

The Rhetorical Citizen: Enacting Agency

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This essay will consider the nature of, and enactment of, agency in the guise of the rhetorical citizen. The essay considers the rhetorical citizen as a person whose actions within the public sphere encompass considerations of race, class, sex, gender lines. Two major criteria undergirding the enactment of citizenship will be explored: the constraints provided with respect to access – whether one can gain both presence in and express voice – and the role of motive in highlighting why one acts in giving voice to one's role as a citizen. The role of voice includes that of silence – the decision to remain silent in the context of an ability to access and present one's voice is itself a message to the community of which one is a part. The refusal to act is as much a rhetorical statement, provided the motive is clear, as is an overt action. The methodological grounding for this exploration will be premised on a Burkean sense of motive.

The rhetorical citizen

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's treatment of rhetorical agency provides a useful starting point for an examination of the role that may be played by the rhetorical citizen: "Whatever else it may be, rhetorical agency refers to the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community. Such competency permits entry into ongoing cultural conversations and is the *sine qua non* of public participation, much less resistance as a counter-public" (2005, p. 3). The key term in this orientation to agency is "capacity"; while I will have reason to object to "competence" as the sole explanation of what it means to have capacity, an ability to state a position is one potential attribute of a person's agency. Stacey Sowards (2010) provides a useful listing

of the “whatever else” in noting its varied nature includes terms such as enactment, performance, articulation, personal will, and resistance, among others. In noting the complex nature of this concept, Sowards offers a concise perspective that serves well for my use: “rhetorical agency is a function of individual dispositions, social contexts, and a rhetor’s ability to respond to those situations as they change over time and negotiate social standings related to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and national origin status” (pp. 227-28). Agency, then, encompasses the complexity involved in any human interaction in which ideas are held in conflict. As such, it embodies issues of access to public space as well as motives for engagement (as will be addressed later). More precisely, this “agentic orientation” is at odds with what Joshua Gunn and Dana Cloud (2010) accurately label “magical voluntarism,” as a reference to “any theory of agency that suggests one can fulfill one’s needs and desires through the independent, willful manipulation of symbols irrelevant of structural limitation or constraint” (p. 62).¹ In Foucaultian terms, agency exists, not as a possession of a person, but as a capacity to act within relations between and among people and the lifeworld they inhabit at a moment in time (Martin 1988).²

Having considered the sense of “agency” in the title, I return to the first phrase. *Rhetorical citizen* has entered the lexicon in various manifestations over the past decade or so (see Greene, 2004, 2007; Martin, 2009; McKerrow, 2010, 2012). My purpose in this essay is to “trouble” the senses in which this term might be employed in relation to rhetorical agency. The central argument I want to advance is that current scholarly interest in articulating a conception of rhetorical democracy, within which the rhetorical citizen is presumed to act, excludes consideration of what it means, rhetori-

¹ Their essay is a trenchant critique of a 2007 essay by Sonja Foss, William Waters, and Bernard J. Armada. As Gunn and Cloud (2010) note, this is a more complex issue than an assumption that a person can choose agency and enact change as a result of that choice. Space does not allow a summary of their extensive review of recent rhetorical positions related to “What is agency?” Suffice it to note that the position they arrive at, which incorporates materialist and dialectic considerations, advances the discussion (See Geisler, 2005).

² Agency is a resource for change. In noting “My role – and that is too emphatic a word – is to show people that they are much freer than they feel” Foucault suggests that individuals can choose, but that freedom is not absolute; it is always constrained within a social matrix that pre-exists their presence (See Rux Martin, 1988, p. 10).

cally, to enact agency by not participating, via silence or the overt refusal to engage others within any of the public spaces reserved for interaction. The argument will proceed in two stages. First, it is important to frame the potential exercise of agency within a sense of rhetorical or “communicative democracy” as distinguished from highly anti-rhetorical conceptions of public deliberation (Young, 2000; McKerrow, 2012). With this as a conceptual backdrop, the essay then considers two principal issues – access, in reference to race, class, etc., and motive within which a sense of silence, or what is perceived as non-action is advanced as a potentially positive act on the part of the rhetorical citizen.

Framing rhetorical democracy

Chantal Mouffe, whose work has privileged the possibility of dissensus as the primary ingredient in a working democracy, provides a starting point. In a 2006 interview, she notes:

I would argue that conflict is ineradicable, but there are different ways in which conflict can express itself. Democracy entails the legitimisation (sic) of conflict. Its aim is to enable forms of expressing conflict that are not going to destroy the political association. ... When a society does not allow for this agonistic form of conflict to express itself, you see the emergence of antagonistic forms of conflict. ... Public spaces should be places for the expression of dissensus, for bringing to the fore what forces attempt to keep concealed. (Carpentier and Cammaerts, p. 973)³

It is useful to contrast this assessment of the nature of a rhetorically oriented approach to democratic action with Robert Ivie’s (2004) astute claim that “democratic dissent was rendered oxymoronic in America after 9/11 under the sign of a timeless war on global terror. ... [The] domestic dissenter symbolizes democracy’s foreign threat, its enemy Other, a traitor to the people and their cause” (p. 20). America has forever been oriented toward exorcizing the perceived enemy within, when outside forces appear as a threat. Witness the creation of a House Un-American Activities Committee, the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in detention camps after Pearl Harbor, the attacks on German-American citizens in the same period, and post 9/11, the downfall of the Dixie Chicks after a brief utterance in relation to then

³ For a brief review of Mouffe’s sense of “agonism,” see Mouffe (2007 and 2013).

President Bush's status as a Texan, and myriad other episodes in which the "foreign other" within American boundaries has been targeted as a symbol of the enemy without. We are forever marking the Other with difference as if it mattered in terms of our own safety and security.

The contrary force, consensus, is equally problematic as a response to the disciplining of dissent. As Jacques Rancière (2009) notes:

Before becoming a preference for peace over war, consensus is a certain regime of the perceptible: the regime in which the parties are presupposed as already given, their community established and the count of their speech identical to their linguistic performance. What consensus thus presupposes is the disappearance of any gap between a party to a dispute and a part of society. ... It is the absolute removal of the sphere of appearance of a people. (pp. 102-03)

Instead of providing a measured, appropriate response to civil discord, consensus excludes those whose voice would otherwise impede progress. It is the privilege of those already in control of the processes of governance, acting on behalf of the people, to determine whose voice will be determined helpful, and which will be silenced via exclusion from the public spaces in which deliberative assembly might occur. From Rancière's (1999) perspective, the "appearance" relates to "a part of those who have no part" in the affairs of civil society (p. 99); their appearance serves to "trouble" the make-up of consensus society in articulating their right to be heard as equals. It should be noted, however, that Rancière's (2011) sense of dissensus differs markedly from that provided by Mouffe:

Political dissensus is not a discussion between speaking people who would confront their interests and values. It is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as an argument on justice. (p. 2)⁴

⁴ As a further example, consider Darrin Hicks' (1995) observation that "By limiting the range of what we persons can say and have count as a legitimate contribution to the discussion, deliberative models are not recognizable as what we know as actual human conversation oriented to practical questions" (p. 304). For a more comprehensive critique of procedural models of deliberation, see Hicks and Langsdorf (1999).

This broadens the compass of discourse from a specific argumentative encounter over differences to the more general sense of who is heard in speaking. From my vantage point, I want to see dissensus operating in this more general context, as well as in contradistinction to the kind of consensus Mouffe considers (e.g., in the narrower frame of dissensus over discussion of interests). That dissensus, at both levels, is an arguably better position from which to perceive the workings of democracy is, of course, not a new idea, nor is the sense that consensus may simply serve to protect hegemonic forces from those whose positions appear threatening. As Mouffe notes, “there is no consensus without exclusion” (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006, p. 967). This observation leads us to the first principle with respect to what constitutes the role of the rhetorical citizen – access. Agency, as well as the decision not to participate, requires the requisite resources to engage social others. As I’ve argued elsewhere, those deemed by hegemonic forces to be incivil are automatically excluded from the “civility table” (McKerrow, 2001). They are not invited to participate as their past reveals a disdain for regulative ideals of decorum and respect. It is much easier for those already accepted into the congregation of the civil to achieve consensus – but at what cost? What is the price paid in terms of exclusion? As Mouffe points out, however, there is no way around this particular “inclusion/exclusion” principle – exclusion is an inherent consequence of any attempt at reaching consensus. Rancière’s question is worth noting in this context: “What indeed is consensus if not the presupposition of inclusion of all parties and their problems that prohibits the political subjectification of a part of those who have no part, of a count of the uncounted?” (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006; Rancière, 1999, p. 116). If you are not among the counted, you have no role to play in presenting voice. As M. Lane Bruner (2010) notes, “all forms of consensus necessarily marginalize some set of discourses” (pp. 57–58). As I argue below, the uncounted may well exercise their voice as rhetorical citizens, if not in legally accepted terms, then in making clear their status as “part of those who have no part.”

In working from Rancière’s position, it needs to be noted that he upends the entire Western tradition of rhetoric that presumes communal connection is arrived at through the appropriation of discursive mechanisms already ensconced within the regulative ideal of a smooth-functioning democracy. As James Martin (2009) notes, Rancière’s “analysis focuses on disagreement as a relationship that *exceeds* any effort to regularize persuasion

through a typology of techniques and devices” (p. 23). Using “police” as a generic term encompassing all social efforts to control the activities of a people, the traditional conception of persuasion falls under this broad umbrella in dictating who speaks and how their discourse shall be shaped. If “the part that has no part” is to be heard as equals, the dimension of what constitutes “the people” has to expand in challenging the conventional dictates of who may speak.

Access

A key issue that needs to be addressed here is the nature of “citizen” in the context of recognizing rhetoric’s province as a means of overcoming the kind of conflict that, in Mouffe’s terms, is endemic in a vibrant democracy. I am in complete agreement with Robert Asen (2004), in arguing that we need to move from a concern over what a citizen “does” or “does not do” that marks their presence as a qualified citizen:

Rather than asking what counts as citizenship, we should ask: how do people enact citizenship? Reorienting our framework from a question of *what* to a question of *how* usefully redirects our attention from acts to action. Inquiring into the *how* of citizenship recognizes citizenship as a process. ... A discourse theory conceives of citizenship as a *mode of public engagement*. (p. 191).

An example from the earlier experience of women in attempting to secure rights illustrates the paucity of a “citizen rights” perspective. Susan Zaeske’s (2003) account of women’s attempt to be recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives in submitting petitions arguing for the abolition of slavery serves as a reminder of how a “right” or “what is done” orientation serves the interests of those already possessing such rights:

Women, they [Representatives] maintained lacked the requisite virtues of republican citizenship: they could not deliberate rationally, act independently, or fulfill a citizen’s obligation to serve in the military. Not unlike the scenario in which the representatives formally abrogated the right of slaves to petition and questioned that of free blacks, members suggested that women possessed no citizenship rights. “Have women, too, the right of petition?” asked Wise at one point in the debates. “Are they citizens?” (p. 131)

What is suggested here, via Representative Wise, is a rejection of women's (and Blacks' as well) status as "citizen" because there is no action that "counts" in relation to the obligations set forth in a "rights" orientation. In seeking to petition, and later to vote, women played into this dominant sense of what citizenship meant. By changing from "what counts" to "how," the very act of petitioning becomes a "mode" of engagement; they were citizens by virtue of the varied processes they employed in seeking to be heard. Being heard is not, in itself, a condition of citizenship. This broader sense is explicit in Josue Cisneros' (2011) examination of the role of a "hybrid citizenship" enacted by Latina/o immigrants (some illegal) in the process of a major 2006 protest against legislation that would place new restrictions on immigration (p. 36). In this instance, the immigrants *enacted citizenship* through public forms of protest, and *problematized citizenship* through their recognition of border violations. The point I wish to draw from Cisneros' argument is that the protestors, especially those representing an "alien" or "illegal" status, enacted the role of the rhetorical citizen via their modes of engagement: they illustrated that "those who lack citizenship in the political, legal, or cultural sense can perform citizenship on a daily basis through rhetorical acts" (p. 40). From a legal or technical perspective, one might not *be* named a citizen, but one can enact that role in contributing to the discursive formation of their value as beings contributing positively to a community. As Cisneros notes, however, coming out publically in this way can produce a backlash, wherein real citizens—those already affirmed under the law — perceive protestors as unworthy of inclusion, and use their protest as affirmation of that judgment (p. 42). As the protestors' activity in 2006 suggests, they came together in accessing public space to air their views over their status as contributors to the national scene.

Another example, this time clearly one that illustrates that not all dissensus arrives at consensus, also serves to highlight the issue of access to public space. In this instance, a "five-acre empty lot simply known as Wilson Yard" in Uptown, a suburb of Chicago, remained undeveloped after a fire in 1996. As plans moved forward for a large apartment complex, "dozens of organizations and hundreds of Uptown stakeholders ... evoked democratic rhetoric ... to justify and support arguments both for and against affordable housing at Wilson Yard" (Rai, 2010, p. 41). As Candice Rai notes, over the next several years those involved pro and con in how best to develop the Yard were "completely unable to agree on a collective vision of their neighbor-

hood's future" (p. 4). This did not occur due to a lack of rhetorical skill, an absence of access to public space in which to express opinions, or an inability to communicate with those in power. In the end, those opposed to the proposal lost their lawsuit against the city, and the units (and big-box store) were eventually occupied in 2010, some thirteen years after the initial conversations began. While dissent continued, planners planned, bureaucrats found financing, and a developer completed the project. A collective vision likely still is absent. As Douglas Ehninger (1970) observed long ago, arguments are never "over" even when events are concluded, such as the decision to build in the face of ardent opposition. Some residents of the Uptown neighborhood may yet refuse to shop in the new Target or grocery store now occupying the former vacant lot.

In the above examples, citizens (whether official or not) have exercised their rhetorical voice in public spaces. These function as illustrations of the possibility present for any person (in theory) to enter a public space and give voice to their interests. That this is not open to all is also evident, as is shown in Ivie's initial illustration of the difficulty for those calling attention to the possible complicity of the U.S. in creating conditions for Bin Laden's hatred – this in no way excuses or authorizes the actions on 9/11; it does, however, acknowledge the possibility that hatred toward another does not simply appear one morning; one does not initiate hate from a vacuum. Access may be limited by a commitment that suggests loyalty to country brooks no expression other than from those in support of a government's actions in opposing the enemy.

Access may also be a function of simple logistics. The meeting I wish to attend is in a small space, and I arrive too late to obtain a seat; my transportation to a meeting place is not available, either on my own or with assistance; my interest is not sufficient to overcome obstacles to attendance. I do not feel welcome in the public space; I do not see myself in that space – others of "my kind" are not present, or have not been valued when they attended. These are varied reasons that effectively silence the rhetorical citizen's enactment of citizenship.

Motivation

The last reason brings us to a consideration of a second principle underlying the enactment of citizenship – that of motive. My argument is simple: I wish to create a space for what may be perceived as "non-action" as a rhetorical

expression – as an enactment by a citizen that is worthy of consideration in the same way as overt discursive acts might be seen. If citizenship, as Asen noted, is a process, that process includes motives that may culminate in silence or the overt refusal to participate in ways already “counted” as those fulfilling one’s obligation as a citizen. Kenneth Burke’s (1965) sense of motive as “shorthand terms for situations” grounds an extension of a citizen’s enactment of rhetorical voice to encompass acts that are not explicitly included in prior discussions of what it means to be a rhetorical citizen (p. 29). Burke notes “motive is not a fixed thing” – you can’t see one walking down the street, nor is it singular: “any set of motives is but part of a larger implicit or explicit rationalization regarding human purpose as a whole (p. 26).” A complex notion, motives function, in Burke’s orientation, as “distinctly linguistic” properties which allow one to interpret reality (p. 35). As named, they do not reflect the one and only reality, but rather function as possible interpretations of why one has acted as they have. Burke goes to great lengths in *A Grammar of Motives* to illustrate the various ways in which motives are connected to the elements within the set of terms that function as a means of explaining situations: act, scene, agent, agency, purpose (1969, p. xv). One can locate a motive within each of these terms – they will be different, but hopefully will assist in explaining an event (see Benoit 1996; Blankenship, Murphy, and Rosenwasser 2012; Jasinski 2001). The indeterminacy present in this treatment of motive is purposeful; we do not know the mind of another (and perhaps the other doesn’t either). The best we can do is to attribute, with an understanding of the cultural background or context within which an event occurs, possible motives that accord with our best judgment. In suggesting silence as a rhetorical act that engages an event, I cannot know that the motive for an action is as I’ve called it. I may be wrong. A person who does not vote in an election may have “failed” from the perspective of a normative sense of an almost mandatory act of citizen engagement. However, it remains possible that this alleged failure was itself an expression of disgust with the system, with the selection of candidates, etc. The reason for not voting may, as well, be that one was well-intentioned and simply forgot, that one was ill, or that one simply didn’t like to get involved in any activity remotely connected to an expression of interest in their own lives (Romney’s alleged 47 % perhaps?). In the absence of precise knowledge of one’s motive, one may withhold judgment, or make whatever attribution seems most likely in the present context. The attribution of motive as contributing to

one's actions as a citizen may be based on past information about the person's beliefs and/or actions, as well as nonverbal expressions, or other sources that would corroborate the accuracy of what one concludes about the actions of another.

To be more precise with respect to opening a space for silence as an act of citizenship: Is silence a means of engagement? First, consider Robert Scott's (1972) observation that "every decision to say something is a decision not to say something else, that is, if the utterance is a *choice*. In speaking we remain silent. And in remaining silent, we speak" (p. 146). Cheryl Glenn (2006) elaborates on this perspective in noting that "speech and silence depend on each other: behind all speech is silence, and silence surrounds all speech" (p. 7). This orientation to the rhetorical function of silence is evident in Zaeske's (2010) analysis of Lincoln's silence on issues that could have been noted in an 1842 speech to the Temperance Society:

By talking about the temperance movement while staying silent on the issue of abstinence, Lincoln exploited the capacious indeterminacy of meaning afforded by the discourse of the flourishing temperance movement to articulate his notion of the ideal republican citizen and assert a new trajectory for the American republic. By silencing the public memory of Washington, he effected a parricide against the founding father and the slaveholding generation of the American Revolution so that the sensibilities of a new generation of men, the Whigs, could be heard. ... In what he said and, importantly, in what he did not say – in his silences – Lincoln articulated and demonstrated a rhetorical philosophy of public deliberation grounded in compassionate appeal to the self-interest of the opponent and the enveloping support of public opinion. (392, p. 412)

I think it is clear that silence may function to convey specific meaning. Lincoln's motive in speaking is implicit; he valued an appeal to his opponent's self-interest, and the desire to enhance potential for support served as the impetus to silence. Whether I am right is less critical (as Burke would suggest) than in noting that his silence had consequences. What would have occurred had he addressed abstinence, or more clearly addressed the memory of Washington in that setting is unclear. But in speaking and withholding, Lincoln served the role of rhetorical citizen.

As another illustration, consider the silence that is endemic within a Quaker meeting. Paula Lippard (1988) chronicles the various motives

for silence as a procedural element in Quaker's consideration of proposals, as silence is a means toward consensus: "It is important to note here that, from the Quaker's perspective, the group's common centering in the silence constitutes the true 'gathering' of the meeting" (p. 149). Their motive for silence is to privilege a means of demonstrating respect and a willingness to listen to "inner voices" before speaking. Elizabeth Molina-Markham (2014) corroborates this orientation toward silence as a process in suggesting "A cultural premise could be formulated as: *Silence during meeting for business prepares participants to participate in spiritual decision making and allows space for participants to listen for a decision to emerge*" (p. 170). While this example does not suggest a role within public space, it gives support to the sense in which silence functions as a rhetorical device for, in this instance, a social good of value to the congregants. The same value-added nature of a motive for silence may underly a citizen's decision not to speak at a meeting.

Silence is not the only means of engagement in ways other than speaking within a public space. The refusal to allow a political sign in one's yard during election season may be motivated by a desire to avoid creating an unsightly or aesthetically displeasing look on one's lawn. It may be that the candidate, even when of the same party as the resident, is one a person wishes not to support. In this latter instance, the motive suggests political engagement through its absence. That is, one acts in not acting. Agency remains present in the scene, as one has the ability to engage via sign placement or not, as one's own interests dictate. It may also be the case that placing a sign on one's lawn engages a conflict of interest, or a show of support for a candidate that violates an obligation to remain neutral. In a recent local campaign, for example, the police chief in an adjoining town allowed a campaign sign for one of the two candidates for sheriff to be placed on his lawn at home. The incumbent sheriff, not the one supported, took exception to a member of law enforcement being perceived to overtly campaign for his opponent. Given this circumstance, and the incumbent's later victory, the police chief's action could mean a rift in cooperation between the two offices. There can be ethically appropriate reasons for a refusal to engage politically. As Burke reminds us, judging the action based on one motive rather than another may change the perception of the act. In this latter instance, the police chief was within his legal rights to campaign, but the social consequences might argue against the overt nature of his action. In either case, his action is one of a rhetorical citizen.

Silence, as Shelby Bell (2014) notes, can be a risky enterprise, especially as one loses any control over the ultimate judgment others may make: “Rhetorical silence limits the silent rhetors’ interpretive authority. Even when the rhetor later attempts to frame their silence, or is spoken for by another, the expectations still limit the silent rhetors’ authority and give authority to other interpreters. This is one of the risks of silence as a rhetorical form” (p. 190). I would add “may” to the argument that authority is given over completely to others; in the legal case she examined, it is clear that justices reviewing an appeal possess the authority to ignore whatever the appellant thought was meant by silence as their judgment is placed within a consideration of prior and future legal actions. In other cases, relinquishing authority will depend on the circumstances, not the least of which would be the rhetor’s own credibility as a past and future citizen.

When factors such as race and class are considered in the context of relations of power, the control over one’s reason to remain silent may be limited. As Dana Cloud (1999) argues, “the rhetoric of silence points to *extra-discursive*, material relations of power which are perceived for various reasons to be unspeakable” (p. 179). When one is not part of what may speak, silence is perhaps the only protective mechanism one retains. As Cloud concludes:

The process of being negated, or the formation of a silenced silhouette, can also apply to the speaker or rhetor. If the first persona is the rhetor, perhaps the phenomenon of self-silencing noted in these transcripts could be referred to the constitution of oneself in the role of “null persona.” The null persona refers to the self-negation of the speaker and the creation in the text of an oblique silhouette indicating what is not utterable. (p. 200)

While we may never know in any certain sense what motivates a particular action, or its absence, we need to keep space available for motives that imply engagement with the political culture at a given moment in time. How a citizen engages encompasses more than the exercise of one’s voice in public space. Potentially, it extends to one’s silence, or one’s refusal to participate as evidence of one’s desire to send a specific message to others. Whether that message is heard is open to question, but it does not invalidate the person’s attempt to engage, any more than when ideas expressed publically are ignored, misinterpreted, or simply not heard. The rhetorical citizen does not have to be successful in achieving goals in order to be “counted” among the parts of the social. In this

sense, Campbell's sense of agency as tied to competence is too narrow a conception – as it assumes that one's inability to be seen as competent or be heard is one's fault; it may just as easily be the fault of those refusing to hear what is being said. That "the people" have ignored those who have counseled against particular actions does not, of necessity, mean that the counsel was wrong, nor does it mean that the person giving voice to ideas was incompetent.

Conclusion

As the above makes clear, while starting with Campbell's sense of rhetorical agency is a useful beginning, it is necessary to take a broader view of the consequences of one's attempt to act within a public space. That is the point with respect to the issue of access as well – while one may well be "a part that has no part" within the social matrix, this does not invalidate the attempt to give voice – to "trouble" democracy in a way that upsets what Rancière (2009) references as the "distribution of the sensible": "a relation between occupations and equipment, between being in a specific space and time, performing specific activities, and being endowed with capacities of seeing, saying, and doing that 'fit' those activities" (p. 275). This troubling brings those who are of "no account" into account through their active involvement – forcing those already "in place" to reconsider the role of those whose exclusion is being challenged. Although not a new conception, beginning from dissensus rather than consensus as the orientation toward how a rhetorical citizen enacts and problematizes engagement is a preferred point of departure. As theorized here, I am embracing a potentially contradictory sense of dissensus as the larger question of who may speak, as well as the more precise issue of how the argument is expressed within an agonistic (not antagonistic) environment. This consideration of both definitions allows for the sense of those who have no part to be considered in the context of a rhetorical citizen's enactment of agency. The role of motive introduces a second problematic beyond considerations of access, as it opens up the space for suggesting that inaction is itself an action, that silence may well function rhetorically as something other than simple disinterest and disengagement. That one disengages from what is perceived as an obligation to act in certain ways may be seen as motivated by something other than disinterest. Silence and the refusal to act are potential acts whereby a citizen expresses disgust with a particular party or process, and thereby indicates, through enactment, her or his motive.

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