



The Politics of Hope Ezine “Helping Ordinary Citizens Become Extraordinary Public Leaders”



The Powerful Political Speech is Back

By Donna Zajonc

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In the last few years citizens have become jaded by poorly delivered political speeches given by pandering political pundits and uninspiring politicians. No more. The power of the inspiring political speech is back!

John Kennedy had it. Ronald Reagan had it---the power to inspire and bring our emotions to the surface and motivate us to act. Whomever you are supporting this year, there is something to like in the style and delivery of all of the presidential candidates and the enthusiasm is everywhere! Aside from the excitement of the competitive election results, many people are enthralled by the speeches and what each candidate has to say.

“The word inspire means "to breathe into" as in breathing life into something. In this case, the candidates are breathing life into US. And we are so ready. “

~Dr. Jennifer Waldron

For decades sound-bites designed for the nightly news dominated political speeches. The art of the elegant speech full of content and sparkling language was lost. Enter UTube, 24/7 cable coverage and internet sites that have given us an opportunity to listen and get to know the candidates up close and personal. We finally have candidates who have honed their speaking skills.

A good friend of mine was recently disappointed that her schedule did not allow her to attend her party’s Caucus. Later that evening she and her family enjoyed watching the candidates and candidate’s spouses on UTube. By listening to an entire speech on their schedule and place of choosing, they felt involved and informed even though they missed the Caucus.

Political speeches and politicians have become inspiring and entertaining again. With new technology we now have a way to listen to every word that is said which will require our political leaders to continue to improve their speaking skills.

I asked my speech coach, Dr. Jennifer Waldron (www.jenniferwaldron.com) **“What makes an inspiring speech?” She said, "First it must be authentic.** The speaker's ideas must be supported

with reasonable evidence that matches their experience or knowledge. An authentic speech has huge "trust" and "believability" components. If you listen with your crap detector on, chances are better that you hear a fake messenger. Once that happens, there's little hope to connect with the audience." She said the second element in an inspiring political speech is the ability to "connect" with the listener. **The desire to be connected to others is primal to all human beings. So when a candidate motivates the audience to connect to each other as well as the speaker, it inspires us to be part of community.** This is done by telling stories or experiences we can all relate to and laying a foundation of argument that appeals to many.

Dr. Waldron continued, "An inspiring and persuasive speech offers the listener choice. This is done by stating the situation and listing the pros and cons of the arguments. Or by coming right out and telling us what our choices are: "traditional course of politics or change?" Of course they have their perspective and outline their position. As we listen we are asking ourselves, "Do I believe this or do I believe that? Once we decide, we feel empowered because we thought through an issue and made a choice."

People throughout history have been captivated by some pretty nasty dudes who gave "inspiring speeches" Dr. Waldron said. "Pardon my metaphor, but they were focused on the music. We have to be sure to read the lyrics too. **The authenticity is when the music and lyrics match AND the speaker is ethical.**"

This point really hit home for me. I remember when I was in the state legislature and participated in political party meetings where it was commonly said, "We can't tell the public the truth. They can't handle the truth." The result was only one perspective was given and it was the perspective that the party leaders wanted the public to hear. Whether the message was only partially true was irrelevant.

Dr. Waldron says the pent-up desire for an authentic message is one reason there is so much excitement in today's election cycle. If the audience is ready and open to be inspired, it is easier to motivate them. **The word inspire means "to breathe into" as in breathing life into something. In this case, the candidates are breathing life into US. And we are so ready.** When we hear the speaker's elegant use of language, it moves us to a higher level of appreciation and connection. The public ignites, as we are witnessing today.

Senator Obama has brought this quality to American politics, and has raised the bar so high that the other candidates are pushing themselves to improve their public speaking. Governor Huckabee is certainly comfortable and funny and uses rich metaphors to make his points. He may not have the elegance of Sen. Obama but he is inspiring to his audience. On the authenticity scale he gets high marks by most observers.

While Senator McCain may lack the sparkle and energy of the other candidates, he is genuine and believable. In person, his town hall meetings are widely viewed as educational and engrossing. Senator Clinton has dramatically improved her vocal tones, confidence, warmth and emotional connection with her audience. We still have few examples of powerful feminine voices in this country. Hillary is blazing a trail for all women who are learning to combine a pleasing and powerful voice with confidence and inspiration.

Throughout the campaign, as you listen to the speeches, notice when you feel inspired. **Such carefully crafted speeches are back and that means by paying attention to the style and elegance we will benefit.**

Public leaders should take note. You can begin by improving your own speaking skills by hiring a coach, joining Toastmasters or other speech clubs, getting clear about your own values and passions so your authenticity will shine, studying the style and content of political speakers you admire, and practice, practice, practice!



www.politicsofhope.com
donna@politicsofhope.com