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Auszug aus:

Speech Analysis: Barack Obama's speech concerning his relationship to Reverend Jeremiah Wright on March 18th, 2008

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235 Ironically, this quintessentially American - and yes, conservative - notion of self-help found frequent expression in Reverend Wright's sermons. But what my former pastor too often failed to understand is that embarking on a program of self-help also requires a belief that society can change.

240 The profound mistake of Reverend Wright's sermons is not that he spoke about racism in our society. It's that he spoke as if our society was static; as if no progress has been made; as if this country - a country that has made it possible for one of his own members to run for the highest office in the land and build a coalition of white and black; Latino and Asian, rich and poor, young and old -- is still irrevocably bound to a tragic past. But what we know -- what we have seen - is that America can change. That is true genius of this nation. What we have
245 already achieved gives us hope - the audacity to hope - for what we can and must achieve tomorrow.

In the white community, the path to a more perfect union means acknowledging that what ails the African-American community does not just exist in the minds of black people; that the legacy of discrimination - and current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the
250 past - are real and must be addressed. Not just with words, but with deeds - by investing in our schools and our communities; by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system; by providing this generation with ladders of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and
255 education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper.

In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand - that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well.

260 For we have a choice in this country. We can accept a politics that breeds division, and conflict, and cynicism. We can tackle race only as spectacle - as we did in the OJ trial - or in the wake of tragedy, as we did in the aftermath of Katrina - or as fodder for the nightly news. We can play Reverend Wright's sermons on every channel, every day and talk about them from now until the election, and make the only question in this campaign whether or not the
265 American people think that I somehow believe or sympathize with his most offensive words. We can pounce on some gaffe by a Hillary supporter as evidence that she's playing the race card, or we can speculate on whether white men will all flock to John McCain in the general election regardless of his policies.

We can do that.

270 But if we do, I can tell you that in the next election, we'll be talking about some other distraction. And then another one. And then another one. And nothing will change.

That is one option. Or, at this moment, in this election, we can come together and say, "Not this time." This time we want to talk about the crumbling schools that are stealing the future of black children and white children and Asian children and Hispanic children and Native
275 American children. This time we want to reject the cynicism that tells us that these kids can't learn; that those kids who don't look like us are somebody else's problem. The children of America are not those kids, they are our kids, and we will not let them fall behind in a 21st century economy. Not this time.

280 This time we want to talk about how the lines in the Emergency Room are filled with whites and blacks and Hispanics who do not have health care; who don't have the power on their own to overcome the special interests in Washington, but who can take them on if we do it together.

285 This time we want to talk about the shuttered mills that once provided a decent life for men and women of every race, and the homes for sale that once belonged to Americans from every religion, every region, every walk of life. This time we want to talk about the fact that the real problem is not that someone who doesn't look like you might take your job; it's that the corporation you work for will ship it overseas for nothing more than a profit.

290 This time we want to talk about the men and women of every color and creed who serve together, and fight together, and bleed together under the same proud flag. We want to talk about how to bring them home from a war that never should've been authorized and never should've been waged, and we want to talk about how we'll show our patriotism by caring for them, and their families, and giving them the benefits they have earned.

295 I would not be running for President if I didn't believe with all my heart that this is what the vast majority of Americans want for this country. This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation - the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election.

300 There is one story in particular that I'd like to leave you with today - a story I told when I had the great honor of speaking on Dr. King's birthday at his home church, Ebenezer Baptist, in Atlanta.

305 There is a young, twenty-three year old white woman named Ashley Baia who organized for our campaign in Florence, South Carolina. She had been working to organize a mostly African-American community since the beginning of this campaign, and one day she was at a roundtable discussion where everyone went around telling their story and why they were there.

310 And Ashley said that when she was nine years old, her mother got cancer. And because she had to miss days of work, she was let go and lost her health care. They had to file for bankruptcy, and that's when Ashley decided that she had to do something to help her mom.

She knew that food was one of their most expensive costs, and so Ashley convinced her mother that what she really liked and really wanted to eat more than anything else was mustard and relish sandwiches. Because that was the cheapest way to eat.

315 She did this for a year until her mom got better, and she told everyone at the roundtable that the reason she joined our campaign was so that she could help the millions of other children in the country who want and need to help their parents too.

320 Now Ashley might have made a different choice. Perhaps somebody told her along the way that the source of her mother's problems were blacks who were on welfare and too lazy to work, or Hispanics who were coming into the country illegally. But she didn't. She sought out allies in her fight against injustice.

325 Anyway, Ashley finishes her story and then goes around the room and asks everyone else why they're supporting the campaign. They all have different stories and reasons. Many bring up a specific issue. And finally they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting there quietly the entire time. And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he does not bring up a specific issue. He does not say health care or the economy. He does not say education or the war. He does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, "I am here because of Ashley."

330 "I'm here because of Ashley." By itself, that single moment of recognition between that young white girl and that old black man is not enough. It is not enough to give health care to the sick, or jobs to the jobless, or education to our children.

But it is where we start. It is where our union grows stronger. And as so many generations have come to realize over the course of the two-hundred and twenty one years since a band of patriots signed that document in Philadelphia, that is where the perfection begins.

Solutions

Speech-analysis, as done here, might be reduced, in principle, to 'who says what to whom – how and why?'. The union of form and function is key and elaborated on in front of the panorama of context and the expectations which thence follow.

[Introduction: who is speaking, frame of reference]

The text given is a transcription of senator Barack Obama's speech on March 18th, 2008. It is his reaction to his political opponents accusing him of his relationship to Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Wright preached on the racism in the American society several times and is accused of being anti-American. For example, he regards 9/11 as the answer to crimes against foreign countries committed by the American people. Wright was the reverend of Obama's parish and his confidant. Therefore Obama had to react although he had tried not to mention his skin colour throughout the election campaign.

[main part: summary with analysis of how language enhances his points]

Barack Obama begins his speech with a quote from the Declaration of Independence, "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union", and thus introduces his main aspects. "We" stands for the American people which Obama describes several times as a unit. He feels appertaining to this unit and uses the first person plural entirely to strengthen this concept. Also, the image of a "unit" is present throughout the speech. Building and supporting this unit is the central aim of the American people. It bases upon the Declaration of Independence but due to slavery, racial hatred and the conflicts between skin colours it still needs to be perfected.

The historical entry of the speech refers to the depth of the conflict and the importance of its overcoming which the Americans have been longing for since they signed the Declaration of Independence. By naming slavery America's "original sin" he introduces religious vocabulary which characterizes him as faithful person. From the very beginning Obama refers to the people's strong will to overcome racism and thus creates the image of a united people beyond the conflict.

Obama's election campaign and his policy aim to lead this "march" into a better America. The racial hatred can only be solved by everybody fighting together and remembering his shared hopes. Again and again, Obama underlines the community which is able to build a "better future" for upcoming generations. He strongly believes in the American people and its "decency and generosity". The emphasis on his patriotism reveals his perception of himself as an American which outweighs his perception of himself as an Afro-American. To him belonging to the American people seems to be more important than belonging to the Afro-American society – homeland outweighs skin colour.

Based on the history of his family Obama presents himself as a link between the skin colours and as a symbol of the diversity of the American people. As son of a white woman and an Afro-American man he experienced both sides of the conflict and feels the tension between the opposites. This is an important stylistic device he uses several times throughout the speech. He experiences black and white, rich and poor in his own family and shows that this elemental differences can be overcome. He gains the faith that America is "more than the sum of its parts". A deep unity lies underneath the obvious differences.



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