

LYNDON B. JOHNSON, "LET US CONTINUE" (27 NOVEMBER 1963)

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Abstract "Let Us Continue" was one of the most important speeches of Lyndon Johnson's political career; it served as a gateway to the leadership and legitimacy he needed for his presidency to succeed. This essay investigates the composition of "Let Us Continue" and seeks to rightfully accredit Horace Busby as the most important speechwriter to contribute to its artistry and success. The essay also emphasizes the obstacles Johnson confronted in his ascension to the Oval Office.

Key Words: Lyndon Baines Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Theodore Sorensen, Horace Busby, presidential assassination, and speechwriting.

All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today. The greatest leader of our time has been struck down by the foulest deed of our time. Today John Fitzgerald Kennedy lives on in the immortal words and works that he left behind. He lives on in the minds and memories of mankind. He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen. No words are sad enough to express our sense of loss. (2-7)¹

Lyndon Baines Johnson
November 27, 1963

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy represented a period of national mourning for the young leader's tragic loss. Although the "president's ratings in the polls were as low as they had ever been," Americans struggled to process the tragedy and feared the threat to their national security.² No one realized these threats better than Lyndon B. Johnson, the man forced into the presidency by an assassin's bullet. Now it was time for Johnson to step forward as a strong leader in the wake of the president's untimely death. The new president would have to capture their trust and earn their respect by making strategic use of the words he uttered. But, the question plaguing many Americans was, how can this man ever rise to the eloquence, the sophistication, and the inspiration of John F. Kennedy?

Indeed, in order for Johnson to "defuse the crisis"³ and simultaneously settle into his new position as chief executive, his rhetorical debut as president would have to be one that offered Americans the confidence to believe he was not simply a "political fixer," but instead "a man of principle, with a value system that would advance the interests of peace, freedom, and social justice."⁴ Unfortunately, public speaking did not represent one of Johnson's strengths. His thick southern accent often took away from the content of his messages, distracting some listeners and agitating others. Yet, with every advancement in Johnson's political career, his

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skills as an orator had progressed as well. As a senator, he spoke publicly more often yet the bulk of his oratory consisted of manuscript speaking. As vice president, he felt hopelessly overmatched by Jack Kennedy's rhetorical eloquence; consequently, LBJ began to place more emphasis on elevating his public speaking capabilities.⁵ On November 27, 1963, as Johnson humbly stood before his former colleagues in the Senate and the members of the House of Representatives, he exhibited an air of self-confidence and diligence. In later private interviews, Johnson described the American populace at that moment as "a bunch of cattle caught in the swamp, unable to move in either direction." He reportedly viewed himself as "the man on the horse . . . ready to take the lead, to assume command, to provide protection."⁶ On this monumental day, however, the audience responded with considerable applause as he suddenly "sounded like a President."⁷ "This nation has experienced a profound shock," he declared, "and in this critical moment it is our duty—yours and mine—as the Government of the United States—to do away with uncertainty, and doubt and delay and to show that we are capable of decisive action—that from the brutal loss of our leader we will derive not weakness but strength—that we can and will act and act now" (39). In an effort to inspire his audience, Johnson pushed Americans onward and worked to reinstitute their will to fight and pursue the "source of his own and our country's strength—its political tradition."⁸ As the speech drew to a close, the president urged the American people to "Let Us Continue" (49) with "strong, forward-looking action" (60) because this was what "John Kennedy's death commands" and "his life conveyed" (77). With the concluding remarks came the acknowledgement and respect of Johnson's leadership abilities.

The effort, however, to craft this all-important speech became the charge of White House staffers. Johnson in fact played a very minor role in the final form of the speech, only glancing over it a few times before addressing the audience.⁹ The content and tone of the speech, however, became the subject of internal controversy. When the "awesome burden" of the presidency fell to Johnson, he immediately asked Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy's chief speechwriter, to help in the drafting of this all-important address. Sorensen, a Kennedy loyalist and speechwriter, experienced mixed emotions as he sought to draft the eulogy for his former boss. Johnson in fact rejected early drafts of the speech, which portrayed LBJ in a more self-deprecatory and timid way. Such tensions and questions of loyalty resulted in Johnson turning to his own trust aided instead—his long-time speechwriter and friend, Horace Busby.

The examination of the "Let us Continue" address and the behind-the-scenes struggles over its content, reveal much about the speechwriting process and the ways in which the thirty-sixth president of the United States sought to lead the American people through such a national nightmare. In order for Johnson's November 27, 1963, Address to a Joint Session of Congress to succeed, his speechwriters needed to accomplish three primary goals: 1) to assuage the fears of the American people; 2) to instill a vision of the future that the entire nation could endorse; and, most importantly, 3) to establish Johnson's legitimacy and leadership as president. Yet, such goals were complicated by the political struggles; evidence suggests that Sorensen worked to thwart some of the rhetorical requirements of the address early on because of his loyalty to Kennedy, limiting Johnson's abilities to showcase his own leadership capacities. Because of such friction, Horace Busby ultimately rose to a level of enhanced prominence in the new administration by providing drafts that did what Sorensen's had failed to do; in the process, he added the idea and language of "Let Us Continue," which became the linguistic marker by

which the speech would be most remembered. Busby's drafts urged Americans to *continue* to move into a new era of presidential leadership, thus marking the transition to a new administration.

A general overview of the rhetorical situation will first be provided, establishing the context of LBJ's "Let Us Continue" address; such a discussion details the early contributions to the speechwriting process. An analysis of Sorensen's speech drafts will follow along with an examination of the drafts penned by Busby. In the process, the behind-the-scenes battles that played out within the White House over the content of the speech will be addressed, reflecting the turbulence inherent in the crafting of a single presidential speech as well as a transition of power during a time of intense national crisis.

A Presidential Transition of Power

Many scholars have commented on the impact that one twenty-five minute speech could have on the rest of President Johnson's presidency. For example, Patricia Witherspoon explains that the November 27 speech would be "crucial to his efforts in mobilizing Congress and critical to the cultivation of a mandate from the divergent and disparate factions that were emerging in American society."¹⁰ Along the same lines, Johnson biographer Merle Miller claimed that "everyone knew" that this particular speech would be the most important of Johnson's political career,¹¹ Edwin Black often maintained that an orator's message closes some doors while opening others, presenting the rhetor with certain commitments and rhetorical obstacles. In Johnson's case, the language he utilized in this highly publicized speech, thus, held the potential to limit the policy options that would determine his own and the country's future.¹²

The rhetorical situation which compelled President Johnson to address the nation on Wednesday afternoon, November 27, 1963, was delicate and complex yet helped determine the appropriate response to the presidential assassination. As Lloyd F. Bitzer suggests, "the situation generated by the assassination of President Kennedy was so highly structured and compelling that one could predict with near certainty the types and themes of forthcoming discourse. With the first reports of the assassination, there immediately developed a more urgent need for information."¹³ Bitzer elaborates that as time passed, numerous other needs evolved, including the need to eulogize the beloved late president in a meaningfully appropriate way; the need to offer more details in how the events played out on that sorrowful day; the obligation of assuring the country of LBJ's preparedness in assuming the presidency; and finally, the necessity of promising the American people that the transition from one leader to the next would be implemented with order and competence.¹⁴

Johnson viewed his biggest obstacle as winning the confidence of the American people and establishing his "right to govern," thereby persuading them to trust in his authority and foresight. As he later recalled,

Every President has to develop a moral underpinning to his power, or he soon discovers that he has no power at all. For me, that presented special problems. In spite of more than three decades of public service, I knew I was an unknown quantity to many of my country men and to much of the world when I assumed office. I suffered another

handicap, since I had come to the Presidency not through the collective will of the people but in the wake of tragedy. I had no mandate from the voters.¹⁵

Johnson wanted to overcome his initial image as a presidential interloper and be regarded not just as any leader but as *the people's* leader. Karlyn Kohrs Cambell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson refer to this phenomenon as "rhetorically investing Johnson with the office of the presidency."¹⁶ They claim that even though Kennedy had physically vacated the Oval Office, his ghost still resided in the hearts and minds of the American people. Therefore, it was up to Johnson to fill the vacancy, leaving only one president in the White House. One important vehicle he would use to accomplish this objective would be the speech of November 27, 1963.

Simultaneously, Johnson also had to inspire the nation to believe that JFK's brutal murder would not go unpunished, and that his death would not be allowed to pass without appropriate commemoration. Johnson recalled: "Everything I have ever learned in the history books has taught me that martyrs have to die for causes. John Kennedy had died. But his 'cause' was not really clear. That was my job . . . I had to take the dead man's program and turn it into a martyr's cause."¹⁷

Johnson, though, was also burdened by the need to bolster his reputation in the eyes of those who distrusted him and by the need for making a favorable impression on those who had previously overlooked him. He wanted the public to believe he was an honest, sincere man who deserved their respect and support. The political strategies he often utilized as Senate majority leader, marked by inconsistency, ambiguity, and trade-offs, now proved less effective as he ascended to the presidency. Johnson, thus, had to counteract his political past and create a new ethos as president, which required a different image from that of majority leader or vice president. Those Americans who were familiar with him were optimistic because of his extensive political experience, but he had to prove to them that he could rise above partisanship to lead the *whole* nation. It was indisputably a strenuous job, but Johnson strove to accomplish his rhetorical and political mission on November 27, 1963, with his distinguished oratory and a formidable presence.

As much as LBJ desperately sought to win the approval of the country, the differences between himself and the late President Kennedy were so significant that many Americans were skeptical and apprehensive of a Johnson presidency. Whereas Kennedy was a northerner with a crisp Boston accent and a young, fresh appearance, Johnson was a fifty-five year old Southerner who spoke with a thick Texan accent and was widely believed to be too conservative. Having already suffered one heart attack while he was Senate majority leader, the public also feared for his health¹⁸—another worry Johnson would have to address.

Living up to the promises of the Kennedy administration would be another complex task for the new president. While paying the proper respects to John Kennedy's legacy and the national and familial loss of the beloved president, Johnson also could not allow the Kennedy loyalists to demean his political adeptness and wisdom. Although he longed to establish his own presidency apart from the Kennedy mystique, Johnson was aware that in order to be embraced by the public, he needed to retain some ties to the Kennedy name while ultimately severing others.

One connection LBJ sought to preserve was his relationship with certain White House officials who were appointed by Kennedy and who had served alongside him throughout his

presidency. Many Kennedy staffers, though, were skeptical about the reasons Johnson wanted to retain Kennedy's staff. Johnson explained his rationale years later: "I needed that White House staff. Without them I would have lost my link to John Kennedy, and without that I would have had absolutely no chance of gaining the support of the media or the Easterners or the intellectuals. And without that support I would have had absolutely no chance of governing the country."¹⁹ Nevertheless, convincing Kennedy's men to stay would be a difficult task, one requiring a substantial amount of selflessness and humility. Even so, the new president eventually won many of them over with the "Johnson Treatment." However, a few staffers like Theodore Sorensen—who was responsible for much of the picturesque imagery, clever rhythmic patterns, and memorable messages that marked the eloquence of the Kennedy presidency—were devastated when faced with the loss of the man with whom they had worked side-by-side since his earlier congressional days. Johnson fully understood that the days Sorensen lingered in the White House would be limited, but he nevertheless pleaded for him to stay.²⁰

Of course, escaping from Kennedy's shadow would also prove to be difficult. The longer LBJ aligned himself with his predecessor, the blurrier the line would become between Kennedy's ideals and his own. While it was necessary that Johnson affirm to the nation that his predecessor's "policies or general principles . . . would shape the actions of the new administration,"²¹ Johnson's future endeavors of developing and sustaining *his own* policies and programs also had to be foreshadowed in his address. Previewing such policies, however, would not be easy. Johnson didn't have at his disposal an in-depth blueprint of policy initiatives that derived from months on the campaign trail.²² In addition, the pressure to exact policy change would have to be expedited since he only had an eleven month time span in which to validate himself as a *worthy* chief executive before the next presidential contest was upon him.

Thus, the constraints that developed in the aftermath of JFK's untimely death complicated an already complex rhetorical situation. As Johnson prepared to speak in the midday hours of November 27, 1963, he had to figure out ways to help the American people work through the national trauma and simultaneously move forward with his own political agenda. As Bitzer notes, "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality."²³ As the president's first public statement in the assassination's aftermath evolved through the drafting process, the speech would ultimately feature assurances, promises, and new prioritizations that addressed the multitude of rhetorical exigencies facing the new president.

The Whole World is Watching

Moving from their television sets to their transistor radios, Americans waited for answers following Kennedy's assassination; an entire nation scrutinized every move government officials made, watching on average 8-10 hours of television each day during the assassination weekend.²⁴ In characterizing the national mood immediately following Kennedy's assassination and the subsequent shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald (the man arrested for Kennedy's assassination only hours after JFK's death), literary critic Irving Howe wrote: "Two assassinations, each ghastly in its own right, and each uncovering still another side of social pathology; callousness, maybe planned negligence on the part of the Dallas police chief." Hinting at his own disgusted reaction to the turn of events, he simply said, "it is all too much."²⁵

In the days immediately following the sudden national crisis of Kennedy's assassination, the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) volunteered their services to obtain an assessment of public opinion at the time of Kennedy's death. Upon hearing the news of Kennedy's death, 54 percent of those polled reported that they could not continue on with their usual activities, and the same percentage felt as though they needed to talk with other people about the horrors of the situation. One in every five Americans began to ponder if "anybody could really be safe in this country."²⁶ Over half of the respondents to the survey were unable to recall a time when they harbored the same type of feelings that they experienced when receiving the news of President Kennedy's assassination. For those who could recollect such a traumatic event, 47 percent of the public related it to the death of a parent, close friend, or other loved one. This "tendency to personify an event," as Paul Sheatsly and Jacob Feldman explain, is common because "the multitudinous political ramifications of such events are too complicated and diffuse to comprehend; we seek instead a more familiar referent. At such times . . . our attitudes are strongly swayed by emotion, and our emotions tend to seek a human object rather than an abstraction."²⁷ In this particular case, the American people tended to align themselves with symptoms of grief: first, the public was plagued with a hard-hitting sense of shock and disbelief (initially, 57 percent of Americans reported that they felt dazed and numb); second, they began to realize the magnitude of the events and reported feelings of shame, anger, sorrow, and sadness (50 percent of Americans expressed shame that something as ghastly as President Kennedy's murder could happen in their country);²⁸ and lastly, the survey respondents detailed discomfiting physical symptoms they experienced, including feelings of tenseness, fatigue, sleeplessness, and a loss of appetite (almost half of those polled reported having trouble falling asleep, and over 40 percent said they "felt more tired than usual" and "didn't feel like eating").²⁹

Beyond initial feelings of shock and incredulity, the NORC survey found that the next three most frequent reactions immediately following Kennedy's death were ones of anxiety and uneasiness about the future course of the nation. Forty-seven percent of the American people that were polled were concerned with how the murder of the president would affect the "political situation of this country." Of primary concern was the fate of the civil rights program. Forty-four percent were worried about how America would continue to fare with the nation's neighbor countries, and 41 percent were troubled when pondering "how the United States would carry on without its leader."³⁰ Overall, only 10 percent reported that they had faith that Johnson would actually carry on with the Kennedy programs—a statistic Johnson would soon work to refute.³¹ However, 75 percent of the population did believe that some kind of lesson had been learned from this awful experience, and it was up to Johnson to explain to the American people exactly what that lesson entailed.³²

Johnson's Texan roots also caused much distress among African Americans. Just prior to his death, polls predicted that Kennedy would have attracted some 85 percent of the African American vote in the 1964 election, resulting in the highest percentage of black votes ever won by a presidential candidate at that time had Kennedy lived to seek re-election. Conversely, the black community either was not acquainted with LBJ's political agenda concerning civil rights, or they simply did not find him to be trustworthy. Considering his vacillating track record on civil rights over the previous three decades, anxieties about the future of civil rights progress were

undeniably valid.³³ Johnson would need to add their fears to a long list of other concerns he needed to address on his rhetorical journey to the Oval Office.

The Genesis of the Speech Writing Process

Lyndon Johnson's "Let Us Continue" speech has long been praised because it "demonstrated a sense of grandeur in language that we did not think was one of his talents."³⁴ Theodore Sorensen and Horace Busby prepared a series of drafts for the crucial oratorical event, involving several others in the drafting process, including, among others, former president Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon.

In a confidential memo sent to Johnson on November 23, 1963—the day after Kennedy was assassinated—Eisenhower recommended that Johnson speak for no longer than ten or twelve minutes, and that the speech portray LBJ as accepting this unexpected assumption of the office that placed him in "the position of highest responsibility of this nation." Eisenhower further recommended that Johnson emphasize that "no revolution in purpose or policy is intended or will occur. Rather it will be your LBJ's purpose to implement effectively the noble objectives so often and so eloquently stated by your great predecessor." Eisenhower noted that in order to implement Kennedy's ideas and establish cooperation with Congress, Johnson would have to "go more than half way," calling on the nation to "mobilize their hearts, their hands, and their resources" to continue to advance America's place in the world.³⁵ In addition to this memo, Johnson's daily diary revealed that he and President Eisenhower personally met alone in the White House two separate times on November 23rd to discuss recommendations for the address.³⁶ Contrastingly, Douglas Dillon lobbied for the president to indicate his "concern over the balance of payments deficit and . . . his determination to carry out a program that will maintain the stability of the dollar,"³⁷ sentiments that were later folded into the final draft of Johnson's speech.

Others also made contributions. The ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, sent the Johnson administration a speech draft as well as several suggestive memorandums. He generally urged Johnson to "embrace explicitly Kennedy's foreign policy"³⁸ and "to capture the two main philosophy ideas which Kennedy has been developing in speech after speech: the world of diversity as the kind of world we want, and the 'search for common interests.'"³⁹ Many others also sent suggestions and potential language for the speech, including Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-MN), economist and U.S. ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-MT).⁴⁰

The complications of the rhetorical situation were compounded by the complexity of the speechwriting process, especially as multiple individuals collaborated in the authorship of the address. As Kurt Ritter observes, "creating a successful speech from this blizzard of hastily submitted papers required two things: first, a coherent rhetorical posture for the new president; and second, a skilled speechwriter dedicated to Johnson."⁴¹ Such a message needed to achieve the following goals: display his competence to assume the presidency; establish his "right to govern" in order to be seen as *the people's* leader; delicately substantiate his own identity as president while assuring that Kennedy's memory would live on; and locate a balance between being sensitive to the Kennedy loyalists while also taking control of his own

presidency. In the process, Johnson had to acquaint himself with the many burdens of an unstable administration.

Johnson thus worked to put forth a collective front that both radiated his leadership and acknowledged Kennedy's achievements. Reflecting such goals, Willaim F. Haddad, political advisor to the president and former associate director of the Peace Corps in 1961 under President John F. Kennedy, claimed that Johnson "must support the Kennedy program. But still emerge as Lyndon B. Johnson." In addition, Haddad argued that Johnson needed to "be liberal, but not so obviously that it begins to look forced."⁴² As paradoxical as it may sound, LBJ wanted to *simultaneously follow Kennedy and lead* the nation himself. As other rhetorical critics have indicated, Johnson, above all else, had to aggressively promote his *legitimacy* and *leadership* in his first presidential address.⁴³ Continuing with the Kennedy agenda was an essential component of acquiring legitimacy in the eyes of Americans. Johnson's display of love, respect, and gratitude for the deceased would help justify him as the rightful heir to the Kennedy legacy. In achieving legitimacy, Johnson also needed to evoke Kennedy. As rhetorical critic John M. Murphy argues, "when presidents die or simply leave office, and their successors see advantage in crafting a link to those presidents, they must do so in part through style. Their rhetorical conventions . . . must form that link."⁴⁴ In this particular situation, a successful speech would "weave Kennedy's words into Johnson's linguistic universe."⁴⁵ On the other hand, achieving a status of admirable leadership would entail an entirely different set of criteria. Johnson would need to show his own adequacy as president by separating himself from Kennedy at least to a degree. As Murphy notes, "the new must be different from the old to convince people that the new is worthy of the old. The new must augment and accentuate the old. A 'mechanistic reproduction' of a past president cannot be a fine president in the minds of most Americans."⁴⁶ Johnson needed a speechwriting team that would help him accomplish such complex ends.

Sorensen's Speech Drafts

The moment Johnson committed to giving an address to a Joint Session of Congress, he bequeathed the majority of its content to the artistry of Theodore Sorensen, unequivocally the most gifted speechwriter Johnson inherited. Johnson knew Sorensen represented the link to Kennedy that he needed in order to embrace Kennedy's legacy. LBJ also went to substantial lengths to maintain friendly relations with Sorensen. When Sorensen called Johnson on November 25 to ascertain Johnson's assessment of an earlier draft that had been submitted to LBJ by Galbraith, Johnson had to "think fast," Michael Beschloss reports. Initially, LBJ claimed he liked Galbraith's draft and agreed with almost everything in it. But Sorensen reportedly responded by asserting that he did not like the draft at all. Johnson immediately backpedaled and said, "I didn't think it was any ball of *fire*. I thought it was something you could *improve* on. I thought it was a bunch of general statements But I think a much better speech could be written. I'm expecting you to write a better one." Sorensen allegedly laughed at the flattery, and as Beschloss points out, Johnson was "obviously worried that he offended Sorensen by praising the other speechwriter."⁴⁷

This "bond" that was manufactured between Johnson and Sorensen in the five-day span after Kennedy's death seemingly veiled the two men's true feelings for each other as they worked to achieve a higher cause and common good. According to Ritter, after the devastation

of Kennedy's death, Sorensen was "outraged by Kennedy aides who transferred their loyalty to Johnson." In Sorensen's eyes, Johnson represented the "western provincialism that he Sorensen felt he had escaped." Sorensen received both his undergraduate and law degrees from Nebraska, but when Kennedy took him under his arm, he guided him into a higher class of professionalism and respectability. Ritter continues, "Sorensen sniffed at Johnson's credentials and found them wanting." He wasn't impressed by Johnson's renowned weapon of personal persuasion either. Instead of calling it by its actual name—the "Johnson treatment"—he referred to it as "the Southwestern State Teachers College Style."⁴⁸

Much of this resentment Sorensen held for Johnson is reflected in the preliminary drafts he prepared. In Ritter's words, "Sorensen's first draft of the speech to Congress admirably fulfilled the objective of presenting Johnson as a man who would carry on Kennedy's programs, but it failed to establish Johnson as a vigorous leader in his own right."⁴⁹ As Campbell, Jamieson, and Ritter all point out, the type of speech constructed to satisfy the necessities of this particular rhetorical situation would have to subsume three parts: a *eulogy*, laying the dead president to rest while honoring his extraordinary life and many achievements; an *inaugural address*, summarizing comprehensive national goals set in place for the country that now would have new prioritization in light of this traumatic event; and finally, a *state of the union address*, highlighting the specific and most immediate governmental priorities for legislation. The problem plaguing Sorensen's first drafts was that he tended to magnify the first part of this rhetorical scheme, while under representing the others—especially the state of the union address—which held the most opportunity for Johnson to "perform as a presidential leader."⁵⁰

In many ways, Sorensen's draft read as if he were writing a personal eulogy of the late president. Sorensen, for example, introduced the speech with the words, "Our beloved leader is gone. Words do not come easily for *those of us* who, for years, have found our hearts lightened by his presence, our will strengthened by his courage, our way guided by his wisdom."⁵¹ Sorensen seemed to intensify his own feelings of loss and grief while forgetting that the sum and substance of this speech needed to be geared toward reviving a fear-stricken nation. Considering that the majority of the U.S. population did not spend enough private time with the late president for him to "lighten our hearts," "strengthen our will," or "guide our wisdom," the first paragraph of this speech already sounded as if it was going to reflect a personal agenda more reminiscent of a mentor and protégé. The very next line in the draft then reads "John F. Kennedy is dead. But in a great sense *no man is dead who has lived in the hearts of his fellow men*."⁵² Such words suggested that Kennedy was still present, and continuing on as the symbolic leader of the grieving nation. Compare this to the phrases that actually made it into the speech: "Kennedy lives on in the immortal words and works *that he left behind* (4) . . . He lives on in the hearts of his countrymen"(6).⁵³ These phrases and the overall structure of Sorensen's introductory paragraph undoubtedly put President Kennedy to rest, yet they failed to transcend JFK's hold on the conscience and hearts of the nation.

Sorensen's initial drafts then moved to celebrate Kennedy further, downplaying the potential contributions of a Johnson administration. Sorensen wrote, we will never understand the "tortured vision" of the "assassin who struck down our President," but he then assured Johnson's audience that we will do "what John F. Kennedy intended to do." In a later draft, he changed the section of this paragraph to read that America will "go forward to complete the Kennedy agenda in the Kennedy spirit." Sorensen's words consequently set up what could be

viewed as a trap for Johnson—to serve a caretaker role rather than the role of an independent national leader in his own right. The first four and a half pages of Sorensen's initial nine page draft also emphasized Kennedy's charm, his wit, his wisdom, and his immortality. Sorensen wrote,

In the last days *tens and hundreds of millions of people* in Latin America, in Africa, in Asia, in Europe, have mourned the death of John F. Kennedy as they mourned the death of a friend . . . He was their friend. To those who wonder what will happen now let me say that I firmly believe the spirit of John F. Kennedy was the spirit of America. He was your friend. America will continue to be your friend.⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, in the final draft of Johnson's address such praiseworthy language was eliminated. After being edited during at least seven successive drafts, the portion of the speech dealing with the nation's international commitments was hardly recognizable:

From *this chamber* of representative government let all the world know, and none misunderstand, that *I* rededicate this Government to the unswerving support of the United Nations—. . . . To the honorable and determined execution of our commitments to our allies—. . . . To the reinforcement of our programs of mutual assistance and cooperation in Asia and Africa . . .—And to our Alliance for Progress in this Hemisphere. (40-46)⁵⁵

Again, such language allowed Johnson to seize the role as pacesetter, letting the entire world know that *he* was the one who would assume the leadership role from that point forward.

Turning to Sorensen's second draft, the eulogy component in honor of Kennedy introduced even more provocative remarks, going so far as to implicitly demean Johnson and his aptitude for leadership. Sorensen seemingly conveyed his own sentiments to the new president about LBJ's leadership abilities, or lack thereof. The second sentence claimed that "the greatest leader of our time has been struck down," and "I who cannot fill his shoes must occupy his desk."⁵⁶ The speechwriter was once again seemingly integrating his own personal feelings toward Johnson into the address and allowing the apparent disparity he saw between the predecessor and his successor to dominate his writing. The former part of this sentence—which actually did contribute to the words Johnson uttered on November 27th—subordinated Johnson to Kennedy by calling JFK the "greatest leader of our time." Within this passage, Sorensen does not say *his* (Kennedy's) time, but instead used the word *our* time, which explicitly included Johnson. Whatever successes LBJ may have had, such phrasing implied they could never compare to the leadership and grandeur of John F. Kennedy's leadership. Tagging on the phrase, "I who cannot fill his shoes must occupy his desk," further eroded Johnson's dignity and self respect.

Following this remark, Sorensen completed the rest of the second draft by claiming at several different junctures that no other president had come close to matching Kennedy in the various tasks of the presidency, which necessitated that his policies and programs be maintained. Once again, Johnson was made to play the role of caretaker as Sorensen again seemed to be speaking as much to Johnson as to the American people as he worked to exert his

own vision for the nation's future. In the process, Sorensen bestowed Kennedy with a prophetic quality that assumed an aura of immortality: "It is almost as if he knew his term would be short. For in a little more than a thousand days, he breathed new sprit and new quality into every aspect of American life."⁵⁷

Sorensen's manipulation of Johnson's legitimacy and authority is found in one final example in how he approached the new president's legislative agenda. Even though Sorensen was aware of the specific legislation Johnson wanted to advance in his address and was also informed about the policies' order of importance, he prioritized instead the agenda of those Kennedy aides remaining in the White House. During the same November 25th telephone conversation between Sorensen and Johnson in which Sorensen interrogated Johnson on Galbraith's speech draft, Sorensen also demanded that Johnson tell him which legislation he wanted Congress to pass first, the tax bill or civil rights. When Johnson stated that he was leaning toward pushing the tax bill, Sorensen reportedly snapped, "You weren't at our last Democratic congressional leadership breakfast . . . And, actually, we tentatively decided then to move civil rights before taxes."⁵⁸ Beschloss interprets this as Sorensen being "chagrined to learn that Johnson is already straying from Kennedy's intentions."⁵⁹ Kennedy had dedicated hours to formulating a civil rights bill that could pass Congress, and now that Johnson had the power to persuade congressional minds, Sorensen was troubled that Johnson would not seize the opportunity to do so. Consequently, when Sorensen constructed his own ideas and embedded them into his outline of the speech, he changed Johnson's mind for him. In his preliminary versions and in the final version of the speech, Sorensen overtly declared,

First, no memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the Civil Rights bill for which he fought so long And *second*, no act of ours could more fittingly continue the work of President Kennedy than the early passage of the Tax bill for which he fought—all this long year. (52-56)

Sidestepping Johnson's wishes was a skill Sorensen honed during the years he served Kennedy in the White House. Although Kennedy himself may not have manipulated Johnson, Kennedy's aides had no problem in doing so. Johnson often felt he was deliberately avoided by Kennedy staffers when he was vice president; he also was outraged that he had not been consulted or involved in promoting the civil rights bill when Kennedy was president. Robert Dallek argues, for example, "that despite JFK's injunction to Lee White to include Johnson in White House discussions with congressional leaders, he was rarely invited." This claim is affirmed in a later conversation that took place between LBJ and Sorensen, in which the two discussed Kennedy's submission of his civil rights bill to Congress. In learning of JFK's attempt to push forward the new legislation, Johnson aggravatingly replied: "I don't even know who drafted it. I've never seen it. Hell, if the Vice President doesn't know what's in it how do you expect the others to know what's in it? I got it from the *New York Times*."⁶⁰ Since Johnson's input and insight had been so explicitly ignored during JFK's administration, Sorensen pursued a similar strategy during the transition to the Johnson administration.

Although Sorensen may have served as Johnson's entrée to Kennedy's past, his work alone was not enough to inaugurate Johnson into the presidency. As Johnson himself realized,

the mandate of the voters still had to be earned. Yet, to a large degree, Sorensen seemingly worked to hinder Johnson's presidential rise as an executive leader. According to Ritter, the reason Johnson's address was ultimately one for the history books was because Johnson supplemented many of Kennedy's White House advisors with his own people, namely Walter Jenkins, Jack Valenti, Bill Moyers, and particularly Horace Busby.⁶¹ These men jumped into the editorial process and collectively worked to help build a speech that would place Johnson in the best light possible. Johnson's team of advisors removed sections of Sorensen's drafts in which they thought the language thwarted Johnson's leadership while also contributing new ideas to the speechwriting process.

The Final Version—Let Us Continue

While Johnson sought assistance in writing the speech from many of his own advisors, it was Horace Busby who was principally responsible for the speech's overwhelming success—a rhetorical contribution that is often overlooked in scholarly assessments of the speechwriting process for "Let Us Continue."⁶² Although some noted authors have tried to award other White House staff with the coined phrase, "Let Us Continue," files in the Johnson Presidential Library confirm that the day prior to the speech's delivery, Busby sent a letter to the president with an attached speech draft that contained the phrase exactly as it was delivered by Johnson.⁶³ Furthermore, Busby not only presented ideas to Johnson, he also played a key role in assembling multiple drafts into a coherent whole. On November 25, 1963, Busby sent a letter to the president, which expressed the following:

I tried but did not succeed to finish the Message draft in a two-hour spurt, as you suggested. This one means so much and must be so good—for the world—I simply can't escape long labor of trying to craft a message that will last a long time. I will have it today. There is no dearth of material. The drafts and ideas are really good. But when it is all assembled, you will have one you—and the country—will be proud of . . .⁶⁴

Still other indications exist that Busby was a vital participant in the shaping of the final speech draft. Bill Moyers received a memo the day before the speech that contained language for the tax and budget discussion which Kermit Gordon had discussed with the president the night before. Moyers handwrote the following message on the document, "Send cc immediately to Busby and Sorensen."⁶⁵

It is clear that Busby's contributions to the speech were, in fact, primarily responsible for establishing Johnson's ability to lead; consequently, it was primarily Busby's words that encouraged a despondent country to move beyond the crisis of the moment. As can be seen in his earliest drafts, Busby played on the overlying theme of the speech, which served as an extension of JFK's inaugural theme, "Let Us Begin."⁶⁶ As Murphy explains, "authority . . . is a rhetorical phenomenon," and Busby utilized this rhetorical phenomenon by making use of "linguistic augmentation."⁶⁷ Busby used Kennedy's memory as a tool to craft Johnson's future; however, he was careful not to undermine Johnson's leadership potential in the process. As Murphy concludes, "Lyndon Johnson found inspiration in the past, but he did not copy the past. He promised to continue, but he also asserted his own role ('action'), his own style ('America'),

and his own program Both men Kennedy and Johnson existed in the address and each worked through the other."⁶⁸

Consider the exact words Busby chose to use in LBJ's well known address:

Today in this moment of new resolve, I would say to my fellow Americans, Let Us Continue. This is our challenge—not to hesitate, not to pause, not to turn about and linger over this evil moment but to continue on our course so that we may fulfill the destiny that history has set for us. (49-50)⁶⁹

Busby indirectly referred to and incorporated Kennedy into the speech by appropriating his prior discourse, but he also left room for Johnson to make a name for himself instead of "lingering" behind Kennedy's legacy. The address encouraged Americans "not to hesitate, not to pause," and ultimately, not to doubt Johnson as their new leader. Ironically, Busby used JFK's idea of getting the country moving again in spite of the tragedy, and to find faith in Johnson's determination and leadership. Americans were asked to cooperate in order to "fulfill the destiny that *history* has set for us." Certainly JFK was a large part of the country's history, and he was especially so at the particular point in time when Johnson gave this speech. Nevertheless, Busby didn't use Kennedy's name. He had exited the eulogy portion of the address and was now starting to set the country's future, and that future was inexplicably linked to Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Busby's draft also characterized Johnson as a leader in his own right and not merely a successor to the Kennedy presidency. In what appears as Busby's first draft, the text read:

Thinking of the days behind us and thinking of the years ahead, responsible men will not—in love of their country—leave unwritten the chapter we must next write in the American effort to guarantee the equal rights and equal opportunity for all.⁷⁰

In the midst of the editing process undertaken by Sorensen, Humphrey, Busby, and others, the exact words that Busby used in his initial draft were changed, with the final version reading: "We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights It *is* time now, to write the next chapter—and to write it in the books of law" (52-53). Such language helped separate Johnson from Kennedy to the extent that Johnson planned to codify the civil rights act, and thus fulfill his role as a national leader.

Busby's devotion to showcasing Johnson's leadership skills and distinguishing between the two administrations is transparent. In his initial draft, Busby used the wording "thinking of the *days* behind us and . . . *years* ahead, responsible men will not . . . leave unwritten the chapter *we* must next write."⁷¹ First of all, Busby did not say "thinking of the *years* behind us and the years ahead." Busby was working not to separate Johnson from history altogether; but to separate Johnson from Kennedy, thus leaving behind the crisis his assassination triggered. Second, Busby called on the public to assist and support Johnson in his new-found leadership. Busby, thus, creatively established LBJ as a legitimate leader by respecting the Kennedy agenda; at the same time, he helped establish that the agenda was Johnson's now and that LBJ possessed the authority to institute it.

The Kennedy quotations that Busby used in his draft further symbolized Johnson's pivotal role in assuming the presidency and moving the nation forward. During the speech, Johnson asserted: "On the 20th day of January, in 19 and 61, John F. Kennedy told his countrymen that our national work would not be finished 'in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet.'"(47) Kennedy's own words further testified that important endeavors can never be accomplished in the lifespan of one governmental administration, and therefore, no administration—and no president—was immortal. Furthermore, in some sense, no administration was worthier than any other. Such sentiments, of course, lessened the pressure on Johnson to be overly productive in the year he had to lead until the next presidential election.

In addition to the specific language Busby created for the speech, his mission of rhetorically promoting LBJ's potential as a leader can be distinguished in other correspondence between Busby and the new president. In a memo Busby wrote to Johnson on November 23, 1963, which highlighted the guidelines and objectives of his impending meeting with Dwight Eisenhower, Busby advised Johnson to make sure Eisenhower understood that it was "imperative that this not be exploited as a 'regency' Presidency, marking time."⁷² In other words, Busby thought it was mandatory for Johnson to promote his legitimate ascendancy to the presidency and project his leadership capabilities. He did not want his rhetorical practices to label him as an exerciser of power only in the absence or disability of the true sovereign. The goal of Johnson's presidency thus was to push for crucial legislation and to mobilize governmental apparatuses—to make history by engaging in vigorous actions, not by cautiously marking time.

In the aftermath of Johnson's assumption of the presidency, Busby continued his efforts to polish LBJ's rhetorical leadership. In memos detailing the suggested language Johnson should exploit for a news conference marking the six-month milestone of his presidency, Busby encouraged Johnson to "set the tone" of the news conference upfront and to display a desired image of "competence, confidence, and maturity in the job." In terms of the assessment of his first 150 days in office, Busby advised Johnson to tell the press that he, personally, was "turning more attention to the future," and that he felt that "many old issues are being cleared off the docket—or materially changed in character." Obviously, Busby wanted Johnson to embrace the future by pressing his own ideas for legislation while de-emphasizing the specifics of Kennedy's programs and policies. In Busby's eyes, Johnson needed to express that these "old" issues of the Kennedy administration had either been substantially addressed, were no longer prioritized, or had "materially changed in character."⁷³

In other memos pertaining to this critical press conference, Busby sought to impel LBJ to use the press platform—which he called a "device"—to convey and publicize his "interest in, and thinking about the longer-term future of the nation—well beyond the immediate problems of the present."⁷⁴ Again, Johnson's most faithful aid was convincing the president to broaden his perspective in terms of what he might be able to accomplish with his presidency. When LBJ was thrust into office, Busby seemed to suggest, his role was not merely to calm the nation during a time of tragedy or to carry forward a political philosophy that had already been established. Rather, the presidency granted LBJ the opportunity to instill a vision for America far above and beyond the reiteration of the Kennedy agenda.

Busby also offered insight into his conception of the presidency as an institution. In offering his conception of the office, Busby, not surprisingly, wanted Johnson to proclaim that "individual Presidents may not have been responsible for national progress—that is the accomplishment of the people and the system." Such a statement reinforced his position that no president is invincible. Yet, Busby additionally urged Johnson to acknowledge and bring to the public's attention that the "country has seldom made progress, seldom resolved serious national issues, seldom responded to national challenges unless leadership were sic offered by the Chief Executive—along with initiative, articulation of goals, etc."⁷⁵ Whether or not Johnson followed Busby's direction, he experienced such support from the American public in the months following his ascension into office. A Gallup Poll showed a 75 percent approval rating of Johnson's first six months in office.⁷⁶

Busby also turned his attention to the future of Johnson's presidency. In this same memo, Busby devoted 6 out of 12 pages to outlining the "Presidential Responsibility Toward the Future." Of particular importance was the way he wanted Johnson to describe the "nature of the Office." Busby urged Johnson to state that throughout his first and second-hand experiences with the presidency, he had found that it "necessitates that the President devote much of his time each day to 'reacting.'" However, in the process of this "deliberate effort to maintain perspective and balance," the presidency should not be belittled by utilizing it solely as a medium of reaction. Conversely, the president and his administration should be proactive; the commander-in-chief "must assume responsibility for making certain that there is initiative in regard to the actual and foreseeable challenges within our own society."⁷⁷ To put it differently, Busby was working to persuade Johnson to announce firmly that his administration and the legislative work it accomplished was not *only* a reaction to the chaos of the Kennedy assassination. Of course, this was a segment of Johnson's presidency that he and his staff had to deliver carefully, but it was only the beginning of a long effort to position LBJ as an activist chief executive. Busby wanted it to appear as though Johnson realized that a proactive and directional presidency was vital, and that in the first six months in office, he sought "to do what could be done to restore the initiative, effectiveness and accomplishment of the Presidency."⁷⁸

Conclusion

As Martin J. Medhurst states, when it comes to the relationship between a president and his speechwriting staff, "one generalization seems indisputable: those speechwriters who have had relatively easy access to the principal have been, on the whole, better able to engage their craft, and . . . to produce prose that better serves the interests and goals of the administration."⁷⁹ From the day he was hired as a speechwriter at the age of 25, until the concluding minutes of LBJ's life, Horace Busby shared a relationship with Johnson that his son, Scott Busby, characterized as "a powerful and hard to define bond."⁸⁰ Although their relationship could not always be described as congenial, Busby was the man who was often referred to as LBJ's "other self." Busby described his relationship with Johnson in the following terms: "I had traveled with him, campaigned with him, laughed with him, worried with him. I knew him better than I wanted to know any man."⁸¹ During the five-night span, ranging from the first night after President Kennedy had been fatally shot (November 23rd) to Thanksgiving day (November 28th), Busby sat at Johnson's bedside until he fell asleep, listening to him speak

when he had something he wanted to say, and sat in silence during the long intervals during which thoughts frantically raced through LBJ's head. During these long talks, which Busby referred to as "hand-holding" or "gentling down," the speechwriter remembered making several attempts to "tiptoe toward the door, only to be snapped back." As soon as his foot slipped through the exit, Johnson would assuredly summon, "Buzz, are you still there?"⁸² If anyone knew Johnson and his political ideals, that person was Horace Busby. He could take Johnson's political philosophies and political agenda and turn them into rhetorical passion.

Busby was cognizant of the monumental power words held, especially in times of crises and instability. At high noon on November 27, 1963, Busby's language use coupled with the position he assumed in piecing the "Let Us Continue" speech, helped lay President Kennedy to rest and sought to convince both the audience and Congress that Johnson was worthy to assume the highest office. Of course, many others made significant contributions as well. Sorensen often received credit for this well known speech, but it was Busby who likely provided the memorable phrase and who edited Sorensen's prose so as to preserve the dignity and leadership potential of the new president.

Although Johnson's "Let Us Continue" address is typically relegated to an important historical moment, the general challenges that confronted him and the situational circumstances he weathered impact many national leaders who have stepped into the Oval Office. National crises are common, providing optimal opportunities for presidents to aid the country in moving through and beyond such crises. As Michelle C. Bligh, Jeffrey C. Kohles, and James R. Meindl have suggested,

the plethora of emotions felt in the aftermath of a crisis, including shock, confusion, fear, anger, sorrow, and anxiety, can have a potentially devastating effect on individual self-concepts as well as collective identity. Times of crisis thus enhance the likelihood that followers will want to invest increased faith in leaders, see leaders as more powerful, and identify more with their leaders as a coping mechanism.⁸³

Hence, the heightened levels of angst that a nation's people experience in the aftermath of a crisis can offer presidents an opportunity to enact leadership qualities in productive ways. Adroit leaders define the situation and thereby help influence the ways in which the nation's people understand and respond to the crisis. Such leadership opportunities allow presidents to enhance their power by relieving the public "of the psychological stress and loss of control created in the aftermath of a crisis."⁸⁴

Presidents have long capitalized on this tool of defining political reality. David Zarefsky points to such examples as George Washington's definition of the Whiskey Rebellion as "a fundamental challenge to the authority of the national government under the Constitution," Franklin D. Roosevelt's conception of liberalism as governmental protection against the threatening "consolidated power of big businesses," Johnson's depiction of "equal opportunity" in 1965 to "embrace equal outcomes, not just equal chances," and more recently, George W. Bush's definition of the September 11th attacks as acts of war demanding a military response.⁸⁵ All of these scenarios as well as the one Johnson faced in 1963 immediately following JFK's death afforded these presidents an opportunity to serve as strong leaders. In a sense, a crisis endowed these men with the "art of structuring the world so . . . they . . . can win."⁸⁶

More recently, in the wake of September 11, President Bush worked to unify the American people and to showcase his strong leadership before a Joint Session of Congress on September 20, 2001. As Murphy argues, "He spoke as their voice, expressing their feelings,"⁸⁷ and in the process, he expressed his own world view and offered a glimpse into the future course of U.S. foreign policy. Bush framed the war as an attack against American values and identified al-Qaeda as the evil offender—which he referred to as "heirs to all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century."⁸⁸ He periodically brought tears to all U.S. citizens' eyes as he depicted the heroic tales of normal, every-day Americans during this horrific time in our nation's history.⁸⁹ Such leadership received considerable praise even among his critics. Following his third year in office and nearly two years past the peril of September 11, President Bush still enjoyed a 63 percent approval rating going into his campaign for re-election—what *USA Today* called "the highest ranking of any president since Lyndon Johnson, who finished 1963 with a 74 percent rating a month after John F. Kennedy's assassination."⁹⁰ Clearly, presidential speechmaking during these periods of national crisis, represents a vital component of the American presidency.

LBJ's recognition of the importance of presidential rhetoric is the source from which his legacy is derived. His words helped induce several landmark domestic achievements and incited remarkable civil rights feats that would change history. Johnson first signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in public establishments, prompted equal employment regulations, and addressed racial discrimination on college campuses across the nation.⁹¹ In 1965, he worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which declared that "no voting qualification or prerequisite to voting . . . shall be imposed or applied by any State . . . to deny . . . the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."⁹² While coasting through the 1964 presidential election with 61 percent of the vote and the widest popular margin in U.S. history,⁹³ Johnson again turned his attention and his rhetoric to the oppressed. He spoke of a "Great Society" and tuned Americans into visions of "abundance and liberty for all" and "an end to poverty and racial injustice."⁹⁴ This program would become the core of his legislative agenda for Congress in 1965. Indeed, Johnson's actions and fortitude more than fulfilled the leadership promises that Busby's speechwriting portended, thereby securing the president's covenant with the American people. While it cannot be denied that his struggles in Vietnam marred his presidential legacy, many historians and journalists agree that "echoes of his presidency" and leadership "still reverberate through the nation's politics" today.⁹⁵ In fact, some even accredit the recent success of Barack Obama's presidential candidacy as attainable only because of Johnson's legacy and his strenuous efforts on behalf of African American rights.⁹⁶ While it may have been Obama who coined the phrase "change we can believe in," Johnson helped forge the possibilities for that change. Richard Cohen goes so far as to characterize the Obama presidency as "the election that LBJ won."⁹⁷

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Notes

1 All passages from President Lyndon Baines Johnson's speech are taken from the Official Record Copy of "Let Us Continue," which was distributed by the Office of the White House Press Secretary for Immediate Release on November 27, 1963. All of the remaining passages from Johnson's Address to a Joint Session of Congress are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the text of the speech that accompanies this essay.

2 Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1971), 1.

3 Kurt Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric after the Assassination of John F. Kennedy: Securing Legitimacy and Leadership," in *The Modern Presidency and Crisis Rhetoric*, ed. Amos Kiewe (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 74.

4 Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 435.

5 Robert N. Hall, "Lyndon Johnson's Speech Preparation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 51 (1965): 174.

6 Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1976), 172. This particular quote is derived from the personal notes of Doris Kearns Goodwin that were collected during her work with President Johnson in the White House and during her work on his memoirs. Kearns, a Harvard graduate, was a member of LBJ's White House staff; she served as a personal confidante in the years before his death.

7 Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream*, 174.

8 Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream*, 173.

9 Hall, "Lyndon Johnson's Speech Preparation," 170.

10 Patricia Witherspoon, "'Let Us Continue': The Rhetorical Initiation of Lyndon Johnson's Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 17 (1987): 532-533.

11 Merle Miller, *Lyndon, An Oral Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 331.

12 Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1965).

13 Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 9.

14 Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 9-10.

15 Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 18.

16 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 59.

17 As quoted in Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream*, 178.

18 "A Midwest View: Johnson is Able," *New York Times*, November 24, 1963, 10.

19 Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream*, 177-178.

20 Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 20-21.

21 Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 57.

22 Paul R. Henggeler, *In His Steps: Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedy Mystique* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee Inc., 1991), 116.

23 Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 4.

24 Paul B. Sheatsley and Jacob J. Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy: A Preliminary Report on Public Reactions and Behavior," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 28 (1964): 159.

25 Irving Howe, "On the Death of JFK," in *Steady Work: Essays in the Politics of Democratic Radicalism, 1953-1966*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966). As quoted in Goodwin, *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the American Dream*, 172.

26 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 197.

27 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 207.

28 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 196.

29 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 198.

30 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 197.

31 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 204.

32 Sheatsley and Feldman, "The Assassination of President Kennedy," 203.

33 "Negroes Ponder Next Rights Step: 'What's Going to Happen to Us?' One Woman Asks," *New York Times*, November 25, 1963, 12.

34 "Editorial Comments From Across the Country Appraising Johnson After His Assumption of the Presidency," *New York Times*, November 29, 1963, 21.

35 Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to the President, "Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President 1963-1969: Ex SP 2-3/Special Messages 11/22/63," Box 62, Folder: "SP2-3/11-27-63: President's Message to Congress, 11/27/63," Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter cited as LBJPL).

36 "The President's Daily Diary, 11/22/63-6/30/1964," Box 1, Folder: "Daily Diary Supplement November 23-30, 1963," LBJPL.

37 Memo from Douglas Dillon to the President, "Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969: The President's Appointment File (Backup Diary): 11/22/63-11/30/63," Box 1, Folder: Appointment File Diary Backup, November 23, 1963, LBJPL.

38 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 78.

39 Memorandum from Adlai Stevenson to President Johnson, November 24, 1963, Subject: Speech to the Joint Session of Congress, "Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969: Ex SP 2-3/Special Messages 11/22/63," Box 62, Folder: "SP2-3/11-27-63: President's Message to Congress, 11/27/63," LBJPL. See also Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric after the Assassination of John F. Kennedy," 78.

40 Unfortunately, the works of John Kenneth Galbraith—JFK's ambassador to India—are less plentiful compared to the other ghostwriters who, like Galbraith, composed complete drafts for the speech. Throughout my research, I was unable to locate any drafts or memos in either the Johnson Library or the Kennedy Library that validated his specific contributions to the address.

41 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 78.

42 Memo from William F. Haddad to Bill Moyers, November 23, 1963, "Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969, Ex SP 2-3/ Special Messages 11/22/63," Box 62, Folder: "SP2-3/11-27-63, President's Message to Congress, 11/27/63," LBJPL.

43 For example, see Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 77-86. Also see John M. Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 577-601.

44 Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," 580.

45 Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," 582.

46 Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," 580.

47 Michael R. Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The White House Tapes 1963-1964* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 41.

48 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 80.

49 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 80.

50 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 83.

51 Speech Draft # 1, "Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, Congressional Address 11/27/1963," Box 77, Folder: "Drafts and Press Releases 11/26/63—11/27/1963," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library (hereafter cited as JFKPL). Emphasis added.

52 Speech Draft #1, JFKPL. Emphasis added.

53 "Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, November 18, 1963-November 30, 1963," Box 89, Folder: "11/27/63, Remarks of the President Before A Joint Session of Congress, House Chamber Capitol, Folder 1," LBJPL. See also, Letter with Draft Attachment, Horace Busby to the President, 11/26/1963, "Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, November 18, 1963-November 30, 1963," Box 89, Folder: "11/27/63- Remarks of the President Before A Joint Session of Congress, House Chamber Capitol, Folder 1," LBJPL. Emphases added.

54 Speech Draft #1, JFKPL. Emphasis added.

55 Official Record Copy of "Let Us Continue," From Office of the White House Press Secretary for Immediate Release, 11/27/1963, "Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, November 18, 1963-November 30, 1963," Box 89, Folder: 11/27/63, Remarks of the President Before A Joint Session of Congress, House Chamber Capitol, Folder 1. LBJPL. Emphasis added.

56 Speech Draft # 2, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, "Congressional Address 11/27/1963," Box 77, Folder: Drafts and Press Releases 11/26/63—11/27/1963," JFKPL.

57 Speech Draft # 2, JFKPL.

58 Beschloss, *Taking Charge*, 40.

59 Beschloss, *Taking Charge*, 38.

60 Quoted in Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 37.

61 Ritter, "Lyndon B. Johnson's Crisis Rhetoric," 79.

62 For example, see Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition*; Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*; Joseph A. Califano, *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000); Patricia Witherspoon, "'Let Us Continue': The Rhetorical Initiation of Lyndon Johnson's Presidency;" and Paul R. Henggeler, *In His Steps: Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedy Mystique*.

63 Witherspoon, for example, claims that while Busby was one of the speechwriters assigned to the task of drafting the speech, his role was minor compared to others who provided more ideas, dedicated longer hours, and produced more materials. Witherspoon also alleges that around 2:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning, the day the speech was to be delivered, Vice President Hubert Humphrey "added the now-famous words, 'Let Us Continue,'" and afterwards, the president deemed the speech finished. But Witherspoon seems mistaken, as

records in the Johnson Library demonstrate that Busby contributed the phrase the preceding Tuesday.

64 Memorandum from Horace Busby to President Johnson, November 25, 1963, "The Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, Pres. 1963-1969," "The President's Appointment File (Backup Diary), 11/22/63- 11/30/63," Box 1, Folder: "Appointment File Diary Backup November 25, 1963," LBJPL.

65 Memorandum, Kermit Gordon to Bill Moyers, November 26, 1963, "Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969: Ex SP 2-3/Special Messages 11/22/63," Box 62, Folder: "SP2-3/ 11-27-63: President's Message to Congress, 11/27/63," LBJPL.

66 Busby Speech Draft #1, November 26, 1963, "Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, November 18, 1963-November 30, 1963," Box 89, Folder: "11/27/63- Remarks of the President Before A Joint Session of Congress, House Chamber Capitol, Folder 1," LBJPL.

67 Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," 580 and 582.

68 Murphy, "Crafting the Kennedy Legacy," 582.

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