

# A Socio-cognitive Approach to the Analysis of Selected American Athletes' Celebrity Speeches

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## ABSTRACT

The pervasiveness of celebrity figures in contemporary media and the effect they have on the minds of the public made investigating their discourse and exhibiting the way they think a worthy topic to study closely. Celebrities, as a social group, use language as a means of inspiration, encouragement, and empowerment. In this regard, they become exemplary and inspirational to the public by conveying their opinion, attitude, ideas, and knowledge. It is worth saying, most celebrities are simultaneously influential, especially entertainers like sports stars. Their discourse is usually imbued with and drenched in feelings, qualities, morals, and values that attract people to follow them, share characteristics with them and watch them. Accordingly, the researchers of the current study selected three American athlete celebrities' speeches to analyze and investigate the type of language used and the kind of ideology imbued within the speeches. Van Dijk's model (1995a, 2016) of the socio-cognitive approach, mainly the discourse-cognition-society paradigm, is applied to analyze the speeches. The main aim is to show how discourse, social and cognitive structures are used to convey ideologies and what types of ideologies are instilled in the (selected) athlete celebrities' speeches. After conducting the analysis, the study ends with the conclusion that some profile athletes are key influencers as spokespersons in society at large and they mainly depict themselves in a positive bright way that assists in spreading their mindsets and ideologies.

**KEY WORDS:** Celebrity, Celebrity discourse, Athlete Celebrity, Socio-cognitive model, Ideology

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Celebrities are becoming an essential piece of today's popular culture thus; it is worth understanding and studying the language they use in formal situations. Cashmore (2014:18) argues that different writers from various intellectual backgrounds agree that when we talk or think about celebrities, we are referring to ideas, thoughts, concepts, or mental impressions of those people, rather than actual people. Athlete celebrities, in particular, have become stable icons within popular culture due to their ability to move freely within many

elite spaces (Reiner, 2019: 7). While they have a wide ground among people, their discourse is worth searching. This study deals with the discourse of such types of celebrities because they become a great interest of people due to their abilities to shed light on issues and persuade the audience; hence, they spread a specific ideology that influences the mind of the public. The study's aim is to ascertain how cognition, society, and discourse structure contribute to the establishment of ideologies in the discourse of selected athlete celebrities. The study has been designed mainly to answer the following questions:

1- What type of ideologies are presented in the discourse of athlete celebrities?

2- Which language structures do they (athlete celebrities) exploit to spread such kind of ideologies?

The current paper hypothesizes that athlete celebrities are showing themselves in a positive way and they spread ideologies in support of their own mindsets, benefits, and interests. Their personal experience and

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stories become an important tool to promote different ideologies to the public.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Celebrity Discourse

Boorstin (1987: 57) defines a celebrity as "a person who is known for his well-knownness". This concept of well-knownness (sometimes called "famous for being famous") has been widely used throughout the literature. It refers to someone who attains celebrity status for no particular identifiable reason. Celebrities are people who interest the public and contemporary culture is 'addicted to celebrity' describing it as the 'new lingua franca of media age' (Schultz, 2004:7 Cited in Stadler & McWilliam 2009: 245). Language as a discourse tool plays a vital role in transforming a certain kind of subject, theme, and public opinion. Celebrity discourses find that celebrities today are much more likely to reproduce a motivational, even moral, discourse of personal achievements and aspirations in contemporary popular culture which have their effect on the minds of the receivers (fans or critics) (Tolson, 2006:155). Celebrities in their discourses share their motivations, their emotional connections, and their positive observations, and encouragements in humanitarian campaigns. Such discourses, whether seen in the real world or online, attempt to raise awareness about social problems by exploring the articulation of identity, individuality, values, and norms (Anderson & Purnaka, 2018: 204).

### 2.2 Sport (Athlete) Celebrity

There has been a lot of interest in the topic of sporting celebrities in recent years. Until the post-World War One Hollywood era, which is often considered as ushering in the era of the celebrity celluloid hero, sports fans might be expected to define their devotion to their favorite athlete as hero worship (Digance & Toohey, 2011:348). Harris notes that athletic heroes sprung from the agonal system in ancient Greece where respect was acquired by "demonstrating brilliance in competition" (1994:8). No doubt, sports stars should be called heroes or celebrities (both terms can be used interchangeably). In the early twentieth century, sports heroes 'were symbols of athletic excellence and represented the ideal of growing sports culture (Stevens et al.,2003:103). According to these critics, the notion of "sports heroes" has been supplanted in the public consciousness by "sports celebrities". Boorstin (1961) maintained that sports heroes and sports celebrities are not the same, with the

former reaching greatness and the latter relying on fame. Rojek takes this issue a step further by differentiating athletic superstars from other celebrities. Rojek bases this on the idea that celebrity in sports is established on "self-discipline, training, and monetary achievement that serves as an example to us all" (2001:37) or as a consequence of their "talent, training, and dedication" (Ibid, 2006:685). Sporting superstars are recognized for their athletic skill and talent, or as Boorstin (1992) maintained, they are just "well-known for their well-knownness" (Parker & Watson, 2015:17). Rojek (2001) suggests that there are three categories of celebrity: ascribed, achieved and attributed. He regards athletes as an example of achieved celebrities due to their physical prowess and talents (Johnes and Schuman, 2000 cited in Bush et al., 2004: 108). Sports celebrities have been looked upon as role models for decades, and with the technological advances in broadcast and interactive media, it appears that famous and infamous athletes are everywhere. Most of the widely utilized advertising spokespersons today are famous athletes because of their huge influence on the generation (ibid).

### 2.3. Socio-cognitive Approach and the Adopted Model

Whereas all approaches in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) study the relations between discourse and society, a socio-cognitive approach claims that such relations are cognitively mediated. Discourse structures and social structures can be linked through the mental representations of language users as well as the socially shared knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies (van Dijk, 2016:64). Teun Van Dijk developed this approach, maintaining that it is the integration between CDA and cognitive linguistics that comes up with this new approach which looks at discourse structures from the lens of their social and cognitive contexts (Attia, 2007: 85). Van Dijk (2006) believes that "societal structures and discourse structures are very different...these should somehow be mediated by an interface that can act as a conceptual ...bridge between social reality and discourse" (p.162). This interface is the cognitive component. This component was missing from many studies in CDA and therefore, in Van Dijk's view, such studies failed to show how societal structures influence discourse structures and how these social structures are in turn enacted, legitimated, or challenged by discourse (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 212). By integrating a cognitive approach, researchers are better able to understand how larger social phenomena are reinforced through popular, everyday discourse. The three main components in van Dijk's approach and how cognition is mediating between discourse and society can be shown in the following

figure:

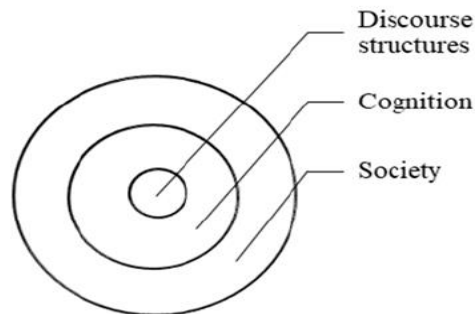


Figure (1) Van Dijk three components of socio-cognitive approach

Van Dijk's (1995a, 2016) three main components are integrated. One can explain the ideology spreading as well as the view of the figure within any of the investigated levels. Mainly, the Social Component of the model refers to the total societal structures and it is context-based. The current study covers Group relations, such as discrimination, racism, and sexism, as well as Group structures such as identity, task, goals, norms, positions, and resources (Van Dijk, 1995a: 20). The Cognitive Component is the new invention within the model that examines both social cognition and personal cognition such as values, ideologies, attitudes and knowledge from a social lens for the former and from a personal lens for the latter. For example, in examining social values, one concerns herself with social ideologies such as being racist, sexist, anti-racist, feminist, ecological, and so on, while personal ideologies refer to the personal interpretations of these group ideologies (Van Dijk, 1995a:20). In his approach, Van Dijk (1995b; 2006b:144) elaborates on the selection of subtle ideological categories among which the fundamental contrast of 'positive self-representations and 'other negative representations' is prominent (source) They are another semantic macro strategies and formulated by 'ideological square' as follows:

- Emphasize "Our" good things (Exaggerate in self's positive features/actions)
- Emphasize "Their" bad things (Exaggerate other's negative features/actions)
- De-emphasize "Our" bad things (Extenuate self's bad features/actions)
- De-emphasize "Their" good things (Extenuate other's positive features/actions)

These four possibilities form a conceptual square that may be applied to the analysis of all levels of discourse structures. As to their content, they may apply to semantic and lexical analysis, but the use of the opposing pairs 'emphasize' and 'de-emphasize' allows

for many forms of structural variation: we may talk about our good or their bad things implicitly or explicitly, with hyperbole or euphemism, so we can analyze the expressions of ideology on many levels of discourse (Van Dijk, 2006d: 44). The linguistic component within Van Dijk's mode is the Discourse component. This component refers to the different structures of text; it tries to examine aspects such as syntax, lexicon, local semantics, topics, and so on. In sum, it is text-based. In Syntax, for example, ideologies and opinions may be expressed in different syntactic forms like word order, sentence structure, nominalization, and use of verbs, cohesion, and pronouns (Van Dijk, 1995a: 24). The current study deals with the last two categories. Lexicalization or word choice is the major dimension of (ideology control) discourse meaning, therefore, some words may be used to convey particular negative or positive meanings and implications about in-group and out-groups which may have an ideological basis (Martinez-Roldan, Malave, 2004: 165). Semantic structures fall within 25 categories (Van Dijk, 2006). The current study examines only disclaimer, evidentiality, hedging and boosters, repetition, illustration as well as victimization as exhibited in the data, hence within the three investigated speeches, some include all of these structures, others part of them. Topics or Topicalizations define the information in a discourse that speakers find the most relevant or important to spread the ingrained ideologies (Van Dijk, 1995a: 27-28).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The current study employs a qualitative method to determine the linguistic and ideological characteristics of the selected (athlete) celebrity speeches. The speeches have been selected due to their publicity and a high number of viewers. The data was collected from YouTube channel (English speech) and (The Undefeated In-Depth) programmed by ESPN. The speeches of three American (athletes) celebrities have been transcribed using the Transcribe Live application as well as manually after listening and observing the whole video. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1995a, 2016) is adopted by selecting specific categories from three components to explore how the discourse strategies can determine the way social and cognitive structures shape discourse and help to promote different types of ideologies.

#### 3.1. Analysis of the Selected Speeches

The study confines itself to three speeches from the sports area. The researchers have analyzed each speech

according to the categories of the adopted model. The researchers will number each speech as No.1, No.2 and No.3 so as to facilitate reading and referring to these speeches. Following the adopted model, the analysis of the selected speeches shows the following:

### **Terry Crews' Speech (Speech No. 1)**

Terrence Alan Crews is a former American football player, actor, artist, and activist. He was a linebacker and defensive in the NFL and World League of American Football. Crews is also a public advocate for women's rights and an activist against sexism. On October 10, 2017 Terry delivered his speech criticizing abuse that was exercised against women and the issues of masculinity, so he hates his belonging and his identity as a man who abuses and harasses women. Analyzing his speech at this specific event shows the following:

#### **syntax**

Example No.1 (first of all, then, totally, therefore, as well as and, but), and personal pronoun (I and We)

Examining the syntactic structure of the current speech shows the cohesive connectedness among the sentences. The use of conjunctions and discourse markers can be felt easily. Words like in example No.2 used as sentence connectors were spreading throughout the speech. This indicates the relatedness of Terry's speech to each other and ideas flow from one sequence to another which is achieved by the cohesion device.

The frequent use of the first-person pronoun I/ my directs one's attention to the speaker's intention to present his viewpoints and feelings to the audience to involve them in his own life and experience. This may coincide with strategies 1 and 3 of the ideological square in which the athlete tried to emphasize his good deeds and de-emphasize his bad deeds. Socially, I is used as a witness of violence exercised against his mother by his father. Throughout Terry's speech, people's relations and norms exhibit discrimination and men's domination over women. From a cognitive point of view, the ideology of Masculinity and manhood has been introduced. Being part of the toxic masculinity and manhood community annoys Terry, maintaining that the power of man in society and the acts one should exercise accordingly should be modified and promoted to a better fair world. Terry uses the pronoun I as a device to narrate his life experience and thus portrays that he is committing himself to his beliefs and will stand by those who face the same experience.

#### **Lexicalization**

Example No.2.(fear, silence, assault, abuse, trauma,

vulnerability, and molestation)

The use of specific words to indicate negative connotations about women's relations and identity throughout society was one of the distinctive features of the speech. Words Like example No.2 were among those. The athlete wanted to say that sexual abuse is not about sex, instead, it is about power over others. Socially, Terry tries to show the relations of women through the idea of discrimination and harassment. Cognitively, the choice of a word has its impact on constructing a negative image schema of the abused person through which Crews tries to show and unveil how women are looked at in society. As such, he presents a negative mental representation of abused women through the use of those nouns.

#### **Hedges and boosters**

Example No.3 hedging words such as (believe, couldn't believe, and think or don't think, usually, maybe, and suggest) and boosting words like (already, never, and know)

As far as hedging is concerned, words like example No.3 were among the hedging words that tried to express the man's personal opinion, personal knowledge, and subjectivity when he talks about men' abuse and to save his face from being blamed by a male in the society. Socially, he tries to criticize the dominant group (men) who regard themselves as being valuable and preferable to women, Terry in this sense, emphasizes the bad action of men in his society. Through a cognitive lens, the athlete expresses his personal knowledge and opinion concerning the issues of abuse and masculinity. The boosting words, on the other hand, like the above example were used to express the degree of certainty and factuality of the information provided. He accurately chooses those words to express his viewpoint and feeling especially when he uses the pronoun I along with boosting words. Socially, the athlete aims at increasing the degree of commitment, honesty, confidence, and assertiveness with the public and how the identity of a woman is in danger at the hand of males and encourages society to break down what culture calls stigma and seek for gender identity equality with other group relations (woman). Cognitively, the image schema of Terry is formed by activating past knowledge of his experience and sharing it with the public to raise the voice of voiceless people against the abuse and power of men over women.

#### **Repetition**

Example No.4 (I, may be, think, and power)

The strategy of word repetition was prevailing throughout the speech, words like example No.3 were

repeated noticeably. Socially, this device helps Terry to emphasize his points and deeds to the public. Cognitively, the repeated words and expressions by Terry aim at enhancing the construction of preferred meaning in the public's mental models and their memorization in ongoing persuasion attempts or later recall. The repeated information is developed to become a system of beliefs and ideologies to be stored in Long Term Memory of the audience's mind. To wit, repetition in his speech makes it possible to provide a distinct and cognitively-driven explanation of his thought and attitude about Masculinity and power abuse.

### Disclaimer

*Example No.5 (American history. I know I'm all over the world right now. But in American history, there was a thing called reconstruction, where you weren't a slave anymore. But if you jaywalked across the street, you get 40 years in prison)*

Terry in his speech employs a disclaimer through the use of conjunction but with concession. Firstly, he mentions the phrase American history: he demands that America is a country of reconstruction; then, he utilizes a disclaimer by using but with it to steer the audience in another direction by saying the last sentence in example No.5. The sentence after but represents negative attitude about American system and rule. Socially, he tries to align the audience's vision with his own concerning the unjust rule and system in America for specific group relations like a black group. Cognitively, personal mental models about human rights and equality in America, become shared knowledge based on previous experiences of the athlete in his society, as this experience reflects a negative image schema of the speaker about the law and rule of America that shows inequality and violation of individual rights.

### Victimization

#### Example No.6 (abused, molested and violated)

The athlete in his speech uses words like example No.6 and many others that have negative connotations to represent himself and the woman (his mother) as a victim of power abuse, this shows his appropriate choice of words that suits his feelings. Socially, he encourages women to challenge their fear and raise their voices against the other group as a victim of power abuse and other kinds of abuse. He identifies himself as a voice of voiceless people (women) who cannot defend their identity and values. Cognitively, his personal experience and the authenticity of his story make people all around the world conceptualize his speech easily. In his speech, he focuses on power abuse since power controls everything like rights, gender balance, and equality. This shows the superiority of men and the inferiority of

women in society. As such, he intended to highlight the idea of inequality and manipulation. Terry's knowledge was based on his personal experience concerning power abuse and violation toward his mother, and both were victims of Men's power.

### Example/ illustration

Example No.7 (his miserable childhood with an abusive father, his mother's life being violated by his father, his personal experience being abused and harassed)

Terry in his speech gives concrete examples in the form of a short story which is his personal experience and his family life. He mentions his miserable childhood with his father and how he used his power and masculinity to abuse his mother. He uses this device to support his claim and belief about abuse and power relations. Socially, he indicates males' power over women and how they manipulate women through fear. Hence he emphasizes female inferiority in the world of masculinity and the violation of women's identity and relations. Cognitively, he emphasizes the positive thing of women and the negative thing of men under the name of manipulation. Thus, he highlights the issues of toxic masculinity, gender inequality, and women's rights violation to the public.

### Topicalization

#### Example No.8 (Toxic masculinity) and (the Abuse of power)

The above example was the basic topics of Terry's talk. Socially, he describes the norms of the male gender and identity in the past and present time. Males can be considered toxic due in part to their assault and domestic violence, to wit, the speaker was a witness to that. Cognitively, the speaker expresses his negative attitudes toward male gender roles in society and critically unveils the issue. Thus, he activates his ideological background and memory to share them with the audience to stand against gender inequality, violation of rights, and power abuse.

#### Serena Williams' Speech (Speech No. 2)

Serena Jameka Williams is the world's number one-ranked women's tennis player. She won 23 singles grand slams and 72 career singles titles. Serena is the most successful woman tennis player and the most recognizable athlete in the world. This interview was done on December 19, 2016, in Clinton Hill Brooklyn, New York. In this interview, she talks about racism, oppression, and persecution of black individuals and women specifically. She strongly criticizes those ideas and actions. Analyzing her speech exhibits the

followings:

### **Syntax**

Example No.1 (then, so, and, but, first, finally, totally, and as well as) and personal pronoun (I and We)

The cohesive devices that were spreading throughout the speech exhibit the connected structure and the sequential flow of ideas. Investigating the categories of the ideological square and the use of pronouns show that the athlete in this current speech tried to show the positive identity of the community she belongs to. The pronoun I is used to show her responsibility, belief, achievement, commitment, involvement, and thought about black individuals' rights. Socially, the use of the pronoun We in her speech refers to a collective identity especially when she talks about (black people) being a member of that group made her proud of herself by saying we are doctors, we are athletes, we are CEO, we are lawyers,...etc. In the narration of her personal experiences with I, she intends to empower black people, especially women relations and be proud of themselves for being black. First plural pronoun We aims at integrating her identity with the whole black women's identity as one, this is a strategy of inclusion to motivate her audience. Cognitively, the speaker talks about her biographical experience using to indicate her refusal of the idea of inequality, violation of human rights, and racism that she experienced during her lifetime as a black individual. As well as, she indicates the sociocultural values of her group as being intelligent and playing an important role in society. Hence, she emphasizes their good things as black individuals that they are professionals in many different fields and sectors.

### **Lexicalization**

Example No.2 (history, supposed to, right, color, discouraged, confident, humility, speak up, slave, blackie and proud).

It can be seen how the lexical choice can provide insight into Serena's attitude and beliefs. The chosen words have both positive and negative connotations like above example. This indicates how the athlete is accurate in choosing the words that represent her ideas, thoughts, and the topic that she wants to speak about. The speaker shows positive-self and ingroup representation through the use of words with positive connotations and other-negative representations with words with negative connotations. Socially, the chosen words are used to indicate her race, identity, color, norm, and ethnicity. As a member of that race, she raises the voice of women, especially black women who fight for their rights, and gives them an awareness that

keeping silent makes them lose their color and culture. Cognitively, she presents information as personal knowledge and attempts to convince the audience to raise their voice against oppression. Although she incorporates the past, cultural knowledge, and background of her group identity and their past life. Hence, these reflect the feminist ideological background of Serena, who promotes women's rights and women's empowerment.

### **Hedges and Boosters**

Example No.3 hedging words like (believe, guess, and think) and boosting words such as (never, always, definitely, really, and honestly).

Hedging words like in the above example with the pronoun I was employed more frequently by the speaker to signal that what is said is personal and subjective rather than showing uncertainty. On the other hand, by using expressions with boosting adverbs like those in above example, Serena emphasized her commitment to the truth of the utterances as well as made the utterances more clear and more explicit to show the certainty of her speech. This indicates that the athlete properly chooses these adverbs for persuasion reasons. Socially, she uses the above words with the pronoun I to share her family values, her past experience, her thoughts, attitudes, feeling, and personal values like self-confidence, not being selfish, not disrespectful, and being proud of herself for being different from having black skin. Her main focus was on black women's relations with other groups in society. Cognitively, Serena strengthens her proposition and expresses her ideas with a strong conviction throughout these items. Specifically, she emphasized her good things and her sociocultural knowledge about her group as a black individual through which she calls for women's rights and criticizes the racial divisions.

### **Repetition**

Example No.4 (I, we are, who we are, I am black and I was confident, Blackie, I didn't really care, I remember being, I remember thinking and I don't really care)

Serena repeated words and expressions to emphasize her belief and idea. The most repeated words are those in example No.4. This shows that the athlete purposely repeated those items to indicate the importance of her ideas and opinion to the public and underlines the intended issues. Socially, she focused on the significance of her race and ethnicity and associated values and norms. The repetition of the pronoun We in this context is inclusive of black people and exclusive of white people in America. Cognitively, the speaker activates her long-term memory of how she faced racism from

white people during her childhood. Serena calls her audience to keep in their mind that black individuals have important professions in society and they play a valuable role as well, not less than any other group in American society. Hence, the repeated expressions help the speaker to emphasize the positive representation of the in-group and the negative representation of the out-group especially with expressions like I am black and I am confident and blackie blackie.

### **Victimization**

Example No.5 (blackie, you do not look good, your hair is not pretty, your skin is too dark, being a woman is a problem and slave)

Serena identifies herself as a victim who is stigmatized because of her skin color, appearance, face, race, etc.. by her surroundings. These were noticed in her speech through the use of the words and phrases in example No.5. These negative statements reflect the negative feeling and sense of the athlete. This indicates that black individuals are victims of racial differences during history, such division is based on race and identity that creates negative attitudes towards white people and American rule. Socially, she states women's relations, identity, and black's race and ethnicity in society that are being downgraded. Cognitively and ideologically, Serena shows the inferiority of black people's (in-group) identity and our group's superiority. Although based on her biographical experience as a black individual she faced a lot of abuse, racial division, and bullying during her lifetime. This made her criticize these ideas and emphasize other negative deeds and actions. Serena is a feminist and defends gender equality and the right of women in general, and the right of black women in particular.

### **Example/ illustration**

Example No.6 (You know, we are the hope and the dream of an of a slave...), (You don't look good) , (Your hair is not pretty) and (Your skin is too dark)

Serena uses this device to explain, clarify and justify her talk and belief. In this regard, she gives an example of Maya Angelou's poem that talks about slaves like the quoted sentence in example No.6. In another part of her speech, she narrates her personal experience as an example to gain the authenticity of her speech. In addition, she narrates her life story as a concrete example by mentioning some sentences of racist people like the three last expressions in the above example and this to indicate her claim of racial division from white American people. Socially, she gives these personal concrete examples to underline the issues of identity and racial division during history against black individuals,

then to make the audience easily conceptualize the contents of her speech. Cognitively, she emphasizes negative other- representations and actions, as she implies that her group has been victimized by society (white individuals) throughout history for a long time. So, this made her fully criticize the idea of racism and inequality.

### **Evidentiality**

Example No.7 (You know, we are the hope and the dream of a slave...)

Serena in her speech mentions the poem of Maya Angelou (famous black American poet) as a piece of evidence to strengthen and support her claim and belief; hence, making the talk sound more authentic and convincing. Socially, she wants to explain their terrible experience as black individuals and she describes their identity as being marginalized and mistreated during history, this device also helps the speaker to attract the attention of the public emotionally and create a social commitment and involvement with the situation. Mainly, by this strategy, she highlights the idea of race, origin, and ethnicity due to the words used in the poem and the poet herself who is a black American. Cognitively, she tries to unveil the issue of inequality, racism, and violation of black people throughout history. The speaker retrieves these stored ideas and reuses them in her discourse to highlight the issues like injustice, inferiority, and exclusion from the right.

### **Kobe Bryant's Speech (Speech No. 3)**

Kobe Bryant is one of the most accomplished and celebrated American athletes (Lakers). During a TEDx Shanghai Salon held on July 25, 2016, Kobe delivered a speech about the mindset that made him a master which is the idea of "Mamba Mentality". This speech becomes a source of power, motivation, and inspiration for people through which he wants to set these pillars in people's minds to be passionate, obsessive, relentless, resilient, and fearless. Most of the quotes within the speech have become slogans among people all over the world including non-athletes.

### **Syntax**

Example No.1 (first, then, and, so, well, overall, and but) and personal pronoun like (I and We)

Examining the syntactic structure Kobe uses different cohesive devices like those in example No.1 in his speech. This indicates that Kobe cleverly made links between his information and ideas to be more comprehensible to the audience to get his points across clearly. The use of inclusive We throughout the speech

was so blatantly clear. It is to give parenting advice that refers to himself (the athlete) and parents in America to convey a message of shared responsibility in society. Cognitively, throughout his speech, Bryant focused on his autobiographical experience to establish a positive image in the mind of the audience and share messages of inspiration, hope and self-drive to benefit others, done with the use of the pronoun I which represents his mental representation that highlights his personal qualities and as being someone with principle, power, and morals. Overall, he emphasizes positive self-deeds and actions and de-emphasizes negative- self deeds, which coincides with strategies 1 and 3 of the ideological square.

### **Lexicalization**

Example No.2 (comfortable, unselfishness, ice-cold, passion, love, possible, creative, peace, gravitates, success, and confidence)

Examining the choice of words and their meanings reveal that Kobe frequently uses specific words to stress certain features and conceal others. He mostly uses words with positive meanings like the above mentioned words. By using such kinds of words Kobe aims at developing poor attitudes of people and sending his positive intuition to be remembered positively. Socially, this implies how he identifies himself among society as superior, strong, and confident in the community. Cognitively or ideologically, he emphasizes his good deeds usually by using those words with I and this shows his superiority and pride in society. As such, he shares his message with words of ideologically positive connotations to implant a positive thought, encouraging and bringing himself closer to a more positive picture in the mind of the audience.

### **Hedges and Boosters**

Example No.3 hedging words like (think, guess, usually) and boosting words like (always, absolutely, sure, consistently, directly, completely, and never)

The use of hedging words cannot be ignored in Kobe's speech. The athlete uses the mental state verbs and adverb like example No.3 in his speech to feel more polite since what he expresses is his opinion rather than denoting certain information. Socially, Kobe uses this strategy as a sign of modesty and solidarity especially when he talks about parenting responsibility. From a cognitive view, he expresses his personal opinion and belief about parents' responsibility by the use of the pronoun I to indicate the subjectivity of what has been expressed which is his knowledge, hence he shows himself as a super father through the positive self-representation and spreading the idea of idol parent.

The boosting vocabularies mentioned in example No.3 reflect Kobe's high degree of authenticity and displays a confident ethos although he shows his degree of certainty and complete commitment to his achievements. Socially, he shares his value of having the ability to make himself better, being courageous, serious, honest, and ambitious. The boosting words are usually preceded by the personal pronoun I which indicates what has been said is his personal opinion and attitude. Kobe narrates his personal experience along with those words to increase the audience's engagement with his talk and show the factuality of his speech. Cognitively, Kobe refers to his memory which is his autobiographical experiences. Accordingly, he emphasizes positive self-representations that create a positive image of himself in the mind of the audience for later recall and as a guiding principle in people's lives.

### **Repetition**

Example No.5 (e.g. learn more- learn more/ When I need a friend...I need to vent and dunk.../ it never leaves... it never leaves.....so it never leaves/ the gap is just going to widen and widen and widen); (e.g. larger and larger and larger/ game like basketball helped me be a better person, a better friend, a better father.), (e.g. on and on and on/ recently, yeah, until recently, yeah).

Different words of a different part of speech have been repeated; verbs, adjectives and phrases of different types have been among the repeated items. The use of this device clarifies how Kobe wants to reinforce his ideas about a specific issue. Socially, the speaker belongs to a superior group. Although, in terms of power relations, Kobe is in a higher position than the hearers being an athlete of distinctive talent. This may pave the way for controlling the public discourse and drawing the attention of the audience to instill the preferred meaning and belief in the audience's memory for later recall. Cognitively, the repeated words and phrases in general, create a positive image in the mind of the public to be remembered later by them and become a system of beliefs or ideologies to emphasize his good deeds and actions.

### **Topicalization**

Example No.5 (love what you do)

The topic of Kobe's speech is mentioned in example No., beginning with the positive emotional word love along with the pronoun you to refer to the audience directly, the phrase has a positive imperative form (unreal commands) that makes hope and gives advice. Socially, he tries to share the value of self-esteem among the society which indicates the internal, emotive state of affairs of the speaker and indicates individuals' relation



in society to his/her duties and responsibilities. From the cognitive side, he shares his personal knowledge which is based on his personal experience during his lifetime as a successful athlete and appeared as a positive role model who inspires people to strive towards the fulfillment of personal goals and aspirations. The positive words of the topic reveal the positive mental model of the speaker regarding the profession, accomplishment, and good deeds.

### **3.2 Results and Discussion of the Analysis**

Analyzing the selected data shows that the three athlete celebrities used different ideological discourse strategies to unveil their own beliefs and ideology as well as to raise people's awareness about the presented issues. Each celebrity uses different social, cognitive, and discourse structures to unravel their different ideologies. For example, in Terry's speech (speech No.1), the most frequent underlying ideologies are power abuse and toxic masculinity. In his speech, he criticizes these ideas, shows his support for women, and stands against men although he belongs to them. As for the second athlete Serena's speech (speech No.2), she tries to display the ideologies of racism and feminism criticizing the former and promoting the latter. The main issue within the speech is to ask for women's rights and to give a voice to the voiceless women. In Kobe's speech (speech No.3), the athlete attempted to create a positive image in the mind of the public as a system of beliefs and ideologies in a form of motivation, encouragement, self-esteem, and inspiration.

After analyzing the three speeches according to van Dijk's components, it is found that the three speeches show some similarities and differences in some respects. Syntactically speaking, the three speeches prove to be cohesive with regard to relating their ideas. The use of the personal pronoun I occupies the three speeches because of the nature of the speech which takes a narration form. As such, the athletes narrate their personal experiences, knowledge, and opinions. As for the topic, most of the topics were about passion and love, the other about abuse, and another one about racism and women's rights, and this diversity of topics depends on their own stories and personal experiences.

The three athletes (Terry, Serena, and Kobe) emphasize their positive deeds, actions, and achievements. Mainly, speeches No.1 and 2 openly show the positive image of the speaker and the negative image of the receiver, something that was missing in speech No. 3 which focuses on the positive side and only implicitly refers to the negative side of the second-person party. This may be ascribed to the nature of the speech and the setting in which it is integrated. Some

differences exist in the use of semantic structures, for instance, in speech No.1, a disclaimer was distinctive, hence investigated, while in speech No.2 victimization and evidentiality were among the distinctive features; hence they were put under the lens of analysis. In speech No.3, Kobe's semantic structures were mainly investigated through the hedges, booster as well as repetition devices.

At the social level, the three athlete celebrities focus on the issues of identity, ethnicity, values, and norms and group relations like women's relations and men's relations to society as well as group structure relations like (in)equality, discrimination, power over others and solidarity to promote a specific type of ideology. The three of them talked about the most critical aspect of the social and cultural life of society among them, including family problems, success, failure, violence, abuse, etc. Overall, most of the ideologies that the athletes spread are based on their interests, activities, benefits, mindset, personal storytelling, experience, and achievements, then other factors like their fame and control of public speaking made the audience and society easily affected by their ideas, opinion, and knowledge they share.

According to the results obtained, the study's hypothesis is proven and verified. The athlete celebrities are positively showing themselves and they spread ideologies in support of their mindsets, benefits, and interests. Those types of celebrities spread ideologies of belonging and positive self-image depiction. As for the latter, the three of them show their selves as positive, talented, and beneficial. As for the former, they tried to involve themselves in the community by showing their own identity by belonging to the same group and community. The three of them exploit specific linguistic structures to fulfill this aim. The use of pronouns, the cohesiveness of the speech, specific meaning structures as well as the choice of the topic were all in support of this main issue.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Athletes with high profiles become important key influencers as spokespersons in society at large. This includes their shifting viewpoints on long-standing issues, like the problem of diversity, discrimination, identity, and social justice. Collectively, the language they use is a gateway to attract the attention of the public and establish identification. It is concluded that the (selected) athletes show themselves as positive and righteous people. The issues they focused on are mostly the ones that they have experienced and faced during their life and work. As such, they promote various ideologies to the public and consider themselves models

who convince and inspire people, empower the powerless, raise the voice of the voiceless and stand against oppression. Mostly they identified themselves within a specific group of society which is usually the abused, the oppressed, and the inferior to gain the passion of the audience. Accordingly, they always stand beside the powerless and losers and feel empathy and passion for them. In their speeches, they exploited specific language structures to fulfill their aim and all was to support their own beliefs, mindsets, and ideologies.

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## APPENDIX:

### Scripts of the three Athlete speeches

#### Terry Crews' Speech (speech No.1)

I'm the first guy to pop his pecks at the One Young World Conference. I love this. Man, I got only a little bit of time, so I'm going to get into it real fast. How you doing? Ah, look at all these people! Man, the future is here. I love the future.

First of all, I am here to basically talk about a couple of things. I only have 10 minutes, so I'm going to be really, really short. But toxic masculinity. How many of you guys have heard all that, the phrase toxic masculinity? It has been used a lot. Everybody's been talking about it, you know. Another way I like to put it is basically abusers of power. Okay. You know, I came up from Flint, Michigan. I was an athlete. I played seven years in the NFL. Flint, Michigan was a very depressed area and I also came up in a very, very violent household. One of my earliest memories was, my father, I probably was like four or five years old. My father punching my mother in the face as hard as he could. That was one of my earliest memories. And you know, through trauma, you learn your lessons. For me, it was, hey, this man, the strongest man I've ever seen, this guy, he uses his power to abuse my mother. I learned simply because I was a man or he was a man, or the people around me who

were men, they were more valuable than women. This is how it was for me coming up in Flint, Michigan. And this is funny because people say, you know, toxic masculinity, I mean don't women do things wrong too and the whole thing, but you got to understand, men and women are very, very different. One thing I noticed coming up in the hood, it was kind of wild because everyone uses their thing to manipulate people. Like, you know, women tend to be manipulated through fear. When I was coming up, the whole thing, if you were, you know, there were, I came up in the crack epidemic where, you know, there were pimps and people who were basically treating women as property and their whole thing was the fear, was to intimidate. My father using fear to intimidate my mother. And he would basically manipulate her through fear. And I knew that guys would work games like that. You know, where they would either be physical, or they would manipulate through mental means where it's like, hey, you know, they were looking at a girl or whatever and tell her, their date or their wife and tell her that she wasn't pretty enough or she wasn't, that she wasn't going to be around much longer, or they would flirt and make her feel very, very insecure. Because the whole game was that you keep the girl or woman off balance so that she never knows whether you like her or not. And this was, this was stuff that was told to me when I was a kid, that when I was dating, they were like, hey man, you got to have game. You got to do this thing. But men tend to be manipulated through pride. And pride is what is the lifeblood of toxic masculinity. When guys are always like, hey man, I bet you, you won't do this, and I bet you I will. And the whole thing, it's about, you know, the challenge, you know, if you ever see five men walking somewhere, they're probably on their way to do something really stupid. I'm just telling you because there's nobody there to calm them down. And let me tell you something. The perfect example of toxic masculinity I can give is let's say you have a restaurant, and a restaurant has a sign in the bathroom. And it says, hey, all employees must wash their hands. But you notice when the boss comes in, who's a man, and if the boss is a guy, he's going to come in and you notice the boss never washes his hands. And so, he goes in, he goes in the kitchen and he's touching the food. He's doing his thing. And employees are like, man, I don't think the boss ever washed his hand. So, what happens is somebody has to tell him, and it's usually the manager and they tell the manager to go over there and tell him and the whole deal. And all of a sudden, the manager goes over to him, he says boss, I'm so sorry, we noticed you didn't wash your hands. Could you please wash your hands? And the boss says: 'Oh, thank you for telling me, you're

fired.'

Then all the employees immediately know, never ever confront the boss about anything. Now you have slipped into a toxic environment, very, very slowly. All the employees are now behind enemy lines. Now they are, if you ever, ever come up to the boss and say anything to him, you are now at risk. You are now a problem that needs to be eradicated, instead of an employee that has good suggestions. And I'm trying to tell you, I was a part of this. I was guilty. I believe because I was a man, I was more valuable, and it was my way or the highway with my own family. And I developed so many bad, bad things that I had to totally eradicate in my life. I had to go to rehab, to beat pornography addiction. There were other things in my life that I knew because of this masculinity issue, this pride issue that did not allow me to hear the truth.

Totally. And I'm going to tell you, man, you guys are young. You guys are the future. The way I came up, you know, as a kid, when I was young, it was like, hey man, nobody wanted to hear me. They were like, just be quiet. You don't know what you're talking about. But I'm here to tell you that you do know. I'm here to tell you that all the young people in here, you know the answer. And I'm here. And if you don't, the fact that you are here and the fact that you are asking questions, because my thing is I never ever want to be the guy that just brings a bunch of answers. I want to be the guy who brings more questions. Because through those questions...

Through those questions, that's where you're going to really figure out, figure out the best way. Because let me tell you, one day is one way and the other day is another way. Now I also want to bring up the Me Too thing. Because being a card-carrying member, ex member of the cult of masculinity, I was able to recognize where my lines got crossed. There was the head of the Motion Picture department at my agency, WME, a guy named Adam Bennett came up to me in the middle of a party when I was with my wife. And this was two years ago, I was already successful, already done movies, already on Brooklyn Nine-Nine, already doing this stuff. And he walks over to me and he gropes my genitals at a party. And I'm sitting here going, what in the world?

Now I pushed the guy back. I'm like, what is happening? I don't even understand it. Now, I ain't even met the guy. I didn't even know the guy. He worked at my agency, but I didn't know him. But I'm like, what is this dude's problem? So, he comes up to me and then I push him back. He comes back to me again and does it again. I'm like, whoa, whoa. Now, now, now my first thing is to kill him. You know what, I'm sorry, I can do that. I am 240 pounds. I got a lot of muscle I can make; I can handle it.

The masculinity part is like, yo, wait, wait a minute. But then I had to think, wait a minute, I am a black man in America. Wait a minute, wait a minute. He is a very, very rich, successful white man. This is his party. If I hit him, what's going to happen to me. Now we're talking about a power dynamic. Most of these things don't deal with sex. The whole *Met Too* thing is never about sex. It's about power. It's about people who want to manipulate and use their power and abuse their power. That's what it's about. Now, one thing, I got some solution, this is the thing that I have a theory. I have a total theory. My theory being that, you know, when I say women are manipulated through fear and guys are manipulated through pride, well, with that theory on the line here, some of these, one of the things that I would like to suggest to young people today, and to the young women in this room and to the young men in this room, one of my suggestions for women to combat this kind of thing is that women be fearless. Fearless! Let me tell you how, the only way I changed, the only way I woke up is my wife left me. My wife left me, and you know what happened? I was like, oh, you know what, go ahead and go. Fine. You know what, I'm successful. Everybody thinks I'm great. You know, Hollywood doesn't care if you lose your family, they don't care. I get two or three other movies. It's all right. Everybody thinks I'm wonderful. But the problem was, I knew I wasn't wonderful. And she knew I wasn't wonderful. So, all of a sudden, I got a little voice and I said, you know what, maybe it's me. Maybe it's not her, maybe it's not my abusive father, maybe it's not the fact that I'm black, maybe it's not all these other reasons that I could point to and kind of figure it all out, but maybe it's me.

And then I had to come to a deep realization that it was me. It was. Her fearlessness and the fact that she took on the fact that she might be alone. Just, I couldn't believe it actually made me see, because everything that I thought I knew and had, and I was the cool man and I had it all together, it was all a lie. Let me tell you, for men, if pride is the problem, the antidote I'm suggesting is vulnerability, for every man in this room. The trick to vulnerability is that you have to open up. You have to admit you're not invincible, because invincibility is the myth. Every man is living it. Every guy in here lives his own action movie, all day long. And my wife kept turning on the light and I'm like, I don't want to see the theater. I don't want to see the seats. I don't want to see it. I want to see my own action movie. But the deal is through vulnerability, we can see, we can truly see where we really, really are. And that vulnerability is the only way you can get love. Because the trick is, what's a wow is that guys tend to feel like, okay, I'm going to be tough. I'm going to be steel. I'm cold steel. I'm dirty

Harry. I'm all these movies where, you know, all of a sudden, the bullets just ping off me and we know that's not true. Vulnerability says I'm hurt. Vulnerability says I have been through trauma. And because of my therapy and because of what I've been through, I was able to recognize when my own lines were crossed. Because this is the thing, there are people who would say you were too big to be assaulted. You're too strong for have someone sexually assault you. And I said, even if I had to beat him up, does that mean I wasn't assaulted? No, I was violated. And a lot of times guys pretend they weren't. In the military, in fraternities, in colleges and schools, things that have been, you know, lines have been crossed, and you'll never, you are too prideful to admit. And you deal with this trauma. And then to the point where, when it's too late. People are on a clock tower shooting at the students. They're in Vegas shooting at a crowd in concert. This stuff comes out in different ways. And if we don't learn as men, how to be vulnerable, and I'm not saying you have to be public, but what I am saying is that you have to find someone you love, you care about, and someone who cares about you and loves you, and you have to share and open up. Because let me tell you, man, I've seen the toughest, toughest men crumble, crumble. And, you know, people determine winners way too early. Like, hey, he won. He won this. He did that. He did it. And they're young, and then you wait a few and you really see the results. And I had so many women come to me about man, Terry I've been abused. I've been sexually molested. But then what flipped me out was that there was so many men after I came public, so many men all over the world were telling me that they were molested too. And it really opened me up to see that this thing is not a witch hunt. It's a fumigation. *Me Too*, *Me too* tells what exactly is going on. And let me tell you, there's a word that a lot of people use in these circles, silence is violence. Your predator, anyone who's giving you that kind of trauma depends on your silence, they depend on you being quiet. They depend on you being scared. They depend on you not telling them to go wash his hands. But I'm telling you, my wife told me I need to go wash my hands. She was fearless. I'm here to tell you that this era, you guys are the future, man. And I have never ever seen a world like this. Ronan Farrow said, we've crossed the Rubicon. The only thing I can really relate this to is the emancipation proclamation, because people are free now. But remember right after that, if you look it up, I'm just going off American history. I know I'm all over the world right now. But in American history, there was a thing called reconstruction, where you weren't a slave anymore. But if you jaywalked across the street, you get 40 years in prison. There's backlash that comes with this,

backlash. But I promise you, and I promise you this, that when you stand for the right thing and you do the right thing and you tell them to go wash their hands, you, you are going to have the support of good people. Because usually these guys are one in a few, and they run a lot of people. They are usually one predator, is responsible for so much damage, it takes them years to get caught. So, I want to thank you for having me here today. It's been a pleasure. And I'm trying to tell you, man, that you guys, you're the future and I love it. It's making me feel good. I only had 10 minutes but thank you very much. I love you. That's all. Ah, thank you.

### **Serena Williams Speech (speech No.2)**

I just think you OK so before me there was a few black players that played but you know I think Althea Gibson was the only one to win grand slams but never on the level that Venus and I just consistently just winning you know half the tournaments I go to. I'm like looking around to see if anyone in the country is looks like me, you know.

You know, that's interesting, because like. Growing up, you know, I'm playing these tournaments. When I was younger, I didn't play a lot. I didn't really see a lot of people. That was my color. That was black. So I think I just got used to it. And then when you go, like to Russia or, you know, a lot of these countries, you know, it's just, you know, you just really kind of stick out. But, you know, I like to stick out. I don't one thing about me, I don't want to be everyone else. When someone everyone's doing something, I'm probably going to try it a different way because I just like to be. Different. I don't want to fit in the mold. From outside looking in, I feel like when I got to know who the Williams sisters were, there was always some type of criticisms at certain points and what allowed you to work through that, because you work through that became greater. Just looking back, you know, when you're in the, when I was in the moment, in the moment, I didn't really think about it because I'm, I'm so focused on my craft. I'm so focused on what I need to do to be the best I can be. And then better that I don't think about anything negative that anyone else is saying. And at a very young age, I think I was 17. I stopped reading any press about me, I think because I was reading an article and they were pumping me up like being this great player. Whatever, and one to watch and blah blah. And then I thought, why don't want my head to get too big? I don't want to be like that person that thinks they're too good for anyone else. And then at the same time, I thought, I also don't want to look at all these negative articles and people talking so negative about me, about my body, about how I look. I didn't want either side of the

spectrum and I don't know. No one told me. I just decided from that day I never read an article and I think that actually helped me avoid a lot of the scrutiny and I kind of put myself in a bubble. Where I don't, and I shielded myself and protecting myself from anything ever came out about me. To this day still, I just feel like. I've definitely was scrutinized because I was confident. You know, it was black and I was confident and I am black and I am confident, you know, but I would say that I feel like I'm, I can be number 10. No, no, you don't say that. But why shouldn't I say that? You know why? If I don't think I'm gonna be the best, why do I play? I could be hanging out. I could be at the beach somewhere or doing something different, you know? And if I playing the number one player and I was like, Oh yeah, I think I can be the best. I think I can be better than her. You know, they're like, oh, she's so rude or she's so disrespectful. And I never meant anything or said anything and disrespect. My dad always taught me. If you want to do something, you write it down, you believe it, you study it, and then you believe that it's going to happen. So I believe that I was going to be #1. I believe that I could have been better than who was number one at that point. You don't really see that when I started a lot and. A black tennis player because we didn't play a lot of tennis and we weren't supposed to have that confidence because black people didn't do that great before. We did some great things in tennis with Arthur Ashe and Althea Gibson, but it wasn't that one player that was winning. Like I said, multiple, multiple grand slams. It became a problem. They it was it was we shook. We literally shook, took the globe and shook it. Me and Venus. Because we came from Compton, we came from nothing. And tennis we kind of have to be have. Something. And we came and we called her. So, and I shouldn't have to apologize for saying and believing that I could be the best. Even when the ridicule or the criticism comes from just you speaking out and just being a black woman, do you ever get like man? There's too much discourage or feeling like you got too much responsibility on people expect too much. From I do feel like that, but only sometimes on the court when I'm playing like a final over Grand Slam. That's when I feel a lot of expectations and that's what I'm like certain would you rather be? Having your 22 titles or would you rather have like two or three and people not having these expectations. So I kind of try to flip it like that and just be like, what would you rather have? And it's hard. That is hard As for being a black woman and being someone that's black in America and representing this country when I'm playing and I guess that's the moment that I realized that. You know, some people looked at me different from being black and I grew up. In South

side of Chicago is this is black neighborhood, white light like I know you grew up black Latinos?

Yes. So yeah, so was it was it a point where you realize like, OK, people look at you different because you're black or you you never felt that? Again, I was in a unique situation. So from the first day I stepped on the scene, I'm talking when I'm really young because we go to parks and where I was from and you know, we would train in Compton and we would go to these, you know, parks. And there's usually only white people that play tennis, you know? So I think from his, for probably as long as I can remember, I've always been able to relate that I am black, I am different. Because of what I do. This kid here would never miss over here. I do remember one time I was playing and and we used to call it Lynnwood Park. It was in Lynnwood and these kids came behind while we were practicing and I don't know as far like 7. I was really young and they were calling me blackie, me and minus their color. They're like Blackie and Blackie, but you know, I I didn't really care. I, I remember being, I remember thinking I don't really care. And that's pretty crazy to think that at that age. Like looking back, I definitely would probably react different now.

But what do you think some of that sensibility and confidence came from your father and mother because they embrace their blackness. So was it like? Something that they instilled in you and your sisters.

They always wanted us to be proud of who we are, and we were, well, a lot of black people. Unfortunately, especially growing up, they are discouraged. Or like you don't look good, or your hair is not pretty, or your skin is too dark, or your lips are too big. Not anymore, but you know. You know, back in the day, they were like, oh, you know, so but we weren't. We were always told to love it, love ourselves. And something that my dad always did with us was he always said, you have to know your history. And, you know, and if you know your past, you can have a great future watching like a lot of those, like, especially slave movies that they had and roots and stuff like that. It was like, you become proud. You see all this, all this stuff that your people went through. So you have an opportunity, you know, to be here like that poem that Maya Angelou said that. You know, we are the hope and the dream of a of a slave. Can you imagine, like, those words that she said are honestly so powerful, like if you think about what the slave had to go through, you know, and then the life that we are privileged to live is, I wouldn't want it to be any other color. Like there's no other race to me that I can. Can that has such a tough history for hundreds and hundreds of years and you know like when I went to Africa I the only the strong survive. So we were the strongest and the most mentally tough and I'm really

proud to to wear this color every single day of my. Life. Do you feel that bad? Something to do with your spirit and energy on the on the. Court, like definitely probably some of my feistiness because I'm really feisty on the court, you know, and I'm really intense on he court and and I'm and that's why people are like. Well, you never give up. You're down match point and you this year it's for me, it's no giving up, you know, because it's like. We we didn't come this far to give up. Yeah you know, like I have this opportunity that's millions of people didn't have and I have it and. You know what's so this is absolutely nothing compared to what we as a people had to go through for hundreds and hundreds of years. Do you feel like, OK now with this opportunity I have more? Responsibility beyond just the. Sport, I think now I feel like I do want to do more and I have to do more, especially with all the stuff that's socially happening in the United States. I feel like it's just it's incredibly frustrating and sad and I think sometimes when you're in a position of a in front of a crowd or you you can influence people. I really think it's important to to to speak up for what's right or what. Believe in and it's so crazy because ten years ago we we weren't really dealing with a lot of this this stuff or if so it was definitely more hidden. Maybe social media wasn't out and it wasn't as in the forefront. But I do know ten years ago I wasn't afraid to have my my nephew or whoever who wasn't at the time drive, you know. Now I just feel like, you know, really be careful. Don't do this. Don't do that, you know? So I I feel like it's. Haven't really had that. You really had that talk with chair and you had to talk like saying like you're really concerned about my nephew going out driving. Yeah, and just all my friends. I mean, you tell me, do you ever get nervous when you get behind the wheel? Yeah, for sure I get. I don't get as nervous and I know there has been different cases with females, but as a male it has to be. You might have to get a. Little, I mean, I get nervous. It's from a from my. Experiences that I've had with with police officers who don't respect black life or black man. And just honestly from those experiences to now, like, I still, when I see the police officer I can be in, I'll try this. You know, I just try to make sure I'm doing everything about my life. I just don't get stopped because like, you just don't. I I feel like they don't look at us and see a human being. Sometimes. They just see all this is a. Black man and I may and either can be doing something or, you know, they may judge. They just prejudge. Did you feel that way 10 years ago?

Well, I guess you said you did. Because I felt this sense. I felt that since I was 16, since I was driving, to be honest. I mean, you know, that's just the experiences I had and you know, and I'm, I'm not one to generalize

and just say all people are like this, like all men, all police are. But. We know like it's a history of just the police and black men, black and brown men, to be honest, and black people. So yeah, I feel that I know that history. I'm I've experienced the.

Her legacy is still being written, but for now, I'll mark it as the greatest. As we talk about black people being marginalized and we talk about women being marginalized, you know, do you think it's ironic that a black woman is in the conversation is the greatest athlete ever? Do you think that's what? Do you think

I think if I were a man, I would have had been in that conversation a long, long time ago. Like 6-7 years ago, eight years ago. Where's your little white man? Would you think you would be? So are any kind of man, any man? Yeah, any man. White, black. I mean, it doesn't matter.

It just if I was a man, then it would have been a different conversation a long time ago. Yeah, long time ago. I think, you know, being a woman is just a whole new set of problems from society that you have to deal with as well. And and being black, so it's like, you know, it's a it's a lot to deal with and especially lately. I've been able to really, really speak up for women's rights as well because I think. You know, that gets lost. It gets lost in color, it gets lost in cultures. And we are doctors, we are lawyers, we are athletes, we are, you know, we are everything. We are CEO's, we're women make up so much of this world. And, yeah, if I run, man, I would have 100% been considered the greatest ever Long time ago.

No, I never thought about it. I never, never thought about being the greatest ever. I just wanted to win a Grand Slam. I wanted to play tennis, I wanted to win tournaments and I wanted to be on tour and live that life and. And I'm still here. And I never, ever, ever. If someone would have said all you'll be doing this and you would have done this, I would have found it very difficult to believe. Very, very, very difficult to believe when someone says to me you're the greatest, you're the goat. I don't even, like, take that in, like, I try to, like, make that go away because I just. I want to focus on being greater than that, you know, and what can I do to to really be the next level to do this and to be better and better and better and? I don't wanna come become complacent and become satisfied with my results and with what I've done and what I haven't done. Whatever. I want to be able to always want to work hard and win and and just keep going. So I don't. I don't want to. I definitely understand that. Yeah, I see it in you and I understand it. You never, never be like, yeah, I am it. Yeah, you'll never hear me say I know I'm the greatest. Like that's. I don't think that's ever come out of my

mouth, right. So I just. I think above all, humility is one of the most important things that humans can have because the you know it, it can keep. It keeps you grounded, it keeps me grounded and it keeps you hungry and it keeps you just thankful for what you have. And I never, ever want to lose my humility with so much focus and so much intention on growing and getting better as an as an athlete.

Ohh, what is my release? I love to dance. I love dancing. I actually work at it like a art, as if I'm going professional. So I love dancing a lot and. Are you good at? Yeah, I'm good. I'm really good at certain style of dancing. Like, I like more contemporary stuff. Oh yeah. So I like, I really like that. I love fashion a lot, but I've always done that like I went to, I went to school for fashion. So when I was somehow playing professional tennis and going to college, fashion was my major. So, you know, kind of always done that. So yeah, it's been that's my release and I'm doing a lot more than now both dancing and fashion and tennis. And so it's been I need that release cause I've been doing tennis for so long that. This is, you know, it's it's insane that I'm still doing it, you know? So. I think I kind of need that. The other stuff to kind of just keep me. Keep me sane. Yes, you're insane and not make me go crazy. Because you continue to go out and be fashionable because you are. We know and I know you like care about that. Like you, you never thought about it influencing. Younger girls or just. No, no, definitely not influencing sport. OK, why are you doing that? Because most people see me on the court. You know, like 99% of the people don't see me like this, right? They see me on the court, you know, sweating and gruntin

Serena Williams: Obviously, everything I've done is because of the help of my sister Venus. But when I started out, I never thought, 'I want to open up doors for black athletes,' and then to female athletes. I ended up on this path and people started looking up to me and it was different, because I was like, 'I'm just doing me.' And people were starting to appreciate it; I was, like, 'Wow, OK, that's kind of cool.'

SW: I never think of it as a weight. I believe that God never gives you more than what you can handle, and for me, I'm not carrying it alone. I embrace it.

SW: Only sometimes on the court. When I'm playing a final of a Grand Slam, that's when I feel a lot of expectations and that's when I'm like, 'Serena, would you rather be having your 22 titles, or would you rather have, like, two or three and people not having these expectations?' I kind of try to flip it like that. That's hard as a black woman and being someone who's black in America, representing this country when I'm playing and when I'm doing things.

SW: I don't know. I've always known I was black.

SW: From the first day I stepped on the scene ... I'm talking when I'm really young, because we'd go to parks, and where I was from we would train in Compton, and we would go to these parks and there's usually only white people that play tennis, you know? So for probably as long as I can remember, I've always been able to relate that I am black. I am different because of what I do. But I also had my family around and Venus was doing it too, and my other sisters were doing it.

I do remember one time I was playing, and these kids came up behind me while we were practicing and – I was probably, like, 7 – they were calling me Blacky. [Both laugh.] Me and Venus, they were like, 'Blacky and Blacky.' I remember thinking, 'I don't really care' – and that's pretty crazy to think that at that age.

SW: They always wanted us to be proud of who we are and who we were. A lot of black people, unfortunately, especially growing up, are discouraged, like, 'You don't look good' or 'Your hair is not pretty' or 'Your skin's too dark.' We were always told to love ourselves. My dad always said you have to know your history, and if you know your past, you can have a great future. So we always watched specials on TV ...

SW: Yeah, we watched all that stuff just to learn about our history. You become proud, you see all the stuff your people went through so you have an opportunity. Like that poem that Maya Angelou said, that we are the hope and the dream of a slave. If you think about what the slave had to go through, and then the life that we are privileged to live – I wouldn't want to be any other color. There's no other race, to me, that has such a tough history for hundreds and hundreds of years, and only the strong survive, so we were the strongest and the most mentally tough, and I'm really proud to wear this color every single day of my life.

SW: I think if I were a man, I would have been in that conversation a long time ago. I think being a woman is just a whole new set of problems from society that you have to deal with, as well as being black, so it's a lot to deal with – and especially lately. I've been able to speak up for women's rights because I think that gets lost in color, or gets lost in cultures. Women make up so much of this world, and, yeah, if I were a man, I would have 100 percent been considered the greatest ever a long time ago.

SW: I'm so focused on what I need to do to be the best I can be – and then better. At a very young age, I think I was 17, I stopped reading any press about me. I think that helped me avoid a lot of the scrutiny, and I kind of put myself in a bubble. I feel like I definitely was scrutinized because I was confident – I was black and I

was confident. And I am black and I am confident. But I would say, 'I feel like I can be No. 1.' [Imitates shock.] Well, why shouldn't I say that? If I don't think I'm going to be the best, why do I play?

SW: There was a time when I didn't feel incredibly comfortable about my body because I felt like I was too strong. I had to take a second and think, 'Who says I'm too strong? This body has enabled me to be the greatest player that I can be.'

And now my body is in style, so I'm feeling good about it. [Laughs.] Like, I'm finally in style! It took a while to get there. I'm just really thankful for the way I was brought up by my mom and my dad to give me that confidence. I could have been discouraged, and I wouldn't be as great as I was because I would have done different exercises or I would have done different things. I totally embrace who I am and what I am. g and making faces.

### Koby Bryan' Speech (speech No.3)

Kobe: Yeah, you know it's.... it's funny like for me the mentality is a really simple one in a sense that the confidence comes from preparation. You know, so when the game's on a line, I'm not asking myself to do something that I haven't done thousands of times before right, so when I prepare, I know what I'm capable of doing. I know what I'm comfortable doing, and I know what. I'm not comfortable doing alright, and so in those moments, if it looks like I'm ice cold or not nervous, it's because I've done it thousands of times before, so it's one more time

Kobe: Well, I mean overall, you know the idea is a very simple one, and you know, the Mamba mentality simply means trying to be the best version of yourself. That's what the mentality means. It means every day you know you're trying to become better, and it's a constant quest. It's an infinite quest, so starting at the age of two when I first started playing the game and on and on and on, I always ask questions. I always try to get better every single day, learn more, learn more.

Kobe: Oh, dude, I was asking questions all the time. You'd be surprised, like some people like my kids at two could do a lot of things. Right. At two, I could dribble the basketball. I could shoot a basketball on the nerf hoop at the house and I would go to practice with my father. I would observe my father. I'd sit and watch games with him.

Kobe: Yeah, man, I guess you could say that. You know a lot of things I learned by just being around the game, so by the age of six, I was already strategizing versus other six-year-olds; you know at the age of six, I figured out that six-year-olds couldn't dribble with their left hand, so I said okay.



Kobe: Well yeah, I would imagine six, so like I was playing these six-year-old kids, I would make them dribble with their left because I knew they couldn't, so they dribble off their foot, I'd pick it up lay it up, do it again. Dribble off foot pick it up lay it up so at six-year-old I had 63 points. I remember mine...

Kobe: Yeah, but um... but yeah listen, I just constantly looked for things to learn from and very observant.

Kobe: Well, I mean, you know the passion came from the love for the game, you know I loved everything about it. Like the smell of the ball.

Kobe: Yes, the ball. You know the smell of like brand-new sneakers, and like the sound, the ball makes when it hits the ground.

Kobe: Yeah, the ball going through the net. Like all those things I love, and so the passion comes from that because once you have that love, you just want to be a part of this thing all the time.

Kobe: It was two. I was born, and I was born to play basketball you know what I mean, and I played a lot of different sports, but nothing brought me the sense of peace and escape, you know, that the game of basketball does.

Kobe: Yeah, when I need that escape, it's there for me, right. When I need a friend, it's there for me. You know when I need to vent and dunk...

Kobe: It's there. So yeah, the game is absolutely everything for me.

Kobe: I think as parents, we try to put them in different things, try to expose them to as many things as possible, and then see if there's one thing that connects with them because if it does, you don't have to tell them to do it. You know, whether it's writing or painting or drawing, you know, if they have that passion, you don't have to tell them; they'll go off and do it because it's just fun. They'd rather do that did anything else so, but as parents, it's our job to just expose them to as many things as possible and see which one they gravitate to the most.

Kobe: Yeah, we expose them to all kinds of it may. They play a lot of different sports, they do a lot of things creatively you know in writing, and things like that and designing and you just sit back, and you just watch which one they move to and then it's our responsibility as parents to try to set them up for success as much as we possibly can.

Kobe: I want them to find whatever it is that they're passionate about, like whatever they feel like their purpose is, and that's what I want them to do.

Kobe: So, my youngest one she does, she wants to. She wants to play. She wants me to teach how to play this summer, and you know our eldest is really into volleyball, so and but we'll see you know passions tend

to change.

Kobe: Well yeah... yeah, my sister was a great volleyball player, so we have a teacher in the family.

Kobe: No, it doesn't... it never leaves ... it never leaves like I... you know the game was just a part of me, so it never leaves even now that I'm retired you know everything I've learned from the game of basketball I've carried it over into life. You know, like basketball helped me be a better person, a better friend, a better father...

Kobe: Because there are life lessons that are within the game like communications, like unselfishness, like attention to detail and empathy and compassion like all those things are in the game and as an athlete, if we are aware of those things it helps us become better human... human beings.

Kobe: Sure, I mean, you can apply; you know I was applying that even while I was playing just in life outside of the game and even more so now. You know, in building a business and all those things, you know, kind of culture you want to have, and all those things are directly learned from the game of basketball to me.

Kobe: I mean to me it just makes complete sense.

Kobe: Okay, so if, if your job is to try to be the best basketball player you can be. Right. To do that, you have to practice. You have to train, right. You want to train as much as you can as often as you can. So if you get up at ten in the morning, train at 11:00, right, 12:00, say 12:00; train at 12:00. Train for two hours, twelve to two you have to let your body recover; so you eat, recover whatever you get back out you train start training again at six; train from six to eight right and now you go home and shower, you eat dinner, you go to bed. You wake up and do it again. Right, those are two sessions. Right now, imagine you wake up at 3:00 you train at 4:00. You go 4:00 to 6:00 come home, breakfast, relax, so now you're back at it again 9:00 to 11:00 right, relax, and now you're back at it again 2:00 to 4:00, and now you're back at it again you know 7:00 to 9:00, look how much more training I have done by simply starting at four right, and so now you do that and as the years go on the separation that you have with your competitors and your peers just grows larger and larger and larger and larger and larger, and by year five or six doesn't matter what kind of work they're doing a summer they're never going to catch up because they're five years behind so it makes sense to get up and start your day early because you can get more work in.

Kobe: No, it was just like you that for me, it was... it was just common-sense like I can; if I just start earlier, I can train more hours, and I know the other guys aren't doing it because I know what their training schedule is. Right so I know if I do this consistently over time is...the gap is just going to widen and widen and widen and

widen, and they won't be able to get that back. So for me it was just common sense. I'm like thinking, how can I get an advantage? Oh, start earlier, yeah, let's do that.

Kobe: Man, like in high school. We start; my first class on high school was 7:00...7:45, I usually get to the gym around 5:00 a.m., and I'd play before school, and then the school starts...

Kobe: My coach. My coach would show up, and we'd do all these basketball drills

Kobe: Just me, my coach, and sometimes it would just be me and the janitor who's still there today, and then I play at lunchtime.

Kobe: I hooked him up with a few things, but I played during lunch and then practice after and then go home, do my schoolwork and then watch a bunch of game films and games on TV and study. Study film.

Kobe: Well, until recently, yeah, until recently, yeah, basketball dominated you know my entire life for more than 30 years.

Kobe: Well, I think it's just no; it's just a matter of what's important to you. What's important to you for whatever reason you know I felt like I didn't feel good about myself if I wasn't doing everything I could to be the best version of myself. If I felt like I left anything on a table, it would eat away at me; I wouldn't be able to look myself in the mirror, right. So the reason why I can retire now and be completely comfortable about it because I know that I've done everything I could to be the best basketball player I could be and so that's where it comes from for me; you can't leave any stone unturned.