

# **The Language of Power: How Political Leaders Use Symbolic Action to Build Authority**

## **Gestures and Rituals:**

Political leaders often use gestures to send a message. For example, a handshake between two political opponents can show unity or a willingness to cooperate. Even how they stand or where they are, like in front of important national monuments, can symbolize patriotism or show they are in a position of power.

## **Language and Speeches:**

The words leaders choose can have a lot of meaning. Their speeches often refer to things that bring people together, like shared history or values. When leaders use words like "we," it can make people feel included. On the other hand, it can also be used to separate groups by implying who belongs and who doesn't.

## **Barack Speech:**

One example I could use is Barack Obama's "Yes We Can" speech from his 2008 campaign. This speech was powerful because it represented hope, unity, and collective effort. The phrase "Yes We Can" became more than just a slogan—it brought people together and spoke to the aspirations of millions. By using this simple yet meaningful phrase, Obama showed that change was possible through unity, solidifying his role as a leader who could bring people together for a common goal.

## **Mandela Speech:**

Another example is Nelson Mandela's speech when he was released from prison. His speech was not just about his freedom, but about forgiveness and moving forward as a nation. It symbolized hope and healing, not just for South Africa but for people around the world. Mandela's words turned him into a global symbol of peace and reconciliation, showing how powerful symbolic language can be in shaping a leader's authority and message.