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Ben Carson

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Ben Carson

Ben Carson is a retired neurosurgeon who worked at John Hopkins Hospital after studying at Yale University for undergraduate and the University of Michigan Medical School. Carson announced his candidacy for presidency on May 4, 2015, at a rally in his hometown of Detroit. He is running for the Republican nomination in the 2016 presidential election. In his announcement speech, Carson positions himself as the strongest, most reliable candidate on the issue of America's broken economy by framing it as a problem that can be fixed by teamwork between Washington and the people. To gain support for this issue framing, Carson constructs his character as the powerful leader/narrator and provokes the emotions of inspiration and motivation.¹

Carson sets his agenda on the broken economy. Carson says, "From 1850 to 2000, our economy grew at a rate of 3.3% at least, even during wars. From 2001 until 2014, it grew at a rate of 1.8%." After giving the statistics on our economy, Carson goes on to explain the massive national debt that our country has accumulated over years. It has especially risen since 2000 and continually rises. Although Carson does not give a specific strategy on resolving our current economy, he does say, "And how do we fix it? Well, recognize that we have the most dynamic economic engine the world has ever known right here in America, and we need to use it again."

¹ This essay applies Medhurst's (2005) conceptual overview of presidential campaign rhetoric – agenda-setting, framing, character construction, and emotional resonance.

Carson wants America to thrive again and him and his followers all understand that it is possible with his leadership.

Ben Carson frames the problem being caused by the government taking away the freedom from the people. He says, “We can’t work it when we wrap it in chains and fetters of regulations and new regulations that come out all the time.” Carson is describing the corrupt leaders in Washington who are placing too many regulations and raising taxes which has essentially broken our economy. Carson uses the word “We” showing a sense of unity. Recently, unity has not been shown in America because of leaders with different opinions, but Carson reminds us that if we work together to fix the broken economy, it can be done. Carson then uses the words “wrap.. chains and fetters” to show the regulations we have put on the economic machine in Washington. By passing hundreds of tax bills, politicians in Washington have couped up the money maker making it difficult to benefit anyone in this country. He also uses these words to show how distant the people are from making a change in our economy because corrupt leaders have sectioned off Washington and its policies to themselves. Later in his speech, Carson says, “So we have to obviously - we obviously have to create an environment that is conducive to them making money.” Carson uses repetition to show his audience that this is something that *needs* to be done. By using “we” he is implying that the people of America need to work as a team rather than battling between political parties. Carson is a believer of unity and believes that we can improve our country if we work as a team.

Although Carson believes that the government's involvement with our economy is a problem, he offers a solution involving the people. Carson frames the people of America as the solution to fixing the broken economy. He says, “We, the people are the rulers of thought in this

nation. We get to determine what kind of nation we have; other people cannot dictate that for us. We never allow anybody to take that right away from us.” Again, Carson uses the word “we” to describe unity and that it takes a team effort. Carson also says that “we are the rulers of this nation. We get to determine what kind of nation we have.” This is powerful because it relates directly to the regulations that are made in Washington that are affecting our economy. He says that we are the ones who control the country and democracy gives us that ability. Carson firmly believes that the government is in too much control of American lives. He doesn’t give the exact solution, but he clearly states that the solution lies in the hands of the people.

Ben Carson purposefully constructs his character as someone who is not politically correct, and does not want to be like every other politician. While describing himself, he says, “I don't want to be a politician, because, politicians do what is politically expedient, and I want to do what is right.” Carson portrays himself as someone who will bypass the big politics in Washington and instead will do what the people of America want. Some are skeptical of this trait while some are excited to see what he can do. Either way, presents himself as a person who speaks the truth and wants to do what is right for the country and what benefits the people. Politically correct or not, Carson strongly stands for his opinions regarding the corrupt politicians in Washington and will lead the people to a brighter future.

Carson makes the crowd feel two main different emotions throughout his speech: anger and the feeling of shared power. As Carson starts out, he introduces the problems with our economy and gives reasons for this. Carson says, “That is really the key to us as a nation becoming successful again. Not allowing ourselves to be manipulated by people who think that they are the kingmakers.” Since the government is continuing to shut out the people and make

their own rules, he makes the people feel angered because they do not have a say in what goes on. He wants people to be angry with how the government is treating its people, and hopefully encourage them to step up and make a change.

After presenting a feeling of anger towards the government, Carson helps the audience feel empowered by connecting with them on the same level. Carson wants the audience to feel a sense of shared power with him so he gives them some words of wisdom. He started from nothing and worked his way to one of the world's most important members in the medical industry. Carson says, "I began to recognize that the person who has the most to do with what happens in your life is you." He wants to remind his voters that he was at one time in the same spot as they are. Also, he helps the audience feel a sense of shared power because he shares the same interests as his fellow Americans, wants to improve our country for everyone, and he does not want to feel like a higher political figure. Carson wants to be equal with his audience because after all, he wants the people of America to be the ones making a change in our country.

Candidate Ben Carson proves his leadership to the people of America by setting his agenda on the broken economy and generating ways to cure the problems we have. He gives his fellow Americans hope by framing the corruption in Washington and leaving it up to the people to make a change, while still remaining a moderator of the movement. Ben Carson starts off by constructing himself as the powerful leader who can help America achieve goals with teamwork and cooperation with officials all throughout Washington. This goes on throughout his speech which in turn resonates with the audience to feel a sense of inspiration to make a change for the advancements in their own lives and others. Many question Ben Carson for his tactics on political situations and some of the radical things he has said. Will Ben Carson win the votes of

millions of Americans for his unique sense of leadership? Many are skeptical of him because he could be just like every other politician, even though he's a neurosurgeon. Ben Carson will continue to speak as a powerful leader and soon he will have to officially leave it up to the people to vote him into office.

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