

Naturalization Ceremony Speech at the National Archives

by President Barack Obama

Jad Vianu - 7/30/20 - SPE
100 - Professor Neubrand



Table of Contents

1. About The Speech

2. Hook

- a. Quote
- b. Analysis

3. Climax

- a. Quote
- b. Analysis

4. Resolution

- a. Quote
- b. Analysis

5. Delivery

6. Works Cited



About The Speech

President Obama delivered this speech during a Naturalization Ceremony at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., on December 15th, 2015. The purpose of the speech was to both formally welcome a group of newly-naturalized immigrants into the United States, and to persuade them to participate in the democratic system that they had just officially become a part of.



Hook

“...Today is not the final step in your journey. More than 60 years ago, at a ceremony like this one, Senator John F. Kennedy said, ‘No form of government requires more of its citizens than does the American democracy.’”

Analysis

Through his usage of a quote from the late President Kennedy, one of the most well known American presidents, President Obama accomplished two things.

First, he reminded his audience of the rich political history of the system they were now joining, and that they were now a part of something larger than themselves.

Secondly, by using a quote from a previous Naturalization Ceremony, Obama also reminded them of the generations of immigrants that had come before them and therefore of their responsibility to those that would follow them.

Additionally, Obama directly addressed his audience, using the word “**your**”, as opposed to speaking abstractly, which guaranteed his audience would have a personal stake in what he was about to say.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a woman in a crowd. She is holding a small flag with red and white stripes on a black pole in her right hand, and a white document or envelope in her left hand. She is wearing a gold watch and several rings. The background shows other people in a crowd, also slightly out of focus.

Climax

“And that work gives purpose to every generation. It belongs to me. It belongs to the judge. It belongs to you. It belongs to you, all of us, as citizens.”

Analysis

During this section, President Obama uses **repetition** to drive his point home. Three of the four sentences in this section begin with the same three words, “**it belongs to**”, the “**it**” being the responsibility shared by all American citizens to participate in our democracy.

Following those three words, Obama stated first that the responsibility sat with himself, as President, then a judge, and finally the audience, who were simply ordinary citizens. By using the tool of repetition, Obama sought to remove the barriers between the aforementioned powerful positions and the audience, giving them the confidence that, as American citizens, they could also affect change despite not occupying a similar position.

Also, he continued directly addressing the audience using inclusive language such as “**you**” and “**all of us**”, once again reminding them that he was speaking directly to them.



Resolution

“And to vote -- to not only exercise the rights that are now yours, but to stand up for the rights of others.”

Analysis

President Obama concludes this portion of the speech by reinforcing his two main points.

First, he reminds his audience that they are now officially American citizens. By mentioning the “rights” that are “**now [theirs]**”, Obama injects a final sense of both inclusion and patriotism.

Additionally, he mentions their newfound responsibility to “**stand up for the rights of others**” by voting. By mentioning “**others**”, Obama places the audience in a position of power, heightening their sense of responsibility and hopefully increasing the likelihood that they will go on to make their voices heard.

A photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a dark tie. He is pointing his right hand towards the right side of the frame. Behind him are several flags: the United States flag on the left, the Illinois state flag on the right, and a white flag with a red and blue emblem in the center. The background is a dark blue wall. A large black rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the word "Delivery" in white text.

Delivery

Analysis

Throughout the speech, President Obama employed several different techniques in his delivery.

To begin with, Obama heavily utilized tactical pauses, both during and after his sentences. The purpose of these pauses was to both project confidence and to ensure that the audience was able to fully absorb each point he made.

Another tactic he used was to use hand gestures to connect with the audience, including pointing directly towards them.

Finally, he used eye contact to engage with the audience as well, scanning the room several times throughout the duration of the speech.

Works Cited

Desk, WGN Radio Digital. "Audio: President Barack Obama Speaks at the University of Illinois." *WGN Radio 720 - Chicago's Very Own*, WGN Radio 720 - Chicago's Very Own, 7 Sept. 2018, wgnradio.com/news/audio-president-barack-obama-speaks-at-the-university-of-illinois/.

Garunay, Melanie. "President Obama: 'Immigrants and Refugees Revitalize and Renew America.'" *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, 16 Dec. 2015, obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2015/12/16/president-obama-welcomes-new-americans.

Obama, Barack Hussein. "Naturalization Ceremony Speech at the National Archives ." *Americanrhetoric.com*, 15 Dec. 2015, www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barackobama/barackobamanaturalizationnationalarchives.htm.

Press, The Associated. "Obama Attends Naturalization Ceremony." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 15 Dec. 2015, www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004094412/obama-attends-naturalization-ceremony.html.

Smith, David. "Obama Says US Is 'Born of Immigrants' in Speech at Citizenship Ceremony." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 15 Dec. 2015, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/15/obama-us-is-born-of-immigrants-speech-naturalisation-ceremony.