

Executive Insight >> Thought Leaders

The Power of Rhetoric

Throughout history leaders have used rhetoric to inspire and move others. Richard Johnson described rhetoric as "the art of framing an argument so that it can be appreciated by an audience." Plato called it "the art of enchanting the soul." In essence rhetoric is speech designed to persuade.

Website www.americanrhetoric.com has compiled a list of the 100 most significant American political speeches of the 20th century; most of these seminal addresses can be found at the site in both text and audio. It's a fascinating journey from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" to Eleanor Roosevelt adaptation speech for the Declaration of Human Rights. Along the way you can drop in on John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Clarence Darrow, William Jennings Bryan, Malcolm X and Elie Wiesel. The list was compiled by Stephen E. Lucas (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Martin J. Medhurst (Baylor University).

We can learn a lot from this cadre of leaders who took a stand on issues, provoked thought and action and helped shape the advancement our society along the way...

See which speeches are on the list...

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
1	Martin Luther King, Jr.	"I Have A Dream"
2	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	Inaugural Address
3	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	First Inaugural Address
4	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	Pearl Harbor Address to the Nation
5	Barbara Charline Jordan	1976 DNC Keynote Address
6	Richard Milhous Nixon	"Checkers"
7	Malcolm X	"The Ballot or the Bullet"
8	Ronald Wilson Reagan	Shuttle "Challenger" Disaster Address
9	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	Houston Ministerial Association Speech
10	Lyndon Baines Johnson	"We Shall Overcome"
11	Mario Matthew Cuomo	1984 DNC Keynote Address

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
12	Jesse Louis Jackson	1984 DNC Address
13	Barbara Charline Jordan	Statement on the Articles of Impeachment
14	(General) Douglas MacArthur	Farewell Address to Congress
15	Martin Luther King, Jr.	"I've Been to the Mountaintop"
16	Theodore Roosevelt	"The Man with the Muck-rake"
17	Robert Francis Kennedy	Remarks on the Assassination of MLKing
18	Dwight David Eisenhower	Farewell Address
19	Thomas Woodrow Wilson	War Message
20	(General) Douglas MacArthur	"Duty, Honor, Country"
21	Richard Milhous Nixon	"The Great Silent Majority"
22	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	"Ich bin ein Berliner"
23	Clarence Seward Darrow	"Mercy for Leopold and Loeb"
24	Russell H. Conwell	"Acres of Diamonds"
25	Ronald Wilson Reagan	"A Time for Choosing"
26	Huey Pierce Long	"Every Man a King"
27	Anna Howard Shaw	"The Fundamental Principle of a Republic"
28	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	"The Arsenal of Democracy"
29	Ronald Wilson Reagan	"The Evil Empire"
30	Ronald Wilson Reagan	First Inaugural Address
31	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	First Fireside Chat
32	Harry S. Truman	"The Truman Doctrine"

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
33	William Cuthbert Faulkner	Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech
34	Eugene Victor Debs	1918 Statement to the Court
35	Hillary Diane Rodham Clinton	"Women's Rights are Human Rights"
36	Dwight David Eisenhower	"Atoms for Peace"
37	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	American University Commencement Address
38	Dorothy Ann Willis Richards	1988 DNC Keynote Address
39	Richard Milhous Nixon	Resignation Speech
40	Thomas Woodrow Wilson	"The Fourteen Points"
41	Margaret Chase Smith	"Declaration of Conscience"
42	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	"The Four Freedoms"
43	Martin Luther King, Jr.	"A Time to Break Silence"
44	Mary Church Terrell	"What it Means to be Colored in the...U.S."
45	William Jennings Bryan	"Against Imperialism"
46	Margaret Higgins Sanger	"The Morality of Birth Control"
47	Barbara Pierce Bush	1990 Wellesley College Commencement Address
48	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	Civil Rights Address
49	John Fitzgerald Kennedy	Cuban Missile Crisis Address
50	Spiro Theodore Agnew	"Television News Coverage"
51	Jesse Louis Jackson	1988 DNC Address
52	Mary Fisher	"A Whisper of AIDS"
53	Lyndon Baines Johnson	"The Great Society"

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
54	George Catlett Marshall	"The Marshall Plan"
55	Edward Moore Kennedy	"Truth and Tolerance in America"
56	Adlai Ewing Stevenson	Presidential Nomination Acceptance Address
57	Anna Eleanor Roosevelt	"The Struggle for Human Rights"
58	Geraldine Anne Ferraro	Vice-Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech
59	Robert Marion La Follette	"Free Speech in Wartime"
60	Ronald Wilson Reagan	40th Anniversary of D-Day Address
61	Mario Matthew Cuomo	"Religious Belief and Public Morality"
62	Edward Moore Kennedy	"Chappaquiddick"
63	John Llewellyn Lewis	"The Rights of Labor"
64	Barry Morris Goldwater	Presidential Nomination Acceptance Address
65	Stokely Carmichael	"Black Power"
66	Hubert Horatio Humphrey	1948 DNC Address
67	Emma Goldman	Address to the Jury
68	Carrie Chapman Catt	"The Crisis"
69	Newton Norman Minow	"Television and the Public Interest"
70	Edward Moore Kennedy	Eulogy for Robert Francis Kennedy
71	Anita Faye Hill	Statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee
72	Thomas Woodrow Wilson	League of Nations Final Address
73	Henry Louis ("Lou") Gehrig	Farewell to Baseball Address
74	Richard Milhous Nixon	Cambodian Incursion Address

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
75	Carrie Chapman Catt	Address to the U.S. Congress
76	Edward Moore Kennedy	1980 DNC Address
77	Lyndon Baines Johnson	On Vietnam and Not Seeking Re-Election
78	Franklin Delano Roosevelt	Commonwealth Club Address
79	Thomas Woodrow Wilson	First Inaugural Address
80	Mario Savio	"Sproul Hall Sit-in Speech/An End to History"
81	Elizabeth Glaser	1992 DNC Address
82	Eugene Victor Debs	"The Issue"
83	Margaret Higgins Sanger	"The Children's Era"
84	Ursula Le Guin	"A Left-Handed Commencement Address"
85	Crystal Eastman	"Now We Can Begin"
86	Huey Pierce Long	"Share Our Wealth"
87	Gerald Rudolph Ford	Address on Taking the Oath of Office
88	Cesar Estrada Chavez	Speech on Ending His 25 Day Fast
89	Elizabeth Gurley Flynn	Statement at the Smith Act Trial
90	Jimmy Earl Carter	"A Crisis of Confidence"
91	Malcolm X	"Message to the Grassroots"
92	William Jefferson Clinton	Oklahoma Bombing Memorial Address
93	Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm	"For the Equal Rights Amendment"
94	Ronald Wilson Reagan	Brandenburg Gate Address
95	Eliezer ("Elie") Wiesel	"The Perils of Indifference"

Rank	Speaker	Title/Text
96	Gerald Rudolph Ford	National Address Pardoning Richard M. Nixon
97	Thomas Woodrow Wilson	"For the League of Nations"
98	Lyndon Baines Johnson	"Let Us Continue"
99	Joseph N. Welch	"Have You No Sense of Decency"
100	Anna Eleanor Roosevelt	Adopting the Declaration of Human Rights

Source: www.americanrhetoric.com



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