Oprah Winfrey Golden Globes Speech Analysis

In January of 2018, Oprah Winfrey gave a riveting speech at the Golden Globes that got almost everyone on social media to comment on and even earn herself many presidential bids for the 2020 election. Her powerful yet touching speech helped kick start the #metoo movement and increase donations to the organization from all over the country. Additionally, she brought a lot of awareness to the event of harassment in the workplace, and after her speech, many new cases of women admitting they were sexually assaulted surfaced. Oprah Winfrey was born on a small farm in Mississippi in which she lived with her mother and grandmother. Her mother worked as a housemaid which meant they moved pretty often and met many different people.

Oprah, as a young girl, was continuously molested by male family members until she ran away to Tennessee to live with her dad. There, she went to school, earned straight As and read as many books as possible. Oprah flourished, and became an honor student, winning prizes for oratory and dramatic recitation. She caught the eye of a reporter at a performance and got a job at a local radio station. She was able to learn more about the industry and became more interested in the entertainment field. With this passion, she rose through the ranks and hosted one of the most popular shows on radio.

Later on, she signed on to a TV show which kickstarted her involvement in the entertainment industry. The Cecil B. deMille Award is given to people who have greatly contributed to the world of entertainment. There have been amazing artists celebrated through the years and Oprah was selected to be one of them in 2018. In her speech, she mentions Sidney Porter, the first black man to receive this award and gives an anecdote of when she saw that as a child. She then continues to say, “it is not lost on me that at this moment, some little girls are watching as I became the first black woman to be given this same award.” In this, she identifies and connects with the people that are not present for the speech. She continues to thank the people that helped her through her journey in entertainment and then switches the mood by talking about the abuse towards women in the entertainment industry.Around the time of the 2018 Golden Globes, there were many allegations towards big directors, producers, and actors of sexual harassment. “Times up” was the theme of the 2018 Golden Globes and the goal was to bring more awareness about sexual misconduct in the workplace and help empower women who have gone through situations like these to stand up, speak out, and fight for their rights. Many actresses brought respected female activist as their dates and everyone wore black to show their support of the Me Too movement. Oprah had an audience of respected artists in the entertainment industry, they all had the power to lead other people. Her goal was to band together every person in the room so they could all make a bigger difference.

Oprah started her speech with an anecdote about herself as a little girl watching the Golden Globes on her kitchen floor. When Sidney Porter won, she said she had never seen a black man win and be celebrated like every other person. “Up to the stage came the most elegant man I had ever seen. I remember his tie was white, and of course, his skin was black, and I had never seen a black man being celebrated like that.” She then reached out to the viewers and acknowledged the little girls watch her being present with this award. She linked historical and current events. By using the true story of Recy Taylor, she was able to show the brutality against women that has been occurring for decades. Oprah used Recy’s story as a metaphor

for all people who have suffered abuse and have not been heard, seen, recognized or respected. As Oprah was talking, she never pointed a finger to who was at fault, she instead called people together. Instead of making her speech about race or gender, which would have created a polarized opinion, Oprah brought people together and persuaded and reassured her audience to move forward in cooperation, not conflict.

Additionally, it was inclusive of all genders. In her whole speech, there was not a single trace of bashing the male gender. Instead, she mentioned the “phenomenal men who choose to listen” which united the entire room. “It’s not just a story affecting the entertainment industry. It’s one that transcends any culture, geography, race, religion, politics, or workplace.” By talking about all the diverse industries, she expanded the scope of her intended audience. This was able to increase the relevance of her topic and make people from all walks of life feel like she was talking to them. By mentioning many different careers women are in and the Olympic scandals, she was able to move the issue out of the entertainment industry and into the real world where many more people are going through sexual harassment in the workplace. Oprah’s main goal was to ignite a fire in the audience. She wanted to inspire not just the room she was speaking in but everyone that was listening. This was about creating a unified front against a problem that was affecting all women. Throughout the speech, Oprah had a strong and stern voice, she was able to convey the urgency of the situation through her voice. She spoke almost effortlessly and use no notes.

Oprah put in the effort to memorize her speech so she could connect with her audience and maintain eye contact throughout her entire speech. This also allowed her to “be in the moment” and speak from the heart instead of her head. The speech itself was written well and condensed with a sense that “every word counted”. There was no try-too-hard language, no type of male-bashing and no sugar coating of any information. She was straight to the point and did nothing with the speech or her delivery to distract the viewers from the message.Oprah created a crescendo as she spoke. Just like a musical performance slowly increases energy by the end of the performance, she did the same for her speech. It didn't feel like it was forced or artificial, it felt authentic. The audience was feeling exactly how she felt about the topic and erupted in a roar of cheers as she said: “So I want all the girls watching here, now, to know that a new day is on the horizon!” Her passion for this topic was positively reciprocated in the room and left the audience with a lasting thought and a feeling of joining her to stop this problem.In conclusion, Oprah proved that every speaking opportunity matters. There’s no such thing as a throw-away talk, even if we’re receiving an award, presenting a keynote or giving a report at a staff, reporting on a board or annual meeting or participating in a panel; we have a responsibility to honor the occasion and say something that matters. It is possible to make an enduring difference if we invest the time and effort to craft a meaningful message, we can make a difference even if the point is only a few minutes long.

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