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## **No Middle Ground: Demagogic Rhetorical Practices at the Truth and Courage Bus Stop in Harlingen, TX**

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NO MIDDLE GROUND: DEMAGOGIC RHETORICAL PRACTICES  
AT THE TRUTH AND COURAGE BUS STOP  
IN HARLINGEN, TX

A Thesis

by

KYMBERLY O. MORQUECHO

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Subject: English

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2023



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May 2023



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## ABSTRACT

Morquecho, Kymberly, No Middle Ground: Demagogic Rhetorical Practices at Truth and Courage Bus Stop in Harlingen, TX Thesis Title is Underlined. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2023, 112 pp., 9 figures, references, 54 titles.

This thesis examines the rhetorical and discursive strategies embraced by conservative politicians and their supporters on the campaign trail. Using Dr. Patricia Roberts-Miller's definition of demagogic cultures coupled with the five markers, or tendencies, of these cultures, I explore how the speakers at the October 22, 2022 Truth and Courage PAC campaign rally in Harlingen, TX deployed these tactics to galvanize voters to vote for TX-34 Republican candidate Mayra Flores. Through a combination of descriptive and rhetorical analysis, I demonstrate how these presenters engage in demagogic and anti-democratic rhetorical moves to an audience of Hispanics. Lastly, I outline how these moves may act as an accelerants for white supremacy.





## DEDICATION

My master's thesis is dedicated to my late abuelita, Ofelia. She was a masterclass in resilience, tenacity, acceptance, and grace; my continuous pursuit of knowledge and self-improvement is an homage to her memory. This undertaking is also dedicated to the women in my family who serve as educators. I hope my work realizes the same excellence and class these ladies have demonstrated in their respective careers.

To my parents, thank you for cultivating my love for reading and learning at an early age. Learning to read from the newspaper with dad and taking bi-weekly trips to the library with mom were both monumental in shaping who I am today.

To my partner Pita, thank you for accompanying me to the site of my analysis, taking pictures for my project, and motivating me through my unabating panic and stress.

Lastly, I want to thank my colleagues and friends, Arleen, Suzanna, and Yael for cheering me on through harsh, self-imposed deadlines and validating the time I took off from work to write.



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Dr. Warren-Riley, thank you for entertaining and validating my work in your class on the rhetoric of TST, introducing me to some of the rhetorical theories that guided my research, providing chapter models, and offering your perspective on my positionality as a researcher.

Thank you to Dr. Shelledy for your encouragement in making me question my intervention in the scholarship of my project and validating my position in the academic sphere. Your class on citizenship cemented my interest in rhetoric and its consequences.

Lastly, a special thanks to the now-retired Dr. Rathbun for introducing me to the work of Dr. Patricia Roberts-Miller, whose work is foundational to my thesis.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*October 2021: Texas House of Representatives member Matt Krause disseminates a list of 850 books, largely dealing with LGBTQIA topics, to school districts in Texas, asking how many copies of each they have on their library shelves. This triggers a number of school districts to ban many of the books, making Texas the state with the most number of book bans; many of the titles cover gender identity, sexual orientation, and racism.*

*June 2022: the United States Supreme Court rules 6-3 in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization that abortion is not guaranteed under the United States Constitution. This move efficiently overturns Roe v Wade, ending federal protection of abortion rights and relegating rights to the state level, triggering a slew of anti-abortion laws in states like Texas. This is a material example of the onslaught of theist normative legislation in the United States.*

*June 2022: United States Supreme Court sides 6-3 with Joseph Kennedy, a football coach who prayed with his team after games, evincing preferential treatment for the rights of Christians over all other religions.*

*December 2022: The United States Supreme Court hears arguments in 303 Creative LLC v Elenis. Christian web designer Lorie Smith challenges Colorado's anti-discrimination law that prohibits her from discriminating against LGBTQIA couples. SCOTUS experts believe the court will side with Smith, again showing preferential treatment for Christians.*

*January 2023: A federal appeals court upholds West Virginia's ban on trans athletes from participating in sports that align with their gender identity.*

*February 2023: the Florida Board of Medicine passes new rules denying transgender children access to gender-affirming medical care.*

*February 2023: Idaho passes a law that threatens doctors with felony charges if they provide gender-affirming care to minors.*

*March 2023: Tennessee bans drag shows in public spaces, claiming the move is an effort to shield children from being potentially "groomed." Governor Bill Lee also signs a bill prohibiting healthcare providers from administering gender-affirming care to minors.*

*March 2023: Texas House Bill 1155 is introduced and aims to prohibit educators from teaching about gender identity and sexual orientation in the classrooms.*

These recent court decisions, laws, and changes in medical routines and rules are the ramifications of electing lawmakers who engage in demagogic practices that ostracize vulnerable groups of people. Once in power, politicians—overwhelmingly conservative and Republican—enact repugnant policies that actively disempower and misrepresent groups, like the LGBTQIA community and teachers, by denying them bodily autonomy, demonizing their lived experiences, and forcing them to adhere to heteronormative hierarchies. Additionally, the conservative-majority Supreme Court is siding with Christian nationalism in court cases that will have harmful effects for women, non-Christians, and queer people. In deploying demagogic rhetoric, conservative politicians create out-groups of marginalized people to scapegoat for the perceived denigration of society. As these laws prove, “demagoguery isn’t just a way of arguing about politics; it’s a way of thinking about decision-making” (Roberts-Miller, 2020, p. 122). Us-vs-them rhetoric and an oversimplified world view prevents public deliberation, endangers

democracy, and ushers in totalitarianism. It is far easier to enact exclusionary legislation and disenfranchise citizens when the targets of those policies are dehumanized.

It is important to understand how demagogic rhetorical practices function in political discourse because it has material effects: denial of bodily and individual autonomy and the right to participate in society. It is important to critique demagoguery in political discourse because it creates oppressive systems, and these systems upend American democracy. Instead of studying one specific political actor's rhetoric, we should examine the rhetorical practices of cultures. As consequence of "when demagoguery becomes the normal way of participating in public discourse,...it's just a question of time until a demagogue arises;" powerful conservatives disseminate divisive rhetoric because the audience is a willing participant (Roberts-Miller, 2020, p. 2). The move of using language to create boundaries between an in-group and an out-group encourages radicalization and violence from the in-group.

Along with broadening our understanding of cultural demagoguery, it is pertinent to explore which specific moves are effective with specific groups, especially those who are not included in the all-white, all-Christian narrative of the American Christian nationalist. Further, how does demagogic rhetoric function as an accelerant for authoritarianism?

In *The Rhetoric of Fascism*, Nathan Crick asserts fascism is a creation of the twentieth century that is now spilling over into the twenty-first. Fascism is a political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues

with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion (2022, p. 6).

The fascist is different from other authoritarian figures because he needs the people, in the form of “cults of unity, energy and purity,” on his side. Demagogic rhetoric does half the work for the populist political actor since he emerges from a culture already tainted with in-group and out-group thresholds. Demagoguery emboldens the would-be fascist.

Currently, demagoguery is a prevailing means of engaging in American political discourse, and its effects are in full display, and so, “the task before us is therefore not to dismiss these devices or hope they go away; the task is to hold them before us, to examine their working, to disempower them by making them familiar and thereby even ridiculous” (Crick, 2022, p. 28). By analyzing the rhetorical moves employed by political rhetors and categorizing them as inflammatory and divisive, we may be able to restore deliberative discourse. Demagoguery needs to be labeled as such because this specific type of rhetoric has consequences, often deadly ones.

In this project I examine the demagogic rhetorical practices enacted by a conservative audience and four conservative speakers at the Truth and Courage Bus Tour campaign stop in Harlingen, Texas. This event was organized by the Truth and Courage Political Action Committee to invigorate red party voters to elect Republican candidates in the 2022 midterm elections. At this event, the organizers were working to elect former representative Mayra Flores for Texas District 34<sup>1</sup>. According to this analysis, the rhetoric at this campaign stop encouraged

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<sup>1</sup> Republican legislators redrew districts in Texas to make them more favorable for conservative candidates in 2020. After the Democratic Party Representative announced he was not bidding for reelection, a special election was held in June 2022; Mayra Flores won 51 percent of the vote.

Hispanic<sup>2</sup> voters to uphold white supremacy, advance Christian nationalism, and target vulnerable out-groups, specifically trans people.

In the next chapter, I review the literature and scholarship on demagoguery, wherein I outline the different perspectives on the term demagogue and then explain each of the specific rhetorical moves enacted at the Truth and Courage bus stop. In my third chapter, I lay out my framework and methodology for this project, which is informed by the work of Patricia Roberts-Miller, one of the current authorities on demagoguery in political discourse. My fourth chapter is a presentation and analysis of the rhetoric enacted at the event by the attendees and the Truth and Courage PAC. I demonstrate how the clothing, actions, and reactions by the audience align with demagogic discourse. My fifth chapter offers a presentation and analysis of the demagogic rhetorical moves enacted by the speakers at this event: Pastor Rafael Cruz, Christian Collins, Mayra Flores, and Senator Ted Cruz. Lastly, my conclusion summarizes my findings, touches on the limitations of this project, presents opportunities for other disciplines in this work, and highlights the importance of the rhetorician's role in studying demagoguery.

Demagoguery is ever present in much of today's political discourse, and the consequences of this are too perilous to ignore.

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term Hispanic because this is how the crowd self-identified. Although the residents of the RGV identify in a myriad of ways (Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, Mexican American), the presenters used this term when referring to the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Demagoguery can be understood as a series of rhetorical moves that the media, the public, and politicians enact as political discourse, such as events like the 2022 Truth and Courage bus tour in Harlingen, Texas. This project examines how demagoguery functioned to solidify the narrative of an idealized Christian nationalist American society at that event. In this chapter, I provide a review of the current scholarship on demagoguery, present the three axes of demagoguery, and outline traits of demagogic audiences. Lastly, I present an overview of the rhetorical practices enacted at the Truth and Courage campaign stop that served as my site of analysis and illustrate how demagogic rhetoric acts as a function and accelerant of fascism and authoritative governments.

Most of my work builds on the scholarship of Ryan Skinnell, a rhetoric and composition professor at San Jose University who has written extensively on political rhetoric; Jennifer Merciaa, a professor of communication at Texas A&M University and public expert on the rhetoric of former President Donald Trump; Nathan Crick, a communications professor also at Texas A&M University and highly regarded expert on the language of fascism; and Patricia Roberts-Miller, professor emeritus at the University of Texas-Austin and preeminent expert on the rhetoric of demagoguery.



I am organizing the chapter and my argument this way because it is important to understand the evolving definitions of demagogues, the different opinions on what does and does not constitute demagoguery, and the role cultures play in creating demagogues. My subsection on explaining how demagoguery is a function of authoritarianism is foundational to understanding the main argument in this project: demagoguery is an accelerant of white supremacy.

### **The Good, the Bad, and the Dismissive: A Review of the Literature**

Often the public and the media use the word demagogue to demonize a single person whose rhetoric sways a perceived sincere, well-intentioned public with emotional appeals, misinformation, and trickery; the people are at the mercy of a singular populist. In this way, demagoguery is misapplied in the same way as the word rhetoric is as a way to criticize political discourse. The terms rhetoric and demagogue are often misapplied, and, thus, intrinsically tied together, in the public sphere as equally harmful. The inflammatory rhetoric of politicians is labeled simply as “rhetoric,” misrepresenting what the term means. The same happens when the term demagogue is used as a catch-all for impassioned speakers. Both misapplications prevent us from dealing with demagoguery in public discourse and make us more vulnerable to it. Rhetoric is labeled as bullshit when really it is demagoguery that is bullshit. Understanding demagoguery and its effects is pertinent to safeguarding American democracy, no matter how complex current academic conversations about demagogues are: some academics argue that demagoguery can be useful, others are steadfast in its inherent danger, and some are dismissive entirely of the label and argue that it is an oversimplification of much more complicated political figures and contexts.

According to Skinnell democratic governments are the only governments susceptible to demagogues. In a system of government that draws its power from the will of those it governs, it is necessary for a populist to draw his power from the people. The demagogue cannot exist without the people. Joshua Gunn explores this relationship between the demagogue and the people, and he finds the populist political is only “successful and persuasive only to the extent that audiences derive pleasure from never truly getting what they are promised or, put alternately, getting precisely what they desire: nothing final, nothing certain” (2007, p. 14). The demagogue and the culture he/she/they emerges out of are intrinsically enmeshed, but the rhetor has a stronger dependency on the audience. Without them, he/she/they<sup>3</sup> is nothing; without democracy, he/she/they is nothing.

Democracy requires public discourse, however, the main conundrum with public discourse in representative governments is drawing “the line between responsible and irresponsible (or ‘demagogic’) discourse” (Hogan & Tell, 2006, p. 480). While this framing suggests that demagoguery is on the bad end of the public discourse spectrum, some academics dangerously portend that demagoguery can be useful in certain contexts and audiences. A way that demagoguery gets weaponized is to criticize speakers who do not engage in speech that is non-normal, non-Western, non-male, and non-heteronormative. When the speaker does not demonstrate a strict adherence to logical and “responsible” discourse, we discount them as fanatical. Hogan contends that this may leave out voices and rhetorical moves that do not align with traditional western ideas of rhetoric. Progress requires some demagoguery; in-groups, or the group that hold power, need to be challenged by out-groups (or the disempowered, demonized

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<sup>3</sup> A note here on my use of the pronouns “he/she/they” when I refer to a demagogue: I am avoiding using the singular “they” to circumvent confusion when I talk about the in-group and the demagogue. I am also refraining from reinforcing rigid gender binaries. A demagogue is anyone who employs divisive rhetoric, regardless of gender.

group). To do this, the out-group may need politically incorrect language to question the status quo, which means they need to use rhetoric that does not comport with the Western rhetorical canon. Purely objective and logical discourse disallows personal stories, lived experiences, and Othered voices (Hogan & Tell, 2006). In this framing, the term demagogue has become inflammatory, so we gatekeep what gets allowed in public discourse, specifically non-traditional, non-Western forms of rhetoric, and so, sometimes we are too quick to label those rhetors who use incendiary rhetoric as demagogues; this move “may mask injustice, ignore the marginalized, and become rationales for the powerful” (Goldzwig, 1989, p. 204).

While this view of demagoguery creates a more nuanced approach and understanding of how we use the term demagogue in the public sphere, the hesitancy to label rhetorical moves that function to disempower marginalized groups as demagogic is not helpful. Refusing to label those moves as such has material effects: it absolves non-white, cis male rhetors of responsibility of their rhetoric.

Jennifer Mercieca names two distinct categories of demagogues: heroic and dangerous. The singular difference between the two is whether they allow themselves to be held accountable for their words and actions (2019, p. 266). The heroic demagogue is a herald of the people, one who embodies the ideal of Quintilian’s good man, a rhetor who does not use “the power of speaking [to] support evil” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001. p. 413). In this view, demagoguery is not inherently evil. It can be good, especially in times that call for revolution or when one is forming bonds with a coworker by disparaging upper management. The heroic demagogue suspends the civility of socially acceptable discourse to call attention to groups and issues that are left out of the conversation. On the other hand, dangerous demagogues use “‘weaponized communication,’ or the strategic use of communication as an instrumental tool and as an aggressive means to gain

compliance and avoid accountability” (Mercieca, 2019, p. 266). Dangerous demagogues are not calling attention to the disenfranchised; they are using abusive rhetoric to force people into submission and maintain social hierarchies.

This distinction between different types of demagogues is useful because it offers a more complex conversation on the impacts of demagoguery and may help remedy the loaded feelings associated with the term demagogue in the public sphere. However, the motives or the character of the speakers is not relevant if the material effects of their rhetoric are harmful.

Continuing in the vein of the goodness in demagoguery, Goldzwig and Darsey have both argued that rules of civility are merely a preference for maintaining order in discourse. Darsey welcomes radical, prophetic speech that may otherwise be labeled demagogic; for him, the American tradition demands radical speech “to aerate the roots of society by means that involve some violence to the soil” (Darsey, 1997, p. 209). Goldzwig lists several scholars who are reassessing rhetors and their speeches within their respective contexts, cognizant of how “text, context, cultural contract, and norms for performance all play crucially interdependent roles in determining the quality, value, and ethicality of discursive practices” (2006, p. 472). Goldzwig, himself, calls for ‘critical localism,’ or analyses of pedestrian language in communities, which one may be quick to label as demagogic without careful consideration of context. However, there are rhetorical moves that are demagogic and dangerous regardless of context. Any rhetoric that creates identity-based boundaries between an in-group and an out-group is detrimental to multi-racial egalitarian societies.

Academic focus on demagoguery has intensified in the last twenty years, and even more so in the last ten. The rise in right-wing, authoritarian leaders across the globe has created a

kairotic urgency to examine the emergence and consequences of demagogic rhetoric. U.S.-based scholarship on unique demagogues, like Trump, is still a popular approach, like we see with Mercieca (2019), Steudeman (2017), Nai (2017), and Skinnell (2018). The rhetorical practices of right-wing political agitators like Alex Jones, Rush Limbaugh, and Andrew Anglin are also popular subjects for analysis (Mercieca, 2019 & Strom Larson, 1997). Such is the cyclical nature of renewed interest in demagoguery: during times of civil unrest or "crisis of legitimacy," academics often turn to examine the more dangerous speakers of the time (Lipset, 1959, p. 70). Most of the literature in rhetoric and composition and communications on demagoguery revisits the rhetoric of horrible people like Cleon and Adolf Hitler, and later figures such as Joseph McCarthy and Huey Pierce Long with contemporary and emerging lenses and methodologies (Gunn, 2007). Gustainis's 1990 review of the literature on demagoguery gave a cursory review of the demagogue in his/her/their rhetorical situation, but most of his focus was on the demagogue and his/her/their practices outside of the kairotic moment in which they operated. McDonough offers a more dynamic approach to the single-rhetor-single-speech analysis: she suggests that new scholarship should focus on the interactive aspects of demagogic speech to "consider the shifting nature of demagoguery" (2018, p. 143). Using this approach may hold a singular rhetor accountable while also exploring the context of their rhetorical practices.

People use divisive rhetoric in their lives every day, and while some scholars implore a more deliberate approach to analyzing demagogues and their rhetorical approaches, other scholars are dismissive of the label entirely. When looking at the rhetorical practices of political rhetors, Hogan and Tell argue "we need to acknowledge that zealots from across the political spectrum have contributed to the decline of public deliberation in America" (2006, p. 485). In another essay, Hogan, this time writing with Williams (2004), suggests that labeling rhetors as

demagogues “reflects a cultural bias, even a sort of elitist stereotyping” (p. 151). These scholars shrug off demagogic rhetorical appeals as something ubiquitous and harmless since these methods are especially relevant in political ads. This dismissal of the dangers in demagoguery level an accusation at the work of rhetoricians who analyze demagogic rhetorical practices and can have an effect of downplaying the peril in demagoguery. Individual persons may engage in demagogic practices, but it is another matter entirely when a political actor begins to engage in the same practices.

While Hogan, Tell, Williams, and sometimes Goldzwig, may not necessarily dismiss the existence or instances of demagoguery, postulating that demagoguery is not a cause for worry is, in itself, cause for concern. Offering alternative analyses for demagogic rhetors grants new understandings of demagoguery, but it also allows for the normalization of unethical rhetorical practices that are harmful to scapegoated populations. Normalizing divisive discursive actions “matters to the degree that it is part of a larger discourse, the relative power of the agent and object of the discourse, and how explicit the call for elimination is” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 3). This sort of dismissal is closely related to the whataboutism present in American political discourse today, and it validates the rhetorical practices of rhetors who hold repugnant views, especially those that would vilify already marginalized and oppressed groups, groups that are especially subjected to violence.

The aforementioned scholars all encouraged more nuanced definitions and understandings of demagogues, and while demagoguery can be “heroic” and open avenues for voices that may have been largely ignored, demagogic cultures are anti-democratic, because they do not encourage deliberation, consensus-making, or community-building. This relationship between demagoguery and democracy is paradoxical. Skinnell argues that “demagoguery

fundamentally seeks to undermine the institutions of democratic governance,” but the demagogue needs the power of the people behind him/her to do so (Skinnell, 2019, p. 250). Demagogues are the antithesis of democracy, though they pretend to represent the people: they “hypercharge or supercharge” democracy to destabilize the institutions that act as checks. The demagogue is a flatterer to a tyrant, one who emerges from the people; a demagogue “steps into a kairotic moment” (Skinnell, 2019, p. 252). When a democratic public does not engage in deliberative discourse, it creates the conditions for its own demise. Demagogic political discourses foment the kairotic moment for these rhetors.

### **Axes of Demagoguery**

Roberts-Miller outlines the three axes of demagoguery: “how demagogic discourse is; how consistently a specific out-group is scapegoated, and how powerful the media and/or rhetors are that are engaging in that kind of demagoguery” (2019, p. 2). On the first axis, cultures who readily employ demagogic discourse shrink away from any authentic policy deliberation and embrace identity politics. Policy differences between parties do not matter because the public chooses politicians who they believe embody their ideals. On the second axis, the in-group targets a specific out-group for the atrocious current state of affairs; the country is in disarray because of the actions of the out-group and it must be stopped. On the last axis, political leaders are successful in their divisive rhetoric, successful enough to incite riots and violence against the out-group. Current public discourse in America aligns with all three axes: voters in this country tend to vote along party lines even if they do not like a candidate, the LGBTQIA community is currently under attack by conservative legislators, and conservative political leaders frequently deploy demagogic rhetoric against political opponents by calling them Marxists.

As cultures devolve into demagogic political discourse and adopt authoritarian tendencies in their speech, it cultivates a breeding ground for political leaders who capitalize on the fears of the populous. When a demagogue is successful and wields political power, democracy is inverted: the in-group rules, not laws or institutions. The will of the people, in the hands of a demagogue, supersedes the checks and limitations necessary in democracies. Current scholarship of demagogic cultures recognizes the processes of demagoguery and its pathway to authoritarianism. This recognition and condemnation is the only way forward in safeguarding democracy. Condemning demagoguery in political discourse calls for more nuanced policy discussions in the public sphere.

For the purposes of this project, I abstain from a focus on a singular demagogue at this time three reasons: current conversations are saturated with a focus on particular rhetors (like Donald Trump or any other unsavory conservative politician); this type of ostracizing is *itself* demagoguery because it scapegoats a singular entity instead of the circumstances and larger systemic conditions he/she/they emerges from; and it absolves the society (and the individuals within) of responsibility for fomenting a demagogic public sphere.

It is far too easy to place blame at the feet of a troublesome political figure. When the conversation is hyper focused on a singular rhetor, it turns attention away from the demagogic tendencies and bifurcated political ideologies of public discourse. Analyzing the rhetorical moves of the culture and how rhetors leverage and adopt those moves in their speeches is imperative to understanding how to protect public discourse.

Furthermore, ostracizing a particular demagogue is itself demagoguery. When a demagogue is called out for their bad rhetorical behavior, his/her/their defenders will trip over



themselves to accuse their critics of using the label “to discredit those who offend our rhetorical or ideological sensibilities” (Hogan & Williams, 2004, p. 153). In this project, I am using the term demagoguery to analyze the rhetorical actions of a culture, not as a pejorative for political actors I disagree with. This project is not a partisan critique of policies I find revolting, but an analysis of rhetorical moves in demagogic political discourse and the harmful effects of such rhetorical moves. That said, it would be intellectually lazy to claim that both sides of the political spectrum in the U.S. are as engaged in employing demagoguery or upholding democracy.

I should note that in my research I noticed that the discussions on demagoguery are mostly white-centered. There is a tendency, at least in American rhetorical scholarship on demagoguery, to label white men more readily as demagogues. Scholars like Hogan, Tell, Goldzwig, and Williams are more hesitant to call people of color demagogues (Goldzwig uses the rhetoric of Louis Farrakhan to argue the importance of analyzing rhetorical situations before labeling a rhetor as a demagogue.). However, as I prove in this project, anyone who uses divisive rhetoric to create strict divisions between an in-group and an out-group should be labeled a demagogue, especially when that rhetor calls for violence on members of the out-group. The scholarship grants rhetors of color more grace for their rhetoric. I do not. My analysis demonstrates how the rhetorical practices of three non-white rhetors is demagogic.

Additionally, I noticed that most scholarship on demagoguery is from scholars who present as white. This might be for a number of reasons: these scholars recognize their privilege and use it to call out bad actors, it might be unsafe for scholars of color to label political leaders as dangerous threats to democracy, or these academics might be ignored because they are not white. My position and embodiment as a queer, Mexican American researcher offers a perspective that is non-white and non-heteronormative. My experiences as a person who does not

conform to white supremacist hierarchies informs both my observations and analyses in this project; it also makes me more conscious of rhetorics that are ignored by the canon.

The scholarship might also be white-centered because most demagoguery, at least the current trends in the United States, uphold white supremacy. That does not mean only white, cis het men can spread this rhetoric—women, people of color, and queer people also contribute to this framing of a Christian nationalist America. We should examine those rhetors *more* closely because they use their ethos as a person of color as subterfuge for their dangerous messaging.

Demagoguery is not only espoused by straight, white men, and so, the scholarship on demagoguery, and those who examine its practices and effects, should be more robust.

### **Traits of Demagogic Citizenry**

It is important to recognize the cultural conditions for demagoguery as well as the characteristics of the audience and what makes a society more susceptible to demagoguery. Fascism and authoritarianism pose threats to a multi-racial egalitarian democracy. The rise of these demagogic agents causes us to question how leaders like Adolf Hitler rise to power, but it happens in democracy all the time. Athens was a democracy before Cleon; Germany was a democracy before World War II. Scholarship on the era of Nazi Germany recognizes that Hitler was “powerful only insofar as he submit[ed] to the constraints set by the current beliefs of the ideal audience, and how much those beliefs can be moved” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 28).

The demagogue and his audience are intrinsically linked: he is “simultaneously insider and outsider; he compels the audience, but only by use of those premises to which they have assented as a culture. The discourse is, then, both of the audience and extreme to the audience” (Darsey, 1997, p. 202).

Some groups are more susceptible to the allure of demagogues, especially the authoritative, and sometimes seemingly inept, ones. Rensmann postulates that certain types of people have a “general disposition to hatred of democracy, modernity, non-conformity, societal difference” (2018, p. 31). He outlines nine characteristics of this psychological make-up:

rigid conventionality, authoritarian submissiveness, authoritarian aggressivity, the lack of intraspection, infatuation with power and toughness, destructiveness paired with cynicism, stereotypical thinking, combined with an incapacity for self-critical reflection, disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world, and a fixation on sexuality (2018).

Joshua Gunn also understands the underlying psychological dynamics of demagoguery: the demagogue and his culture live in a symbiotic system or an exchanging of influences. With a psychoanalytic approach to demagogues, he ascertains how-

demagogic rhetoric is goaded by the desire-driven, psychical structures of neurosis, namely, obsession and hysteria. In distinction from the hysteric, who constantly identifies him- or her-self with the object of another’s desire, the demagogue is an obsessional neurotic, righteously complete, frequently obscuring or erasing audiences as mere objects at the exact moment of professing his or her love for them...the obsessional rhetor appeals to audiences precisely because of his or her apparent completeness and lack of need for listeners—because he hystericizes audiences by claiming to bring order to chaos, thereby representing strength, resolve, and absolute autonomy (2007, p. 6).

The demagogue possesses an audacity to emerge from the culture to espouse, platform, and vulcanize the views of a larger demagogic citizenry.

We imagine all people want to live in representative societies, but because democracy requires deliberation and debate, some yearn for a strongman to “relieve them of at least some of the challenges” of democracy (Szabłowski, 2014, p. xvii).

### **Overview of the In-Group’s Rhetorical Moves**

For this project I am using Patricia Roberts-Miller’s definition of demagoguery:

Demagoguery is a polarizing discourse that promises stability, certainty, and escape from the responsibilities of the rhetoric through framing public policy in terms of the degree to which and means by which (not whether) the out-group should be punished and scapegoated for current problems of the in-group (2019, p.16).

This definition and the five markers of demagogic societies she outlines in her book *Rhetoric and Demagoguery* will guide my methodology: evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary-paired terms, scapegoating and rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. In my presentation and analysis chapters of the event and the speeches, I demonstrate how the attendees and the presenters at the Truth and Courage campaign stop engaged in the following rhetorical practices, then I illustrate how these rhetorical moves align with the five markers of demagoguery.

In my analysis, I found the rhetors evoked these overarching types of rhetoric: Christian nationalism, the ideograph, anti trans rhetoric, terministic screens, and remaking shit. I review the literature of these rhetorical moves in the next paragraphs.

The in-group at this event most frequently engages in Christian nationalist rhetoric. Communications professor, Kristina Lee defines Christian nationalism as “an ideological political framework and not a religious identity” (2022 p. 419). Christian nationalists mistakenly

believe that the United States government was founded on Christian values and, thus, should adhere to Christian doctrine. To them, their exclusionary brand of Christianity is grounded in moral principles that should govern all of America. Their beliefs tend to align with “patriarchal, heteronormative, nativist, and white supremacist” hierarchies that frequently ostracize those who do not adhere to their religious framing (Lee, 2022 p. 419). Creating out-groups and vilifying them is intrinsic to the Christian nationalist because they believe they are saving America. This religious-political ideology “depends on a...policing of boundaries to keep out those deemed impure to protect the integrity and the values of the American nation;” it requires demonization and expulsion of groups who do not comply with their narrow definition of what America is (Crockford, 2018, p. 229). By enacting rhetoric that upholds those ideas, the in-group normalizes these views and eases its surgance in the mainstream.

Christianity has a “a language rooted in acknowledgement and re-performance of divine authority” (Hobson, 2002, p. 1). Christians submit to an all-knowing all-seeing God who visits punishment on those who do not submit; this is mirrored in their penchant in selecting leaders who embrace strict faithfulness to tradition and display aggressiveness to those to who do not get in line. Christian nationalism is the shortest path to fascism because “from the perspective of its participants, this drama narrates the heroic choice of a Chosen People to struggle against cosmic foes, both internal and external, in the noble effort to forge a true Nation in the mythic image of group purity” (Crick, 2019, p. 200). The Christian nationalist is already primed for submission to a higher authority, and the fascist happily obliges.

The next rhetorical move the attendees and presenters enacted at this event was the ideograph. Since this rhetorical move builds on Kenneth Burke’s terministic screens, I combine both definitions here. A terministic screen is the language we use to “affect the nature of our

observations, [and] direct the attention to one field rather than another” (1966, p. 115). The specific words we use to refer to people, things, and places convey the in-group’s feelings about those things, and it signals the audience to perceive those ideas the same way you do. These screens, as Burke outlines it, are a “a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (1966 p. 115). These terministic screens are the filters we apply to words and these filters represent the reality we choose to believe.

In 1980, rhetorical theorist Michael McGee builds on Burke and defines the ideograph as: an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable (p. 15).

The ideograph is a political symbol that a group adopts to represent a number of its political ideologies. All their political feelings and conclusions are wrapped up in one word, phrase, or symbol, effectively halting the possibility of conversation. Although the ideograph does not allow for nuances in political ideology, not all members of a society need to embrace everything the ideograph represents. An example of this is the Blue Lives Matter flag: for this in-group, this flag represents support for the police, but it may also, on a deeper level, signify support for, among other ideologies, state-sponsored violence against non-white bodies.

Although the terministic screen is foundational to the ideograph, the two terms are not interchangeable. They function in different, distinct ways: the terministic screen is language, or

terminology that filters reality, and it is not necessarily political; the ideograph is a symbol, phrase, or language that represents a political ideology.

The speakers at this event frequently lamented the existence of the dangerous Marxist, a term used by conservatives for anti-capitalists, government without ever defining which parts of this administration align to Marxist ideas. For the in-group, the accusation and invocation of the terministic screen is grounds enough to condemn the administration as antithetical to American identity. The specific language they use in this case, even if they are deploying it in a political context, filters the boundaries of who belongs in the in-group. The in-group's reality excludes supposed Marxists from their ranks. The term is used to label someone as an enemy, even if that enemy does not ascribe to Marxism.

At this event, the ideograph manifested in the presence of the police at the event; acting as the embodiment of order and punishment, the police represent the in-group's tendency to worship authoritarian entities. Their presence also functioned as an expression of the in-group's self-perceived victimhood, which I extend in the next section of this chapter. Similarly, the ideographs of Cuba and Venezuela act as clear examples of failed socialist states and the in-group accepts this summation without question, never mind the influence from the United States in the political landscapes of those countries.

Terministic screens and ideographs are demagogic because they close off discussion by supplanting conversations with built-in conclusions. The in-group does not need to discuss the meanings of words or symbols because the ideograph and the terministic screens terminate discussion and thought. By accepting these terms and the group's definition of them, "each member of the community is socialized, conditioned, to the vocabulary of ideographs as a

prerequisite for ‘belonging’ to the society;” membership to the in-group is solidified (McGee, 1980, p. 16).

Thirdly, the presenters readily deployed anti trans rhetoric. V. Jo Hsu, an academic in rhetoric and queer theory, describes the purpose of anti trans rhetoric:

In framing transgender identity as an attack on children and the “American family,” anti-trans activists have used trans topics to shore up protections for white, middle-class respectability and gender norms. Public outcry for governmental intervention in the trans “epidemic” has thus provided an outlet for anxieties about perceived threats to white social and economic capital (2022, p. 63).

Working within the confines of their binary-paired view of the world, trans people represent a disordered, perverted upset of the hierarchies the in-group wants to preserve, hierarchies that are grounded in white supremacy and Western definitions of gender and sexual orientation. The Christian nationalist-inspired in-group “focus[es] on rigid definitions of gender dysphoria, weaponizing its diagnostic language to exclude anyone who does not adhere to very binaristic framings of trans experience” (Hsu, 2022, p. 65). The trans experience forces us to question our strict definitions of gender expression and gender roles, which upsets the hierarchies the in-group clings to. These definitions are necessary to their version of reality because it maintains those structures, structures that are confining and dangerous to those who do not conform to them.

By passing anti LGBTQIA, more specifically anti trans, legislation, conservatives are making discrimination, vilification, and criminalization of these marginalized groups a part of the institution. It is an epideictic act in that it requires Americans to actively harm these groups



and it “necessarily reinforce[s] discriminatory norms that endanger people of color, disabled people, LGBTQ folks, and cisgender women” (Hsu, 2022, p. 73). The speakers at this event use demagogic, bifurcated understandings of gender and sexual orientation to make a mockery of trans existence. They liken trans people to a disease that requires an antidote, which conservatives offer in the form of legislation to prevent gender-affirming care for these individuals. This move is demagogic because it reinforces black-and-white framing of the in-group and the out-group, and it materially dehumanizes trans people.

The last overarching rhetorical move this in-group made was remaking shit, a fascist rhetorical appeal wherein, according to Nathan Crick, the fascist moves the audience “by convincing them of their potential greatness only after persuading them to accept their present shittiness, thus establishing the conditions for guilt and its subsequent violent redemption through nationalist rebirth enabled by an elite leadership contemptuous of those same masses” (2022, p. 13). The populist leader convinces the audience of the undesirability of their current situation, then argues that the only way forward is to rebuild with the remnants.

The process includes naming shit, modeling shit, and remaking shit. The populist leader then reshapes shit to benefit him. In naming shit, “the aim is to create an atmosphere that arouses emotions of disgust and anger, along with a sense of intolerable claustrophobia and the desire to escape” (Crick, 2022, p19). The current shittiness of the world threatens the security of the in-group. By explicitly naming it and eliciting feelings of disgust, the in-group is empowered to reform it. When the demagogue makes calls for modeling shit, he “place[s] the audience in the mindset of what Hannah Arendt calls homo faber, or the human being as craftsman, fabricator, artisan, or tool-user” (Crick, 2022, p21). The step justifies violence toward the architects of the bad shit. The end of achieving security and purity justifies the means, or the use of force and

violence against the out-group. Next, the in-group must remake shit, or imploring the audience “not simply to discard unwanted material or people but also to Redirect Shit toward new nationalistic aims” (Crick, 2022, p. 23). This new shit is reanimated with the aims and beliefs of the in-group, which infuses it with goodness. This entire process nullifies the hypocrisy in what the in-group calls indoctrination; the indoctrination is not a problem, but, rather, *what* is being indoctrinated.

The speakers at this event deployed this rhetorical move when they encouraged the attendees to join local school boards. They named the public education system and higher institutions of learning as the current shit that threatens to upend their hierarchies. By placing themselves in positions of authority in the public education system, the in-group can enact and restrict policies that align with their political agenda.

Each of these moves is demagogic because they discursively evade public policy, punish and scapegoat the out-group, cultivate a black-and-white framing of the world, legitimize the in-group’s biases, and create hostility towards higher education and anyone who is critical of the status quo. This political identity-building functions to define and insulate the in-group, create boundaries, close off public debate, and visit harm upon an out-group. For democracy to work, “we need to be willing to argue about what we believe, but also why we believe it” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, 190). It requires introspection and adjustment. Demagoguery, like the rhetorical moves deployed by the attendees and speakers at the Truth and Courage campaign stop, prevents introspection and adjustment. It validates repulsive ideas.

## **Demagoguery as a Comorbidity to Fascism**

Understanding how demagogic rhetorical practices are a pathway to fascism is essential because “to understand fascism is to identify its emergence, not its rule” (Gershberg & Illing, 2022, p. 58). It is important to recognize and denounce demagoguery because, as Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Italy teach us, demagoguery is an accelerant to fascism and other forms of authoritarian governance. The early twentieth century proves how polarizing public discourse ushers in totalitarian leaders, materializing from “unprecedented levels of social, political, and technological changes” (Crick, 2022, p. 15). Climate change, the advancement of artificial intelligence, economic instability, and dwindling resources all prime the ground for populist, fascist rhetors who prey on the fears of a frenzied people. Demagoguery is effective as a precursor to fascism because it creates “a mass consciousness” through language that is disseminated within the culture (McGee, 1980, p. 4). Demagogic citizenry and their rhetoric birth fascism.

Democracy is an affordance for times of stability and prosperity because “democratic institutions formalize difference and dissent, even as they stabilize and regularize governance....No one gets everything they want” (Skinnell, 2019, p. 254). Democracy is compromise, and demagogues make impossible promises to the in-group, knowing he cannot satisfy—he keeps the audience in a constant state of desire. The people “can never get what [they] desire because, if [they] did, desire would disappear” and the demagogue would lose his power (Gunn, 2007, p. 9). Democracy that deteriorates into demagoguery is an absolute necessity for the fascist since “fascism rises within and against the backdrop of the structural conditions of an open communication environment afforded by democracy” (Gershberg & Illing, 2022, p. 59).

This is how they supercharge democracies—they rhetorically give in to the audience; the fascist cannot emerge from a citizenry that is not demagogic.

Once in power, the fascist promises a return to a glorious past, or palingenesis—a rebirthing of the greatness the nation set out to be. Demagoguery as a rhetorical move “frames a situation (often ironically) so as to make people feel empowered to recapture some previous glory” (Crick, 2022, p. 28). Return to this glory requires decimation of all those who threaten the way back and failure to achieve this previous glory may make victims of the in-group. Crick explains how “fascism represents the systematic deployment of the totality of rhetorical devices that identify both the victimhood and the inborn dignity of a newly crystalized social group whose mythic rebirth requires internal and external purification through redemptive violence” (2022, p. 5). The rhetorical practices of the in-group at this event are fascist in how they deploy them, calling for strict loyalty to the in-group and annihilation of the out-group. Since the in-group’s way of life is under threat, meting out violence is justified, even if the threat against them is make-believe or mythical. All those who threaten the American family warrant destruction. Today, it is trans people. Tomorrow it is you.

### **Application**

By cultivating a better understanding of how demagogues harness emotional appeals, we can recognize when and how these types of political actors capitalize on our feelings of uncertainty. If a society is identity-driven, a demagogue flourishes by exploiting the bifurcation of public discourse. To use a tired trope: the demagogue is a symptom of the culture he/she/they inhabits; the culture props up the rhetor. He is responding to the will of the ideas circulated in the public discourse. The languages accepted and circulated by the in-group is a reflection of the

reality our culture places value on. Emerging demagogues are a reflection of ourselves. Ignoring the weight of our own demagogic tendencies closes us off to introspection and only allows the problem to persist.

In my next chapters, I apply these theories alongside Roberts-Miller's framework of demagogic citizenry. I apply her definition and the five markers she lays out as a framework for categorizing the demagogic moves the attendees and presenters employed at the Truth and Courage campaign stop. In my next chapter, I flesh out my methodology and methods of data collection.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This project examines how demagoguery, or us-vs-them rhetoric, functions as a form of political discourse and upholds white supremacy. My site of analysis is a political rally that took place in Harlingen, TX during the 2022 midterm elections. The methodology for this project builds upon Patricia Roberts-Miller's definition of demagoguery and the five markers of demagogic rhetoric, Ryan Skinnell's theory of the political conditions that allow demagogues to emerge, and Nathan Crick's theory of the political conditions that lead to fascism to examine how demagoguery acts as a function of white supremacy and how current political actors engage with these rhetorical practices in political campaigns.

In this chapter I outline my methodology for examining demagogic rhetorical practices. In my first subsection, I place Skinnell, Crick, and Roberts-Miller in conversation to explain the social conditions demagogues emerge from and highlight what their scholarship overlooks. My third section summarizes Roberts-Miller's framework, or the five markers of demagoguery, which primarily guides my research. Next, I describe my approach and positionality to examining demagoguery. Lastly, I describe the site of my analysis and my methods for analyzing the data I collected.

## **Explanation of Key Theories: Skinnell, Crick, & Roberts-Miller**

For the purposes of the project, I use the following definition of demagoguery, as outlined by Roberts-Miller:

Demagoguery is a polarizing discourse that promises stability, certainty, and escape from the responsibilities of the rhetoric through framing public policy in terms of the degree to which and means by which (not whether) the out-group should be punished and scapegoated for current problems of the in-group (2019, p.16).

It is important to note the “kairotic moment” of demagoguery, or the conditions that make demagoguery a viable means of participating in political discourse (Skinnell, 2019, p. 253). Part of understanding why particular rhetorical practices are effective is examining the whole rhetorical situation. Demagogues emerge especially well from democracies in disarray. The success of democracy hinges on our ability to enter into deliberative discourse, so when discourse shifts to identity politics rather than discussions on policy, we are primed for a demagogue to emerge. If the demagogue is successful in gaining power, he/she/they then “fundamentally seeks to undermine the institutions of democratic governance” (Skinnell, 2019, p. 250).

Authoritarians materialize during “a severe socio-economic crisis which threatens a considerable section of society with loss of status and even economic ruin” (Crick, 2022, p. 18). Along with economic upheaval, disruptions in a country’s perceived social, political, and ideological traditions encourage the people to seek out stability. Often, this stability is found in politicians who capitalize on the fears and anxieties of a culture and promise a return to normalcy.

Political scientist Abromeit notes how “rising levels of inequality, frustration and anxiety since the 1970s have created conditions much more favourable to right-wing populist movements” (2018, p. 22). A culmination of social, economic, and hierarchical disturbances in America has made an anxious society inclined to return to a stable and traditional normal, with a strongman at the helm. Because America is reckoning with her racism, income inequality, heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality, anti-worker policies, and penchant for Christian nationalism, some people are nervous about what this means for them and their place in those social structures. The upending of these hierarchies in America devolves public discourse into us-vs-them rhetoric.

To promote safety and order, politicians engage in demagogic discourse and put us on a path to fascism. The “fascists, while acknowledging these material conditions, tend to place their faith for redemption in ‘essentially irrational concepts such as authority, obedience, honor, duty, the fatherland or race’” (Crick, 2022, p. 4). Cults and in-groups emerge out of political urgency to preserve social hierarchies.

Most of the scholarship, at least U.S.-based scholarship, is white-centered: white scholars examine the demagoguery of heterosexual white rhetors. Consequently, articles that named a non-white rhetor displayed a nuanced analysis, namely on expectations of the audience, and a hesitancy to outright name the rhetor a demagogue (Hogan & Tell, 2006). Most of the material examples Roberts-Miller presented in her book *Rhetoric and Demagoguery* (2019) were white-presenting men. In my research, non-white rhetors who deployed demagogic practices were afforded more grace than their white counterparts. The tendencies of white scholars naming white demagogues is the argument that demagoguery is a function of white supremacy. Further analysis would be required in order to demonstrate a causal relationship between



authoritarianism, fascism, demagoguery, and whiteness and maleness, but for now, a correlation will have to do. As such, the scholarship does not account for how non-white demagogues uphold white supremacy.

Using Roberts-Miller's framework of the five demagogic markers is useful for this project because it supports my assertion that *anyone* can be named a demagogue, regardless of gender, race, or ethnic background. It is necessary to examine the practices of those non-white rhetors because white supremacy is a threat to a multi-racial egalitarian democracy.

### **Markers of Demagogic Citizenry**

My framework is based on the five markers Roberts-Miller outlined in her 2019 book *Rhetoric and Demagoguery*: it does not denote a hierarchy or progression (with the exception of the first rhetorical move). While these overarching rhetorical practices may encompass a myriad of other rhetorical moves, these are the outlining patterns in how demagoguery functions in political discourse: evasion of policy deliberation, punishment/reward & binary-paired terms, scapegoating and rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion.

Demagoguery relies on how well a demagogic group can frame a narrative, or an imagined myth of the country. The narrative of how and why we are in our current political turmoil trumps all other forms of deliberation. Democratic solutions require discussion, patience, and a willingness to build consensus. A populous in disarray has no time for that. Political unrest heightens the threat of existential threats and the need for feet at which to place the blame. A culture of demagoguery cuts the possibility of deliberation through “the reduction of political action to expressions of identity [and] complicates any dissent at all” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, 37).

To disagree with the ingroup is to ostracize oneself as part of the agitating outgroup. These cultures engage in identity politics and accuse others of doing exactly the same when there is disagreement. Policy is no longer a part of public discourse because all rhetorical moves are a function of identity politics. There are no shades to policy differences. Demagoguery closes debate, it is inherently anti-democratic. One either submits to the correct authority and accepts the dominant narrative or is ousted as a threat.

Demagogic citizenries adopt binary paired terms, or a discursive bifurcation. When public discourse is presented through these binary terms, there is no middle ground or broadening of the political spectrum. Democrat. Republican. Left. Right. One aligns with one side or the other. Terms exist in two ways: inclusive (to make one feel a part of something) and exclusive (to make one distanced from something). Demagogic citizenry weaponizes binary-paired terms to manipulate the in-group, color perceptions, and demarcate the borders of in- and out-groups.

As such, demagoguery promotes violence to the out-group to ensure stability and conformity; the violence is necessary because “to survive as a family, race, or nation, the supposedly malicious and harmful [outgroup has] to be eliminated” (Schmidt-Hellerau, 2020, p. 238). Authoritarianism coupled with projection “relies on condemning the out-group for what the in-group is doing,” essentially scapegoating Others for the problems that plague the culture, when the in-group may be responsible for the very problems it created (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 20).

For the in-group, there is adhering to tradition or the prospect of upending conventional ways of life, ushering in a new, terrifying, unruly social order. This new social order could

punish the current ruling in-group because the demagogic citizenry can only think in black and white: dominance/submission; punishment/reward. In this narrative, they are either the punishers or the punished and the in-group projects exactly what it is doing to the out-group.

The way Roberts-Miller outlines it, the rhetorical practice of rationality markers creates an illusion of logical thinking. In her chapter, hedging speech and conspiratorial thinking are rhetorical practices that fall under this category. Elites may practice rationality markers when they engage in demagoguery. Their ethos demands a “discourse that uses rationality markers- metadiscourse heavy in logical connector, attitude markers that suggest being calm and in control and claims of ‘facts’ and assertions of evidence-can *seem* to be ‘logical’” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 91). The impression of logical thinking justifies violence wrought upon a scapegoat. In a culture steeped in identity politics, there is little desire for justification for bringing harm to an outgroup, but rationality markers gild the grotesque behaviors anyway.

As stated earlier, demagoguery relies on a narrative. Often, the in-group will find material to support their intolerances to legitimize their biases, adopting seemingly expert language and arguments to support positions it already holds. These “politically useful [texts or “evidence”]...legitimize their political agenda as grounded in the ontic” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 130). There is no search for exploratory evidence because the truth is not necessarily important. The only important “evidence” confirms the biases of the culture. These not-so-academic texts serve to create a patina of intelligence. When the ingroup repeats the language of these materials, “these statements function as a claim to membership in the club of the epistemologically elect” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 131).

The last demagogic rhetorical marker is anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. Demonization of the institutions of learning is a crucial rhetorical practice because these institutions assail the binary-thinking of the in-group. Education and science often have no clear-cut answers or solutions to societal ills. Since public deliberation has been curtailed, the gray areas of the academic are unwelcomed in the public sphere. Demagogic societies tend to desire cognitive closure and have little patience for academic discourse that does not come to a neat consensus. Any information that does not square with the prevailing narrative of demagoguery is labeled as propaganda from the educated elite. The in-group's "rigid conventionality, that is, the unreflective attachment to social norms and dictates...produces anxiety at the appearance of any social deviation" (Rensmann, 2018, p. 31). It is not necessarily that they are ignoring evidence of progressive solutions, rather demagogic in-groups pronounce that "the truth is easily attained, easily expressed, and easily enforced" (Roberts-Miller 171).

### **Another Approach to Examining Demagoguery**

In this project, I examine demagoguery through a non-white, non-heterosexual lens. My position as a queer, Mexican American intersectional feminist aids in my examination of how demagoguery functions as an accelerant for white supremacy because my identity allows me to recognize rhetoric that is usually overlooked or omitted in the scholarship of demagoguery. Being a queer researcher enables me to perceive harmful rhetorical practices like the ones enacted by the speakers at the site of my analysis, namely anti trans rhetoric. My material observations of this research are supported by queer theorists and makes me sensitive to rhetoric that works to exclude those who do not conform to white, heteronormative social structures, structures that emanate from Christian nationalist ideals, or the belief that "God is intimately

connected with a specific construction of America as an exceptional nation” (Crockford, 2018, p. 225).

The first part of this lens is acknowledging that America is situated on hierarchies ground in white supremacy, or an “institutionalized... set of power arrangements that exists prior to the creation of contemporary political and economic institutions” (Daum, 2020, p. 444). The power structures in America work in favor of those who identify as white, heterosexual, white, and Christian. Queer people, then, create challenges to those hierarchies and the people who benefit from them. Examining how the in-group uses demagogic rhetoric to retain these hierarchies through a queer lens “leads to a radical intervention into normativity, precisely the one that rules those notions” (Domínguez-Ruvalcaba, 2011, p. 80).

While many of the scholars in the field of rhetoric and demagoguery are leveraging their privileges, my position as a non-white, queer academic intervenes in these structures because “many white Americans – including well-intentioned liberals and progressives – regularly act as obstacles to socio-cultural, institutional, and legal changes that would work to dismantle institutionalized white supremacy in the U.S.” (Daum, 2020, p. 444). My queer, non-white intersectional approach to examining demagoguery is explicitly attuned to race, gender, sexuality, and religion, and pays specific attention to how those factors are engaged with and/or ignored within demagogic spaces. Further, by using these lenses, we may get a broader sense of why Americans who are not cis-het, white, or Christian engage in demagogic rhetorical practices that intrinsically exclude them.

## Methods

My methods, or the way I investigated demagoguery, is informed by my methodology, or the theories that frame my project. For this project, I conduct a rhetorical analysis of public discourse and rhetorical practices in action during a political event in South Texas. Through this examination, I analyze how these discursive moves conform to the five rhetorical markers of demagogic discourse as accelerants of white supremacy. There are two sites I examine through rhetorical analysis: the event itself (the type of people who attended, what they were wearing, the place of the event, etc.), and the speeches of four presenters at the political event.

In October of 2022, I attended an event for the Truth and Courage Bus Tour in Harlingen, TX. This stop on the bus tour was a rally for Mayra Flores, the Republican candidate for Texas's 34th congressional district. She was one of three Latinas on the Republican ticket for the midterms in South Texas. The bus tour was put together by the Truth and Courage Political Action Committee. The following description is taken from their site:

Truth and Courage PAC was formed to Train, Equip, and RALLY conservative activists across the country to ensure that we conservatives WIN our races this November. We are not just talk, we will be showing up and helping to support conservatives on the ground so we can capitalize on the huge opportunity we have to WIN BACK AMERICA in 2022!

Choosing to conduct field observation rather than watching a video of the event is informed by my methodology because observing demagoguery in action allowed me “to experience rhetorical performance as it happens in communities;” I needed to “travel to [the] place where rhetoric happens, [and observe] people who co-produce and co-experience it”

(Endres et al., 2016, p. 1). It was important to attend the event in-person, despite my underlying fears, because I wanted to observe how members of the Republican Party deployed their messaging in real time. I did not want my site of analysis tainted by an edited video or someone else's analysis. This political rally was the most authentic setting for viewing these rhetorical practices. Observing and recording the rhetoric at this event as “naturally occurring rhetoric that is accessed, documented, and interpreted as it occurs in the moment of rhetorical invention...emphasize[s] the embodied, emplaced, and intersectional experience of rhetoric as it happens” (Endres et al., 2016, p. 6).

Acting as an unobtrusive observer, I enlisted the help of a professional photographer to take pictures of the attendees, the venue, and the speakers. I recorded speeches given by Pastor Rafael Cruz, Christian Collins, Mayra Flores, and Senator Ted Cruz on my iPhone. While I recorded, I took notes in a double-entry notebook, noting special phrases and crowd reactions to specific parts in the speeches. I felt it necessary to record the speeches for posterity because I doubted the speeches would be recorded in their entirety and preserved online. I also collected flyers that conservative candidates were handing out.

After attending the event, I opened the recordings of the speeches by Rafael Cruz, Collins, Flores, and Ted Cruz. I then screen recorded on my iPhone as the audio file played. Once the recording finished, I uploaded the video to my iCloud, downloaded it to my laptop, then uploaded the video to Microsoft Stream. After publishing the video, I turned on the auto generated captions under settings and waited a few minutes. When the captioning was completed, I downloaded the transcript as a VTT file, copied and pasted it onto a Google Doc, removed the timestamps and other miscellaneous lines. Using a pair of headphones, I relistened

to the audio recordings and made adjustments as necessary, noting instances of the reactions from the audience.

Once I finished with the transcription, I created a coding system based on the five markers of demagogic cultures: evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary terms, scapegoating and rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. I used different colors to highlight instances of these rhetorical practices in the speeches, then I copied and grouped quotes onto another document for analysis. While coding the speeches, I looked for overarching themes and common threads running through all four speeches.

For the analysis of the event, I revisited my notes and the pictures taken by my photographer and coded the rhetorical moves of the attendees and the organizers in the same manner as the speeches.

In my next chapter I present the event at The Moon Rock and analyze how the actions of the attendees and the organizers align to the demagogic markers in my methodology. In my fifth chapter, I present the individual speakers and analyze how specific moves in their speeches are demagogic. In my sixth and final chapter, I highlight the importance of labeling rhetorical practices as demagogic if we are to safeguard democracy and participation in a multi-racial egalitarian democracy in America.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE EVENT

I was unfamiliar with the venue of the event, so I looked them up on Facebook to get an idea of what to expect. Most of the posts before this event were innocuous promotional material: pictures of live music, food and drink specials, crowds enjoying a night out at the bar. However, when The Moon Rock, a bar/food truck park, shared the flier for the Truth and Courage Bus Tour, they were met with backlash and praise alike. This post had over 200 reactions and 97 comments, with some people condemning the bar as a conservative space that is acting as a political pawn. The administrator of the Facebook page was decorous at first, declaring a neutral space for all events, but eventually began responding with a snarky attitude to some of the commenters.

The October 2nd, 2022 Take Back America Bus Tour was a part of the Truth and Courage Political Action Committee's bus tour to rally Republican voters for the 2022 midterm elections. The bus tour was a part of a conservative political strategy to create a “red wave,” wherein Republican candidates win their respective districts and, then, outnumber the Democratic Party in Congress. The bus tour in Harlingen, Texas, featured four speakers: Pastor Rafael Cruz, Texas Youth Summit founder Christian Collins, Texas-34 Republican candidate Mayra Flores, and Texas Senator Ted Cruz. This chapter is a presentation and analysis of this event where I examine the demagogic rhetorical practices of the attendees and organizers at this

event. My larger project analyzes how participation in demagogic political discourse upholds oppressive white supremacist systems.

On account of its Mexican American demographic homogeneity, the Rio Grande Valley is perceived to be a close-knit and small community, but the RGV is a sprawling, diverse location. District-34 encompasses Harlingen, Weslaco, Mercedes, some other smaller cities in the Rio Grande Valley and then stretches up to Kingsville, a city that is some 100 miles north. Texas lawmakers have gerrymandered districts so much that different communities of people are forced to share a representative.

At the event, each presenter, Pastor Cruz, Christian Collins, Mayra Flores, and Senator Ted Cruz, gave speeches to a crowd of over 150 people on a Sunday afternoon at The Moon Rock, a bar right off of the expressway. The bar hosts a number of food trucks; picnic tables adorned with pink umbrellas populated the area, and an image of each of the moon phases is plastered on the exterior wall of the bar. The colorful, breezy, and laid-back atmosphere was tainted by the militarized presence of the police: officers directed traffic to the parking lots across the street, some were lined up near the entrance of the venue, and others walked around the food truck park.

A huge gold and navy-blue passenger bus is parked in front of The Moon Rock; a lion head accompanied by the words Truth and Courage PAC was plastered on all four sides of the bus; the hashtag #TakeBackAmerica runs along the back of the bus, right below a balcony of seats; an ad for Patriot Mobile, “America’s only Christian conservative phone company,” is featured to the left of the door. Numerous silver-colored signatures peppered the sides of the bus.

Further inside the park, lawn signs with Mayra Flores's smiling face up permeate the venue, and other conservative candidates mingle with the crowd, handing out flyers. Attendees mill around ordering food, looking for places to sit, or lined up in front of the stage that sat at the back of the big parking lot. Some of the patrons wear button-up shirts with the Flag of the United States pattern, others are wearing campaign shirts for Mayra Flores, and a few walk around in cowboy boots. The midmorning sun beat down as they make their way to the stage, eager to listen to the presenters.

As part of my larger project to examine the demagogic rhetorical practices enacted at this Truth and Courage Bus Tour stop, in this chapter I narrate and analyze the rhetorical practices of the event and demonstrate how those rhetorical practices are functions of a demagogic culture rooted in white supremacy,

In the following subsections, I analyze this event according to the following codes: evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary terms, scapegoating & rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. I selected these codes in accordance with the framework outlined by Patricia Roberts-Miller in her book *Rhetoric and Demagoguery*. They were collaboratively finalized with my thesis director. In each analysis subsection, my objective in analyzing these codes is to demonstrate how this group rhetorically establishes its political ideologies and actions around identity rather than policy, a practice that is anti-democratic and promotes violence on marginalized members of the out-group. I close this chapter by outlining why these practices are harmful and how they shepherd in authoritarianism.

## **Methods**

Using Patricia Roberts-Miller's framework, the five markers of demagogic citizenry, I narrate and analyze the scene at this political campaign event. I illustrate how Republican voters expressed Christian nationalist ideology at this event through clothing and signage from the attendees and the Truth and Courage bus tour organizers. I also demonstrate how these practices are anti-democratic because they close debate and policy deliberation. Acting as an unobtrusive observer, I took notes on the actions of the crowd, recorded the speeches delivered by the presenters, and asked a photographer to take pictures. I then categorized my corpus of evidence into two parts: the event and the people who attended, and the speeches performed by the four presenters. This chapter analyzes the event itself and the behavior of the attendees.

## **Evasion of Public Policy**

Groups that participate in and respond to demagoguery place high value on group performance because it signifies group allegiance to political ideologies. One's identity as part of the in-group shapes the behaviors and political stances of the individual. Everything at the bus tour stop was a rhetorical performance of in-group identity from what attendees wore to the order of the speakers. The specific identity of this group is grounded in Christian nationalism or "a political ideology in which adherents generally believe that (typically white and Protestant) Christians have a right to political domination" (Lee, 2022, p. 418). In the context, the in-group members have to adhere to a certain type of Christianity, or a 'correct' perspective: one that is fundamentalist and exclusionary. The attendees at this event postured themselves as hardworking, god-fearing, conservative Hispanics who warrant membership to the Republican party.

When I entered The Moon Rock's food truck parking lot, campaign yard signage for Mayra Flores was propped up against the picnic tables. On her poster, her long black hair sits in contrast against her red dress. Her arms are crossed in front of her, and she smiles next to the words "Re-elect Congresswoman Mayra Flores for District 34." Directly below that are the words "God, Family, Country." This framework shapes the identity of the in-group at this event: their interpretation of a fundamentalist Christian god gets top billing in their political ideology.

The order and identity of the presenters at this event also solidified the importance of Christianity for the group: Pastor Cruz spoke first to establish the group's identity as good, Christian Hispanics who maintain traditional, heteronormative social structures. He performed a prayer at the start of his speech and all of the attendees bowed their heads in performative piety. He was followed by Christian Collins, founder of Texas Youth Summit, a group aimed at indoctrinating teenagers with conservative, "Judeo-Christian" values. When Mayra Flores comes on, she starts her speech with praising god. Just like the two presenters before her, she is met with cheers and applause from the crowd any time she invokes God. Ted Cruz's speech did not contain overt themes of Christian nationalism. The rhetorical choice of moving from Rafael Cruz, the pastor, to his son, the senator, is an indication of the group's ideological prioritizing of Christianity and its vital importance in politics (it may also be a way for Ted Cruz to distance himself from the overt Christian nationalist messaging in the other speakers' speeches). The successive shift from speakers who center God in their speeches to the last speaker who does not is a discursive indication of the in-group's identity.

The identity of Christian nationalism was evident in the audience's sartorial choices, an example of which was one attendee's shirt, which featured an all-blue American flag printed vertically—the canton stars were displayed on the left-hand side and the flag was fashioned in a

manner that mimicked aged paint, almost as if someone had painted the flag free-hand. One of the stripes was replaced by a bright red crucifix. This ensemble was complemented with camouflage cargo shorts and a bucket hat. This shirt, and the individual wearing it, demonstrate the performative rhetorical moves of the in-group as Christian nationalists. Wearing the shirt is a symbol of this individual's place with the in-group.

Several people wore some iteration of the American flag on their person: American flags were on hats, on scarves, on shirts, and on umbrellas. A couple of people wore red MAGA hats and Mayra Flores had some campaign hats in the same color. The rhetorical act of shrouding themselves in the American flag is yet another marker of in-group identity performance.

The campaign signs, the order of the speakers, the man's shirt, and the several iterations of the American flag are rhetorical demonstrations of how "far-right extremists deploy...myths and symbols in service of a particular claim to what 'America' is as the mainstream Christian right, a process of negotiation of 'Americanism'" (Crockford, 2018, p. 231). For this group, you must abide by their ideals of Christianity, the brand of Christianity they believe is inherent to true Americans. This is demagogic because these narrow parameters define the group identity, not necessarily political positions; once a group frames their political positions around identity, they shut down any opportunities for deliberation, effectively shutting off a tenet of democracy. Deliberative democracy is not grounded in sound reasoning or discourse because "the validity of an argument...is determined by the identity and the person making it" (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 144). By wearing the American flag, members of the group are pledging their allegiance to the ideals of the Republican party. They represent true patriots: people who put God and country first.

## **Punishment/Reward & Binary-Paired Terms**

In-groups in demagogic cultures necessitate punishment on out-groups. Their black-and-white framing (or binary-paired ideology) of the world creates only friends or enemies, chaos or stability. This “bifurcated worldview of good and bad, with punishment related to good, and reward related to bad,” warrants punishment on the out-group; disagreeing with the in-group and its leaders rewards the out-group (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 53).

The first thing I encountered upon arriving at The Moon Rock was a heavy police presence. Several police cars with flashing lights were parked along the street next to the bar and a handful of officers were directing traffic. I was pointed to a lot across the street from the venue, where I cruised past cars garnished with Trump/Pence 2020, Trump: Make America Great Again!, and Blue Lives Matter bumper stickers. When I found a place to park, I had to take several breaths to steady myself; I lifted my hand and widened my eyes at my visible trembling.

A police presence might normally prompt feelings of safety and security, but with recent national focus on brutality at the hands of police, they only heightened my hesitation to attend this political campaign stop. Their presence represented the rhetorical reification of punishment; the officers clad in blue uniforms, POLICE vests, and reflective sunglasses served as ideographs for this in-group’s affinity for law, order, and authoritarianism. Rhetorical theorist Michael McGee defines ideographs as “symbolist constructs [with a] focus on media of consciousness, on the discourse that articulates and propagates common beliefs” (McGee, 1980, p. 15). In demagogic cultures, the in-group uses symbolic language, or, in this case, the physical presence of the police, to signify ideological paradigms, one of which is the protection of the binary way they view the world: you are either with us or against us. For the right-wing in-group in

American politics, the police act as an ideograph to symbolize an embodiment of law and order. The police are the enforcers of maintaining hierarchies and doling out punishment to those who would upset the natural order. The in-group is insulated from threats, or even *perceived* threats, from out-groups.

There may have been any number of reasons the police were at this event: perhaps the venue took precautionary steps because of the controversy they created online with their Facebook posts announcing the event. In this case, the heavy police presence served as an ideograph for perceived victimhood. Perhaps the organizers thought that the bus tour stop would be a target for counter protest. Perhaps they worried about violence. Or perhaps the in-group needs state-sponsored violence to execute their new Christian nationalist world order.

The perception of threats “helps [the in-group] imagine themselves as victims of a political tragedy centered around the displacement of ‘real America’ from the political center” (Johnson, 2017 p. 230). They create a culture of victimhood within the group because of the constant assault from the out-group. Crying out against cancel-culture and supposed limitations on free speech are other examples of how they perform victimhood. This group and the police are kindred spirits: in their eyes, they have become powerless groups because of an overpowered out-group, and the only way to win back power and maintain hierarchies is to punish the outgroup. This narrative of victimhood and imagined threats from external groups justifies violence, and there is no better group to dispense brutality than the police.

All of my aforementioned arguments could be easily dismissed if the police were there solely to direct traffic, but there was no shortage of officers inside the food truck park. Several cops outlined the parameters of the event, oscillating between patrolling, laughing amongst each



other, conversing with attendees, or chatting with the event organizers. Although some of these exchanges were not outwardly menacing, the cool reflections off of the sunglasses of these officers suspended their humanity.

For the duration of the speeches, I stood in one place recording on my phone and making notes in a notebook. On occasion I looked up and saw the cops slowly walking around the parking lot, keeping a general eye on the happenings of the crowd and the speakers. I did not see them clap or make reactions to what was being said on stage, not even at the times the presenters effused affection for the police. However, I did make note that one officer was perpetually fixed behind me. Whenever I turned my head to scan the crowd, I noticed him in my peripheral vision, hands hooked on his vest and facing forward. He was one of the only officers anchored to one spot, but his reflective sunglasses prevented me from seeing what he was watching. I was not standing particularly close to the stage, nor were there any materials around me that needed safeguarding. I assumed he was there to keep an eye on me.

After the speeches, the event organizers invited everyone there to sign the Truth and Courage bus parked in front of the bar. Members of the Truth and Courage PAC herded attendees to the bus and looked on as silver Sharpies were passed around. I abstained from signing because one, it felt and looked silly; two, it was clearly a performative action of in-group loyalty; and three, I found the rhetoric of this event harmful and dangerous. The navy and gold bus was a way for the PAC to put on a facade of grassroots movement and getting members of the crowd to sign was a ceremonial act of pledging devotion to the Republican Party.

As people signed the bus, all the officers made their way to the side of the building that faced the street and dutifully lined up to take pictures with each of the presenters. After the

pictures, the speakers shook each officers' hand, thanking them for helping. In my observations, other than corralling the attendees to parking spots, the police did not execute any other actions for the event. However, their presence, and their sheer number, demonstrate how, according to McGee, the ideograph is a way to "control the masses by creating, maintaining, and manipulating a mass consciousness suited to perpetuation of the existing order" (2018, p. 14). The attendance of the police, and their numbers, evince their place in the hierarchy. The in-group is complicit in these "politics of submission to the *appropriate* authority; a relationship ground in fear" because the police act as an enforcement of the political ideologies they hold dear (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 55). In this case, the presence and support of the police, and, by extension, the border patrol (Mayra Flores is married to a border patrol agent), is a performance of in-group membership and it is demagogic, as it signifies the punishment and reward tendencies of the in-group.

Being in a space that, for some reason, warranted such an inordinate number of officers, I often felt intimidated by the presence of the police. When my photographer and I left The Moon Rock, one of the first questions she asked me was, "Were you being followed, too?" When I asked what she meant, she said one of the police officers was shadowing her the whole time we were there. She did not carry any of the same identifying media paraphernalia as the other photographers who were there, so she was likely perceived as an outsider. I, too, was likely labeled in this same manner since I was the only one taking notes and scowling; this may explain the officer installed behind me during the presentations. I clearly did not agree with what was being said on the stage or the general political sentiments of this crowd.

After labeling us as outsiders and following us, the police solidified the in-group's participation "in...domination/submission; [members of the in-group] submit to the will of those

higher in the hierarchy, but participates (through proxy control) in the in-groups's domination of the out-group" (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 58). By monitoring us, the police acted as a control on our actions. It might be the job of the police to ascertain threats, but we were there taking notes and pictures, not to inflict harm to anyone. The police presence, along with the Blue Lives Matter stickers on the cars in the parking lot, and the narrative of victimhood fit into how political scientist Robert O. Paxton defines fascism:

fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion" (2004, p. 218).

At this event, the in-group's victimhood is a rhetorical move that aligns with fascism or other schemes of authoritarianism. And the only way to reclaim power is to punish all others who are not in line with the dominant group.

### **Scapegoating and Rationality Markers**

The next markers of demagogic cultures, scapegoating and rationality markers, were more readily present in the speeches given by the orators at the event, which I present and analyze in my next chapter. However, the attendees did display some of these tendencies in their actions during the speeches and their clothing.

Scapegoating happens when the in-group blames an out-group for the problems that are currently plaguing the in-group. Because of the demagogic nature of politics in the county,

identifying with the Republican Party intrinsically makes the Democratic Party the enemy. By attending this campaign stop organized by a Republican PAC, the attendees inherently scapegoated the Democratic Party for the current problems ailing the country and it serves as a testament to their “in-group loyalty and purity” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 76). Through their allegiance to the red party, they must lay the problems of the country at the feet of the blue party.

One attendee wore a shirt that said, “I identify as non-Bidenary,” a play on current discourses on gender and non-binary conforming individuals. According to the in-group, the Democratic Party is responsible for any and all transgressions against traditional social hierarchies and must be stopped; this party is scapegoated for pushing gender dysphoria and harming children, so the in-group has to punish them by voting them out.

Whenever the presenters criticized current members of the opposed party, the crowd responded positively. When Senator Cruz made a joke about Vice President Harris, the crowd howled with laughter. In fact, they responded just as positively whenever he made President Biden or other Democratic leaders (like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) out to be bumbling buffoons. Voting them out and scapegoating members of the Democratic Party is a performance of in-group identity.

Finding rationality markers, or “discourse that uses...logical connectors, attitude markers that suggest being calm and in control,” in the audience is outside my methodology for this project (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 91). I did not engage in conversation with the attendees because I was there to observe as unobtrusively as possible. Talking with members of this crowd at events like this might be an opportunity for a social sciences project.

## Legitimizing Biases

The Christian nationalist rhetoric of this in-group implies an inherent “politically useful [texts or evidence]...that legitimizes their political agenda as grounded in the ontic” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 130). American fundamentalist Christians have used the bible to validate their biases and establish hierarchies for a long time, like upholding slavery and proving that people of color belong on the lower rungs of social hierarchies. The Christian nationalist ideologies that form the identity of this group also function as a way for them to legitimize their biases. This group’s Christianity is weaponized to relegate Othered groups to second class citizenship based on the in-group’s perception of divinely inspired hierarchies, or God-given strict social structures. These prescribed structures give them license to discriminate and, when necessary, punish the out-group.

The Christian Bible, or this group’s interpretation of it, gives them carte blanche to impose several types of hierarchies onto the rest of America, all of which are grounded in white supremacist, Western, imperialist ideologies. The in-group uses “circular and self-reinforcing kind of reasoning” to legitimize their political positions (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 129). According to the logic enacted throughout this event, Christianity is morally superior and good, thus, Christians are morally superior and good, so “Christians have a right to political domination” (Lee, 2022, p. 418). Because of the in-group’s identity as good Hispanic Christians, they have clear and logical reasoning for believing in gender dichotomies—dichotomies grounded in religious doctrines. Those who do ascribe to these strictly defined and divinely inspired hierarchies belong to the out-group and, thus, cannot think logically; consequently, they deserve to be punished.

To them, enforcing the heteronormative structures is their way of being a good Christian. Electing Republican candidates who enact legislation that punishes out-groups (like anti trans, anti LGBTQIA, and anti-abortion laws) is a rhetorical upholding of the group's identity. Current legislation enacted by conservative representatives prevents "expanding notions of Americanism beyond Judeo-Christian identities" and preserves hierarchies favored by the in-group, as decreed by their foundational text (Lee, 2022, p. 426).

As a candidate for the Republican party, Flores upholds these hierarchies when she proudly flaunts her status as a mother; she adheres to heteronormative gender roles prescribed to her by birth, and thus, by God. Accordingly, the crowd displays the most invigoration when she and Collins highlight her motherhood. Her conservative identity supersedes her identities as a Hispanic and a Mexican-born woman because the latter parts of her are being used to advance the GOP's agenda.

Using religious doctrine to legitimize the in-group's biases is demagogic because it warrants harm to the out-group. It gives the dominant group permission to visit violence on outsiders. It does not allow for deliberation because the in-group believes their biases are justified.

### **Anti-Intellectualism & the Appeal to Expert Opinion**

One of the final markers in Roberts-Miller's framework is anti-intellectualism but this was inconclusive at this event. The attendees did not wear apparel, hold signs, or shout things that I would categorize under this marker. Not finding data that fits within this marker validates the framework of my presentation and analysis; I am not going out of my way to demonize the

attendees or organizers at this event, nor am I forcing data to conform to my framework. The attendees at this event did not present rhetoric that fits under this marker.

### **Conclusion**

The attendees and the organizers at this Truth and Courage campaign stop engaged in demagogic rhetoric by performing in-group identity and evading policy deliberation, advocating for punishment for the out-group, scapegoating the Democratic Party, and using the bible to legitimize their biases against non-Christians. In my capacity as an unobtrusive observer, I still impacted the scene because I did not perform in-group identity: police officers were following me and my photographer. I was labeled an outsider and a potential threat to the attendees because of their demagogic nature to expel outsiders.

Researching these types of events is important because the election of GOP candidates has far-reaching consequences, many of which are already experiencing: the fall of Roe v Wade, anti-trans legislation, anti-LGBTQIA legislation, heightened racial tensions, book bans, and the limiting of what content gets included in the curriculum. Demagogic rhetoric that upholds Christian nationalist, white supremacist hierarchies has impacts that are harmful and it is important to label these rhetorical practices as such.

In my next chapter I apply this same framework to rhetorically analyze the speeches given by Pastor Rafael Cruz, Christian Collins, Mayra Flores, and Senator Ted Cruz. I am organizing my analysis chapters this way because it aligns with scholarship on demagogues and how they emerge from the cultures they pander to. The attendees, the location of the event, and how it was organized all provide influence on the rhetorical actions of these speakers.

## CHAPTER V

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECHES

The October 2nd, 2022 Truth and Courage Rally in Harlingen featured four speakers: Pastor Rafael Cruz, Texas Youth Summit founder Christian Collins, Texas-34 Republican candidate Mayra Flores, and Texas Senator Ted Cruz. Each presenter gave speeches to a crowd of over 150 people on a Sunday afternoon at The Moon Rock, a bar right off of the expressway which houses numerous food trucks in the parking lot. The midmorning sun beat down on the crowds as they made their way to a stage situated near the back of the parking lot, adjacent to a park. The Truth and Courage PAC was laying the groundwork for a red wave in the November 2022 midterm elections and looked to galvanize conservatives in the Rio Grande Valley.

Political actors are at the mercy of the audience, “goaded by the desire-driven, psychological structures of neurosis, namely, obsession and hysteria...claiming to bring order to chaos, thereby representing strength, resolve, and absolute autonomy” (Gunn, 2007, p. 6). The populist politician and their supporters create a symbiotic relationship: the politician promises stability and protection at the behest of an audience inundated with fear, fear that has been fomented by the political actor. They weave narratives of a crumbling society, constructing a justification for calls for a strongman to bring order. The politician benefits from this relationship in securing power through what Skinnell calls a supercharged democracy, in “attempt to turn democracy against itself...[by] supercharging the will of the demos” (Skinnell, 2019, p. 254). After securing



power, the populist politician works to delegitimize democratic institutions, establishing an authoritarian, fascist form of government.

Speaking events like this one at The Moon Rock are the perfect medium for demagogues who work within democracies. He works to ingratiate himself to the audience, telling them what they want to hear to earn their trust and votes. The presence of this audience functions to validate the speaker and whatever claims he makes; the demagogue effectively supercharges democracy: with the power of the people behind him, the politician can later claim “democratic institutions needed to be suspended and/or destroyed” to preserve both the in-group and the country at large (Skinnell, 2019, p. 256). These political rallies are valid sites of analysis because they are samples of larger cultural demagogic tendencies; the ideologies and out-groups they choose to target are indicative of the ideologies and out-groups the audience obsesses over: these speakers reflect the prejudices of the audience. Speaking events like these prime the installation of authoritarians.

I am not labeling the practices of these rhetorics as demagogic simply because I disagree with them politically; in this chapter I demonstrate how their rhetorical practices align with demagogic markers, namely evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary-paired terms, scapegoating & rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. Further, I outline how their rhetorical practices are detrimental to democracy and uphold white supremacy. In this chapter, I analyze the rhetorical practices each of these rhetors employed at the rally and demonstrate how their rhetorical practices are accelerants for white supremacy. I preface this analysis to “distinguish carefully between rhetorical and political definitions of the term ‘demagogue’” (Hogan & Tell, 2006, p. 480). The purpose of this project

is not to label any of these singular speakers as demagogues, rather it is to illustrate how their rhetorical practices align with current understandings of demagogic moves.

Instead of analyzing each speech as a singular entity, I am organizing this chapter thematically, or by the demagogic markers outlined in my methodology, connecting common themes/arcs that are present in all of the orator's speeches. Christian Collins's speech may seem like an outlier because he only spoke for a few minutes in comparison to the other presenters, and he was there to promote the October 22nd Texas Youth Summit event. However, he echoes the same sentiments as the other three speakers, thus solidifying the common thread among the four rhetors.

First, I present the speeches and the speakers: what they wore, their demeanor on stage, how the crowd responded to them, and how well they spoke. Then, I analyze these speeches according to the following codes: evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary terms, scapegoating and rationality markers, legitimizing biases, anti-intellectualism & the appeal to expert opinion. These codes were selected as part of my framework, which is based on Patricia Roberts-Miller's markers of demagogic cultures and were collaboratively finalized with my thesis director. In each analysis subsection, my objective in analyzing these codes is to illustrate how the speakers at this political rally engaged in demagogic rhetorical tendencies, which may emanate from white supremacy.

### **Descriptive Analysis of the Speakers**

Before the senior Cruz takes the stage, a member of the event staff leads the group into a recitation of the pledge of allegiance. He briefly describes who Rafael Cruz is and waves him on stage. Dressed in a blue blazer adorned with a flag pin and pocket square, a plaid shirt, dress

pants and loafers, the pastor is met with applause. He greets the crowd and immediately lowers his head to lead the group in a prayer. For most of his speech, Cruz personifies the fiery preacher, angry and steadfast in how he characterizes Hispanics<sup>4</sup> and their values. His secular and identity-based political message is enveloped in a preacher's clothing, effectively sealing the two realms (the secular and sacred) together. He clenches his fist at key moments in his presentation and, at one point, stomps his foot and bares his teeth. Halfway through his speech, he switches from English and speaks in Spanish-stumbling at first, then gaining momentum the more he speaks. At the end of his speech, he introduces his close friend, Christian Collins.

Collins is charming in his blue button-up and belted jeans, effecting an effortless, business casual style. His five o'clock shadow, smile, and easy speaking voice is almost disarming. Anytime he comments on the conservative values of Hispanics, or praises Mayra Flores for being a mother, the crowd cheers him on. His speech is brief, but he touches on a lot of the same themes the other speakers do in that short window: the importance of encouraging conservative Hispanics to be more active in politics, denouncing trans existence as degenerate, and emboldening evangelicalizing the youth. He brings on Mayra Flores.

Mayra walks on to Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." wearing sunglasses and a baseball cap on top of her long, dark, straight hair, which contrasts with her bright red button up shirt. The crowd whistles and applauds her when she shouts, "God bless America!" She garners most of her applause when she highlights her motherhood, decries the harms being

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<sup>4</sup> The word 'Hispanic' was coined in the 1980's to coalesce all Latinos under one umbrella, an attempt to conform the marginalized into one cohesive group. The U.S. homogenized a group that was historically marginalized on its (the U.S.'s) own terms, and it adopted a word rooted in imperialism. The term Hispanic acknowledges the shared Spanish language, and language spread through colonialism. The United States constructed an identity for a group that had already formed one for itself. This naming stripped Mexican descendants of their Indigenous roots, or their mestizo (Alarcón, 1990).

wrought on the children (by pop culture and schools who, in her eyes, promote gender dysphoria), and criticizes her opponent, Representative Vicente Gonzalez (Representative Gonzalez was forced out of Texas District 15 because of gerrymandering practices in 2020 redistricting). She stumbles through some of her talking points and does not seem as comfortable on the mic as Senator Cruz who follows her.

Senator Ted Cruz saunters on stage to Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" wearing a flag pin on a plaid blazer, jeans, cowboy boots, and sunglasses. He speaks twice as long as Flores and his father, probably because he is the better speaker of his three counterparts. His speech sounds much more measured and rehearsed; he exudes an obnoxious confidence while telling jokes that resonate with the crowd who laugh along and shout back affirmative responses like one audience member howls, "PREACH" to some of Cruz's talking points. This exchange between the audience member and Cruz exemplifies the melding of the religious and the secular for the in-group; because the messaging is religious in content, the audience member is obligated to respond in kind. For most of his time on stage, Cruz seems a little distant from the audience, not really responding or following up to things the audience cheers at him, save for one moment when he seems to respond to my act of taking notes. Toward the end of his speech, I make a note of when he encourages these voters to "vote ten, eleven times at the voting booth." He looks in my direction and throws up a hand and says, "Now before the journalists write about me telling you all to commit voter fraud" and proceeds to qualify his statement.

In the consequent subsections, I lay out the rhetorical moves these speakers make in their speeches and analyze how they align with the aforementioned specific demagogic markers while explaining the more specific discursive practices that fall under those markers.

## **Evasion of Public Policy**

Demagogic cultures shy away from nuances in actionable policies, shifting public discourse to “performances and assertions of identity” (Roberts-Miller, 2016, p. 35). The individuals must align their value system with the in-group, or they are cast aside as traitors. This in-group engages in rhetorical practices that align with Christian nationalism, or, as Lee defines it:

a belief that the United States is a Christian nation where laws and policies should be based on Christian morals and that god-fearing citizens are best suited to uphold democratic values (2022, p. 418).

Pastor Rafael Cruz establishes the group identity with the rhetorical move of opening with a prayer and extolling the glory of God, continuing in the American rhetorical canon of infusing religious oratory in a political setting. He asserts that Hispanics are God-fearing Christians who, like Christian nationalists, “tend to believe in moral establishmentarianism, the idea that a democratic government has an obligation to codify morality because citizens cannot be trusted to behave morally on their own” (Lee, 2022 p. 419). Flores, Collins, and Senator Cruz reaffirm this in-group identity in each of their presentations by using the same Christian nationalist rhetoric.

Halfway into Rafael Cruz’s speech, the pastor code-switches to Spanish and further outlines the characteristics that make up a good South Texas Hispanic: conservative, pro-life, family-oriented, hardworking, and hesitant to accept government handouts. All of these buzzwords function as dog whistles for not only American capitalist ideals, but also as ideographs, or symbolic language rife with political doctrine, for right-wing political ideologies.

This assessment is met with cheers and applause from those in attendance. Later, he cements the Hispanic identity with American values when he says, “El pueblo Hispano asido fundamental en los valores Americanos,” declaring the intrinsic linkage between Hispanics and American conservatism.

Collins echoes these feelings and demonstrates why it is important for Republicans to reach out to Hispanics voters: “Hispanics are the future of the Republican Party.” Both Cruz men and Collins use the term Hispanic much more readily in their speeches as opposed to Mexican or Latino. Pastor Cruz uses the word thirteen times, Senator Cruz five times, and Collins twice. Neither Rafael Cruz or Collins use the term Latino or Mexican.

Senator Cruz does use the term Latina, but only when referring to the three “smart, beautiful, passionate, fiery Latinas” on the Republican ticket. Here, Ted Cruz invokes “a gendered Latinidad [by portraying the candidates as]...opinionated, fiery, and easily angered” (Mora, 2019, p. 141). He reduces them to caricatures of Latinas instead of serious women who are running for congressional seats.

Through this rhetorical move of calling the crowd Hispanics, Cruz et al subtly link the audience to their Spanish roots, divorce them from the possible Indigenous parts of their identity, and solidify their status as conservative Christians who share the same values as American conservatives, and thus the Republican Party. This makes the audience feel both like a special group as well as part of a larger group of crusaders working in the name of God to protect the evangelical myth of American exceptionalism. Rhetorically, this move is effective because it grants the audience membership to the in-group by way of a white supremacist identity, without explicitly intimating whiteness. It is demagogic because it separates these Hispanics from their

Mexican/Latino counterparts. The “Judeo-Christian<sup>5</sup> and conservative values,” as Collins calls them, are inherent to the Hispanic identity. Their identity-building relies on mythmaking and “the belief that the United States is a Christian nation where laws and policies should be based on Christian morals and that God-fearing citizens are best suited to uphold democratic values” (Lee, 2022, p. 418).

Unfortunately for Flores and her supporters, although the mythology of a Christian America “was part of establishing a national identity in the early nineteenth century,” Hispanics and Catholics are excluded from God’s chosen people in this flavor of Christian nationalism (Crockford, 2018, p. 231). The usage of this rhetoric is perhaps a response “to uncertainty of any kind by reminding [them]selves of in-group membership” (Roberts-Miller, 2016, p. 40). Although Hispanics are racially white, their ethnic identity strips away their white social capital, more so if they claim Mexican heritage. Christianity provides an additional safeguard: by adopting the Christian nationalist cloak, Republican Hispanics are allowed a seat with the hegemony.

Flores and Ted Cruz solidify this identity about Hispanics and conservatives in their respective speeches: Cruz states Hispanics “are fundamentally conservative. What are the values we believe in? Faith. Family. Patriotism.” Cruz creates the narrative of a feel-good God who creates a divine hierarchy for America—one that conservatives are tasked with preserving. However, Christian nationalism is fundamental in its exclusion and out-grouping; Lee explains how “abortion access, same-sex marriage, and non-mainstream faith traditions” are branded as “violation[s] of God’s will [and] a rejection of the core values of the United States” (2022, p.

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<sup>5</sup> Theologian Arthur Cohen asserts that the term Judeo-Christian gained momentum in the 1950’s during the Red Scare to unite American Christian and Jewish people against a common atheist enemy. It emerged as a political alliance, not a religious one (1971).

427). Failure to comply with the in-group's rigid definitions of Christianity is grounds for ousting.

Flores reiterates that Hispanics are "people of God." In fact, she devotes almost a third of her speech speaking on the importance of keeping their version of a Christian God in politics:

I was raised to always put God and family first and I'm not willing to put that aside for their political party...we stand for our values and that we are not afraid to speak the word of God. People are constantly telling me God doesn't belong in politics. Are you kidding me? This is his planet. This is his universe. He belongs everywhere. And I will not allow them to shame me or allow them to shame you for our belief. I want to make sure that I am right with God. I want to be sure that I have eternity. This is temporary. We don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow. But we got to make sure that we got things right with God and that everything that we do, we do it through prayer.

She insists that Christian values belong in American politics, advocating for a theocratic authoritarian type of government.

To their credit, there are a few instances when these speakers name specific policies and government actions that impact the voters. For example, Flores criticizes the "total of \$60 billion to Ukraine," but stops short of naming specific policies that affect people in the Rio Grande Valley. Ted Cruz points at the border crisis as an example of the harms wrought on South Texans, but that is more of a scapegoating action (which I elaborate on later in this paper). Part of their strategy, as demagogic actors, is to weave narratives of chaos and destruction, all of which happened at the hands of the out-group, without offering any solutions. Their only goal is to incite fear and anger in people.



All four rhetors engage in the demagogic practice of evading policy discourse in favor of Identity politics. In their view, if you identify as a Christian, then you MUST vote Republican. To vote Democrat is a betrayal of God and family values. You are not a real Latino/Hispanic. Voting for Flores is a rhetorical demonstration of one's allegiance to the in-group. However, Mexican Americans are only begrudgingly being accepted into the fold to advance white supremacy narratives. Their membership in this group is conditional.

### **Punishment/Reward & Binary-Paired Terms**

In a demagogic society, one of the ways the in-group performs group identity is to adhere to strict binary, black and white terms, "paired terms that, on the whole, present a bifurcated worldview" (Roberts-Miller, 2016, p. 52). Acceptance of these terms are demagogic and anti-democratic because they terminate deliberation: you are either on our side or with the enemy. This horse-blinders perception of the world applies to everything, and the rhetors at the Truth and Courage Rally engage in this practice in two ways: by vilifying a strawman "Left" and using anti-trans rhetoric.

The speakers at this rally use the terms "leftist" and "Marxist" as terministic screens to create clear boundaries of membership to the in-group. As Burke asserts, "any given terminology is a reflection of reality, but its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality" (Burke, 1966, p. 115). Flores, Rafael Cruz, Collins, and Senator Cruz use these terms to frame the out-group as extremists who do not embody American values, even if that assertion is not ground in reality. It is the reality of the in-group.

Pastor Cruz constructs the strawman of the “rampant Marxist” in office with terministic screens as does Collins when he colors the agenda of the Democrats as “radical...leftist...distorting the minds of our youth.” None of the speakers explain how President Biden is Marxist nor do they define what actions of his are radical: he simply *is*. By labeling the president as a Marxist, he is excluded from in-group membership and is unquestionably labeled an outsider.

In their condemnation of “Marxism,” or any notions of socialism or community-building, they reveal that American values require the upholding of capitalism. While President Biden and current members of the Democratic Party do not seem to threaten this paradigm, conservatives must deflect this reality with their terministic screens so that Democrats *are* perceived to be threats. The rhetorical practice of labeling non-conservatives as radical and leftist ratchets the culture further to the right and strengthens the undercurrent of white supremacy. As Senator Cruz says, “These crazy woke leftists...[have] no resemblance to our community.” By labeling the other side with the term “leftist,” Cruz demarcates the reality of the in-group.

This binary-paired tactic also reveals the inherent demagogic nature of politics in America. The two-party system in America is detrimental to her citizens: if there is no middle ground, everyone on the other side is an adversary. This system necessitates the usage of demagogic rhetorical practices if one side is to win, entrenching its citizens in deeper holes of political identities. This is best exemplified when Collins uses the word “patriot” as a synonym for conservatives; according to him, and the reality constructed by the in-group, conservatives are the true upholders of American values; all others are enemies.

A material example of how the binary-paired rhetorical practice is employed by these speakers is their vilification of trans people, or people who do not identify by the sex they are assigned at birth. This type of rhetoric “subject[s] trans people to behavioral and bodily norms weaponized against others who defy white heteropatriarchal strictures” (Hsu, 2022, p. 63). This iteration of binary-paired terms demands rigid conformity to gender roles and identities. All four of the speakers at this rally galvanize their audience against trans people because they are an easy target. People across the political spectrum, and even members of the LGBTQIA community, unite in their discomfort, distrust, and disgust with trans existence.

The anti-trans rhetoric cycles between the protection of the conventional family unit, protection of children, and protection of traditional, Christian, Western understandings of gender expression. Rafael Cruz and Flores engage in these practices most frequently.

Cruz makes a mockery of the fluidity of gender, a rhetorical tactic that ridicules the experiences and nuances in non-heteronormative gender identities. He states the following:

Estamos viendo que le dicen al niño, no, no sabemos si eres hembra o varón, en realidad no hay dos géneros, hay 75 géneros. ¿Has cambiado un pañal alguna vez? No es difícil saber si es niño o niña. Pero no, hoy en día estamos viendo que los niños están siendo a propósito confundidos en las escuelas. Estamos destruyendo- están destruyendo nuestros valores fundamentales.

Flores suggests that trans people and their allies are attempting to usurp motherhood from women and, thus, are a threat to traditional, white femininity. She also likens the trans experience to a virus, suggesting it is an entity that spreads and infects children. Flores:

Their biggest frustration from the left? Is to have someone that stands strong on God and family values. They want to destroy that. They want to take that away from us. They want us to believe that men can get pregnant. You cannot get pregnant. And I will not allow them to take that away from us. I am a women. [sic] I am a mother. And I won't allow them to take that away from me or us mothers. I won't allow them to want to change a four-year-old, a five-year-old, six-year-old boy into a girl. That type of ideology doesn't go here in South Texas.

Both Flores and Cruz employ expected tropes when talking about trans-ness: they oversimplify the trans experience to easily understood definitions of gender-black and white borders that should not be crossed.

Collins echoes this sentiment when he says, “Gender dysphoria” is being “pushed” on to American youth.

Anti-trans rhetoric is a performance of the group’s identity: these binary-paired terms cement Western and Christian ideas of gender conformity. By propping trans people as one of the main out-groups, the four speakers frame “transgender identity as an attack on children and the ‘American family[;]’ anti-trans activists have used trans topics to shore up protections for white, middle-class respectability and gender norms” (Hsu, 2022, p. 63). Trans people are antithetical to traditional, truncated understandings of gender hierarchies and expectations; to claim that one’s body is a mistake is an agitation against God. This rhetoric is an extension of the in-group’s Christian nationalist identity in that “Christian nationalists fear the moral decay of society and these anxieties often intersect with desires to maintain patriarchal, heteronormative,

nativist, and white supremacist values” (Lee, 2022 p. 419). To maintain the status quo, the simple, traditional understanding of gender and the roles we are assigned at birth, means to vote red.

The punishment and reward move is inherent in the acceptance and adherence of the binary-paired terms; the speakers imply that if the audience of Hispanics uphold conservative values, like participating in the punishment of trans people through legislation, the conservative movement promises that Hispanics will be rewarded with membership with the in-group. This, of course, is a long-storied tactic of demagogues and fascists: the in-group shrinks more and more as undesirable members are picked off, after they have served their purpose in offing the more despicable refuse in the out-groups.

### **Scapegoating and Rationality Markers**

In this section, I extend the argument that the anti-trans rhetoric advanced by these speakers also functions as a rationality marker, another rhetorical practice of a demagogic culture. Rhetorical rationality markers “[claim] to be acting on the basis of facts and data,” biology in this case, but is it “dehumanization...and demagoguery” (Roberts-Miller, 2016, p. 76). Scapegoating and rationality markers are demagogic because they are a move to insulate the in-group against any criticism. Scapegoating holds the out-group accountable for the ills the in-group is experiencing; rationality markers function to frame the in-group as logical and reasonable, and it eases the people into more extreme politics.

Flores, Collins, and both Cruz men flout the shifting science protocols of COVID, but readily accept the supposed science behind sex and gender. To them, it is only logical to whittle gender identity and expression down to the basic principles of biology: you are born as a female or male and should adhere to those dichotomies prescribed by God.

Senator Cruz typifies this argument when he mentions language: “You look at the Spanish language, you have Latino and Latina. Every damn word in Spanish is masculine or feminine and what do these leftists want to do? Erase it all and stick an X on it.” Here, he is referring to the term Latinx- a term that did not necessarily originate with any sort of *American* leftist ideology to categorize Latinos, but instead on social media forums in 2004. The term germinated from a desire to confront the binary limitations of Latin@, and universities and scholars adopted the term around 2015 (Aja & Scharrón-del Río). Cruz’s rhetorical posture functions twofold: it justifies the logical condemnation of people who reject binary-paired terms of gender expression, and it functions to establish his rhetorical practices as ground in reality. According to Cruz, language and science follow logical rules, so people should, too. He applies the genders in language to argue against the existence of trans people; the genders in language apply to all of reality-it is evidence that trans rhetoric is made up. Science, and language for that matter, is hardly ever black and white, but it is easy to accept science when it is neatly packed into two, discernible, distinct boxes. Their rhetorical practices and “claims to facticity, realism, common sense, and even science” are obvious guises for anti trans sentiments (Roberts-Miller, 2016, p. 158).

Flores deploys another rationality marker when she implores her audience to do their research and “read the bill[s]” proposed in congress. By encouraging her voters to read notoriously difficult legal language, she foments the veneer of an informed voter, voters who believe they can speak intelligently about the intricacies of the legal system. She also suggests that the bills are inherently wrong, and the audience will come to that logical conclusion if they read the bill. Lawmakers themselves really read the bills, so this tactic is deployed to elicit a response from the crowd.

Additionally, all the speakers scapegoat the “left” for the problems faced by their audience, namely for two problems: inflation and the border crisis, implicating policies enacted by Biden. As Roberts-Miller asserts, demagoguery relies on tried-and-true rhetorical practices. Here, Flores and the other speakers engage in the traditional shifting of blame for the consequences of Republican policies. They appear to empathize with the voters about the “skyrocketing” cost of goods “across the country.” Flores displays concern for Brownsville residents “struggling to pay...bills or rent or mortgage.”

In the words of Ted Cruz, “And then there's our southern border.” The rhetoric about the border crisis is yet another performance of in-group identity. By scapegoating crimes on an “open border,” Cruz vilifies Mexico for supposed upticks in crime rates. He uses stereotypes of Mexico's cartel violence to shift blame away from the crowd who might have Mexican heritage. In voting for the conservative party, the audience demonstrates the differences between themselves and the Mexicans on the other side and Mexican Americans who recognize, and embrace, all parts of their identity.

Collins has already made it clear that the Republican party views Hispanics as the future of the party, so these Hispanics need to distance themselves from their cousins across the physical and legal divide. The rhetorical act of voting Republican proves how markedly different they are from any family across the border, solidifying their status as part of the in-group: they are logical and violence-free, unlike the out-group. Their Mexican roots are purified by the American values and identity they have adopted.

## Legitimizing Biases

Demagogic cultures tend to adopt seemingly expert language and arguments to support positions they already hold. They prop up pseudoscience, technical-sounding vocabulary, and other forms of evidence to validate their views and biases. In her framework, Roberts-Miller cites the adoption of the book *Passing of the Great Race* by white supremacists as an example of this move. For the white supremacist, racism is inherently correct because it is based on research: there is a clear hierarchy that places white men at the top. At this Truth and Courage event, the speakers do not cite literature; instead, they use Cuba and Venezuela as symbols of failed socialist/communist states. These countries serve as material examples to legitimize their bias against those structures; Cuba and Venezuela are “politically useful [texts or evidence]...that legitimizes their political agenda as grounded in the ontic” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 130). These two countries are clear-cut evidence that communism, or at least the way this audience perceives it, is a threat to American core values of rugged individualism and capitalism; it is a fact that socialism is not a sound system of governance.

The speakers at this rally invoke Cuba and Venezuela as ideographs, or, according to rhetorical theorist Michael McGee, placeholders for larger political philosophies-symbols dense with meaning. These ideographs serve as an epideictic function in that they work to teach the audience what they ought to value or, in this case, what they should condemn (1980). The ideograph, built on Burke’s terministic screens, is a thought-, conversation-, nuance-, and deliberation-terminating rhetorical move that “determines mass belief and thus restricts the free emergence of political opinion” (McGee, 1980, p. 5). This rhetorical move cultivates a mass consciousness wherein the members of the in-group perform their group allegiance with a consensus on what the ideograph represents: these two countries are the epitome of the



destruction and decline wrought by communism. Rhetorically, these examples are a reification of how easily countries slip into chaos. By ascribing to the belief that Cuba and Venezuela represent chaotic socialist states, the audience member and the speakers share a political ideology that is pro-capitalist, pro-conservatism, and pro-America.

The ideograph of Cuba and Venezuela functions as both a warning of what will come under the current administration and a signal for an American palingenesis, or “the rebirth...of a revitalized national community,” a traditional myth making move in demagogic speech (Crick, 2022, p. 5). As a consequence of the chaos narrative he sells, the political actor promises a rebirth of the nation wherein it will finally achieve its promised glory.

Cuban American Rafael Cruz brandishes his ethos when he says, “You know, I was born in Cuba. I've seen Communism firsthand. And make no mistake, we have a communist regime in the White House in Washington D.C.” His personal brush with communism solidifies his condemnation of it and validates the rhetorical function of Cuba as an ideograph. His personal experience serves as a testimonial of truth: since he has experienced communism himself, he knows the markers for it. He decries the dangers of the “Marxist” Biden administration as “lo mismo que yo vi en Cuba.” Desperate to stop America from succumbing to the same fate as his homeland, Rafael Cruz declares that “America’s best days are ahead,” urging for a rebirth, or palingenesis. Pastor Cruz and his attendees participate in “a political myth of ‘the regenerated nation’ in the aftermath of perceived decay” (Hobeika, 2022, p. 181). When Pastor Cruz stomps his foot and raises his fist declaring to the crowd that “it's up to us to turn the tide back. We cannot afford another two years of this,” he reaffirms the purpose of invoking Cuba: to return America to its glorified past by way of rebirth.

When Mayra Flores makes the same move in her speech, she enters into “a voluntary agreement to believe in and to participate in a ‘myth’” (McGee, 1980, p. 2). However, devoid of Cruz’s ethos, she must shore up the Cuban ideograph with the addition of another failed communist state: Venezuela. She tells the crowd, “I know you think you're the exception. Most of us think it'll never happen in the United States. Venezuela thought that it would never happen in Venezuela. They said, ‘It’ll never happen. We're not Cuba.’ And now they’re just like Cuba.” Here, she uses both countries to prove her, and the crowd’s, bias against anti-capitalist systems. These two countries represent a political ideology that is antithetical to what America represents: the free market and the opportunity to become a self-made person. Countries who adopt socialism as a valid political system, like Cuba and Venezuela, are destined to fail.

It does not matter whether the claims made by Cruz or Flores are based on fact because the ideograph “can not be used to establish or test truth;” the rhetorical function is not necessarily based on truth, but as a display of in-group membership (McGee, 1980, p. 9). Accepting the evidence is confirmation of ascribing to the in-group’s political philosophy.

Ideographs are limited to their cultural setting. For the audience members in attendance, they must accept the mass consciousness to perform in-group identity, and the ideographs of Cuba and Venezuela function as legitimate reasons to actively prevent the rise of communism in the United States. It legitimizes labeling perceived agents of communism as enemies, thus legitimizing action against them. Cuba and Venezuela are used as boogeymen and “function as a claim to membership in the club of the epistemologically elect. It is performance of group identity” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 131).

## **Anti-Intellectualism & the Appeal to Expert Opinion**

Lastly, the rhetors display an aversion to what Senator Cruz labels the “rich, white, woke liberal, a refugee from the faculty lounges.” In his eyes, the Academy, or the universities pushing a “woke” agenda, is populated with liberals who embody the antithesis of what Hispanics identify with, and who possess the additional rhetorical prowess to indoctrinate children and college students. Three of the speakers encourage the audience to infiltrate school boards: Senator Cruz, Flores, and Collins. By having more conservative voices in these positions, they have the power to stop Critical Race Theory from being taught in schools and, in essence, save the children.

Getting more conservatives on school boards is a blatant tactic by the Leadership Institute, a nonprofit that schools rightwing politicians on how to win elections, of which Flores is an alum. In fact, their website landing page specifically announces a program that aims at getting more conservatives on school boards. In 2021, Senator Cruz gave a lecture “explaining” Critical Race theory; he prefaces his talk by heralding those who plan to run for school board positions. Indoctrination is not the problem; the content of the indoctrination is the issue. By focusing on the *what* and not the *how*, conservatives absolve themselves of hypocrisy.

As Collins states in his speech, “We're doing everything that we can to equip and educate and mobilize our young people toward activism and to make a difference and so that they have the right values to push conservative values.” In their perspective, the dangerous out-group is currently in control, placing right-wingers at the mercy of a menacing left-wing communist state.

The speakers use “woke” as a pejorative to criticize any aspects of culture that work to be anti-racist or oppose white supremacy, which, to this in-group, makes it anti-American. The presenters rebuke the “woke” Academy with the fascist rhetorical move of remaking shit. According to Nathan Crick, remaking shit consists of three moves: naming, modeling, and redirecting. In the following few paragraphs, I demonstrate how the speakers at this rally engage in all three moves.

To the audience and the presenters, the current ideas running through the American public school system are shit, as named by Pastor Cruz when he claims that the red wave will protect families and make sure “que nuestros niños estén educados en lugar de estar indoctrinados.” Collins follows this up by suggesting that schools are pushing leftist gender dysphoria. In naming the shit that underpins the current culture in schools, Collins and Cruz engender feelings of disgust and fear in their audience, which then provide the impetus for the next move.

The second move, or modeling shit, occurs when Flores and Collins animate their audience to run for the school board. The conservative base acts as artists who craft their version of the material that needs to be indoctrinated—the “right” Christian values. Collins says it is imperative that we have “patriots in those positions.”

Flores appeals to the other mothers in the crowd, tasking them with getting to know their childrens’ teachers and to “start paying attention.” According to Flores, freedom is on the line if conservative audience members do not take an active role in policing what is being taught in schools, which leads to the third move.

By placing conservatives on school boards, and making this a *targeted* approach, “the speaker and audience have colluded together to come up with an entirely new set of premises that leads them to their heroic conclusion—namely that whatever went before can be effectively ignored in the pursuit of their own rebirth” (Crick, 2022, p. 14). The in-group redirects the curriculum pursuant to their own interests. This move effectively cements palingenesis for America; the only acceptable truths are the ones engineered and deployed by the in-group.

With the rhetorical move of remaking shit, the rhetors name “a decadent culture or foreign, corrupting influence and then praise the same thing once it becomes associated with their own redemption” (Crick, 2022, p. 23). They proclaim a distaste for academia because it counters the myths the right has imagined for themselves and the vision they hold for the country. The only solution is to place themselves directly in the education system and to control the messaging. Labeling their rhetorical move as fascist does not label the speakers as fascists, but they are engaging in fascist practices through their rhetoric. From the position of a rhetorician, I am concerned with the effects of their rhetoric, and these moves are detrimental to the out-groups these speakers vilify. By encouraging their audience to place themselves in positions of power and propagate these harmful, demagogic ideas to children is dangerous. Their fascist and demagogic rhetoric suggests that the current people in education are enemies who need to be rooted out, justifying acts of violence beyond running for school board.

At this event, the appeal to expert opinion is inconclusive. This demagogic practice adopts seemingly expert language, language that sounds like it is ground in logic and reasoning, to advance its own ends. The anti-trans rhetoric might carry colors of this practice (using biology to justify discrimination against trans people), but, since this is not a paper that explores the

complexity in biology, sex, gender, and our understanding of it, I have categorized that rhetorical practice under binary-paired terms.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I demonstrated how all four of the speakers at the Truth and Courage event deployed demagogic rhetorical moves, namely evasion of public policy, binary-paired terms, scapegoating and rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism. Pastor Cruz, Mayra Flores, Christian Collins, and Senator Ted Cruz engaged in harmful rhetoric practices to ostracize and denigrate already-ostracized groups, namely trans people, educators, and non-Christians. I also demonstrated how people of color are not immune from rhetoric that upholds white supremacy. Identity politics is demagogic and the embracing of these rhetorical practices ushers in authoritarianism. These harmful tactics, and the political actors who employ them, need to be recognized and labeled as demagogic.

My methodology necessitated that I attend this event as an unobtrusive observer. However, I impacted the scene when Senator Cruz misidentified me as a reporter. Because I did not demonstrate in-group loyalty by cheering or smiling at what he said, I was labeled an outsider. He met my presence with hostility, added an addendum to his messaging, and potentially put me in harm's way. This is an example of how the in-group changes its behavior when a perceived member of an out-group poses a threat.

In my project I outline why electing Republican lawmakers has dangerous consequences. Their embracing of Christian nationalism and demagoguery is abhorrent for marginalized groups and their actions need to be labeled as such. In my next chapter, the conclusion, I summarize the

demagogic practices enacted at this campaign stop and I illustrate how those practices lean into authoritarianism.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

In analyzing the demagogic rhetorical practices at the Truth and Courage campaign stop, I demonstrated how the political discourse at this event was demagogic. The attendees and the speakers enacted rhetoric that aligned with each of Patricia Roberts-Miller's five markers of demagogic discourse: evasion of public policy, punishment/reward & binary terms, scapegoating & rationality markers, legitimizing biases, and anti-intellectualism & appeal to expert opinion. By enacting these practices, these rhetors uphold white supremacy and create a pathway to authoritarianism. Because it avoids deliberative public discourse, demagoguery provides a schematic for fascism, a term that some people are hesitant to use to label these rhetorical practices. Each of the five markers works to foment hatred for the opposing side; in this way, demagoguery funnels people into the in-group and lays the groundwork for radicalization.

My objective for this project was to examine how a group participates in demagoguery, and how demagoguery cultivates a pathway to authoritarianism. By observing how this rhetoric functions in the real world, I gained insight into how this in-group identifies and how they use rhetoric to solidify and perform that identity.

I have argued that demagogic rhetoric in political discourse is antithetical to democracy and creates the conditions that lead to authoritarianism. I have also demonstrated that non-white,



non-male rhetors are complicit in enacting rhetorical practices that uphold oppressive, traditional social hierarchies.

The key takeaway from this project is that non-white, non-male rhetors and citizenry can participate in discourses that uphold white supremacy. As such, the scholarship on demagoguery should examine how those rhetors participate in discourses that seek to disempower them.

### **Limitations**

Because of time and the scope of my research, I elected to leave out some data and rhetorical theories. While my local focus afforded insight into the political discourse practices of one group in the Rio Grande Valley, attending the Truth and Courage bus tour stops for the other two Latinas on the Republican ticket, Monica De La Cruz and Cassy Garcia, could have made for a broader summation of the rhetoric endorsed by this political action committee. This would have provided a more robust corpus of evidence, and the opportunity to observe the "dynamic of the rhetoric employed and how it operates by new considerations such as audience involvement, back-and-forth point-making, and contextual influences over the course of time that can impact the substance of the rhetor's arguments" (Lawler McDonough, 2018, p. 140). This data would have offered the chance to analyze the dynamics between the rhetors and the different audiences.

I also had to omit some of the topics a singular rhetor presented because they did not fit into overarching themes shared with another rhetor: Pastor Cruz portrays Hispanics as a group of people who do not take handouts from the government; Christian Collins depicts the conservative movement as a grassroots, people-led movement; Mayra Flores hedged her identity politics by encouraging the audience to vote out politicians who are not doing the job, regardless

of their party; Ted Cruz engendered a fear of immigrants and claimed Mexico's cartel violence is spilling into the United States. Since my analyses are thematically linked, focusing on these singular moves did not fit into my examination of emerging patterns among the speakers and the audience. The omission of these rhetorical moves in my chapters does not diminish their importance or their material effects. These moves did not fit into my framework, but they are still important to consider because they are divisive, misleading, and function to characterize the motives and beliefs of the speakers.

There are some relevant rhetorical theories I left out of my thesis because they did not fit into my framework, and these theories could add more depth or provide a unique perspective to my analysis. In the future, rhetoricians may consider examining demagoguery from one of these theories. Affective rhetoric is one approach where researchers may investigate how fear is leveraged by demagogues and why the fear of losing the "American nuclear family" is such an effective rhetorical move for this Hispanic group, since this rhetorical move proved to be effective with the crowd at the site of my analysis. It would also be worthwhile to examine which emotions are leveraged to different audiences. Rhetorical velocity, or how quickly rhetoric is recomposed and recirculated, might be a way to study how the messaging of demagogic rhetoric is spread.

I examined the practices at this event from a rhetorician's viewpoint, but there are other questions in my research that other disciplines are more equipped to answer. Sociologists can more readily explain what makes the American Hispanic susceptible to demagogic rhetoric. Further, they may explain why these groups are complicit in upholding white supremacy. Why do these moves, steeped in Western white supremacy, resonate with Hispanic/Latino and Black audiences? Political scientists may explore the voting tendencies of the Rio Grande Valley and

how our voices are muted by gerrymandering practices, specifically in the 2022 midterms. The field of psychology may answer why Christian nationalists are likely to flock to authoritarian leaders.

Another direction this research can take is examining the locations of political rallies like the one held in Harlingen, Texas. It was not surprising that this campaign event took place in Harlingen because this city, in my experience as a resident of the Rio Grande Valley, is perceived to have more white, conservative, and affluent residents than the surrounding areas. Winter Texans are an integral part of the Harlingen community and shape the city's identity as an older, whiter part of the Rio Grande Valley. Texas-34 has a population that is 12% non-Hispanic white (Astudillo et al., 2021). Harlingen has a population that is 14.9% non-Hispanic white; surrounding cities in the same district, like Brownsville and Los Fresnos, have non-Hispanic white populations of 4% and 8%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau). The demographics (and the perceptions) of this city, relative to those around it, could provide insight as to why it was chosen as the site for this rally. More research could find the implications of these percentages and perceptions on the residents, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic white, in Harlingen, since they are both the target audience for this event in this city. By embracing Hispanics as a part of the conservative movement, the speakers and organizers of this event may signal to the white audience to accept them as well (for as long as they need to, anyway). The history and selection of the locations where these rallies take place shape meaning. The geographic settings are ideographs that represent the ideologies a group associates with that location. By examining the specific locations of political rallies, including their demographics and histories, researchers create a more contextual understanding of how and why politicians feel comfortable deploying demagogic rhetoric to those audiences in these places.

This project is not an examination of the motives behind demagogic political actors. There are a number of motives for why Flores, a self-identifying Hispanic woman, does this work in service of white supremacy, the patriarchy, and the Republican Party, a party that would easily cast her aside once she has served her purpose. She might be being tricked. She may believe everything she says. She might be a grifter. There are no shortages of the personal gain Flores gets from her participation in the Republican Party: she gets funding, opportunities to travel, chances to speak in front of large audiences, fame, and her status as an ex-congressperson establishes some ethos. In truth, it is not up to me to know or even understand her motives, but I can inspect her rhetorical practices and how her identity as a Hispanic woman impacts her messaging. Her motives, as well as the motives of the other presenters at this event, are immaterial to the effects of her rhetoric because her messaging is in the public sphere and it causes harm to an out-group. She, and anyone who enacts demagoguery as a functional public discourse, needs to be held accountable for the ramifications of her rhetorical moves.

### **Going Forward**

Although academics like Goldzwig believe demagoguery in practice is “a sometimes marred and sometimes marvelous portrait of ourselves” wherein we should “listen before we...exercise judgment,” I contend that platforming this type of political discourse is dangerous (1989, p. 222). I condemn the views espoused by the rhetors, the attendees, and, by extension, the Truth and Courage PAC because I find them repugnant, dangerous, and harmful. However, I did not label these speakers as demagogues for those reasons. My methodology kept my analysis objective and the conclusions I drew stem from my methodology alone. In using a queer lens, I did not force conformity to my methodology on these speakers, the attendees, or the organizers of the event. My analysis proves their rhetorical moves are demagogic. When societies try to

play fair and agree to listen to these rhetors, we validate their ideas. When we refrain from labeling these political actors and their rhetorical practices as reckless and destructive, we are complicit in harm wrought on marginalized communities. When we refuse to label these moves as demagogic and the rhetors as demagogues, we create the conditions that devolve democracies into fascism.

Because our culture is saturated in demagogic rhetorical tendencies, politicians are comfortable enacting us-vs-them rhetoric, and it makes it difficult for the public to recognize this type of rhetoric. To combat this, I echo what other rhetorical academics have said: “rhetorical studies is equipped to intervene in hostile rhetorics that stoke prejudicial animosities and to highlight and nurture more restorative intimacies” (Hsu, 2019, p. 74). The study of rhetoric is critical in understanding and naming the harmful rhetorical practices of populist political actors. It is equally crucial in spreading rhetorics that humanize marginalized and vulnerable groups. The renewed interest and scholarship on demagogic practices works to that end. Labeling someone as a demagogue or calling their rhetoric demagogic is not a “preference for order, civility, rationality, and decorum,” it is a term that enables us to examine how a speaker limits meaningful political discourse (Goldzweig, 1989, p. 204). I am not calling for civility or limitations on how we deliberate in the public sphere. Shying away from the term demagoguery because its meaning has become muddled in the mainstream is detrimental to safeguarding democracy.

Current conversations on demagoguery are limiting: they feature white-presenting scholars who examine white, cis male rhetors. To confront the white supremacist structures that demagoguery reinforces, the scholarship needs should be more inclusive. This project begins to remedy those gaps: I am a queer, Mexican American researcher who examines three non-white

demagogic rhetors: Rafael Cruz, Mayra Flores, and Ted Cruz. Academics like myself more readily label non-white rhetors as a demagogic and we are attuned to rhetorics that current scholarship overlooks.

The specters of the fascism in the twentieth century do not fade so easily. Demagoguery is a mechanism for returning us to authoritarian leadership. This rhetorical move as a valid means of political discourse “is powerfully reduced when it stops getting people elected” (Roberts-Miller, 2019, p. 192). By labeling these bad politicians as demagogues and refusing to elect them to office, we tacitly condemn their rhetorical practices and the messaging that goes along with it. When we have fewer demagogues in office, we may return to a democracy that allows deliberate discourse.

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## APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

### TRANSCRIPTS AND TRANSLATIONS OF SPEECHES

Transcripts follow the speaking order of the presenters. Translated speeches follow the original for each speaker.

#### **Rafael Cruz**

Good morning. Great to meet with you today. Let us pray father on God will bless you in it. Salt you would glorify. We thank you, father, for living in the greatest country on the face of the Earth and the double blessing to living in the greatest state within the greatest country. And I thank you, father, because you are awakening America. You're specially awakening South Texas to retake this country for your glory. Father, we commit this effort to you and. And look with anticipation at the great victory in November. In the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Please have a seat.

It is so great to be with you. I'll tell you I'm so excited to be here and to honor Mayra Flores. Mayra Flores has broken a humongous barrier. First conservative in South Texas, elected in over 100 years. It sent shock waves to Washington, DC Congresswoman Mayra Flores sounds good. We did it and we're gonna do it again in November.

Yeah, I know only that we are also going to elect Monica and Cassie. Three conservative Hispanics, women from South Texas, Texas is turning red. To the glory of God. You know. I was born in Cuba. I've seen Communism first hand. And make no mistake, we have a communist regime in the White House in Washington DC. And I'll tell you what, it's about time that we as Hispanics, we as conservatives, we as Texans says enough is enough.

We are taking this country back for the glory of God. The times that the Democrats have total control over South Texas are over. On Mayra, Flores broke the barrier. And she is an inspiration not only to Cassie and to Monica, but to every Texas, to every Hispanic in South Texas, to every Hispanic across Texas. We are going to see Texas turning bright red. And the Valley is gonna be the tip of the spear. We are going to see a shockwave that is going to put all Democrats trembling, waiting for their defeat in November. We are going to have a celebration in November.

But I'll tell you what: we cannot get complacent. We have to be cognizant that the enemy is alive and well, that they are going to show up in the polls with a lot of lies. The question that we should be asking is eternal question: Are you better off now than you were two years ago? But it's up to us to turn the tide back. We cannot afford another two years of this rampant Marxist organization, this Marxist government putting their thumb over our necks. I'll tell you, I've seen communism first hand, and that's what we have in Washington, DC. I'll tell you what, I think America's best days are ahead, and they're starting with the election of Mayra Flores again to Congress in November.

[Cruz begins to speak in Spanish] Nuestros jugadores hispanos. El pueblo hispano es un pueblo conservador, es un pueblo que honra la vida, es un pueblo que honra a la familia, es un pueblo que honra el trabajo duro y el ganarse el sustento por nuestros propios esfuerzos, no por una limosna del Gobierno. [cheers from audience] Es hora de que el pueblo hispano se levante y diga, no lo vamos a aceptar más. Vamos a ver que nuestra familia está protegida, que nuestros niños estén educados en lugar de estar indoctrinados.

Yo vi la indoctrinación de los niños en Cuba año tras año, y lo que hizo fue destruir a la familia, nuestras familias son la tradición del pueblo Hispano. Al pueblo, hispanos, un pueblo unido donde el valor familiar es primordial. El valor de poder, predicar, poder, honrar a Dios, sin ninguna interferencia está puesto en temor y en peligro aquí en Estados Unidos. Donde el nombre de Jesús no se puede decir en público, dónde vamos a ver un ataque a la familia, un ataque al pueblo hispano, un ataque a nuestros niños. Nuestros niños están siendo indoctrinados y tratando de destruir los valores fundamentales que tenemos como hispanos. Estamos viendo que le dicen al niño, no, no sabemos si eres hembra o varón, en realidad no hay dos géneros, hay 75 géneros. ¿Has cambiado un pañal alguna vez? No es difícil saber si es niño o niña. Pero no, hoy en día estamos viendo que los niños están siendo a propósito confundidos en las escuelas. Estamos destruyendo- están destruyendo nuestros valores fundamentales. Pero quiero decirles, vamos a ver una total ola de cambio en Sur en el sur de Texas y a través de todo Texas. [Cheers from audience]

Nuestros derechos fundamentales. La establecidos cuando tengamos un orden cívico, cuando tengamos un derecho constitucional, no siendo totalmente pisoteado día tras día. Quiero decirle no permitamos que el pueblo, que el Gobierno esté castrista, casi cualquier igual que el Gobierno castrista, lo mismo que yo vi en Cuba. Estamos viendo en la Casa Blanca, no vamos a permitir que nos digan que el pueblo hispano es un pueblo de segunda clase. Nuestro honor, nuestra honra, es que nosotros somos Americanos, nosotros vivimos en un país donde estamos orgullosos de nuestro país y también de nuestra herencia. ¿A quiénes somos? Porque el pueblo hispano asido fundamental en los valores Americanos, que todo el mundo fue, escucha y ve. Es por nuestros valores que hemos permanecido unidos. Es hora que nos levantamos por encima de la retórica política y veamos que tenemos que luchar por nuestra familia, luchar por nuestros niños, luchar por ver que Texas continúa siendo la estrella más grande en este país, Texas, tiene que guiar al resto de América a que nos volvamos de nuevo, un pueblo conservador donde los derechos humanos son protegidos. Y esto comienza con asegurarnos de que Mayra flores gana estas elecciones en Noviembre. Cordial que cada 1 de ustedes no solo va a las urnas a votar si no llevas a toda tu familia a todos sus vecinos, que no nos pongamos a descansar hasta después de noviembre 8. Tenemos que ganar y ganar en grande para mandar un mensaje a Washington, vamos a unirnos todos para poder decir Maya flores es nuestra congresista del sur de Texas y la realizaremos en noviembre. Gracias, Dios los bendiga.

Ahora quiero presentarles a un amigo, el cual es 1 de mis más íntimos amigos. Este joven viajamos por dos años cuando mi hijo estaba aspirando a la Presidencia de Estados Unidos por todos los países, todos los Estados de Estados Unidos. Este es un hombre de Dios, un hombre que ha tocado algo sobre todo al pueblo joven, en el Estado de Texas, haciendo estos congresos de jóvenes a través de todo. Te hashtag más que en las próximas semanas vamos a tener unos 3 congresos aquí mismo, el sur de Texas, y se necesitamos que todo joven esté en este congreso, les invito a que escuchen a mi amigo Christian Collins.

**Rafael Cruz—Translated**

Buen día. Encantado de reunirme con ustedes hoy. Oremos padre en Dios te bendiga en ella. Sal que glorificamos. Te agradecemos, padre, por vivir en el país más grande sobre la faz de la Tierra y la doble bendición de vivir en el estado más grande dentro del país más grande. Y te agradezco, padre, porque estás despertando a América. Estás despertando especialmente al sur de Texas para retomar este país para tu gloria. Padre, te encomendamos este esfuerzo y. Y mira con anticipación la gran victoria de noviembre. En el nombre de Jesus. Amén. Amén. Por favor tomen asiento.

Es genial estar con ustedes. Les diré que estoy muy emocionado de estar aquí y honrar a Mayra Flores. Mayra Flores ha roto una enorme barrera. Primera conservadora en el sur de Texas, elegida en más de 100 años. Envió ondas de choque a Washington, DC La congresista Mayra Flores suena bien. Lo hicimos y lo haremos de nuevo en noviembre.

Sí, solo sé que también vamos a elegir a Monica y Cassie. Tres hispanas conservadoras, mujeres del sur de Texas, Texas se está poniendo rojo. Para la gloria de Dios. Sabes. Nací en Cuba. He visto el comunismo de primera mano. Y no se equivoquen, tenemos un régimen comunista en la Casa Blanca en Washington DC. Y les diré algo, ya es hora de que nosotros como hispanos, nosotros como conservadores, nosotros como tejanos digamos basta.

Estamos recuperando este país para la gloria de Dios. Los tiempos en que los demócratas tenían control total sobre el sur de Texas han terminado. Sobre Mayra, Flores rompió la barrera. Y ella es una inspiración no solo para Cassie y Monica, sino para cada Texano, para cada hispano en el sur de Texas, para cada hispano en todo Texas. Vamos a ver a Texas ponerse rojo brillante. Y el Valle será la punta de lanza. Vamos a ver una onda expansiva que va a poner a temblar a todos los demócratas, esperando su derrota en noviembre. Vamos a tener una celebración en noviembre.

Pero les diré algo: no podemos ser complacientes. Tenemos que ser conscientes de que el enemigo está vivo y bien, que va a aparecer en las encuestas con muchas mentiras. La pregunta que deberíamos hacernos es una pregunta eterna: ¿Estás mejor ahora que hace dos años? Pero depende de nosotros hacer retroceder el rumbo. No podemos permitirnos otros dos años de esta organización marxista desenfrenada, este gobierno marxista poniéndonos el pulgar sobre el cuello. Les diré, he visto el comunismo de primera mano, y eso es lo que tenemos en Washington, DC. Les diré algo, creo que los mejores días de Estados Unidos están por venir, y están comenzando con la elección de Mayra Flores nuevamente al Congreso en noviembre. [Cruz comienza a hablar en español] Our Hispanic players. The Hispanic people are a conservative people, they are a people that honor life, they are a people that honor family, they are a people that honor hard work and earning a living through our own efforts, not because of a handout from the Government. [audience applause] It's time for the Hispanic people to stand up and say, we're not going to accept it anymore. We are going to see that our family is protected, that our children are educated instead of being indoctrinated.

I saw the indoctrination of children in Cuba year after year, and what it did was destroy the family, our families are the tradition of the Hispanic people. To the people, Hispanics, a united people where the family value is paramount. The value of being able, preaching, being able to, honoring God, without any interference is in fear and jeopardy here in America. Where the name of Jesus cannot be said in public, where we are going to see an attack on the family, an attack on the Hispanic people, an attack on our children. Our children are being indoctrinated and trying to destroy the fundamental values that we have as Hispanics. We are seeing that they tell the child, no, we don't know if you are female or male, in reality there are not two genders, there are 75 genders. Have you ever changed a diaper? It's not hard to tell if it's a boy or a girl.

But no, nowadays we are seeing that children are being deliberately confused in schools. We are destroying- they are destroying our core values. But I want to tell you, we are going to see a complete wave of change in South in South Texas and throughout all of Texas. [audience applause]

Our fundamental rights. Constancy when we have a civic order, when we have a constitutional right, will not be totally trampled day after day. I want to say that we don't allow the people, the government to be Castroite, almost anyone like the Castroite government, the same thing I saw in Cuba. We are seeing in the White House, we are not going to allow them to tell us that the Hispanic people are a second class people. Our honor, our honor, is that we are Americans, we live in a country where we are proud of our country and also of our heritage. About us? Because the Hispanic people have been fundamental in American values, which the whole world hears and sees. It is because of our values that we have remained united. It is time that we rise above the political rhetoric and see that we have to fight for our family, fight for our children, fight to see Texas continue to be the biggest star in this country, Texas has to lead the rest of America. for us to become again, a conservative town where human rights are protected. And this starts with making sure that Mayra Flores wins this election in November. Cordial that each 1 of you not only goes to the polls to vote if you do not take your whole family to all your neighbors, that we do not put to rest until after November 8.

We have to win and win big to send a message to Washington, let's all come together to say that Maya Flores is our congresswoman from South Texas and we will do it in November. Thank you, God bless you.

Now I want to introduce you to a friend, who is one of my closest friends. This young man traveled for two years when my son was running for the Presidency of the United States through all the countries, all the States of the United States. This is a man of God, a man who has touched something, especially young people, in the State of Texas, doing these youth conferences throughout everything. In the next few weeks we are going to have about 3 congresses right here in South Texas, and we need every young person to be in this congress. I invite you to listen to my friend Christian Collins.

### **Christian Collins**

My name is Christian Collins, and I'm so honored to be with you and give it up for Congresswoman Mayra Flores. I'm blessed to get to introduce her, but before I do, I want to share a little bit about Texas Youth Summit and I want to give you a little bit of encouragement on how you can make a difference.

Texas Youth Summit—we educate on Judeo-Christian and conservative values. We're doing everything that we can to equip and educate and mobilize our young people toward activism and to make a difference and so that they have the right values to push conservative values. And that's what we're doing. And we have an incredible event October 22nd, and we'll have some flyers available for you. You can register right here. It's with Kaylee McKinney, Congresswoman Mayra Flores, Monica de la Cruz, Cassie Garcia. And we have many others that we're going to have there October 22nd in Weslaco. It's from one to six and you can go to [texasyouthsummit.com](http://texasyouthsummit.com) and register and we'd love to see you there.

Let me tell you- you if you're an adult, you can buy a ticket, and if you're a youth, it's completely free. So come enjoy and participate. I also want to say that there's a lot of ways that you can make a difference. One of those such ways is one for school board. Get involved in the putting in our schools. You see the gender dysphoria that's being pushed. You see the race

ideology that's being pushed. It's radical, it's leftist, and it's for an exact purpose of distorting the minds of our youth. And so you as concerned parents need to be vigilant and you need to run for office and get involved in the political process or support people who do. [Applause from audience]

And people like Ted Cruz and Mayra Flores, they want patriots in those positions and they will get involved with you, I'm sure. So get involved in the political process, fight for this country, also get involved in the Republican Party. Run for precinct chair. It takes patriots block walking, phone banking, giving their money, their time, their sweat, their energy to reelect these great patriots. Next year: Senator Cruz. But this year, Mayra Flores. And a red wave cannot happen unless you give the energy that it takes to make it happen. So let's make it happen. Amen?

You are part of something truly historic here in South Texas. We are seeing it turned completely bright red, and it's because what we've known all along is that Hispanics have conservative values. They're waking up to the leftist tactics of the Democrats. They're not going along with it anymore. You may have seen what Jill Biden said: some reference to tacos. And Nancy Pelosi said something degrading the other day that wasn't much better. But to us, Hispanics are the future of the Republican Party. And so who better than Mayra Flores? She really needs no introduction. She really needs no introduction. She- she's living an incredible life. She's lived the American dream. She's an accomplished business lady. She's congresswoman. And you know what, most importantly, aside from being a Christian, she's a mom. Give it up for moms. Well, she's a strong Christian, so let's give it up for Congresswoman Mayra Flores.

### **Christian Collins—Translated**

Mi nombre es Christian Collins, y me siento muy honrado de estar con ustedes y darlo por la congresista Mayra Flores. Tengo la suerte de poder presentarla, pero antes de hacerlo, quiero compartir un poco sobre la Cumbre de la Juventud de Texas y quiero alentarlos un poco sobre cómo pueden marcar la diferencia.

Cumbre de la Juventud de Texas: educamos en valores judeocristianos y conservadores. Estamos haciendo todo lo que podemos para equipar, educar y movilizar a nuestros jóvenes hacia el activismo y para marcar la diferencia y para que tengan los valores correctos para impulsar los valores conservadores. Y eso es lo que estamos haciendo. Y tenemos un evento increíble el 22 de octubre y tendremos algunos folletos disponibles para ustedes. Puedes registrarte aquí mismo. Está con Kaylee McKinney, la congresista Mayra Flores, Mónica de la Cruz, Cassie García. Y tenemos muchos otros que tendremos allí el 22 de octubre en Weslaco. Es de uno a seis y puede ir a [texasyouthsummit.com](http://texasyouthsummit.com) y registrarse y nos encantaría verlos allí.

Déjeme decirles, si eres adulto, puedes comprar un boleto, y si eres un joven, es completamente gratis. Así que ven a disfrutar y participar. También quiero decir que hay muchas maneras en las que pueden marcar la diferencia. Una de esas formas es una para la junta escolar. Involucrarse en la puesta en nuestras escuelas. Vea la disforia de género que está siendo impulsada. Vea la ideología racial que se está impulsando. Es radical, es izquierdista y tiene el propósito exacto de distorsionar las mentes de nuestra juventud. Entonces, ustedes, como padres preocupados, deben estar atentos y deben postularse para un cargo e involucrarse en el proceso político o apoyar a las personas que lo hacen. [Aplausos de la audiencia]

Y gente como Ted Cruz y Mayra Flores, quieren patriotas en esos puestos y se involucraron con ustedes, estoy seguro. Así que involúcrese en el proceso político, luche por este país, también involúcrese en el Partido Republicano. Corre para presidente de distrito. Se



necesitan patriotas caminando en cuadradas, realizando operaciones bancarias por teléfono, dando su dinero, su tiempo, su sudor, su energía para reelegir a estos grandes patriotas. El próximo año: Senador Cruz. Pero este año, Mayra Flores. Y una ola roja no puede ocurrir a menos que des la energía necesaria para que suceda. Así que hagamos que suceda. ¿Amén?

Eres parte de algo verdaderamente histórico aquí en el sur de Texas. Lo estamos viendo completamente rojo brillante, y es porque lo que siempre hemos sabido es que los hispanos tienen valores conservadores. Se están dando cuenta de las tácticas izquierdistas de los demócratas. Ya no están de acuerdo con eso. Es posible que haya visto lo que dijo Jill Biden: alguna referencia a los tacos. Y Nancy Pelosi dijo algo degradante el otro día que no fue mucho mejor. Pero para nosotros, los hispanos son el futuro del Partido Republicano. Y entonces, ¿quién mejor que Mayra Flores? Ella realmente no necesita presentación. Ella realmente no necesita presentación. Ella... Ella está viviendo una vida increíble. Ha vivido el sueño americano. Es una consumada mujer de negocios. Ella es congresista. Y sabe qué, lo más importante, además de ser cristiana, es mamá. Hagámoslo por las mamás. Bueno, ella es una cristiana fuerte, así que hagámoslo por la congresista Mayra Flores.

### **Mayra Flores**

[“God Bless the U.S.A.” music fades out]

[Cheers and applause from audience]

God Bless America. God, family and country. Dios, familia, y patria.

That's how we won on June 14th. You elected the first Mexican-born Congresswomen ever elected in Congress. Si señor!

I was blessed. I was born in Bogota, Maripaz, Mexico and blessed to come to this amazing, amazing country when I was six years old, thanks to my father. Both my parents were migrant workers. We moved a lot growing up. I started working alongside my parents at 13 years old in the cotton fields. And I did that for many years. And it instilled me the value of hard work. Graduated high school, continued by education and became a respiratory care practitioner. I'm a mother of four. I'm a proud border patrol wife. God bless our border patrol agents. God bless all law enforcement.

I've accomplished the American dream in this amazing country. Only in America. And I want to make sure that our kids also accomplish the American dream. I am their worst nightmare. All of a sudden, an immigrant, a woman, a mother is dangerous. The hypocrisy. They've been claiming all these years that they're for people like me. But the moment that we fight for the values that we were raised with- do they not know that in Mexico you're raised with strong conservative values? I was raised to always put God and family first and I'm not willing to put that aside for their political party. This time is so important. Especially now. That we stand for our values and that we are not afraid to speak the word of God.

People are constantly telling me God doesn't belong in politics. Are you kidding me? This is his planet. This is his universe. He belongs everywhere. Amen. And I will not allow them to shame me or allow them to shame you for our belief. I want to make sure that I am right with God. I want to be sure that I have eternity. This is temporary. We don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow. But we got to make sure that we got things right with God and that everything that we do, we do it through prayer.

And that is why we won this special election. People were shocked. 150 years this area hadn't been flipped. But I tell people South Texas just got fed up. We were taken for granted for

decades. They did nothing for us. Why are we going to keep voting for people over and over that are not a representation of who we are in South Texas?

No more.

Why do our kids have to leave South Texas for better opportunities? Why can't we have those opportunities here? Why can't they accomplish the American dream here? We have the ingredients to be successful. We're people of God. We're people of strong family values and hard work. You won't find more hard working people than in South Texas. Somos bien trabajadores.

And that's what I am telling everyone in Washington. Come and invest in South Texas, we are worth investing. We won't let you down. But before me, no one was talking about South Texas. No one was talking about Texas-34 in Washington. This isn't about me. This is about our kids' future. About your grandkids. Are they not worth you fighting for?

I can't do this alone. I need every single one of you to go out there and vote. But take your abuelita, your tia, your tio, your brothers and sisters a toda raza y vayanse a votar.

Their biggest frustration from the left? Is to have someone that stands strong on God and family values. They want to destroy that. They want to take that away from us. They want us to believe that men can get pregnant. You cannot get pregnant. And I will not allow them to take that away from us. I am a women. I am a mother. And I won't allow them to take that away from me or us mothers. I won't allow them to want to change a four year old, a 5 year old, 6 year old boy into a girl. That type of ideology doesn't go here in South Texas.

We fight for our children. Our children are everything. They're our engine. We wouldn't be able to do what we do every single day. Moms, I need you to get involved. Moms, I need you to know who their teacher is. Mom, I need you to go to the school board meetings. Mom, I need you. I need you to start paying attention because we haven't been paying attention for so long. They've taken advantage of that.

And you know what else they take advantage of? Us not actually doing our research. They know that. The bills that they write, they named them a really nice name, knowing that the people are not going to read the bill, to take advantage of us and pass bills that are not a representation of who we are. Read the bill. If we don't start getting involved in our community, even at the low, at the local level, because it impacts us just as much. If we don't get involved, they will take away our freedoms. I know you think you're the exception. Most of us think it'll never happen in the United States. Venezuela thought that it would never happen in Venezuela. They said it'll never happen. We're not Cuba. And now they're just like Cuba. We need to understand that people before us fought for this country. Fought for us to be in the position that we're in. It is our turn to fight for our children's future as well. If someone like me has accomplished so much. Let's help our children also have the same opportunities.

But let's also remember Washington, who they work for. I work for you. I am obligated to serve the people that elected me to be in this position. They forget that. They forget who elected them. It's so important for you to remind them and vote them out. If they're not doing their job, I don't care what party they're on, if they're not doing their job, vote them out. This isn't about this Democrat or Republican. This is about putting the American people first. No more loyalty to political parties. No more. Be loyal to God. Be loyal to your family. Be loyal to the community in South Texas. And that's what I'm about. I want to put South Texas first. I want to put Texas-34 first. I am sick and tired of them putting everyone else but us first.

No more.

When I got elected, I put you first and I will always put you first. When did you see your former congressman, ever? He was nowhere to be seen. Vicente Gonzalez in Texas-15, he ran away from Texas-15 to come here because he thought, "Ohh, it's gonna be a much easier for me." We don't want him. He wasn't willing to fight for the district he had been a member of for three terms. And came here because he thought it was going to be an easier race. Well, that didn't happen. So Texas-15 doesn't want him there. But guess what? Texas 34 doesn't either. He doesn't represent our values. He represents Washington. He never cared to show up for us and all of a sudden now he wants to show up. Es muy tarde. Ya no. And you know what's gonna happen when he loses in November? He's gonna sell his house and he's going to go back to Corpus. He doesn't have no love for South Texas. He isn't from here. As soon as he loses, mark my words, he's going to sell his house and he's going to leave. And I will prove you that day that he had never had any love for South Texas. He doesn't represent us.

Just a few days, he approved to send \$12 more billion dollars to Ukraine. \$12 billion. That is a total of \$60 billion to Ukraine. What about the people of South Texas? What about us that are struggling to pay our bills or rent or mortgage? The people of Brownsville right now are struggling to pay their utilities. Which makes still no sense to me why people are paying double, triple. And to be honest with you, their explanation still made no sense.

Those are the things we have to- this is why we have to get involved, even at the local levels, in making sure that the people that we elect are doing their job. They're nothing without it, I'm nothing without you. If you don't help me get elected and reelected, I won't be able to do my job. And just know that when I go back to Washington, I will continue to put you first and put our children first because it is all about the RGV. God bless you. America and God bless South Texas. Thank you. Thank you so much. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't because of all your amazing support. But I've also, I've gotten so many other people support, like Senator Cruz, who believed in me since day one and helped us raise the money for us to be able to spread the conservative message across the district, to be able to do commercials, to be able to do mailers, to be able to buy signs. If it wasn't because of all the amazing support y'all have given me, but also Senator Cruz, I wouldn't be here. So I am forever grateful. So, Senator Cruz, welcome to Texas-34 and thank you for being here and all your support. God bless you.

### **Mayra Flores—Translated**

["Dios bendiga a los EE.UU." la música se desvanece]

[Vítoreos y aplausos de la audiencia]

Dios bendiga a América. Dios, familia y patria. Dios, familia y patria.

Así ganamos el 14 de junio. Usted eligió a las primeras congresistas nacidas en México en ser elegidas en el Congreso. Si señor!

Fui bendecida Nací en Bogotá, Maripaz, México y tuve la suerte de venir a este increíble, increíble país cuando tenía seis años, gracias a mi padre. Mis padres eran trabajadores inmigrantes. Nos mudamos mucho mientras crecíamos. Empecé a trabajar junto a mis padres a los 13 años en los campos de algodón. Y lo hice durante muchos años. Y me inculcó el valor del trabajo duro. Se graduó de la escuela secundaria, continuó con la educación y se convirtió en un médico de atención respiratoria. Soy madre de cuatro. Soy una orgullosa esposa de la patrulla fronteriza. Dios bendiga a nuestros agentes de la patrulla fronteriza. Dios bendiga a todas las fuerzas del orden.

He logrado el sueño americano en este maravilloso país. Solo en América. Y quiero asegurarme de que nuestros hijos también logren el sueño americano. Soy su peor pesadilla. De

repente, una inmigrante, una mujer, una madre es peligrosa. La hipocresía. Han estado afirmando todos estos años que son para gente como yo. Pero en el momento en que luchamos por los valores con los que nos criaron, ¿acaso no saben que en México te criaron con fuertes valores conservadores? Me criaron para poner siempre a Dios y la familia en primer lugar y no estoy dispuesta a dejar eso de lado por su partido político. Esta vez es tan importante. Especialmente ahora. Que defendamos nuestros valores y que no tengamos miedo de hablar la palabra de Dios. La gente me dice constantemente que Dios no pertenece a la política. ¿Me estás tomando el pelo? Este es su planeta. Este es su universo. Él pertenece en todas partes. Amén. Y no permitiré que me avergüencen ni permitiré que los avergüencen por nuestra creencia. Quiero asegurarme de que estoy bien con Dios. Quiero estar seguro de que tengo la eternidad. Esto es temporal. No sabemos qué va a pasar mañana. Pero tenemos que asegurarnos de hacer las cosas bien con Dios y que todo lo que hacemos, lo hacemos a través de la oración.

Y es por eso que ganamos esta elección especial. La gente se sorprendió. 150 años que esta área no había sido volteada. Pero le digo a la gente que el sur de Texas se hartó. Nos dieron por sentado durante décadas. No hicieron nada por nosotros. ¿Por qué vamos a seguir votando por personas una y otra vez que no son una representación de lo que somos en el sur de Texas? No más.

¿Por qué nuestros hijos tienen que dejar el sur de Texas para tener mejores oportunidades? ¿Por qué no podemos tener esas oportunidades aquí? ¿Por qué no pueden lograr el sueño americano aquí? Tenemos los ingredientes para tener éxito. Somos pueblo de Dios. Somos personas de fuertes valores familiares y trabajo duro. No encontrará más gente trabajadora que en el sur de Texas. Somos bien trabajadores.

Y eso es lo que les estoy diciendo a todos en Washington. Ven e invierte en el Sur de Texas, nosotros valemos la pena invertir. No te defraudaremos. Pero antes de mí, nadie hablaba del sur de Texas. Nadie hablaba de Texas-34 en Washington. Esto no se trata de mí. Se trata del futuro de nuestros hijos. Sobre sus nietos. ¿No vale la pena que luchen por ellos?

No puedo hacer esto sola. Necesito que cada uno de ustedes salga y vote. Pero tomen a su abuelita, su tía, su tío, sus hermanos y hermanas a toda raza y vayanse a votar. ¿la mayor frustración desde la izquierda? Es tener a alguien que se mantenga firme en Dios y los valores familiares. Quieren destruir eso. Quieren quitarnos eso. Quieren que creamos que los hombres pueden quedar embarazados. No puedes quedar embarazado. Y no permitiré que nos quiten eso. Soy una mujer. Soy madre. Y no permitiré que me quiten eso ni a mí ni a las madres. No permitiré que quieran cambiar a un niño de cuatro, cinco o seis años en una niña. Ese tipo de ideología no va aquí en el sur de Texas.

Luchemos por nuestros hijos. Nuestros hijos lo son todo. Son el motor. No seríamos capaces de hacer lo que hacemos todos los días. Mamás, necesito que se involucren. Mamás, necesito que sepan quién es su maestro. Mamá, necesito que vayan a las reuniones de la junta escolar. Mamá, las necesito. Necesito que empiecen a prestar atención porque no hemos estado prestando atención durante mucho tiempo. Se han aprovechado de eso.

¿Y sabes de qué más se aprovechan? Nosotros en realidad no estamos haciendo nuestra investigación. Ellos saben eso. Los proyectos de ley que escriben, les dieron un nombre muy bonito, sabiendo que la gente no va a leer el proyecto de ley, para aprovecharse de nosotros y aprobar proyectos de ley que no son una representación de lo que somos. Lea el proyecto de ley. Si no empezamos a involucrarnos en nuestra comunidad, aunque sea a nivel bajo, a nivel local, porque nos impacta igual. Si no nos involucramos, nos quitarán nuestras libertades. Sé que creen que son la excepción. La mayoría de nosotros pensamos que nunca sucederá en los Estados

Unidos. Venezuela pensó que nunca sucedería en Venezuela. Dijeron que nunca sucedería. No somos Cuba. Y ahora son como Cuba. Necesitamos entender que la gente antes que nosotros luchó por este país. Luchó por nosotros para estar en la posición en la que estamos. Es nuestro turno de luchar por el futuro de nuestros hijos también. Si alguien como yo ha logrado tanto. Ayudemos a que nuestros niños también tengan las mismas oportunidades.

Pero recordemos también a Washington, para quién trabajan. Yo trabajo para ustedes. Estoy obligada a servir a las personas que me eligieron para ocupar este cargo. Se olvidan de eso. Se olvidan de quién los eligió. Es muy importante que se los recuerdes y los elimines. Si no están haciendo su trabajo, no me importa en qué partido estén, si no están haciendo su trabajo, echenlos. No se trata de este demócrata o republicano. Se trata de poner al pueblo estadounidense en primer lugar. No más lealtad a los partidos políticos. No más. Sé leal a Dios. Sé leal a su familia. Sea leal a la comunidad en el sur de Texas. Y de eso se trata. Quiero poner el sur de Texas primero. Quiero poner Texas-34 primero. Estoy harta y cansada de que pongan a todos los demás menos a nosotros primero.

No más.

Cuando me eligieron, los puse primero y siempre los pondré primero. ¿Cuándo vio a su ex congresista, alguna vez? No se le veía por ninguna parte. Vicente González en Texas-15, se escapó de Texas-15 para venir aquí porque pensó: "Ohh, será mucho más fácil para mí". No lo queremos. No estaba dispuesto a luchar por el distrito del que había sido miembro durante tres mandatos. Y vino aquí porque pensó que iba a ser una carrera más fácil. Bueno, eso no sucedió. Así que Texas-15 no lo quiere allí. ¿Pero adivinen que? Texas 34 tampoco. Él no representa nuestros valores. Representa a Washington. Nunca le importó aparecer por nosotros y, de repente, ahora quiere aparecer. Es muy tarde. Ya no. ¿Y saben lo que va a pasar cuando pierda en noviembre? Venderá su casa y volverá a Corpus. Él no tiene ningún amor por el sur de Texas. Él no es de aquí. Tan pronto como pierda, recuerden mis palabras, venderá su casa y se irá. Y le demostraré ese día que él nunca había tenido ningún amor por el sur de Texas. Él no nos representa.

A los pocos días aprobó enviar 12 mil millones de dólares más a Ucrania. \$12 mil millones. Eso es un total de \$60 mil millones para Ucrania. ¿Qué pasa con la gente del sur de Texas? ¿Qué pasa con nosotros que estamos luchando para pagar nuestras facturas o el alquiler o la hipoteca? La gente de Brownsville en este momento está luchando para pagar sus servicios públicos. Lo que todavía no tiene sentido para mí es por qué la gente paga el doble, el triple. Y para ser honesto con usted, su explicación todavía no ha tenido sentido.

Esas son las cosas que tenemos que hacer, es por eso que tenemos que involucrarnos, incluso a nivel local, para asegurarnos de que las personas que elegimos estén haciendo su trabajo. Ellos no son nada sin ello, yo no soy nada sin usted. Si no me ayudan a ser elegida y reelegida, no podré hacer mi trabajo. Y sepa que cuando regrese a Washington, continuaré poniéndolo a usted primero y poniendo a nuestros hijos primero porque todo se trata del RGV. Dios lo bendiga. Estados Unidos y Dios bendiga el sur de Texas. Gracias. Muchas gracias. No estaría aquí si no fuera por todo su increíble apoyo. Pero también obtuve el apoyo de muchas otras personas, como el Senador Cruz, quien creyó en mí desde el primer día y nos ayudó a recaudar el dinero para poder difundir el mensaje conservador en todo el distrito, para poder hacer comerciales, para poder hacer correos, para poder comprar letreros. Si no fuera por todo el increíble apoyo que me han brindado, pero también por el Senador Cruz, no estaría aquí. Así que estoy eternamente agradecida. Entonces, Senador Cruz, bienvenido a Texas-34 y gracias por estar aquí y por todo su apoyo. Dios los bendiga.

## **Ted Cruz**

[Eye of the Tiger intro music fades away]

[Applause]

God bless the great state of Texas. Isn't Mayra fantastic? What is happening here right now is exciting. It is transformational. South Texas is changing before our eyes and it's changing the state of Texas. It's changing the country. It is leading a revival across this country.

[Applause]

You know where we find ourselves right now. This isn't normal. The President of the United States shakes hands with the empty air. [Laughter] The president talks to the Easter Bunny. [Laughter] And then we have the vice president. [Laughter and boos from the audience. One person shouts, "Where, where, where?"] Who flies to the Korean Peninsula to talk about our strong and enduring friendship and alliance with North Korea. [Audience member says, "Idiot."] And really. What did the North Koreans ever do to deserve Kamala Harris? [Audience member shouts, "Have her!"] Another audience member says, "What did we deserve?"

I'm here today to give you a word of hope and a word of encouragement. I've got two simple points. The first one. America is in crisis. [Audience: "Yes, Sir."] Listen, we know this. You look at what's happening in Washington. Biden and Harris and Schumer and Pelosi. They are batcrap crazy. Yeah. That's actually a technical medical term. Look up in the medical dictionary. It's under B for bat. [Laughter from crowd]

Every single policy they put in place is a mess. All of them are wrong. It's actually impressive to get everything wrong. If they literally rolled the dice by accident, they get something right, but everything they touch, they destroy. Inflation [Audience member: "Preach!"] skyrocketing across the country. [Audience member shouts, "Boo!"] Cost of everything's gone up. The cost of food's gone up. The cost of rents gone up. The cost of mortgages have gone up. The cost of lumber has gone up. The cost of electricity has gone up. The cost of healthcare has gone up. The cost of gasoline has gone up. It is so bad Antifa can't afford bricks. [Audience laughter] It's so bad Eric Swalwell can't afford Chinese dinners. [Audience laughter. One member says, "Here, here!"] Look it is so bad that Hunter Biden can't afford crack cocaine. [Audience laughter] Yeah, he's forced to snort Pixie sticks instead. [Audience laughter] Inflation is out of control and crime is even worse. Every part of America, the murder rates are up. The the the carjacking rates are up, the crime rates are up. It's almost like abolishing the police and putting leftwing DA's in office that let violent criminals go results in a whole lot more violent crimes. [Audience member: "Preach!"]

And then there's our southern border. But there's really nothing I can tell y'all about the chaos at the border that you don't know already, because you're living it every day. You are seeing the suffering, the chaos, the human misery. That comes from what's unfolding on our southern border. You know that in the last year and a half with Joe Biden as President, 4.4 million people have crossed the border illegally. The worst illegal immigration in 62 years? I've been coming down to the Rio Grande for 10 years. It has never remotely been as bad as it is now. And the national media? They ignore it. The corporate media pretends South Texas doesn't exist. Why is it that Joe Biden won't come to the southern border? Why is it that Kamala Harris, allegedly the quote border czar, won't come to the Rio Grande Valley? Because they know if they come, the TV cameras will come with them. And the corrupt corporate media, you cannot watch the children who have been assaulted by traffickers. You cannot see the women sexually assaulted by vicious traffickers. You cannot see the dead bodies abandoned on farms and ranches throughout South Texas. You can't see the jails overflowing, the hospitals overflowing, the

schools overflowing. You can't see the over 100,000 overdoses from fentanyl and other opioids. Because the cartel had been given free reign on South Texas. None of that makes national news. But you send 50 illegal immigrants to Martha's Vineyard, [audience cheers and applause] and holy crap, those white-bread-pansy-leftist-gazillionaires lose their minds. They absolutely lose their minds and I don't know if there's been anything that is more demonstrated the hypocrisy of the left than their reaction- you know, AOC tweeted out "Shout out to the people of Martha's Vineyard for demonstrating the very best in American values." [Audience boos] I actually responded. I retweeted her and I said, "They deported everyone within 24 hours. They literally sent them to a military base."

And as bad as the domestic policy is, as bad as the economic policy is, the foreign policy and national security policy is even worse. From Biden's disgraceful surrender to the Taliban and withdrawing from Afghanistan, leaving Americans behind to die. When that happened, every enemy of America they looked to Washington, to the Oval Office, they took a measure of the man in the Oval Office, and tragically, they came to the conclusion that our commander-in-chief was weak and feckless and ineffective. [Audience member shouts, "That's right!" Another says, "And retarded."] And every enemy of America right now is stronger, and the world is more dangerous than it has ever been. Now some of y'all might be thinking, "Ted, you said you were going to encourage us. You really suck at this." But I told you I had two messages.

Here's my second point. Revival is coming. [Audience cheers and applause] And I believe that with all my heart, one of the great blessings I have is that I get to travel all over the state of Texas and all over the country. I see what's happening. People's eyes are opening up. [Audience cheers and applause] You look throughout American history, politics has always been like a pendulum: one party gets in power, they go too far one direction, the American people say hold on a second, they pull it on back. Every time I see some dumbass policy from this White House, part of me grieves. Grieves for the damage being done to the American people. But part of me quietly celebrates because it's accelerating the process of people realizing this path doesn't make any sense. [Audience member shouts, "Red wave! Red wave!"]

You know, you look at something like the insanities of COVID. Sometimes it takes a crisis to reveal character. COVID, the pandemic, showed the character of petty politicians all over this country. Little tyrants who shut down small businesses, who shut down restaurants, who shut down gyms, who shut down bars, who shut down food trucks, who shut down churches, who shut down schools- hurting tens of millions of children across this country by shutting their schools down for over a year. [Smattering of applause. One audience member says, "I didn't even graduate."] And none of it made any sense. How many of y'all remember the idiocies of mask policies? Remember the rules: you walk into a restaurant, you must wear a mask. Until you sit down. [Comments from audience: "Ridiculous. Ridiculous." Another says, "And COVID doesn't exist anymore."] And when you sit down, you take your mask off. Why? Because of science. And actually I've got a theory on this, which is the COVID virus reacts to altitude. At 6 feet, it is utterly deadly. At three feet it's harmless and a tonic for regrowing the hair. By the way, that's why Fauci is safe. He's only 5 feet tall. [Audience laughs] But everybody watching this knew it was nonsense. It made no sense.

And people's eyes are opening up, and I'm here today to tell you in November, just about a month from now, we're gonna see not just a red wave, but a red tsunami. [Audience cheers and applause] And that is going to be led by the men and women right here because I'm here to tell you, in November 2022, South Texas is turning red. [Audience cheers and applause] I have been saying this for over a year. You know, you look at South Texas. The values in the Hispanic

community. Our values are fundamentally conservative. What are the values we believe in? Faith. Family. Patriotism. You know, the rate of military enlistment in the Hispanic community is higher than any demographic in America? And hard work. You look today at these crazy woke leftists. That has no resemblance to our community. And then you look at what happened right here in District 34. We had a special election in a seat that had not had a Republican member of Congress since 1871. But that's older than Joe Biden. I think. [Audience laughs]

And thanks to the hard work of everyone here knocking on doors, picking up the phone and making phone calls, getting on social media, sending texts, sending emails, saying listen, what they're doing in Washington is killing us. The men and women here y'all shocked the world when Mayra Flores became elected as your congresswoman. I'm here to tell you Mayra's doing a fantastic job. [Audience cheers and applause] And what the Democrats are counting on is telling people of South Texas just shut up and vote Democrat. [Audience shouts, "Never!"] Just follow orders. You're not allowed to think for yourself. You're not allowed to recognize that your family's hurting, that your community is hurting from policies that are idiotic. And I gotta tell you, that's not going to happen. And not only that, Mayra Flores will be reelected. [Audience cheers and applause] In the district next door, Monica de la Cruz is going to be elected. [Audience cheers and applause] In the district next door, Cassie Garcia is going to be elected. [Audience cheers and applause]

A couple of weeks ago, I had Mayra and Monica and Cassie all up to Houston, along with three other Latina candidates running all over the country. One in Illinois, one in Virginia, one in Florida. The sixth of them all. Smart, beautiful, passionate, fiery Latinas.

You know I described growing up my Tia Sonia. You guys saw my father. My Tia Sonya is my father's younger sister. I call her my Tia Loca. And she would wear these huge chancletas. And when Bibi and I were misbehaving, which was frequent, she would pull off her chancleta and she had eyes in the back of her head, she'd just throw her chancleta, boom, it hits you in the back of the head and you'd fall to the ground. [Audience laughs] I cannot wait until Mayra and her reinforcements are on the House floor and Adam Schiff starts saying some dumb nonsense and out of nowhere a chancleta and boom! [Audience laughs] And by the way, the six of them they've dubbed themselves the Spicy Tacos.

You know you had Jill Biden. Who came to a conference in San Antonio, it was called a Latinx Conference. [Audience boos] Alright, you want a simple rule of thumb that is always, always true: find me someone that uses the idiotic word Latinx and I will find you someone who is not Hispanic. They are a rich, white, woke liberal, a refugee from the faculty lounges. [Audience member shouts something intelligible and Cruz responds] That's a good example. Actually, when he launched his campaign against me in '18, The Associated Press ran a story. They said Beto O'Rourke gave a speech in his native tongue. And I said, "Wow, I've never seen a speech in Gaelic before." But look, you look at the Spanish language, you have Latino and Latina. Every damn word in Spanish is masculine or feminine and what do these leftists want to do? Erase it all and stick an X on it. But Jill Biden stood up, and she said, "Hispanics are as diverse. As breakfast tacos." By the way, for the record, I'm a chorizo egg and cheese. And you gotta think about it. This wasn't just a gaff. This wasn't like Joe Biden anytime he speaks. This was written in the speech. It was loaded on the teleprompter. The White House political affairs said, "Hey, this is a great idea. Let's call all the Hispanics in America tacos."

You look at what's happening here. It is a change that is fundamental and transformational. It is going to change Texas and the nation. [Audience applauds] But to make that happen, it's gonna take work. So the Texas Legislature, when they redrew Mayra's district,



they drew it to put more Democrats in it, so there are more Democrats in their district now than there were in the special election, they think that means she can't win. [Audience cheers] They're wrong. And I gotta tell you all your friends and neighbors. [Audio cuts out because my iPhone turned off after overheating.]

### **Ted Cruz—Translated**

[La música de introducción de Eye of the Tiger se desvanece]

[Aplausos]

Dios bendiga al gran estado de Texas. ¿No es Mayra fantástica? Lo que está sucediendo aquí ahora mismo es emocionante. Es transformacional. El sur de Texas está cambiando ante nuestros ojos y está cambiando el estado de Texas. Está cambiando el país. Está liderando un avivamiento en todo el país. [Aplausos]

Ya sabe dónde nos encontramos ahora mismo. Esto no es normal. El presidente de los Estados Unidos le da la mano al aire vacío. [Risas] El presidente habla con el Conejito de Pascua. [Risas] Y luego tenemos al vicepresidente. [Risas y abucheos de la audiencia. Una persona grita: "¿Dónde, dónde, dónde?"] Que vuela a la península de Corea para hablar sobre nuestra fuerte y duradera amistad y alianza con Corea del Norte. [Un miembro de la audiencia dice: "Idiota."] Y realmente. ¿Qué hicieron los norcoreanos para merecer a Kamala Harris? [Un miembro de la audiencia grita: "¡Tómala!" Otro miembro de la audiencia dice: "¿Qué nos merecíamos?"]

Estoy aquí hoy para darles una palabra de esperanza y una palabra de aliento. Tengo dos puntos simples. El primero. América está en crisis. [Audiencia: "Sí, señor".] Escuche, lo sabemos. Miren lo que está pasando en Washington. Biden y Harris y Schumer y Pelosi. Están locos. Sí. Eso es en realidad un término médico técnico. Busque en el diccionario médico. Está debajo de la M de Murciélagos. [Risas de la multitud]

Cada política que implementan es un desastre. Todos ellos están equivocados. De hecho, es impresionante hacerlo todo mal. Si tiraron los dados literalmente por accidente, acertaron en algo, pero todo lo que tocan lo destruyen. La inflación [Miembro de la audiencia: "¡Predica!"] se disparó en todo el país. [Un miembro de la audiencia grita, "¡Buu!"] El costo de todo ha subido. Ha subido el precio de la comida. El costo de los alquileres subió. El costo de las hipotecas ha subido. El costo de la madera ha subido. El costo de la electricidad ha subido. El costo de la atención médica ha subido. El costo de la gasolina ha subido. Es tan malo que Antifa no puede pagar ladrillos. [Risas de la audiencia] Es tan malo que Eric Swalwell no puede pagar cenas chinas. [Risas de la audiencia. Un miembro dice: "¡Aquí, aquí!"] Miren, es tan malo que Hunter Biden no pueda pagar por su cocaína. [Risas de la audiencia] Sí, en su lugar se ve obligado a inhalar pixie sticks. [Risas de la audiencia] La inflación está fuera de control y el crimen es aún peor. En cada parte de Estados Unidos, los homicidios han aumentado. Las tasas de robo de autos aumentan, las tasas de delincuencia aumentan. Es casi como abolir la policía y poner fiscales de izquierda en el cargo que dejan ir a los criminales violentos y da como resultado muchos más crímenes violentos. [Miembro de la audiencia: "¡Predica!"]

Y luego está nuestra frontera sur. Pero realmente no hay nada que les pueda decir sobre el caos en la frontera que no sepan ya, porque lo viven todos los días. Están viendo el sufrimiento, el caos, la miseria humana. Eso viene de lo que se está desarrollando en nuestra frontera sur. Saben que en el último año y medio con Joe Biden como presidente, 4,4 millones de personas han cruzado la frontera ilegalmente. ¿La peor inmigración ilegal en 62 años? He estado viniendo al Río Grande durante 10 años. Nunca ha sido ni remotamente tan malo como lo es ahora. ¿Y los

medios nacionales? Ellos lo ignoran. Los medios corporativos fingen que el sur de Texas no existe. ¿Por qué Joe Biden no vendrá a la frontera sur? ¿Por qué Kamala Harris, supuestamente la citada zar de la frontera, no vendrá al Valle del Río Grande? Porque saben que si vienen, las cámaras de televisión vendrán con ellos. Y los medios corporativos corruptos, no pueden mirar a los niños que han sido agredidos por traficantes. No puedes ver a las mujeres agredidas sexualmente por traficantes despiadados. No se pueden ver los cadáveres abandonados en granjas y ranchos en todo el sur de Texas. No puedes ver las cárceles desbordadas, los hospitales desbordados, las escuelas desbordadas. No se pueden ver las más de 100.000 sobredosis de fentanilo y otros opioides. Porque al cartel se le había dado rienda suelta en el sur de Texas. Nada de eso es noticia nacional. Pero envías a 50 inmigrantes ilegales a Martha 's Vineyard, [la audiencia vitorea y aplaude] y, mierda, esos millonarios izquierdistas de pan blanco y pensamientos pierden la cabeza. Se vuelven absolutamente locos y no sé si ha habido algo que demuestre más la hipocresía de la izquierda que su reacción. Ya sabes, AOC tuiteó: "Grita a la gente de Martha 's Vineyard por demostrar lo mejor de Estados Unidos". valores." [Abucheos de la audiencia] De hecho, respondí. Le retuiteé y le dije: "Deportaron a todos en 24 horas. Literalmente los enviaron a una base militar".

Y por mala que sea la política interna, por mala que sea la política económica, la política exterior y la política de seguridad nacional son aún peores. Desde la vergonzosa rendición de Biden a los talibanes y la retirada de Afganistán, dejando a los estadounidenses para que se murieran. Cuando eso sucedió, todos los enemigos de Estados Unidos miraron a Washington, a la Oficina Oval, tomaron una medida del hombre en la Oficina Oval, y trágicamente, llegaron a la conclusión de que nuestro comandante el jefe era débil, irresponsable e ineficaz. [Un miembro de la audiencia grita: "¡Así es!" Otro dice: "Y retrasado".] Y cada enemigo de Estados Unidos en este momento es más fuerte, y el mundo es más peligroso que nunca. Ahora, algunos de ustedes podrían estar pensando: "Ted, dijiste que nos ibas a animar. Realmente apestas en esto. Pero te dije que tenía dos mensajes.

Aquí está mi segundo punto. Se acerca el avivamiento. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] Y creo que con todo mi corazón, una de las grandes bendiciones que tengo es que puedo viajar por todo el estado de Texas y por todo el país. Veo lo que está pasando. Los ojos de la gente se están abriendo. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] A lo largo de la historia de Estados Unidos, la política siempre ha sido como un péndulo: un partido llega al poder, va demasiado lejos en una dirección, el pueblo estadounidense dice espera un segundo, lo tira hacia atrás. Cada vez que veo alguna política tonta de esta Casa Blanca, una parte de mí se aflige. Se aflige por el daño que se le está haciendo al pueblo estadounidense. Pero una parte de mí celebra en silencio porque está acelerando el proceso de personas que se dan cuenta de este camino no tiene ningún sentido. [Un miembro de la audiencia grita: "¡Ola roja! ¡Ola roja!"]

Ya sabes, miras algo como las locuras de COVID. A veces se necesita una crisis para revelar el carácter. COVID, la pandemia, mostró el carácter de los políticos mezquinos en todo este país. Pequeños tiranos que cierran pequeños negocios, que cierran restaurantes, que cierran gimnasios, que cierran bares, que cierran camiones de comida, que cierran iglesias, que cierran escuelas, lastimando a decenas de millones de niños en todo este país al cerrar sus escuelas cerradas durante más de un año. [Un puñado de aplausos. Un miembro de la audiencia dice: "Ni siquiera me gradué".] Y nada de eso tenía sentido. ¿Cuántos de ustedes recuerdan las idioteces de las políticas de mascarillas? Recuerda las reglas: entras a un restaurante, debes usar una máscara. Hasta que te sientes. [Comentarios de la audiencia: "Ridículo. Ridículo." Otro dice: "Y el COVID ya no existe".] Y cuando te sientas, te quitas la máscara. ¿Por qué? Debido a la

ciencia. Y en realidad tengo una teoría sobre esto, que es que el virus COVID reacciona a la altitud. A 6 pies, es completamente mortal. A tres pies es inofensivo y un tónico para el crecimiento del cabello. Por cierto, es por eso que Fauci está a salvo. Solo mide 5 pies de alto. [La audiencia se ríe] Pero todos los que miraban esto sabían que era una tontería. No tenía sentido.

Y los ojos de la gente se están abriendo, y hoy estoy aquí para decirles que en noviembre, dentro de aproximadamente un mes, veremos no solo una ola roja, sino un tsunami rojo. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] Y eso lo van a liderar los hombres y las mujeres aquí porque estoy aquí para decirles que en noviembre de 2022, el sur de Texas se está poniendo rojo. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] He estado diciendo esto durante más de un año. Ya saben, miren al sur de Texas. Los valores en la comunidad hispana. Nuestros valores son fundamentalmente conservadores. ¿Cuáles son los valores en los que creemos? Fe. Familia. Patriotismo. Ya sabes, ¿la tasa de alistamiento militar en la comunidad hispana es más alta que cualquier grupo demográfico en Estados Unidos? y trabajo duro Miren hoy a estos locos izquierdistas despiertos. Eso no tiene ningún parecido con nuestra comunidad. Y luego mira lo que sucedió aquí mismo en el Distrito 34. Tuvimos una elección especial en un escaño que no había tenido un miembro republicano del Congreso desde 1871. Pero eso es más antiguo que Joe Biden. Creo. [La audiencia se ríe]

Y gracias al arduo trabajo de todos aquí tocando puertas, levantando el teléfono y haciendo llamadas telefónicas, ingresando a las redes sociales, enviando mensajes de texto, enviando correos electrónicos, diciendo, escuchen, lo que están haciendo en Washington nos está matando. Los hombres y mujeres aquí conmocionaron al mundo cuando Mayra Flores fue elegida como su congresista. Estoy aquí para decirles que Mayra está haciendo un trabajo fantástico. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] Y los demócratas cuentan con decirle a la gente del sur de Texas que se callen y voten por los demócratas. [La audiencia grita: “¡Nunca!”] Simplemente sigue las órdenes. No se les permite pensar por sí mismo. No se les permite reconocer que su familia está sufriendo, que su comunidad está sufriendo por políticas que son idiotas. Y tengo que decirles que eso no va a suceder. Y no solo eso, Mayra Flores será reelegida. [Vitores y aplausos del público] En el distrito de al lado van a elegir a Mónica de la Cruz. [Aplausos y aplausos de la audiencia] En el distrito de al lado, Cassie García va a ser elegida. [Aplausos y aplausos del público]

Hace un par de semanas, llevé a Mayra, Monica y Cassie a Houston, junto con otras tres candidatas latinas que se postularon por todo el país. Una en Illinois, una en Virginia, una en Florida. Las seis de ellas. Latinas inteligentes, bellas, apasionadas y fogosas. Saben que describí el crecimiento de mi tía Sonia. Ustedes vieron a mi padre. Mi tía Sonia es la hermana menor de mi padre. Yo la llamo mi Tía Loca. Y ella usaba estas enormes chancletas. Y cuando Bibi y yo nos portábamos mal, que era frecuente, se quitaba la chancleta y tenía ojos en la nuca, solo tiraba la chancleta, bum, te daba en la nuca y te caerías al suelo. [La audiencia se ríe] No puedo esperar hasta que Mayra y sus refuerzos estén en el piso de la Cámara y Adam Schiff comience a decir tonterías tontas y de la nada una chancleta y ¡bum! [La audiencia se ríe] Y, por cierto, las seis se autodenominan Tacos Picantes.

Saben que tenían a Jill Biden. Quien vino a una conferencia en San Antonio, se llamaba Latinx Conference. [Abucheos de la audiencia] Muy bien, quieren una regla general simple que siempre, siempre sea cierta: encuéntrenme a alguien que use la palabra idiota Latinx y te encontraré a alguien que no es hispano. Son un rico, blanco, despertado liberal, un refugiado de los salones de la facultad. [Miembro de la audiencia grita algo inteligible y Cruz responde] Ese

es un buen ejemplo. De hecho, cuando lanzó su campaña contra mí en el 2018, The Associated Press publicó una historia. Dijeron que Beto O'Rourke dio un discurso en su lengua materna. Y dije: "Vaya, nunca antes había visto un discurso en gaélico". Pero mira, mira el idioma español, tienes latino y latina. Cada maldita palabra en español es masculina o femenina y ¿qué quieren hacer estos izquierdistas? Bórralo todo y pégale una X. Pero Jill Biden se puso de pie y dijo: "Los hispanos son tan diversos. Como tacos de desayuno." Por cierto, para que conste, soy un taco de chorizo con huevo y queso. Y tienes que pensar en ello. Esto no fue solo un error. Esto no es como Joe Biden cada vez que habla. Esto estaba escrito en el discurso. Estaba cargado en el telepronter. Los asuntos políticos de la Casa Blanca dijeron: "Oye, esta es una gran idea. Llamemos tacos a todos los hispanos en América".

Mira lo que está pasando aquí. Es un cambio que es fundamental y transformador. Va a cambiar Texas y la nación. [La audiencia aplaude] Pero para que eso suceda, se necesitará trabajo. Entonces, la Legislatura de Texas, cuando volvieron a dibujar el distrito de Mayra, lo dibujaron para poner más demócratas en él, por lo que hay más demócratas en su distrito ahora que en la elección especial, piensan que eso significa que ella no puede ganar. [Aplausos de la audiencia] Están equivocados. Y tienen que decírselo a todos sus amigos y vecinos. [El audio se corta porque mi iPhone se apagó debido al sobrecalentamiento.]

## APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

PHOTOS FROM THE TRUTH AND COURAGE CAMPAIGN STOP



*Figure 1 Truth and Courage Tour Bus*



*Figure 2 The Moon Rock*



*Figure 3 Police at The Moon Rock*



*Figure 4 Pastor Rafael Cruz Speaking*



*Figure 5 Christian Collins Speaking*



*Figure 6 Mayra Flores Speaking*





*Figure 7 Christian Nationalist Shirt*



*Figure 8 Senator Ted Cruz Speaking*



*Figure 9 Truth and Courage PAC Media Block My Photographer*

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kymerly Morquecho graduated *summa cum laude* with her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2016. She promptly began teaching English at her high school alma mater, teaching grades 10-12. From 2019 onward, she taught Advanced Placement courses in Language and Composition and Literature and Composition. She also served as a UIL speech and debate coach, AP campus coordinator, and SBDM chair.

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