

[Living the American Dream 2 and Learning from President Clinton](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on September 10th, 2012

Over the years, I have learned a great deal about inspirational speaking and communication skills by watching our political speakers. Since my goal is to be inspired and to gain a deeper understanding on how to connect with an audience, I do not care if the speaker is a republican or a democrat. I simply admire their life story or their presentation skills.

After the republican convention I wrote: [Living in America: Still Inspired by Those Living the American Dream](#) and linked to video of three awesome speeches. My favorite presentation was by Condoleezza Rice, in part because she was the only speaker who did not use a teleprompter. The line from her speech I will most remember was;

And on a personal note – a little girl grows up in Jim Crow Birmingham – the most segregated big city in America – her parents can't take her to a movie theater or a restaurant – but they make her believe that even though she can't have a hamburger at the Woolworth's lunch counter – she can be President of the United States and she becomes the Secretary of State.

I was more challenged during the democratic convention. Using the headline from the Dallas Morning News, I had to watch the [Giant step forward: Cowboys sack defending champs to open 2012 in style](#) and the [US Open](#) matches. So, I watched video of more speeches.

[**Mayor Julián Castro: 2012 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address**](#)

Since I live in Texas, I wanted to watch San Antonio's mayor [Julián Castro](#)'s keynote speech. I enjoyed hearing his family story about his grandmother and mother and how America made it possible for two grandsons and sons to be mayor of San Antonio and a congressional



candidate. He made a name for himself on the national stage.

For me, the greatest opportunity to learn came from watching President Clinton's speech. Many say President Reagan was the great communicator and clearly he was. Many also say that President Obama can work up an audience and, yes he can. I consider President Clinton to have that amazing ability to look into a camera and cause everyone watching to feel he is speaking directly to him or her. As a lawyer, you can most certainly learn from him. I wrote about his ability to connect with people in January: [You Must Have a "Presence" to Attract Clients](#).

[Bill Clinton speaks at the 2012 DNC](#)



The day after his speech I read two on-line assessments [The Atlantic: Why Bill Clinton's Speeches Succeed](#) by [James Fallows](#) was the first. As you will see in the assessment, President Clinton's speeches succeed:

Because he treats listeners as if they are smart.

I especially appreciate one thing he says:

Now listen to me here, this is important.

The second Atlantic assessment was: [Bill Clinton Shows How It's Done](#) by [Molly Ball](#). I appreciate and agree with Molly Ball's point:

Clinton evoked nothing more than a country lawyer earnestly trying to save his client, and willing to exhaust every argument at his disposal to do it. He seemed as if he would not rest until he had you on his side, and while he was having fun and hamming it up, there was an undisguised earnestness that forced you to actually consider what he was saying.

If you watched President Clinton's speech or watch at the link above, share with me and readers what you learned about speaking and persuading an audience.

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.