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Reagan And Obama Comparison Analysis

Both presidents of different times took the stand to better the future. Ronald Reagan became the fortieth president of the United States, and he used his power and authority to help stop the Cold War between America and Russia. In nineteen-eighty-seven, Reagan went to Berlin to make a speech for the people, but also command directed towards the Soviet’s leaders. Reagan’s command was short and direct, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” (635). Ultimately, Reagan used his presidential power to help better the world and create a hopeful, everlasting peace. Barack Obama, in two-thousand-eight, before he became president or the democratic nominee, gave a speech in hopes of unification and, in turn, creating a stronger and better union to better the future lives of Americans. His speech focused on racial tension and the incomplete Constitution, but with unification, America can make America even better. Reagan’s “Remarks at Brandenberg Gate” and Obama’s “A More Perfect Union” present great use of Rhetoric; however, unlike Reagan, Obama was forced to risk his political life all on this one speech.

Reagan used logos to argue that freedom is crucial, and that the destruction of the Berlin Wall must occur if the world desires freedom. Reagan first claimed that only when a country has freedom, particularly economic freedom, can a country truly flourish and advance into the future. Reagan makes this argument because the evidence is the Soviet Union itself. Regan revealed that “in the communist world, we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards of health,” also stating that “but in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history” (635). Reagan praises Berlin because “from utter ruin, you Berliners have, in freedom, rebuilt a city that once again ranks as one of the greatest on Earth,” and the only reasonable conclusion to make for this level of difference between East and West Germany is the use of freedom (635). Reagan reasons that countries can only prosper when they have economic freedom, just like a journalist can only flourish if given the freedom of speech (635).

Reagan claims that only when the Berlin Wall is destroyed can peace and freedom rain throughout the world. The evidence Reagan provides is “as long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind,” meaning that worldwide freedom cannot exist if we continue to allow a country to be oppression by another country (634). Reagan argues that if the world allows one country to be oppressed, what will stop other countries from doing the same? Freedom will never exist if we allow Germany to be divided forever. Reagan reasons that “this wall will fall. For it cannot withstand faith; it cannot withstand truth. The wall cannot withstand freedom” (637). He reasons that freedom is the direct opponent of communism, and no matter how long it takes, freedom will always come out the victor, which responds to his earlier statement that “freedom replaces the ancient hatreds among the nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor” (635).

Reagan claimed that if the Soviets wished for freedom, they must destroy the wall. Reagan’s evidence is the common misconception of weapons, “but we must remember a crucial fact: East and West do not mistrust each other because we are armed; we are armed because we mistrust each other” (636). The reason America has weapons in Europe is because of this mistrust countries have towards each other; however, if this continues and every country continues to create more weapons to stop another war from breaking out, then will the Cold War ever end? If no country trusts each other, freedom between nations will never exist. Since America and Russia have been in a Cold War for decades, Reagan reasons that destroying the wall be the only way to prove they are committed to bringing freedom and peace to the East. “There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace… Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall” means that destroying the wall will cause a reaction across the world, and our world will be one step closer to worldwide peace (635).

Obama applied logos to argue that the United States must start looking ahead and uniting if we wish for America to advance into the future. Obama claims that America continues to be stuck on past injustice instead of problems affecting America right now. The evidence to support his claim is the fact that decades after racial equality, there is still a dispute between races today. Obama says, “That anger is not always productive; indeed, all too often it distracts attention from solving real problems…and prevents the African American from forging the alliance it needs to bring about real change” to tell America that these racial disputes do not help America, it continues to stop this nation from progressing. Until whites and blacks live together, there will continue to be segregation in this country (20). Another piece of evidence Obama gives is, “But we need to remind ourselves that so many of the disparities that exist in the African American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow” showing that people today are still focusing on problems from the past (19-20). Obama reasons that these racial disputes are from the anger of the people because he knows that any race can succeed in America. Obama says, “I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible” because it proves that race plays no part in one’s life (17).

Obama claims that the current issues in America can and will only be solved with unification. Obama’s evidence for this claim is that “segregated schools were, and are inferior schools; we still haven’t fixed them,” showing how, even after five decades, America still has not fixed racial segregation (20). Obama reasons that “…we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together...that we may not look the same and may not have come from the same place, but we all want to move in the same direction” (17). Obama believes unification will solve our problems because America can only change with the people’s will, and only when people want change and fight for change will change happen.

Obama claims his life proves America can and will change for the better. Obama’s evidence is the fact that he, a black man, can become the most powerful person in America. Obama says, “I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible,” to show that America has become a freer country (17). He also says, “ the document they produced was eventually signed but ultimately unfinished” and later says, “a Constitution that promised its people liberty, and justice, and a union that could be and should be perfected over time”  because Obama believes that the original Constitution was like a first draft and only can the people turn this draft into a perfect piece of writing (17). Obama reasons that since the unification of Americans abolished slavery, it stands to reason that unification allows Americans to better the Constitution (17).

Reagan and Obama both used real proof to support their claims. However, Obama proves his claim because one proof is himself. Obama argued that only when the people unify can change happen, and Obama claimed that because a black man can become president proves that change can happen in America. He shares that people of color gained their rights because of the unification of America and the risks they took to fight for their ideals and the ideals of the Constitution. However, it is arguable that the Civil War was when America was most divided and not unified. America was split between the North and the South states, and each side fought for what it thought was right. Obama risked claiming this because he wants to show how great America can become if we truly wish it to happen.

Reagan adequately used ethos to give hope to every country around the world. Reagan had inherent authority because he was the president of the United States and was in his second term, allowing people to know his goal and how he fixed issues in America and worldwide. In Berlin, Reagan had invested authority because “President John F. Kennedy visited Berlin, speaking to the people of this city and the world at the city hall. Well, since then, two other presidents have come, each in his turn, to Berlin “giving Reagan the respect from the previous presidents and helps Reagan give hope to Berlin because Berliners know how life-changing America’s help can be (634).

Reagan shows moral authority by saying, “Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatred among the nations with comity and peace. freedom is the victor” because Reagan argues that freedom should be given to everyone, not just America (635). He shows goodwill by saying, “I come here today because wherever I go, whatever I do ‘ich hab noch einen koffer in Berlin.’ [I still have a suitcase in Berlin]” which means that Reagan sees Berlin as a second home, that wherever his and whatever his doing Berlin will also be important to him (634). He creates common ground by making parts of his speech in German because he wishes his audience to show that he is a part of Germany and will never abandon them. His use of self-presentation in his speech allows his audience to feel hopeful while acting as a command to those who oppress others.

Obama effectively used ethos to argue that America can and will change for the better. Unlike Reagan, Obama’s inherent authority and invested authority are from his senator and presidential candidate positions. Reagan was already a president for six years before he gave his speech, while Obama only had the credibility of being appointed a senator. Obama shows moral authority when saying, “The document they produced was eventually signed but ultimately unfinished… and to leave any future resolution to future generations” because he believes that current Americans have the right to change the Constitution, like Reagan’s belief that we all have the right to freedom, the right to change our future (17). Obama shows goodwill by saying, “Problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all,” showing that he knows the future could be terrifying to think about. However, it is not just one person or group; all Americans are afraid (18). Obama has the same commitment to America that Reagan had to Berlin; both want their audience’s future to be the greatest.

Since Obama is not speaking to a different country, like Reagan, he can establish common ground by sharing his life. Obama shares that, growing up, he was not rich but came from a low-income family. However, he could go to better schools in America and get more opportunities than any other country could give him. Obama’s self-presentation leaves his audience with the idea of unification and hope. Obama focused on race and slavery because slavery was abolished with unification, and he wants his audience to remember that fact. He shares his own family’s history to show that race holds no value in America, only people stuck with past anger. Obama and Reagan’s self-presentations leave their audience hopeful because they know that the future can only improve if we try.

Reagan appeals to pathos by giving his audience fear but simultaneously showing hope for change. Reagan’s word choice to relate to the Berlin wall as a scar, “forced to look upon a scar,” gives the wall the meaning of a typical wound, and the only way for Germany to heal is to remove the wall (634). Another word choice Reagan used was to withstand, “It cannot withstand faith. It cannot withstand truth. It cannot withstand freedom”, showing weakness towards the wall of tyranny (637). Reagan shares that “where four decades ago there was rubble, today in West Berlin there is the greatest output of any city in Germany… you Berliners have, in freedom, rebuilt a city…” to give his audience a vivid example of what freedom can do to an oppressed country (635). Reagan used the sensory detail seek when demanding the wall be torn down because the word seek shows that Reagan and the world desire to see the wall be torn down and Germany be made one country again. Reagan shared that “In the communist world… declining standard of health, even the want of the most basic kind” as a scare tactic because he hoped countries would move towards freedom, not communism.

Obama appeals to ethos by giving urgency to solve current problems to better America’s future.  Obama used the choice of words “we the people” to show closeness, and he also used the word choice of anger to show the problem of letting it continue (17). One vivid example Obama gives is himself. Obama’s life gives hope for change in the black community. Instead of using the past, like Reagan, Obama decided to share a present vivid story of Reverend Wright to tell America: “Reverend Wright’s comments were not only wrong but diverse, diverse at a time when we need unity; racially charged at a time when we need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems” (18).

Obama used two different sensory details for sound, voice, and talk. He used voice when talking about the anger of the black community, “That anger may not get expressed in public…But it does find voice in the barbershop…kitchen table…church” and used talk when arguing for wanted change now, “at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, ‘Not this time.’ This time we want to talk” (20,22). He changed voice to talk because voice to Obama means talking internally, keeping your thoughts to yourself, while talk means speaking to others. Like Reagan, Obama said, “And if we walk away now…we will never be able to come together and solve challenges…” as a scare tactic because he wants to push Americans farther from racial injustice and towards the real issues America (19).

Both Reagan and Obama delivered powerful speeches that used rhetoric to inspire hope and push for change. Reagan focused on global freedom, and Obama addressed unity and racial change within America. Reagan wished to give hope about the future to every country, while Obama gave hope for America’s future. Obama asked for urgency, and Reagan promised a better future. Ultimately, both speeches focused on improving the country’s audience, but Reagan spoke to improve every country.

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RESUBMISSION:

I asked you if it was okay to resubmit with the works sited page because I forgot to include it when I turned it in Sunday night