

## **Commitment, Compassion, and Camaraderie: A Rhetorical Analysis of Barack Obama's 'Healing Our City' Speech**

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### **Abstract**

Since 9/11, there has been an increased emphasis on protecting key public events globally through prioritized protection against terrorism via an extensive security system. The Boston Marathon Bombing was an exceptional incident in this regard that shook the city of Boston. The speech titled 'Healing our City' that was given by President Barack Obama after the Boston Marathon Bombing advocated for the psychological healing of the community and the measures required to move ahead towards reconstruction after a shattering experience. It proposed the prioritization of communal well-being through an emphasis on collective efforts amid the tough phase. By centering on post-traumatic recovery, it addressed a range of actions from general sentiments to societal collaboration offering optimism and resoluteness. The tone of the speech was laden with solace, yet it was also aimed at galvanizing and empowering people by instilling a compassionate call for regeneration and reclamation during stressful times. This paper explores the efficacy and the impact of the rhetorical strategies used by Obama in his speech. The paper seeks to gain an insight into the influence that the speech was meant to have on the audience in order to contribute to the restorative process whereby the people of Boston continued their way of life by not letting fear or hatred to prevail.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Threat, Boston Marathon Bombing, Tsarnaev Brothers, Enemy, Stranger, Empathy, Solidarity,

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Resilience, Unity, Collectivism, Inclusivity, Community, Patriotism

### **Introduction**

Terrorism is a communication strategy that disseminates a negative message to a large, heterogeneous audience in a short span of time. The complicated connection between terrorism and sporting events is based on instilling the culture of trepidation in a society. Although such sporting events are well protected, yet their symbolic target selection has always been aimed at disrupting the host country's claim to deliver a 'safe and secure' event (Richards). Acting as a lone perpetrator or part of a strategic terrorist group, hitting such events has most of the time an intrinsic logic to target the government's misdirected, biased, and flawed policies towards a certain group that ultimately results in such a backlash harming and disrupting the lives of innocent citizens. Such hostile instances in sporting events have acted as emblematic justifications for their grievances and revengeful motives where increased coverage by a variety of media sources further creates a symbiotic relationship between such atrocious deeds and the group's demands (Gonzalez).

The concept of 'enemy' and the notion of 'stranger' while dealing with the 'others' is based in apprehensions experienced while facing the traumatizing events that often overshadow the narrative of camaraderie, collectivism, and inclusivity (Schmitt; Simmel). Huysmans (1998) particularized that strangers create unsettledness by bringing together the viewpoint of mayhem within the established order. Expressing ambivalence, the stranger thus destabilizes the established plan of a state's law that epitomizes inclusion and exclusion simultaneously. This way the paradoxical binaries of the innocent and the guilty, the benign and the harmful, the friend and the foe, in short us and them, lead them to enter the political limelight warranting further intervention. Being marginalized as migrants of a Chechen-Avar descent, this was the

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case with Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev and his brother who perpetrated the Boston Marathon Bombing, 2013. They were blamed not in isolation but as part of the larger group that was seen as a threat. These entwined apparatuses of identity construction resemble distinct phases in the Boston narrative, illuminating the significance of viewing identity as a process and shedding light on the ambivalence towards the Tsarnaev brothers that marked the initial narrative of the attack (deRaismes).

In response to such terrorist acts, countries and their leaders usually emphasize the importance of 'value talk' in the aftermath that is meant to unite their societies against such threats more holistically communicating both internal cohesion through 'we-hood' and external distinction by 'us-hood'. The variable formulations of 'we', 'us', and 'them' create a dynamic and flexible sense of togetherness that contests the concept of inflexible cultural boundaries. Public discourse during such times always looks divided between safety of local dwellers at the hands of threatening immigrants and governments' counter arguments that support social cohesion crucial for a sustained national identity during crisis. In the case of terrorism, the 'external agent' against which the 'us-hood' is established is the terrorists and those who supported them whereas the 'we-hood' arises from the shared task of achieving unity in response to these threats. This notion serves as a framework for value-talk, allowing for the articulation of stories that define who 'we' are through shared experiences and historical events. Still, it is also evident that this framework does not necessarily create consensual narratives. Governments have a challenging task in such times to work meticulously on alternative context-dependent perspectives to curtail the prevailing social thought process of negativity and distrust in the society at large. This way they aim to better accommodate the complexities of diverse societies and their narratives of belongingness and exclusion (Ezzati).

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One thing that must be clearly comprehended in this regard is that both patriotism and nationalism must be understood as separate psychological constructs whose meaning is rooted in national identity. In the first place, 'essence-based' meaning is tied to cultural homogeneity while its 'common goal-based' meaning focuses on shared goals and purposes. In the essence-based scenario, however, patriotism has always been associated with exclusionary attitudes, intolerance of cultural diversity, and derogatory views toward other nations whereas in common goal-based definition, patriotism is less related to nationalism and is more compatible with tolerant attitudes toward cultural and communal diversity. It is the latter scenario where politicians and leaders usually embark upon to engage audiences for more social cohesion and inclusivity when facing hardships as a community or a nation. The situational factors of threat and uncertainty have always played a crucial role in this perceived meaning of national unity and patriotism that either lead to nationalism or inclusivity. On the other hand, essence-based unity aligns patriotism with nationalism through homogeneously conducive culture, encouraging tolerant attitudes toward intergroup differences as well (Li & Brewer).

Within this broader context, this paper critically analyzes the "Hearing Our City" speech by Barack Obama in order to understand its role in the regeneration of the people of Boston in the aftermath of the Boston Marathon Bombing in 2013. The speech recognized innocent victims of the bombing and reflected on the celebratory nature of the Boston Marathon turning into a tragic event. The President emphasized the unity of the American people and the city of Boston in the face of the attack. He rejected the idea that an act of terror could create divisions, asserting that Boston and the nation stood united. President Obama's speech could rather be seen as a political response to the tragedy, a call for unity, resilience, and a reaffirmation of American values in the face of terror.

### **Methodology**

Reflective of the 'common goal based' ideology, a 20-minute address was delivered by the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States Barack Hussein Obama on Thursday, April 18, 2013 at 12:04 P.M EDT at the 'Interfaith Service in Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston Massachusetts, USA' in response to the Boston Marathon Bombing on Patriot's Day. The bombing occurred on Monday afternoon, April 15, 2013, around 3pm during the 117<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon where, at 12 seconds apart, 02 homemade pressure cooker bombs exploded near the finish line, resulting in 03 deaths and 281 injuries (Kiger). The attack stunned the nation and reaped widespread media coverage. The speech was given at a memorial service held in Boston to honor the victims by showing support, offering condolences, expressing solidarity, and inspiring unity, resilience, and compassion in the face of adversity. This paper explores how the speech utilized rhetorical techniques by strategically using various aspects of rhetoric, the role of each rhetorical element in promoting solidarity and resilience, the impact of rhetorical appeals on inspiring unity and the contribution of literary devices to effectively convey complex ideas and emotions within the context of the tragedy. The researcher has adopted a qualitative approach to analyze how the speaker expressed condolences for lost lives and also paid homage to the victims. For this study, systematic examination of rhetorical elements and appeals present in the transcript have been investigated. The primary data source was the Whitehouse website that contains presidential speech archives as a reliable, publicly available source. The data was coded using established categories to identify rhetorical devices, appeals, and elements used in the speech. The data was studied using thematic analysis for the exploration of recurring rhetorical strategies. The research has adopted a theoretical framework rooted in classical rhetoric, focusing on ethos, pathos, logos, and other rhetorical appeals and elements present in the speech.

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For a detailed analysis, the title of the speech has been deconstructed in the first place where the rhetorical reasoning for using that specific title is discussed. After that the characteristics of rhetoric are explored including the use of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery of the speech to gauge its persuasive handling of the text. Next, the rhetorical construction of the address is dissected to understand how effectively the speaker has incorporated empathy into the message by systematically yet slowly imparting the message from introduction paragraphs leading to the body and finally to the conclusion through a focus on collectivism and unity. All possible uses of deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric are explored thoroughly to understand the narratorial power the speech carried in convincing its audience to feel one with each other in tough times. In this respect, the elements of narration, description, comparison, example, illustration, definition, process, causal analysis, and argument are explored in detail. Lastly, all possible uses of literary devices were explored in detail and it was found that from a balanced sentence structure to positive and proactive language, Obama's speech made use of syntax, metaphor, diction, personification, analogy, symbolism, repetition, alliteration, imagery, anaphora, anadiplosis, and tricolon to make the speech one of the most connectable texts for both communal and national cohesion.

### **Analyzing 'Healing our City' by President Barack Obama**

The speech has a tone of mourning, grief, and a collective search for understanding and healing by uplifting the spirit of the community and emphasizing the strength and resilience of the American people. The title reflects that the speech was delivered by a confidante allied to the city and its dwellers both in actions and spirit. It signifies inclusivity of the speaker who reflects shared experience and a sense of unison with the tragedy-stricken community to validate his honest association and vigilant concern for the city. The title is also representative of multi-tiered

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connotative concepts including communal refurbishment and reclamation from psycho-physical wounds helping trauma-stricken residents to overcome the loss through optimistic transformation and progression. Linguistically, the word 'healing' signifies empathetic sentiments and optimism for the people of Boston; it urges them to generate a compassion-driven collective communal support to recuperate. It suggests a way forward to evolve, rejuvenate, and reinvigorate for a better future by encompassing the entourage of courage needed to strengthen as well as to rebuild again as a society. The possessive pronoun 'our city' in the title emphasizes a sense of mutual accountability as well as communal collectivism nurturing inclusivity required for comfort and reconciliation on the whole.

The speech's 'introduction' employs various rhetorical devices and techniques to grab the attention, establish the emotional tone, and lay out the central themes for the audience. By starting with a compelling 'anecdote' of a beautiful morning in Boston on Patriot's Day and the use of vivid imagery, such as the sun rising over the city, the glistening State House Dome, and the spring bloom, the speech paints a picturesque scene, engaging the audience's senses and drawing them into the setting. 'Alliteration' has also been used to create a lyrical effect from phrases like "sun rose over Boston", "spring was in bloom", and "see the Sox at Fenway," which contributes to the speech's rhythm and memorability. The 'repetition' from scripture "run with endurance the race that is set before us. Run with endurance the race that is set before us" and "On this Patriot's Day, like so many before," also emphasizes the significance of the day by setting a reflective tone in a suggestive manner. The use of 'parallel structure' is evident in the phrases "dedication and grit and the human spirit" and "leadership, courage, and grace" that adds a sense of balance and clarity by making the message more impactful and easier to follow. Referring to the historical events and symbols associated with Boston, such as the mention of Governor Patrick, Mayor Menino, faith leaders, past governors, and iconic Boston sports

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teams like the Red Sox, the Celtics, the Patriots, and the Bruins, the 'allusions' help the audience connect to Boston's history, culture, and sense of identity. The 'description' of the tragic event that has shattered the day's beauty and the mentioning of the families who lost loved ones evoke a sense of sorrow and empathy. The 'contrast' between the joyful celebration and the sudden tragedy further intensifies the emotional impact. The speaker also creates a sense of inclusivity by referring to Boston as "your beloved city" and "our beloved city, too" that has fostered a sense of unison and shared responsibility.

In the 'body' of the speech, the speaker utilizes various rhetorical devices and strategies to further develop the message, evoke emotions, and persuade the audience. Throughout the body of the speech, the speaker employs 'emotional appeals' to connect with the audience and evoke empathy through personal stories of the victims, such as Krystle, Lingzi, and 8-year-old Martin Richard, thus bringing a human element to the tragedy. The use of 'anaphora' is evident through the repetition of "Our prayers are with..." when mentioning the families of the victims and the injured, emphasizing the speaker's empathy and compassion. The use of 'testimonials' and 'quotes' from Martin Richard's wish for "No more hurting people's Peace" and the father-son duo, Dick and Rick Hoyt, emphasize the message of determination in the face of adversity. The speech also employs 'contrast' and 'antitheses' to highlight the difference between the tragedy and the compassionate response from first responders and the Boston community. By juxtaposing acts of violence with acts of kindness, the speech underscores the power of compassion to overcome hatred. The speech effectively uses 'pronouns' like "we", "us", and "our" to create a sense of inclusivity for the healing process. By emphasizing these shared values of compassion, resilience, and unity, the speaker connects the audience on a deeper level by reinforcing the American identity. The historical and cultural references of the city of Boston, on the other hand, echo strength and resilience. By encouraging people to continue running the



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Boston Marathon and showing resilience, the speech instills preemption in the face of challenges.

In the 'conclusion' paragraphs, the speaker utilizes rhetoric to leave a powerful and lasting impression on the audience by reinforcing the central message through inspiring action. By reiterating the themes introduced in the start and developed through the body, the conclusion reinforces the central message and motivates the audience to take positive steps forward. By tapping into the audience's emotions once again, the conclusion creates a lasting impression, leaving the listeners with a sense of empathy and a renewed commitment to stand together. By painting a hopeful picture of healing, progress, and community support, the speaker also instills optimism and determination in the audience that solidifies the community's response to adversity. The artistic elements add an emotional dimension to the conclusion, leaving a lasting impression on the audience by entreating the resilient spirit of America in the face of challenges. It also strengthens the connection between the audience roles at communal as well as national fronts. By emphasizing the fortified resilience of the human spirit, the speaker encourages the audience to face adversity with conviction. The speaker reminds the audience of the undeniable importance of inclusivity, integrity, and collectivism as well. This passage builds the climax with the statement: "We come together to celebrate life, and to walk our cities, and to cheer for our teams." The use of "and" to list these activities reinforces the idea of communal gathering and shared experiences, signifying a powerful sense of unity and resilience.

The cogent and enthralling content of the speech delivered with an impactful note of well-spirited optimism highlights the use of 'invention' in the speech. The proficiently constructed and conjured sentiments induce unity to elevate communal and national commitment by encouraging shared values of fellow Bostonians to face adversary with fortitude. In this regard, the foremost prevalence is that of 'emotional appeal' eliciting empathy and

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compassion painted by vividly describing victim stories like that of ‘Krystle, Lingzi and 8 years old Martin’ and how they all have suffered differently still sharing the same excruciating pain. This humanism creates a strong sense of connection even with those living at a distance, thus successfully letting them empathize and feel the intensity of the pain suffered by both the victims and their families. The idea of nationalism, American values, and national unity are visible when Boston is referred to as “one of America's iconic cities” by highlighting its historic stature and its significance for the American identity. Resultantly, this fosters communal collectivism and national pride among the audience through phrases like “our beloved city” and “this country that we love”. This also reiterates the city’s positivity in accepting immigrants from diverse backgrounds that has encouraged the audience to see themselves as part of a larger whole and fostered a spirit of togetherness and support as a community. Phrases like “We carry on”, “we finish the race”, and “we will run again” further the tone of anticipatory optimism reflecting courage, fortitude, and perseverance of Bostonians in general. The city and its residents’ determination further echoes through its defiance against terrorism highlighting the flawed choice of the perpetrators because nothing could shake the valor of the city and its people even after this heinous act.

The organization of the speech is also significant for conveying its message. The opening with an elated introduction that switches to the description of the catastrophe goes on to celebrate Boston's power; humanize the sufferers; and proclaim defiance and hope. This well-ordered assembly assures a meticulous engagement of the audience and conveys a powerful message of unity in times of despair. The speech starts off with a vibrant portrayal of a beautiful day to suggest an affirmative and commemorative tone. The introduction emphasizes the city’s welcoming nature, its iconic landmarks, history of sports, and cultural events establishing a connection of collective communal delight before the befallen tragedy. The shift to adversity is so sudden and impactful that it

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creates a blatant contrast between two contradictory scenarios of the joyful life and the miserable death. The speaker conveys commiserations to the victim's families that beseech compassion through the shared sense of grieving. The speaker then focuses on the city's ability to overcome challenges and unite in the face of adversity by applauding its inclusivity, openness to diversity, and unwavering strength. From humanizing the tragedy aimed at personalization to defiance against the perpetrators of the attack, the speaker appeals to the celebratory national identity and unity as a common feature. The conclusion thus has a futuristic optimism that encourages perseverance to finish the race by staying strong and together as a united community.

The speaker uses emotive and evocative language such as "Beautiful day", "tragedy", "heartache", and "broken for 8-year-old Martin" to evoke empathy, compassion, and shared grief by incorporating personal narratives to humanize the victims through relatable tragedy fortifying the need for a collective support system. The speech also carries a strong patriotic tone of national identity and pride in the country's values. Phrases like "our beloved city", "this country that we love", and "our fidelity to our way of life" reinstate Americans' unity and resilience. The attitude of optimism, hope, strength, and unity in the aftermath of the attack are portrayed through allusions to the city's unique identity of embracing diversity to harness togetherness.

The speech constantly admires the spirit of Boston city: "Boston, he said, is not just a capital, not just a place. Boston, he said, is the perfect state of grace.... As you begin this long journey of recovery, your city is with you. Your commonwealth is with you. Your country is with you. We will all be with you as you learn to stand and walk and, yes, run again." The speech explicitly specifies Boston's undaunted spirit during tough times. By pointing out State House Dome, the Boston Marathon, and the gathering on Patriot's Day, the rhetorical technique of 'memory' is used to refer to historical and cultural sites that reinforce communal cohesion in

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a continued connection to the city's traditions, conjuring the spirit of pride and attachment. It also endorses Boston as a hub for arts, science, and research and through citing its concert halls, hospitals, and laboratories cherishes the city's intellectual competency and novelty. Boston and Massachusetts evoke devout leadership in the form of 'Governor Patrick', 'Mayor Menino', and 'Cardinal O'Malley' that reflect the city's strong political history and the enduring spirit of the Boston community.

The speech uses 'deliberative rhetoric' to convince the audience to maintain fortitude and abide by their values and traditions thus reinforcing a particular course of action aimed at upholding the principles of interwoven community and nation. Where "our beloved city" and "this country that we love" call for unity, phrases like "carry on", "finish the race", and "run again" suggest dedicated reassurance towards communal norms and traditions. Bolstering American values of freedom and openness through phrases like "free and open society" and "spirit of compassion", the speaker encourages a robust attitude in the face of terrorism as an act of defiance against those who seek to instill fear. Along the same lines, phrase like "our fidelity to our way of life" convey exceptional American individuality and stanch national forte. The speaker also utilizes judicial rhetoric by condemning the culprits, accentuating American values, and pleading the concepts of integrity and morality. The brief reference to malefactors through the phrase "the perpetrators of such senseless violence, these small, stunted individuals who would destroy instead of build" uses 'judicial rhetoric' by labeling the actions of the aggressors as "senseless violence" seeking annihilation rather than construction which implicitly calls for uprightness and shared liability. Finally, the speech utilizes 'epideictic rhetoric' to honor the victims of bombing by celebrating the city's legacy and applauding the acts of compassion and heroism of survivors. The speaker honors the sufferers of the Boston Marathon Bombing as well as the entire city through the use of ceremonial and demonstrative epideictic rhetoric. Tribute to the victims refers to their personal qualities,

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such as 'Krystle's smile' and 'Lingzi's journey to experience Boston' thus humanizing the victims for strong emotional connection with the audience. The celebratory tone for the city's character and spirit is reflected in phrases like "one of America's iconic cities" and a "world's great city". The speech commends the bravery and dedication of the security and the paramedical personnel to fearlessly serve their fellow citizens. It also praises Bostonian response of civic responsibility required in challenging times. The speaker praises the collective acts of delivering water, offering blankets, giving blood, and opening homes to strangers lauding the city's resilience, compassion, and unity in times of hardship.

While the main emphasis of the speech is encouragement, its narrative technique that blends storytelling and emotional effect makes it powerful. Not only the personal stories of victims but the honoring eulogy of Martin Richard, the act of compassion by both citizens and different personnel working at the scene of tragedy as well as the description of Boston's traditions all add up to the narratorial brilliance. The element of 'description' further adds meaning through an elaborated portrayal of people, places, and events by creating sensory stimulus for clearer mental images. This is reflected through describing paradoxical scenarios on the same day through phrases like "sunlight glistened off the State House Dome", "the commons, in the public garden, spring was in bloom", and "a celebration became a tragedy". The thought-provoking visually descriptive address not only adds emotional value but also humanizes the victims to understand the gravity of the situation and its effect on innocent residents through 8-year-old Martin Richard's wish expressed on a blue poster board, "No more hurting people. Peace". Overall, the speaker effectively elicits empathy, a sense of harmony, and altruism among the audience.

The speaker reinforces the 'ethos' of the community based on his stature. As the President and leader of United States, he reflects authority, trustworthiness, and credibility. As such, as the head of

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state, his role as a binder and a unifier is evident when he asks the audience to act with resilience, unity, and solidarity. The President's personal recounting demonstrates his humanism, empathy, relatability, and emotional connectedness with the victims and families. He also recognizes initial responders as heroes who displayed bravery and compassion, exemplifying the best of America. The element of 'pathos,' on the other hand, is reflected in emotional and sentimental statements. The personal stories of the victims harness emotional linkage that serve to intensify the sense of tragedy and loss. Communal acts of compassion evoke a sense of admiration and gratitude for those who risked their lives to help others by promoting the national spirit. By describing an 8-year-old boy's last hours eating ice cream with his family at the Marathon, presents a distressing picture of a young life discontinued in an untimely manner. The speech also reflects 'Logos' in its acknowledgement of the tragic event on Patriot's Day and its immediate consequences in the form of the loss of life, injuries, and bereavement by the community. By acknowledging the logical consequences of the tragedy, the speech establishes a factual basis for the emotions and challenges faced by the people of Boston. The speaker emphasizes the need for a well-knitted community to tackle adversity amicably. By highlighting examples of compassionate choices made by first responders and Bostonians, the speech logically argues that choosing compassion over cruelty leads to communal unison, the shared American value that has reinforced unity and resilience.

The speech also combines logos with an emotional and anecdotal approach to persuasively connect with the audience. The use of the Boston Marathon as an analogy for life's challenges and the human spirit's resilience serves as a form of 'analogical reasoning' as well. By comparing the endurance required to run both the marathon and life's challenges, the speech underscores the strength and determination of the Boston community in facing hardships. The speech appeals to principles of 'ethical reasoning' and shared values of empathy, harmony, and amity. 'Deductive reasoning' is

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also used through repetitive messages of unity and resilience to stay strong and together in tough times. Lastly, the use of personal stories and particular instances of acts of compassion and heroism can be seen as 'inductive reasoning,' which builds a broader argument of a compassionate and united community. The meticulous and impressive use of rhetorical devices not only extends the emotional appeal of the speech but also induces a sense of unity, courage, togetherness, resilience, and optimism among the Boston dwellers. It boosts the morale of Bostonians post tragedy as well as reiterates the need for collective consciousness aimed at psycho-physical healing at the communal level.

The speech also employs 'anaphora' and 'repetition': "We will find you. And yes, you will face justice. We will find you. We will hold you accountable. But more than that, our fidelity to our way of life, for a free and open society, will only grow stronger". Use of 'anaphora' accentuates the central idea of the speech by generating a rhythmic pattern through oft-repeated use of the phrase "we will," reflecting the conviction to bring culprits to justice and to safeguard the concept of a free, fair, and open society. 'Repetition', on the other hand, helps in thematic reiteration: "That's what you've taught us, Boston. That's what you've reminded us, to push on, to persevere, to not grow weary, to not faint even when it hurts. Even when our heart aches, we summon the strength that maybe we didn't even know we had, and we carry on; we finish the race." The repetition stresses Bostonians' motivating spirit and fortitude. This is combined with 'alliteration' through oft-repeated consonant "f" that creates a sense of determination to face the adversity: "We will not falter. We will not fear. We will not be defeated." Besides, a balanced sentence structure evokes a sense of symmetrical order whereas pronouns like "we" and "our" create a feeling of unison and collective responsibility through shared experiences and values that foster solidarity. The use of positive and proactive language, such as "carry on", "race", "strive", "build", "work", "love" and "celebrate" conveys a sense of hope and optimism. It shows that

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people are actively engaging in life and supporting one another. Phrases like “That’s why we don’t hunker down. That’s why we don’t cower in fear” serve as a strong repudiation of fear and terror and emphasize a commitment to face challenges head-on.

Through strategically employed ‘syntax,’ the speaker engages the audience for an enhanced impact to communicate the message with mastery. In this regard, the speech not only uses ‘parallelism’ in phrases like, “a bomb can’t beat us”, “We will stand together”, and “We will overcome” but also parallel structure to create a sense of harmony in the speech: “In times of sorrow, we find strength; in times of adversity, we find unity.” ‘Repetition’ is also incorporated for an enhanced sense of emotions and unity in sentences like: “Together, we will rise. Together, we will heal. Together, we will prevail”. Likewise, ‘inversion’ is used both to add emphasis and to create a dramatic effect; for example, “Through darkness and pain, we shall find the light.” The use of ‘anaphora’ further reinforces the central idea of the speech by building momentum through phrasal reiteration: “We will not falter. We will not fear. We will not be defeated.” To create an emotionally charged, action-oriented sense of urgency, the speaker uses ‘asyndeton’ as well as ‘short and powerful sentences’ in the following lines: “We marched forward, united, determined, strong” and “We will not be broken. We will rise”. Finally, ‘polysyndeton’ is employed to reflect the speaker’s control on the pace of the delivery while emphasizing the main idea: “We came together and supported one another and lifted each other up.”

To enhance the efficacy of the delivered message, the speaker uses imaginative, yet clear metaphors aimed at inducing emotions with a profound sense of the tragedy that has befallen Bostonians. The undaunted resilience of the city having symbolically prestigious stature of moral excellence, harmony, and virtue is encapsulated metaphorically by the speaker as “the perfect state of grace.” The tragedy is symbolized as a source of determination and fortitude in the following words, “26.2-mile test of dedication and grit and the



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human spirit". The metaphorical claim over Boston by the speaker is suggestive of collectivism, unison, and solidarity: "Boston may be your hometown, but we claim it, too. It's one of America's iconic cities." The phrase, "The sun rose over Boston" serves as an emotionally deep metaphor for hope, renewal, and new beginnings after the nightmarishly traumatizing atrocity inflicted by the perpetrators. The metaphor of running a race is repetitively used to symbolize the challenges faced by the people of Boston as well as the collective efforts to overcome them through determination and communal strength: "Run with endurance the race that is set before us" and "We will all be with you as you learn to stand and walk and, yes, run again. Of that I have no doubt. You will run again. You will run again." Last but not the least, "No more hurting people. Peace." showed a powerful metaphor for a world free of violence and suffering.

Delivered by the head of state, the diction of the speech is formal, solemn, and respectful throughout, keeping in view the gravity of the occasion and the importance of the intended message. With carefully chosen words and phrases that have a clear, concise, and specific stance to provide vivid descriptions and personal stories, the speech employs reverential language to show respect to the memory of the victims and their families. The speech uses evocative language to appeal to emotions. Words like "tragedy", "grief", "compassion" "strength", "unity" and "resilience" evoke powerful feelings of empathy with the victims and Bostonians. The speech also uses optimistic and inspiring words to instill hope and determination. Terms like "courage", "hope", "healing", "support" and "persevere" emphasize resilience and strength of the community during tough times. The speaker also employs inclusive language for creating connection among the audience and to foster a sense of unity through the use of pronouns like "we", "our" and "us". The speech also uses sensory-rich images and descriptive language for emotionally picturesque presentation of events with phrases like "sunrise over Boston", "glistening State House Dome" and "spring in bloom".

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To create intense mental images, nurture empathy, and consolidate the emotive impact, the speaker draws an analogy between Bill Ifrig, the elderly runner knocked down by the blast, and the resilient Bostonians who connect deeply with the themes of unity and persistence: “Like Bill Ifrig, 78 years old - the runner in the orange tank top who we all saw get knocked down by the blast, we may be momentarily knocked off our feet - but we’ll pick ourselves up.... we will choose compassion.” In the face of those who would visit death upon innocents, we will choose to save and to comfort and to heal. We’ll choose friendship. We’ll choose love.” This analogy helps the audience in visualizing the shared reaction to misfortune and inspires them to subdue the obstacles.

The use of symbols enriches the speaker's message. The Boston Marathon itself becomes a powerful representation of the fortitude of the city and its people. The sun rising over Boston symbolizes optimism, regeneration, and the commencement of a new day. It serves as a contrast to the tragic event that unfolded later that day, signifying that even in the murkiest times, there is a gleam of hope and new start. Throughout the speech, running the race becomes a symbol for facing trials and persevering through adversity. It represents communal collectivism to overcome hardships. The cups of water handed to the runners and the act of support from the Bostonians lining the streets reflect sympathy, care, and cohesion. The blue poster board with the messages “no more hurting” and “peace” encapsulates the expectations and dreams of a young boy and serves as a prompt for the importance of espousing love and considerate attitude over ferocity. The concept of the Boston diaspora also denotes the spread of Boston's influence and values across the globe represented in the city's welcoming nature and the progressive offerings of its people in various arenas of human endeavor.

Through using imagery, the speaker vividly portrays the collective response of the community through different actions and emotions.

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“The sunlight glistened off the State House Dome” creates a visual representation of a routine peaceful and optimistic Boston morning. The imagery of spring in bloom reflects regeneration and progression, symbolizing hope and resilience even after tragedy: “On this Patriot’s Day, like so many before, fans jumped onto the T to see the Sox at Fenway”, showed imagery of lively and exalted fans as well as a usual picture of Boston city’s enthusiasm on the Patriot’s Day. This is contrasted with how a “celebration became a tragedy.” The raw emotions and impact of the tragedy on the victims’ families is revealed in the words of a grieving, heartbroken confused mother: “Through her tears, this doesn’t make any sense.”.

Overall, the speaker’s assumed position of authority and responsibility not only carries immense weight and importance but also provides a sense of reassurance that the entire country stood in harmony with the people of Boston during this challenging time. The very context is a powerful reminder of the human capacity to come together, support one another, and find hope in the face of atrocity thus inducing a renewed sense of strength and community among the American people. Henceforth, understanding the context of the speech provides insight into the emotions and challenges faced by the people of Boston and the nation and helps to provide comfort, encouragement, and a sense of national unity during a difficult time.

### **Conclusion**

A sense of doubt, uncertainty, and distrust prevailed in the American society after 9/11 that intensified after the Boston Marathon Bombing. In the case of the latter, the lack of information about the culprits for the next few days posed the threat of a lurking attack in the coming days. The 9/11 attack was categorized as an act of war since it was the most lethal attack ever on the American soil. The rhetoric of American Exceptionalism portrayed such radicalized faction as an existential danger. After

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the Boston Bombing, these themes reemerged replacing Al-Qaeda with Tsarnaev brothers but with a slight twist as the earlier terror was externally inflicted, but this time it was internally generated. The act was condemned as a nerve-shattering experience for a cultured society at the hands of aggressive perpetrators that disturbed the ontological security of America (Weiss). Against such a narrative, a justification of American way was structured through exemplary display of fortitude, empathy, and unity at both the communal and national levels popularized through the 'Boston Strong' movement in the event's aftermath. But this narrative and idealistic stance was jeopardized once the brothers were marked as internal perpetrators, which was seen as reflective of flawed governmental policies that resulted in such backlash blurring the lines of the-us-versus-them ideology (Miller & Wilson). To manage the buildup of an unwavering sense of apprehension among the masses, the political higher-ups started promoting the account of perseverance to guide and direct the people to the cohesive values of 'American Exceptionalism' and the 'American Creed'. The discourse on creed ideals was further strengthened during the trial of one of the convicted brothers who was behind the attack. This time, the entire narrative was focused on the power of the American legal and justice system that dealt with the murderer in a humanitarian spirit despite him being a threat to the society (Longman). Obama's speech was also focused on furthering the above discourse.

To conclude, the discourse on Boston Marathon bombing portrays Tsarnaev brothers as a frightening, vindictive, and anonymous force that is half-American, half-radicalized as a result of Islamist fundamentalism that threatens American Exceptionalism. Their strangeness was established by their coercive action that made them an unknown potential threat always existing within western progressive society. Whether accepting or rejecting the brothers, the existential threat and the resulting anxiety that they posed both to the Boston community and the country at large remained a challenge for the patriotic and collective approach to addressing

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terrorism put forward by the leaders and politicians in the aftermath of this disastrous attack. This is also the subject of the president's speech that emphasized the unity of the American people and the city of Boston in response to the attack. He highlighted the resilience and determination of the community to overcome the tragedy, stating that Bostonians and Americans as a whole would not be intimidated or divided by such acts of terror. He expressed a collective goal of reclaiming the "state of grace" for Boston and the nation. He out-rightly rejected the idea that fear would prevail or that acts of terrorism could undermine the American way of life. He asserted that the perpetrators had chosen the wrong city to carry out their attack, underscoring the strength and resilience of Boston in particular and the United States in general by highlighting the importance of faith in one another, love for the country, and a common creed that unites Americans beyond apparent differences. The speech thus concluded on a positive note of hope and a futuristic vision, assuring people that they would rise above the tragedy and that despite pain, life must go on.

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