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Public Speaking 100

BMCC

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Lyndon Baines Johnson “*We Shall Overcome*” Speech

On March 15, 1965 Lyndon Baines Johnson speech “we shall overcome ” was presented to congress during a time when Black Americans couldn’t practice their rights as citizens. The purpose of the speech was to try and persuade congress to pass a law that would make it a crime to discriminate against Black Americans when they are voting. What made this speech so effective is he used personal stories, his credibility, and quotations to prove his points. He starts off his speech stating “I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy. I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause.” This indicates that not only was he addressing congress but the American people who were watching nationwide. He was informing them that we are all one despite the color of our skin or background. He described the traumatic events that happened in Selma, Alabama where men and women were brutally beaten for protesting and one person lost their life. He stated that “At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom.” To prove this point he used anaphora and analogies by referring to the violence that occurred in Selma, Alabama to Lexington and Concord as well as Appomattox. Johnson continues to oppose those who don't

support black voting rights by denouncing their “self satisfaction” but instead believe there's a chance that congress will pass the bill. He uses allusion in his statement “ to right wrong, to justice, to serve man” which refers to America principles and concepts that are right or wrong, justice and serving all. Repetition was also used throughout the speech to show his persistence and courage. The speech had a beginning, middle and end and was very clear.