

Victory & Concession Speeches: Joe Biden Victory Speech Analysis

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Throughout history, people have been able to see the value of acknowledging candidates for their victory or loss. Without allowing candidates the right to express their feelings toward the results of their campaign the people who voted are not able to gain closure to the ultimate results. It is vital that individuals know that their candidates accepted their victory or loss, because if a candidate were to not accept their loss, this is where issues could arise in the democracy of a country. Victory and concession speeches are a form of respect towards the opposing candidate. Campaigns are meant to be regarded as a positive way to bring either new individuals into making important decisions for their country or keeping the same individual if they have demonstrated throughout their leadership that they are willing to continue progressing with their ideas in a positive aspect for all the people that they are representing. The 2022 presidential election was a major turning point in our democracy when the two people running for office, Donald Trump and Joe Biden, had such an uproar in their campaigns due to the division between the Republican and Democratic political parties. Even though this was a very close and divided election, Joe Biden was finally declared as the victor and 46th President of the United States. During President Joe Biden's speech, he demonstrated the six functions of victory speeches as well as brought in the major theme of unity for the people of the United States into his speech.

Lens Description**Themes of Victory and Defeat**

In a victory and concession speech there are six functions that all concession/victory speeches are supposed to address to analyze the speech. According to Ritter and Howel, these six functions include: "First, formal declaration of victory or defeat. Second, call for national unity. Third, tribute to American Democracy. Fourth, affirming the candidates campaign. Fifth, transformed roles for candidates. Sixth, thanking supporters" (Ritter, K., & Howell, B. 2001). All

of these functions are essential in a concession/victory speech in order to demonstrate that both of the candidates acknowledge their loss or victory to their supporters. The first function is meant for the candidate to publicly acknowledge their victory or defeat. The second function is for the citizens to be grateful for the goodness of the American Democracy that allows individuals to cast their votes and make their choice on who they want to represent their country. The victor also tends to state that no matter the results, they will be representing everyone even if they did or did not vote for them. Thirdly, when making a tribute to American Democracy, it is to acknowledge the democratic liberties that our government gives to the people and how it is ultimately up to the people on who is declared victorious. Fourth, it is vital that the candidates affirm their campaign whether it is to state that their energy and time invested was declared victorious by their win or even if the candidate did lose it still demonstrates a form of gratitude towards their campaign. The fifth function involves the winning candidate stating how things will be different now that their party is in a higher position while the losing candidate takes the role of the loyal opposition. Lastly, the sixth function is that the candidates thank everyone who supported them throughout their entire campaign in order to demonstrate their appreciation for these individuals. No matter what the results may have been, even in the case of a victory, they still need their supporters for re-election in the future while the candidate who was defeated still needs supporters in case they have plans for running again.

Influence of the Speaker

When preparing for a victory speech, it is essential for the candidate to be able to influence his audience on the points that this candidate is bringing to the table. The way a candidate may present themselves through the way they speak as well as how confident they prove to be while giving their speech demonstrates a lot for the viewers. Especially after a

victory, there is a lot of pressure to demonstrate that their winning the position was the best option and now it is time for the candidate to prove it. Willyard and Ritter state, “For the winner and his supporters there is euphoria, as near to ecstasy as politics can be” (Willyard, J., & Ritter, K. 2005). The excitement of winning the position can most definitely be full of thrill and nervousness due to this being a new beginning for the candidate in their new position as well as their party being full of joy due to them winning. The candidate at the point of winning also has much more of an influence on their supporters because they were able to prove that they can achieve a victory over another contender. A victory speech will create a significant influence on the people that the candidate is representing.

Enargeia and Energeia

A speech needs to be conveyed in a way in which the audience will feel like they are being transported into that speech so that they feel a rush of energy as the candidate speaks. This is where enargeia and energeia come in because they bring a vivid description of the language that helps the audience imagine in a different way. Devinney defines these two concepts, “Enargeia with an alpha or “a” is commonly translated as “vivid description” while energeia with an epsilon or “e” has to do with motion or activity” (DeVinney, D. J. 2021). If a candidate uses these two concepts throughout their speech they are able to bring more richness to their speech by allowing their listeners to feel as if they are also a part of the speech. It is much more than just a speech, it is a way of allowing listeners to follow the speech as if it was a movie in their heads. This is what makes a speech more intriguing to the audience and if a candidate is able to achieve this form of vivid description and motion then they will have achieved the ultimate goal for their speech.

Analysis

President Joe Biden gave his victory speech on November 7, 2020 (Phillips, A. 2020) and throughout the analysis of his political message to all of America, individuals will be able to see if President Joe Biden addressed the six essential functions that are vital for a victory speech. To begin, the first function is clearly addressed when President Biden stated, “Folks the people of this nation have spoken. They’ve delivered us a clear victory, a convincing victory, a victory for we, the people.” This quote clearly shows that Joe Biden was declared as the winner of the 2020 presidential election, while at the same time he is stating that this victory is not only for himself but for “the people” as well. By stating the victory right away at the beginning of his speech it represents the first function in a very accurate manner.

The second function, which is the call for national unity, is very important for this precise election. The reason why it was vital that Joe Biden added something about national unity is due to the tension and division that the 2020 Presidential Election brought to the people of the United States. President Biden stated, “I pledge to be a president who seeks not to divide but unify, who doesn’t see red states and blue states, only sees the United States.” This quote is clearly stating that President Biden does not see differences among the people of the United States and he wants everyone to be united as one in order to demonstrate the power of unity.

When it comes to the tribute to American Democracy, President Biden does not necessarily talk directly about how our voting system works and how it has been part of our democracy for all these years. Still, instead, he uses a very unique way of expressing this without necessarily using the same type of phrase that other candidates may use which becomes repetitive. President Biden stated, “You just heard from Kamala Harris, who makes history as the first woman, first Black woman, the first woman from South Asian descent, the first daughter of

immigrants ever elected to this country. Don't tell me it's not possible in the United States. It's long overdue." This quote is very important because it shows that American Democracy is making history by voting for the first-ever woman vice president and this is something that is very important for the United States. Throughout the years, people have only had the chance to vote for male leaders, and the fact that a woman was able to win demonstrates that voters want change. Voters are willing to take it to the polls to show what type of leadership they wish to see in the White House and it is all thanks to the American Democracy.

The fourth function is affirming the candidate's campaign and President Biden did this in a very direct way when giving his speech. He stated, "I'm proud of the campaign we built. I'm proud of the coalition we put together, the broadest and most diverse coalition in history." President Biden's campaign was truly built in one of the most diverse ways and throughout his speech, he thanked everyone who stood by his side throughout the entire campaign. One of the things that truly stood out while analyzing this speech was how President Biden acknowledged the African American Community because without them he would have never been able to win this election. It was all because of the extraordinary numbers of African-Americans who went out to vote, especially in the southern states, that made a significant difference in Biden's campaign.

Joe Biden winning the presidency as a democrat allowed the Democratic Party to be in a higher position due to winning the presidency compared to the other parties. With this comes function five which is the transformed roles for candidates which in his speech explains what changes or goals they will be implementing. President Biden stated, "On Monday, I will name a group of leading scientists and experts as transition advisers to help take the Biden-Harris covid plan and convert it into an action blueprint that will start on January the 20th, 2021." This is

particularly important to acknowledge because during this time the United States was going through a very divided and difficult time due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The fact that President Biden added this to his victory speech demonstrates that he wants to implement changes from the past presidency as quickly as he can in order to create the change that he believes will benefit all. This most definitely shows the transformation of power between republicans and democrats when it came to this precise election.

Lastly, there is the final function where the winning candidate must thank their supporters. President Biden did this in a particularly different way than expected. Many may expect the thank you's to be at the end, but he seemed to not say any form of thank you at the end. All of his thank you's were done at the beginning of his speech. President Biden stated, "And to my campaign team and all the volunteers and all who gave so much of themselves to make this moment possible. I owe you. I owe you. I owe you everything." While analyzing this part of the speech President Biden didn't specifically use the words "thank you". Although with the way he worded some phrases one can infer that's what he ultimately meant without saying the precise words.

Discussion

While reading this victory speech that was given by President Biden, there were a wide variety of ways that I felt he made this speech effective for the audience. One of the things that I really liked was how he created the ultimate theme of unity throughout his entire speech. During this campaign, there was a lot of division between parties as well as the issue of former President Trump not accepting that he had lost, which created issues for the president-elect when it came to the United States being unified as one. One of the quotes that stood out to me from the speech that truly spoke out on unity was when President Biden said, "It's time to put away the harsh rhetoric, lower the temperature, see each other again. Listen to each other again. And to make

progress, we have to stop treating our opponents as our enemies” (Phillips, A. 2020). There were plenty of times in the speech where there were small phrases that directed the audience toward unity in the United States and this is what made the speech so effective and respectful towards all individuals.

This speech was also a way for President Biden to bring the idea of enargeia and energia because the way he created such a vivid description with his words allowed the audience to be influenced by him as a speaker. This demonstrates that it is not only about the way that the speech is written, but also the way that the presenter gives the speech. Throughout his speech, there was a lot of eye contact as well as enthusiasm in the way he spoke confidently to the nation.

This was an ethical victory speech due to President Biden using all six of the functions and themes that Ritter and Howel mentioned were essential for a proper victory or concession speech. The only criticism that I do have for the sixth function, which was thanking supporters, was that I thought that President Biden could have gone a little more in-depth in thanking everyone, and in a way he just cut it short. Other than that, the other functions were used properly and ethically making his speech translucent on the theme of unity throughout the United States of America.

American democracy will continue to be demonstrated throughout the years as people continue to use their power of voting and voicing their opinions to create a nation that represents not one, but all of the individuals living in the United States today. This paper demonstrates the power that victory/concession speeches have on the audience that is listening and how impactful it is to vote for candidates that represent our nation as a whole.

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