DIFFERENCE WITHIN DIFFERENCE:
A STUDY OF MODERN BLACK CONSERVATIVE RHETORIC

A dissertation presented

By

Jonathan Osborne

to
The Department of English

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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In the field of

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes speeches delivered between 1996 and 2015 by Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell to examine how Black conservative rhetoric constructs and resists itself as part of the African American rhetorical tradition. My study engages an area of African American rhetoric rarely given serious rhetorical analysis. Much of the scholarship surrounding Black rhetoric(s) presents its methodology and execution in a similar form. Theorized as a rhetoric of resistance, the field draws upon the writing and rhetoric of prominent and insightful Black men and women to construct its form and function. Though profound and necessary to elevate the voices and perspectives of Black people, I argue that the field neglects conservative political perspectives latent within the larger African American rhetorical tradition. Black conservatives often find themselves ostracized by Black communities and tokenized by the political right, producing a twofold marginalization of their rhetoric. At the same time, Black conservatives occupy an important role in constructing policy and legislation, particularly in the cases of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, as well as the historical construction of the Black political voice. My study addresses this lacuna in the field by establishing a method for identifying and analyzing rhetorical tropes used by Black conservatives and their argumentative purposes in the speeches of Powell, Rice, and Alan Keyes. Through my research I argue that Black conservative rhetoric contains several rhetorical techniques generally reserved for more mainstream means of persuasion, thus questioning the status of Black conservatives residing on the fringes of social consciousness and Black communities. My study extends scholarship on African American rhetoric(s) as it surfaces specific rhetorical strategies related to the creation of difference in Black conservative rhetoric.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

During his campaign for the Democratic nomination for the President of the United States, Barack Obama delivered the Father’s Day remarks at the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago on June 15, 2008. A predominantly Black church, Obama spoke to a majority Black audience at the Apostolic Church of God, addressing concerns of the Black community there while also beginning his campaign for President. In this speech, Obama called for Black men to take a more active role in raising children, saying, “We need fathers to realize that responsibility does not end at conception. We need them to realize that what makes you a man is not the ability to have a child – it’s the courage to raise one” (Obama). Citing his own experience as a child raised by a single mother, Obama noted that most children in his position lack the human and material resources to overcome an absent father. This moment received applause from the congregation during the speech as well as favorable coverage in the media. However, more recent critics point to this speech and similar rhetoric of Obama as examples of respectability politics – appealing to White norms of respectable behavior to gain social and political standing. Critics view Obama’s critique of absent fathers as perpetuating the idea that Black fathers uniquely and excessively abandon their children in contrast to other fathers, ignoring external factors such as disproportionate incarceration and lower representation in the workforce as significant factors restricting the presence of Black fathers in the lives of their children (M. Smith; Phippen). While I appreciate this cultural and social critique, I am more interested in the rhetorical moves of Obama that hint toward a conservative means of persuasion, particularly in light of his liberal political agenda.
In the quote above, Obama argues that taking on the identity of a man means more than simply having the ability to inseminate, but someone who helps raise a child. He offers a definition of a man based on broadly agreed upon actions specific to males within a heteronormative social order. Such a definition aligns with the conservative rhetorical theory of Richard M. Weaver who developed a hierarchy of arguments that explains the types of arguments most likely to persuade people in a political context. I explain Weaver’s theory in greater detail below, but I note here that broadly his theory asserts arguments from definition should prove most persuasive to conservative audiences, while arguments from circumstance should find more acceptance among liberal audiences (Weaver 112). Arguments from definition, though, are not man-made but derived from nature and God, meaning for conservatives, such definitions are unchanging and resolute. Therefore, the setting of Obama’s speech, as well as the heteronormative basis for his argument, both serve to substantiate his ethos and the conservative foundation of his rhetoric.

To go a step further, readers and listeners of Obama’s speech may consider the rhetorical tropes he employs to fortify his position. Earlier in his speech, Obama confronts the congregation with a series of questions to drive home the necessity of fathers in the Black family:

How many times in the last year has this city lost a child at the hands of another child? How many times have our hearts stopped in the middle of the night with the sound of a gunshot or a siren? How many teenagers have we seen hanging around on street corners when they should be sitting in a classroom? How many are sitting in prison when they should be working, or at least looking for a job? How many in this generation are we willing to lose to poverty or violence or addiction? How many? (Obama)
Obama utilizes these rhetorical questions to force his audience to consider the communal and material consequences of absent fathers in the Black community. More specifically, Obama employs *pysma*, a form of the rhetorical question where the speaker asks “multiple questions successively (which would together require a complex reply)” (Burton). These questions go beyond framing the necessity of fathers to educate and lead their children in a direction of personal, societal, and financial wellness. Obama’s battery of questions creates a compounding moral dilemma whose remedy resides in the rhetorically conservative definition of a man he provides. Together, Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments and rhetorical tropes such as the rhetorical question, provide a foundation for describing conservative rhetoric, such as that present in Obama’s Father’s Day speech.

Though this and other similar speeches worked to propel Obama to the Democratic nomination and eventually the presidency of the United States, most of the attention paid to his rhetoric focuses on his soaring rhetorical style or the Black rhetorical tradition from which it developed (Alim & Smitherman; Dyson). My aim in including a brief analysis here intends not to say that Obama also belongs within a Black conservative rhetorical tradition, though that may also be true, but that such a tradition exists. In the realm of politics, Black conservative rhetoric holds a historical trajectory dating back to Reconstruction, but garners very little attention and analysis within the field of African American rhetoric(s). In this study, I offer such an analysis, through which I argue for the inclusion of Black conservative rhetoric within the field of African American rhetoric(s), a difference within difference. I argue that Black conservative rhetoric represents a means of persuasion that mirrors the social and cultural perception of Black conservative people. Black conservative rhetoric denotes a rhetoric of resistance opposing political correctness and a narrative of victimhood that imagines Black people as the victims of
their history and circumstances. In terms of political ideology, Black conservatives find themselves ostracized by politically left-leaning organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Color People (NAACP), as well as tokenized by right-leaning groups, such as the Republican National Committee. In a similar fashion, the Black conservative rhetoric lacks serious academic and political attention as scholars and pundits find the dissonance between Blackness and conservatism difficult to comprehend. Black conservatives see race as more than a trivial accident of nature, but they also dismiss the idea that race functions as an integral component of systemic and institutional limitations on certain groups of people. At the same time, Black conservatives see conservatism as more than a political system designed to empower the individual, nor a system designed to provide aid to the less fortunate. At once, Black conservative rhetoric argues for the rights of the individual, regardless of specific differences among individuals, while also acknowledging the role of historical and potential limitations on the individual.

The Black Rhetorical Tradition

I understand the field of African American rhetoric(s) organized around rhetorics of resistance separated roughly into three categories: resistance through voice, resistance through identity, and resistance through opposition. Resistance through voice locates historical inflection points where Black rhetors assert their presence discursively and rhetorically. Jaqueline Bacon argues that, “In general, the writing of history is a rhetorical act of constructing group identities. As nineteenth-century African Americans wrote their own histories, they resisted collected narratives about themselves and created alternative identities that gave agency to Blacks as subjects rather than objects” (Bacon 149). The ability to write history, and for that history to gain acceptance in society writ large, existed outside the grasp of Black people before the writings of
African American abolitionists. Upon taking up the tools to write and construct their own history, these abolitionists also worked to define African American identity and produce a rhetoric that “resisted collective narratives” that reduced the agency of their people. Bacon also shows the affirmative aspects of early African American rhetoric(s), noting how “Vernacular rhetoric, as black abolitionists’ ‘Declaration of Independence’ demonstrate, emanates from a uniquely empowered space of critical resistance to dominant norms and enables African Americans to recreate the very foundations for judgments of eloquence, authenticity, and efficacy” (Bacon 151). Beyond representing a means of rejecting the rhetorical parameters created by White abolitionists or the expectations of White audiences, Black abolitionists used the power of resistance to create a new voice to communicate with multiple audiences using “eloquence, authenticity, and efficacy,” to build a collective sense of self for African Americans.

Moving forward to the Harlem Renaissance we observe a new framework of resistance borne of segregation and Jim Crow policies in Alain Locke’s seminal work *The New Negro*. In his examination of Locke’s text Eric King Watts notes how the Harlem Renaissance “was a dynamic forum for deliberations about the appropriate norms, premises, and practices of a distinct black culture; thus, it made available to black intellectuals the symbolic and material resources for the rhetorical invention and the articulation of a black public voice” (19). Rather than looking at external values against which to resist, Watts argues that Locke and other writers developed “appropriate norms, premises, and practices of a distinct black culture” internally to resist cultural stagnation. This rhetorical strategy of self-determination gave room for the Harlem Renaissance to produce “the articulation of a black public voice” like that spoken by Langston Hughes, George Schuyler, and Nella Larsen among others.
Watts also positions hermeneutical rhetoric, which “involves the location and
development of appropriate topics to shape public understanding,” as Locke’s method for
redefining how people may interpret Black art (20):

In other words, hermeneutical rhetoric may be well suited to achieving propriety
because it has a sensual dimension; it works through an aesthetic praxis that move
people to the places in which to “find the right word” to touch others. In The New
Negro, Alain Locke repositions the meaning of and the rations among black folk
expression, African artistry, and U.S. pragmatic modernism so as to invent an
African American ethos during the Harlem Renaissance. (Watts 22)

The moment Watts describes, where rhetoric not only works to convince an audience of a
position, but teaches the audience through invention, takes the idea of resistance through voice to
a fascinating extreme. Rather than depending on a conventional or even esoteric interpretation of
artistic expression ensconced in European/Western practices and ideals, Watts positions The New
Negro as “an aesthetic praxis” by which Locke can educate Black people on “black folk
expression” and other forms of art. Where early Black rhetors used their rhetoric to concretize
the African American voice for an external audience, Locke’s rhetorical strategies work to
establish a stronger internal Black voice of resistance.

Another manifestation of the move away from a Eurocentric understanding of rhetoric
underpins the arguments put forth in Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s seminal text The Signifying
Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism. From the outset, Gates states his
intent to liberate theory about African American texts from those ideas generated from outside
the tradition:
The book attempts to identify a theory of criticism that is inscribed within the black vernacular tradition and that in turn informs the shape of the Afro-American literary tradition. My desire has been to allow the black tradition to speak for itself about its nature and various functions, rather than to read it, or analyze it, in terms of literary theories borrowed whole from other traditions, appropriated from without. (xix).

Gates’ text speaks to issues of ownership and propriety, in addition to power and perspective. Having African American texts only understood and analyzed through the lenses developed by White Western thinkers means crucial aspects of idea generation become lost to those who created the tradition, even if they are the ones using borrowed analytical lenses. Using other traditions leaves little account of the cultural memory understood by African American readers, nor the marks of personal cultural history inscribed in the texts. Thus, _The Signifying Monkey_ not only resists a Eurocentric tradition of literary criticism, it also resists valuing knowledge and culture production from a traditional Western understanding.

Perhaps no modern Black voice remains more visible or scrutinized that former President Barack Obama, particularly when considering his use of language. In thinking about his semantic and linguistic choices, H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman observe how “Barack’s ability to bring together ‘White syntax’ with ‘Black style’ and to speak familiarly Black was not only important for the Black community, it was also critically important for the White community” (21). Formatting “White syntax” in the recognizable “Black style” of a Black preacher allows Obama to create bonds with multiple audiences simultaneously. Interestingly, his use of language marked as White may still connote resistance, since it sounds stylistically familiar to African Americans while also making room for a Black man to assume a position previously
only occupied by White men. The resistance through voice demonstrated by Obama, then, repurposes language valued by traditionally resistant audiences to subvert notions of racial difference and create room for a Black man to assume the highest position in the U.S. government, a feat most likely unthinkable when Black abolitionists first asserted their voices in the public discourse.

Resistance through identity speaks to an expansion of those voices that count as representative of the African American experience. Scholarship in this category typically approaches the rhetorical moves of Black people by taking into consideration identities that may compound the historical oppression of their voice while questioning concepts like the rhetorical tradition and learning processes. In *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, Jacqueline Jones Royster crafts a theoretical model to demonstrate the rhetorical moves made by African American women to elevate their voices and enact their agency:

My intent generally is to view the acquisition of literacy as a dynamic moment in the lives of African American women, as people with desires for agency and authority in the use of written language. To facilitate this analysis, I have developed a theoretical framework within which to consider how early generations of African American women incorporated literacy into their lives and how they used literacy systematically as a variable tool. The theory begins with the notion that a community’s material conditions greatly define the range of what this group does with the written word and, to a significant degree, even how they do it. The pivotal idea is that what human beings do with writing, as illustrated by
what African American women have done, is an expression of self, of society, and of self in society. (5)

For Royster, resistance permeates the writing and rhetoric of African American women. Their struggle for literacy acquisition and representation in discursive spaces works against the notion that women require a male voice to substantiate their position. They also resist expectations of expression, particularly of genre, tone, and voice, by utilizing the essay genre. Additionally, African American women work against ideas of representation – that their voices fail to address issues impacting the entirety of society. This perspective seems particularly ill-formed from an historical framework, considering the myriad of settings in which African American women attended to the work of society, such as slavery, childrearing, cleaning and repair, or education to name a few. Indeed, the example put forth by Royster of how African American women represent “what human beings do with writing” not only speaks to issues of agency and appreciation, but culture and knowledge production within Black communities and society in general.

Ideas of resistance and freedom produced by modes of African American rhetoric(s) are also fundamental to African American educational outcomes. Elaine Richardson takes up this conceptual argument in “Coming from the Heart: African American Students, Literacy Stories, and Rhetorical Education,” observing how “Freedom through literacy has been an important trope in stories about literacy acquisition for African Americans. These complex stories revolve around issues of dominance, suppression, economics, culture, racism, freedom, equality, and justice” (155). Implicit in Richardson’s statement exist the multifaceted issues at stake in the educational struggle of African Americans. The literacy used to obtain freedom from issues of dominance and suppression remain inextricably linked to the structures in society that propagate
these same issues. And yet, remaining ignorant of literacy acquisition provides a space where these systemic issues may propagate, unchecked by those most directly impacted. Richardson goes on to explain how, “From the beginning of the African American experience, education was not designed to empower African Americans but to socialize them into ‘productive citizens’ who become consumers of dominant cultural literacy” (158). Literacy and literacy acquisition, then, become the modes by which African Americans frame their own existence within systems of oppression, liberating themselves from education meant “to socialize them into ‘productive citizens’” in a society that continues to find them burdensome.

To reconceptualize rhetoric and resistance as a global and inclusive educational goal, Keith Gilyard argues in “The Rhetoric of Translingualism for a system that “incorporates the view that all language users, or languages, are perpetually producing and experimenting with multiple varieties of language. Thus, translingualists grasp that the institutional enactment of language standards is repressive in some cases and restrictive in all” (284). Gilyard moves the lens of educational rhetoric away from one centered around those who created the systems of education to those who experience the learning. Instead of resistance through inclusion, translingualists focus on using the act of learning in multiple modes as the manifestation of their resistance. While translingualists attend to concerns broader than the areas of African American education and rhetoric, the ramifications seem clear in terms of its overarching impact on educational practices in African American communities. Rather than ascribe to the “language standards” designed by rhetors positioned within systems of oppression, translingualists in general and African American rhetors specifically acquire education outside the “repressive” forces at play to achieve a more universal understanding of language.
Another identity addressed through African American rhetoric(s) of resistance is that of the Black intellectual. Historically, the Black intellectual developed her modes of resistance and liberation through the framework provided by the Christian church. Yet, modern, more liberal perspectives on knowledge accumulation and production contribute other foundations of rhetorical development. bell hooks and Cornel West discuss this and many other issues in a dialogue titled *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*. From a feminist position, hooks argues that “when [Black women intellectuals] do insurgent intellectual work that speaks to a diverse audience, to masses of people with different class, race, or educational backgrounds, we become part of communities of resistance, coalitions that are not conventional” (*Breaking Bread* 162). Echoing the ideas put for by Royster and Richardson, hooks sees the role of women in moments of change and liberation as necessary and standard. The voice and rhetoric of Black intellectual women are tools and presences that always already existed in these moments of resistance, required to instruct the resistance those under oppressive structures demand.

In a similar vein, West addresses the rhetoric of Black intellectuals from a religious/cultural perspective. As concerning the Black intellectual, West asserts “Critical understanding is a prerequisite for any serious talk about coming together, sharing, participating, creating bonds of solidarity so that Black people and other progressive people can continue to hold up the blood-stained banners that were raised when [“Precious Lord”] was sung in the civil rights movement” (8). Considering the presence of the Christianity during slavery, and continued influence through the civil rights movement of the 1960’s, it seems inevitable that religious rhetoric would also play a significant role in the push for liberation by African Americans. The strategies of resistance argued by hooks and West carry significance as they promote the notion of community among those oppressed. Neither intellectual limits the form of community or
bonds to that of Black people, making room for all identities suppressed under systems meant to restrict their mobility. The rhetoric of the Black intellectual represents a crucial, though complex, component of the production of resistance through African American rhetoric(s).

Resistance through opposition distinguishes itself from the previous two categories by containing messages of freedom and liberation in line with the conventional ideology of the African American rhetorical tradition but pursued through methods typically found in fringe Black communities. Gwendolyn D. Pough identifies a less effective, but culturally significant, resistance structure in “Rhetoric That Should Have Moved the People: Rethinking the Black Panther Party.” Here, Pough “uses critical memory to explore the [Black Panther Party’s] position as a ‘counter-public sphere’ to an already existing ‘counter-public sphere’ – the Black community it was trying to reach” (Pough 62). Rather than focus on the ethos of the rhetors, shaped by the perceived reputation of the Black Panther Party (BPP) of outside audiences, Pough urges readers to use “critical memory” to consider their rhetorical content and policies in a more nuanced, less divisive manner. She defines “counter-public sphere” using language from Nancy Fraser’s (1993) “definition of ‘subaltern counter publics’…’parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs’” (Pough 62). Pough points to a dissonance in rhetoric where one sphere of difference, the BPP, seeks to influence a second sphere of difference, the Black community, with a unique rhetoric of resistance. Though their ideology agrees with the messages of freedom and resistance traditionally found in African American rhetoric(s), the methodology of the BPP derives from a different context, specifically their militant persona. However, scholars may view this rhetorical strategy of difference within difference working in a similar manner as Black conservative rhetoric in the Black community.
As I demonstrate in this project, Black conservatives share ideas and principles consistent with traditional African American rhetorical approaches yet find themselves categorically rejected as detrimental to the goals of freedom and liberation due to their perceived difference.

Moving beyond the confines of land and American history, Adisa A. Alkebulan positions the Egyptian theory of rhetoric as the origin of African American rhetoric(s). By doing so, Alkebulan argues that “we are speaking of artistic verbal expressions and its performance in the form of poems, songs, proverbs, myths, legends, incantations, sermonizing, lecturing, testifyin’, signifyin’, and other modes based on a complex worldview designed to elevate and transform society” (33). With this move, Alkebulan reframes African American rhetoric(s) from rhetoric(s) performed by African Americans to rhetoric(s) adopted from Africa itself. Rhetorical genres, then, such as poems, myths, and signifyin’, represent more than adaptations of rhetoric found in European traditions, but distinct rhetorical moments established from techniques developed by the ancient Egyptians. In consideration of this trajectory of study of African American rhetoric(s), Kete Molefi Asante offers a position very much in line with previous conceptions of resistance already discussed. He asserts that “[African Americans] will never be able to create a proper criticism of our own rhetoric until we reattach ourselves to our classical traditions. I am not talking here about Greek and Latin, but about mdw ntr, that is, the language and culture of the ancient Egyptians, usually translated ‘divine utterance’” (289). What Alkebulan advocates toward, and Gates implies through adoption, Asante explicitly calls for; that is, a completely Afrocentric formulation of rhetorical practices and critique. Beyond positioning themselves as the authorities of their rhetoric, African American rhetoric(s) must develop from a tradition unique to those performing the rhetoric, in this case Africa, to substantiate their authority, along with notions of form, content, origin, and inspiration.
These rhetorical perspectives resonate with a historical memory constructed of the systematic oppression of Black people in America – from slavery to Jim Crow, segregation, mass incarceration, and restriction of civil rights. While each of these categories of Black rhetorics contribute vital scholarship on the rhetorical methods of Black people, I seek to redress the underlying limitation of defining a field of rhetoric based on counteracting injustice. The voices of enslaved people count because their experiences of oppression silenced their cries. Yet, Black people who owned enslaved people, sometimes for economic exploitation, occupy the fringes of historical memory because their actions and rhetoric contradict expectations (Koger 53). Additionally, the voices of Black gun supporters, Black atheists, and the Nation of Islam exist on the fringes of social consciousness because their rhetoric disrupts narratives of Black identity entrenched in American discourse on race. By including a study of modern Black conservative rhetoric as a form of resistance through opposition, I model how scholars may expand whose voices count when describing the breadth of African American rhetorical practices.

The primary position of this project argues for the inclusion of Black conservative rhetoric within the larger corpus of African American rhetoric(s). Though many unique voices prove vital to the field, such as the Black Panther Party, Black queer people, and Afrocentrists, Black conservatives find themselves on the outside of the tradition. The included voices count because they reflect a common theme among African American rhetoric(s) of resistance. Elaine B. Richardson and Ronald L. Jackson observe how “African Americans and other diasporic Africans have developed communicative behaviors, ideas, and persuasive techniques to advance and protect themselves while counteracting injustice” (xiii). The development of African American rhetoric(s) arose from the cultural touchstones of slavery and oppression that tied previously distinct tribes and people together under a common condition. Just as Black people
physically resisted confinement and captivity as enslaved people, they also resisted
representation of their voices and perspectives by White abolitionists. However, scholars and
Black communities typically view Black conservatives as adversaries in the resistance to
injustice and unwitting abettors in the continued oppression of Black people. They advocate for
personal responsibility and against affirmative action and community assistance, disrupting
norms calcified within the field of African American rhetoric(s) writ large. By turning our
attention to Black conservative rhetoric, I argue for an expansion of agentive voices within the
field of African American rhetoric(s), bringing better representation to unique and divergent
perspectives already existing within the Black community.

“Black” and “Conservative”

To frame the scope of my dissertation, I will define the three main terms I use in the title:
modern, Black, and conservative. For the first term, I turn to Michael L. Ondaatje’s *Black
Conservative Intellectuals in Modern America* for context. He demarcates the 1980s as the dawn
of modern Black conservatism, identifying Thomas Sowell as the “unofficial godfather of the
‘black right’” (1). This time marks when Black conservative intellectuals gain prominence within
academic and political arenas at a rate not previously witnessed in American history. As
Ondaatje notes, “for much of the 1980s and 1990s, these intellectuals were ensconced at the
heart of the national dialogue on race, tapping into the enduring American philosophies of
individualism and free enterprise, seeking to overturn the corrective political initiatives secured
by the great civil rights movement” (2). Additionally, locating my study after the civil rights
movement removes the complication of parsing the rhetoric of individuals such as Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr. or Jackie Robinson, prominent Black men in the civil rights movement who
identified as members of the Republican party in the late 1950s. Such an analysis deserves its
own study as an examination of social conservatism in Black communities, separate from the analysis of cultural discourse at stake in my dissertation.

For the second and third terms, I believe it necessary to explain them in tandem as a close association exists between Black identity and political ideology in the United States. I understand Black conservatives to be those individuals who identify themselves as Black and who promote tenets of conservative ideology. Defining conservative ideology proves difficult within today’s political climate, but I will settle on 4 tenets: limited government, free market economy, rejection of Communism, originalist interpretation of the Constitution and law (Kirk). This definition of conservatism, though, conflicts with the typical values of Black people, specifically from a political context, because the policies and ideology advanced by conservatives conflicts with the political alignments that typically inform Black political identity. Due to political moves within the Democratic and Republican parties such as the New Deal of the 1930s, the Southern Strategy of the 1950s, and Reaganomics in the 1980s, Black people have become increasingly aligned with tenets of a more liberal Democratic ideology. When Black people aligned with the more liberal policies of the Democratic party observe Black conservatives, they immediately reject the combination of Black identity and conservative ideology. According to Black Studies scholar Elwood Watson, Black conservatives “have been referred to as racial traitors and right-wing racists. Some Black conservatives have also been accused of self-hatred, of egotism, of being disrespectful toward the poor, of being ‘house niggers’” (73). Black communities ostracize Black conservatives as representing political and ideological stances antithetical to the existence of black people. At the same time, the political right tokenizes Black conservatives by trotting them out during national conventions to represent diversity within the Republican party. In recent years, presidential candidates such as Herman Cain and Ben Carson gained national notoriety for
their political aspirations, but an actual articulation of their ideology remains generally untraceable.

As an outsider to Black conservative identity, I find the layered nature of a Black conservative’s existence compounding Du Bois’ concept of double-consciousness.¹ The thought of Black conservatives constantly monitoring not only what oppressors expect of them but also the expectations of Black people who share a common history of oppression changes the factor of double-consciousness from multiple to exponential. Indeed, scholars tend to analyze the actions and ideology of Black conservatives from perspectives misaligned with the values of Black conservatives. To do so, however, ignores recent efforts to pay greater attention to how Black conservatives represent themselves (Lewis; Ondaatje; Rigueur), as well as what Black conservatives say. In a speech delivered to the Heritage Foundation in 1991, Anne Wortham, Professor of Sociology at Illinois State University, recalled several instances in her life where friends and colleagues chided her for associating with Western, capitalistic ideals rather than the Tanzanians she helped volunteering with the Peace Corps (3). She continues:

Later, as I pursued a career, I learned that to be a politically correct black person in predominantly white business and academic settings, I should take on the role of historical victim and confirm the identity of white colleagues who accepted the indictment of themselves as historical oppressors and needed condemnation to legitimate the self-imposed guilt on which they based their sense of worth. (3-4)

¹ From *The Souls of Black Folk*: “It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (1997 [1903]: 38).
What resonates here most closely with identity is the expectation that Wortham assume “the role of historical victim” to “legitimate the self-imposed guilt” found within her White colleagues. This role of portraying “a politically correct black person” positions double-consciousness as performative as opposed to an authentic representation of her political beliefs. For Black conservatives like Wortham, framing her consciousness from a racial perspective, what she calls ethno-race consciousness, restricts her capacity to act because her actions must always hinge on their relation to Black struggle and White guilt. Instead, she champions the role of the free individual whose ability to manifest change in life cultivates a rhetoric of resistance toward political correctness. Wortham implies, and I argue Black conservative rhetoric reveals, that the adjective “Black” establishes the ethos of the speaker with respect to their personal experiences and arguments. Just as the “Black experience in America” varies depending on age, geography, gender, etc., so does the expression of that blackness from a rhetorical and cultural standpoint. Wortham’s ethos stems from her lived experiences as a Black woman, but she consciously limits her expression of blackness to those lived experiences and not a grand notion of Black identity encompassing the entirety of America. In this project I show how this development of ethos also applies to prominent Black conservative voices through a rhetorical analysis of their speeches, thus advancing the scholarship of the Black rhetorical tradition to include cultural and political voices typically pushed to the fringes of Black rhetoric.

WHY BLACK CONSERVATIVE RHETORIC?

Black Being; Being Black

I find myself interested in all articulations of Blackness as this diversity of voices, this difference within difference, works to dismantle historically constructed notions of race, as well as monolithic perceptions of racial and political categories. I do not identify as conservative, nor
do I personally endorse the various ideologies and perspectives voiced by the rhetors in my study. I acknowledge this bias as a potential hindrance to effectively analyzing Black conservative rhetoric. However, I recall many instances in my life where both Black and non-Black people tell me that either I do not act or present as “Black.” Though I possess brown skin and my ancestors traveled to America from Africa through the slave trade, my mannerisms and enunciations often demonstrate atypical expectations of Blackness. Even as I articulate my own rhetorical perspective that resonates with my identities, I must also negotiate expected rhetorical moves associated with those identities, many times failing to do so. In *African American Literacies* Richardson observes a similar imbalance where “most African American Vernacular English speaking students become further indoctrinated in the precepts of White dominant discourse in the process. What the student brings to the classroom is not valued or recognized” (2). In the realm of politics, what Black conservatives bring to the conversation typically carries little value or recognition beyond a tokenized sense of diversity. While I may not share their political ideology, I do sympathize with the search of Black conservatives for this respect where others acknowledge the rhetoric that matters to them, as well as myself. That the way they articulate their Blackness through a conservative ideological perspective gains respect as an additional articulation of African American rhetoric(s). By undertaking this study, I see my work not only further establishing the value of non-White rhetorics and literacies, but different versions of those rhetorics and literacies within difference themselves.

Conservative Resistance

In terms of the three categories of resistance found in African American rhetoric(s) outlined in the literature review, I argue that the rhetoric of Black conservatives represents a unique thread of resistance through opposition akin to the rhetorical methods of Afrocentrists.
Maulana Karenga asserts that, from an Afrocentric perspective, “African American rhetoric is also a rhetoric of reaffirmation” (6, emphasis in original). In essence, Afrocentrists resist by reaffirming traditional African virtues to substantiate their humanity and offer support to those oppressed and marginalized. While some aspects of the Afrocentric rhetoric of resistance resonate with the scholarship of Richardson and Jackson as well as others, there remain components specific to an Afrocentric perspective not found in other threads of African American rhetoric(s), such as Asante’s hardline approach to an Afrocentric rhetorical foundation. In much the same way, I contend that Black conservative rhetoric resonates with the larger field of African American rhetoric(s) by using blackness to establish the ethos of the rhetor, both as a means to convey authority to the rhetor as well as confirming their identity and humanity. At the same time, Black conservative rhetoric advances ideologically conservative concepts that push against politically correct notions of blackness. By arguing this position, I hope to elevate the rhetorical methods of Black conservatives, not to impede the resistance of injustice at the center of African American rhetoric(s), but to diversify how the field constructs itself by discussing a different form of resistance through opposition. To do so requires I answer two questions: what conventions form the Black conservative rhetorical tradition; and how does the rhetoric of Black conservative people function within public political discourse?

Given the lack of scholarship on the relationship between Black conservative rhetoric and African American rhetoric(s) I purpose to use the rhetorical methods of people who identify as Black conservatives to establish a general tradition of Black conservative rhetoric. My method contrasts that of other scholars who view the identification of Black conservative rhetoric as establishing Black conservative identity (McPhail; Smith); such a method proves problematic as

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2 See Asante’s “The Future of African American Rhetoric” and his call for a complete schism between Eurocentric and Afrocentric rhetorical practices.
it purports to an essentialization of rhetoric and identity. Returning to Obama’s Father’s Day speech discussed at the outset of this chapter, I note here that his conservative rhetorical moves find themselves juxtaposed with liberal political issues, such as gun reform and gender equality, as well as Obama’s soaring rhetorical style. He successfully blends together several rhetorical methods to sway his intended audience in his favor. My choice to source the Black conservative rhetorical tradition from Black conservatives provides a more substantial representation of said tradition than an analysis of Democratic and liberal Black politicians.

Beyond surfacing the conventions of Black conservative rhetoric, my questions bring attention to the often-overlooked participation of Black conservative people in national political discourse. My second question examines the implementation of the tradition identified in the first question. Black conservatives remain involved in public discourse, participating as concerned citizens and political actors since at least the Reconstruction period in American history. Particular to this study, modern Black conservatives find themselves “ensconced at the heart of the national dialogue on race, tapping into the enduring American philosophies of individualism and free enterprise, seeking to overturn the corrective political initiatives secured by the great civil rights movement” (Ondaatje 2). While I find value in considering Black conservatives within the rhetorical tropes and traditions of Black people, I also endeavor to show how their rhetoric functions within the American political rhetorical landscape. To accomplish this goal, I analyze the speeches and arguments of three prominent Black conservative rhetors with the aim of offering an initial representation of how Black conservatives articulate themselves within public and political discursive moments.
Richard Weaver and Rhetorical Tropes

My dissertation considers the rhetoric of Black conservatives as both an example of African American rhetoric(s) and national political discourse. For this study I use 45 speeches, 15 each, from three prominent Black conservative politicians: Alan Keyes, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Colin Powell, former Secretary of State, and Condoleezza Rice, also a former Secretary of State. In total, the corpus of data analysis includes 354 pages of text, approximately 176,350 words delivered between 1996 and 2015 to audiences ranging from college graduates at Southern Methodist University to potential voters in Idaho to the United Nations Security Council in New York City. My analysis focuses on the identification of traditional rhetorical tropes and schemes originally observed by early Greek and Roman scholars such as Aristotle and Cicero. Of the roughly 440 classical tropes and schemes, I observe 20 schemes and 15 tropes employed by the rhetors, 1,179 occurrences in total. For the purposes of this dissertation I discuss the tropes, breaking down the speeches into units the size of a complete sentence to code for tropes I observe. Much of the scholarship on these public figures and Black conservatives in general reside in the disciplines of Political Science (Dawson; Lewis), Black Studies (Watson), History (Flynn; Ondaatje; Rigueur), and Communications (McPhail; Smith), and in these disciplines the scholarship remains sparse. The dearth of research on Black conservatives in general and their rhetoric specifically belies a rich and storied part of Black history in America typically stigmatized by current perceptions of Black conservative ideology. Much of that history harkens to a schism among early Black intellectuals W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, with Du Bois asserting the talented tenth as the means for elevating

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3 Though there exist tropes specific to the Black oral tradition, such as call-response and signifying, I only encountered one use of such a trope in all of the speeches delivered by Keyes, Powell, and Rice. I discuss this observation in chapter four.
Black people while Washington advocates an individualistic “bootstraps” mentality. Though history does remember Washington as a pioneer in education, far less work traces his influence on current trends in society, or how conservative ideas function currently within the Black community. By studying a neglected subsection of Black identity, this difference within difference, I bring attention to a unique and important area of the Black rhetorical tradition in general, specifically as it pertains to Black conservatives beyond their status as tokenized people in Black communities and political contexts.

Frameworks of analysis for African American rhetoric(s) typically assume a unified whole in terms of socio-economic conditions, notions of community, and conceptions of history, concerning what arguments appeal to African American audiences. These frameworks enumerate the methodological approaches Black rhetors utilize when constructing and deploying their rhetorics of resistance. Many of these frameworks construct African American rhetoric(s) as inherently different from rhetorical practices derived from Western traditions (Smitherman; Gates; Asante). These scholars locate the difference of rhetorical origin in the preservation and adaptation of African rhetorical traditions by descendants of enslaved people. A second group of scholars construct their analytical frameworks from education practices prevalent in Black communities (Richardson; Gilyard; Young; Lathan; Moss). These more contemporary approaches take into account a greater integration of Black people in American society, specifically how Black people combine aspects of more traditional African American rhetorical practices with mainstream expectations of education. While these analytical frameworks nod

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4 Anne Wortham speaks to this historical omission, noting that “Washington was an ardent proponent of free enterprise and championed the other ideals of Western civilization,” points not typically covered when discussing his contribution to Black people specifically and the United States generally (7).
toward education as a distinct aspect of African American rhetoric(s), they still assume a unified identity in terms of the rhetorical practices applicable to Black communities writ large.

In a move away from these analytical frameworks, some scholars now focus on specific aspects of identity to understand African American rhetorical methods of political resistance. Groundbreaking work on black women’s rhetoric (Logan; Royster) as well as Black queer people (Pritchard) analyze rhetorical methods practiced in certain Black communities but not found across all Black communities. Rather than arguing for a holistic understanding of African American rhetoric(s), these scholars surface how the multiple identities Black people embody influence rhetorical methods traditionally observed as derived from the larger, unified Black community. In a similar manner, my analytical framework brings together rhetorics typically construed as mutually exclusive, specifically conservative rhetoric and Black rhetoric, to surface the rhetorical methods of Black conservatives. African American rhetoric(s) and conservative rhetoric originate from distinct reference points: African American rhetoric(s) from a place of resistance and conservative rhetoric from a Western, essentialist foundation. Yet, these typically opposing rhetorics come together under the rhetoric of Black conservatives, combining means of persuasion that both resists oppression [African American rhetoric(s)] while also appealing to defined systems of power (conservative rhetoric), into one voice that subverts expectations of rhetoric and identity. Building upon scholarship that traces the rhetorical practices of Black resistance common in Black communities (Logan; Royster; Pritchard), my analytical framework analyzes the rhetorical tropes and figures in Black conservative rhetoric to surface their rhetoric of resistance. For conservative identity, I rely on the scholarship of Richard M. Weaver, a modernist and theorist of conservative rhetoric. In bringing together these two unlikely frameworks, especially in light of Weaver’s essentialist epistemology and racist arguments
discussed below, I devise a method to better listen to (Royster; Ratcliffe) voices that seem heterogenous in nature, adapting aspects of their stated identities to advocate for positions important to their understanding of the world, even if those identities appear contradictory.

A growing body of research in political science explaining the idea of partisanship theorizes that a person’s political identification correlates closely with their identity and psychology (Barreto; Johnston et al.; Mason). Previously, American political theorists argued that geographical and ideological sorting contributed to the increased polarization of the United States Congress, with liberals becoming synonymous with Democrats and conservatives synonymous with Republicans (Theriault 48). However, researchers now observe identity markers as playing an outsized role in determining a person’s political affiliation. While this move seems particularly salient for most right-leaning constituents of the American political system today, I would argue that Black communities find sanctuary within the Democratic party identity and social policies since at least the civil rights movement of the 1960’s, perhaps contributing to a vast majority of Black people voting Democratic in elections even while holding socially conservative beliefs. Viewing political affiliation as identity also helps explain why Black communities push Black conservatives to the fringes of their political sphere, a result of the seemingly incompatible nature of their racial and political identities. Unlike the relationship between queer identity and Black identity, where both groups have shared non-violent strategies to combat systemic oppression in spite of Christianity’s conservative influence over Black people’s views on sexuality, tacit acceptance of Black and conservative identities existing together generally seems rare, and there exists minimal effort to normalize Black conservatives as part of the Black communities. The split between conservative and African
American rhetorical strategies may reside in the theory and methodology undergirding conservative rhetoric.

Scholars trace the theory and practice of modern conservative rhetoric to the writings of Richard M. Weaver. A contemporary of Kenneth Burke, Weaver contemplated the cultural role of rhetoric; that is, how people use rhetoric to maintain and preserve valuable aspects of culture in the face of adversarial arguments and shifts in societal norms. Most scholars attribute Weaver’s affinity for the preservation of culture to his Southern roots and romanticized vision of the South (Beasley; Duffy and Jacobi). In their exploration of Weaver’s scholarship, Bernard K. Duffy and Martin Jacobi offer this definition of conservative rhetoric based on Weaver’s work:

Conservative rhetoric, “right reason,” attempts to achieve persuasion and cultural coherence by expressing intuitive and imaginative truths, preferably in arguments from definition, analogy, and genuine authority, rather than from false authority or from vexing arguments from circumstance, which assume that things as they are create imperatives for belief and action. (1)

Grounding arguments in “intuitive and imaginative truths” grants Weaver and other conservatives an elevated platform of rhetoric in comparison to other rhetorical methods. Since these truths come from nature as opposed to man, man cannot fabricate the exigency latent within said truths. Deriving arguments from natural truths, then, imbues the rhetoric of conservatives with authority liberal rhetoric lacks. Theorizing his perspective on arguments, Weaver builds upon Aristotle’s concept of topics by separating the various places where people locate their arguments into four groups, “from definition, analogy, and genuine authority” as well as “from circumstance.” Arguments from definition originate from the essence of a thing, consistent and unchanging over time. Arguments from analogy or similitude draw comparisons
between two things, hinting toward the truth that may not immediately present itself. Arguments from cause and effect use a known outcome to explain an unknown outcome to an audience. Finally, arguments from circumstance abandon reason, imploring the audience to act because the circumstance demands action absent of verifiable. The previous arguments originate from the rhetor, what Weaver described as internal arguments; he also identified an external argument that comes from how the audience perceives the rhetor. Arguments from genuine authority rely on the position of the speaker as authority for truth rather than the thing under discussion, forcing the audience to discern the veracity of the speaker’s words for themselves.

Listed in descending order of efficacy, this hierarchy of arguments correlates to political ideology according to Weaver, with liberals more convinced by arguments from circumstance while conservatives find arguments from definition more persuasive. Conservatives should find arguments from definition most persuasive, though arguments from similitude and cause and effect may also work depending upon certain circumstances. The 2016 presidential election represents an extreme version of an argument from analogy, with Donald Trump’s numerous disparaging comments about people of color and immigrants catalyzing racial animosity among those who voted for him (Schaffner et al.; Luttig et al.). Ideally, conservatives will find arguments from definition most appealing as they approximate phenomena occurring naturally around us (Weaver 112). The laws of nature are absolute, so arguments derived from natural definitions contain truth within them. Further, the arguments from definition “must be related to the existential world” and not intellectual exercises of debate (Bliese 403). John R. E. Bliese cites Weaver’s analysis of different arguments concerning slavery for this distinction – Henry David Thoreau posits slaves should be free while John Randolph of Roanoke explains why his slaves should be free, then proceeds to create opportunities for the former slaves to thrive in the
material world (404). For the conservative rhetorician, truth describes more than some ethereal concept beyond the reach of humans, but an essence inextricably tied to the experiences of people in the world.

While Weaver contributed substantially to rhetorical studies, the postmodern turn takes issue with his essentialist and neo-Platonic approach to rhetoric. The postmodern turn in rhetorical studies developed as a reaction to scholars questioning the role of subjectivity in the production of persuasion. A modernist interpretation of subjectivity envisioned the rhetor as holding complete control over the implementation and effectiveness of rhetoric – harkening back to Plato’s concept of the philosopher king as an all-knowing ruler able to see and speak on issues in a fair manner. The rhetor would appeal to his audience by conveying a universal truth understood by everyone and unquestionable in terms of its veracity and application. Weaver found refuge in Plato’s work, building much of his rhetorical theory and practice on the original work of the ancient Greek philosopher. However, recent scholars take issue with this essentialist construction of rhetoric, critiquing notions of knowledge and truth (Foucault; Nietzsche) as well as agency (Biesecker; Greene; Turnbull; Butler; Miller). The field of rhetorical studies no longer subscribes to Weaver’s essentialist epistemology of rhetoric, let alone his views on race and Southern culture.

Weaver identified as unapologetically Southern, taking decidedly pro-slavery stances in his writing (Duffy and Jacobi 44). Indeed, in the previous example of John Randolph of Roanoke, the idea of a former slave owner providing opportunities for his former enslaved people, while admirable, also brings up questions of power and agency that Thoreau seems more comfortable leaving to the newly freed people. In addition to critiques of race, scholars find fault with his arguments concerning truth (Covino and Joliffe; Bizzell and Herzberg), conservatism
(Bilese; Crowley) and gender (Duffy and Jacoby). Crowley’s criticism of Weaver’s conservatism presents one of the greatest challenges to integrating Weaver’s theory into my framework as she questions whether the rhetorical tradition should include any rhetorical theory that openly promotes hostility toward another group of people (67). In terms of Black conservative rhetoric, I find it difficult to employ the theory of a racist who actively believed Black people were inferior to White people. By giving credence to one part of Weaver’s theory, his hierarchy of arguments, some might interpret this move as validating Weaver’s larger corpus and rightly ask: why employ the theory of a person who promoted an essentialist view of rhetoric and viewed Black people as inferior to White people to interpret Black conservative rhetoric? As the lone modern conservative rhetoric scholar of note, however, Weaver offers valuable insight into the development of conservative rhetoric in their own words, a method vastly understudied in the field of rhetorical studies. By using Weaver’s scholarship to analyze Black conservative rhetoric, I both challenge the veracity of Weaver’s theory as well as his racist positions concerning Black people. Affirmative application of Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments proves the soundness of his theory, while simultaneously incorporating Crowley’s plea to always include the “cultural and ideological contexts” of a rhetorical theory when implementing it in our work (67). As witnesses to Jim Crow and the civil rights movement, Black conservatives are well aware of racism’s nefarious nature. Analysis of their arguments, then, requires sensitivity to their cultural background as Black people and ideological foundation as conservatives. Observing their rhetoric as heterogenous affords me the perspective required to surface the rhetorical tropes Black conservatives utilize within the context of Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments, while also maintaining awareness of Weaver’s racist tendencies. More broadly, my analytical framework
challenges the field of rhetorical studies to listen to and analyze all of the available means of persuasion, even those means we find disagreeable.

Using this framework, I analyze the rhetoric of Black conservatives with a two-step process designed to work in conjunction with my research questions. The first step involves analyzing speeches by Black conservatives using a coding scheme I developed based on classical and African American rhetorical tropes. This coding scheme produces sentence-sized data streams that I then analyze to reveal the rhetorical theory behind the tropes. The second step consists of categorizing the data according to Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments by labeling data streams according to the type of argument employed by the rhetor. This two-step process generates evidence useful for exploring two questions related to my overall research questions: how do Black conservatives manifest racial and ideological identity through their rhetoric, and how do Black conservatives construct arguments for their audiences? Many of the arguments utilized by Black conservatives point to an intersection of race and civics as indicative of a person’s political identity. By locating the audience most closely aligned with the identity promoted through the tropes utilized by Black conservatives, I can point to the significance, or insignificance, of race to their rhetoric. Jaqueline Jones Royster’s call and Krista Ratcliffe’s methodology of rhetorical listening inform my analytical framework overall to promote a method of listening to positions people may find repulsive, to hear unfamiliar rhetorics as familiar within a specific context rather than perverse. With this analytical framework and dissertation, I offer a means of understanding the arguments of Black conservatives.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

The second chapter theorizes how Black conservatives form their ethos in relation to their mostly White, politically conservative audiences. Scholarship within the field of African
American rhetoric(s) typically highlights the necessity of Black rhetors to foreground the Black experience before positioning themselves as authorities. This method of constructing ethos also assumes a liberal foundation to the character of Black people due to the narrative of resistance built within the rhetorical tradition. I argue in this chapter that Black conservatives use the same strategy of discussing narratives of blackness before asserting their authority to form their ethos, but they do so while emphasizing a conservative foundation to their character. By employing this shift in political foundation Black conservatives complicate the relationship between blackness and history and how political actors use Black history for political gains.

Chapter three concerns the use of rhetorical questions by Black people as a political tool of self-definition. Modern rhetorical theory recognizes rhetorical questions as a means to access agency for Black people – a view I share as well. I argue Black conservatives follow a similar tactic, using rhetorical questions in speeches to define themselves as individual political actors who resist narratives of collective victimhood. Though they recognize the oppression and trauma of historical tragedies such as slavery, Black conservatives view the continued use of oppressive narratives as perpetuating a stagnant political vision instead of defining oneself based on the pursuit and achievement of opportunities. Using various types of rhetorical questions, Black conservative rhetors manipulate their questions to define ideas for their audience that combine race and conservatism into a unique means of persuasion. Through their speeches, Powell, Rice, and Keyes set expectations for their audience concerning conservative principles through defining ideas or causing the audience to doubt the definition already in their minds.

The fourth chapter engages with the long history of trope usage in African American discourse. Used as both a survival technique as well as a means of intercultural communication, linguistic tropes occupy an ever-present position in the discourse of Black people. Black
conservatives also participate in this tradition, though they direct their tropes toward White and conservative audiences. Rather than dismiss or deceive White members of the audience, Black conservatives use comparative rhetorical tropes, such as metaphor and metonymy, to directly communicate ideas to their audience regardless of their racial demographics. I argue that Black conservatives revise traditional expectations of how Black people use tropes in discourse to promote values shared between different groups in political and social contexts.

The final chapter restates the stakes of my dissertation, specifically how understanding Black conservative rhetoric contributes to a greater understanding of national political discourse as well as African American rhetoric(s). Additionally, I will use the conclusion to restate my methodology, based on the examples used in the dissertation. I will also return to my discussion of Obama’s rhetoric begun at the start of this chapter. Obama’s unique position as the first Black president provides an ideal context for framing the larger ramifications of understanding Black conservative rhetoric considering the expectation of nationally-elected officials to communicate with the entire country. With Obama’s racial identity constantly influencing how his audiences perceived his rhetoric, I will touch upon one speech delivered during his presidency to highlight the Black conservative rhetorical tradition already at play in his rhetoric, public discourse generally, and the Black communities that view this difference within difference as untenable. Through my analysis offered in the previous chapters, I hope to provide a substantial body of critique on how society understands Black conservative rhetoric, specifically concerning rhetorical tropes and Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments. In doing so, I plan to position my dissertation as an important contribution to how differences become constructed and discussed in society and in the academy. Beyond representation, I contend that studying Black conservative
rhetoric provides necessary context to appreciate the depth and complexity of being a Black person in America.
CHAPTER TWO
“OTHER[ED] SOURCES SEEN THROUGH OTHER EYES”
BLACKNESS, CONSERVAITISM, AND ETHOS

I have no reason to despise the fact that I am a Negro; the fact that I am simply is of no primary significance. The social significance of racial identity is not derived from the laws of nature, but from the conventional judgments of men. Racial identity is given to us by nature, but the natural laws of existence give it no significance in so far as human survival is concerned. – Anne Wortham, *The Other Side of Racism*

The distinction of race has always been used in American life to sanction each race’s pursuit of power in relation to the other. – Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character*

SOURCING BLACK CONSERVAITVE ETHOS

As described last chapter, scholarship in African American rhetoric(s) traces the ways that Black rhetors establish their ethos using rhetorics of resistance—persuasive methods borne from centuries of oppression and struggle in the United States. Black conservatives, such as Anne Wortham and Shelby Steele’s whose quotes open this chapter, reflect a reluctance to embrace the long legacy of racial oppression in the United States. They instead opt to establish their own ethos with conservative audiences by downplaying, even denying, race as important to the construction of their positions. In the introduction to *The Other Side of Racism*, Wortham characterizes her writing as neither for nor against Black people but for the individual. Focusing on individualism means she refutes the collective sense of oppression present more traditional

5 “Arguments based on testimony and authority, utilizing external sources, have to be judged in a different way. Actually, they are the other sources seen through other eyes” (*Language is Sermonic* 215-216).
expressions of Blackness – a sense she describes as taking on the role of historical victim to assuage the guilt of White people. Thus, when she states that her skin color contains “no particular significance” she indicates to conservatives that she favors an individual’s ability to choose their association with other people rather than a forced community based on appearance (Wortham xii). In like fashion, Steele argues in *The Content of Our Character* that the “distinction of race” functions as a method of subjugating a group of people different from oneself to maintain imbalance among people and perpetuate racial roles (5). Creating community and advocating for rights align with conservative principles familiar to Steele and Wortham – the founding of the United States represents a community of people advocating for representation in government.

Both scholars position race as independent from oppression; in other words, race functions as a convenient explanation for a sense of oppression rather than the reason. Wortham and Steele suggest that Black conservatives resist the expectation that their actions align with a shared sense of oppression or victimhood as they insist race simply functions as a means of distinguishing people based on physical appearance. Race still matters to Black conservatives – they reject colorblind ideology as it erases historical wrongs perpetrated on people of color. At the same time, Black conservatives argue that discourse on race should never rise to the level of political correctness found in narratives of victimhood they associate with traditional Black discourse. Rather than conceiving of race as a method for establishing ethos and calling for political change, as suggested by scholarship on Black rhetors, Black conservatives appeal to their audience’s desire for colorblindness by rendering their Black identity through conservative ideals. Merging Black identity and conservative ideology produces an ethos that understands political correctness and narratives of victimhood as appealing to the same sentiment. In doing
so, Black conservatives force the question: If Black rhetorical ethos has largely been created through rhetorics of resistance, what rhetorical means do Black conservatives utilize to establish their ethos?

To develop ethos with audiences, Black conservatives employ arguments from authority and testimony to persuade audiences of their positions. Black conservatives use their own narratives, or testimony, to speak about race while relying on broader authorities like the Founding Fathers or the Bible to signify conservatism. When establishing authority on race with their audience, Black conservative rhetors resist narratives of victimhood by framing African American histories in conservative ideology. Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell all take important moments from Black history and reframe them through a conservative lens to persuade audiences of their authority to speak on conservatism and race. Once they dispense of the issue of race, Black conservatives use warrants grounded in conservative authority to connect with audiences based on the themes of purity and loyalty, two important themes of conservative morality. To establish their authority, Black conservative rhetors refer to the Bible to evoke the ideal of purity, and they refer to the Constitution or related governance documents to evoke the theme of loyalty. By employing these unique warrants Keyes, Rice, and Powell showcase their ideological connection to predominantly White audiences, bolstering their ethos as conservatives who happen to have Black skin. In what follows, this chapter analyzes the ethos of Keyes, Rice, and Powell, using Richard M. Weaver’s concept of arguments from authority to surface how these rhetors establish authority with their audiences through notable speeches each rhetor delivered either while serving in a political administration or while engaging with important political moments.
Blackness, Authority, and Testimony

Black skin in America in the 1700s signified a rhetor as always already intellectually inferior and less-than-human in the eyes of White audiences. Compromised from the beginning, rhetors such as Frederick Douglass faced the nearly impossible feat of establishing authority with his audience no matter the methods he employed when speaking or writing. In his book *Revisiting Racialized Voice: African American Ethos in Language and Literature*, David Holmes sees Douglass’ attempt and failure at overcoming race in his rhetoric as bringing attention to who authenticates Black voices, specifically in political contexts (8-9). Douglass’ first book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* begins with the “Preface” written by William Lloyd Garrison rather than Douglass himself or some other liberated man. Rhetorically, Garrison, a well-known White abolitionist, provides authority to Douglass’ narrative by vouching for the author’s character. By assuring readers that Douglass wrote the text by himself using his own experiences, Garrison tempers any concerns readers, particularly White readers, may have of fabrication and sensationalism on the part of Douglass (*Narrative 34*). Garrison’s authority functions as a proxy for Douglass’ authority, imparting to Douglas the ethos needed for audiences who may or may not eventually accept the veracity of his testimony or experiences. Douglass’ problem of ethos represents a problem of race that prevented the exceptional orator from relying on his own authority with audiences.

At first glance, viewing Douglass’ rhetoric as ineffectual seems inconsistent with his fame, notoriety, extensive readership, and considerable legacy as a master writer and orator. His words still echo in speeches today concerning freedom and oppression, inspiring the working class as well as presidents to strive toward a more equitable future for Americans. However, these measures of success do not necessarily account for Douglass’ own goals, not least of which
included a desire to overcome race as a means of creating distinction between men. Holmes identifies “one legacy of the Enlightenment: racial essence, more specifically, the assumed inherent, intellectual inferiority of the African” as the main hindrance of Douglass’ effort to rely on his own voice for authority (14). Unlike the White abolitionists at the time, Douglass lacked the luxury of a perceived racelessness intrinsic to those in power when speaking on divisive topics such as race. Though Douglass failed in establishing ethos through authority in his first narrative, he published two other versions of his narrative that relied increasingly on testimony to overcome the problem of ethos with the audience. Both *My Bondage and My Freedom* as well as *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* include far more text and detail than the first narrative as Douglass used quantity as a substitute for authority. In finding an alternative source for establishing his authority Douglass sets an example for future Black rhetors who face the conundrum of trying to establish one’s ethos while being Black.

Black women writers also face this conundrum, as Jacqueline Jones Royster describes in “Responsible Citizenship: Ethos, Acton, and the Voices of African American Women.” Here Royster lists several methods Black women employ to establish authority with audiences, including “multivocality, multifocality, and multiple discourses” as well as “multiple genres” (48). In producing writing that contains a multitude of voices speaking in different spaces through multiple discourses and genres, Black women writers like Ida B. Wells-Barnett confront the racist notion of intellectual inferiority based on skin tone through a preponderance of evidence to the contrary. Writing to audiences through multiple viewpoints and genres allow Wells-Barnett and others like her to communicate stories both personal and political to a wider

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6 *Narrative* contains 171 pages, whereas *My Bondage* contains 244 pages and *Life and Times* contains 695 pages. Each narrative builds upon the previous version by including either greater detail on Douglass’ escape from slavery or subsequent exploits in Douglass’ life as a free man. In both cases, Douglass offers additional testimony to his narrative of overcoming slavery, thus bolstering his ethos as a Black rhetor.
audience using their own voice – voices cultivated through a history of oppression and dismissal. As with the voices, modes, discourses, and genres Black women writers take up, their oppression also takes on multiple forms, including race, class, and gender. Addressing and responding to these oppressions become rhetorically the basis for their authority; observing injustice personally allows Black women writers to persuasively write about injustice observed globally (Royster 50). Oppression and injustice, then, become the basis for Black rhetors to establish ethos among various audiences. Taken along with the rhetorics of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (Banks), as well as Harriet Jacobs (Pittman) and Alain Locke (Watts) a pattern emerges: Black rhetors use personal testimony as evidence of their individual and presumably shared oppression to establish themselves as authorities in their arguments. Black conservatives also use testimony to connect with audiences; however, their interpretation of the evidence they offer originates from a conservative warrant rather than a liberal warrant, producing a conclusion often understood as incompatible with their race.

In the Minds of Conservatives

Black conservatives use testimony and authority in intriguing ways to establish ethos, while weaving their racial identity into their alignment with conservative ideals. One such example comes from Condoleezza Rice when she delivered a commencement address at the College of William & Mary on May 16, 2015. The former Secretary of State spoke to an audience including the 2015 graduating class as well as faculty and administration at one of the oldest education institutions in the country. She begins her commencement address, a genre meant to convey advice to graduates on becoming a valuable member of society, with a story present in previous commencement addresses about how her grandfather became a college

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7 “In its simplest form, *ethos* is what we might call the argument from authority, the argument that says in effect, Believe me because I am the sort of person whose word you can believe” (Halloran 60).
graduate.\textsuperscript{8} John Wesley Rice, Sr. enrolled at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, paying his way by selling cotton from his parent’s farm. After running out of cotton, Rice found out he could continue attending college through a scholarship for men training to become Presbyterian ministers. By accepting the scholarship, Rice not only became the first person in his family to earn a college degree, he formed the religious foundation of future family members, including the future Secretary of State. Condoleezza Rice offers this story to graduates both to add a personal touch to her commencement address, and to frame the argument she wants the graduates to believe: “Because of all that my grandfather and others of my ancestors endured – poverty and segregation, really second-class citizenship – they understood that education was a privilege, not a right, and that it therefore conferred certain obligations” ("College of William & Mary"). Here I borrow from an argument structure developed by British philosopher Stephen Toulmin in The Uses of Argument where arguments in their most basic form consist of claims, what someone wishes to prove, evidence, information meant to support the claim, and warrants, underlying assumptions that support the claim. Rice offers two claims in her argument – that “education was a privilege, not a right” and “that it therefore conferred certain obligations” for graduates to enact after college. She goes on to explain those obligations in the remainder of the address but focusing on Rice’s first claim helps clarify the role the narrative of her grandfather fulfills in her argument.

The evidence she offers concerning the status of education for citizens derives from “all that [her] grandfather and others of [her] ancestors endured – poverty and segregation, really second-class citizenship.” The struggle of Rice’s grandfather to attain an education suggests that all individuals must earn the privileges afforded to citizenship in the United States. Interestingly,

\textsuperscript{8} See Rice’s 2002 commencement address at Stanford University and 2012 commencement address at Southern Methodist University.
Rice frames her grandfather’s struggle as instructive rather than oppressive. Scholars traditionally interpret the struggle to overcome not only poverty and segregation, but slavery, Jim Crow, red-lining, and other racist institutional practices as indicative of oppression designed to refuse people like Rice’s grandfather an education, among other services. Though her grandfather’s story sounds inspirational, replacing the traditional warrant of a struggle based on race to an appreciation of the opportunity for education seems too great a leap. Warrants represent logical connections between the claim and the evidence the rhetor assumes the audience understands. Though a liberal audience may not understand the warrant used here, Rice’s audience takes the leap with her because they share an assumption she leaves out of her argument. For Rice and her audience, education falls beyond the rights provided by the government, meaning citizens, even second-class citizens, must attain the privilege of education on their own regardless of the hardships that stand between them and their goal.

The assumption comes from a conservative principle developed by William F. Buckley and M. Stanton Evans that the government should only hold the power to protect its citizens at home and abroad, as well as to pass and execute laws (Evans). Anything beyond these powers affords the government too much sway over its citizens, leading to a reduction of liberty. Because the audience already holds this assumption in their minds, either due to their own beliefs or the salience of such a well-known conservative principle, Rice can assert her argument to her audience without showing how the evidence connects to the claim and evidence of her testimony. When giving her commencement address Rice chooses to let the audience connect her

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grandfather’s struggle to conservative principles, rather than explicitly connecting the two ideas for her audience. By employing this warrant Rice led her audience to infer the claim that education is a privilege while also demonstrating her conservative credentials and establishing ethos with the audience. The assumption made by the audience demonstrates a significant level of trust in Rice that the perspective they hold on certain ideas also exists in her mind as a rhetor. The audience trusts the rhetor’s appeal to authority, they trust the rhetor’s personal experiences and testimony, and they trust the rhetor’s ethos as a speaker and public figure. As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, Rice and other Black conservatives employ warrants from conservative ideology as an ethos-building strategy to succinctly relate their arguments to audiences.

From a rhetorical studies perspective, the work of Richard M. Weaver lays a foundation for a conservative understanding of ethos. In his seminal text “Language is Sermonic” Weaver builds off Aristotle’s idea of topics to articulate three topics, in descending order, as the most appropriate topoi for conservatives in particular to locate their arguments. His topics include arguments from definition, arguments from similitude, and arguments from cause and effect (Language 209). Briefly, arguments from definition form conclusions from the nature of something – an idea fixed and stable over time. Arguments from similitude compare things to draw conclusions about something unfamiliar based on something more familiar. Arguments from cause and effect considers the relationship between things to determine conclusions for the audience. Weaver characterizes these topics as internal sources for arguments, meaning the interpretation of the experience comes from within the rhetor; however, Weaver also identifies an external source of arguments, authority and testimony, meaning the interpretation of the experience comes from others, specifically the audience. Where the internal sources of argument

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11 In other texts Weaver also includes a fourth topic that conservatives should find least persuasive, arguments from circumstance.
rely exclusively on the quality of the words used by the rhetor, arguments from authority and testimony are “as good as the authority” (*Language* 216). In other words, audience members must not only analyze the words spoken by the rhetor but how the rhetors convey their character.

Weaver’s strategy involves three components: authoritative sources, testimonial sources, and places of understanding. Authority corresponds to individuals or ideas the rhetor cites as evidence of the veracity of their position, such as the principle of limited government power alluded to by Rice (*Rhetoric & Handbook* 145). Testimony, on the other hand, refers to moments where rhetors establish their ethos through their own narrative and history to create a connection with their audience, like the story of Rice’s grandfather going to college (*Rhetoric & Handbook* 145). Though similar to the concept of testifyin (Smitherman) in the Black rhetorical tradition, testimony extends beyond Black experiences to encompass any individual narrative other people may find relational. Testimony also lacks the more ceremonial nature of testifyin as the latter incurs greater salience in setting like the Black church. Finally, Weaver contends that audiences require more than logical arguments to believe a rhetor; rhetors must approach the audience “through certain ‘places’” they understand to present arguments more persuasively (*Language* 173-174). Rhetors need to prove their character as someone worth believing by understanding where the audience locates their beliefs, then forming arguments based on those places.

Conservative audiences typically locate their understanding in themes of purity and loyalty; these themes represent foundations of morality among conservatives in both social and political settings. Political scientists Matthew Feinberg and Robb Willer’s scholarship focuses on political rhetoric in the United States to uncover what assumptions liberal and conservative people find most persuasive in terms of morality. Their research involved surveying over 1,300 people across six studies in 2015 to understand how moral arguments impact political affiliation.
The first two studies asked participants to craft arguments designed to persuade someone of a different political belief. The remaining four studies evaluated whether changing the moral warrant of an argument persuaded participants to change their stance on a topic. They conclude that conservatives find moral arguments that emphasize purity, such as health or religious practices, as well as loyalty, such as the military or concern for the country, more persuasive than arguments that lack these themes (Feinberg & Willer 1666). In Rice’s commencement speech, she appeals to the theme of purity concerning the role of government in the lives of citizens. A pure federal government would maintain the limits of power outlined in the Constitution, powers that lack the capacity to guarantee education for all United States citizens. For conservative audiences, warrants that reference a rhetor’s authority or testimony on themes of purity and loyalty develop the most solidarity between rhetor and audience. While this theoretical model resonated with Weaver and conservatives in the 1960’s, including the topic of race complicates arguments from authority in ways that matter in today’s public discourse.

Connecting Black and Conservative Ethos

Using Rice’s speech to explain ethos and warrants works well here as it provides a useful snapshot of Weaver’s rhetorical theory in action, but it utilizes race in a manner Weaver found objectionable half a century ago. Weaver’s political identity and research developed during a period where many political leaders viewed communism as a threat to the world, and progressive movements involving civil rights and feminism began to gain national traction (Duffy & Jacobi xv). Weaver’s rhetorical theory rests on a concerted effort to define and position conservatism as a culture rather than strictly a political ideology. An analysis of Weaver’s body of scholarship reveals an essentialist and decidedly pro-South political position before his death in 1963. 12 He

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wrote his dissertation at Louisiana State University on the survival of Confederate culture and later published an article titled “Lee the Philosopher” championing a Lost Cause defense of the Confederate general. Published prior to his passing, Weaver wrote “The Southern Phoenix” where he laments the encroachment of modern liberalism on social, political, and economic institutions in the South (8-9). In a sense his scholarship and rhetorical theory responds to the changes communism, civil rights, and feminism demand not only from political leaders but from society itself. These movements question ideas of authority and introduce new voices as testimony to the lived experiences of social and political actors. Weaver, however, sees tremendous value in preserving traditional ideas and voices of authority as a means of elevating conservatism to a cultural movement. The authorities Weaver cites are all White and all male, leaving no room for Black conservatives, let alone other voices of difference in conservative discourse.

The rest of this chapter analyzes selected speeches delivered by Alan Keyes, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell to examine how these Black conservatives use warrants to establish their ethos in the minds of their audiences. The assumption rhetors omit from the syllogisms corresponds to ideological truths concerning conservatism – the audiences find common ground with the Black conservatives on conservative ideas even if their lived experiences differ in terms of race. Rather than viewing racial differences as a limitation, Black conservatives utilize the testimony of their experience as evidence that their connection to conservatism resonates just as strongly as their White audience members. Their testimonies access histories associated with their race specific to the United States, such as narratives of slavery, immigration, and the civil rights movement. Together, the ideological assumptions shared between Black conservatives and their audiences, as well as their testimonies of being
Black conservatives, allow Keyes, Rice, and Powell to persuade audiences of their trustworthy ethos on conservatism. Each rhetor uses authority and testimony to present an ethos that combines conservative ideals with Black experiences into one authoritative voice. Creating an ethos that compounds and complicates a rhetor’s character aligns with observations by other scholars concerning race and gender (Pittman; Royster [2000]) as well as race and place (Banks; Watts). I work to extend the scholarly discourse on race and politics by showing how Black conservatives create an ethos that harmonizes conservatism and Blackness for their audience.

BLACK HISTORIES/ CONSERVATIVE LENS

Purifying the Role of Government

Following the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States, many conservatives who voiced disdain with the economic direction of the country formed the Tea Party movement around fiscal conservatism. People in the movement traced the Tea Party’s origin back to a video of CNBC’s Rick Santelli where he accused the Obama administration of poor economic behavior, declaring the country needed a new political party (Kirell). The movement caught on quickly, leading to party chapters in multiple states advocating for lower taxes and reduced government spending to lower the national debt. At the same time, observers of Tea Party rallies noted a component of the movement colored by racist rhetoric. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) claimed racist groups found an affinity with the Tea Party movement, pointing to images and effigies at rallies that disparaged Obama appearing at Tea Party rallies. Then-president of the NAACP Ben Jealous called on leaders in the Tea Party to denounce any racist components of the party (Barr). Eventually the board of the NAACP ratified a resolution condemning racists actions committed by the Tea Party
(“2010 Resolutions” 71-72). The Tea Party rejected the NAACP’s words, and called a press conference shortly after the NAACP ratified the resolution to counter the claims of racism.

On August 4, 2010, a group of African-American members of the Tea Party gathered at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. to articulate why accusations of the Tea Party as racist contained no merit. Their audience included the assembled media outlets, such as CNN and Slate.com, their associated audiences, as well as the NAACP. Among those gathered was Alan Keyes, an early leader in the party. Considering his strong political background as a member of the Reagan administration, Keyes felt compelled to speak on his own experiences as a member of the party where he relied on his authority as a leader to quell concerns on any racist attitudes among Tea Party members. At the close of his speech, Keyes argues against the idea that racism buttresses the Tea Party movement so much as concern for fellow citizens oppressed by an undisciplined government:

This is not a racial matter. It is a matter that concerns all Americans, and I have stood proudly at Tea Party gatherings. I have stood proudly there not as a black American, not in the midst [of] white Americans, not as an American who in any way exemplified this or that physical characteristic which I have in common with others, but rather as a human being who has in common with other human beings a commitment to our dignity, a commitment to our liberty, a commitment to a nation dedicated to hope that has stood as a beacon light of true hope for human beings all around the world…("Slaves")

Keyes argument begins with his conclusion (“This is not a racial matter”) followed by the claim (“It is a matter that concerns all Americans”) and his supporting evidence (“…a human being who has in common with other human beings…”). His conclusion attempts to convince his
audience that the NAACP incorrectly labelled parts of the Tea Party movement as racist. He offers his identity as a Black man as evidence he would recognize moments of racism, thereby offering an alternative to the narrative presented by NAACP. Earlier in the speech the former ambassador remarks that his relationship with the history of slavery gives him unique insight into how racism manifests in the United States ("Slaves"). Keyes argues that being a descendent of enslaved people confers to him clarity on the political goals of socialism and expansive government. Obama, generally characterized by Keyes and others on the right as a socialist, plans to expand government regulation to control all parts of a citizen’s life, a stance Keyes and other Tea Party members oppose. Keyes asserts the more conservative idea that the imposition of government motivates outrage within the Tea Party toward Obama as “a matter that concerns all Americans” rather than just one person or one group.

Keyes continues to evidence his claim that the Tea Party’s attack on the Obama administration “is not a racial matter” through apophasis\(^\text{13}\) by affirming his identity “not as a black American, not in the midst of white Americans, not as an American who in any way exemplified this or that physical characteristic which I have in common with others, but rather as a human being.” In his mind, the only valid reason Keyes understands to associate with others and build community comes from a shared sense of humanity. This shared sense of humanity places little emphasis on differences of race, instead valuing intellectual and ideological qualities among people. While Keyes’ position on identity works in a theoretical sense, it fails to properly explain his immediate context where he and almost a dozen Black conservatives must answer for the Tea Party’s racial attitudes. The context for Keyes’ argument encompasses not only

\(^{13}\) “The rejection of several reasons why a thing should or should not be done and affirming a single one, considered most valid.” (Burton)
conservative principles on diversity and race, it also includes the NAACP and other liberal entities invested in understanding the Tea Party’s position on race. As a veteran orator Keyes knows that his audience goes beyond conservatives in this context, so when he tells conservatives that the attack on the Obama administration “is not a racial matter” he addresses liberals at the same time. Keyes argues that his testimony as a descendent of enslaved people grants him the ethos to state whether the actions of the Tea Party count as racist. In effect, Keyes justifies the Tea Party by activating the same tactic the NAACP uses to frame the Tea Party’s actions as racist. The resolution passed by the NAACP only cites a perception of losing the country as prompting racist actions by Tea Party members (72). With no inartistic proofs to support their claim, readers of the resolution must rely upon the ethos of the NAACP when assessing the veracity of their argument. Keyes asserts a similar ethos based on race but shifts the warrant in his argument from oppression to a narrative of victimhood to convince his audience that racism played no role in the motives of the Tea Party.

Keyes offers three ideas concerning his conservative ideology as motives for the Tea Party as his speech shifts from the racial to the political. The human beings who gather at Tea Party events focus their action toward “a commitment to our dignity, a commitment to our liberty, a commitment to a nation dedicated to hope” according to Keyes. Dignity and liberty carry a religious significance for Keyes prevalent in many speeches he delivered since at least 2004. During a speech given in South Holland, Illinois on October 20, 2004 Keyes tells his audience “If we cannot invoke God’s name and His authority as citizens in our public life, then we can no longer refer to that which is the very foundation of our claim to liberty and justice, dignity and rights.” Keyes makes a similar, but more troubling, statement in a speech for Vision

14 See “Ten Conservative Principles” by Russell Kirk; specifically, principle five that understands differences of class and other forms of inequality as a part of living within social institutions.
America’s War on Christians Conference on March 28, 2006 concerning murder and the Koran: “Matter of fact, people tell me that the law that they have actually reflects the dictates of the Koran. So, they might have to – in order to respect the dignity and liberty of our human nature – they might have to make some amendments in the Koran.” These examples represent the tendency of Keyes to designate dignity and liberty as fundamental rights given by a Christian God to Americans. Conservatism for Keyes ignores the separation of church and state, meaning his religiously conservative values influence his political ideology. Subscribing to a religiously conservative ideology allows Keyes to base his authority on God and the theme of purity. Keyes argues for removing superfluous identity markers in favor of the essential components of human nature – the dignity to have other people recognize the humanity of the Tea Party and the liberty to act on their convictions. Finally, by describing the United States as “a beacon light of true hope for human beings all around the world,” Keyes connects his claim to another conservative authority, Ronald Reagan, and his numerous references to America as a shining city on a hill.  

Linking his authority with Reagan cements Keyes’ conservative credentials with the audience, thus providing the last step necessary to persuade audiences not only of the dangers of Obama’s socialist government, but the erroneous charge of racism to the actions of the Tea Party. In total, Keyes uses his testimony as a Black man and claims on conservatism to persuade people at the National Press Club of his authority to speak on matters of race and politics, by eliding his race to emphasize his shared humanness. Where Keyes’ speeches rely more on ideas of purity to substantiate his authority with audiences, Rice and Powell appeal to ideas of loyalty to ground their conservative ethos.

15 See Reagan’s election eve address titled “A Vision for America” on November 3, 1980 as well as his “Farewell Address to the Nation” on January 11, 1989.
16 As Reagan notes frequently in his speeches, the phrase “a shining city on a hill” originates from John Winthrop in 1630, itself an adaptation of a sermon Jesus spoke in Matthew 5: 14-16.
A Loyal Interpretation of Black Histories

Alan Keyes’ speeches all come from his own archive, and he wrote and delivered them all after his time in government. While the subject matter generally pertains to political contexts, Keyes’ speeches contain a certain amount of freedom to address issues more aligned with his ideological positions. However, the speeches collected and analyzed of Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell come mostly from the archives at the State Department, meaning their speeches and rhetoric align with the ideological positions of the White House. Their resistance to politically correct constructions of Blackness arise from their relationship to Black histories as well as the unique authority afforded to them by both holding the position of Secretary of State for the George W. Bush White House. Despite the different institutional contexts from which they wrote, Rice and Powell reference race in a similar manner to Keyes when speaking to their personal stake in issues. For Rice, this analysis concentrates on how she molds her racial testimony for different audiences while maintaining the conservative authority she embeds in her ethos. Analysis of Powell’s speeches concentrates on his interesting interpretation of history and race in speeches delivered during his time in the White House.

Unlike the rhetorical choices made by Alan Keyes concerning race, Condoleezza Rice typically engages her racial identity during her speeches. Where Keyes rhetoric seems to only project conservative positions while insinuating ethos on race, Rice positions race prominently in her speeches to not only establish her racial ethos, but to define her conservative ethos through race. Using Weaver’s language, Rice uses her testimony on race as the foundation of her conservative authority. Race functions as a tool for Rice to describe her understanding of conservatism to audiences that might assume she uses race as her primary identity instead. Rice demonstrates this use of Black ethos in a speech on foreign policy she delivered to the 28th
Annual Convention of the National Association of Black Journalists on August 7, 2003 in Dallas, Texas. Unlike many other speeches featured in this project, Rice’s audience consists mostly of Black people, specifically those who work in the media. While much of her speech describes the efforts by the Bush administration to bring the perpetrators of September 11th to justice, Rice also discusses the importance of bringing democracy to the Middle East. Interestingly, Rice draws a parallel between the struggle for democracy in the Middle East and the struggle for humanity by African Americans:

But Democracy is not easy. Our own histories should remind us that the union of democratic principle and practice is always a work in progress. When the Founding Fathers said “We the People,” they did not mean us. Our ancestors were considered three-fifths of a person. America has made great strides to overcome its birth defects – but the struggle has been long and the cost has been high.

(“Foreign Policy”)

To establish her authority with the audience, Rice offers the Black journalists in the audience the following argument – democracy gives people liberty (claim); Black people understand the struggle of attaining democracy (evidence); Black people can sympathize with the struggle of people in the Middle East to gain freedom and exercise democracy (conclusion). By connecting her racial identity to that of the audience, Rice creates the evidence for her warrant, that everyone in the room understands the struggle of striving for democracy and freedom. Rice’s use of personal pronouns here differs from other parts of the speech where she connects herself to the Bush administration. The people implicated by “our own histories,” “they did not mean us,” and “our ancestors” are Black people, specifically the Black journalists in the room. The sentence

\[17\] At the time of this speech, Condoleezza Rice was the United States National Security Advisor. Rice was not sworn in as Secretary of State until January 26, 2005.
“Our ancestors were considered three-fifths of a person” serves a significant role in proving the authenticity of Rice’s ethos to audience members. Her words not only recall the horror and trauma of slavery within the United States, they demonstrate her personal connection to the pain of slavery. Rice’s reference to the Three-Fifths Compromise also works to manipulate the typical relationship between the press and the government. As members of the press, the profession of the Black journalists in Rice’s audience demands a critical investigation and reporting on the government. Essentially, journalists need a reasonable distance from their subjects to effectively scrutinize government policy and actions. However, by joining her personal history and identity with that of the Black journalists, Rice implies to her audience that their Blackness supersedes any professional divisions that would cause the journalists to question Rice’s motives. By creating a connection between herself and the Black journalists based on race, Rice forms the foundation of her warrant connecting the struggle for democracy abroad with the struggle for democracy at home.

The claim Rice offers her audience concerns democracy and loyalty to one’s country brings scrutiny to the promise of liberty so often attached to the policy. Distinguishing between “democratic principle and practice” highlights the larger problem underpinning Rice’s evidence. The principles of democracy at the founding of the United States only applied to those allowed to experience liberty as defined by the Constitution. As enslaved people, Black people lacked the ability to practice democracy even while exposed to the language and principles of democracy surrounding them as they suffered. However, because the principles of democracy formed the foundation of the United States, Rice believes those same principles encouraged the country to “overcome its birth defects” and allow more people to enjoy the benefits of democracy. If Rice’s audience accepts the claim that loyalty to the United States leads to liberty using the evidence
that their shared history of oppression demonstrates the struggle to gain the promise of liberty offered by democracy, then the Black journalists should conclude that the same outcome would apply in the Middle East. Though the form of oppression differs, in this case an ideological subjugation drives youth away from productive actions toward “blowing themselves up,” the principles of democracy still hold the force to liberate the region and bring about positive change (“Foreign Policy”). Change in this case refers directly to the tragedy of September 11th; as National Security Advisor, Rice holds a unique interest in convincing her audience that journalists see the stance she and the Bush administration take on the Middle East as correct. Though Rice accomplishes much in using race to persuade her audience of this first warrant, she goes a step further when building her second warrant around the terrorist attack.

A little further in her speech, Rice uses a memory inviolable in the collective Black conscious to further establish her character among the Black journalists in the room as well as codify her conservative ideology (“Foreign Policy”). She recalls the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama as an example of terrorism related to the terrorism of September 11th. Rice mentions that one of her childhood friends died in the bombing, demonstrating her closeness to the national tragedy through a warrant– the evidence consisting of Rice’s closeness with the tragedy; the claim being Rice’s understanding of how terrorism functions for society generally and Black people specifically; the conclusion relating to Rice’s authority on matters of race considering her conservative background. By invoking this memory and placing herself within the context of the bombing, Rice conveys to her audience a Black ethos based in her testimony of the civil rights era. There exists no need to question Rice’s racial identity due to her proximity to such a serious and infamous moment in the history of the United States.
However, as previously stated, Rice sees ethos concerning race as a tool useful for a more noble and national purpose. Immediately after mentioning her friend who passed away in the bombing, Rice characterizes their death as a means to remind the country of ideals used to create the United States. By relating their passing with the tenets of American loyalty Rice sees the girls killed in that terrorist attack as setting “a better example to a world where difference is still too often taken as a license to kill” (“Foreign Policy”). Though Rice closes with a sentiment more aligned with social justice, the ethos she establishes with the church bombing and the story about her relationship with the civil rights movement all work to substantiate her authority on the conservative ideals of loyalty and individualism. Only by taking personal responsibility for one’s role in fighting terrorism can the United States realize the potential envisioned by the Founding Fathers. Further, that potential extends to all Americans regardless of their identity markers, meaning the story of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing is a story of American tragedy and American determination. Without first establishing her Blackness Rice would lack standing with the Black journalists to connect the bombing to notions of American loyalty without incurring claims of appropriation or dilution of a seminal moment in Black history. Rice’s ability to weave these seemingly disparate ideas together demonstrates not only her abilities as a political rhetorician but the adeptness to frame messages for different audiences. I find Colin Powell utilizes a similar strategy when speaking to audiences, embracing a painful history specific to African Americans as exemplifying the type of ethos available to all Americans who exert sufficient effort.

Sourcing Black Ethos from a Founding Father

A year prior to Rice’s foreign policy speech, Colin Powell received the Liberty Medal on July 4, 2002 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Powell spoke before government officials from the
state of Pennsylvania and the city of Philadelphia, members of the Liberty Medal selection committee, and other invited guests to the ceremony. This award presented by the National Constitution Center recognizes individuals who represent the ideals of the United States Constitution and serve people around the world (“Constitution Center”). In his speech Powell speaks glowingly of the Constitution and its role in framing his understanding of loyalty and democracy. However, he also takes an opportunity to describe the limitations of those who wrote the document and how those limitations still resonate today. Powell begins the speech by reflecting on the importance of what the medal represents as a citizen of the United States. This reflection includes Powell’s characterization of citizenship as “a privilege, whether you’re a tenth generation mainline Philadelphian, or child of immigrants, as I am” (“Remarks”). Similar to Keyes and Rice, Powell constructs his warrant with the claim that citizenship represents a privilege for American citizens, evidence centered on his background as the child of immigrants from Jamaica, and a conclusion that the ideals spelled out in the Declaration of Independence belong to patriotic citizens. The context of the speech works in Powell’s favor since being awarded the liberty medal means others recognize his authority on citizenship and democracy. Additionally, Powell’s status as former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then-Secretary of State also endows Powell with substantial authority with his audience. Essentially, Powell already exhibits the traits necessary to establish his conservative ethos and defend his conclusion on citizenship as a privilege rather than a right.

How race functions in Powell’s discourse on citizenship seems less clear as he attempts to draw connections between immigration and citizenship not typically aligned by rhetors or scholars. Drawing a distinction between “a tenth generation mainline Philadelphian” and “a child of immigrants” introduces questions of identity and history. Those Philadelphians not only
receive citizenship from birth, they must descend from immigrants themselves as Powell most likely overlooks Native Americans in this context. Characterizing those citizens as “mainline” further hints to Powell’s objective as positioning Philadelphians in this example as people who imagine themselves as inherently American and thus lack the necessity to prove their citizenship in the United States. Powell contrasts the sentiment of the mainline Philadelphians with that of immigrants who may feel the need to prove their citizenship and loyalty to the United States in every action they take. Powell tells audiences in other speeches about what his parents went through as immigrants and how they instilled in him a drive to constantly prove his American identity through work.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, Powell begins to establish his authority on race through personal testimony on his immigrant background.

Continuing with his speech, Powell makes mention of September 11\(^\text{th}\) and how that tragedy brought the country back to its democratic roots, not unlike Rice in her speech to the Black journalists. Instead of drawing a connection to historical tragedy, Powell reaches further back to the Declaration of Independence and the foresight of Thomas Jefferson. Framing September 11\(^\text{th}\) as a catalyst to revisit the principles of democracy, Powell reflects on the motives of Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence: “By choosing those words, secure those rights, Jefferson gave us a glimpse of his vision for the future. Because when he wrote about equality and unalienable rights, he knew that those rights didn’t apply to everyone, --- not at that time, not in this place” (“Remarks”).\(^\text{19}\) Ideally, every citizen of the United States should

\(^{18}\) From Colin Powell’s Speech to the Republican Nation Convention in San Diego, California on August 12, 1996: “My parents came to this country as immigrants over 70 years ago. They came here, as had millions of others, with nothing but hope, a willingness to work hard and a desire to use the opportunities given them by their new land…They raise two children to whom they gave a precious gift – a set of core beliefs. A value system founded on a clear understanding between right and wrong and a belief in the Almighty…We were taught that hard work and education were the keys to success in this country.”

\(^{19}\) Powell here refers to the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that
automatically access the rights guaranteed by the Constitution; however, historical sexist, racist, and xenophobic ideas restrict citizenship and access to rights. Powell seems to give Jefferson credit for including a mechanism women and non-White people could activate to gain citizenship in the United States. Jefferson includes the phrase “secure those rights” as a countermeasure to those restrictive ideas limiting people’s ability to gain full citizenship. By referencing rights in the Declaration Powell contributes additional authority to his point concerning the right of citizenship. The founders understood rights as fundamental to American life but not a formality – the rights from the Creator require securing on the part of those living in the country. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness parallel citizenship as rights available to inhabitants of the United States. Jefferson worked for his citizenship, Washington worked for his citizenship, Powell worked for his citizenship, so everyone must work for their citizenship. Through the strategic language of Jefferson Powell asserts his position on conservatism regarding citizenship in the United States.

Of course, of the three men mentioned here, Powell’s identity differs not only in terms of his place in history but also in terms of race, a fact not lost on Powell. Reflecting on the rhetorical and lexical choices available to Jefferson, Powell commends the slave owner with recognizing who would not hold the ability to call themselves men and secure the rights necessary to live as Americans, noting that the rights “didn’t apply to women. They didn’t apply to people who owned no land. They didn’t apply to black people. They surely didn’t apply to the slaves that Jefferson had on his plantation at Monticello” (“Remarks”). Crediting Jefferson’s perspective on history and inclusion here matters a great deal to Powell’s warrant on race. If the founding documents for the United States failed to contain the capacity to expand beyond

among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men…” (United States, National Archives, America’s Founding Documents).
property-owning White men, no amount of hard work and dedication would allow Powell the
opportunity to secure citizenship. The same goes for people in the audience who were not White
or men or grew up in poverty who now view themselves as U.S. citizens. The entire conservative
foundation Powell expresses in his speech would fall apart if the country were founded by
oppressors who thought Powell had no place in the United States as a citizen. By discussing
Jefferson’s writing as reflective of its time but progressive toward the future, Powell positions
his testimony as evidence a Black man who dedicates himself to his country can attain
citizenship. In the minds of his audience, though, Powell’s evidence based on race only serves to
bolster his claim concerning conservatism and citizenship, meaning race serves only a supportive
role in establishing an American identity for Black conservatives. For both Condoleezza Rice
and Colin Powell, the histories of race function as lessons on the pain and suffering of racial
minorities in the United States, but also as examples of how they specifically overcome
expectations of race to achieve their goals and work for their country by demonstrating loyalty to
their fellow citizens.

ETHOS IN BLACK CONSERVATIVE ARGUMENTS

To establish ethos with conservative audiences, Black conservatives use their testimony
as politically conservative Black people to garner the trust of their audience. Adjusting Weaver’s
metaphor of places to account for race means Black rhetors must first assuage concerns the
audience may have on race before addressing conservative values. Essentially, Black
conservative require two keys: one key to prove their skin tone does not preclude a liberal
political stance, and a second key to prove their conservative political stance. When they discuss
ideological positions with audiences, Black conservatives reference cultural touchstones within
conservatism as authority and testimony to establish their character. Black conservatives inhabit
the larger conservative culture as demonstrated by their ideological stances and positions with the United States government. Simultaneously, Black conservatives inhabit a second culture, a racial culture, which distinguishes their ethos from White conservatives. Black conservatives share a culture of conservatism with Weaver – they espouse the dangers of communism and voice skepticism toward the benefits of progressive movements. However, when Black conservatives include perspectives informed by their racial culture, their capacity to establish ethos with the audience becomes limited to testimony due to a paucity of Black authorities in conservative culture. Historically almost no Black figures participated in establishing or developing conservatism as an ideology or culture. More recent figures like Thomas Sowell and Clarence Thomas hold stature within the party, but their ethos generally resides in more academic settings. Additionally, former members of the Republican party like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Jackie Robinson moved to the Democratic party around the time of Weaver, further reducing the inclusion prominent Black people in the conservative culture. With so few authorities for Black conservatives to reference when speaking to audiences, their testimony becomes the authority on which they build their arguments. Historical Black figures who provide authority to their ethos would most likely fail to resonate with an audience of mostly White affluent people. Just as Douglass and Wells-Barnett reference themselves as authorities to audiences, so, too, do Black conservatives utilize their experiences as Black people in conservative spaces to build trust with their audiences.

This analysis of Black conservative rhetoric finds that the methods by which Black conservatives establish ethos with their audience appears both familiar and foreign to scholarship on Black ethos. Keyes, Rice, and Powell leverage their connection to Black histories as testimony to substantiate authority with their audience. Their arguments contain similar claims to
past atrocities enacted on people with similar skin tones and racial backgrounds. However, the conclusions Black conservatives assert to audiences based on those claims produce greater appeal among conservative audiences due to a shift in warrant from resisting oppression to resisting narratives of victimhood. Black conservatives link their lived experiences with those of their audience to evoke an ethos of shared humanity that recognizes yet minimizes differences of race. Their ethos requires a compromise of expectation because Black conservatives exist on the border between politics of race and politics of ideology. Many Black communities view the compromise of Black conservatives as a traitorous act – Black conservatives rarely become “black enough” to satisfy more traditional expression of Blackness. The examples of Keyes, Rice, and Powell, though, provide an important critique on the gatekeeping of Black identity by interpreting histories in ways that recognize historical pain but evoke a more egalitarian future.

While not always successful, Black conservatives use their ethos to convince people in their audience that they share the same concerns regardless of racial distinctions. By eschewing the authority of race in their ethos, Black conservatives evoke an ethos that appeals to a broader audience than that of most other Black rhetors.

Ultimately, Black conservatives, and indeed all rhetors, develop their ethos to gain the trust of their audience and make their arguments more persuasive. If the audience already believes arguments from authority, any subsequent argument should prove more palatable and convincing. Black conservatives use their unique position as racial minorities in conservative spaces to gain trust in ways unfamiliar to scholarship and indeed participants of African American rhetoric(s). Their ethos represents a form of difference unique to African American rhetorical studies, an ethos worth understanding and analyzing. Differing forms of ethos allow for more robust interrogation of ideas and a fuller sense of how history unfolds for different
people. Enslaved people and owners experienced slavery differently, different owners experienced slavery differently, and different enslaved people experienced slavery differently. From these differences emerge testimonies and authorities that all have value, even if that value only matters as an interpretation worth arguing against. The subsequent chapters on argument from definition and similitude provide further context for understanding how Black conservatives compromise race and ideology to persuade audiences of their words.
CHAPTER THREE
WHO IS A BLACK CONSERVATIVE?

THEORIZING THE USE OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Building on the concept of Black conservative ethos established in the last chapter, I detail in this chapter how Black conservatives couple their ethos with rhetorical questions to create moments of self-definition. These moments of self-definition in political speeches pertain not only to the subjects of the speeches, but the rhetors themselves as political actors. By posing questions to their audience, Black conservatives influence listeners to consider ideas from their point of view— a perspective constructed from Black and conservative experiences. Black conservatives utilize a full repertoire of rhetorical questions to engage their audience: anthypophora, anacoenosis, and pysma. From Greek rhetorical theory, anthypophora refers to rhetorical questions the rhetor answers; anacoenosis refers to rhetorical questions left unanswered; and pysma refers to a series of rhetorical questions asked of an audience that requires a complex response. I show in this chapter that Black conservatives consistently use anthypophora to overtly define ideas for their audience, while anacoenosis and pysma address doubt in the minds of the audience about previously held ideas. Together with a clearly understood ethos, Black conservatives use rhetorical questions to persuade audiences to initiate war with Iraq, adopt an anti-immigration stance on the US-Mexico border policy, and reify the United States’ position as the most powerful and influential force in the world.

Race and Rhetorical Questions through Three Trajectories

Traces of rhetorical questions used by African Americans fall along three trajectories for scholars of African American rhetoric— Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and rhetorical

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20 For this study I use the definition of the rhetorical question offered by Edwin Black: “A rhetorical question is asked for the persuasive effect of its asking. It solicits assent to a proposition by a subtle shift of burden of proof. It
education. Delivered at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio on May 29, 1851, Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” speech continues to influence rhetoric around racial and gender identity. bell hooks uses the title to Truth’s speech as the title and framing device for her own examination of sexism and racism called *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* that shows the compounded oppression lived by Black women in the United States. Though critical to discourse concerning Black feminist criticism and thought, hooks text only references the speech by Truth rather than analyze how the early abolitionist and feminist orator uses rhetorical questions in her speech. Indeed, scholarship associated with Truth’s speech generally borrows the quote to frame any subsequent analysis, in fields such as communication studies (Pearson), cultural studies (Taylor and Smitheman-Donaldson; Ignacio; Schwartz et al.), literature (Choudhry and Asif), and feminist theory (Haraway). While these scholarships share only a reference to Truth’s speech rather than a clear and cohesive discursive history, they do demonstrate the efficacy of rhetorical questions as an arresting device for their audience. The ability of Truth’s question to capture issues of agency, gender, race, and language in a way that still resonates over 150 years after the Women’s Rights Convention shows how rhetorical questions inspire analysis in engaging and powerful ways.

Analysis of how Frederick Douglass persuades audiences through rhetorical questions pays closer attention to his technique, specifically in his speech titled “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Douglass’ speech delivered a year after Truth on July 5, 1852 before the Rochester Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society in Rochester, New York, criticizes America’s

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21 See Nell Irvin Painter’s “Sojourner Truth in Life and Memory: Writing the Biography of an American Exotic” for discussion on the likely fabricated attribution of the phrase “Ain’t I a Woman” to Truth at the Women’s Rights Convention.
celebration of independence from Britain while continuing to enslave Black people within the
country’s borders. In “The 4th of July and the 22nd of December: The Function of Cultural
Archives in Persuasion, as Shown by Frederick Douglass and William Apess,” Patricia Bizzell
analyzes Douglass’ speech to surface how he utilizes personal and cultural knowledges to
establish ethos and understanding with his audience. Importantly, Bizzell highlights “not only
what [Douglass] did with what [he] knew, but also what [he] knew about both the dominant
white culture and [his] own home cultures” to emphasize the effectiveness of Douglass’ rhetoric
(56). While not focusing specifically on the use of rhetorical questions, Bizzell does analyze
certain quotes containing rhetorical questions as well as the title of the speech itself as examples
of Douglass connecting with and persuading his audience. Similarly, in “Frederick Douglass’ use
of comparison in his Fourth of July oration: A textual criticism,” Kevin R. McClure studies
Douglass’ speech through close reading to emphasize the orator’s anti-slavery rhetoric in
addition to Douglass’ break from Garrisonian abolitionism. As with Bizzell, McClure places
analysis of rhetorical questions within his overall critique, focusing most of his emphasis on the
comparisons Douglass uses to unify rhetoric surrounding “the American Revolution, the
Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution” with expectations concerning emancipation
(428). McClure shows how Douglass places these comparisons within rhetorical questions,
proving the efficacy of questioning audiences to persuade minds on topics as controversial as the
interpretation of the Constitution on slavery.

A third scholar, Jacqueline Bacon, interprets Douglass’ use of rhetorical question as a
component of the broader rhetorical trope of signifying. In her article “‘Do You Understand
Your Own Language?’ Revolutionary ‘Topoi’ in the Rhetoric of African American
Abolitionists,” Bacon analyzes the topoi of Black revolutionaries during the time of Douglass
and other abolitionists to better contextualize how they pushed back against pro-slavery rhetoric. In the case of Douglass, Bacon focuses on a passage from his 4th of July speech where he subtly questions the irony of his position as the speaker for an event dedicated to freedom. Bacon asserts that “Douglass’s exaggerated politeness and tone of embarrassment at his awkward position pretend to connote deference to his audience,” compounded by his rhetorical question posed to the very people who asked him to speak at their function. Not only does Douglass demonstrate his unique and robust rhetorical skills by weaving signifying into a speech intended for a sympathetic audience, he also showcases the multifaceted nature of rhetorical questions to highlight problems, but also point to revelations and solutions already available to the audience. In this instance, Douglass emphasizes the problem of asking a formerly enslaved person to discuss freedom before a mostly White audience, while also alludes to the power and potential within the Declaration of Independence to ensure freedom for all people within the United States, provided the audience act with conviction concerning the freedom discussed by Douglass. Together, the scholarship surrounding the use of rhetorical questions by Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass remains sparse, though scholars do recognize the influence of rhetorical questions on their rhetoric and how the questions posed by those orators continues to influence audiences today.

Concerning the rhetorical trope itself, scholarship around the purpose and application of rhetorical questions appears more robust than the intersection of race and rhetoric. The field of Linguistics pays particular attention to the function of rhetorical questions in communication, theorizing its role as an interrogative (Han; Rhode) as well as how to interpret a person’s use of

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22 “Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to…express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?”
rhetorical questions in discourse (Rexach). For Rhetorical studies, scholarship on rhetorical questions centers around theory and rhetorical education, particularly how students utilize the trope for personal gain. In terms of theory Cosmin Toth notes in “Do children need religious education? Discursive construction of children in talk shows by means of rhetorical questions” how rhetorical questions allow rhetors to hide beliefs and assumptions behind argumentative positions described as commonly shared beliefs. Specifically in the context of religious education in Romanian schools, Toth analyzes how rhetorical questions in the discursive arena of talk-shows “suggest a more profound level of implicitness and obviousness which cover larger argumentative gaps and, therefore, pupils are built using tougher ideological stokes, resulting in a higher impact” (85). Essentially, rhetorical questions allow rhetors to create gaps in arguments by posing rhetorical questions that contain both an obvious answer as well as underlying assumptions the audience agrees to by implicitly or explicitly stating the answer. More applicable scholarship to rhetorical education as well as my analysis of rhetorical questions used by Black people comes from Lena Ampadu in “Modeling Orality: African American Rhetorical Practices and the Teaching of Writing.” Here, Ampadu considers how using African American rhetorical texts may improve the persuasive writing style of students struggling to progress through other means. Analyzing texts from students using African American speeches as the oral basis for teaching persuasive writing, Ampadu observes how one student uses a rhetorical question to appeal emotionally to the audience, imitating the style of Henry Highland Garnet’s “An Address to the Slaves in the United States of America” (148). The significance of this move by the student resides in their capacity to make rhetorical choices that reflect both their personal perspective as a rhetor as well as their heritage as an African American. The ability to draw upon a history of persuasive rhetorical speeches grounded in the context of race reflects the
significance of Ampadu’s research on rhetorical education in African American settings as well as my interest in how political actors use rhetorical questions in speeches today to persuade their audience.

Shared through Toth and Ampadu’s research, as well as hooks, Bizzell and other scholars on the application of rhetorical questions in speeches, exists an understanding of a connection between the rhetorical trope and a rhetors sense of self-definition. For students in Romania, this self-definition manifests as the choice of religious or non-religious education. For African American students, self-definition appears in their ability to improve their persuasive writing through cultural texts. Black conservatives also participate in this tradition of using rhetorical questions as both a means of persuasion and self-definition. By titling this chapter “Who is a Black Conservative?”, I employ the rhetorical question as a tool to surface an identity and rhetorical tactic already active in political settings. As noted in previous chapters, scholars of African American rhetoric pay little attention to inflections of conservative ideology in the rhetoric of Black people, yet Black conservatives occupy historically and currently an impactful role in all three branches of the United States government. The definition I derive for Black conservative rhetoric draws upon both their resistance to expectations of victimhood concerning their racial identity as well as their desire for clarity on the meaning of truth and policy in government.

Blackness, Conservatism, and Rhetorical Questions

In their speeches, Black conservatives reflect the conservative methodology of Richard M. Weaver by basing their arguments within his hierarchy of arguments. Briefly, Weaver devised a system in the 1950s by which conservative rhetors should construct their arguments, distinguishing them from most persuasive to least persuasive. At the top of his hierarchy resides
arguments from definition, followed by arguments from similitude, and finally arguments from cause and effect. Weaver also identifies a fourth argument, arguments from testimony, which exists in parallel to the other arguments. In their chapter titled “Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric: An Interpretation,” Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland, and Ralph T. Eubanks note how Weaver argued “A speaker would make the highest order of appeal by basing his argument on genus or definition” because the genus or definition represents something everyone can recognize and understand (Weaver et al. 21). Arguments from definition resonate with audiences because they represent shared ideas concretized through use and expression over time. In his seminal text *Language is Sermonic* Weaver states that “Definitions…deal with fundamental and unchanging properties” meaning ideological and political party differences should fail to overcome definitions as persuasive measures for rhetors (Weaver et al. 209). Unlike arguments from testimony where warrants represent a rhetor’s attempt of conveying their testimony to their audience, he left no identifying rhetorical move or trope as emblematic of arguments from definition. Here, I propose that rhetorical questions signify a rhetor’s use of arguments from definition as they force the audience to consider whether they know and understand the “fundamental and unchanging properties” of a thing. As already discussed by Toth, rhetorical questions contain intentionally obvious answers for the audience that allow the rhetor to assert arguments based on assumptions associated with those answers. Using the language of Weaver, rhetors ask rhetorical questions of their audiences to determine whether they agree about the fundamental and unchanging properties of a thing to argue their larger point from a position that neither changes nor contains imperfections23.

23 From Weaver’s “Language is Sermonic”: “That which is perfect does not change; that which has to change is less perfect. Therefore, if it is possible to determine unchanging essences or qualities and to speak in terms of these, one is appealing to what is most real in so doing” (212).
Taking my proposal of rhetorical questions representing attempts by rhetors to use arguments from definition a step further, I argue that different types of rhetorical questions represent different means of arguing through definition for rhetors. Through my research I identify three main types of rhetorical questions used by Black conservatives: *anthypophora* 24, *anacoenosis* 25, and *pysma* 26. From Greek rhetorical theory, these terms denote the most common forms of rhetorical questions, each varying slightly in terms of the meaning behind the question or questions posed to the audience. *Anthypophora* signifies the most direct connection between rhetorical question and definition as the rhetor answers the question they pose to the audience. By answering the rhetorical question, the rhetor assumes the strongest position with the audience by telling them the definition they should already know. Instead of overtly defining ideas for the audience, *anacoenosis* and *pysma* leave the definition open, allowing rhetors to emphasize or assuage doubt in the minds of the audience concerning their connection with the rhetor and truth. Rhetors use one question (*anacoenosis*) to address doubt about an idea or utilize a series of questions (*pysma*) to breakdown assumptions held by the audience through multiple angles. No matter the method, rhetorical questions allow rhetors to situate themselves as understanding the essence of a thing, its definition, thus garnering trust with the audience and persuade the audience to their side. In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze the use of rhetorical questions by Black conservatives Colin Powell, Alan Keyes, and Condoleezza Rice to show how they persuade audiences through arguments from definition.

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24 “A figure of reasoning in which one asks and then immediately answers one’s own questions (or raises and then settles imaginary objections) (“Anthypophora”).

25 “ Asking the opinion or judgment of the judges or audience, usually implying their common interest with the speaker in the matter” (“Anacoenosis”).

26 “The asking of multiple questions successively (which would together require a complex reply)” (“Pysma”).
DEFINITION AND DOUBT ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

September 11, 2001 marks an indelible turning point in how the United States approaches military and diplomatic policies with foreign nations. The War on Terror represents one such approach that the United States adopted to address threats to domestic attacks. Coined by President George W. Bush immediately following 9/11, the War on Terror refers to military campaigns carried out by the United States and allied forces against terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (Bush). At times referred to as the Bush Doctrine, the War on Terror advocates a preemptive approach to military action against forces identified as terrorist groups as well as foreign powers understood as supporting terrorist groups. By the end of 2002, the Bush administration viewed Iraq as party to terrorist plots against the United States, specifically concerning the possession of weapons of mass destruction or WMDs (Collins). Though Bush held a majority of support from the American public and Congress, his administration sought a global coalition from the United Nations to remove terrorist threats from Iraq. On February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the United Nations Security Council, hereafter referred to as the Security Council, to present the case that Iraq’s leader Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs and thwarted efforts on the part of United Nations inspectors, hereafter referred to as inspectors, to locate the illegal weapons. The audience contained leaders from permanent members of the Security Council27, including China, France, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation, as well as ten elected members from other allied countries. Rather than addressing a more polarized audience like what he would face in the United States, Powell spoke to world leaders concerned with how an invasion of Iraq would impact their countries in terms of military action, economic shifts, and political fallout. With hindsight we now know that

27 The United States serves as the fifth permanent member of the Security Council, occupying the role of speaker rather than audience member in this instance.
Hussein possessed no such weapons; however, analysis of Powell’s rhetoric sheds light on the evidence he used to convince the world to overthrow Hussein’s government, as well as the influence of conservatism on his means of persuasion. Powell derives his evidence on the terroristic actions of the Iraqi government from the rhetorical questions he poses to his audience. He uses *anthypophora* to define the Iraqi government as knowingly rebellious to the demands of the Security Council and *anacoenos* to substantiate doubt in the minds of his audience concerning the actions of Iraqis. By employing this system of definition and doubt, Powell succeeds in framing Hussein and the Iraqi government as proponents of terror with the capacity to destroy the world unless the United Nations responds swiftly and harshly to destroy his regime.

Powell begins his remarks to the Security Council by playing a recording of two senior Iraqi officers obtained by the United States government. Throughout the recording Powell pauses to translate the conversation and explain the context to other leaders in attendance. Noting a moment where the officers sound rattled regarding upcoming inspections, Powell asks, “What is their concern? Their concern is that it’s something they should not have, something that should not be seen.” By asking and then answering his own question, Powell creates expectations for his audience concerning the actions of the Iraqis. The officers never explicitly state why they seem worried about the upcoming inspections, though they do discuss plans for moving materials to different facilities during the time of inspections. For Powell, though, the plans to move materials during inspections resonates with an essence of evil that defines the Iraqi government. Thus, even without clear evidence of why the officers decided to move materials during the inspection, Powell confidently asserts that the actions of the officers reveal a plot to fool the inspectors concerning materials banned in Iraq. Further in the recording where someone in the
Iraqi government gives instructions to destroy a message after completing its directions, Powell pauses to pose questions to his audience. Again, the recording offers no explanation behind the instructions beyond a desire to keep the message a secret, yet Powell asks the Security Council “Why? Why?” to propagate doubt in the minds of his audience. Here, Powell creates a reason for the destruction of the message, declaring that the message would explain to inspectors the methods of moving materials as well as their current locations. Offering this explanation works well for his audience as it both substantiates the idea that the Iraqi government always acts in nefarious ways while also reducing the chance that someone on the Security Council will offer a counter reason for the failed inspections.

In addition to secret recordings of Iraqi officers, Powell also provides his audience with photographic evidence of his claims. However, as with the recordings, the photographs require contextualization on the part of Powell to ensure his audience understands them according to the definition of Iraq as evil promoted from the beginning. The Secretary of State alerts his audience that “The painstaking work of photo analysis takes experts with years and years of experience, poring for hours and hours over light tables.” By emphasizing the amount of work required to analyze the photographs Powell endeavors to dismiss any questioning of the veracity or utility of the images. The photographs, taken over a nearly two-month period, refer to locations the Bush administration believes contain banned materials. Figure 1 shows munition bunkers in Iraq outlined in different colors – yellow for inactive bunkers and red for active bunkers. Anticipating skepticism from the Security Council, Powell asks “How do I know that? How can I say that?” in response to his claim concerning active munition bunkers. Both Powell and other security officials know that the inspectors scrutinized these locations and found no evidence of banned materials. Yet, Powell presents this image as verification of his claims based on the definition-as-
evidence of Iraq acting with evil intentions. Powell submits a second image (figure 2) that juxtaposes two photographs of similar munition bunkers on different dates: the photo on the left side taken on November 10, 2002 and the photo on the right taken on December 22, 2002. Answering the rhetorical questions he asks of the Security Council, Powell points to the differences in these photographs as evidence of inspection interference – a decontamination vehicle and security tents that appear in the November image but vanish in the December image. The Iraqi government not only continues to possess and use banned materials, as proved by the need for decontamination vehicles and security tents, it attempts to deceive inspectors by moving the materials in advance of inspections.


Powell extends his claims of corruption and deception by the Iraqi government with additional photographs taken during the same period. Figures 3 through 5 show an increased number of vehicles at sites later reviewed by inspectors according to Powell. He suggests that the Iraqis use these vehicles to move materials between sites, creating the appearance that the facilities meet expectations stated by United Nations Resolution 1441, hereafter referred to as Resolution 1441, by removing banned materials before inspection. Taking time to note the unusual nature of so many vehicles occupying space around these sites due to constant surveillance, the Secretary of State states: “We must ask ourselves: Why would Iraq suddenly move equipment of this nature before inspections if they were anxious to demonstrate what they had or did not have?” Powell designs the rhetorical question he offers to the Security Council to undermine both the legitimacy of the Iraqi government as well as the findings of the inspectors. Stylistically, he uses terms like “suddenly” and “anxious” to create emotional connections to the
actions described in the photographs. Through Powell’s question the audience assumes the presence of the vehicles follows a need to obfuscate evidence rather than adhere to a planned schedule of vehicle movement by Iraqi officials. He leaves his question unanswered, encouraging his audience to regard the evidence provided by the United States as self-evident of wrongdoing by Hussein. Without Hussein or other representatives of Iraq there to defend their actions, the Security Council must rely on the description of deceit laid out by Powell to understand the presence of vehicles at the various testing sites.


To disperse any doubt on the viability of his evidence while exacerbating the deceitful actions of the Iraqi government, Powell uses his rhetorical questions to critique a possible explanation on the part of Iraq. Around the thirty-nine-minute mark of the speech, Powell describes how Hussein moves chemical weapons from production facilities to implementation sites. Using surveillance photographs (see figures 6 and 7) and testimony from an unidentified defector with firsthand knowledge, Powell narrates a well-tuned system whereby Iraq identifies locations to procure banned materials, smuggles those materials into the country, refines the materials into chemical weapons, then utilizes cargo vehicles to move the weapons to various locations in the Middle East. After detailing the operation for almost two minutes, Powell offers a counterargument to his claim only to immediately undermine the counterargument through rhetorical questions:

Now, of course, Iraq will argue that these items can also be used for legitimate purposes. But if that is true, why do we have to learn about them by intercepting communications and risking the lives of human agents?

With Iraq’s well-documented history on biological and chemical weapons, why should any of us give Iraq the benefit of the doubt? I don’t.

Powell invokes the counterargument of “legitimate purposes” for banned materials only to bolster his own claim vis-à-vis Iraq and Resolution 1441. He fails to delineate what other uses exist for the banned materials, nor does he present a first-hand account from the Iraq government on how they use the materials. All evidence concerning military and government activity within Iraq comes from Powell and his interpretation of the evidence.

Following the counterargument Powell presents his first rhetorical question, asking “why do we have to learn about [the banned materials] by intercepting communications and risking the lives of human agents?” As already referenced, the Iraqi government lacks the ability to defend their actions during the Security Council meeting, so council members must rely on educated assumptions concerning the motives of Hussein – assumptions educated through Powell’s methodical deconstruction of Iraqi trust with rhetorical questions. By leaving this first rhetorical question unanswered, Powell surreptitiously leads his audience to see the actions of Hussein as fundamentally evil, even though the evidence seems circumstantial at best. On the other hand, Powell answers his second rhetorical question where he asks his audience “why should any of us give Iraq the benefit of the doubt” in light of the country’s “well-documented history on biological and chemical weapons.” Of course, Powell means to convince the world of Iraq’s corrupt and dangerous actions, so he contextualizes the question of Iraq’s trustworthiness with a negative characterization of their history with WMDs. By answering with a simple “I don’t,” Powell informs the UN Security Council of his stance and the stance of the United States – I don’t trust the information we receive from Iraqi officials, I don’t trust that Iraqi holds no WMDs, and I don’t trust Iraq to ever comply with resolutions handed down from the United Nations. Taken together, these rhetorical questions create a compounding effect on Powell’s audience, driving home the imperative to distrust Iraq on all accounts and remove Hussein from power through all available means.

While the primary purpose of including rhetorical questions in his remarks revolve around convincing the Security Council of Iraq’s failed compliance with Resolution 1441, a secondary purpose of Powell includes creating a sense of urgency among council members. Dating back to 1990 the UN Security Council adopted ten resolutions prior to 1441 requiring
Iraq to disarm its WMD capabilities (United Nations, Security Council 1). From the perspective of the United States and other world powers Hussein met each resolution with obstruction and indifference, preventing the United Nations from concluding that Iraq complied with international expectations. Passing an eleventh resolution that echoed the previous inspections and threats of military intervention no longer seemed adequate following 9/11 for the Bush administration. Powell’s speech required him to convey the seriousness and urgency facing the world should they choose not to act regarding Hussein’s continued noncompliance with United Nations resolutions. After listing the hundreds of tons of chemical weapons intelligence officials believed Iraq stockpiled and hid from inspectors Powell asks, “The question before us all, my friends, is when will we see the rest of the submerged iceberg?” Comparing the image of an iceberg to the military capabilities of Iraq carries startling implications for the United Nations. The most immediate implication to Powell’s audience concerns the inspection of facilities and his assertion that Iraqi officials move materials to circumvent efforts on the part of inspectors to discover banned materials. The little evidence United States intelligence found suggests a larger operation within Iraqi hidden from sight but a threat to the world. Powell emphasizes this threat following his rhetorical question, stating “Saddam Hussein has chemical weapons. Saddam Hussein has used such weapons. And Saddam Hussein has no compunction about using them again.” Utilizing anaphora to compound his point, Powell stresses to the Security Council the danger of allowing Hussein and Iraq to fool the world and not act militarily to bring the president of Iraq to justice. A second implication of the iceberg image also magnifies the need for immediate action, though the motive resides in the ethos of the Security Council itself. Viewed as a metaphor, Powell implies that failing to act against Iraq would sink the integrity of the

28 “Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines.” (‘Anaphora’).
council, rendering their ability to force rogue countries and actors to comply with resolutions ineffective. Whether to check the power of a despot or maintain an image of resolute strength, Powell uses his rhetorical questions to implore the Security Council to act quickly and with force.

Through the prism of hindsight, we may castigate Powell’s persuasion method as inadequate considering the global and material implications of his argument. The Secretary of State spends over an hour talking to world leaders about the impending threat of Hussein and Iraq using evidence grounded in doubt to sway votes in the United States’ favor. We do not know why the soldiers sounded worried in the recording, so we must invade Iraq. We do not know why the inspectors cannot find evidence of WMDs, so we must invade Iraq. We do not know why vehicles associated with chemical weapons disappeared from inspection sites, so we must invade Iraq. Looking back on the decision of the Security Council, we might conclude that the world removed Saddam Hussein from power through a preponderance of rhetorical questions designed to scare leaders and leave no alternative action available. At the same time, we can conclude that Powell’s rhetoric succeeded in its objective of persuading his intended audience. The United States attained its stated goal and led a campaign to remove a threat it identified to national and international security. Moreover, Powell’s use of rhetorical questions to define ideas for his audience and dissuade listeners from ideas contrary to the position of the United States speaks to the trope’s importance in creating definitions through speeches.

QUESTIONS AT THE BORDER

Immigration and border security represent primary policy topics for Donald Trump during his campaign for President of the United States and first term in office. Throughout his appearances on the campaign trail Trump decried the many non-US citizens moving through the
US-Mexico border without government approval, promising to build a wall to help regulate immigration (Phillips). Many of Trump’s talking points echoed policy positions advocated by Alan Keyes a decade earlier in a speech titled “Solutions to America’s Border Crisis” delivered in Provo, Utah on June 21, 2006. His speech coincided with a race for Utah’s third congressional seat; Keyes refused to endorse a candidate for the race, opting instead to speak on larger policy issues affecting all Americans before a predominantly White, ideologically conservative audience.29 As with Colin Powell, Keyes uses anthypophora to establish definitions and anacoenosis to create doubt in the collective understanding of his audience, but he also integrates pysma into his speech to undermine previously held conclusions of his audience. Keyes relies on anacoenosis and pysma more than Powell and Rice as he purposes to persuade his audience that his brand of conservatism represents the correct way to think and act as defined in the Constitution. In terms of immigration and national security, Keyes argues that the country requires strong, clear borders to exist, and securing the borders must take priority for any elected administration (Walch and Bulkeley).

In his speech, Keyes frames the issue of immigration as a matter of policy that requires action on the part of the United States government to restrict movement on the southern border. His position on immigration aligns with conservative ideological principles that specifically involve Mexico, though Keyes’ argument presents more radical solutions than many of his peers. While the CATO Institute highlight the economic benefits of positive immigration regulations with Mexico (“‘Closing the Border’”) and call for expansive reforms to immigration policy

29 Keyes’ speech also functions as a response to George W. Bush’s speech on immigration delivered on May 18, 2006 in Yuma, Arizona. In this speech Bush explains the plans of his administration to address border security and immigration, specifically people who cross the US-Mexico border through improper channels. During the speech Bush notes to border security officials that “we do not have full control of our borders,” an admission that Keyes’ takes great umbridge with in his speech (“Border Security”).
(“Legal Immigration”), Keyes views an open border as an invitation for the world to occupy the United States. Early in his speech Keyes denounces any expansion of immigration policy, stating “Don’t fool yourselves. Put a ‘y’all come’ sign on America, and billions will come. Not millions anymore. And so, the question then becomes, do we mean to do that?” Taken on its own, Keyes’ question works to create doubt in the minds of his audience regarding the beneficence of expansive immigration policy. Juxtaposing the act of increasing immigration with the prospect of billions of people pouring over the border not only calls into question the desire to make immigrating to the United States easier, but also foreshadows rhetoric from the 2016 Presidential campaign of Trump concerning immigrants from Mexico (Phillips). However, Keyes answers his question by speaking for the audience, saying “Well, I think everybody who has some common sense will say, ‘Well, no, we don’t want to do that.’ We’ve got to have some rational and responsible regulation…” In part, Keyes’ answer functions to assuage concerns for his audience that the danger of mass immigration exists – the answer coming from Keyes himself and an appeal to reason. As a former diplomat, Keyes knows the borders must maintain a certain level of permeability, and he sees the role of the government as critical in defining and enforcing that permeability through immigration policy and border control. Additionally, by speaking his answer as though it comes from the audience, Keyes implicitly acknowledges that he and his audience share the same ethos or “common sense” concerning immigration. Including this move early in his speech helps Keyes gain credibility with the audience and ensure they consider the rhetorical questions he poses throughout the rest of his speech with the same ideological positions as the former Ambassador to the United Nations.

Slightly further in his speech, Keyes continues his criticism of the government border policy by using rhetorical questions to compound and complicate his argument. Here, Keyes lists
specific regulations he deems undefined by the government, including issues of assimilation, economics, infrastructure, and education, all of which fail to show immigrants how to live as proper citizens of the United States. After describing these failings of the government’s immigration policy Keyes asks “if we don’t take care, do you think it’s going to work? Do you think it will survive? Or will we have the millions and the tens of millions who will come in search of a dream that our irresponsibility has turned into a nightmare?” While each question only requires an answer of “yes” or “no,” they prompt audience members to consider the issue of immigration from different positions of authority. The first question asking if the current immigration policy will work appeals to the audience’s authority to vote politicians in and out of office. Understanding his audience, Keyes begins this series of questions by reminding the audience of their impending responsibility to vote; while he chooses not to endorse a candidate in the Utah congressional race Keyes delineates the stance a proper conservative politician should hold through his speech. The audience should vote for the candidate who plans to create an immigration policy that works from an ideologically conservative position, specifically one that works for the United States. The second question asking whether the immigration policy will survive appeals to the audience’s expectation of politicians to craft and implement the legislation. Answering “no” to the first question automatically means the legislation will not survive, meaning better, longer lasting legislation should take its place. On the other hand, answering “yes” to the first question makes the question of survival more complicated. Answering “yes” to the question of survival for the current immigration policy indicates belief that the system works for all interested parties; however, answering “no” invites the third of Keyes questions which describes a worst-case policy outcome concerning US immigration. Keyes’ third question depicting immigrants moving to the United States in search of a dream
ruined by the current immigration policy appeals to the audience’s sense of justice for people who see the United States as their home – a home that requires structure and protection. For Keyes and other conservatives, strictly regulating the border both maintains the integrity of the United States borders and ensures people can attain entry legally and orderly. Without order, people may enter the country illegally, leading to chaos and instability in economic, education, and institutional sectors of the United States. Together, this example of *pysma* by Keyes pushes the audience to consider the issue of immigration policy from different angles, all of which lead them to accept Keyes’ strict position on immigration.

Building off the fear of uncontrollable immigration represents only one tactic used by Keyes in his speech before voters in Utah. A second tactic involves casting doubt on the competency of legislators in Congress on developing and enforcing immigration policy. After discussing the ways that current immigration policies fails the country and its citizens, Keyes turns his attention to how Congress discusses illegal immigration, asking “Why are we living in a nation where almost not a single word they speak about what is and is not true about illegal immigrants can be verified in any way? You know why?” Instead of directly answering his questions, Keyes recounts an answer he heard from Earnest Scott Garrett who served as U.S. Representative of New Jersey’s 5th District from 2003-2017. According to Keyes, during a rally in 2006 Garrett implored his audience to ask people who describe illegal immigrants as hardworking people how they could reach such a conclusion when no reliable data on the illegal immigrant population exists. Without documentation of these people, legislators lack the evidence to accurately describe the attitudes and motivations of illegal immigrants. For Garrett and Keyes the argument that asserts illegal immigrants as deserving of citizenship lacks sufficient support in terms of data as the government by definition ignores their existence. Had
the illegal immigrants applied for work through proper channels, their contributions to the United States would receive proper recognition and the argument about their citizenship would attain more credibility.

Taking this tactic a step further, Keyes understands the argument around citizenship for illegal immigrants as not only fallacious, but a deliberate attempt by Democratic and liberal legislators to undermine the government. In addition to his previous questions noting the paradox of documenting illegal immigrants, Keyes notes how different sources produce different numbers and ultimately concludes “that tells you that this can’t really – do you think that a job could be that badly done by accident?” (emphasis in original). Here Keyes arrives at the core of his position on the issue of immigration – trust what the government says at your own peril. Any conclusions concerning illegal immigrants must result from clandestine and unverifiable information; therefore, liberal legislators and the government as a whole deliberately operates to undermine the meaning of citizenship in the United States. Keyes uses rhetorical questions to attack the character of the government as a trustworthy and representative institution. Pointing to weaknesses in how the government regulates citizenship and what the government says regarding illegal immigrants helps Keyes substantiate doubt for his audience and lend credibility to his argument. Additionally, Keyes connects the purposeful deceit concerning immigration from the government to economic outcomes for citizens like those in his audience in Utah. Keyes recounts a typical narrative concerning immigrants, that they come to the United States to work in fields understaffed by Americans, only to reject the premise by arguing that immigrants fill positions that pay wages below what Americans find acceptable for themselves: “…do you think after working so hard to produce that result, we should stand by and allow an immigration policy that has as its explicit purpose the objective of cheapening labor in this country? Have we lost
our minds?” (emphasis in original). Rather than positioning immigrant labor as taking jobs away from Americans, Keye argues that immigrant labor reduces wages for everyone in the workforce, subsequently reducing costs for everyone and ultimately making workers poorer overall. While this argument may see less traction in more mainstream conservative outlets, it holds the potential to resonate with voters who see more immigrants working in their communities and believe the government ignores the concerns of citizens who lack the funds to support or contribute to politicians. Keyes use of rhetorical questions ultimately works to concretize doubt for his audience that the government works for them, particularly in terms of immigration policy and border security.

DEFINING THE LEADERSHIP PROVIDED BY THE UNITED STATES

A week before Keyes delivered his speech in Utah, Condoleezza Rice provided remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention in Greensboro, North Carolina on June 14, 2006. The recently appointed Secretary of State used this and similar speeches to demonstrate her ethos as the United States’ minister of foreign affairs, as well as her strong connection with the policy and ideological convictions of President Bush. In this speech, Rice strikes a creative balance between her religious background and her diplomatic positions to address the social and political portions of her public persona. While the ethos Rice develops with the audience mirrors the language and moves discussed in chapter two, she relies on rhetorical questions to convey her

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30 Rice become Secretary of State for George W. Bush on January 26, 2005, succeeding Colin Powell.  
31 Rice begins her speech with an earlier version of the anecdote about her grandfather she narrates during her commencement address to the College of William & Mary in 2015. After his first year at Stillman College, Rice’s grandfather exhausted his funds, meaning he could no longer attend college. However, he received a scholarship to continue his education in exchange for becoming a Presbyterian minister. At the end of the anecdote, Rice muses that “my family has been college educated and Presbyterian ever since,” solidifying her standing as a speaker before a religious audience. The warrant Rice uses in her speech comes from the assumption that her grandfather’s religious journey and her own religious journey represent the same idea. As with the commencement address the audience at the Southern Baptist Convention laughs at Rice’s speech, substantiating Rice’s claim of ethos before a predominantly religious audience.
theory of diplomacy to the audience. However, unlike Colin Powell and Alan Keyes, Rice employs rhetorical questions for a different effect than previously observed. As noted earlier in this chapter, rhetors use specific types of rhetorical questions such as *pysma* and *anacoenosis* to create doubt for their audience concerning long-held definitions they collectively believe. Rice also uses *pysma* and *anacoenosis* in her speeches, but this particular speech to the Southern Baptist Convention contains a unique feature that shifts the effect of her speech from doubt to conviction. Namely, Rice’s view on foreign policy and the audience’s view on foreign policy align so that Rice’s rhetorical questions only work to reinforce definitions the audience brings to her speech. Such a shift develops from an alignment between the political conservatism of the audience as actors in a democratic society as well as their social conservatism as member of the Southern Baptist religious tradition. By including rhetorical questions with answers immediately obvious to her audience, Rice not only showcases rhetorical questions as a necessary component of Black conservative rhetoric, she also demonstrates an attunement to her audience and the flexibility of rhetorical questions to inspire trust when other rhetors so often use them to develop doubt in their audience.

Rice’s speech before the Southern Baptist Convention contains roughly three sections: the first establishes her ethos with the audience, the second section describes Rice’s view of foreign policy, and the third section defends her foreign policy through argumentation. Similar to the Bush Doctrine presented to the United Nations Security Council a few years earlier by her predecessor Colin Powell, Rice argues that a larger presence by the United States in foreign affairs leads to a more stable and democratic world overall. Rice supports her argument with a

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32 “We in America are blessed with lives of tremendous liberty: the freedom to govern ourselves and elect our leaders; the freedom to own property; the freedom to educate our children, our boys and our girls; and of course the freedom to think as we please and to worship as we wish. America embodies these liberties but America does not
series of unanswered rhetorical questions designed to both define the manner by which the United States intervenes in foreign countries and to persuade her audience that this method of intervention always leads to a positive outcome for the United States and the other country involved. In this third section of the speech Rice begins with *pysma* where she asks her audience what direction the United States should take concerning foreign policy: “Will we lead in the world or will we withdraw? Will we rise to the challenges of our time or will we shrink from them?...We must ask ourselves: If not for America who would rally other nations to conscience to the international defense of religious liberty?” These questions prompt her audience to create a compound answer as each subsequent question builds upon the previous question. The first two question present the audience with a binary – either the United States will lead the world or withdraw from the world; either the United States will rise to the leadership challenges or shrink from those responsibilities. If the United States chooses to lead the world then it also chooses to embrace the leadership challenges of bringing liberty and democracy to the world. Similarly, should the United States withdraw from the world then it also chooses to shrink from the challenges of leading the world.

Knowing her audience, Rice constructs these questions to lead her audience to the answer that resonates with her view of foreign policy. The presidential election of 2004 included a new strategy for Bush as he ran for reelection – mobilize the roughly four million evangelicals in the United States to vote Republican (Miller). Robert McMahon of the Council on Foreign Relations writes that part of the evangelical foreign policy platform includes foreign intervention, including the push for an Israeli state after the end of World War II as well as

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own these liberties. We stand for ideals that are greater than ourselves and *we go into the world not to plunder but to protect*, not to subjugate but to liberate, not as masters of others but as servants of freedom” (Rice; emphasis added).

33 Southern Baptists represent a denomination of evangelical Christians (McMahon).
ending the civil war in Sudan in 2005. Therefore, the audience at the Southern Baptist Convention would expect the United States to not only accept the leadership role willingly, but to see foreign intervention as a necessary role and challenge. Gaining the audience’s trust through the first two questions leads Rice to ask her third question which moves away from the binary choice model. The third question, “If not for America, who would rally other nations to conscience to the international defense of religious liberty?” appears to ask the audience an open-ended question concerning leadership on the international stage. However, due to the rhetorical baseline Rice creates with her previous questions, her third question effectively dismisses the notion that another country holds the leadership credentials to defend religious liberty in a manner equal to the United States.

Unlike Keyes in his speech, Rice uses *pysma* to reinforce a definition for her audience rather than to surface doubt concerning a definition held by her audience[^34]. From a foreign policy perspective Rice defines the United States as a country determined to bring democracy and liberty to other countries. I attribute this shift in Rice’s application of *pysma* to two factors: the audience Rice addresses and the unique nature of the foreign policy Rice advocates. As noted by many analysts of the 2004 Presidential election (Berke; Gilgoff and Schulte; Green et al.; Mead), evangelical voters played a pivotal role in the reelection campaign of George W. Bush.

Evangelicals found a political home with Bush’s campaign due to his doctrine on promoting democratic values with foreign countries reflecting a doctrine found in the new testament of the Bible. Paul S. Rowe argues in “The Global – and Globalist – Roots of Evangelical Action” that the move of evangelicals to the Republican party arises from a confluence of religious and political ideologies both based in spreading ideas to other nations lacking those ideas. In

[^34]: See page 91 for Keyes’ use of *pysma*. 

particular, Rowe observes a connection between Biblical passages calling for Christians to spread the teachings of Jesus to non-believers\textsuperscript{35} and a tradition of improving social welfare on a global scale (36). Evangelicals see their duty as spreading Christianity throughout the world and the duty of governments to spread democracy and freedom in a similar manner. The desire of evangelicals to see values they hold in high esteem proliferate on a global scale mirrors the foreign policy perspective held by the Bush administration and voiced by Rice before the Southern Baptist audience. As Rice’s audience already holds the ideological position she advocates in her speech, the rhetorical questions she uses which would normally produce doubt in the minds of the audience work in this case to further entrench the foreign policy perspective they already hold. In other words, the rhetorical situation dictates the outcome of the persuasive means used by the rhetor. An audience not inclined to see the role of the United States government as a means to spread democracy on a global scale or an audience less inclined to conflate religious and ideological proselytization would bring more skepticism to Rice’s speech, thus changing the purpose of the rhetorical questions from words of reinforcement to words of doubt and uncertainty.

After her use of \textit{pysma}, Rice continues asking the audience a series of individual questions designed to augment her argument concerning the United States’ role in acting as the global leader in democracy and freedom. She uses five instances of \textit{anacoenosis} where she asks the audience questions concerning American foreign policy contextualized by social issues her audience finds worthy of intervention. These questions build upon the perspective on foreign policy shared between Rice and her audience observed in her use of \textit{pysma}, further concretizing the audience’s trust in the Secretary of State. Notably, each question either precedes or antecedes

applause from the audience which denotes agreement on their part of Rice’s argument.

Structurally, Rice employs anaphora to demonstrate continuity between the ideas she presents. She takes time between each question to contextualize them within her larger discussion of foreign policy as well as the goals of the Bush administration. Repeating the phrase “If not for America” Rice details the moral and political imperative of prioritizing the role of the United States in international discussions of religious oppression, human trafficking, disease eradication, conflict resolution, and defending liberty and democracy. These areas fit well within the interventionist position of evangelicals concerning social welfare. Indeed, the examples Rice associates with each question speaks to her understanding of the audience and the ideas they find sympathetic. Referencing Chinese Christians prevented from practicing their faith or young girls forced into human trafficking appeal directly to the emotional and logical senses of evangelicals. Collectively, Rice’s use of anacoenosis works to inspire confidence from her audience with respect to the direction of the Bush administration on foreign policy as well as her own place as a newly confirmed Secretary of State.

While Rice may deviate from the more established tradition of using rhetorical questions like anacoenosis and pysma to surface doubt in the minds of her audience demonstrated by Powell and Keyes, she still invokes the more fundamental idea of using rhetorical questions to define contexts for her audience. Repeatedly connecting the United States with interventionist foreign policy through rhetorical questions leaves very little room for doubt on the part of the

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36 “If America does not rally support for people everywhere who desire to worship in peace and freedom then I ask you: Who will?”
37 “If not for America, who would rally a great coalition and work to end the horrific international crime of human trafficking?”
38 “If not for America, who would rally likeminded countries in the global fights against HIV/AIDS?”
39 “If not for America, who would rally other compassionate countries to support peace and justice in Sudan?”
40 “Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we must consider one further question which is this: If not for America, who would rally freedom-loving nations to defend liberty and democracy in our world?”
audience of the Bush administration’s intentions in global affairs. Moreover, by establishing her ethos with the audience at the outset of her speech, Rice combines arguments from authority with arguments from definition to persuade her audience through Black conservative rhetorical methods. Rice’s speech to the Southern Baptist convention demonstrates the complexity of Black conservative rhetoric by showing how definitions gleaned from rhetorical questions work to remove doubt from the audience when the rhetor has a clear ideological connection with the audience and understands how to use ideas that strongly appeal to the audience.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF RACE AND POLITICS

At the conclusion of her speech to the Southern Baptist Convention, Condoleezza Rice reflects upon a meeting the day before between George W. Bush and the newly elected Prime Minister of Iraq. Following the actions of her predecessor, Colin Powell, to convince the world to remove Saddam Hussein from power, the people of Iraq elected a new leader whom Bush met with in Iraq. Rice asks the audience “Who could have imagined that these two democratic leaders would be standing together in Baghdad in the very same palace where Saddam Hussein and his henchmen conducted their tyranny, plundered their country and condemned thousands, hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis to death?” Her question speaks not only to her priorities as Secretary of State, but the ideological position she promotes through her rhetoric. Rice frames her question through the context of democracy, emphasizing the method by which leaders gain their power and the despicable regime democracy replaced in Iraq. Answering her question, Rice states “It has happened because of the hope and dedication of millions of ordinary Iraqis and it has happened, ladies and gentlemen, because of the courage and the sacrifice of America’s fighting men and women.” In other words, the people of Iraq and the United States acted upon the promise of liberty and democracy to make a free Iraq a reality. Rice expertly defines liberty
and democracy for her audience, but also conservative ideology – people acting in their own interest to gain freedom from an oppressive government. No matter the hindsight gained from learning of Iraq’s nonexistent stockpile of WMDs, Hussein and his regime continue to represent a threat to liberty and democracy politically and conceptually for conservatives. Using the specter of Hussein, Rice rallies all people who share her values to the same cause, no matter their race or gender.

As a rhetorical strategy, Black conservative rhetoric endeavors to work on the same level as the perception of Saddam Hussein by conservatives – appealing to the values of the audience despite physical differences between the rhetor and the audience. Rice, Powell, and Keyes use rhetorical questions to center their values with their audiences through definition and doubt, effectively persuading those in attendance that they share a common brand of conservatism. Race necessarily plays a more subdued role for arguments from definition considering the origin and context of most definitions used by conservatives. Black people historically serve such a small role in defining political terms in the United States that inserting race into the definition would inspire skepticism on the part of conservative audiences. Yet, the presence of Black conservatives as rhetors on national and international stages, as well as the ethos they develop through arguments from authority and testimony provide enough context for audiences to acknowledge the race of the rhetor while also accepting the more traditional arguments they present on ideology and national policy. In the next chapter, I consider how Black conservatives express arguments from similitude to audiences, using rhetorical tropes like metaphor and metonymy to connect their own ideas to those of their audience. Unlike rhetorical questions, rhetorical tropes that draw comparisons carry a long tradition within African American rhetorics, specifically signifying and similar techniques designed to obfuscate knowledge from the White
people which populate most audiences for Black conservative rhetors. Though Black conservatives may understand this tradition, the rhetorical moves they use with their audiences concerning arguments from similitude work more to inform the audience than to deceive them of knowledge or understanding.
CHAPTER FOUR
“FROM A KNOWN TO AN UNKNOWN” – USING THE METAPHOR TO CONNECT BLACKNESS AND CONSERVATISM

FINDING COMMON GROUND AMONG BLACKNESS AND CONSERVATISM

In addition to arguments from authority and arguments from definition, conservative rhetors also rely most consistently upon arguments from similitude to persuade audiences. These arguments employ methods of demonstrating equivalence, including metaphors, metonymy, and other comparative rhetorical tropes, to show similarities among concepts and convince audiences that they share an understanding of ideas between themselves and the rhetor through commonly held beliefs. Black conservatives participate in this practice, often referencing their racial background when explaining the similarity between an idea they hold, and a slightly different idea understood by their audience. This use of comparative rhetorical tropes strikes a significant contrast from how metaphor and metonymy traditionally function within the African American rhetorical tradition. For a primary audience consisting of other Black people, Black rhetors use these types of rhetorical tropes to communicate important cultural ideas and meaning. Simultaneously, when those same rhetors encounter a primary or secondary audience of White people, the rhetorical tropes work to deceive and deflect that audience from participating in the practice. Stated simply, the Black rhetorical tradition expects comparative rhetorical tropes to work differently for different audiences in terms of racial demographics. Black conservatives, on the other hand, only find one use for comparative rhetorical tropes – they connect ideas between the rhetor and audience to offer clarity and persuade the audience of their argument. I explain in

41 “Of course, metaphor is intended here in the broadest sense, requiring only some form of parallelism. But when its essential nature is understood, it is hard to resist the thought that metaphor is one of the most important heuristic devices, leading us from a known to an unknown, but subsequently verifiable, fact of principle” (The Ethics of Rhetoric 203).
this chapter how Black conservative rhetoric utilizes comparative rhetorical tropes to convince audiences of various backgrounds regardless of race to act decisively concerning financial policies and historical interpretations within a political context. Through this persuasive method, Black conservatives alter expectations concerning race and rhetorical tropes, pushing the African American rhetorical tradition away from its past usage toward a more universal application of comparative rhetorical tropes.

Black Tropes Developed from Black Histories

Underlying any conversation of comparative rhetorical tropes generally, or rhetorical tropes within a racialized context specifically, exists a question on the necessity of metaphors and similes to convey meaning to the audience. While the inclusion of these tropes in sentences and arguments introduce engaging nuance to discourse, they also belie a fundamental disconnect between the rhetor and their audience. On some level the rhetor believes the idea they desire to convey to the audience requires augmentation so that their idea resembles something the audience already recognizes. For instance, the metaphor “the police are a shield” attempts to explain the purpose of a state-run agency by comparing it to a protective instrument. In this case the rhetor would assume the audience possess sufficient familiarity with the form and function of a shield to ensure the metaphor takes hold. However, considerations such as the racial demographics of the audience hold the potential to complicate and misrepresent the intended aim of the metaphor in certain contexts. A postmodern analysis of the metaphor “the police are a shield” might ask who the shield should protect, what does the shield protect people from, and whether the shield might turn into a weapon. These questions certainly demonstrate a comprehension of the metaphor, but they disrupt the purpose of the metaphor by surfacing the complexities of navigating race and rhetoric, specifically in a 21st century American context.
With the historical and racial memory of people such as LaQuan McDonald, Philando Castile, and Tamir Rice among others, the interpretation and use of comparative rhetorical tropes takes a sharp turn when the audience factors in race and African American rhetorical methods. In *Keppin’ It Hushed: The Barbershop and African American Hush Harbor Rhetoric*, Vorris Nunley captures the dissonance between rhetors and audiences in racial contexts through his concept of African American hush harbor rhetoric (AAHHR). Nunley points to the oft-used mask metaphor (Dunbar; Fanon) to illustrate how African American rhetors typically navigate contexts where the racial demographics of the audience predetermine the language and tropes available to the rhetors. Referencing Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem “We Wear the Mask,” Nunley observes that over a century after the publication of the poem “Blacks still speak differently in front of White folks and others in the public sphere: Black folks still wear the mask” (1). For Dunbar as well as Nunley, the mask signifies a performance of racial identity for Black folks when the audience consists of non-Black folks. Black rhetors lack the ability to speak freely in the public sphere due to physical and psychological threats to their bodies. This distinction between Black and non-Black public spheres – safe and unsafe rhetorical spaces – manifests distinct rhetorical moves from Black rhetors to communicate effectively to multiple audiences. Non-Black spaces and audiences represent “public sphere rationalities, discourse, and rhetoric [that] often require a *public podium-auction block rhetoric* that decenters the distinctive tropes, knowledges, and perspectives of hush harbor rhetoric” specific to Black audiences (Nunley 3, emphasis in original). In essence, Black rhetors must navigate the historical and racial influences of public spheres by setting aside rhetorical techniques developed and honed in the hush harbors of African American communities, instead taking up rhetorical techniques borne of the dominant culture to successfully persuade non-Black audiences. Nunley goes on to explain
how foundational and recent scholarship on African American rhetoric(s) dispels the need for masks by seriously theorizing Black rhetorical techniques. These scholars play a significant role in explaining the importance of valuing rhetoric from Black communities as well as the ways their rhetoric informs and changes discourse within the public sphere.

Geneva Smitherman represents one such scholar, whose seminal text *Talkin’ and Testifyin’: The Language of Black America* laid the foundation for Black rhetorical and linguistic methods found within Black spaces. She makes clear the purpose for developing a culturally distinct language in addition to theorizing Black means of persuasion and communication. Functionally, Black speech “has allowed blacks to create a cultural of survival in an alien land, and as a by-product has served to enrich the language of all Americans” (Smitherman 2-3). As I discussed in chapter one, scholars of African American rhetoric(s) understand the field as resisting narratives of oppression and marginalization from the dominant culture. This resistance often uses Black speech as a survival method when Black people confront threats to their well-being and way of life. The rhetorical choices of Black people reflect the material circumstances of their existence within a country that enslaved their ancestors, not the scholastic construction of language found in an English textbook. At the same time, the influences of Black speech on American language appear everywhere from advertisements to political speeches. When the President of the United States incorporates the phrase “pop off” during a press conference about the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist group, the integration of Black speech into general American language seems sufficiently deep (Obama).42

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42 This phrase comes from an exchange between President Obama and Jim Avila, a journalist for ABC News. In response to Avila’s question about critics of his approach to handling issues in the Middle East, Obama responded, “If folks want to pop off and have opinions about what they think they would do, present a specific plan.”
Of course, this integration of Black rhetorical and linguistic techniques into American language developed over centuries due to resistance from Black people overcoming the oppression they experienced coming to the United States, as well as resistance from White people accepting Black people as equals. Smitherman captures this struggle of integration through a historical rendering of the process, noting how the early development phase in the 1600s included substitution of English words for West African words, allowing Black people to work around features of the English language such as the verb “to be” (5). The use of substitution for comprehension and discourse within Black speech development shows how integral comparative linguistic moves appear to Black rhetorical and linguistic techniques. Early Black people in America substituted words they understood in their original language for terms found in the English language. Purposes for such a move include finding a connection between a familiar language and an unfamiliar one, defining terms in a manner that makes sense to people within the community, and to create dissonance among people unfamiliar with the non-English language, among other reasons. These functions prove the resourcefulness of early Black folks forcibly brought to the United States – a resourcefulness on full display through their rhetoric, specifically the tradition of signifying.

In his seminal text *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. identifies the use of signifying or Signifyin(g) as “a trope, in which are subsumed several other rhetorical tropes, including metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (the master tropes), and also hyperbole, litotes, and metalepsis” (71). These tropes work together to deceive listeners, specifically people who exist outside the tradition of signifying, and provide a sense of defense and safety for those within the tradition. Deception arises from the substitution of terms and ideas familiar to a White audience with language and
phrases developed in the hush harbors of Black communities. Comparative tropes such as metaphor and metonymy work especially well in these contexts as the interpretation of the comparison relies on the cultural knowledge residing in the minds of the audience. Both White and Black audience members may hear signifying at the same time but interpret its meaning differently due to the varied contexts in which they developed their cultural knowledge. Carol D. Lee argues in *Signifying as a Scaffold for Literary Interpretation: The Pedagogical Implications of an African American Discourse Genre* that signifying does not “exist independent of people” as, “There is no parallel usage of the terms to signify or signification within other ethnic or English–speaking communities” (11). Signifying denotes a group-specific action designed and actively driven by the Black discourse community for the community’s use. Black people developed the rhetorical trope for their own purposes, deploying it within their own communities as well as broader discursive spaces to communicate important ideas amongst themselves while controlling how people outside the communities interpret the discourse. Beyond the rhetorical method of signifying, scholars point to other adaptations in Black speech such as code meshing (Young) and an Afrocentric approach to language (Alkebulan; Asante; Brown-White; Karenga), both designed to center the rhetor’s experiences as vital to the communicative moment. Most scholars of African American rhetoric(s) conceptualize a more liberal stance on the rhetor’s motives concerning their use of comparative tropes that emerge from a cultural context. However, Black conservatives employ comparative tropes most often from a political context, valuing an effort to create a common understanding between themselves and the audience regardless of racial variations among audience members.
Metaphor – Inclusivity and Conservatism

The conservative rhetorical scholar Richard M. Weaver places a high value on metaphors and other comparative tropes when a rhetor attempts to persuade an audience of their argument. Within Weaver’s hierarchy of arguments, he places arguments from similitude second in terms of the type of argument conservatives should find most persuasive, right behind arguments from definition and above arguments from cause and effect. In tandem with arguments from authority, arguments from similitude work by connecting an idea from the rhetor with a similar idea from the audience, creating a sense of knowing in the minds of the audience even if they never fully comprehend the original idea from the rhetor. In his seminal work *Language is Sermonic* Weaver theorizes the argument in this manner: “We say that it is like something which we know in fuller detail, or that it is unlike that thing in important respects. From such a comparison conclusions regarding the subject itself can be drawn” (Weaver et al. 209). The audience agrees with the rhetor because the connection between the idea they hold and the idea voiced by the rhetor appears so strong that questioning the connection seems unnecessary. In the introduction to Weaver’s book titled “Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric: An Interpretation,” scholars Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland, and Ralph T. Eubanks note that arguments from similitude “embraced analogy, metaphor, figuration, comparison, and contrast. Metaphor received focused attention from Weaver; to him it was often central to the rhetorical process” (Weaver et al. 23). As referenced in the title to this chapter, the metaphor works particularly well in helping the audience move from a known concept they hold to an unknown concept expressed by the rhetor.

In his composition textbook *A Rhetoric and Handbook*, Weaver finds four uses of the metaphor for the purpose of persuasion: giving concreteness to an idea, clarifying the unknown,
expressing the subjective, and assisting thought. On the first purpose Weaver notes that the
“Metaphor by its very nature conveys to the mind an image, and an image is of something
concrete” (Weaver and Beal 252). Primarily, comparative tropes such as metaphors function to
make an idea the audience finds unfamiliar more familiar, thereby increasing the likelihood of
the audience accepting the new idea as true. Imagery aids in this process by taking
representations of things the audience already understands to concretize new ideas. If the
audience already recognizes the images presented by the rhetor, they may find the process of
accepting a new idea easier than if the rhetor fails to present a context of prior knowledge.
Beyond making an idea concrete, metaphors help audiences understand ideas previously
undefined in their minds. The prior knowledge that helps make an idea concrete for an audience
also contributes to their understanding of a new idea. Where arguments from definition rely on
the essence of a thing to create understanding, arguments from similitude rely on associations the
audience creates between the ideas they already hold and the new idea from the rhetor. Weaver
describes this phenomenon as “communicating meaning by comparing something that is less
well known to something that is known” (Weaver and Beal 253). Audiences bring their
recognition of common ideas to bear on the new idea, creating understanding and acceptance of
the rhetor’s perspective.

Third, metaphors help rhetors express ideas that exist beyond objective description due to
the unique manner by which people experience emotions and feelings. Certainly, definitions
exist for terms like joy, fear, and other emotions, but that definition may fail to express the
underlying idea that creates those emotions. Though Weaver prioritizes objectivity in his
hierarchy, he also recognizes the importance of subjective emotions and how integral of a role
they play in expressing ideas to the audience (Weaver and Beal 254). Metaphors help rhetors
communicate the subjective to their audience by drawing upon shared or imagined scenarios that convey the emotion of their larger point. Rather than expressing emotion through a definition, rhetors have the option of employing metaphors that capture the audience’s attention and connect to their own experiences with emotions in various contexts. Finally, metaphors function as a device to help audiences understand ideas in new and important ways. Weaver theorizes the metaphor as a heuristic device that, “by calling attention to certain resemblances, points the way to finding still other resemblances” (Weaver and Beal 256). Going beyond the previous three purposes, some metaphors help the audience understand an idea they already believe in a new way due to the context and form of the metaphor. The metaphor expands the application of an idea to new and previously unconsidered contexts, prompting the audience to not only find the argument from the rhetor’s persuasive, but develop new knowledge and understanding. Rhetors may choose to use the metaphor or other comparative rhetorical tropes, such as similes and analogies, for one of these purposes or combine them for more impact.

These differing purposes for the metaphor highlight the versatility and usefulness of the rhetorical trope to persuade audiences. However, each purpose proposed by Weaver prioritizes coherence between the rhetor and the audience. This inclusive approach to comparative tropes rejects the deceptive approach found in signifying and other forms of Black speech. For Black conservatives who typically identify more strongly with their political identity than their racial identity, Weaver’s method for persuading audiences through arguments from similitude aligns with their political and social ideology. Black conservatives view their arguments as a means to elucidate audiences on topics of political and social importance as I show in the rest of this chapter through an examination of speeches delivered by Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, and
Alan Keyes. Their rhetorical moves demonstrate a tradition of prioritizing an explanation of ideas over a rhetorical method designed to resist oppression and deceive White people.

DEMOCRACY AND AMERICAN HISTORY

An important function of arguments from similitude concerns making opaque or difficult ideas clear for the audience. Rhetorical tropes such as metaphors and similes draw upon conventional concepts understood by the audience that the rhetor compares to a more obscure concept to demonstrate the similarities between them. Forming this similarity for the audience both endears the rhetor to the audience, as they demonstrate an understanding of what ideas the audience already holds, while also convincing the audience of their argument. Showing the audience how similar an idea they already hold appears to something more obscure works well to persuade audiences that they already believe the less understood concept. In a speech to the World Economic Forum Condoleezza Rice relies on the persuasive nature of arguments from similitude to convince her audience of important ideological positions of the United States. Specifically, she endeavors to promote free market economy measures endorsed by American values of freedom and liberty as a method to improve the social and economic prospects in the Middle East. Delivered on January 23, 2008, Rice delivered her speech in Davos, Switzerland before a gathering of the world’s economic and political powers, including leaders from Germany, Afghanistan, and France. Though Rice also draws upon arguments from definition in her speech, the metaphors she deploys in her speech carry increased significance due to the racial nature of their comparison. Condoleezza Rice uses history specific to African Americans in an international context to both critique the United States and to exemplify how a nation should confront its past.
Though Rice uses multiple rhetorical tropes in her speech, two distinct examples stand out due to their form and function. The first example stems from a metaphor Rice uses with respect to the role of democracy in improving the lives of diverse populations. After describing the important benefits of participating in a democracy, including increased representation and more diffuse political power among citizens, Rice asks a question designed to quell any doubts about the downsides of democracy in bringing peace to the Middle East: “Do optimism and idealism play a role in this endeavor, which is by its very nature the art of the possible? Is it as Lord Palmerston said – that ‘nations have no permanent enemies and no permanent allies, only permanent interests?’” As discussed in chapter three, questions in speeches that the rhetor fails to answer function to create or assuage doubt in the audience’s mind with respect to definition. Here, Rice employs a question along with a quote from a former British Prime Minister to temper any concerns her audience may harbor concerning diversity and democracy. While Rice leaves her own question for the audience to ponder, she does respond to the assertion of Lord Palmerston that nations have neither permanent enemies or allies, but permanent interests by invoking the actions of position of the United States in the world, saying “I can assure you that America has no permanent enemies, because we harbor no permanent hatreds. The United States is sometimes thought of as a nation that perhaps does not dwell enough on its own history. To that, I say: Good for us. Because too much focus on history can become a prison for nations.” Here, Rice places the metaphor at the end of her response – focusing too closely on history becomes a prison for nations. Returning to her original question, asking the audience whether optimism and idealism play an outsized role in efforts to introduce democracy to the Middle East, Rice’s complete response about enemies and history begins to clarify her remarks as well as the purpose of the metaphor. Solving conflicts in the Middle East stands as a primary goal of
presidents dating back to the first World War. By pointing to the United States as a successful example of democracy, Rice criticizes the grudges and long memory of leaders in countries like Iran and Iraq who refuse to relinquish past aggressions in favor of a peaceful future. Rice argues that the United States enjoys the benefits of democracy by eschewing “permanent hatreds” as well as “permanent enemies,” a state reached through its unique relationship with history.

The assertion that the United States “does not dwell enough on its own history” as well as Rice’s understanding that such a relationship with history benefits America requires some scrutiny. To many observers the United States appears rather infatuated with its history, assuming those in positions of power find that history supplemental to arguments they put forth. In this very speech Rice discusses ideas fundamental to the concept of the United States “as old as America itself. I have referred to this tradition as American Realism.” The concept of American Realism refers to the economic and political framework developed by early leaders of the new country. Rice references “political and economic freedom, open markets and free trade, human dignity and human rights, equal opportunity and the rule of law” as tenets of American Realism. By locating the genesis of these tenets at the founding of the United States, Rice relies upon history to support her argument on the benefits of spreading democracy. From the perspective of Rice and other political leaders who share her understanding, the United States would occupy a much smaller position in the world without the foresight to craft a government built on capitalism and democratic freedom. Countries in the Middle East may attain the same political and economic prosperity as the United States by looking back at the history of the United States and adopting American Realism within their government.

Beyond American Realism, political leaders also reference historical periods such as the American Revolution, Manifest Destiny, the Emancipation Proclamation, and other moments of
triumph as examples of the United States relying upon its values to achieve greatness. Due to these well-used examples we may conclude that Rice’s metaphor of history becoming a prison for nations functions to assist thinking due to the many histories and interpretations of history available to Rice as well as her audience. Prisons evoke powerful imagery and emotions from an audience, undoubtedly due to their use in society as well as popular culture. The term prison usually accompanies the sight of a barred enclosure where a prisoner must reside for a predetermined sentence under restricted parameters. Freedoms and actions become limited in prison and the prisoner must rely upon guards and other security personnel to modify the prison amenities. The imagery produced by the prison metaphor helps the audience think about history and democracy in a manner supportive of the United States and Rice’s vision for the Middle East. Rice references freedom and equality several times in her description of American Realism, meaning she sees a strong association between the term and those qualities. Prison represents the antithesis of those qualities, and by describing history as a prison for nations, Rice endeavors to dissuade her audience as well as leaders in the Middle East from activating historical memory that would undermine freedom and equality.

Though Rice places a large emphasis on beneficial historical moments in her talk at the World Economic Forum, she also finds a use for the type of history she claims the United States spends far less time contemplating. Toward the end of her speech, Rice offers a second argument from similitude that invokes the history of slavery as a learning moment in the United States’ drive toward democracy. In a move to demonstrate the growth experienced by the United States, Rice comments that Americans “realize how long and difficult the path of democracy really is. After all, when our Founding Fathers said ‘We the People,’ they did not mean me. It took the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, to overcome the compromise in our Constitution that
made the founding of the United States of America possible, but that made my ancestors three-fifths of a man.” Instead of focusing on the benefits of democracy as in her previous argument from similitude, Rice makes a plea for the sustained application of democracy and the benefits that exist after fully implementing the system of government. Interestingly, Rice chooses American slavery as the evidence of democracy’s promise, an example from history rarely revisited in political discourse due to its painful memory as opposed to the more uplifting idea of American Realism. Though examples of slavery exist around the world as well as throughout history, the use of American slavery proves curious considering Rice’s description of the United States’ relationship with its own history in the previous example. She quickly addresses the issue, referencing Abraham Lincoln as “the Great Emancipator,” though Rice glosses over the events leading up to Lincoln’s actions during the Civil War. Additionally, Rice inserts herself into the historical memory, noting how the Founding Fathers considered her less than human and thus exempt from the promise and protection of democracy.

The phrase “made my ancestors three-fifths of a man” plays an important part in the argument as Rice interjects a metonym into her argument. Rice never explicitly uses the term slave in her speech, choosing instead to substitute “three-fifths of a man” to stand in for slave. Replacing the term slave carries risks in the speech for several reasons. The audience may lack familiarity with how the United States historically treated enslaved people and the Three-Fifths Compromise that ensconced racism into the Constitution. The audience may also find Rice’s association with enslaved people confusing as the Secretary of State never became enslaved herself. Regardless of the potential pitfalls of her rhetorical choices, Rice inserts herself into the democracy narrative to provide a close, material reference point for the benefits of democracy to her audience.
The dream of democracy in the Middle East continues to this day, as President Donald Trump debuted a new plan in February 2020 detailing steps for peace between Palestine and Israel. The plan carries echoes of American Realism, calling for Palestine to demonstrate "freedom of press, free and fair elections, respect for human rights for its citizens, protections for religious freedom" and other markers of a democratic government (United States, White House, Office of the President 34). By drafting this plan, Trump exemplifies the continued struggle of American politicians to bring democracy to the Middle East, but he also shows a commitment to the policies championed by Rice over a decade earlier to Western political leaders at the World Economic Forum. Though both Rice and Trump share a belief in the power and promise of democracy, Rice’s use of racial metaphors and metonyms showcases a unique approach to the argument for democracy in the Middle East. Alluding to the unequal version of democracy established at the founding of the United States affords Rice the ethos to announce the problems with democracy in addition to strides accomplished by the United States to correct said inequality. Of course, Rice speaks not only as an American by a Black American, granting her additional credibility concerning the gross injustice forced upon her ancestors as enslaved people. Coupling her ethos with arguments from similitude allows Rice to create comparisons with efforts to introduce democracy in the Middle East that may resonate more strongly with residents of the region due to their interaction with imperialism and Western influence. Audience members from Iran or Palestine may find a stronger connection to Rice’s description of her ancestors than descriptions of democracy advanced by diplomats who imagine democracy exclusively from a position of power. Rice conveys the value of observing, adopting, and critiquing democracy through her argument, a perspective available to her through her racial heritage as a United States citizen.
DERIVING EMOTIONAL LEVERAGE FROM METAPHORS

Continuing the theme of Secretaries of State addressing international financial organizations, Colin Powell delivered remarks on the importance of financial institutions working together to the Bretton Woods Committee on April 27, 2001. A nonpartisan economic committee developed in the 1980s, the Bretton Woods Committee meets annually to discuss ways nations and financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund or IMF may work together to address social issues that impact all citizens of the world. Broadly, Powell’s speech echoes the stated goals of the Committee to bring international financial institutions together for the common good, though he frames his argument within a conservative ethos of freedom and liberty. However, Powell augments his argument with explicit references to the issues of auto-immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS, and poverty with the goal of concretizing the need to assist countries and people who lack the resources of wealthier nations. Rather than drawing upon arguments from definition concerning the responsibilities of nations or the benefit of interventionist policies, Powell uses arguments from similitude to leave a lasting image in the minds of his audience concerning the necessity of intervening in these humanitarian crises and the urgency of helping those in need. By utilizing this method of persuasion Powell relies upon the emotions of his audience to enact changes in the world instead of assuming logic alone will convince his audience to mobilize their vast financial resources to address the problems of AIDS and poverty in the world.

Powell deploys his metaphors strategically in his speech, concentrating his arguments from similitude after a lengthy introduction characterizing the purpose of Bretton Woods. Crafting his speech in this manner allows Powell to define the role of the Committee, then offer metaphors that work to better contextualize the efforts of Bretton Woods for his audience. One
such metaphor revolves around AIDS and the necessity to address the problem according to Powell:

Let there be no doubt, ladies and gentlemen, that the wildfire of AIDS threatens to engulf whole countries and continents. And let me tell you, in today’s interdependent world, we all are in the same neighborhood together and we need to get out our hoses and help put out this fire. Even more importantly, we need to engage in more effective fire prevention efforts. And if we do, we will surely live in a more secure and stable world.

The Secretary of State utilizes an extended metaphor of a wildfire to form a concrete image in the mind of his audience. Powell begins this paragraph by describing “the wildfire of AIDS” as an unstoppable force ready to “engulf whole countries and continents.” By design, Powell describes the spread of AIDS in a hyperbolic nature to accentuate the pathos contained within the metaphor. Though the disease exists throughout the world and contains the ability to spread quickly, worldwide efforts to identify and contain AIDS trace back to the 1980s, meaning any current outbreak of the disease would garner serious and immediate attention from health institutions. Additionally, with advancements in modern medicine, any spread of the disease on a scale similar to the bubonic plague from the 1300s seems miniscule at best. Instead, Powell’s implementation of the wildfire metaphor works to create an image his audience readily recognizes and to urge the audience to action through the emotion of fear. Though far more prevalent in the years following Powell’s speech, wildfires began to appear more and more often at the turn of the millennium in the United States (United States, Congress, Congressional Research Service). Their increased occurrences mean the image of wildfires also increases in news coverage both domestically in the United States as well as abroad. An increase in the
salience of wildfire imagery correlates with an increase in addressing the problem. Powell relies on this correlation as he continues his metaphor, calling on nations that border areas impacted by AIDS “to get out our hose and help put out this fire.” This part of the metaphor relies upon common imagery of fire fighters using pressurized water from hoses to suppress wildfires as quickly as possible. Here the metaphor becomes more concrete as Powell builds upon his earlier imagery of an unstoppable wildfire. Where the wildfire stands in for the invisible spread of AIDS on a global scale, the hose Powell cites to “put out this fire” represents the funding available through the Bretton Woods Committee. Many of the wealthiest countries in the world attend Bretton Woods in addition to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In a way the entirety of the world’s economic power exists in the audience before Powell, a power he hopes to activate through his argument from similitude. By drawing upon the wildfire imagery in his speech Powell crafts a sustained appeal to his audience to act swiftly before the disease of AIDS spreads too far too quickly.

In addition to relying upon a recognizable image for his argument, Powell also uses the wildfire metaphor to engage the emotions of his audience to act with urgency. The final part of Powell’s paragraph on the AIDS wildfire notifies his audience that “we need to engage in more effective fire prevention efforts” than those previously implemented to combat the spread of the disease. While the emotion of fear certainly plays a role in the image of an uncontained wildfire, the intensity of the emotional response increases when considering future outcomes. No matter the potency of the wildfire metaphor, the spread of AIDS lacks the visceral social response of a wildfire due to its microscopic dissemination. When people see a wildfire, they react; the reaction time to AIDS pales in comparison due to the need for symptom recognition and testing to verify the disease. Powell understands this problem, imploring his audience to act proactively
with regards to AIDS rather than reactively to an uncontained problem. Though he fails to
describe these preventative measures, Powell’s metaphor invariably involves the use of money to
counteract the spread of AIDS around the world. Crafting an extended metaphor in this manner
affords Powell the flexibility to address multiple facets of a global problem in a manner that
concretizes the seriousness of the problem in the minds of his audience. The spread of the AIDS,
the need to address the disease, and the urgency to develop preventative measures all manifest
through Powell’s extended wildfire metaphor.

Immediately following his argument on addressing global concerns of AIDS, Powell
introduces a second metaphor designed to bolster the morale of those listening to his speech. The
Secretary of State references his time in the United States military and the efforts of soldiers like
himself to protect the world from threats such as the Cold War and Vietnam and provide security
for global citizens from dangerous threats, noting “Those security structures provided a shield
behind which economic development could take place despite the pressures of the Cold War.”
Similar to the wildfire metaphor, Powell’s shield metaphor here solidifies an important concept
he wants to convey through his speech concerning economic growth and financial responsibility.
Powell believes that the wealthiest nations should shoulder the burden for addressing widespread
diseases, and he also believes countries with a strong military should intervene in international
contexts to help disadvantaged countries and people improve their economic prospects. The
United States not only held an obligation to combat the military strength of the U.S.S.R. during
the Cold War, but also an obligation to prevent vulnerable countries from succumbing to
financial burdens during that time. Powell’s metaphor connotes safety for vulnerable countries to
devote their resources to economic development during a tumultuous time in world history. This sense of safety
also extends to global financial institutions as Powell notes that “the international economic
institutions were fostering prosperity behind our protective shield.” From Powell’s perspective the protective shield of powerful countries not only provides space for vulnerable countries to grow economically, it also safeguards economic institutions so they may continue their work in financial sectors.

By placing his use of the shield metaphor after the wildfire metaphor, Powell goes beyond simply concretizing ideas – he endeavors to draw out the emotions of his references. As previously noted, the wildfire metaphor draws upon the fear audience members hold of an uncontrollable virus spreading throughout the world. On the other hand, the shield metaphor instills a sense of safety for the audience that world powers such as the United States always work in the best interests of the global citizens and will intervene to address global problems when necessary. In both cases, Powell purposes to highlight the indispensable role of financial institutions and the power held by wealthy nations to enact positive change on the world. However, expressing this sentiment without careful preparation holds the potential to sound impertinent to listeners skeptical of interventionist foreign policy or the benevolence of unchecked capitalism. For instance, an audience member may believe Powell hopes his argument, which references military intervention as a measure to prevent a global catastrophe, will allow the United States to establish itself as the dominant nation in the world, dictating how other countries may use their resources and run their governments. To remedy this concern, Powell strategically appeals to the emotions of his audience to ensure they leave his speech with the perspective on financial intervention he prefers. Weaver and Beal notes in A Rhetoric and Handbook that the “Metaphor is particularly a vehicle for giving expression to our feelings of delight, surprise, elation, frustration, and so forth,” making the rhetorical trope an excellent vehicle for conveying the necessity of contributing resources to global issues like AIDS and war
Powell places the international financial institutions at the center of both metaphors to avoid a direct appeal to economic intervention and to display a more beneficent side of financial intervention. While the threat of AIDS on a global scale appears scary and uncontrollable, allowing wealthy nations and institutions such as the IMF and WTO to intervene provides safety and security, similar to the global experience of the Cold War. By describing financial intervention as a safety policy, Powell effectively circumvents more virulent criticism on his argument due to the emotional appeal he makes to his audience.

Beyond the global issues of AIDS and war, Powell also includes poverty as a key issue requiring the attention of financial intervention. Indeed, the Secretary of State views poverty as one of the most important challenges of the 21st century and implores his audience “to liberate more and more of the world’s people from the prison of poverty” (Powell). A potential precursor to Rice’s use of the prison metaphor, Powell characterizes poverty as a place of restriction for much of the world’s population. As with his other metaphors, Powell means to concretize an idea for his audience that often seems difficult to convey through alternative methods. Defining poverty proves notoriously difficult, in light of the various economic systems, rates of employment, and quality of life considerations, among other factors, that differ from country to country, all of which allow a person to effectively live their lives. In 2001 the global poverty line demarcated two dollars as the distinction between poor and low-income people around the world (Kochhar). Instead of detailing the hardships people experience in various countries living below the poverty line, Powell reforms the line into a prison for those people unfortunate enough to make less than two dollars per day. However, characterizing the poverty line as a prison becomes problematic after extending the metaphor even slightly. While prisons certainly restrict people found behind bars, a person’s arrival in prison generally follows an action prompting their
recusal from society. Said another way, people put people in prison. People surveil people in prison. People restrict other people’s actions in prison. While Powell never implies this darker interpretation of his metaphor, characterizing poverty as a prison certainly carries gravity considering the seriousness of imprisonment. Equating poverty to imprisonment implies that people with means place people without means into poverty and keep them in poverty, letting them out of their economic prison only when those people in prison become worthy of release. Understandably, the prison metaphor requires Powell to discuss poverty in a manner that sidesteps any descent into surveillance and control of people below the poverty line.

To accomplish this move, Powell immediately follows the prison metaphor with an appeal to financial intervention, arguing that “We must acknowledge first that engagement with the global economy, opening up to trade and investment, is the engine of poverty-easing growth.” In effect, Powell introduces a second metaphor likening financial intervention as “the engine of poverty-easing growth” in response to the first metaphor on the prison of poverty. One interpretation of this collection of metaphors involves viewing financial intervention as an engine powerful enough to pull people out of the prison of poverty impacting so many people globally. Encouraging wealthy nations and international financial institutions to engage with poorer nations and boost their economic development serves as the most effective means of addressing poverty according to Powell. The engine metaphor also connotes a sense of power to the audience – acting on the behalf of poorer nations allows wealthier nations to demonstrate their strength through a means other than war. Again, similar to the wildfire and shield metaphors, Powell places the metaphors of a prison and engine next to each other to both concretize ideas for his audience, and to convey emotions to his audience. All four metaphors work together to contextualize the difficult subject of financial intervention in a manner palatable to Powell’s
immediate audience at Bretton Woods and the global audience this intervention would help. Though connecting Powell’s speech to global economic improvement proves difficult, there exists evidence that the strategy of financial intervention improved the lives of people the world over. The Centers for Disease Control reports an increase in the percentage of pregnant women with HIV using drugs to prevent the transmission of the disease from 49% in 2010 to 92% in 2018 (United States, Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control). This means most women with HIV exercise the ability to prevent their children from automatically receiving the disease using drugs. Financially, the United States contributed $19 billion dollars to “low- and middle-income countries” in 2018, making these important drugs more affordable and attainable for women living with HIV (United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Communications and Global Advocacy 3). If not from Powell then by some other means, wealthy nations accepted the call to intervene financially to improve the lives of all global citizens, and the results prove the effectiveness of this foreign policy.

COMPARING ONESELF TO GOD

In between his Illinois senate election bid in 2004 and his presidential election bid in 2008, Alan Keyes took time to speak at the Constitution Party Conference on December 2, 2006. A Republican at the time of his speech, Keyes eventually switched to the Constitution Party in 2008 as it better reflected the conservative principles he valued in a political party. In this address to the Constitution Party, Keyes focused on the state of conservatism in the United States, specifically failures from the Republican Party to uphold conservative values. More than most other Republican politicians, Keyes champions a socially conservative political agenda that exists to the right of Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell. This includes a strict interpretation of the Constitution and an increased reliance on the Bible as a guide for social and political action
in modern times. Keyes highlights this perspective during his speech when he discusses the topics of state’s rights and abortion, topics that appears frequently in his speeches. A strict reader of the Constitution, Keyes firmly believes in a distinction between the powers of the federal government and how decisions made on the federal level operate on the state government level. Particularly in right-to-die judiciary cases, Keyes argues that government officials should intervene in the lives of citizens and keep them alive, regardless of decisions handed down by judges. Additionally, Keyes sees very few instances where abortions prove advantageous, viewing the practice as an afront to God and a needless slaughter of innocent life. Many of Keyes’ arguments against abortion address the validity of the practice through an examination of the Roe vs. Wade decision; he finds fault with the interpretation of the Constitution offered by Associate Justice Harry Blackmun in defining the right to life. However, in this speech Keyes moves from arguments of definition to an argument of similitude to address failures of the Republican party generally and the practice of abortion specifically. Keyes uses metaphors and similes to convince his audience of the importance of preserving the lives of United States citizens, grounding his position within biblical references designed to fortify his standing with the audience.

Few cases exemplified the necessity for the distinction of federal powers for Keyes better than the Terri Schiavo case in Florida. Diagnosed in 1990 as existing within a persistent vegetative state after a cardiac arrest, Schiavo never regained awareness through years of therapy. Her husband believed she would prefer death over forced life-sustaining methods and asked the court to remove her feeding tube. Terri Schiavo’s parents disagreed, starting a legal

43 See Keyes’ “Super Rally for Bill Sali” speech on May 19, 2006 and “Mt. Rushmore Pro-Life Rally” speech on November 4, 2006 for additional examples.
process spanning fifteen years and ultimately culminating in the removal of the feeding tube and Schiavo’s death in 2005. Keyes personally traveled to Florida during this ordeal, attempting to persuade then-Governor of Florida Jeb Bush that he held the power to override the court’s decision and prolong Schiavo’s life. Keyes’ efforts proved ultimately unsuccessful, prompting him to reflect upon the failure of the governor to act as well as the overall state of the United States’ government. At the Constitution Party Conference only a year and a half after Schiavo’s death, Keyes told his audience “that in some ways what’s happening in America reminds me of a story that is told in ancient times about the fall of Babylon” (“Constitution”). Keyes goes on to extend his metaphor, arguing that the failure of Babylonians to recognize that enemy forces conquered their city and Americans failing to see a decline in moral responsibility appear the same. Jeb Bush held a moral charge to save Schiavo’s life according to Keyes, but chose instead to relinquish power to the courts, thus weakening the executive position in American politics and morality overall in the United States.

Constructed in this manner, Keyes’ metaphor functions more similarly to an allegory, as he includes the lesson on morality in his comparison. In the Bible, Babylon tends to represent evil and opposition to God. To compare the United States to Babylon, then, means Keyes views the country as succumbing to actions and beliefs incompatible with the will of God, thereby predetermining the fate of the country. Within the structure of his speech, this argument from similitude bolsters arguments from definition Keyes uses earlier in the speech. Keyes uses multiple rhetorical questions to demonstrate the correctness of his argument that Bush held the power to keep Schiavo alive. As an example, Keyes reflects upon the ability of judges to dictate social action, asking “If the judges can check the legislature when the law is applied to the

44 See Jeremiah 25:12-14, Revelation 17:5, and Revelation 18:21 for examples.
individual, who is to check the judges when lawlessly they apply their opinion to the society and to the nation as a whole?" Essentially, Keyes inquires as to what government body plans to hold judges accountable to their decisions considering how willingly judges decide on the constitutionality of laws. These questions demonstrate a theoretical understanding of politics, but they lack the moral gravity Biblical references offer. To remedy this issue, Keyes uses the Babylon allegory to express the urgency of holding different government bodies accountable for their actions, as well as the need to protect life when government action endangers said life.

Keyes’ penchant for extended metaphors applies to people and ideas he critiques as well as himself. During his speech he reflects upon his Illinois senate election bid where he ran against Barack Obama. The race between Obama and Keyes in 2004 marked the first time in American history where both parties nominated Black candidates for a Senate seat. Keyes framed his purpose in running as philosophical rather than practical, noting the importance of valuing principles over prominence:

“So, if you go into a situation where you’re doomed to fail, people think you’re nuts. And therefore, I imagine, no matter if they profess Christian belief, all of them would have deserted Christ at the crucifixion. They wouldn’t have been standing at the foot of the cross, because He didn’t look like a success that day. They probably would have been out carousing with Barabbas. After all, he won the election.” (“Constitution”)

In this quote Keyes utilizes an extended metaphor to explain the higher purpose in his 2004 Senate election bid. Keyes critiques his detractors, drawing a parallel between political commentators who characterized his senate bid as “doomed to fail” and followers of Jesus who “deserted Christ at the crucifixion.” In this metaphor, Keyes and Christ become synonymous,
representing martyrs for the higher purpose ordained by God. Keyes invariably elevates his religious identity when speaking to his primary audience above other parts of his identity, cultivating an ethos designed to evoke a purity of motive beyond reproach. When a secondary audience questions those motives, they fail to comprehend the calling of Keyes given to him by God, just as Pontius Pilate failed to recognize Jesus as the Son of God before the crucifixion. Keyes posits that onlookers viewing Christ’s body hanging from a cross would abandon the Son of God as “He didn’t look like a success that day.” Similarly, Keyes’ defeat at the hands of Obama by 43 percentage points, in addition to defeats in two previous presidential bids and two senate bids in Maryland, creates the narrative of a failure for the former Ambassador (Mendell). By comparing himself to Jesus Keyes runs the risk of sounding blasphemous before his audience; however, Keyes dedication to a theocratic government model provides sanctuary for the former Ambassador’s argument. Rather than calling himself the next coming of Christ, Keyes only means to promote a morally pure political agenda that his opponents constantly reject at the ballot box.

Additionally, Keyes references the character of Barabbas in his analogy. Imprisoned at the same time as Jesus Christ, Barabbas escaped crucifixion when the assembled crowd chose him for pardoning by Pontius Pilate instead of Christ. Undoubtedly, Keyes invokes Barabbas due to the similarity between his name and Barack to both fortify the metaphor and further concretize the higher purpose of Keyes’ Senate election bid. In many ways Keyes’ use of metaphor compares favorably to the tradition of signifying – Keyes uses metaphors in multiple ways to create new meaning for his audience. In particular, the metaphor where Barabbas represents Barack Obama works as a form of criticism for his opponent in the Senate race as well as those citizens who decided not to vote for him. However, Keyes only means to explain his position to
his audience through a context they understand – in this case the Bible. Deception plays no role in his rhetoric as he wants his audience to connect Christian identity with political identity. Claiming that the general public “would have been out carousing” with a man who “won the election” contains the same meaning regardless of the racial demographics of the audience. While Black audience members may understand Keyes’ argument as “trippin’” or “hating” on Obama, their interpretation comes from the negative characterization of Obama from Keyes rather than some clandestine interpretation only they understand from Keyes’ signifying. Keyes’ use of metaphor works strictly on a one-to-one level – voters of his day chose the more popular candidate over the morally pure candidate in a similar fashion to audience members who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ.

Keyes expounds upon his morally pure stance just after his Christ metaphor by discussing his position on abortion. During his senate bid, Keyes often criticized Obama’s decision to vote against the Born-Alive Infants Protection bill that came before the Illinois senate in 2003 (Rohter). While Obama offered many responses to his decision to vote against the bill, including that he and other senators viewed the bill as a means to circumvent Roe v. Wade, Keyes remains unpersuaded (Keyes and Obama). For Keyes the bill represented a clear means to protect innocent life: “That’s about infanticide. That’s about whether children fully born and capable of life will be set aside to die, like in ancient times when pagans exposed their babies on the hillside and let them die because they were not fit to live” (“Constitution”). Once again, Keyes borrows from a religious narrative to contextualize his argument for the audience. Pagans, or non-Christians, view life as trivial, ignoring the Christian mandate to value all life, particularly newborns. Similarly, Obama and other Illinois senators view the protection of newly born babies as optional, a clear afront to Keyes’ morality. This simile, like his Christ and Babylon metaphors,
works to communicate a clear and singular message to his audience concerning the values of Obama. Protecting life, whether that of newborns or adults, should occupy the highest level of concern for conservatives according to Keyes. Morally and politically, conservatives possess and obligation to act on the behalf of others to safeguard life. For Keyes, his metaphors and simile help his audience think through this directive by offering comparative moments from religious contexts familiar to them. To prevent the downfall of the United States as Babylon fell, we must protect life. To properly assess the morality of our leaders, we must protect life. To act in a morally righteous manner as opposed to the corrupt actions of non-Christians, we must protect life. Each comparative trope builds upon Keyes singular motive to move the country toward a moral standard he views as imperative to the continued prosperity and existence of the United States.

WELCOMING BLACK CONSERVATIVES HOME

Other than Condoleezza Rice’s speech to the World Economic Forum, each example of arguments from similitude presented here lacks a direct reference to the rhetor’s race or racial identity at all. Both Colin Powell and Alan Keyes promote their politically conservative identity in their speeches, developing comparative rhetorical tropes that rely upon fiscal and religious conservative ideas, respectively. Without prior knowledge of the rhetor’s race, someone reading or listening to the speeches may never guess that the rhetors identify as African American. None of the rhetors use signifying in their rhetoric, nor any Black speech with distinctive influences from African languages and dialects. Their speeches eschew the hush harbors of Black communities in favor of White and international audiences with little to no recognition of the oppression and marginalization so familiar to Black audiences. Quite simply, Black conservative rhetoric appears to use comparative rhetorical tropes in ways unrecognizable to the African
American rhetorical tradition. Black conservatives value clarity in their efforts to connect their ideas to the ideas already held by the audience, regardless of racial context or demographics. Even Rice’s references to slavery functions as a device to clarify her argument of unity through democracy, rather than a critique of White supremacy disguised as an appeal to unity through democracy. From the vantage point of typical scholarship analyzing Black speech as well as users of Black linguistic methods, arguments from similitude delivered by Black conservatives register as a rhetorical strategy more aligned with the political concerns of a White audience than Black rhetors speaking to a Black audience about Black political issues. Smitherman identifies this concept brilliantly with her push/pull metaphor: early Black Americans freed from the bondage of slavery required some mastery of White English that pushed them away from their cultural home; yet they always felt a pull back to Black speech due to the association between White English and oppression common in Black communities (13-14). Here rest the origins of so much hatred and vilification of Black conservatives – their pull toward rhetoric rejected by Black communities prompts Black folks to push against Black conservatives and label them traitors to the race.

Rather than disprove this conclusion on the motives of Black conservatives using “White English” to communicate with audiences, this chapter offers a complication of how scholars theorize Black speech with the purpose of expanding the African American rhetorical tradition. Arguments from similitude may lack the flare and depth of signifying, but it still represents a method of persuasion available and used by Black folks. Further, Rice’s integration of her racial roots into a rhetorical method originally considered only available to White people demonstrates the same principles of Black speech identified by Smitherman at the outset of this chapter. The history of Black speech contains countless examples of Black folks taking the languages of the
dominant culture and adjusting it for their own use; perhaps Black conservatives see fewer points of adjustments than other Black communities. The same reasoning applies to the use of comparative rhetorical tropes for African American rhetoric(s). While this chapter argues for a new way of theorizing Black rhetorical tropes in political contexts, it also pushes against norms concerning how scholars recognize Black speech. Yes, the stylistic choices and linguistic origins of Black speech matter a great deal, but so does the humanity of the people behind the rhetoric. This chapter offers a means of understanding the humanity behind Black conservative rhetoric; not to champion their arguments or promote their ideas, but to recognize their place within the African American rhetorical tradition so often refused.
CONCLUSION: 
A RHETORIC OF RACE AND IDEOLOGY

Two years after his first Father’s Day remarks Barack Obama delivered a second Father’s Day address in Washington, D.C. on June 21, 2010. He spoke before an audience that included many members of his Cabinet, the United States Congress, and other governing bodies, as well as multiple families with small children sitting behind him on stage to contextualize his talk. Titled “Promoting Responsible Fatherhood,” Obama utilized this venue to launch the Fatherhood and Mentoring Initiative, announcing his efforts to improve the presence and activity of fathers in the lives of their children. Similar to his speech I cite in chapter one, Obama relies on conservative rhetorical appeals to frame the discussion for his audience and garner support for his initiative. After describing the consequences of growing up without a father and lamenting the limitations of government to provide a substitute for fatherhood, Obama declares that “Our children don’t need us to be superheroes. They don’t need us to be perfect. They do need us to be present.” Drawing upon arguments from similitude, Obama juxtaposes the unattainable image of a superhero father he speculates most absentee fathers carry in their minds with the more manageable image of a father who maintains a constant presence in their child’s life. Fathers hearing these words from the President of the United States, as well as men in general, may decide to change their actions and return to the children they abandoned. Interestingly, Obama never explicitly addresses race in his talk, either through the terms “Black” or “African American.” However, due to his racial identity and his previous Father’s Day address, most onlookers from the media assume his initiative means to confront a failure of Black fathers to help raise their children. From a racial perspective, this argument from similitude highlights the choices of an individual as opposed to structural and systemic limitations placed on people of
color typically finds more traction among conservative audiences. Indeed, Obama received significant criticism on his penchant for chastising Black fathers, mostly toward the end of his presidency (Clay; Cooper; Phippen and National Journal; Harris-Perry; Smith). Regardless, his argument on the need for more fathers to stay with their families resonated with audiences and continues to stand as one of Obama’s lasting initiatives from his presidency.

Fundamentally, the examples of Obama’s Father’s Day speeches represent the traces of a Black conservative rhetorical tradition latent within African American rhetoric(s). As a means of persuasion, this tradition presents itself due to the opportunity that exists for the rhetor, the *kairos*, as opposed to the political affiliation of the rhetor. For Obama, the socially conservative setting of a church or the necessity to represent liberal and conservative ideologies as President of the United States may contribute to his inclusion of Black conservative rhetorical moves in his speeches. Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Alan Keyes, on the other hand, find themselves before audiences primed to accept ideologically conservative speeches. Their use of race to lend credibility to their arguments and contextualize ideas for their audience signifies a completeness to their humanity and rhetoric worth recognizing and understanding. This project represents my attempt to surface difference within difference by recognizing the humanity of Black conservatives and tracing a means of persuasion often heard but rarely understood. In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*, Krista Ratcliffe names four moves by which people may learn to relate with other people, regardless of differences of culture. The first move involves cultivating an understanding between oneself and another person where “understanding means listening to discourses not for intent but with intent – with the intent to understand not just the claims but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well” (Ratcliffe 28, emphasis in original). While the other three moves of rhetorical listening play an important role in developing
a code of cross-cultural conduct, a foundation of understanding seems intrinsic to any attempt to bridge cultural divides, let alone liberal and conservative political perspectives. People with liberal political views may continue to disagree with their conservative counterparts but recognizing and understanding how Black conservative rhetoric functions should foster more productive discourse in political spaces, and at the very least see Black conservatives as political actors and not traitors to their race.

By employing Richard M. Weaver’s hierarchy as a strategy to understand Black conservative rhetoric, this project brings important attention to the scholar’s work. Weaver’s hierarchy represents one of the few examples of conservative rhetorical theory within *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Culturally and politically, Weaver gives voice to a rhetoric at odds with efforts such as the civil rights movement and second wave feminism, as well as a sophisticated understanding of rhetoric. His hierarchy of arguments advocates for a recognition of tradition – viewing ideas and perspectives for their current existence rather than an endless pursuit of the future. Arguments from definition derive their persuasiveness from an idea common among the audience and the rhetor. Arguments from similitude form intuitive comparisons between ideas held by the rhetor and the audience. Arguments from authority and testimony rely upon a well-defined ethos understood by the audience and built by the rhetor over a long period of time. These techniques for appealing to conservative minds assert an expectation of convention and custom within discourse. Definitions change, metaphors change, characters change, but audiences remember previous iterations and find understanding and comfort in the tradition. Black conservatives and Black people generally engage with this rhetoric in all forms of discourse – the Black church, the hush harbors of barber shops and beauty salons, even Black academic spaces all incorporate some form of Weaver’s arguments into discourse readily
recognizable to Black folks across the United States. Using conservative rhetorical techniques and advocating for conservative ideologies represent two distinct ideas; Obama still sits firmly in a liberal political tradition despite the many examples of Black conservative rhetorical techniques employed during his presidency. However, he utilizes Black conservative rhetorical techniques for political gain, particularly when speaking to Black audiences in Black spaces.

An additional consequence of using Weaver’s methodology to understand Black conservative rhetoric concerns the scholar’s view on race. The impetus for Weaver’s scholastic investigations arose from his admiration and concern for Southern culture. On multiple occasions Weaver wrote in an apologist manner about the South, valorizing Robert E. Lee while lamenting the North’s dismantling of Southern ways of life through the Civil War. Though Weaver rarely wrote explicitly about race, the unmistakable yearning for an Antebellum South necessarily calls into question the scholar’s position on race and his attitude toward Black folks. Weaver only ascribes rhetorical prowess to White men such as Lee, Abraham Lincoln, and the 14th century friar and philosopher William of Occam. Following the postmodern turn, such antiquated perspectives on race (as well as gender) find little play among scholars or society writ large. Further, his penchant for an essentialist understanding of rhetoric sits at odds with more modern epistemologies of the discipline. In the minds of people today, a desire for the Antebellum South signals a return to slavery and an explicit racial hegemony controlled by White men. I agree with this perspective, but I also contend that Weaver’s scholarship on rhetoric still holds value due to the uniqueness of his work and the thoroughness of his analysis. Scholars may apply his hierarchy of arguments to contexts Weaver never conceptualized, broadening its boundaries as a methodology and producing new understandings. By applying his hierarchy as a methodology to

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45 See Weaver’s “Lee the Philosopher,” “The Southern Phoenix,” and “Agrarianism in Exile.”
understand Black conservative rhetoric, I both recover and critique the work of Weaver by showing the value of his writing while also denouncing his anti-modern way of thinking. I believe further analyses that recover and critique past scholarship may produce similarly informative and enlightening research on current rhetorics.

Finally, my project expands the field of African American rhetoric(s) by detailing the persuasive methods of Black folks who often find themselves shunned from inclusion in the tradition. Black conservatives play an outsized role in the United States government with respect to both the number of people in the Republican party specifically, and politics generally. Acknowledging their voices certainly complicates the field as a rhetoric of resistance, as Black conservative rhetoric resists narratives of Blackness generally celebrated within the tradition. However, their inclusion in the African American rhetorical tradition also allows for more robust analysis of rhetorics used by Black people to persuade White audiences as well as Black audiences, conservative audiences as well as liberal audiences. Rhetors such as Obama, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Sojourner Truth spoke to audiences that disagreed with their arguments but found ways to persuade their listeners through means represented in this project. I believe this project offers a new way to think about Black rhetorics in an inclusive and analytical manner necessary for understanding the persuasive methods of Black folks.

Additionally, Black conservative rhetoric represents a voice of difference that expands the concept of hybridity. In her chair’s address to the 1995 Conference on College Composition and Communication titled “When the First Voice You Hear is not Your Own,” Jacqueline Jones Royster notes how scholars in cultural and postcolonial studies, such as Gloria Anzuldua, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, identify hybrid people as “people who either have the capacity by right of history and development, or who might have created the capacity by right of
history and development, to move with dexterity across cultural boundaries, to make themselves comfortable, and to make sense amid the chaos of difference” (37). Black conservatives recognize the quandary they present to Black audiences especially when they combine African American histories with conservative ideology. Yet they speak with ease when combining their cultural identity with conservative political ideology to manifest a hybrid ethos recognized and generally respected by Black and conservative audiences alike. My research shows the dexterity of Black conservatives to exist within the border of race and political ideology to present a rhetoric of difference within difference.

Moving forward, I believe my project creates the foundation for additional rhetorical analysis interested in difference within difference. Though I answer questions regarding the place of Black conservative rhetoric within the African American rhetorical tradition as well as how Black conservative rhetoric persuades audiences, my project also hints toward deeper, more granular questions of identity and ideology. One inquiry involves the examples of good rhetoric from Weaver – what role does gender play in the development and implementation of Black conservative rhetoric? How does the rhetoric of these Black conservative women intersect, acknowledge, contradict, or respond to more mainstream examples of Black women’s rhetoric? A second inquiry also involves Weaver and how scholars categorize his work. Bernard K. Duffy and Martin Jacobi note in their book *The Politics of Rhetoric* that “Weaver casts himself in the role of the cultural critic who uses his understanding of rhetoric to explain modern culture’s deflection from the socially integrative force of an older rhetoric that appealed to staid values and philosophical constants” (2). In other words, Weaver uses his background in rhetoric to argue for a culture of conservatism in response to an increasingly liberal society. Often those arguments take on a political nature, but Weaver’s purpose resides in a cultural context. In a
similar vein, my project applies Weaver’s methodology to rhetoric in political contexts, but the
goals of Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, and Alan Keyes concern a culture of conservatism.
Each rhetor speaks to the audience about their ideology rather than participating in a dialectic
about ideology. As a field of study, political rhetoric focuses on the debate of ideological
positions and the methods of persuasion employed by rhetors (Perelman, et al.; Zaleska; Condor,
et al.). If my study shows how Black conservative rhetoric establishes itself culturally, what does
Black conservative rhetoric look like as a political rhetoric? How do rhetors engage in debate to
sway their interlocutor through a combination of race and ideology? As more people who
identify as Black conservatives engage in politics these questions of gender and political rhetoric
deserve increased attention from scholars. Relegating Black conservative rhetoric to the fringes
of society no longer seems appropriate if rhetorical studies truly values Aristotle’s description of
rhetoric as “an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion” (1355b 27-28).

Scholars must take on the task of listening to those voices shunned by the majority of
society and value their means of persuasion. In a period marked by extreme partisanship in
political contexts and ideological polarization in social contexts, rhetoricians hold the ability to
reveal how our rhetoric works and show people how to navigate difficult discursive situations.
We must do the hard work of listening to voices we may find disagreeable so that we may locate
the humanity that binds us all together.
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