**Susan B. Anthony: Still Relevant Today**

In 1872, Susan B. Anthony voted without a legal right to do so. The reason she did not have the right to vote was simply being a woman, as women did not have voting rights at the time. When put on trial for this in 1873, Susan gave a passionate speech on why she felt women should have the right to vote so as to persuade the people in the court. In analyzing the structure of her speech, her key arguments, and how she presented those arguments, one can gain insight into how to write a better speech, and perhaps find some statements which still hold true today, possibly more than ever before.

Susan’s speech was structured in the tried-and-true “Introduction-Arguments-Conclusion” manner. The basic version is that she started by greeting the people in the courtroom, then proceeded to go over the reasons why she felt her actions should not be considered a crime. A closer analysis indicates that she goes from one point to another, focusing on one at a time, allowing each to stand at full strength. This is a method of speech organization which has stood the test of time.

There are two key arguments in this speech. The first is that the United States was formed by “We, the people”, as opposed to “We, the white male citizens”. In other words, what Susan is arguing is that all people who live in the United States should have the right to vote. In fact, at one point, she asks, “Are women persons? I hardly believe any of our opponents would have the hardihood to say that they’re not.” Her use of “hardihood” in that sentence is interesting, as it is a very uncommon word in the present day. The word “hardihood” refers to an individual’s fortitude, or perhaps even audacity (Merriam-Webster). What she is asking, in other words, is if those who did not think women deserved the right to vote would have the audacity, the gall to say that women are not people. A lesson on writing persuasive speeches can be found here quite easily: One way to persuade a hostile audience is to ask a strong question.

Susan B. Anthony’s other key point is that the ability to vote is a sign of freedom. She argues that without the right to vote, the US is effectively an oligarchy (i.e. a country controlled by a specific group of people (ibid)) for a given person. “An oligarchy of wealth where the rich govern the poor. An oligarchy of learning where the educated govern the ignorant. Or even an oligarchy of race, where the Saxon rules over the African.” In other words, what she is arguing is that a democracy in which any individual lacks the right to vote is not a democracy at all. This statement actually still applies to the modern day, what with the recent influx of Voter ID Laws (which are, at the very least supposedly, intended to deal with voting fraud) causing impoverished citizens to be unable to vote. Can our country truly be a Democracy today if any adult, law-abiding citizen is rendered unable to vote by the law? Of course, another lesson on speech-writing can be found here: Repetition is a powerful tool, and can emphasize your point quite well.

In conclusion, Susan B. Anthony’s speech on the right of women to vote is still relevant today in many ways. It is not just through lessons from the structure of her speech, but through statements which still ring true for issues we face in the present day.

# References

Merriam-Webster. n.d. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.