

Nishna Aerabati

Mr. Dean

Literary Explorations I

12 November 2021

Rhetoric use in Zell Miller's 2004 Republican National Convention Address

Zell Miller, a Democrat, during the Republican 2004 National Convention Address gives a speech advocating for George W Bush to be in office rather than the other candidate Senator John Kerry. The country during this time is in the midst of the war on Afghanistan and the Middle East. Terrorists are what was constantly in every media and the hot issue of the time, and with the word, terrorist came fear in Americans' hearts especially only three years after 9/11. This election affects the life of not just the current Americans in 2004 but millions of people in the Middle East, so this election was critical in the time period and addresses these fears of the typical American at the time. Zell Miller advocates for George W. Bush's aggressive and action-based plan for handling the situation in the Middle East. Bombings and missiles are not an easy thing to advocate for but speeches like Zell Miller represent the importance of the power of persuasion good speeches can convey. **Zell Miller successfully advocated that George W Bush should be in office because he reasons how Senator Kerry is unfit for president, and he persuaded his audience by using repetition to emphasize statements that evoke dislike towards the Democratic party and connect himself to his audience.**

Repetition is a tool that he used multiple times to emphasize statements he wants his audience to remember. These statements Miller repeats invoke emotions and degraded his

audience's view of the other party by attacking how the Democratic party views soldiers. Miller does this by saying,

“today's Democratic leaders see America as an occupier, not a liberator. And nothing makes this Marine madder than someone calling American troops occupiers rather than liberators... Tell that to the half a billion men, women, and children who are free today from Poland to Siberia, because Ronald Reagan rebuilt a military of liberators, not occupiers”.

This not only makes the Democratic appear unpatriotic because according to Miller, they view soldiers as occupiers, but creates an image of how the Democratic party as a whole disagrees with the patriotic views that millions of Americans have. The repetition allows this point to stick in the audience's mind. In this quote, Miller claims that the positive symbolism of a soldier is synonymous with those views of Republican Americans because of the ideas that soldiers symbolize like freedom and strength is upheld by the Republican candidate, George W. Bush, wanting to invade Afghanistan with soldiers. Miller is able to back up this statement by being a Democrat because this conflict of interest in the Democratic party was so pertinent that it caused him to advocate for a Republican. To the audience, this makes Miller's statements, about his own party even more credible. Miller uses repetition again by saying,

“For it has been said so truthfully that it is the soldier, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the agitator, who has given us the freedom to protest. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, serves beneath the flag, whose coffin is draped by the flag who gives that protester the freedom he abuses to burn that flag”.

This also again emphasized how the Democratic party does not agree with his audience's patriotic views of soldiers because Miller again uses repetition of the phrase "it is the soldier".

This repetition adds to the statements made by Miller before and in the quote, he credits soldiers for the freedoms that every person in the US enjoys. In contrast, this villainizes the Democratic party in viewing the soldiers in the negative connotation of occupiers while Miller repeatedly states that the freedoms soldiers have won make soldiers liberators. The audience after hearing Miller's repetition connects the Democratic's party plan to not invade the Middle East with the Democratic party not viewing the soldier as a positive figure, which caused many people to vote for Bush instead. Similarly, Miller not only uses repetition to degrade the other party but also to help his audience connect with himself.

Miller used more repetition in his speech to make himself seem relatable to his listeners. In the beginning portion of the speech, Miller begins with,

"Like you, I think of their future, the promises and the perils they will face... And like you, I ask which leader is it today that has the vision, the willpower, and, yes, the backbone to best protect my family?".

He used in this passage repetition of the words "Like you" in his language to make his audience feel like they can relate to and understand Miller. This allows Miller to speak as he is part of the millions of Americans who were choosing the candidate they think is best for their families and livelihoods rather than a seasoned politician. Also, his repetition of "like you" allows him to appeal and relate to his audience rather than intimidate them. Miller talks about how he thinks of his family, which is identical to his audience at the time deciding what candidate would be best. This causes the audience to see the emotions of worry and fear that Americans felt when

choosing which candidate would be best for themselves reflected in Miller. This connection Miller built by talking about his family and his use of repetition makes his speech more convincing to his audience. However, Miller does not just connect himself with the audience, but he also addresses, the opposing candidate, Senator Kerry's decisions.

Zell Miller's speech reasoned and ostracized Senator Kerry's decisions and made Kerry appear as an unfit candidate for the presidency. Miller throughout his speech advocates for George W. Bush and Bush's plan to use its soldiers and military to further the War on Terror by saying, "But Americans need to know the facts: The B-1 bomber, that Senator Kerry opposed, dropped 40% of the bombs in the first six months of [Operation] Enduring Freedom." Furthermore, Miller goes on to mention more examples of proposals for more weapons and more soldiers that Kerry voted against and provide historical statements about how the same weapons have taken out past threats like the Taliban, bombs, USSR, and even missile strikes. The historical evidence used by Miller strengthens his argument and helps convince the audience that more weapons are needed. However, this display of facts by Miller when talking about the historical impacts of nuclear weapons is an example of cherry-picking. Miller mentions the wars that the weapons were used in and won yet he never mentions the catastrophic losses of lives caused by these weapons, so his audience only hears facts about the benefits of weapons in wars and feels emotions of fear because Miller emphasizes that Kerry chooses not to vote against weapons. Elements of fear also are also used in this part of Miller's speech because Miller talks about bomb threats and terrorists which immediately invoke fear, but Miller built on this natural fear by talking about Kerry is not combating this with any weapons. This implies that if Kerry is in charge he will allow more threats and acts of terrorism to occur makes Kerry appear unwilling

to protect the US against terrorists, which is already a major point of fear in America during the War on Afghanistan. This causes some of the strongest emotional motivators like panic and fear to become associated with Kerry in his audience's perspective. Later Miller adds,

“Senator Kerry has made it clear that he would use military force only if approved by the United Nations. Kerry would let Paris decide when America needs defending.”

which provides an example of Kerry's actions and ostracizes him by reasoning that Kerry is allowing other countries to decide for the US. This implication invokes more fear but this time the audience perceives that if Kerry is in power the freedom of the US to make its own decisions would be repressed. To his audience, Miller successfully reasons and portrays an image of Kerry as unreasonable and weak.

Miller plays a key role in George W Bush's campaign and gives a speech at the 2004 National Republican National Address. Miller throughout his speech connects himself to his audience through repetition and degraded the democratic party with repetition in his language. He also criticized Senator Kerry's decisions, and evoked fear towards Kerry being in office. Furthermore, Miller successfully makes a very aggressive and violent plan seem not only reasonable but needed. Cleverly, Miller plays off the patriotism, anger, and fear about the War on Terror in this time period to rally people into believing that Bush's plan is necessary. As controversial as the effects of this speech and the ideas it advocates, history clearly demonstrates how smart speeches can lead to millions of lives being uplifted or obliterated.

Works Cited

Miller, Zell. "Chance for Peace." 19 Nov. 2021. *American Rhetoric*, <https://www.Americanrhetoric.com/speeches/convention2004/zellmiller2004rnc.htm>. Transcript.

Changes Memo

Nishna Aerabati

I removed the sixth paragraph in my previous version of the essay and I changed the quotes that were longer pieces of text to block quotes. I changed my essay to focus on two main ideas, how repetition portrays emotional statements in the essay and how Miller portrayed Senator Kerry as an unfit candidate for president through him providing evidence and reasoning in his speech, this change was especially impactful in my thesis statement. That change in my thesis also caused me to remove my fourth paragraph and just expand my analysis of the two quotes in my first paragraph about repetition. I also decided to add to my paragraph about how Miller used repetition to relate himself to his audience by explaining the messages conveyed by Miller in that quote and how the audiences perceived them. I elaborated on the analysis of my first quote in the first paragraph by talking about the symbolism of soldiers amongst the Republican party. I integrated Miller's use of logos into my fourth paragraph by explaining the facts and evidence Miller provides to degrade Kerry and I also added Miller's logical fallacy in his reasoning in this paragraph I also changed some MLA formatting issues in my work cited and headings.