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Dr Chukwuka Onwumechili, Howard University
Stella-Monica Mponda
Joanna Jenkins

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Abstract

One of the greatest leaders of our time – Nelson Mandela – died December 5, 2013 bringing an end to a remarkable life from prison to presidency. While scholars have studied Mandela’s speeches (Williams, 2008; Zagacki, 2003; and Sheckels, 2001), few have sought to understand his complexities through a rhetorical analysis of his speech and its resonation for a particular audience – Black South Africans. Analysis of Mandela’s speeches have until now focused on a much wider audience. In this paper, we focus attention on what his speech may have meant for his people – Black South Africans – who he represented in the fight for freedom that led to his imprisonment in 1964. We carefully selected two of his most important speeches and provide a rhetorical analysis of each and in the process we sought to understand who he was. The two speeches are considered the most important in Mandela’s life but they also represent, perhaps, the most important speeches for Black South Africans in the long history of struggle. The first is the An Ideal for Which I am Prepared to Die speech presented by Mandela on April 20, 1964. It is the defining speech of the apartheid era when Mandela spoke at the trial, which would keep him in prison for a significant length of his life. The second, his Inauguration as President speech on May 10, 1994 when he spoke as leader of his country where he and Black South Africans became, for the first time, equal citizens in a democratic republic.

INTRODUCTION

Nelson Mandela is widely acknowledged as one of the great leaders in the world. The media have written volumes on his ascendancy to South Africa’s presidency more than three decades after being imprisoned in the same country. Mandela’s speeches provide an opportunity for scholars to gain insight into who Mandela was, how Black South Africans may have imagined him during those periods. In this piece, we use rhetorical analysis to study two of Mandela’s speeches, one delivered three decades before the other, each delivered at critical moments of South Africa’s history, and each marking indelible milestones of life in South Africa.

The first speech delivered on April 20, 1964 occurs at the height of South Africa’s apartheid system. Mandela makes the speech in the docket of a courtroom as he faced serious charges in the “Rivonia Trials” that eventually led to his imprisonment for decades. The second, delivered May 10, 1994 marks his inauguration as South Africa’s President after apartheid system has been dismantled. How would an audience of Black South Africans have received those two speeches? How does Mandela craft his message to an
imagined Black South African audience? These are critical questions that we attempt to answer in this piece.

In order to provide answers to the questions raised above we have organized this paper in ways that we believe provide an effective process for reporting the analysis. We begin by providing a background that helps us understand who Nelson Mandela was at those two points in time and the conditions of Black South Africans during those periods. In the subsequent section we focus on the specific contexts of the speeches i.e. what led to the Rivonia Trials and what immediate context lead to the 1994 inauguration. The third section provides detailed explanation of rhetorical analysis, which serves as our method for analyzing the speeches and it also provides a place for our review of relevant literature. The section that follows is the analysis of both speeches before we conclude with answers to the questions that we have raised in the previous paragraph.

**BACKGROUND**

Our discussion in this section focuses on two key elements of our rhetorical analysis i.e. the Speaker and the audience. It is important to describe each of those elements as they exist in time of interest. In essence it is important to establish who Nelson Mandela was at the time of the speeches and also understand the condition of Black South Africans and who they were at the time of Mandela delivered his speeches.

**Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**

Mandela from his childhood learned about the inequalities that existed in apartheid South Africa. A magistrate deposed his father because the latter asserted his traditional prerogative and as Mandela describes it “There was no inquiry or investigation; that was reserved for white civil servants. The magistrate simply deposed my father, thus ending the Mandela family chieftainship” (Mandela, 1995, p.6). Mandela became involved in righting the wrong of apartheid in various ways including helping to form the Youth League of the African National Congress (ANC) and leading the Defiance Campaign which started in 1952. It was during this campaign that he worked jointly with members of the South African Indian Congress and the Communist Party (Mandela, 1995 and Sampson, 2011). In 1961, he helped establish Umkhonto weSizwe (Spear of the Nation) to lead an armed struggle against apartheid. He was a man dedicated to resisting apartheid and while in prison he rejected at least three offers of conditional release from prison based on his principles to steadfastly
continue the struggle against White rule. However, as President Bill Clinton citing Mandela’s words and perhaps his inner conscience in the Foreword to Mandela’s 1995 biography, “To make peace with an enemy one must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes one’s partner.”

**Conditions of Black South Africa**

Though physical appearance was used for racial classification in South Africa, there were inconsistencies in those classifications of whether a person was native, colored, Indian, or White. By 1950, the Population Registration Act was introduced to make classification permanent relying on physical appearance and general acceptance (Posel, 2001). Intermarriages made it difficult to strictly determine one’s race based on physical attributes. Additionally, the 1936 Natives Representation Act had sanctioned racial “promotion” from Native to colored based on education and not just physical attributes (Posel, 2001).

Racial classification under apartheid was crucial as it provided social entitlements. Race was used in determining where one lived, which school you attended, which jobs you could have, and many other activities. Black South Africans or natives suffered the most in the apartheid system as they were classified as the rung of the racial classifications.

Various Acts and laws reinforced the segregationist period in South Africa, ultimately isolating African, Colored and Indian activists from collaborating with each other and responding to government-issued discriminatory policies (Switzer, 1997, p. 21). The 1913 Natives Land Act and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 prevented Africans from acquiring and accumulating land and capital in the countryside, as well as in towns, respectively (Switzer, 1997, p. 20). In addition to displacing Africans from urban and rural settlement areas to reserves, the 1936 Land Act further restricted African sharecroppers in efforts to “reduce them to wage labor” (Switzer, 1997, p. 21).

The White rulers were migrants from Europe mostly in the 17th century and in the minority but they controlled the state and the economy and used it harshly to oppress the rest of the country. The National Party that inaugurated apartheid in 1948 strengthened segregationist programs.

Blacks could not vote at the time Mandela delivered his 1964 speech. Men were separated from their families in order to seek wage-paying work in the townships. These men resided in single-sex hostels around the cities where they found work. They received
brief home leaves to visit their families in the tribal homelands. This separation created severe racial problems that included alcoholism and prostitution as men separated from their wives had to seek ways out of boredom. The apartheid state created tribal homelands in the least desirable locations as they attempted to fully divorce Blacks from South Africa. The apartheid system also strictly restricted the movement of Black South Africans through an internal passport system called the Pass Laws, which determined where Blacks could go to and when in their own country.

As Coloreds comprised of no more than 10% of the entire population of South Africa, they exploited the racial system. Comprised of artists, traders, clerks and professionals, the Colored elite, or petit bourgeoisie, sought to assimilate with the Western-middle class, gain citizenship rights and social acceptance, and end institutionalized discrimination—without necessarily changing the social order (Switzer, 1997, p. 128). Due to denied access from economic and political power, Coloreds straddled the fence between their racial ties to the dominant White race, “and claiming to be culturally more significant than Africans” (Switzer, 1997, p. 128). These contradictions reinforced their marginalization from a dominant community, resulting in their status as second-class citizens, while simultaneously embracing the racial privilege, relative to the Africans in South Africa (Switzer, 1997, p. 133).

The Indian sub-group also limited their participation from Black South African protests and grievances. After Indians first settled in Natal in 1860 as indentured servants, their colonial-born descendants comprised the Indian petty bourgeoisie in South Africa as lawyers, civil servants, accountants, teachers, bookkeepers, clerks and small farmers (Switzer, 1997, p.99). The early 1900s marked a distinctive period in Indian politics in South Africa that emphasized separation from the same category Black South Africans, of which, Mahatma Ghandi noted in 1904, after spending time in Natal, that “...sharp distinctions...undoubtedly exist between British Indians and the Kaffir races in South Africa” (Switzer, 1997, p. 107).

Following the Population Registration Act was the Group Areas Act of 1950, which reinforced separate residential areas for Indians, Coloreds and Whites in 1950. The Colored Voters Act of 1951 banned Colored males from voting, as well as the Bantu Authorities Act that legally deported Blacks into homeland reserves and established territories were passed subsequently in 1951. In non-violent protest to the prohibitions, the African National Council (ANC) launched the Defiance Campaign in 1952 that sought to challenge White
liberal views. Although the Defiance Campaign disbanded, the multiracial Congress Alliance emerged from the ANC, South African Indian Congress, South African Colored People's Organization, and white South African Congress of Democrats in the mid-1950s. The lack of coordination between Black political and trade union leaders, as well as between the Coloreds, Indian and African protest groups, and little support from the Black community-action groups resulted in a vulnerable state of political groups that the government banished (Switzer, 1997, p. 41). The Group Areas Act of 1950 ultimately led to the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 that enabled the South African government to “treat natives as foreigners and allow them no political representation in the South African government” (Laverty, 2007, para.1; Butler 19-23). In 1960, South Africa declared a State of Emergency that highlighted a period of political exiles and the detainment of 2,000 political activists (Switzer, 1997, p. 41).

**Socio-Economic Climate during Apartheid**

In addition to obsolete labor conditions, curtailed freedom of movement, Black South Africans were offered little to no access to public services, including health, housing, education and sanitation, and further oppressed with violence from white South Africans. Domestic and international responses to South Africa’s apartheid exacerbated the nation’s economy, prior to its end in (??).

To persuade the Afrikaner-backed National Party to surrender its apartheid state, developing countries were amongst the first nations to impose sanctions on South Africa in the 1960s. Economic sanctions in South Africa through trade and financial restrictions characterized international anti-apartheid efforts between the 1960s and 1990 (Laferty, 2007, para. 4; Brewer 36-37). Trade sanctions imposed by the European Council, Japan and the USA restricted the imports of the Kruger rand, as well as products of steel, iron, uranium, coal, textiles, agriculture, food and exports of petroleum; however, none was as significant as OPEC’s oil embargo (Hefti & Staehelin-Witt, n.d., p. 1). Campaigns that deterred consumers from using Shell’s oil, an Anglo-Dutch company, as well as oil embargoes from Arab countries, pressured South Africa to pay exorbitant costs of oil.

However, as much as the sanctions served to pressure the South African National Party to terminate its apartheid movement, they were approached with caution because of the effects they would bear on the Black South African population. Ultimately, black South Africans suffered unemployment as one of the costs of import sanctions (Nieuwhof and
Unemployment continued to be problematic for the unqualified Black population, whereby “even after 1990 the unemployment rate among whites remained insignificant” (Hefti, E. Staehelin-Witt, n.d., p. 4).

Financial sanctions in South Africa focused on disinvestments, evidenced through massive capital outflows, and additional consumer boycotts of Outspan brand oranges and grapefruits in the early 1970s (Nieuwhof and Ngeleza, 2004, p. 10). Various factors accounted for the massive capital outflows, including political instability, particularly since the State of Emergency, reduced competitiveness, high inflation and increasing debt (Hefti & Staehelin-Witt, n.d., p. 3). Divestments were evidenced through Banks that terminated their relationships with South Africa, whereby consumers closed bank accounts with Banks that sold the Kruger Rand in 1982, followed subsequently by three Dutch banks, ABN, AMRO and RABO that altogether banned sales of the Kruger Rand coin by 1985 (Nieuwhof and Ngeleza, 2004).

South Africa further incurred economic costs, as a result of political and diplomatic sanctions in South Africa, after the passing of the UN Resolution 418 by the UN Security Council in response to the bloody turmoil against black South Africans in Soweto. The transfer of resources from public goods and services to the nation’s militia and arms accounted for the depletion of the nation’s resources, exacerbated from its isolation with the international community.

Although there remains controversy about the direct impact of economic sanctions on South Africa’s political emancipation from apartheid, its debilitating, oppression on Black South Africans remains clear. Bangani Ngeleza, a Black South African, whose family members were involved in the anti-apartheid movement, expressed that:

> Remember that the system then was at its most ruthless, with prison deaths reported week after week and speculative raids into neighboring countries. Our movements were also launching raids into the country and experiencing casualties with freedom fighters captured and executed at alarming rates (Nieuwhof and Ngeleza, 2004, para. 19).

It was this oppressive system of apartheid that Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) sought to change. It was the condition that existed when Mandela made his courtroom speech in 1964. Not only did ANC and Black South Africans increase the pressure to break the apartheid system, there was also increasing international pressure on the
South African government to change. These led to the realization by the South African apartheid government that the only way apartheid could be sustained was through costly force and that peace was only possible through a system of democracy allowing all South Africans to participate in their own governance. Jacobs (2010) and Sparks (1996) mention the beginning of secret meetings between Mandela and the South African government in search for the road to peace. On the streets very little changed in the condition of Black South Africans but by the time Mandela made his inaugural speech there was hope. For the first time, Black South Africans voted and with Mandela about to become President, expectations were high for a once oppressed group.

**SPECIFIC CONTEXTS**

While the background provides us with insight into Nelson Mandela and the social conditions of Black South Africans during the periods that Nelson Mandela made his two speeches, it is important to specify the context that immediately gave rise to both speeches. In this section, we provide those contexts.

**The Rivonia Trial**

The Black Struggle against apartheid system had become more violent in response to increased state violence against Black resistance. One of the responses was the establishment of *Umkhonto weSizwe*. At this time, Mandela was hiding out at Lliliesleaf Farm owned by a White Communist, Mr. Arthur Goldreich and he was disguised as a gardener and cook using the pseudo name David Motsamayi. Goldreich’s farm in Rivonia (a suburb of Johannesburg) was used largely as a hideout by ANC. On July 11, 1963 the state security arrested several ANC members including Nelson Mandela at the farm on the following charges: (1) recruiting persons in preparation for guerrilla warfare for purposes of violent revolution and acts of sabotage, (2) conspiring to aid foreign military units when they invade the republic, (3) acting to further communist objectives, and (4) soliciting and receiving money for these purposes from sympathizers outside South Africa (Algeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, Tunisia, among other states).

The trial began in December 1963 and dragged on until June of 1964. Mandela’s famous speech took lace in the midst of trial on April 20, 1964. The trial led to the life imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and a few other ANC leaders.
The 1994 Inauguration Speech

As many as 63% of voters cast votes for Nelson Mandela to become South Africa's first Black President on April 27, 1994. However, before the vote and Mandela's inauguration speech, there were a series of negotiations that brought down the apartheid system and allowed Black South Africans to vote and consequently the vote making Mandela President.

Frederik Willem de Klerk of the National Party was an ultra conservative who became President in 1989 and was expected to continue the state's apartheid policy. However, he chose to dismantle it in a surprise move. First he discontinued the ban of ANC and the Communist Party and released Mandela from prison. De Klerk began negotiations with Mandela and the ANC to end apartheid and create a new democratic system with the backing of majority Whites who had tired of apartheid and violence. The negotiations led to voting rights for all South Africans and adoption of a nonracist constitution and representative democracy.

THE METHOD OF RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Mandela's two speeches given 30 years apart from each other were designed to persuade the audience with messages that he perceived as persuasive. The first is a forensic speech, which considers the issue of justice or injustice of a certain charge and the second is an epideictic speech, which is ceremonial and focuses on praise and blame. Both of those two speeches can be fully analyzed using Aristotle's rhetoric to answer the two questions that we had raised in the introduction section.

Aristotle’s rhetoric argues that there are three critical means of successful persuasion (Sandys, Aristotle, and Cope, 2009 and Foss, 2009). These are (1) Ethos or the character of the speaker. In the background we provided a brief description of Nelson Mandela to demonstrate the speaker's character, competence, or credibility on the topic of the speech and what the audience was likely to use in making judgment of Mandela's speeches; (2) Pathos or the emotional disposition of the audience. The speaker has to arouse this emotion in the audience in order to influence the audience's judgment of the message. This arousal may be one of anger, pity, guilt, among others; (3) Logos or logic focuses on the message content itself. There are two types of logos – the inductive and the deductive. The inductive in most speeches proceeds from a particular example to an analogy to a similar particular if both particulars are seemingly under the same genus. The
deductive rhetoric is often an enthymeme where the existence of certain situations produces different results, for the most part, because of the situations that were identified.

There are numerous scholarly studies of speeches made by leaders. These studies are widely diverse with a significant number focusing on presidential speeches (Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl, 2004; Cohen, 1995; Brace and Hinckley, 1993; and Kernell, 1993). Those have largely focused on impact of those speeches on their audience and they are similar, in purpose, to our study of Mandela's two speeches in this paper. In the case of Cohen (1995) and Brace and Hinckley (1993), for instance, the focus was studying how presidential speeches were used for public relations' purpose in order to build the President's popularity. Bligh, Kohles, and Meindl's work (2004) was different as they studied the relationship between a speech's charismatic quality and whether it was delivered pre or post crisis. While Dow and Tonn (2009) did not focus on presidential speeches, they showed how a female politician used “feminine style” rhetoric to offer an alternative philosophy based on female values of care, nurture, and relationships.

The discourse above, albeit brief, is designed to demonstrate the prevalence of scholarly analyses of speeches made by leaders. In fact, there are far more similar studies to the one that we report in this paper. Here, we refer to scholarship that focuses on Nelson Mandela's speeches. There are several such studies. The most notable is Williams (2008) who used rhetorical analysis to complete one of the deepest studies of Mandela's speeches. The study involved analysis of four of Mandela's speeches including the two that we focus on in this paper. However, Williams' identified the audience as White South Africans and the international audience and in a large part does not identify Black South Africans as an important audience category for study. Only in one of her analysis (i.e. the Inaugural Speech in Cape Town) did Williams include all South Africans as the audience as well as the global audience. While we do not disagree with Williams' choice of a broader array of audience for several of Mandela's speeches, we argue that the Black audience is a markedly separate group for the speeches selected for analysis in this paper. Our focus is on this specific audience while acknowledging the existence of other audiences for the Mandela speeches.

Brockett (2005), Zagachi (2003), and Sheckels (2001) have also studied Mandela's speeches. In Sheckels' study, he analyzed 15 of Mandela's speeches all delivered after he became President in 1994. He found that Mandela made clear an interest in addressing the poor social condition of South African blacks but threaded a fine line as he also did not wish to prompt the flight of capital and Whites from South Africa. Sheckels' work noted that
Mandela’s early speeches as President were optimistic about improving Black conditions in the country but his messages of improvement certainty declined over time as difficulties in improving those conditions became more apparent. Zagachi’s (2003) and Brockett’s (2005) analyses of Mandela’s speeches share similar conclusions as Sheckels’ study. They all cite Mandela’s focus on the idea of a non-racial South African society. In this way, Mandela’s vision appears similar to Barack Obama’s more recent idea of post-racial society (Utley and Heyse, 2009). Importantly, Zagachi and Brockett studies focused on critical moments in South African history where race was central but Mandela chose to neutralize tension. The moment in Zagachi’s study was the murder of popular Black activist Chris Hani and angry demonstration and impending social disturbance by Black South African youths seeking answers and revenge. In Brockett’s case it was a study during difficult negotiations between the ANC and the National Party on how best to disband the apartheid system.

Those studies provide us with preliminary views of Mandela’s vision through his speeches. Are those visions sustaining? Were they the same in 1964 as they were in 1994? How would an audience of Black South Africans have received the “Rivonia Trial” and the ‘Inauguration’ speeches? How does Mandela craft the message in those two speeches in order to persuade a Black South African audience? Those are the questions that we answer in the next section.

INTERROGATING THE SPEECHES

As we review the two speeches our focus is to examine the speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, and subject before dissecting the use of the rhetorical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos.

The Rivonia Trial Speech

The background section has elaborated on Mandela’s credentials for the Rivonia Trial speech. In the speech, he went to great length to further establish his credentials to a Black South African audience by citing his education, his imprisonment in his role as a leader against apartheid, and importantly his African background. It is clear that our audience of interest -- the South African blacks – would consider Mandela credible at the time of the speech. He was one of Black Leaders in the struggle against apartheid and was under trial while representing interests of the Black audience. The occasion is of course the trial. While the explicit purpose of the speech is to defend the charges against him, what is implied by
the content of the speech is Mandela’s focus on justifying Black South African actions against apartheid system and actions. This purpose resonates in the subject of the speech, which is Black South African rights. He captures this in the most quoted passage of that speech which we reproduce below:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, I have fought against Black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

The conditions of Black South Africans in 1964 was such that as an audience to this speech they most probably wanted a leader who would not deny them or their struggle at the time of slightest trouble. Mandela’s speech clearly reiterated the Black African view in the face of severe penalty in the apartheid court. He neither denied that he committed sabotage nor did he deny that he was a leader of Umkhonto. This stance most likely upheld his status as hero among the Black South African audience.

Mandela relied largely on the use of both logos and pathos to make his and Black South African case for sabotage. In this excerpt he plays on the emotion of helplessness and a fight back against a bully to make his point:

All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle (of white supremacy) had been closed by legislation, and we were placed in a position in which we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or to defy the government. We chose to defy the law.

Africans want to be allowed out after eleven o’clock at night and not confined to their rooms like little children. Africans want to be allowed to travel in their own country and to seek work where they want to and not where the Labour Bureau tells them to.
The above statements are intended to arouse sympathy and anger. The first passage provides two choices. One is to accept a situation of inferiority, which no reasonable person is likely to note. The other option is to defy law, which ordinarily is not a preferred choice but one that is taken in order to avoid the first. By stressing the options, Mandela’s intends to arouse sympathy for a choice of violating the law. Moreover, in an earlier passage Mandela has used logos to justify situations for defying a law. He had stated that it was justifiable to ignored the banning of ANC since the government issuing the ban did not accept African people as citizens and thus could not make laws for African people. In the second passage, he arouses anger in the audience by reiterating how unbecoming the treatment of Africans was.

Pathos is used, particularly, in the last few pages of the lengthy speech. Here Mandela no longer focuses on the direct government charges but clearly seeks to arouse the audience emotions by speaking on the general ills and inhumanity of the apartheid system. He speaks of educational inequality, poverty of Black South Africans, denial of jobs and rights to Black South Africans, inhumanity of pass laws as he builds a crescendo of emotions to close his speech and make the point that he has no apologies to offer for his part in the struggle against the apartheid system.

However, most of the speech is based on the appeal of logic. He uses both syllogism and enthymeme for this appeal. In a rousing and riveting list of examples of state violence against Black South Africans, Mandela notes violent government responses from 1957 to 1961 and then uses those to justify a violent response by Black South Africans as follows:

Each disturbance (and state’s violent response) pointed clearly to the inevitable growth among Africans of the belief that violence was the only way out – it showed that a government which uses force to maintain its rule, teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it.

Mandela uses logic to defend the establishment and policy of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the policy of the ANC, the decision to use violence, decision to begin military training, and the decision to co-operate with the Communist Party. It forms the crux of his appeal in the Rivonia Trial.

However, a major link between Mandela’s 1964 during the Rivonia Trial and his later speech of 1994 during his inauguaration as president, is his message that South Africa
belongs to all races. This message is indeed a difficult one to make particular;ly when speaking to Black South Africans who had been oppressed in a land that many of them considered theirs. In 1964, Mandela mentions it in one line as follows but did not make it prominent:

We believe that South Africa belongs to all people who live in it, and not one group, be it black or white. We did not want an interracial war, and tried to avoid it to the last minute.

It is also important to note that even though Mandela mentioned that South Africa belongs to all,” in the same speech he mentioned what appeared to be opposed to that goal. He stated as follows:

It may not be easy for this Court to understand, but it is a fact that for a long time the people had been talking of violence – of the day when they would fight the White man and win back their country.

“Win back their country” appears to be a view of Black South Africans who wanted South Africa to belong to Black South Africans and not to “belong to all.” However, Mandela clearly shared the later view that the country “belongs to all” as he would clearly demonstrate in the inauguration speech.

The Inauguration Speech

CONCLUSION
References


