run-down public housing project. During the process, Obama came face to face with the complexities of city bureaucracy, which often posed obstacles to success and efficiency. These encounters caused Obama to realize that better progress could be made if he were to obtain a law degree. Therefore, he enrolled in Harvard Law School in 1988. At Harvard Law School, Obama distinguished himself as an excellent student and graduated magna *cum laude*. He was also elected president of the *Harvard Law Review*, the first African American in history to hold that office. The way in which Obama successfully won the position in the *Harvard Law Review* is particularly relevant to the development of his later political and oratorical style. Obama won by "persuading the journal's outnumbered conservative staffers that he would treat their views fairly, which he is widely acknowledge to have done" (Nelson n.p.).

Obama's commitment to reconciliation, unification and treating opposition with fairness is a consistent attribute of his character and also of his speeches. The fact that Obama was the first African American in history to hold the office of president of the *Harvard Law Review* drew a lot of national and international attention, leading to the publication of his first book, *Dreams from My Father*. The book was primarily a memoir and focused largely on Obama's struggle to develop an identity "as a black man raised by whites in the absence of his African father" (Nelson n.p.). Again, it is evident that the theme of race is one that is profoundly personal for Barack Obama; it is not surprising, therefore, that it emerges so frequently in his oratorical content.

Compared to Lincoln, Obama's oft-compared predecessor of oratorical genius, Obama's education had a profound influence on his development and accomplishments. Richard N. Current notes in his *Britannica* article on Lincoln that Lincoln received very little if any formal education. However, Lincoln possessed an intense self-motivation and desire for knowledge, and so he taught himself enough as a child to become literate by the time he reached adulthood. As a young man, Lincoln again engaged in self-education through a study of law books, and mastered the field enough to pass the bar examination in 1836. The context of Obama and Lincoln was very different, as in today's world Obama's distinguished path of academia is much more typical for the highest achieving lawyers and politicians, but Lincoln's self-initiative is similar in scale to Obama's, as both outstanding orators

relied mostly upon their own efforts to rise out of mundane and unprivileged positions.

Obama's Historical and Political Context

Entry into Political Life

Obama's early political career was characterized by adversity and adaptability. He first ran for Senate office and won in 1996. Nelson describes Obama's early time in the Illinois state legislature as "frustrating," as the senate was controlled by Republicans. Many of Obama's Democratic colleagues harbored resentment against him due to "hardball" tactics that he used to defeat his opponent in his first Senate race. In keeping with his character, however, Obama's mode of adaptation consisted of building friendly personal relationships with legislators on both sides of the political aisle. In 2002, after the Democrats took control of the Illinois Senate, Obama took a leadership position on a range of issues, including children's rights, rights for the elderly, labor unions, and the elimination of poverty.

According to David Mendell, it is worth considering that Obama made at least one "serious misstep" in the earliest stages of his political career (82). Obama challenged U.S. Representative Bobby Rush in the 2000 primaries. Rush was a former leader of the Black Panthers and had been a member of Congress since 1992, while Obama was not as well known. Furthermore, Obama's white elite education at institutions like Harvard and Columbia worked against him and raised questions about his authenticity among the district's predominantly African American constituents. Obama ultimately lost to Rush by a 30%-point margin. The loss is

significant in reference to Obama's use of rhetoric and oratorical style because it highlights the position of tension that Obama has been forced to navigate between his white and black identities. In adopting an oratorical tone that often reflects the structure and cadence of famous African American preachers, including Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Obama sought to move away from any elitist stance towards an identity that is more authentically African American, while still retaining the eloquence and erudition attained in his formal education (Atwater 2).

Democratic Convention Keynote Address

The influence of Obama's education and personal background became clear in the acclaimed keynote address that he gave at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. According to Thomas J. Sugrue, the keynote address provided an opportunity for Obama to focus on the themes of unification and reconciliation that characterize most of his rhetoric: "There's not a liberal America and a conservative America...There's a United States of America. There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America. There's a United States of America" (Sugrue 53). It is in this speech that Obama first employed one of his most memorable and iconic phrases: "the audacity of hope." The phrase was borrowed from Obama's close friend and mentor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Wright was the minister at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, a large and influential black congregation, that Barack and Michelle Obama attended from 1988 onward. Wright's influence on Obama also extends to the cadences and tone of Obama's rhetoric.

Critics such as Robert Lehrman and Andrew Cline have observed that Obama's speech style, including the stately pace of delivery and the use of repetition, frequently resembles the sermons given by Wright and other prominent black spiritual leaders (282). In an article for online magazine, *The Guardian*, Charlotte Higgins observes that Obama's rhetoric "has been influenced by his time in the congregations of powerfully effective preachers" (n.p.). At the same time, Obama's careful and comparatively erudite style also mimics the oratory of famous Greek orators, specifically Cicero. Higgins points out that "Like Cicero, Obama is a lawyer. Like Cicero, Obama is a writer of enormous accomplishment...Like Cicero, Obama entered politics without family background...or a military record" (n.p.). Both Cicero and Obama set up what classical scholar Catherine Steel calls "a genealogy of forebears" that relates not to biology, but to intellect and oratory (as qtd in Higgins). For Obama, these forebears are Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr. In contrast to other modern presidents and presidential contenders, including Bill and Hillary Clinton, George W. Bush, and John McCain, Obama entered the political arena with little support from external frameworks. He found himself in a position where it was necessary to establish his position on the basis of something other than family connections, money, or military expertise; oratorical excellence became this foundation. Higgins, Steel and Andrea Andrews all note that Obama employs classic Aristotelian devices in his rhetoric, such as the use of "pathos, logos and ethos—emotion, argument and character"

(Higgins n.p.). Obama is particularly skilled in the use of ethos, as demonstrated in this passage from his Speech on Race at the National Constitution Center in 2008:

I am 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 lived in one of the world's poorest nations. (Remnick 523)

Obama appeals to ethos and emotion; he emphasizes his unique position as a black American who knows a multiplicity of worlds and therefore is well equipped to operate effectively within all of them.

Political Climate during Obama's 2008 Campaign

The political climate of 2004-2008—the time of President George W. Bush's second term and emergence of Obama as a viable political leader—was ideal for Obama's rhetorical platform. Indeed, as Marshall Ganz writes in "Organizing Obama: Campaign, Organizing, Movement," during Obama's campaign, "many Americans sensed a moral crisis in the land that was not only political" (5). The presidential candidates for the 2008 election had to figure out how to guide the country from the military embroilments in the Middle East that followed from the September 11th terrorist attacks of 2001. From the security issues posed by the threats of terrorism and from the high costs of the wars overseas, Obama faced a

nation with high tensions and growing divisiveness among racial and political groups (Ganz 6). In this context, Obama's appeals to the core values of Americans such as family, unity out of diversity, and collective perseverance to overcome challenges and reach further progress were timely and inspired reminders to many Americans about a hopeful path out of the confusion and darkness of the time (Ganz 6).

As Bettina Love and Brandelyn Tosolt discuss in "Reality or Rhetoric? Barack Obama and Post-Racial America," as a widely appealing African American candidate, Obama also carried a paramount importance in the racial context of the country. The United States, of course, carried several centuries of a slavery and racism-filled legacy to the social context of Obama's 2008 campaign and presidency. While some would claim that the twenty-first century was by all reasonable terms a "post-racial" society in that the Jim Crow laws no longer officially segregated and oppressed African Americans, the real story is that racial tensions remained, as well as ingrained structures of racism as seen by the "War on Drugs" and status of African Americans as the leading demographic of the United States' high prison population (Love and Tosolt 20). By many standards, the United States remained a racially stratified society after the turn of the twenty-first century, with geographical segregation remaining between Caucasians and African Americans, and with African Americans occupying lower economic strata much more often than Caucasians. Obama's emergence as a powerful political figure thus carried a paradigm-shifting importance that the United States had never seen before.

Indeed, Obama's rhetoric of hope was not only widely important for the collective cultural sentiments of the time thanks to 9/11 and the wars, but it also carried a more specific importance for African Americans as a symbol of liberation into a truly racially just era. The following analyses of Obama's speeches demonstrate the various critical contexts that were relevant in Obama's messages and the wide effectiveness of their influence.

Rhetorical Analysis of Obama's Speeches

Here we will examine the rhetorical virtues of Obama's following speeches: the "First Inaugural Address," the "Second Inaugural Address," and the "Crossing the Bridge" speech. These three speeches exemplify various Stoic and other rhetorical means of influence that were effective in connecting deeply to the collective philosophy of the United States and spirit of the American public. In his "First Inaugural Address," Obama invokes a cosmopolitan American civic religion which inspired a morally disillusioned and socially fragmented public. The "Second Inaugural Address" emphasizes Obama's power of uniting various groups of the public under the common mythos of the United States and demonstrates various Obama's various Stoic virtues as an orator. Last, Obama's "Crossing the Bridge" is important for our analysis because this speech again appeals to the United States history of fighting for freedom and overcoming challenges to reinforce the rhetoric of hope. All three of the speeches demonstrate Obama's effectiveness in appealing to the American public by creating a common historical mythology which becomes his foundation for hopeful and inspired messages.

First Inaugural Address

On January 9, 2009, history was made when the first African American stepped up to the podium to give his inaugural address as the forty-fourth President of the United States. President Obama's address set the stage for what David A. Frank calls a "cosmopolitan expression of American civil religion" which was necessary to combat the United States'

mass disillusionment in politics, pessimism in the face of economic, ecological, and security crises, and growing disunity and polarization among the public (605). Indeed, as Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* discusses, voter turnout dramatically declined from the 1960s to the late 20th century, and similar trends can be seen in all civic and community forms of involvement. Aware of the crisis impacting America, Obama stated:

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.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable, but no less profound, is a sapping of confidence across our land; a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights.

("Inaugural Address" para. 5)

The mortgage crisis of 2008, the legacies of the 2001 terrorist attacks, the wars in the Middle East combined with other economic and ecological issues had left the American public apprehensive about the future and demanding change. Expanding on the themes from his books, *Dreams from My Father* and *Audacity of Hope*, Obama's inaugural address builds on a foundational rhetoric of hope through perseverance, unity, and continuing the American tradition of progress toward a more ideal state. As discussed further below, Obama's rhetoric of hope, combined with his highly esteemed character and oratory prowess, also reflects certain Stoic rhetorical virtues related to *sensus communis* such as eloquence and propriety.

Rhetorical critic David Frank notes that one of President Obama's most impressive qualities as a statesman was to bridge the gap between opposite groups and ideas, and this can be seen in how his 2009 inaugural address evokes an American civic religion by connecting a secular and reason-based American civic life with inspiring religious values of transcendence and deep meaning. Indeed, as Eric Uslaner discusses in "Religion and Civic Engagement in Canada and the United States," countries like the United States have often approached the nation or civic society with religious values of sacrality, which then turn the country and symbols such as the flag as domains and objects calling for self-transcendent service or participation for the greater vision or community (239). In all of Obama's following speeches this theme of a civic religion is emphasized, but especially so in the "First Inaugural Address."

Near the beginning of the speech, Obama references the "words of Scripture," and mentions the "God-given promise that all are equal," and then weaves the religious

principles into a much more scientific and rational approach based on restoring “science to its rightful place” and utilizing the powers of technology to resolve the issues mentioned above (“Inaugural Address” para. 11). Obama thus effectively unites a “language of Being,” which is more often the domain of the Republican party’s focusing on tradition and eternal religious principles, with a “language of Becoming,” which has been seen more strongly in the Democratic party, focused upon advancement in technologies and social transformation through civil rights and other movements (Frank 605). Through this integrative approach, Obama set forth a vision intended to unify the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as both religious and secularly oriented people.

Obama’s skillfulness in connecting disparate groups and themes is part of his approach of a cosmopolitan American civic religion, which embodies qualities esteemed as Stoic virtues. For instance, a common Stoic agenda with regard to political public address upholds qualities such as how well the orator communicates ideas that inspire the public toward a virtuous and more harmoniously connected and communicative group.³¹ Thora Ilin Bayer argues Obama’s quality of unifying and inspiring people is encapsulated in a sense of “public spirit” which may be seen as a “universal sentiment upon which civil society itself depends, and thus a sentiment that cuts across the diversity of religions,

³¹ The masterful orator Cicero lays the foundation for two essential components in analyzing Obama’s rhetoric: 1) Form, and; 2) Intention. Cicero receives much attention today because of his effective form of rhetoric based on clearly announcing to the audience one’s agenda and then using certain tactics to win the audience to one’s side and motivate them toward a certain action. However, Cicero’s ideas on persuasive tactics of rhetoric have a deeper meaning based on a leader’s need to unify and inspire the public around a common set of views or agendas that reflected the truth or the good. Thus, Cicero’s strategies of persuasion, although potent in themselves, are more meaningful when we consider his interest in unifying the public.

moralties, and societies” (1141). Toward this end, Obama notes that the United States is a nation of “Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers,” and transcends the boundaries of his American audience to speak to the world at large, such as “people of poor nations” (“Inaugural Address” para. 22). This cosmopolitan approach not only transcends traditional dualisms between social, religious, national or other groups, but also inspires the individual toward responsibility for one’s community, both on the societal and global levels. In so doing, Obama is effective in combating the trend of political disillusionment among the American public. As discussed further below, the unifying approach of the cosmopolitan approach is also expressive of Stoic virtues in public address based on its capacity to inspire the public toward a more noble or moral approach to life.

A full rhetorical analysis of Obama’s speeches must also address Obama’s character which is reflected through his ideas and conduct and various rhetorical aspects of his address such his tone, delivery, and mannerisms. From the Stoic perspective, Obama successfully expresses an eloquence which is a virtue among oratorical leaders. For ancient Stoic leaders of rhetoric, eloquence—as defined as an inspired and persuasive style of oration—was equated with a rationally ordered mind as well as a capacity to effectively relay one’s position to one’s audience. Ancient Stoic orators such as Cicero were not impressed by one’s capacity to speak with persuasion but were more interested in the combination of the orator’s commitment to rational truth and one’s interest and ability to relay one’s message to the public. Obama would indeed satisfy the ancient Stoic orators on both counts.

As Bayer states, eloquence is important because it “allows the thinker to communicate his discoveries to an audience, to present wisdom in its proper form and to avoid simply the juggling of words” (1135). Obama has a powerful and novel vision based on a cosmopolitan civic religious approach, or, what can simply be called a rhetoric of hope. As a visionary in a leadership position, Obama’s eloquence in his inaugural address allows him to connect with the public and spread his vision, which is itself necessary to achieve his vision of greater unity and focus upon an inspiring future. Frank points out that Obama’s eloquence can be seen through a variety of rhetorical strategies, including his usage of short and powerful sentences, which is a strategy that he has applied in each of his successful books (604). Another facet of eloquence is seen in Obama’s usage of both mythic symbols that make his address feel like a prophetic sermon, as well as his rational and scientific language that grounds his vision in the practical here-and-now world. For instance, while Obama’s instances of practical, rational statements are numerous, one can spot more metaphorical language in the style of a preacher when Obama says, “In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship...let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come” (“Inaugural Address” para. 33).

Related to the eloquence of Obama’s speech is his broader expression of *sensus communis* in holding himself with a sense of respect and tact that inspire the esteemed virtues of the American public, connecting the present political moment with the spirit of tradition that weaves through the country’s past. Obama appears every bit the statesman in his inaugural speech as he stands poised and confident and speaks with a sense of clear

authority and purpose. From a Stoic perspective, this propriety of Obama's character is a great virtue because it inspires trust throughout the public as proper conduct or tastefulness is seen as inseparable from moral goodness (Bayer 1135). Cicero would agree that the power of eloquence in an orator is best used to inspire and unite the audience. The Stoic ideal of rhetoric here thus highlights the audience's trust in the orator as essential in unifying everyone to a common frame of meaning and call to action. Obama's speech is made effective by an alignment of all aspects of the speech—the ideas and overall vision, the imagery and themes, his vernacular and oratorical style, and in his character that both infuses and transcends the speech. If Obama appeared to be simply speaking rhetoric designed to catch keywords and manipulate the public into giving him support, the overall effect of his speech would likely lack its animated and inspiring force.

Related to Obama's propriety, his speech and character express a basic sense of kindness and wish for harmonious connectivity among all people. Stoics, referring to this kindness as an aspect of *sensus communis*, would say that it is a "shared sensibility upon which society and civility depend...more than a sentiment for successful relationships between individuals; it is the sentiment necessary for society itself to function" (Bayer 1139). The converse of this decency of character would be a pompousness and sense of superiority that leads to exclusion and divisiveness. Obama's vision is for a cosmopolitan civic world in which all people are inspired to contribute to the common good. He mentions several instances where people and institutions need to transform from self-interest to service to the public. As a leader, it is important that Obama himself represent

the very qualities of inclusive and kindness and commitment toward universal uplift that he speaks about in his public address. Indeed, Obama's rhetoric of hope depends upon this aspect of *sensus communis*.

The Second Inaugural Speech

President Obama's second inaugural speech, delivered January 21, 2013, continued and expanded upon some of the central themes of his first inaugural speech, including the focus on a cosmopolitan civil religious approach and integrating traditional conservative values with a more progressive and revolutionary vision. David A. Frank states, "The speech builds toward the theme of responsibility by using conciliant and congruent reasoning. Enacting the principles and patterns of reasoning and reflecting a cosmopolitan civil religion, Obama's inaugural is not built on a deduction but unfolds through juxtapositions of opposites leading to a new frame" (619). In this context, Obama is adamantly consistent throughout the speech in speaking to the American public as an inclusive "we." For instance, Obama states "we have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action" ("Second Inaugural" para. 9). He reminds his audience that no one single American can face modern challenges effectively, but rather many people will need to work together to end the wars in the Middle East and take care of the country's other needs such as training math and science teachers or building roads.

Similar to his 2009 speech, Obama intends to immediately bridge the gaps between adversarial groups. Indeed, also like his previous inaugural address, in 2013

Obama evokes his “rhetoric of hope” with the intention of unifying and advancing the country. To elaborate on the “rhetoric of hope,” Deborah F. Atwater defines it as “the use of symbols to get Americans to care about this country, to want to believe in this country, to regain hope and faith in this country, and to believe that we are more alike than we are different with a common destiny and a core set of values” (123). Like the 2009 inaugural address, Obama’s 2013 speech carries the Stoic rhetorical virtues based on carrying the country forward to a more unified and publicly engaged state.

One of the rhetorical strategies that Obama employs in his 2013 speech is what some call a mythic signature, and Frank argues this approach helps to further Obama’s goal of unifying the country under a common inspiring vision (609). Regarding myths, Frank suggests that they serve to “answer the basic questions of human life, setting forth the values in the form of sacred and transcendent stories that inform speech and induce action” (609). In the 2013 speech, Obama reasserts the philosophy of the United States’ history, quoting Thomas Jefferson’s famous passage from the *Declaration of Independence* regarding all men being created equal, and recounting a narrative of how the country has since developed, persevering through challenges and growing stronger with time. Obama states:

Each time we gather to inaugurate a President we bear witness to the enduring strength of our Constitution. We affirm the promise of our democracy. We recall that what binds this nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names. What makes us exceptional -- what makes us

American -- is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Today we continue a never-ending journey to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they’ve never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth. The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob. They gave to us a republic, a government of, and by, and for the people, entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed. (“Second Inaugural Address” para.1-2)

Obama’s opening statements sets a frame that includes everyone in the country regardless of political party affiliation, skin color, creeds, or ancestral origins. Obama takes these potential factors of differentiation and divisiveness and turns them in the strength of his message: He says they make us “exceptional.” Further, Obama declares that the essence of America is to create a unity out of those differences through the pursuit of lofty and higher ideals that transcend the smaller differences of identity. By citing the “Declaration of Independence,” Obama taps into this fervor of civic religiosity that runs through the United States culture and historical origins. Obama then masterfully unites the past with the present to invoke the very same nationalistic religiosity that the Founding Fathers

inspired. This usage of the mythic story of the United States allows Obama a context of hopeful and inspiring momentum toward greater progress and transcendence of challenges. By appealing to the history of the United States, Obama embraces the traditional and conservative values of the nation, just as he did in his first inaugural address. Obama then uses this narrative of progress to put forth an agenda that is in some ways more radical than his first inaugural address.

Two of the more radical dimensions of the 2013 speech include a mention of the need for gay rights, a topic that was absent from Obama's prior inaugural address, and a lengthier section on climate change as compared to his first speech. Obama says, "Our journey is not complete until gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law," and notes that climate change deniers are up against the "overwhelming judgment of science" ("Second Inaugural Address", para. 21). These progressive aspects indicate Obama's wider embrace of a civil rights spirit that inspires memories of radical moments and figures through history, as seen in Obama's citing of Seneca Falls, Selma, and Martin Luther King Jr. This progressive trend is animated by the prophetic revolutionary spirit seen in King. While there are many instances of this prophetic spirit in King's work, we can see it clearly through King's 1968 "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech.³² In this speech, King frequently frames God as having a hand in helping the oppressed fight for their liberation, such as when he says, "I've seen the promised land," and that "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," by

³² King's April 3, 1968 "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech was presented 24 hours before he was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Hotel by James Earl Ray.

which he refers to the belief of prophetic Christianity in which God is orchestrating the coming of a kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Indeed, some compare Obama and King in their rhetorical styles due to the common approach of fusing a religiously inspired vision of a harmonious and just world with grounded humanistic action for civil rights. This progressive path is a continuation of the cosmopolitan civil religious society which strongly defined his 2009 speech. The prophetic optimism of Christianity, which King so powerfully evoked, is used by Obama as well to address fundamental issues of society.

Applicable to Obama's 2013 speech are the same rhetorical virtues that apply to his 2009 inaugural address. Reflecting once more on the importance of rhetorical virtue, some, such as Michael J. Hogan, believe that "resurrecting the civic and ethical foundations of the rhetorical tradition...can recapture a spirit of public service and rededicate ourselves to making a difference in people's lives" (423). In 2013, Obama still faced an uninterested political public. As Obama states, the economy was improving, there was progress in getting troops out of the Afghanistan and Iraq, and there were other improvements, but though Obama does not mention this, the country still faced the political crisis of disengagement. As in 2009, Obama attempts to integrate a "civic virtue" that realigns the public with the orientation of caring for the other—including wider community, nature, and world. Obama states:

We have always understood that when times change, so must we; that fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges; that preserving our individual freedoms ultimately requires collective action. For the American people can no more meet the demands of today's world by acting alone than

American soldiers could have met the forces of fascism or communism with muskets and militias. (“Second Inaugural”, para. 9)

By adopting the philosophical narrative of the country’s history, Obama seeks to rekindle the revolutionary democratic spirit of the Founding Fathers. In the late eighteenth century, the Founding Fathers designed the inspiring framework and ideals of a democratic republic for the United States. The United States Constitution was a revolutionary document at the time because it broke the long historical trend of monarchy as the essential political and social mode of organization, and invited individualism as the center organizing principle of a democratic society. While the structure was imperfect at first, the Founding Fathers’ guiding values and philosophy were based on an inclusive civic society wherein through the will of each individual to enact his or her duty of engagement and contribution, a country of individuals would become a united democratic society.³³ Obama, in both his 2009 and 2013 addresses, seeks to stand as a virtuous rhetorical figure with the purpose of inspiring the public to reengage with the original spirit of the country.

³³ This study acknowledges the United States Constitution privileged white, male society. Originally, the Constitution granted the states the right to determine voter eligibility with state legislatures limiting suffrage to white male property owners. In the original Thirteen Colonies suffrage was often based upon religious tests as well as property qualification. In 1870, the 14th Amendment protected the voting rights of non-white and freed slave men and the 15th Amendment prohibited denying male citizens the right to vote based on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. However, following the Reconstruction era, various states used Jim Crow laws to deny the poor and black voters their rights. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed many of these discriminating voting practices. The 19th Amendment gave the right to vote to women. For more information see Lawrence Goldstone’s *On Account of Race: The Supreme Court, White Supremacy, and the Ravaging of African American Voting Rights*, Counter Point Publishing, 2020; Alexander Keyssar’s *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, Basic Books, 2009.

Obama's public addresses are powerful not only because he is a skilled speaker, but because he integrates and infuses different dimensions with a core set of laudable values. In other words, Obama himself embodies the values of the Founding Fathers such as integrity, devotion to public service, democracy, freedom, and the progress of the human endeavor. The cosmopolitan vision for the future is also aligned with Obama's embodiment of the United States' core values, and indeed, is an extension of the project established by the Founding Fathers in the eighteenth century. The vision for a future in which all people are harmoniously connected and cooperative in a progressive evolution of humanity is indeed an expansion of the ideals established in the eighteenth century, and also expressive of the Stoic virtues of politics and oration.

Crossing a Bridge

A study of Obama's 2015 speech in Selma, Alabama further shows how these aspects of Obama's values are unified and rooted in the history of the United States, and how they are representative of Stoic ideals. The Selma speech took place on the fiftieth anniversary of what is known as Bloody Sunday due to the violence inflicted upon 600 non-violent Civil Rights protestors by Alabama state troopers.³⁴ Similar to his inaugural addresses, Obama sets a historical context of meaning to describe the importance of Selma, noting that it deserves to be placed among "Concord and Lexington, Appomattox

³⁴ For more information on the civil rights march in Selma, Alabama see *From Selma to Montgomery: The Long March to Freedom*, Barbara Harris Comb, New York: Routledge, 2013; *Selma's Bloody Sunday: Protest, Voting Rights, and the Struggle for Racial Equality*." Robert A. Pratt, Baltimore: Hohn Hopkins University Press, 2017; Thomas R. Wagy, "Governor Leroy Collins of Florida and the Selma Crisis of 1965." *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol 57, no. 4, 1979.

and Gettysburg” (“Selma” para. 7).³⁵ In each of these places, Obama references the will of brave people who put their lives on the line to stand for higher causes of freedom and justice. In Concord and Lexington, it was the revolutionary pilgrims of New England whose defiance marked the official start of the revolutionary war, and Appomattox and Gettysburg represent the Union’s indomitable will to persevere through the Civil War to win the rights of equality and freedom for African Americans. Indeed, Obama uses the commemoration of Selma to invite the country to reflect upon the ideals of Dr. King along with others who worked for a “just America, a fair America, an inclusive America, a generous America” (“Selma” para. 11). Obama opens the speech by stating:

I have to imagine that when a younger John Lewis woke up that morning fifty years ago and made his way to Brown Chapel, heroics were not on his mind. A day like this was not on his mind. Young folks with bedrolls and backpacks were milling about... The air was thick with doubt, anticipation, and fear. They comforted themselves with the final verse of the final hymn they sung:

No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you;

Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you.

Then, his knapsack stocked with an apple, a toothbrush, a book on government – all you need for a night behind bars – John Lewis led them out of the church on a mission to change America. (“Selma” para. 1-4)

³⁵ All quotes from Obama’s “Crossing a Bridge” speech are accessed via <https://time.com/3736357/barack-obama-selma-speech-transcript/> and referred to as “Selma” in the text.

Obama grounds his argument in the Civil Rights movement and the dangers the participants faced as they marched against Jim Crow. Andre E. Johnson argues that by focusing on John Lewis and locating the speech in the past, Obama attempts to do two things. He states, “Not only does [Obama] want to acknowledge someone who was an important figure in the movement during the Civil Rights era and who was in attendance that day, but also, by speaking of the past, Obama wants to remind the audience of the present” (Johnson 180). Obama’s Selma speech expresses the cosmopolitan vision for a unified world, thus again demonstrating Obama’s power in aligning different aspects of his political and rhetorical approaches. Obama cites how many different and mostly persecuted people came together in Selma in 1965 to fight for a future in which everyone works together, and no one is marginalized or excluded. Obama uses the engaged revolutionary spirit of Selma to note that “Selma is not some outlier in the American experience” (“Selma” para. 24). Similarly, Obama’s speeches are not detached from the Western democratic political ideals that were put into institutional form in the eighteenth century.

Any political leader could offer rhetoric that identifies that importance of the Civil Rights Movement, but Obama’s statements on Selma undeniably reflect a more integrated approach that embodies the revolutionary narrative that inspired the formation of the United States. As such, Obama can use the events of Selma to add momentum to his vision for a more united future. Obama’s statements on how the ideas in the *Declaration of Independence*, such as “We the People...in order to form a more perfect union,” and “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” are

“not just words,” but rather a “living thing, a call to action” (“Selma” para. 26-27). This is an apt description of Obama’s rhetoric: Obama does not just speak words that sound convincing, but rather he embodies a mission of furthering democracy and the virtuous political character that Stoics valued in orators of their time. This type of political character inspires hope because the public senses the orator’s integrity and heartfelt commitment to the ideals that the orator espouses. Indeed, Obama demonstrates that there is an enduring history and essence to his message that is motivational and therefore transformative for the public, which thus presents the public with evidence for hope: The public can be hopeful from Obama’s message, because this message has inspired and transformed the country before.

Obama’s Selma speech also brings to light the relevance of Obama’s African American racial status in the pursuit of actualizing the original ideals of the United States. In rhetorical analysis of public address, every aspect of the orator’s character and context matters and Obama’s African American race is yet another aspect of Obama’s rhetorical situation that is in harmony with his rhetoric, values, and vision for a cosmopolitan future. Obama, as the first African American president in the history of the United States, overcame a long history of racial domination embedded in the core power relations of the United States. Theon E. Hill argues that, as an African American, Obama embodies the long struggle of one of the most oppressed groups in American history to earn the rights that were first granted to only white, property-owning men (135). Indeed, many African Americans found their beginning in the United States as enslaved people, and then faced subsequent racist oppression through Jim Crow laws and basic

circumstances of disenfranchisement as well as racist prejudices that carried on through the American culture. Obama's own character as an African American is directly involved when he speaks of a more inclusive United States. Thus, just as it was significant to Stoic rhetoricians that the orator embodies virtues of character that allowed one to formulate a progressive political vision and uplift society through bringing people together, it is significant that Obama's racial status reflects his vision for a more inclusive and just United States. Obama's vision for collective freedom, justice, democracy and inclusion is also the vision for his own racial liberation.

Obama's philosophical signature based on a cosmopolitan civic religious spirit inspired by Christian prophetism is also reflected in Selma, fittingly harmonizing with Dr. King's vision for a beloved community. As in Obama's inaugural addresses, Obama's Selma speech carries frequent references to a religious framework in which God inspires and infuses the world with the values of equality, freedom, justice, and so on. In the Selma speech Obama quotes a hymn that states "No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you," and other lines from Scripture such as "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" ("Selma" para. 14). Indeed, King's narrative, infused by a Christian theological position, was animated by the idea of a "heaven on Earth" which King defined as a beloved community (Hill 137). In King's cosmological frame, the beloved community was the inevitable result of the spirit of God further entering in the world, such to the extent that all people recognized each other as equal aspects of a spiritual reality. Obama's inaugural addresses as well as Selma speech, while not as

decidedly religious in terminology as King's speeches, express a similar theologically inspired vision of unity and inclusion among all people.

Both King and Obama synthesized civic and religious dimensions to motivate people to become publicly engaged for the betterment of all, and as in his inaugural addresses, the blending of religious elements within a wider civic context is strongly present in Obama's Selma speech. Obama integrates religious subtexts intricately in the Selma speech so that his transitions from religious terminology to civic discourse are seamless. For instance, Obama notes that the Civil Rights protestors had "faith in God—but also faith in America," and then identifies virtues of courage, perseverance, and patriotism as emerging from this faith ("Selma" para. 17). For the rest of the speech, when Obama speaks of "the American instinct" to cross the bridge of Selma and fight for greater freedom and equality, it is unclear and possibly irrelevant whether Obama defines that instinct in civic secular or religious terms, and thus Obama can put into practice the purpose of his vision—to unify all people toward the laudable expression of values to bring about a better world. Indeed, while Obama is open about the religious underpinnings of his civic approaches, most of his Selma speech is phrased in secular civic language, such as his emphasis on the importance of the word "We" in the context of "We The People," "We Shall Overcome," and "Yes We Can." In the Selma speech, as in his inaugural addresses, Obama's primary goals of unification shine through.

In review of Obama's 2009 and 2013 inaugural addresses and 2015 Selma speech, Obama's cosmopolitan civic religious approach is a prominent aspect of his rhetorical style; and in various ways, Obama's speeches embody Stoic rhetorical virtues. As

discussed above, Obama's rhetorical signature may be so effective and influential due to the harmony of different aspects of his speeches such as values, vision, and other aspects of his own character. It is appropriate that Obama's cosmopolitan approach is based on unity among so many potentially disparate dimensions, such as traditional and conservative views and more future-leaning progressive visions, as well as various groups of different races, religions, and other beliefs or orientations. Being grounded in this unitive approach, Obama is able to connect the secular and religious, past and future, and conservative and progressive groups within one common vision that is rooted in an inspiring framework that defined the Founding Fathers' works in the eighteenth century. Further, the fact that Obama himself embodies the strength of character that is valued in Stoic rhetoric adds further value to his speeches. The cosmopolitan civic religious vision is itself a virtue within Stoic rhetoric, because it lends toward a more democratic and enlightened society in which more people are engaged in productive work of bettering and furthering the project of humanity. Indeed, such a public-service and unifying approach is reflective of *sensus communis*, essentially, the common sense regarding the best for society. Obama's character embodies the virtues he advances in his speeches, as seen in his eloquence and propriety. Last, as discussed with regard to the Selma speech, Obama's status as an African American also reinforces his drive for equality, justice and unity among the country, since he himself represents the advancement of one of the most persecuted groups in American history.

Conclusion

As the first African American president in United States history, Obama is undoubtedly one of the most important figures of American history. However, independent of the racial strides of achievement in representing values of equality and opportunity, Obama will be remembered as one of the most effective rhetorical presidents. Indeed, the topic of Obama's rhetorical skillfulness is broad and rich, as discussed in the above passages. For instance, in his speeches Obama displays mastery in essential rhetorical devices (Andrews 120), designs a rhetorical message and vision that is based on hope and the American dream or "promise" (Miedler vii), imbues a secular format of politics and democracy with a spiritual value set, and in other ways demonstrates himself as a leader expressive of Stoic rhetorical virtues. Obama's skillfulness in rhetoric is unquestioned due to his display of various techniques, but what elevates Obama to an orator worthy of Stoic admiration is how his character, intent, and capacities combine to create a compelling message of hope and unity for his country.

Obama's personal history sheds light on how he developed his intellectual and ethical character that would be the source of his rhetoric of hope. Being African American by race and experiencing multiple cultural contexts of upbringing gave Obama a visceral understanding of the value of unity, diversity, and opportunity. Obama's speeches are not made of abstract value sets, but rather express the world that Obama knows through experience. Thus, Obama's alignment with the inspiring aspects of his speeches gives his rhetoric the inspired and authentic tone that Stoic rhetoricians seek. Coming from a mixed racial background of oppression and climbing the ladder of

opportunity to the highest rung imbued Obama with a real understanding of how community, freedom, democracy, and equality are among the most important priorities of a country. The fact that Obama touts these values is aligned with Obama's priorities as a leader, and thus again by Stoic rhetorical criteria, Obama was a highly esteemed candidate for office.

Obama's inaugural addresses as well as his "Crossing a Bridge" speech illustrate how Obama combined his authentic understanding and passion for hope, unity and other aspects of *sensus communis* with an extremely sophisticated and eloquent understanding of rhetoric. In short, with these and other speeches, Obama proves himself acutely aware of his rhetorical situation and how various rhetorical strategies are effective in reaching his audience and inspiring the country to pursue a valiant vision. Through tone, diction, pacing, lyricism, passion, and other rhetorical tools such as drawing upon proverbs and wise phrases, Obama transformed the ordinary political speech into a work of art reminiscent of a preacher's sermon that remains politically sound and relevant. Obama's insight, intelligence, values, real-life experience, and gifts of oration combine to make Obama one of the most eloquent and worthy rhetoricians in the field of rhetoric that the United States has ever seen.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Each of the presidents in this study used a rhetoric of hope designed to transcend differences and bring the country together during times of social stress. Abraham Lincoln had the difficult task of preserving the Union against the threat of civil revolution. Franklin D. Roosevelt pulled the country out of a debilitating depression with his New Deal Policies and encouraged America to join the fight to defend democracy around the world. Obama understood that America's diversity was one of its strongest assets and argued for a communal effort in the fight against racism and inequality. Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama use the Stoic ideas of *sensus communis*—common sense, taste, sympathy, and propriety—in their rhetoric to construct a republican collective identity across a diverse audience. Lois Agnew states, “The Stoic understanding of the relationship among language, ethics, and the community begins with the Stoics’ belief that virtue entails the recognition that individuals are naturally bound to other people and to the universe as a whole” (24). Stoicism argues that our actions must be considered in the framework of the greater good.

What Role Does Hope Play in Creating a Unifying Presidential Rhetoric?

Hope has been a central unifying value for the US ever since the country's beginnings. Indeed, the migration of various people to the Americas represents hope in action as millions have sought to find brighter opportunities than they had before. The United States' core value of hoping and even expecting that the future can and will be

better than the present can be seen throughout the nation's history. Similarly, the theme of unity around hope is omnipresent in the American ethos: The Founding Fathers' ideal was that the United States would be a place for everyone to unite democratically to maintain freedom and order for all people to pursue their hopes and dreams. It is no surprise then that hope and unity have especially been exhibited by the great rhetorical leaders of Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama. Each of these leaders used the rhetoric of hope during times of great challenges to unify the country and rally the public to work for an inspired vision for the future.

Lincoln's rhetoric often drew from the traditional United States cultural reservoirs of hope as a means of guiding the nation through the divisive tumult of the Civil War Era. For instance, as discussed above, Lincoln consistently invoked the Founding Fathers and the Constitution in his speeches as a means of inspiring those earliest American ideals of hope and unity. This was an integral means by which Lincoln attempted to unify the country while also standing firm to his anti-slavery position which itself inherently alienated the South. In Lincoln's "Cooper Union Address" and other speeches such as his inaugural addresses, Lincoln promotes a vision of a united country that had reconciled its grave differences to reunite around the core Constitutional values. Hope and unity are thus integrally related and essential to Lincoln's rhetoric.

Roosevelt likewise faced conditions of great challenge, though those conditions affected the country as a whole, and so Roosevelt's task of uniting the country required a different approach. Hopelessness was largely a collective experience for Americans during the Great Depression, and so Roosevelt's rhetoric was directed to everyone. In

Roosevelt's fireside chats, inaugural addresses, and other speaking opportunities, Roosevelt reassured the public and spoke of a vision for a better future. Roosevelt masterfully relayed in his messages that the country must be united if they were going to persevere through their economic issues, and later, the security issues of World War II. Like Lincoln, Roosevelt's rhetoric of hope and unity draws back to the cultural ethos of the United States by appealing to the nation's strength of endurance and aspirations for a better future. Like Lincoln, hope and unity are inseparable in Roosevelt's rhetoric.

Obama rhetorically displayed the theme of hope with a unifying intent with the tenacity of Lincoln or Roosevelt. Obama's situation was perhaps a balance of Lincoln's and Roosevelt's in that he both faced great economic and political challenges as well as great divisiveness between the left and right political groups of the country. Obama's rhetoric of hope, which has been analyzed and discussed at length as essential to his political presentation as seen in the very title of his second book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts of Reclaiming the American Dream*. Like Roosevelt and Lincoln—his predecessors of rhetorical mastery—Obama's rhetoric of hope often drew upon the cultural history and core ideals of the United States Founding Fathers. Further, Obama wielded this rhetoric as a means to unify the country around the philosophy of the “American Dream,” which again posits that with the shared acceptance and participation of democratic and transcendent ideals, then everyone can and might prosper.

How Does Understanding Stoicism's *Sensus Communis* Help Us Understand Goals of Presidential Rhetoric?

The Stoic meaning of *sensus communis* is seen in each of Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama's rhetoric as reflections of the harmony among their ideals, character, and eloquence. Indeed, *sensus communis* is important for the rhetorical goals of these presidents because its essential meaning relates to the ideal of a character that reflects the core values of unity and wisdom that are requisite for an authentic and compelling rhetoric of hope. *Sensus communis* confers a style of being wherein the leader personally embodies the cohesion between oneself and the public and possesses the high intellectual and moral qualities needed to express a worthwhile vision for the public. In short, without *sensus communis*, presidential rhetoric is empty and unconvincing toward the goals of inspiring hope and unity among the public.

Lincoln's mastery of rhetoric cannot be separated from his embodiment of *sensus communis* which is seen not only in his trademark nickname "Honest Abe," but also in the eloquence and wisdom of his speeches. Lincoln's rhetorical goals of unifying the country required sensitivity and care in acknowledging not only his vision, but the meaning of the situation of the various stakeholders such as his Southern opponents. *Sensus communis* appears throughout Lincoln's rhetoric, such as in the Gettysburg Address, which he intentionally structures with inclusive appeals of unity around the essential United States values. *Sensus communis* highlights the reputation of the orator's character as a key sign as to whether the public should invest trust in one's rhetoric. In

Lincoln's character and socially sensitive and wise rhetoric, *sensus communis* shines through as essential for his rhetorical success.

Roosevelt too possessed an eloquence of character and speech which proved that he understood the difficulties that faced the nation, and enabled him to inspire confidence in his vision and encouragement. For instance, Roosevelt's fireside chats were a brilliant way for him to connect directly with the public to show that he was with them and among them rather than far removed in an isolated tower of leadership. Earlier, this dissertation discussed the role of pathos in Roosevelt's speeches in connecting deeply with the public to gain trust regarding his political agenda, and this technique too speaks to his *sensus communis*. Roosevelt's strength of leadership and establishment of a shared ethos of suffering as well as hope for a better future are indicative of *sensus communis*. Indeed, Roosevelt possessed both the moral character as well as exemplary vision that enabled him to accomplish his goals of rhetoric, which were to unite and lift the United States out of the Great Depression.

Obama's display of *sensus communis* may be the most interesting of the three leaders reviewed, simply because he served as president in a time of such intense public spotlight and scrutiny. Indeed, Obama's eloquence and gratuitous appealing to unity were very much available to the public at large, which made his displays of *sensus communis* all the more important. Obama's rhetoric had long embodied the *sensus communis* ideals of the shared sensibility between himself and society and the themes of hope that have been discussed at length. In a time of perilous confusion and doubt, Obama's stable and reassuring presence and technical oratorical abilities, in conjuncture with his Stoic ideals

of unity and embodiment of a high moral character, demonstrate the value of *sensus communis* in achieving his rhetorical goals.

How Is “The Trope of Hope” An Extension or Alteration of Stoic Rhetoric?

For some, the theme of hope as discussed in the context of Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama may be an alternation of Stoic rhetorical ideals based on the contextual political agendas that defined each president’s rhetorical displays of hope. Indeed, if Stoic rhetoric is predicated on the pursuit of a higher order of rationality and potentials of virtues, hope may be something ancillary to these goals. However, while it is true that Stoic rhetoric breaks from sophist or other rhetorical pursuits of simply persuading an audience, the Stoic rhetorical tradition as exemplified in ancient political arenas expressed a role for the trope of hope. Namely, an ideal Stoic orator in the political realm such as Cicero was one who would use one’s virtuous character and consequential eloquence in rational and oratorical abilities to inspire unity among the public regarding an empowering agenda or vision. Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama’s rhetoric of hope should be seen as displays or examples of the Stoic rhetorical tradition because of their sincere embodiment of Stoic virtues in their visions and conduct of character.

The key element for Lincoln—as for Roosevelt and Obama as well—in making his rhetoric for hope relevant in the Stoic tradition is the authenticity of the rhetoric toward uniting and encouraging the nation toward a greater ethical ideal. Lincoln’s rhetoric consistently reflects his deepest values based on the inherent value of human life, and thus the need to abolish slavery. That Lincoln personally cared deeply for ideals of equality, human dignity, and democracy are unquestioned. Lincoln viewed slavery as

unjust while admitting that he was unsure how to resolve the issue. Lincoln's hope thus reflects the Stoic ideals of rhetoric because it is not empty or egotistical, but rather in pursuit of what the Stoics would identify as essential ethical virtues.

The same could be said about both Roosevelt and Obama's rhetoric of hope, which thus compels us to consider how the ideals of hope within the US itself reflect Stoic ideals. Roosevelt, Obama, and Lincoln alike consistently appeal to the ethical virtues at the core of the United States Constitution regarding opportunities to allow the greatest expression of individual and collective character, which connects with the Stoic tradition of aspiring toward excellence of character, as contained in the sense of eloquence. When Roosevelt, Obama, or Lincoln use their rhetoric to appeal to these essential virtues of the United States tradition, they are presenting a hopeful message to orient people around themes which are intrinsically hopeful, or, in other words, inspiring. It is no coincidence that the United States Constitution and Enlightenment values of modernity are built from the western tradition which stems back to the ancient Stoics. The drive for excellence of virtues and the most ideal united, democratic state wherein the leaders set the policies for the welfare of all represents hope. Stoic rhetoric was predicated on the idea that the leaders should possess those very virtuous traits and have the ideal vision for the society clearly and articulately defined. Thus, when Obama, Roosevelt, and Lincoln express their themes of hope, it is not a divergence from ancient Stoic rhetorical traditions, but rather an example of those values into the modern time.

How Does a Rhetoric of Hope Support Civil Discourse?

Understanding the rhetoric of hope of Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama again entails recognizing the political ideals and aims of the United States Constitution. The United States was founded as a country of hope for European colonists, and since then has remained an iconic nation of hope for other migrants from all over the world. The above leaders' usage of hopeful rhetoric is aligned with the United States' core values built around the opportunity for democracy to emerge and sustain itself. Of course, civil discourse is a necessary facet of democracy, so this element is essential within a rhetoric of hope that is rooted in the essential United States tradition. In fact, civil discourse and the rhetoric of hope that is intrinsic to the United States ideology are mutually reinforcing: Hope for a better, more unified, free, and democratic society with opportunities for all to thrive depends upon a strong civil discourse, and the discourse itself is intended to maintain this hopeful and inspired belief in the ideals of the country. This is why Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama so centrally emphasize the ideal of civil discourse in their rhetoric of hope.

Lincoln faced the most divisive era of United States history, and so his rhetoric of hope was especially intended to support a unified civil discourse. Recalling that the Stoic ideals of rhetoric are to establish a certain harmonious political and social order rooted in ethical virtues such as democracy, then it becomes very apparent that Lincoln uses his rhetoric of hope in this Stoic tradition rather than simply for adversarial ends. In other words, Lincoln's rhetoric is not intended to rally one side of the country to overcome and defeat the other, but rather to unify both sides on the common ideals of democracy so that

they could continue the tradition of civic discourse around the core themes of the United States Constitution. Thus, Lincoln's consistent appeals of unity and recalling the values of the United States Founding Fathers were, even in moments of outright civil war, always intended to bridge the gap between the two sides and reintegrate the country again around the ideals of civic discourse and a shared aspiration toward greater excellence.

Roosevelt advanced the ideal of civil discourse through his rhetoric of hope, and particularly through the medium of his messaging in his fireside chats. Roosevelt also faced a time of peril in the United States where the grave economic and security issues were creating fractures among the public due to people living in fear and desperation. Roosevelt's presence of speaking to the public via radio in his fireside chats was an excellent tactic designed to pull individuals and households into the fabric of democratic discourse. Through this medium of communication, Roosevelt demonstrates again the relation between the rhetoric of hope and the theme of unifying the country around democratic ideals that include the civil discourse. By appealing to the core values of the country, Roosevelt reinvigorated faith in the idea that civil discourse and other aspects of a united country could save the country from its unfortunate circumstances.

While Lincoln and Roosevelt both heavily framed their rhetorical discourses in united language such as "we," Obama's rhetoric is perhaps most frequently infused with unifying themes that appeal toward the civil discourse. Similar by degree to Lincoln's situation, Obama faced an increasingly polarized society in which communication was breaking down between sides of the political spectrum. Obama's rhetoric was consistently intended to appeal to the great American tradition of a powerful unity

emerging out of a diversity of people through the means of mutual respect, shared core values, and the willingness to maintain communication. Like Obama's great rhetorical predecessors of Roosevelt and Lincoln, Obama's rhetoric never frames the political situation in adversarial terms of opposition, but rather always attempts to bridge the gap between the left and right political groups, and appeal to the hope that can be realized through a cooperative and engaged effort to compromise and work together despite differences. Thus, Obama's rhetoric of hope very much also invoked the ideal of civil discourse.

Presidential Opposition

While this study acknowledges that the rhetorical abilities Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama were the primary focus, it also acknowledges that each of these presidents faced opposition during their tenure in office.

Lincoln faced immense criticism for his political course because he attempted to disrupt long-standing cultural and economic orders. Some of Lincoln's opponents insisted that his attempts to end slavery were major overstepping of Constitutional limits to his power (Williams 464). A comprehensive look at the conflicts and challenges arising from the Civil War would be an extensive project. In short, Geoffrey R Stone argues these issues include "explosive issues of race, slavery, and emancipation, the nation's first experience with conscription, the challenge of winning reelection," and then other issues in how to conduct the war and then reintegrate the southern states after the war (2). Lincoln's conflicts and controversies were, however, born from his struggle to reach a greater unification and realization of moral ideals for the United States.

As for Roosevelt, he as well faced great dissent among different groups of society because of his foreign policy decisions regarding World War II and his radical economic programs that responded to the Great Depression. As Richard Steele notes, there was widespread cynicism at home regarding the necessity of United States involvement with World War II (15). There were a lot of proponents of isolationism, and so Roosevelt had to make important leadership decisions about whether or not American engagement in World War II was truly necessary and good. Likewise, Daniel Gifford states that Roosevelt's "New Deal" economic plan featured many programs and policies that certain politicians and pundits of his time critically claimed were "socialistic" (300). Even more recently Roosevelt has faced criticism of the New Deal such as the following: "The Roosevelt administration possessed neither a clear understanding of the causes of the Depression, nor a coherent, stable, and workable scheme for ending it" (Gifford 299). However, like Lincoln, it can be argued that Roosevelt was making the best decisions of his discernment to resolve immensely complex issues such as the Nazi invasion of Europe and the Great Depression. However radical Roosevelt's actions were, they were in the interest of protecting the greatest civic good.

The criticisms that have been weighed against Obama are probably more complex than those levied against Lincoln or Roosevelt, perhaps because they come in a time of greater political confusion and disarray. Criticisms of Obama were continuous through his two terms in office, and the topic of complaints ranged from specific policy references such as his healthcare policies, to trivial factors such as his race (Pyszczynski et al. 863). As stated, we live in a complex modern age, as revealed by the fact that in

2009, 18% of political conservatives in New Jersey agreed that Obama may truly be the “Anti-Christ” figure of Biblical prophetic mythology (Pyszcznski et al. 863). However, as we have argued before, Obama has represented through the integrity of his character and conduct throughout his career that he actually embodies honorable Stoic virtues, and so his political agendas can only reasonably be reviewed as expressing his interest to best unify the country and promote civic virtues.

It is important to note that the criticisms to the former three leadership examples come from specific reference to their policies, and not their rhetorical abilities. The example of these leaders’ skillful handling of opposition demonstrates their commitment to the civic ideals of Stoicism. The Stoic leader is one who pursues controversial and sometimes unpopular policy directions because of a commitment to the ideal of the greatest civic good.

Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Obama combined the eloquence of clarity and coherence in speech, moral dignity in conduct of character and warmth of personality to advance their visions of civic unity during times of crisis. Lincoln navigated the United States through the civil war, Roosevelt faced the Great Depression and World War II, and Obama inherited military embroilments of the “War on Terror” as well as an economy coming off the biggest crash since 1929. Each of these orators would earn approval from Ancient Roman Stoics such as Cicero or Cato.

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