

## 15. APPRAISING SELECTED SPEECHES

A good indignation makes an excellent speech

R.W.Emerson

Give me the right word, and the right accent and I will  
move the world

Joseph Conrad

In this segment, we shall attempt to analyze some speeches originating mainly in Africa and the Black Diaspora. We hope to examine the occasion on which the speeches were delivered, the audience, subject, purpose, content, organization and style, as well as give an overall evaluation of the speeches.

### EMEKA OJUKWU'S DECLARATION OF SECESSION

This speech is fundamental to the history of Nigeria, especially when we examine her development as a nation. It creates a feeling of disillusionment at the thought of why a newly independent state had to go through a civil war not long after independence. Let us look at the speech:

Fellow countrymen and women, you, the people of Eastern Nigeria: conscious of the supreme authority of Almighty God over all mankind, of your duty to yourselves and posterity;

Aware that you can no longer be protected in your lives and in your property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria;

Believing that you are born free and have certain inalienable rights which can best be preserved by yourselves;

Unwilling to be unfree partners in any association of a political or economic nature;

Rejecting the authority of any persons other than the Military Government of Eastern Nigeria to make any imposition of whatever kind or nature upon you;

Determined to dissolve all political and other ties between you and the former Federal Republic of Nigeria;

Prepared to enter into such association, treaty or alliance with any sovereign state within the former Federal Republic of Nigeria and elsewhere on such terms and condition as best to subserve your common good;

Affirming your trust and confidence in me;

Having mandated me to proclaim on your behalf and in your name, that Eastern Nigeria be a sovereign independent Republic. Now therefore, I, Licutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria by virtue of the authority and pursuant of the principles, recited above, do hereby solemnly proclaim that the territory and region known as and called Eastern Nigeria together with her continental shelf and territorial waters shall henceforth be an independent sovereign state of the name of title of "The Republic of Biafra".

The importance of this speech lies in the declarations made by the speaker. Perhaps, this is why it is known in many quarters today as the AHIRA DECLARATION since it was presented at a place called AHIRA in the present Imo State of Nigeria. These are the major issues raised in Ojukwu's declaration of secession:

And I do declare that

- (i) all political ties between us and the Federal Republic of Nigeria are hereby totally dissolved;



- (ii) all subsisting contractual obligations entered into by the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Or by any person, authority, organisation or government acting on its behalf, with any person, authority, organization operating or relating to any matter or thing, within the Republic of Biafra shall henceforth be deemed to be entered into with the Military Governor of the Republic of Biafra for and on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Biafra, and the covenants thereof shall, subject to this Declaration, be performed by the parties according to their tenor;
- (iii) all subsisting international treaties and obligations made on behalf of Eastern Nigeria by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, shall be honoured and respected;
- (iv) Eastern Nigeria's due share of all subsisting international debts and obligations entered into by the Government of the Republic of Nigeria on behalf of the Federation of Nigeria shall be honoured and respected;
- (v) Steps will be taken to open discussions on the question of Eastern Nigeria's due share of the assets of the Federation of Nigeria and personal properties of the citizens of Biafra throughout the Federation of Nigeria;
- (vi) the rights, privileges, pensions, etc, of all personnel of the public within the Republic of Biafra, are hereby guaranteed;
- (vii) we shall keep the door open for association with and would welcome any sovereign unit or units in the former Federation of Nigeria or in any other parts of Africa desirous of associations with us for the purposes of running a common services organization and for the establishment of economic ties;
- (viii) we shall protect the lives and property of all foreigners residing in Biafra, we shall extend the hand of friendship to those nations who respect our sovereignty and shall repel any interference in our internal affairs;
- (ix) we shall faithfully adhere to the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity and of the United Nations Organisation;

- (x) It is our intention to remain a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations in our right as a sovereign, independent nation.

Long live the Republic of Biafra  
And may God protect all who live in her!!

Source: Tekene N. Tamuno and Samson C. Ukpabio, *Nigeria Since Independence: The first 25 years Vol. VI The Civil War Years* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989)

We have given the full text of this speech in order to afford Nigerian youths and children who have heard about the civil war an opportunity to read this important speech. It is possible, we hope, that as they reflect on it, they will be propelled to establish a stronger fort in this generation against the hazards of nation building.

### ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH

#### Occasion

This speech was made to formally declare the secession of Eastern Nigeria from the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to announce the birth of an independent state called the Republic of Biafra. It was presented on 30th May, 1967 by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu who was the Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria at that time. The occasion was used to assert the collective consciousness of the Easterners amid feelings of neglect by the Nigerian Government.

#### Audience

The target audience was the people of Eastern Nigeria, but the speech was also directed at the Federal Republic of Nigeria led by Colonel Yakubu Gowon. Despite the fact that the speech has a clearly defined audience, the mayhem which characterized the Civil War has given it a certain prominence for adults and youths, leaders and followers, soldiers and civilians alike; and even for members of the international community because of the medium used in presenting the speech.

#### Subject

The importance of this speech lies in the seriousness of its subject. Lt. Col. Ojukwu is well informed on the issues at stake because the speech shows



his familiarity with certain facts in Nigerian history. The question is. What prompted the *AHIRA DECLARATION*? There was division in the Nigerian Armed Forces since the coup which eliminated Sir Tafawa Balewa in January, 1966 was seen as a tribal affair even though that was not the intention of the coup planners. Chief Anthony Enahoro put it in perspective when he remarked that "whatever may have been the basic plan... its effect was that civilian leaders and outstanding senior military officers from some areas were killed, while those from a particular area were spared" (44).

The government of General Ironsi which was in charge did not seem to address the situation in the six months that followed the July, 1966 coup, so the division in the Armed Forces was deepened while the public service was plagued by corruption. This situation was compounded by the eruption of violence in the North, which led to the death of many Easterners, especially Igbos; and in a military fiat, Lt. Col Ojukwu called for repatriation of the Easterners for in the North and expelled all non-Easterners from his region. The problem became more volatile when Igbo leaders came together and gave Him the power to establish a sovereign state which would protect the interest of the Igbos.

There is no doubt that the *AHIRA DECLARATION* was a product of the insecurity which prompted the belief that the people of Eastern Nigeria and their properties were safe only under a government in the East. What followed that impression was rebellion, the declaration of secession, and the birth of the Republic of Biafra under the leadership of Lt. Col. Ojukwu. But then, when you locate this speech within the realities of its time, do you think that the thirty months civil war was necessary? In our opinion, even though Ojukwu has made some historical points in his presentation, they are carefully selected and consciously projected in order to portray a desperate need to defend and protect the Igbo psychology. This sense of desperation has helped to impose a subjective tone on the speech.

### Purpose

The purpose of preparing this speech was to inform the people of Eastern Nigeria that the Federal Military Government (FMG) was insensitive to their problems. Again, the FMG is painted as a weak government unable to take proper decisions on national issues, especially when they relate to the Easterners. This meant that the safety of their lives and properties was in doubt. Ojukwu achieved these by educating his people on the need to assert

their inalienable rights against collective repression, and from the number of people who enlisted in the Biafran army, it is obvious that a large percentage of the people were completely bought over by his ability to identify their problem, and proffer what appeared to be the right solution, as well as his readiness to serve as the leader of the Republic of Biafra. At this point, not even constitutional and peace talks could help the situation, because the stage was already set for the Nigerian Civil War.

### Content And Organization

The following issues are raised and discussed in the speech:

The insecurity of lives and property of people of Eastern Nigeria, the freedom of every Easterner to exercise his/her fundamental human rights; disassociation of the Republic of Biafra from all ties with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, except where the interests of the Republic of Biafra are protected, and the confidence reposed in Ojukwu through the collective mandate of his people form the basis for secession.

These ideas are organized through illustration, analysis and process patterns. The speaker explains that the people of Eastern Nigeria "can no longer be protected in [their] lives and properties by any Government based outside Eastern Nigeria". The rest of the speech *analyses* the reasons for this assertion, and lays out a *process* of action for their liberation. This is reflected in the key words which he uses to state the problem and the controlling idea stated at the beginning of the speech. The speech reveals an awareness of oppression, a vision of freedom as a non-negotiable reality, a refusal to compromise that ideal, and the rebellion to protect the Easterners. And so, the target audience is identified, the need for emancipation is clearly stated, and the declaration of secession is pronounced.

### Style

The occasion, the organization of ideas, the intensity of the problems and the declarations suggest that this is a well thought out speech. Ojukwu's choice of words is appropriate for the situation, and the level of formality is conditioned by the seriousness of the subject. In order to communicate effectively with his audience, he uses the informative - affective tone by stating the injustices meted out on the Easterners in the first part of the speech, while



presenting the principles under which the new state is established in the second part.

The speaker uses complex sentence structures and fragments throughout the speech. There are about seven hundred words in the speech, with only two fullstops. This explains the success of the speech in delivery, especially when we recall that the speaker is a skilled orator and an adept speaker. At the end of the day, he painted a vivid picture of the uncertainties which surrounded his people, recaptured the sense of urgency in the situation, justified the rebellion, and presented secession as the only means of surviving and conquering the perceived onslaught of the time. Ojukwu's tone is bitter, defiant, urgent and authoritarian as shown in the first word of each of the seven sentence fragments in the first part of the speech: *Awake, Rejecting, Determined, Prepared, Believing, Unwilling and Affirming.*

#### Evaluation

The power of this speech is traceable to the speaker's position as a prominent member of the Armed Forces in Nigeria, a leading Igbo army officer, the Governor of Eastern Nigeria and the speaker's insight into the subject. Ojukwu has attempted to strip the speech of self-interest by drawing his authority from the collective conscience of the Igbos, but it is important to consider whether his call for the repatriation of Easterners in the North and the dismissal of non Easterners from the East were the only avenues for solving the crisis.

Yet there is no doubt that the speech fitted perfectly into the occasion, and achieved the intended purpose, for many enlisted in the Biafran army, including women and young boys such that within a short period, the army numbered about fifty thousand. This fact, is attested to in *History of the Nigeria Army (1863 - 1992)* which reveals that "in the early hours of 6th July, 1967, at about 0530 hours the civil war to keep Nigeria one, between the federal side and the "Biafrans" started with the first shots fired by the Federal troops at Garkem, a town about 47 kilometers from Ogoja in Cross River State" (143).

#### BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S ATLANTA EXPOSITION ADDRESS

Mr President and Gentlemen of the Board Of Directors And Citizens. One third of the population of the South is of the Negro race. No enterprise seeking the material, civil, or moral

welfare of this section can disregard this element of our population and reach the highest success. I but convey to you, Mr President and Directors, the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom.

After establishing his appreciation to the Directors and Board members of Tuskegee Institute for the support that they had given to Blacks, Washington vowed for the continued submission of his race to the dictates of the southern Whites by admonishing his race to stoop down and work.

Ignorant and inexperienced, it is not strange that in the first years of our life, we began at the top instead of at the bottom; that a seat in congress or the state legislature was more sought than real estate or industrial skill; that the political convention of stump speaking had more attraction than starting a dairy farm or truck garden.

A ship lost at sea for many days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water, we die of thirst!". The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "cast down your bucket where you are"... The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River... "cast down your bucket where you are" - cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. ... Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skills into the common occupations of life... No



race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling the field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top. Nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunities.

Washington spoke for the Black race and encouraged them to take up agriculture, mechanics, commerce, domestic services and other aspects of the unskilled professions instead of insisting on racial, civil and political rights. Also, with taciturnity, he requested the southern Whites to give the Black race another chance to do what they knew best - give absolute and loyal service.

To those of the white race who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth and strange tongue and habits for the prosperity of the South, were I permitted I would repeat what I say to my own race, "Cast down your bucket where you are" cast it down among the eight millions of Negroes whose habits you know, whose fidelity and love you have tested in days when to have proved treacherous meant the ruin of your firesides. Cast down your bucket and labour among these people who, have, without strikes and labour wars, tilled your fields, cleared your forests, builded your railroads and cities, and brought forth treasures from the bowels of the earth, and helped make possible this magnificent representation of the progress of the South... While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen.

After Washington's request, he proposed a common ground for both races.

In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.... I pledge that in your effort to work out the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the door of the South, you shall have at all times the patient, sympathetic help of my race.

Source: James Weldon Johnson, "Up from Slavery", *Three Negro Classics* (New York: Avon, 1965) 176-150.

## ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH

### Occasion

This speech was delivered by Booker T. Washington, an African-American leader, statesman, educationist and the principal of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in an exposition organized to mark thirty years of its existence. Tuskegee Institute was the first Black institution after the Emancipation Proclamation.

### Audience

The speech was delivered to a predominantly Southern White audience with a few Coloured people. In attendance also were personalities such as Governor Bullock, Bishop Nelson of Georgia, Albert Howel, Jr. President of the Exposition, Mrs Thompson - The President of the Women's Board, other Board members, Northern Philanthropists as well as some students of the institute.

### Subject

Booker T. Washington was an African - American leader who committed his energy to making his people self-reliant after the yoke of slavery had been removed. This was not a small task because the categorization of human worth according to skin pigmentation had condemned Blacks to a life a misery, and so, it was not an easy thing to make a case for the development of a group that "entered the world through the back door". Again, Washington was the first African - American in the South to address a White audience, so the speech illustrates his effort to speak to Whites and Blacks without destroying the prospects of friendship and assistance which the institute needed badly from Southern whites and Northern philanthropists.

Washington had carefully studied his subject and was very familiar with the facts that would help Blacks to move beyond slavery. He achieved these through a high sense of honesty and diplomacy as he appealed to the emotions of the audience to assist in giving Blacks the means of livehood. The highest point of his persuasion is the exhortation of Whites and Blacks to cast down their buckets where they are - a fact which Martin Luther King, Jr., re-echoed in many newspapers. Washington received letters of congratulations from many people, including W.E.B. DuBois who later labelled the speech as "The



Atlanta Compromise" because it exchanged social equality for economic servitude.

### Purpose

The intention of the writer-presenter of the speech was to persuade his audience to contribute to the economic mobility of the Black people in America. Also, he used the situation to educate his people about the need to accept America, specially the South, as their only home, despite the traumas of being Black in a world where racism was a pervasive reality. It was uppermost in his heart to "cement the friendship of the races and bring about hearty co-operation between them" (*Negro Classics* :146).

### Content And Organisation

Booker T. Washington used the speech to raise thorny issues in the African - American community by

1. Thanking the Southern Whites and Northern philanthropists for supporting the Tuskegee Institute.
2. Showing that the fate of Whites in the Southern state was linked with that of their Black brothers and sister.
3. Encouraging Blacks to do unskilled jobs in the Southern states for survival instead of going on self-expatriation to the Northern states.
4. Requesting the Southern Whites to accept black
5. Selling out social equality and accepting blacks' self-reliance
6. Indicting whites for oppressing and exploiting his race by masking these in a theory of Black devotion to White America.

The subject sentence is introduced at the beginning of the speech while the speaker uses comparison, contrast, illustration, persuasion and process patterns to organise his points. We are told that "one third of the population of the South is of the Negro race" and so, the Southern states cannot achieve any meaningful progress without them. The speaker contrasts this by evoking a vivid picture of the centuries of slave trade and deployed these sentiments

to persuade the audience on the need to support the Black race on her journey towards self reliance. And because of his position and the exigencies of the time, he proposed a process by which Blacks could survive in America economic freedom at the expense of social equality.

### Style

The timing of the speech speaks of its importance for it was an opportunity that no right-thinking individual would have misused. Washington's language is simple, but his simplicity is also sophisticated when we consider the skill he displays in persuasive argumentation. His sentence patterns are compound in structure while he uses fragments to convey his emotional appeal on the subject. The highest manifestation of his style is the conscious effort to speak to Whites and Blacks at the same time. He does this effectively by being condescending in his approach and on that pedestal, he succeeds in convincing an indifferent audience. This is achieved through an enthusiastic, sober and sensitive tone.

### Evaluation

Booker T. Washington spoke as a representative of the black race because the abolition of slave trade did not give immediate freedom to African Americans. They were still denied basic rights in every sphere of life in America, and it is against this background that we should view the idea of Tuskegee Institute in its empowerment of Blacks as skilled labourers. Consequently, Washington reasoned that each member of his race needed personal development and not franchise, social equality was not their basic problem, rather it was survival - a challenge which Tuskegee set out to meet. This was the tension point and, in fact, the reason why "the good that was not good enough became an enemy of the best".

It took decades to understand the implications of Washington's speech on the status of Blacks in America because the same people who hailed the speech also shouted "crucify him". Since Washington represented his race, it was taken for granted that he spoke the mind of his race, people so the speech became the aspirations of Blacks a yardstick for dictating and measuring the aspirations of Blacks, since it appeared to condemn the African-Americans to the lower cadres of life. Yet the content of the speech was determined by the conditions that blacks found themselves in that time.



Nevertheless, as a speech, The Atlanta Exposition Address is a success. Its power lies in the ability to identify the basic needs of Blacks and suggest solutions to these problems within the confines of racial bigotry. The speech is successful despite the central issue of compromising social and political freedom for economic expediency. It is most likely that Washington did not want the Southern racists to annihilate his people, since the fire of lynching was a common means of sending Blacks to the grave. Again, it could be that he had seen a vision of another Black leader who would move his people from the state of economic survival to social equality - represented in the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.

### MARTIN LUTHER KING'S "I HAVE A DREAM"

The following is the text of a speech titled "I HAVE A DREAM" by Martin Luther King, Jr., A renowned Civil Rights Leader, a Crusader for Negro emancipation in America, a priest, and an intellectual, king was well known as a prophet of non-violence as a channel of freedom.

#### 'I HAVE A DREAM'

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later the Negro still is not free; one hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination; one hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity; one hundred years later, the Negro still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land.

So we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check.

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was the promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that American has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds". We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now.

This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy; now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice; now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all God's children. It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.

Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of the revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges

**But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice.**



In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plain of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to generate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic height of meeting physical force with soul force; and the marvelous new militancy, which has engulfed the Negro community, must not lead us to a distrust of all white people. For many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we talk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of Civil Rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality; we can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities; we cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one; we can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating "For Whites Only"; we cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No! No, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi. Go back to Alabama. Go back to South Carolina. Go back to Georgia. Go back to Louisiana. Go back to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that

somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal". I have a dream that one day on the hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

**I HAVE A DREAM TODAY!** I have a dream that one day "every valley shall be exalted and every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together".

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we shall be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. And this will be the day. This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of the I sing. Land where my father died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire; let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York; let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania; let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain



of Georgia; let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee; let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last, Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last".

Source: EBONY Magazine, January, 1966 Edition. A Johnson Publication, Chicago. Vol. XLI, No.3).

## ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH

### Subject And Organization:

'I Have a Dream' is an x-ray of the condition of African-American and the betrayal of America in failing to live up to its creed of liberty, freedom and the pursuit of happiness for all Americans - Black, White, Red or Yellow. It is an assurance to the suppressed and oppressed Blacks that one day their condition would be a thing of the past. According to the speaker, the Emancipation Proclamation was made one hundred years before, but after such a long period "the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination": America has refused to integrate Negroes into mainstream life and give them equal opportunities. King therefore tells the Negro that the time has come for a re-awakening, to rise from their slumber. However, in doing this, physical violence should be avoided, rather the Negro should employ "soul force". He argues that the Negro shall never be satisfied until the injustices and social degradations they have suffered are corrected; until freedom is allowed to ring everywhere. The speaker charges all "people of color" Southern Blacks (the most badly hit), and Northern Blacks who are merely tolerated, to go back home with a hope, a faith a dream, for a brighter, free tomorrow.

Every paragraph expresses a thought. The presentation shows progression of thought. Progression from the injustices meted out on the Blacks, to a call for a change by the perpetrators of these injustices, to assurance for the humiliated and the oppressed, that they should have faith in their cause and maintain a hope that their dream of freedom would become a reality.

### Occasion

"I Have a Dream" was delivered on the 28th of August, 1963 at Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. It was on the occasion of a mass protest. The March on Washington. Obviously, the subject of the speech fits the occasion and the occasion the subject.

To start with, Washington D.C is, as it was then, the capital of America. It is therefore not only the seat of Government where policies are formulated, but is also a meeting point for all categories of Americans. It is like the Biblical cities of refuge, one of the Northern cities where the run-away slaves from the South, and the 'emancipated' ones, hope to find salvation. Lincoln Memorial is in memory and honour of Abraham Lincoln, the American President who signed the emancipation Proclamation in 1863, an act designed to give the Negroes political power, economic emancipation, social upliftment and justice in all spheres of American life. The choice of place and time, becomes symbolic and relevant to the purpose of the gathering - which is to reiterate the need for Negro emancipation in the real sense of the word in all ramifications.

### Audience

This speech was presented before a crowd of about one hundred thousand persons. Most likely, the audience composition must have been predominantly black: African-Americans who had borne the burden of racial discrimination, and never enjoyed anything more than ghetto existence: Blacks who wished for liberation and freedom, and who therefore saw the likes of King as notable voices making the paths of Black people straight Black and White. People of fifteen (15) years and above were present. As a Black, the speaker knew what it meant to be a Negro in America of the 1960s, and at what age the realisation of the burden of Blackness starts to dawn on Black boys and girls.

The Blacks were in need of salvation, of assurance, and of direction to their "promised land". King knew the anxiety, the aspirations, the disappointment, of these people. The speech was therefore very suitable in articulating their state, and their dreams for the future. It was also a common fact that in such a gathering, some Whites and or their agents would be present, and that was why parts of the speech were directed at them for example: "we can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of unspeakable horrors of police brutality;... we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters



and righteousness like a mighty stream". This was for the consumption of both the whites and those Blacks who felt that the Negroes should be contented with the status quo.

### Style

The language of the speech is simple and straightforward. It is inspiring, indicting, didactic, persuasive and argumentative; all at the same time. The language is equally emotive, and this suits the audience and the circumstances. The emotional appeal is achieved by the speaker through relating the speech to the needs and aspirations of the audience, as well as identifying personally with the audience. (Note the consistent use of the pronoun 'we' in addressing the people. This creates a sort of involvement likely to stir the emotions of the audience. There is also the use of ethical appeal. The speaker was a Reverend Pastor of The Baptist Church. He therefore employs the Christian themes of hope, faith, justice, and redemption, in enacting this speech. Biblical quotations are used to authenticate the need of the audience, as well as validate the 'dream'.

In Christianity, the scriptures are regarded as a source of inspiration, of comfort, and of salvation. Using scriptural references in this speech serves to authenticate the purpose, the intent, and the seriousness of the speaker in matters affecting the audience. The speaker therefore comes out as sincere, dependable, believable, and serious. His position as a Civil Rights Leader also adds to his credibility. The structure of the speech indicates that it is a well thought-out speech; it is logical. Every persuasive statement is backed by reasons.

The premise of his argument is that though on paper the Negro has been emancipated, the American political and social institutions have failed to adhere to the original terms. For this reason therefore, the Negro shall never relent in the struggle against injustice. The reasoning follows the pattern of cause and effect.

The use of repetition such as *one hundred years later now is the time, we can never be satisfied, I have a dream, Let freedom ring*, as a rhetorical device enhances emphasis and coherence.

From the orderly presentation, the organization of thought, the language and the nature of the occasion, it is clear that the speech could not have

been impromptu, though the speaker was a seasoned orator. It is most likely that the method of presentation was manuscript or a combination of manuscript, extemporaneous and memory.

### Evaluation

The history of Black people in America is that of oppression, suppression, discrimination and humiliation. American history is full of people, Blacks and white but mostly Blacks, who decried injustices against the Negro race in America. Martin Luther King, Jr., was one of such Blacks. He organised several protest marches (non-violent) and delivered many articulate speeches to accentuate the feelings of Black people, and to prick the consciences of the white race. "I Have a Dream" was one of such speeches.

"I Have a Dream" preached integration of the Negroes into all aspects of American life - political, social, economic, with all the attendant opportunities, and it argued for justice and equality for the Negro race. In taking the position that integration was the only way for the Negroes in America to have social mobility, political power, economic survival, spiritual fulfillment, and real emancipation, the Civil Rights movement differed from that of other Black groups like Black Nationalism, also fighting for justice for the Negroes.

The proponents of Black Nationalism included Malcolm X. They preached separatism instead of integration: separation, not segregation in the form of Black social structures, Black economic enterprises, and Black votes for Black politicians. This was because, according to them, the Whites were more afraid of separation than of integration. Black Nationalists also encourage militancy and violence by Blacks as a means of emancipation, a position argued by Malcolm X in "The Ballot or the Bullet". In the later part of the last century, Booker T. Washington opted for a middle position between the two above. He admonished that both White and Black races in America should be as close as the palm, but as separate as the fingers. Whatever the differences in approach, these Black leaders all had one goal in common - the upliftment of the Negro from his position of an underdog.

"I Have a Dream" does not offer any practical activity for Blacks as a means of changing their status, instead, the people are asked to go back to Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, "to the slums and ghettos of our Northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed". They are



not to "wallow" in it, but are not told how to overcome "the valley of despair". If the Negroes were attacked or lynched by the White racists of the South, King did not offer the kind of response that should be expected from them.

However, despite the above weakness of this speech, the choice of topic and subject of a dream that will never die, a hope that will never fade, a resilience that can never and should never be allowed to be broken, is appropriate. The success of this historic speech lies in the fact that Martin Luther King, Jr. understood the psychology and the aspiration of his people as well as the significance of race and occasion.

#### IBRAHIM BABANGIDA'S " THE SEARCH FOR A NEW POLITICAL ORDER"

(An Address by General Ibrahim Babangida, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria at the inauguration of the Political Bureau at Abuja on January 13, 1986)

It should by now be clear to all that this Administration is firmly set on a course of Government by consultation with the people. Since my assumption of office, I have repeatedly reaffirmed my faith, and that of the Armed Forces Ruling Council, in the sense of responsibility of the Nigerian people and their responsiveness to challenges of whatever nature. Indeed, as a nation, we have repeatedly demonstrated these qualities whenever the occasion arose.

Only a few months back, the whole nation undertook the IMF debate and, after thoroughly considering the options, decided to forego the IMF facility as well as accept to bear the consequential hardship and sacrifices. We were indeed encouraged by this debate. We were also gratified by the sincere and widespread support repeatedly given to this Administration, especially after uncovering of a plot to effect a bloody change of Government. I would like to believe that this mutual confidence between the people and government is due to an understanding that the intention and activities of government are geared towards the good of all.

We are gathered here this morning to continue this process by inaugurating the Political Bureau which I promised in my Budget address to the nation. Indeed, this morning's ceremony is intended to "kick off", as it were, the national

debate on a viable future political ethos and structure for our dear country. I am happy that the search for a new political order is taking place at Abuja, the political capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

We are all familiar with the political conditions which brought about military regimes. Invariably military administrations have come about as a result of bad government; indeed, our present economic predicament can be attributed to the nature and practice for partisan politics. It has contributed, in part, to the increasing cynicism and apathy of individuals, economic mismanagement as well as the apparent social chaos and disorder in our society. It has also adversely affected our capacity, as a nation, to realise our vast economic potentials. This Administration would therefore like to shift our attention to the need to create a relevant political system. Consistent with our stated philosophy of government, we are committed to popular participation in the process of evolving such a viable political order.

In commemorating our country's 25th anniversary as a Sovereign State, I reminded the nation that what really lies at the bottom of our past dilemma is the absence of a viable political arrangement. The political history of this nation is partly one of disillusionment with politics and politicians. As you all know, the history of the past twenty-five years has been dominated by this political question. The search and solutions have hung around by this political system without adequate care of the supportive values. Our search has been to remedy immediate problems without sufficient attention to the long-term issues. Not surprisingly, our efforts so far only succeeded in producing inept and inherently unstable political arrangements, which have failed to synchronise our cultural ideals with our economic and political potentials.

To put it differently, apart from the immediate and more visible problem of salvaging our battered economy, our other task is to bring about a new political culture which, like a veritable fountain head, would bring forth a stable, strong and dynamic economy. Such an arrangement must enable us to harness the vast human and natural resources of Nigeria towards building a cohesive and self-reliant society. These ideas and values have already been clearly articulated in the fundamental and directive principles of state policy as



enshrined in the 1979 Constitution. This Administration is firmly committed to the realisation of these objectives.

Today, we commence the search for a new political order. The setting up of the Political Bureau is the first step. As part of the strategy towards evolving a viable political order, I expect the ensuing debate to capture the nature of the threshold of the transition process. In particular, I expect the debate to come up with suggestions as to how we can evolve a political system which can enable us to aspire to a predictable political life. I believe the time is now ripe for us to have a system which can guarantee an acceptable and painless succession mechanism. Finally, I would want the debate, as far as possible, to be rooted in a truly Nigerian political experience. Thus, I would expect the debate to identify and clarify issues in a manner as to ensure a higher political order that is capable of sustaining our enthusiasm for a healthy future.

It is important to point out, at this state, that this Administration does not conceive the Political Bureau as an agency set up simply to serve the national political debate. The Political Bureau will do much more. In addition to guiding, monitoring, analysing and documenting the national political debate, the Bureau will provide an objective and in-depth critique of our past political experience in order to serve as background information for the debate. It will also produce the blueprint of a new political model (or models) for the consideration of the Administration. It shall be its responsibility to eventually place options before this Administration as well as work a realistic implementation programme for the agreed model.

Our primary political objective is to bequeath to posterity a new political order that can endure stresses as well as contain the competitive demands in our national life. Furthermore, the Bureau must ensure that Nigerians collectively secure for themselves a more meaningful political future through open and free debate. As an administration, we have stated our commitment to a decision-making process that will always be guided by the principles of discussion and consultation. We are committed to these basic tenets of democratic government, and we will adhere to it in order to remove the mistrust attached to the leadership by our people. We are convinced that we cannot truly make progress as a nation

unless and until we collectively take our destiny in our own hands. We equally accept that the challenge of leadership dictates that government must remain responsive to popular wishes in order to foster a sense of greater belonging.

In this regard, it is important that all those who will contribute and participate in the debate need not be afraid to be both daring and imaginative. As you are well aware, we are committed to an order that will check the excess of government and the abuse of power by the political leadership. We shall equally frown at a system in which a small group of individuals shall be allowed to misuse power to the detriment of our national aspirations. Simply put, the new arrangement must promote and enhance a self-reliant society.

I would like to warn that this Administration does not want a regurgitation of the political models of the so-called advanced countries of the world. If this were our desire, we would not have wasted your time and ours, by inviting you here. Rather, we would simply have turned to the many volumes and various encyclopedias on these alien constitutions and political models. That should not be your way forward. We share neither the political history nor the political culture of these lands. Our demographic settings and social structures differ vastly from theirs. We presently lack the sophisticated and advanced industrialism that provides the economic foundations for these alien political models.

At this juncture, I wish to make it abundantly clear that the ensuing debate is not an open invitation for partisan politics. It is a collective search for a new political order; it is a call for a country-wide debate in order to illuminate our path towards the search. It is neither a call for political party formation, nor the assertion of claims and plea for leadership on behalf of the people. It is certainly not a call for post facto wholesale justification for past systems and their operations both of which have failed us as a nation. The exercise is a call to all Nigerians to search, identify and select options that can lead this country to better heights.

This search will be conducted by a Political Bureau composed of men and women of ideas and experience, I expect the Bureau will carry out the assignment by canvassing the view and opinions across the Federation. You should bear in mind



that our country is blessed with experienced and seasoned politicians, administrators and industrialists. I implore you to rap and utilize their collective experience for the good of our nation. The Bureau is also empowered to make adequate administrative arrangements including the creation of zonal centres in order to enable it reach as many people as possible.

I want to make it quite clear that government does not intend to abandon its responsibility in this regard. We will not tolerate the emergence of "leaders of thought" for any hamlet, village, town, local government area or community, state or any combination of parts of sections of this country. The ban on partisan political activities and political parties is still in force and shall remain so until the AFRC has taken a decision on the report of the Political Bureau.

The debate can, of course, be carried out by socio-economic groups; professional associations can and should also participate. In short, participation must be completely divorced from partisan leaning. It must not seek to muzzle or even harness individuals' views in the name of providing leadership at the grassroots. In order to enhance wider participation therefore, I hereby lift the ban on the Medical Association and the National Union of Students.

The Political Bureau shall comprise the following-

S. J. Cooney - Chairman	E. O Awa	A.D Yahaya
Haroun Adamu	Ibrahim Halilu	Paschal Bafyau
Oye Oyediran	Tunde Adeniran	S.E. Oyovbaire
Bala Takaya	O.E. Uya	Sani Zahradeen
Mrs. Hilda Adefarasin	Mrs. R. Abdullahi	Ola Balogun
Edwin Madunagu	Abdullahi Augie - Executive Secretary	

In the course of my Budget Speech, I identified a number of factors which have contributed to our political instability. I would like the Bureau to regard my Budget Speech integrally with my present address as key notes for their work.

I hereby inaugurate the Political Bureau with the following terms of reference-

- (a) Review Nigeria's political history and identify the basic problems which have led to our failure in the past and suggest ways of resolving and coping with these problems.

- (b) Identify a basic philosophy of government which will determine goals and serve as a guide to the activities of governments.
- (c) Collect relevant information and data for the Government as well as identify other political problems that may arise from the debate.
- (d) Gather, collate and evaluate the contributions of Nigerians to the search for a viable political future and provide guidelines for the attainment of the consensus objective.
- (e) Deliberate on other political problems as may be referred to it from time to time.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my promise in the Budget Speech to the effect that this Administration will not stay a day longer that it is absolutely necessary. Your assignment must therefore provide time-sequences for the transition to be achieved (by October 1, 1990).

I would like to end this address by commending you to Allah's guidance. You are about to embark on a difficult assignment, but I believe there is no greater satisfaction than a call to service one's country. It is a call to duty. It is my hope that the new political arrangement would enrich our faith and rekindle our hope in the future of this great country.

Good luck and God bless.

Source: The Directorate for Social Mobilisation. *Report of the Political Bureau (Reproduced for Mass Distribution)* (Abuja MASMER, 1987)

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you classify the above speech types based on the speaker's purpose in each case? Support your answer.
2. Which of the above speeches do you consider to be the most in line with each of the quotations at the beginning of the chapter?



3. Using your knowledge of stylistic analysis, describe the styles of any of the first three speeches.
4. Using the criticism sheet you have drawn up in chapter 3, write your own appraisal of the last speech

**WORK CITED**

*History of the Nigerian Army 1863-1992*, by Nigerian Army Education Corps and Schools (NAECS). Abuja: Nigerian Army Headquarters, 1992.