Speech Analysis

Persuasive Speech is when you want to make others believe that what you are saying is totally correct. Your audience may think that is utterly impossible; nevertheless, you have to make them change their mind by using all your strategies, so that your audience, or part of your audience, will believe that you are right. An oral argument designed and presented to convince or influence the listener to do a specific thing, such as a vote for a certain candidate or support a cause. A good persuasive speech has to prove a point, that will change the listeners. The process of causing someone to change their mind can be difficult. A persuasive speech can be given by anyone anywhere, during a political event, commencement ceremony, lecture halls, live events, and many more. This paper evolves around the analysis of the two commencement speeches. One was given by Conam O'Brien's in 2011 at Dartmouth College and another one was delivered by Oprah Winfrey in 2013 at Harvard University.

Saint Oprah aimed her words at everyone in the audience who felt “screwed by life,” because apparently graduating from Harvard must really be the pits. She meant because they have student loans, because that actually does make you feel “screwed by life” sometimes. Her speech was fine, if a little clichéd. Oprah told the grinning graduates that, “there is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in a different direction.” Oprah told the students, “If you’re constantly pushing yourself higher… you will at some point fall”. She was attempting to make them understand that even the beneficent and magnanimous Ms. Winfrey has fallen down. She then said that one of the keys to life is to “develop an internal moral, emotional GPS that can tell you which way to go,” when you fall. Her story was personal. A year ago, after spending 25 years atop the talk show circuit, Winfrey was struggling to get her Oprah Winfrey Network off the ground. She also was trying to ignore negative media reports that called her new venture “a flop.” “It was the worst period of my professional life,” she said. It also proved to be one of the most enlightening. When you fall, Winfrey told the Class of 2013, remember, “There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another
Conan O’Brien delivered the commencement address to the 2011 graduating class of Dartmouth College. In cold, windy weather, he took the stage and wowed a crowd of thousands 24 minutes. Conan’s jokes, one-liners and funny anecdotes elicited a steady stream of laughter and applause. But then the direction of the speech changed, and he spoke openly and poignantly about his recent setback with The Tonight Show. In so doing, he fashioned an important message for the students. Clearly, he put a lot of effort into the speech. He related his speech instance to the students, commenting on their life. Like he said, “When I got the call two months ago to be your speaker, I decided to prepare with the same intensity many of you have devoted to an important term paper. So late last night, I began. I drank two cans of Red Bull, snorted some Adderall, played a few hours of ‘Call of Duty,’ and then opened my browser”. He added a lot of humor to his speech and made it a pleasant addition to the comedic colle canon. His speech included humors like, “life is not fair” for the fact that his honorary Dartmouth degree for “interviewing the fourth lead of ‘Twilight’” is worth just as much as four years of actually difficult academic work, and that Dartmouth is Harvard, Princeton and Yale’s “cool, sexually confident lacrosse-playing younger sibling who knows how to throw a party and looks good in a down vest.”

Oprah said a lot of things, and her speech was fine but it certainly wasn’t on par with Canon O’Brien’s speech. Canon appealed mostly to pathos and ethos, being as this was a commencement speech, there wasn’t very much need to appeal to logos using stats or facts. He used pathos to appeal to the graduating students by telling about his falling out with NBC and how he came back to fame with his talk show on TBS. He said “I am here to tell you that whatever you think your dream is now, it will probably change. And that’s okay.” When saying that, he was telling them that it’s okay to be faced with failure or a change of plans, that it’s not the end of the world. He talked about failure and whether you fear it, or not, you will at some point be faced with disappointment. Through the use of his personal stories of struggle, failure, and success, he appeals to the emotions. But even throughout these
stories, he would still sometimes slip in a humorous line like, “Though some of you may see me as a celebrity, you should know that I once sat where you sit. Literally. Late last night I snuck out here and sat in every seat” to keep it light hearted and not too gloomy, which a commencement speech should all but not be.

Likewise, Oprah too picked up her speech with the great excitement. She had that spark in the beginning of the speech, but somewhere in the middle of the speech, she loses the spark of the audience, as she keeps on talking about the failure that the graduates are going to face in their life, before having that great achievement. Her speech touched the grounds of pathos as Winfrey had plenty of inspiring words for the Class of 2013 (she even joked about wishing she could tell everyone to look under their seats to find a free master’s and doctoral degree), and also touched on political issues like gun control, immigration, and public education. But she spent most of her 30-minute speech advising the new graduates on how best to navigate the next chapter of their lives. “My one hope today is that I can be a source of some inspiration,” she said. “I’m going to address my remarks to anybody who’s ever felt inferior, disadvantaged or screwed by life.” Her speech would have basically hit the sympathetic audience, as there was less of humor in her speech. And on the graduation day, there is very less audience who constantly wants to listen over one topic for 30 minutes.

Canon’s speech build a good connection with his audience as he ties in with advice and inspiration. He addresses problems with job market and warns that it could be some time and patience needed. Oprah does the same in her speech, by advising students to be calm and do not panic about their career, as it takes time to reach the highest level, where everyone wants to be at. Both the speakers held good credibility, as their ethos appeal was highly attractive. Both the speakers are famous TV stars, and had good delivery voice. They both knew what they were saying and were confident about it. The style of their language and the tone of their voice was highly remarkable. And both the speakers took over the attention in the beginning of the speech with their humorus anecdotes.

Both the speakers represented Plain folks propaganda technique, where the speaker presents
him or herself as a common person who can understand and empathize with a listener's concerns (Jowett and O'Donnell). The outline of both the speeches was that disappointment happens, failure happens and change happens, but one should learn how to embrace it. Both the speakers Canon and Oprah related their own life stories with these elements and addressed it to the graduates.

Eventually, both the speeches were great, entertaining and persuasive for the audience. As it includes all the appealing factors and propaganda techniques too. The source credibility of both the speeches is white, as the source of the speech is revealed correctly and the information is accurate.
Works Cited

