

Donald Trump vs. Barack Obama

President Barack Obama served as the 44th president of the United States (2009-2017) and was the first African American to hold the presidency. Obama was best classified as a member of the Democratic Party and previously held office in Illinois in the U.S. Senate (2005-2008). Obama's presidency had noticeable involvement in the Afghanistan War, Iraq War, Strategic Arms Reduction Talk, Syrian Civil War, Paris Agreement, Patient Protection Affordable Care Act, and USA Patriot Act. Donald Trump served as the 45th president of the United States (2017-2021). Noticeably was a real-estate developer and businessman who owned and managed his name to many hotels, casinos, and golf courses. Trump was best classified as a member of the Republican Party and had roles in the Ukraine scandal, the U.S. presidential election of 2020, and the U.S. presidential election of 2016. Despite having similar verbiage in both presidents' inauguration and acceptance speeches, Obama and Trump had different political beliefs concerning the U.S. and had different diction levels and uses of repetition. Obama spoke at the Democratic National Convention in Denver addressing accepting the Presidential nomination,¹ "The American Promise" on August 28, 2011. The main focus of Obama's speech is the American promise, the language employed by Obama was emotional and powerful. Obama began his speech by accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency of the U.S., followed by his personal anecdote of introducing himself as a man of American values who has lived out the American

¹ Obama, Barack. "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: 'The American Promise.'" *Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: "The American Promise"* / *The American Presidency Project*. Last modified August 28, 2008. Accessed April 29, 2023. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-denver>.

dream; he mentions his parents who came from modest roots and aspired for success for their son in the land of opportunity. He then first introduced his new theme of an American promise, a word that doubled in meaning as both opportunity and obligation. Claiming the American promise has often disappeared but has always been revived by hardworking men and women willingly fighting for the American dream. Obama then tries to define the American promise, talking about freedom and respecting others; then focusing on innovations and jobs, and finally how both the American people and government must work together to help the country flourish. Defining the American promise as an opportunity for every man and woman, from hard work and sacrifice can pursue their dream; also, that each individual is free, the freedom to create their own life. As well as, claiming the American promise to be the economic market rewarding drive and innovation and generating growth; American businesses protecting their workers, generating new jobs, and following rules placed. Meanwhile, Obama moves on to address his opposition to John McCain, claiming his position on most issues is incorrect because ²“John McCain doesn’t get it.” Claiming McCain is repetitive in his support of the old discredited Republican philosophy over the past two decades; giving more to those with the most and hoping that prosperity trickles down to everyone else; trickle-down economics. However, Obama uses McCain to call to action on the American people, ³“it’s time for us to change America.” Obama

² Obama, Barack. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: ‘The American Promise.’” *Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: "The American Promise" / The American Presidency Project*. Last modified August 28, 2008. Accessed April 29, 2023. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-denver>.

³ Obama, Barack. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: ‘The American Promise.’” *Address Accepting the Presidential*

moved on to cover many issues America was facing at the time at both home and abroad, he laid out the foundation of his economic agenda, his tax policy, energy, education, health care, bankruptcy reform to preserve worker's pensions, Social Security, and equal pay for equal work. Obama planned to cut taxes for 95% of working families, covering the lack of revenue from taxes by closing corporate loopholes and purging federal budgets of outdated and inefficient programs. Claiming Democrats have a different way of measuring success in America, not when the wealthy minority grows, or not by the profits of the Fortune 500, but by when an average individual has the opportunity to venture into a business idea. As well as, when a waitress can take the day off; specifically claiming when the economy honors the dignity of work. Many classified his speech as

"workmanlike," including himself as he appealed to the average American citizen. Much of Obama's speech incorporated direct and indirect argumentation; in which the speaker openly states his arguments. This is evident in one of the last paragraphs of his speech, where Obama argues the

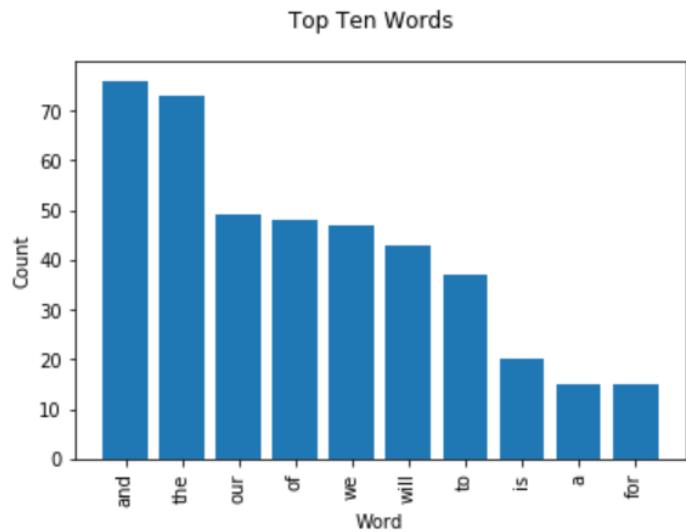


Figure 1. Bar graph of Donald Trump's top 10 words during his inaugural address on January 20, 2017, at the Capitol in Washington.

ideology that the U.S. must keep moving forward.⁴ “American we cannot turn back. Not with so much work to be done. Not with so many children to educate.” Donald Trump was sworn into office at a ceremony on January 20, 2017, at the Capitol in Washington. Beginning by reciting the Oath of Office and introducing himself as the 45th president of the U.S., Trump spoke a brief, forceful, and unconventional inaugural address. Trump moves on to thank former President Barack Obama for the transition into office and offers a nod to other former presidents like George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter. Then he criticizes Obama’s performance as president, claiming the state of the nation to be descending into poverty with dangers at home and flashing weaknesses abroad on the foreign state. Stating for many decades America enriched foreign industries at the expense of domestic ones, subsidized the armies of foreign countries, and allowed the depletion of our own military. Claiming the average person suffered while “elites” in Washington prospered;⁵ “Their victories have not been your victories.” Stating Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods, and good jobs. Trump

⁴ Obama, Barack. “Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: ‘The American Promise.’” *Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Denver: "The American Promise"* / *The American Presidency Project*. Last modified August 28, 2008. Accessed April 29, 2023. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-democratic-national-convention-denver>.

⁵ Trump, Donald. “Full Text: 2017 Donald Trump Inauguration Speech Transcript.” *POLITICO*. Last modified January 20, 2017. Accessed April 29, 2023. <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907>.

made a promise to the American people ⁶“This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.” Trump then pivots to offer a new vision of governing America, claiming a current grim state of affairs in America will be no longer as he will improve the nation by putting America and its people first. Claiming America will focus on domestic affairs, ⁷“buy American, and hire American.” By focusing on domestic affairs, Trump aimed to lead by example for foreign nations, still hoping for positive relations with foreign countries but only with the understanding of America comes first and focusing on completely eradicating Islamic terrorism. Trump makes use of the language of his campaign, repeating diction that moved the American people; promising America will ⁸“win again.” Pledging his administration will bring back jobs to the true American people, borders, dreams, and wealth. Promising new infrastructure and getting

⁶ Trump, Donald. “Full Text: 2017 Donald Trump Inauguration Speech Transcript.” *POLITICO*. Last modified January 20, 2017. Accessed April 29, 2023.
<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907>.

⁷ Trump, Donald. “Full Text: 2017 Donald Trump Inauguration Speech Transcript.” *POLITICO*. Last modified January 20, 2017. Accessed April 29, 2023.
<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907>.

⁸ Trump, Donald. “Full Text: 2017 Donald Trump Inauguration Speech Transcript.” *POLITICO*. Last modified January 20, 2017. Accessed April 29, 2023.
<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/full-text-donald-trump-inauguration-speech-transcript-233907>.

Americans off welfare. Trump then claims empty talk is over, no more inaction and only words, claiming the hour of action is now. Then, only 16 minutes after he began his speech was over.

Both presidential speeches made skillful use of repetition and perspective. Both include repeated verbiage; however, they differ in what specifically is repeated. With respect to perspective, Obama's speech involved the repetition of the phrase "I will" while Trump's speech involved the repetition of the phrase "we will." Specifically, one of the most used words of Obama's speech

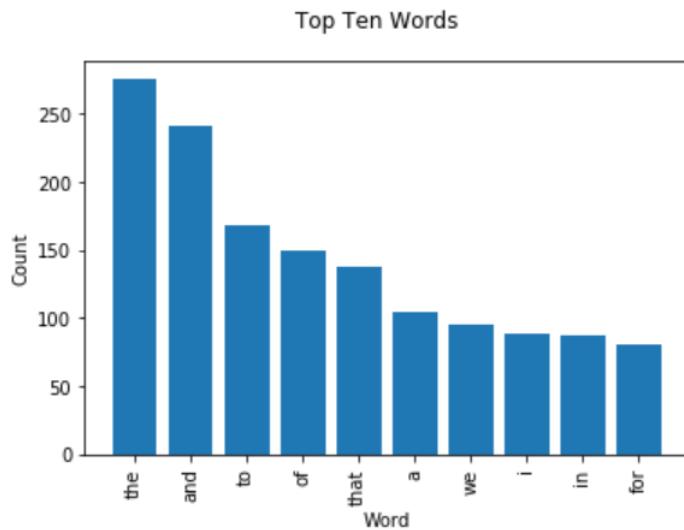


Figure 2. Bar graph of Barack Obama's top 10 words during the Democratic National Convention in Denver on August 28, 2008.

was "we" and "I" while one of the most use words in Trump's speech was "our." While Obama focused audience was the average, working American citizen, his speech focused on what he planned to act on, and what he promised the people will be his course of action.

On the other hand, Trump's main audience was every single American citizen, claiming it would be the actions of everyone that will restore America to its former glory. Additionally, Obama had a reputation for using college-graduate and upper-level diction when speaking to the American public, while Trump had a more high-school-level diction. Obama's presidency can be described as eloquent, with sophisticated language, speaking in measured tones and advanced informed, reasoned dialogue. Trump's presidency can be described as inarticulate and brusque, with simplistic language, dishing out incentive and with little regard for facts, and does not promote informed, reasoned dialogue.