

PERSPECTIVES

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The lost generation found

By Christopher Brown
contributing writer
cmb5303@psu.edu

President Barack Obama gave his Inaugural Address on Tuesday in front of a live crowd of one or two million and in front of a television audience no doubt much larger. His speech turned out to be typical of Obama: inspiring and hitting all the right notes.

At first glance, one could easily dismiss it as nothing special, difficult to separate from the many stump speeches on the campaign trail, his victory speech in November, and the many press conferences during the transition. Yet, layered between the intonations of hope and change ("We gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord"), lay some deeper messages about America, the world, and the last two decades since the end of the Cold War.

Much of President Obama's address reads as a repudiation of the Bush Administration, but in fact it goes much

further than that. To lay the blame of all the failures of the past eight years at the feet of former President George W. Bush would be too easy. In admitting the dire straits of our economy, Obama said, "Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age."

This line seems to point at a deeper issue, the collective relaxation that we in the United States enjoyed after the end of the Cold War. America let out a sigh of relief and didn't know what to do with itself. We lacked a common purpose, a defining goal, an application of our strengths and energy.

Without a common enemy threatening our existence, many decided to celebrate their existence through the pursuit of money and material wealth. The 1990s saw great economic expansion. Collectively, we thought that our triumph in the Cold War also represented the triumph of Capitalism, but we ended

up pursuing Egoism in its stead. The pursuit of me, damned be everyone else. The proof is in the financial crisis, in our savings rate, and in America's choice of profession. In 1990, jobs in the financial industry and professional business represented just over 15 percent of all nonfarm employment, today, before the financial crisis at least, that number was approaching 20 percent. All this while inequality, measured by the GINI coefficient, reached its highest level since it was first measured in 1967, and left us third to last in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development ahead of only Turkey and Mexico.

As Obama pointed out, "without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control - and that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our Gross Domestic Product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on our ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart

- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good."

The similarities between the Roaring Twenties and the last two decades look eerily similar. Both periods followed times of great hardship (WWI and the Cold War), both placed too much faith in humanity's ability to solve the world's problems with technology, and both times ended with a rude awakening. Yet we as a nation persevered, and this sentiment was not lost on Obama.

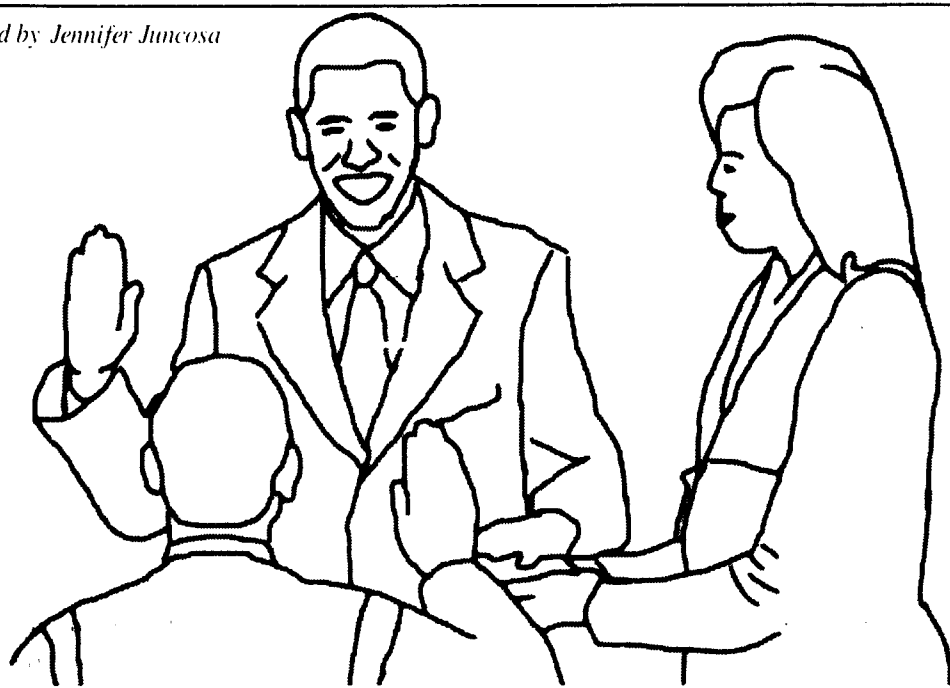
He said, "In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted - for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things - some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom."

President Obama also struck the right chord when it came to defining our challenges abroad and our enemies. He defined them as the threats they are, while also pointing out that defeating does not entail a "false choice between our safety and our ideals."

There were many other significant, symbolic passages of his speech (non-believers, Khe Sanh, and "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist"), but there weren't any Kennedy-esque or Rooseveltian one-liners that I could hang my hat on, that I can say I'll remember years from now.

I can't lie, I was probably too overjoyed hearing it live that I could think of little else than that we finally have a new President. And, as a result my insta-reaction felt it was a little bland, a little eh. I think that made it difficult to appreciate at first, but doesn't diminish its potential. However, the themes he expounded on are certainly timeless and definitively American. In the end, history will be the best judge.

contributed by Jennifer Juncosa



It could be worse. The whole world could be watching...

The shy guy's guide to feminine interaction

By Neil James Peters
Staff Writer
njp5083@psu.edu

Men as a whole are typically well-intentioned individuals. We simply sometimes lack the mental or testicular fortitude to accomplish what we want to see happen. Never has this been more apparent than when it comes to a man attempting to "ask out" a woman. Some men have "it" and others don't. "It" is the magical something that is generated from having confidence. Don't ask me how it works, because, much like Einstein's Theory of Relativity, I can't even come close to understanding it. Though I may not know how, some men can walk out of a pile of dog crap and still woo women with only their presence. I do however understand how confidence can be developed. So, dear reader, if you are among the butt-load of men who lack confidence and can hardly remember how to breathe when speaking to a cute girl, please skim on. Simply follow these simple steps when first talking to women and you will be okay.

Rule #1: Smile. Nothing screams whack-job like a brooding man glowering at a lovely lady form across a room. I don't care if your contact fell out or if you just got a dodge ball to the face, for

the love of all things holy and good, smile. You may ask: "But what if I'm in a bad mood and don't feel like it?" Well my answer to you is to grow a pair and suck it up. Smiling is the easiest way to appear to be confident, even if you are not. Also, even if you force a smile and maintain it, in a few minutes you will actually want to smile.

Rule #2: Try. Every single guy has a girl that they admire, secretly or otherwise. The problem is that after a few weeks of infatuation, we begin to put that woman on a pedestal and they seem perfect. Too perfect to like guys like us. Right? Guess what. You will never know unless you make an effort. Go up and talk to her. "But what do I say?" For starters, your name; then ask them their name all while using Rule #1. Once they respond, ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer.

Rule #3: Lie Positively: When talking to a woman or a human in general, NEVER say anything negative. If someone asks you how your day went, you always say that it was great. I don't care if your dog died or your car exploded while ninjas attacked you with napalm filled super-soakers. Your day was great.

Rule #4: Do Not Tell Them Everything: She does not need to know about how you have explosive diarrhea.

That is gross. She does not need to know about how you have a chemical imbalance. That's kind of scary. She does not need to know about how you were mauled by your math teacher in ninth grade. These are all important parts of your life, that she will need to know eventually- but only after your third year of marriage. Until then, keep these secrets locked away for now.

Rule #5: Be positive. Did you ever know a person that you couldn't stand to be around because you felt drained afterwards? Did you ever know a person who you loved to be around because you always felt energized when the interaction was over? Have you ever stopped to wonder which one you are? If you do some soul searching and discover that you are of the negative type, then it is time to change whatever is coming out of you that is so emotionally toxic. Use all of the rules listed above to be as positive as possible at all times. Even if you lack confidence, if you pretend that you have some, then eventually it will become reality. You don't have to be funny or wild or a jerk or even super confident. Just be positive, helpful and empathetic. If you can do that then you are in the clear. Just remember to stay calm and that everything will be okay in the end. If it's not okay, then it's not the end.

Inaugural questions

By Jennifer Juncosa
perspectives editor
jjj5061@psu.edu

Lately the media has focused on the inauguration of the 44th president. We all expected that, but as I checked the websites, newspapers, and CNN videos: I have found that there is a lot I still want to know.

I was too busy to watch the inauguration on television when it aired, so I resorted to watching it via *CNN.com* and other online news sources. I immediately found the first of the videos and started there.

One of the first videos I saw was when Barack and Michelle Obama arrived at the White House. First question I had, and still do, is what is in that box that Michelle gave Laura Bush? It's white with a red ribbon and it's a decent size. What is the appropriate gift when you move into someone's home? Flowers? A nice scarf and a pair of gloves? A pie? Most agree the best gift would be food of some sort. I doubt there is an etiquette book somewhere that talks about inauguration and what to bring when you have coffee with the people who used to live in the house you are taking over.

Another video I watched was the one where George and Laura Bush left the

U.S. Capitol on the Marine Helicopter. There was a picture taken of the former president and the president laughing and waving on the Capitol steps. My question is what did Bush say to Obama? What do you say as you leave and why was it so funny?

After watching the inauguration online I thought about moving into the White House. Does the family pack up and unpack? Do they hire people to pack up their old house and move their stuff into the White House? That's a long process. I've moved twice and it took months to pack up and then a month or even years to fully unpack in the new house. They must have had help.

On *Boston.com* there are numerous pictures from the inauguration. The last picture of a manila envelope that has a yellow post-it that says 44. Obviously, I want to know what's in it. It is from the former president. Maybe it's a tradition or maybe it's protocol. But what could the former say to the new president? There is so much information that one could pass, what could you put in a letter, assuming it's a letter.

Journalism is about finding the story. It's about digging deep and finding out the information that the people want to know. Needless to say, I want to know.

In my opinion:

I'm ready for Spring.
Bring on the sun and warmth.
I think we are all ready to thaw.

Ugh...

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Above zero temperatures
- Queen
- Inauguration
- Inauguration Balls

Submission Guidelines:

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run it.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty or administration position, and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 8 p.m. Wednesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue.

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.

Please keep complaints as specific as possible.

Email submissions to jjj5061@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Waiting for books to arrive
- Required GPAs
- Comment boxes
- Anonymity