On Exhibit

A Rhetorical, Political History of Washington, DC

By

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This book first published 2025

Ethics International Press Ltd, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Print Book ISBN: 978-1-83711-187-9

eBook ISBN: 978-1-83711-188-6

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Preface

One writes a book for a variety of reasons. For this one, I have a scholarly reason, a political reason, and a personal one.

The Scholarly

The scholarly one, first. Washington, DC, throughout its history, has been used as an exhibit for political purposes. The city's prominence as national capital and the city's unique political status—not in a state and with residents whose political rights have been severely limited--have facilitated this rhetorical usage. I imagine that any city might be used as an exhibit, but Washington, DC, has been time-after-time the one used in this nation. Political communication scholars should know how the city has been used to send various political messages. Political communication scholars who are also rhetoricians should know how what I am terming an exhibit, which hovers somewhere between fact and fiction (between the two types of examples Aristotle speaks of), works, featuring selectivity, exaggeration, and sometimes distortion. The book, then, offers the city's interesting rhetorical history while complicating and refining our understanding of how the exhibit as a *topos* functions. The book then has a specific rhetorical focus as well as a broader, more theoretical point.

Washington, DC, has been used as an exhibit by those in favor of slavery and by those who wanted to enfranchise all black males and involve them in governance. The city has been used by those opposed to the progress of African Americans and those promoting it. And, seemingly outside the politics of race, the city has been used to show how American cities—and this, *the* American capital city—can be magnificently beautiful. So, at the outset, let me admit that the city

has been used as an exhibit by diverse groups. Race will play a major role in the story this book tells, as in most histories of the city, but its rhetorical history sometimes entails race only incidentally. But even then race lurks in the background—e.g. in creating a "city beautiful" or in pursuing other model urban redevelopment efforts, who was forced to relocate? The answer, although not always people of color, usually is.

The Political

However, an important under-current in the rhetorical history is the city's status, which makes it a pawn in politics. Washington, DC, is not a state, and it is not in a state. Evidently, in the beginning, few thought the city would be populous. That, plus the desire to not be dependent on a state for protection in case of an insurrection, resulted in the city's residents being denied basic citizenship rights. They could not participate in presidential elections until the 23rd Amendment was ratified in 1961; they do not have, to this day, voting representation in the Congress. Perhaps worse than these two slights, they did not have home rule initially, and then for a century-long period between the 1870s and the 1970s. And that home rule is assailed to this day by politicians who use aspects of the city, usually its crime, to argue that its governance, by a sequence of black mayors, is so inept that Congress ought to take further control. And I say "further" because the city's home rule is significantly limited by Congressional oversight. It is a rather limited form of home rule that Washington, DC, has, one that allows Congress to void city actions for purely political purposes.

Over a half million Americas live in Washington, DC. This population exceeds that of Wyoming and Vermont and is quite close to Delaware and Alaska. These thousands of people are denied basic citizenship rights. One might ask: hasn't this rejection of our nation's democratic principles been noted? And the answer is "Yes." Early-on, Augustus

Brevoort Woodward penned essays lamenting the city's political plight for the *National Intelligencer.* However, his call and most proposals to end the city's "colony" status have been thwarted by political forces in Congress. Statehood has been repeatedly rejected, and even the measure of home rule the city has was enacted thanks to Democrats doing an end-run around the southern-controlled House of Representatives District of Columbia Committee and getting a bill to the floor out of the Judiciary Committee. Members of the DC Committee were furious: they wanted to control the city, not for its sake but so that they had a legal justification for using it—exhibiting it—to advance their position on civil rights issues. They wanted to exhibit how bad a black-dominated city was; they wanted to both exhibit the negative results of the civil rights movement and, at the same time, thwart its progress, exhibiting how to do so for others (mainly in the South) to emulate. Grandstanding, yes, but often with tangible consequences for the city's people.

And, as a later chapter discusses, the city is still being used as an exhibit to advance causes larger than the District. Crime, a problem in all urban areas, is where the current exhibition begins, but, whereas it was very clearly black crime back in the 1950s, now it is a curious mix of black and immigrant crime, enabled by liberal Democrat city leaders. A politician could, of course, advance an anti-urban position even if Washington, DC, were a state, but, given the city's legal status, a politician can do more: this politician can act against DC, demonstrating how crime and other urban problems should be addressed, even going so far as arguing that the military should be sent in or suggesting that Washington, DC, should be abandoned for a new (conservative Republican) location, one presumably with less crime and fewer immigrants. That was suggested as early as 1814 (Dickey 105) and, absurd as it sounds, has been repeated in an *American Spectator* piece written by James Pierson in March, 2024. In 1814, there was not that much to abandon, but, in 2024, one has to shake one's head at the

idea's absurdity. Are we to consider seriously the idea of abandoning the many government buildings and monuments and then, rebuilding it all in St. Louis?

Members of Congress have stepped up and addressed the city's and its residents' oppressed political status. License plates have proclaimed "Taxation Without Representation," and President Barack Obama even had presidential vehicles adorned with those plates. But support never seems to advance very far: other issues emerge, and, at least at present, Republicans—knowing that DC will elect Democrats to the House and the Senate—have stood in the Capitol doorway, blocking access. And the issue is just not on the proverbial "radar screen" of Americans at-large, who may question why a city should be a state and have two Senators, not recognizing that Washington, DC has more people than Wyoming and Vermont, both of which have two Senators. Political party platforms have advanced the cause, and several presidents have lent their support, but the city has remained not just a "colony" but something of a blank slate upon which an exhibit might be drawn.

So, undergirding this study is the pro-DC political argument. The study is not, cover-to-cover, that argument but it percolates beneath the surface throughout. The study's focus is on how the District of Columbia has been used rhetorically as an exhibit, but its political status plays a role in that use by justifying it. A recent anti-DC resolution was introduced in the House by congressmen from Florida, Tennessee, and Montana. Would these three gentlemen attack New York or Chicago or San Francisco? They might want to—for they are liberal Democrat places, but they do not feel it is their place to do so, but Washington, DC, is a different story. It is the capital, and it is to a degree still under Congressional supervision. So, these men can attack it, using that attack, not to help the city but to score political points for a larger cause. This study, then, keeps looping back to the

District of Columbia's "special" status, hoping that others will recognize how both the city and its people have been treated unjustly in many anti-DC arguments and in the city's governing structure.

The Personal

And—here's the personal reason for writing this book. I was born in Washington, DC, and, although I was raised a few blocks into the Maryland suburbs, I always thought of myself as a Washingtonian. Furthermore, my parents were both born in the national capital. My mother attended Eastern High School on Capitol Hill; my father, Central High School just North of the city's Shaw District. And their parents were born in Washington. My younger daughter, who is doing family genealogy, quickly got her mother's side over to Europe but complains that she can't get my side out of the District of Columbia or, early in the Nineteenth Century, the parts of southern Maryland that border what became the city. Washington, DC, is often depicted as a city of transients. True, but there are some families that have been there from close to the beginning. Although a morbid note, the "Sheckels" name—usually preceded by "Theodore"—adorns three cemeteries in the city.

My parents, of course, had many DC memories. My mother talked about playing in Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill; my father about walks downtown from his 11th and N Streets NW home. They both talked about Sundays watching Redskins games at old Griffith Stadium, about dinners afterwards at my mother's parents' 10th and B Street NE home, and about being at the stadium when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was announced. They knew the bus (and trolley) routes; they knew the downtown stores. And my mother knew the stores along H Street NE, where Sears set-up its first DC location aside other major retailers, for H Street was Capitol Hill's shopping district

before it became the African American Atlas District (named after the theatre there).

My father had one sibling, who married and moved to Bethesda in Montgomery County, Maryland. My mother had three siblings. One ended up in Chevy Chase out in Montgomery; another in Oxon Hill in Prince George's County. The remaining one, my grandmotherly maiden aunt, stayed in the District—living a block across the line from Takoma Park, Maryland. When, at family dinners, the discussion turned to politics, she would often ask why she should care since she couldn't vote for president and had no senators or congressmen. She was delighted to vote for LBJ in 1964 but still grumbled at having no representation in Congress.

That district line was important politically, but also in other ways. The "look" changed as one crossed it: the streetlights were distinctly different as were the street signs. They were often for numbered streets, and they designated what hundred block you were in. North of the line, all seemed rather random—less elegant, less treed, but also safer, safer because, by the time I was growing-up, crossing the line meant going from white suburbia to black city, which, thanks to the rhetoric we were unwittingly absorbing, meant crime city. Sidewalks were more predictably present on the DC side of the line, but so, supposedly, was danger.

My father would take my older sister and I bicycle-riding. The nearby high school featured a few paths, but the real treat was a large park in DC just North of Coolidge High School between 3rd and 5th Streets NW. When L'Enfant's plan for the city was enlarged, the East-West streets North of the original alphabet ones were two-syllable names in alpha order, three-syllable ones in alpha order, and then trees and flowers in alpha-order. The park was between Tuckerman and VanBuren, so pretty far North, just before the Aspen-Beach-Cedar stretch that preceded the DC-Maryland line on that side of town. Going to

this park meant loading our bicycles into the car (1950 Chevy Impala), but that effort was not the reason we stopped cycling there. Although I did not know the reason at the time, that area had, as they said back then, "gone colored."

When I was growing up, a highlight was a trip to the downtown department stores. We'd shop at "Woodies"; buy children's shoes next door at "Rich's," and eat lunch at the Neptune Room at 13th and E NW. Our trip down, however, changed over the years. It was never down Georgia Avenue, which turns into 7th Street NW. And it was never down 14th Street either. For the longest time, it was down 13th and over the escarpment with Central (by then, Cardozo) High School off to the left. But then the preferred route became 16th Street NW, wider and lined with homes and other structures that looked, even to a ten-year old's eyes, much better. My mother would claim the issue was traffic, but the true issue was race. Streets had "gone colored" and were thought to now be unsafe.

So, as one reading this study will quickly discover, race plays a major role in Washington, DC's history—its political history and its rhetorical history. Early, it was a place in which slavery was fully on display. As the African American population increased, so did the so-called "black codes" to regulate its behavior. They debuted in 1808 (Lewis 83) and grew to fifty-seven pages by the middle of the Nineteenth Century (Dickey 91-92). A bit later, the city was a place where African Americans had the franchise—until all residents, black and white, lost it for a century. And even today, it is a place depicted by politicians as crime-infested, black dominated (with an ever-increasing immigrant group), and too liberal and too Democratic in its politics. These pictures—and others—were exhibits, offered for political reasons—that sat somewhere between fact and fiction.

Growing-up, I was perhaps captured by these exhibits. I quickly learned that crossing the district line meant entering an area less safe,

and I quickly learned that there were parts of the city to either be avoided or to pass through with the car doors locked. Going to Union Station required a doors-locked drive down North Capitol Steet; going to the dentist, who had his office in a large old house in the Capitol Hill neighborhood he grew up in, required a doors-locked drive through the city's Northeast quadrant, which seemed, to a ten-year old, "spotty," with "good" sections and "not so good" sections alternating. And going to the large downtown department stores along F Street NW required going down 7th or 13th or 14th or 16th Streets NW, and, believe-it-or-not, one's choice made a difference: 16th, bordering Rock Creek Park, did not require locked doors.

Growing up in an environment defined by both parental experience of the city and what politicians were making of it did affect my view, but I was also alert to pieces that did not quite fit the prevailing "story" among those who engaged in "white flight" to the suburbs and those who wanted to make an example out of Washington, DC. As a teenager, I was probably more drawn to the city than my parents were—even my father who worked there. The 1968 riots (the smoke of which I could see from my home) ended that attraction, and then, I went off to college in Pittsburgh.

Many years later—and after thirteen years in Pennsylvania and forty-four in Virginia, I still feel the draw of Washington, DC. I lament how its residents, like my maiden aunt, have been denied political rights, but I also lament how the city is used for political purposes, put on exhibit with a high measure of selectivity and, usually, a mix of fact and fiction. Sometimes, these political purposes are arguably beneficent, but, more often, they are malicious. The city, populated by half a million with limited rights, is held up as an exhibition of something "bad," with the supporting evidence exaggerated. An exhibit is created in the mind: listeners "see" the city in the manner

it is described, but what they "see" is often a politically-inspired construct, not the real thing.

Preview

Studies these days must be "theorized." So, in this study's initial chapter, I consider what Aristotle said about the example *topos*. Aristotle was, of course, a brilliant rhetorician, but, sometimes, in his desire for listing types, he misses something important. In this case, he listed examples drawn from reality and examples the rhetor creates as the two possibilities, ignoring an interesting middle ground where examples may be based somewhat on reality but are characterized by considerable selectivity and exaggeration—and maybe distortion. Work on examples as a *topos* has, of course, proceeded onward since Aristotle, but, as Chapter Two will show, it has accepted Aristotle's bimodal division while focusing attention on examples based on reality. Hypothetical examples are discouraged; rules for using examples tied to reality stressed; the middle ground ignored.

Chapter One mixes in another rhetorical concept—that of the "performance"—because it functions much the same way rhetorically as an exhibit that features selectivity and exaggeration. Also because the "performance fragment," as a concept, is usually discussed in the larger category of visual rhetoric. The exhibitions this study will discuss are not literally visual; rather, the rhetor offering the exhibit invites the auditor to see what is being described. Slavery is discussed in words that evoke pictures; crime is discussed in words that evoke pictures. So, although a literal visual might accompany an exhibition—e.g. a picture of a crime scene, the exhibition's visual quality is more in how the auditor "sees" what is being discussed primarily in words. This visual dimension is important to recognize, for it has a power that exceeds that which mere words might have. What I as a young teenager saw as I crossed Eastern Avenue, leaving Montgom-

ery County for the District, did not appreciably change, but I had been indoctrinated to "see" major differences. Yes, the streetlights were different: that I could literally see, but I had been taught to, in my imagination, "see" more.

Following Chapter One is a second preliminary discussion, one that surveys Washington, DC, geographically and historically. Both surveys provide necessary background, for geography plays a role in how the city has developed. The concepts of being "East of the River" or "West of Rock Creek" lack resonance unless one understands where these two markers—the "River" being the Anacostia, not the Potomac—are. And President Trump wanted to "drain the swamp." Is there one? No. But there was swampy marshland and a large creek that became a canal that became by 1820 an open sewer (Lewis 101). These water-related spaces or places do influence how the city slowly developed. And history is, of course, important. Although individual chapters will present bits of the city's history, this overview offers a valuable backdrop, one that highlights what makes Washington, DC, a politically peculiar place.

From Chapter Three onward, the study traces phases in the city's rhetorical history. It begins with the effort by Jefferson and Madison to use the city to exhibit a nation that featured African slavery. It passes through an attempt to exhibit political enlightenment by granting black males the limited franchise whites males possessed and involving these black males in governance and a later attempt to make the city a "city beautiful." It passes through a period during which no one had the franchise, and the city had no home rule. During the latter part, southern members of Congress controlled the two District of Columbia Committees and used the District as an exhibit of both the evils of a black-dominated city and the various ways to thwart the advances being gradually made by the Civil Rights Movement.

The city's African American population is often the object exhibits describe—more often than not, negatively. But there were positive exhibits, put forward by the city's more elite black residents to an audience of whites, less elite blacks, and themselves. The city had black entertainment and culture to exhibit along U Street NW, often referred to as "Black Broadway," and the city had an example of excellent black public education in Dunbar High.

Washington, DC, was not void of the urban issues many American cities were facing, among them grossly inferior housing stock for the city's poorer residents and horribly congested automobile traffic. In addressing them, the city tried to be an exhibit. The ambitious housing redevelopment effort in the city's Southwest quadrant was a failed exhibit in many respects; so was the ambitious superhighway plan. But the latter's failure did facilitate a shift to intra-urban rail and the construction of Metro, which was a highly successful exhibit, inspired by the desire to make a statement to Bicentennial visitors—and speed them about the city.

Home rule returns in 1974, and the city government proceeds through a sequence of African American mayors. On exhibit during this period was either the success of black-dominated urban government or its failure. There was evidence for both success and failure, but neither is necessarily tied to race. Many, however, wanted to tie both to race.

1974, black city governance was unusual, so maybe there was a link then, with the city, like others such as Cleveland, Ohio, and Gary, Indiana, serving as exemplar, but not by the time Muriel Bowser takes office as mayor in 2015. One might also argue that, with the Bowser administration, Washington, DC, finally proceeds beyond being a place where race is the crucial variable. But, as the last chapter in the study shows, the rhetorical history under Bowser takes a curious twist involving race (and ethnicity) with Trump and his MAGA Republicans. As of today, the city is still being used as an exhibit character-

ized by selectivity and exaggeration and outright distortion, but the exhibit is more complicated than when South Carolina Congressman John McMillan hurled racist insults at it in the 1950s.

The concluding chapter is just that, basically highlighting why one should find this rhetorical history of interest. There is, however, one chapter in the flow of the book that interrupts it. It discusses exhibitions that have been held in Washington, DC, such as those by Suffragettes in the 1910's, the Bonus Army in the 1930's, and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's. They are discussed for three reasons: first, they are historically and rhetorically important; second, they are probably what most who pick up this book think the book is going to focus on; and, third, they are rhetorically different from the exhibits this book deals with. These famous events are exhibits using Washington, DC, as a back-drop, helping them make a national statement, whereas the exhibits studied in this book are exhibits a rhetor has fashioned out of Washington, DC. The extra, interrupting chapter helps make it clear how the exhibitions using the capital as their stage are rhetorically different from the exhibitions using the capital as their raw material, to be shaped as necessary to make a political point.

Let me note and stress that this study is *not* another history of Washington, DC That has been written by others with a remarkable measure of agreement. They disagree on how "bad" or "good" Alexander "Boss" Shepherd was; they cite the compliance of the city's wealthy white and elite black communities in the negative portrayal to different degrees; and they disagree on how "bad" or "good" Marion Barry was. But these differences do not alter the rhetorical history I offer. An historian would pour through archives and offer a different interpretation of the city's story. That is not what I did and not my goal. My goal is to offer a rhetorical history.

And what exactly is a rhetorical history? Put simply, it is the story of how the city has been used by rhetors to advance their political

positions. Other cities have such histories. As the Nineteenth Century turned into the Twentieth, Theodore Roosevelt used Chicago to depict how bleak and unhealthful urban life was. Sections of New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles have been used to highlight urban crime and urban gangs. No city, however, has repeatedly been used as a rhetorical ploy in the manner Washington, DC, has. Its status, as capital and as federally-regulated "colony," has allowed that repetition.

The city is often spoken-of as a southern city. It clearly was such when the Civil War erupted, creating issues for supporters of both causes. It still was such as late as the 1950s. But it was never like cities farther to the South. So, the Civil Rights story played out differently in DC than in places farther South. There was segregation—in transportation, public accommodations, and schooling, and this prompted some demonstrations and boycotts. Gradually, things changed. The courts played a major role in forcing changes, in schooling (arguably weakening the city's excellent black Dunbar High School) and especially in housing where whites had used covenants to preserve segregation, and blacks had used "block-busting" strategies to end it. There were moments of tension and moments of anger, but, until the King assassination and the urban riots afterwards, the city was changing peacefully. Whites were fleeing to West of Rock Creek or to the suburbs; blacks were establishing neighborhoods with different socioeconomic traits East of Rock Creek. Too separate; too unequal. The rioting and its aftermath chilled the city, which only gradually warmed again with recovery evident throughout. Then, gentrification began, affecting areas East of the Creek positively and negatively. Some racial mixing developed, but the city as a whole is still racially defined. Very few white children attend the DC public schools; Washington's City Council is overwhelmingly black. The Civil Rights Movement has not reached all of its goals in the national capital, but, with a succession of black mayors—some serving quite well, it has resumed a largely peaceful course.

The several histories of the city offer the (often surprising) facts as well as some oddities. Why, for example, do African Americans prefer grocery shopping at Giant over Safeway or how did the *Washington Post* transform itself from being local, sensationalistic, and often racist to the liberal beacon it is today while the *Evening Star* (now defunct) went in the opposite direction? What I know from parents and about grandparents and great grandparents flesh out that history with its facts and its occasional oddities. And then, there is my own experience. I saw the exhibits "work"—i.e. convince many in the city that they were truthful, not the result of selectivity, exaggeration, and distortion. I saw my elders accept them, and, as I noted earlier, I did too—to a point, for I did note some matters that the prevailing narrative could not explain and I was alert to what activists were saying in response to what some in Congress were declaring and what those in power were suggesting would help the city, like an elaborate interstate highway system (which would destroy black communities) as opposed to Metro's rapid transit one (which, in part, connected black communities to the city's center).

Historians of several stripes have done an excellent job tracing the city's story, so I'm not attempting to challenge their work. In fact, I heavily play-off of their work as the many references should indicate. But I am trying to add depth to the story by, in addition to discussing how the city was used as an exhibit, implying why more in the city did not strongly protest the selectivity, exaggeration, and distortion involved. Some did, but the matter of power—as opposed to governance—lurks beneath the story's surface. Those with power, usually correlated with economic clout, often were aligned with those who chose to present the city as mismanaged or dangerous. During the period when southerners on the two Congressional District Committees assailed the city and asserted control, those with power worked behind the scenes, directing the city's affairs in a direction that supported their interests. Too often, that direction did not address the

concerns of what was becoming a black majority. So, to what historians have written, I try here to add nuance explaining why the often negative exhibition of Washington, DC, was tolerated.

My primary goal, however, is not to add to the city's history. As I have said, that has been written—and written well. Rather, it is to offer a rhetorical history, one that also raises a matter of rhetorical theory well worth noting—that of the "exhibit" that sits between the factual example and fabricated example Aristotle discusses.

Acknowledgements

Published histories, my recollections, and those of family members have helped me understand how a marshy area just below the piedmont and just above tidal waters became a major world capital. Those in politics did not just let the city grow; rather, they took advantage of its political impotence to make of it an exhibit to serve their political purposes. This study focused on the sequence of exhibits. It does touch on some of the technical dimensions of the District of Columbia governance. I'd like to thank colleague and friend Lauren Cohen Bell, who holds an endowed chair in government at Randolph-Macon College, for reading the manuscript and offering comments that helped me make these dimensions clearer. This study also heavily deals with race, since most of the exhibits were/are tied to it. As a white male, I am well aware that there are many pitfalls I might stumble into when discussing African American urban communities. I'd like to thank colleague and friend Carl T. Hyden, who held a faculty position and now holds an administrative position at Morgan State University, a Baltimore HBCU, for reading the manuscript and flagging down spots where I might inadvertently make comments or use phrasing that could be either inaccurate about or insensitive to the African American experience.

Retired, I have no institutional funds or released time to note. But I am thankful that a generous retirement plan—and good investing on my behalf—makes it possible to devote time and energy to a political communication project that takes me back to my roots and allows me to note for a larger audience how Washington, DC, has been not just a city or a capital city, but a site of rhetorical exhibition for good but more often for ill.

I should note, in closing this preface, that the use of Washington, DC, as a rhetorical exhibit continues, that the story told in the penultimate chapter is on-going. All studies must have a point at which the writing stops. Between then and publication, months elapse. So, unless the topic is well in the past, a book may seem out-of-date upon publication. I think I know where Trump and certain members of Congress are going with their anti-DC rhetoric. I think Trump will stop well short of a takeover; I think Congressional action against home rule will certainly fail in the Senate if not in the House. But I might be wrong, but, no matter where current rhetoric leads, it is still true that it is making an exhibit out of our nation's capital featuring selectivity, exaggeration, and distortion. So, my argument holds even if action prompted by the rhetoric exceeds my guesses in the time immediately ahead.

Chapter 1

On Exhibition

The classic text to turn to when beginning a discussion of how an argument works is, of course, Aristotle's *The Rhetoric*. In it, he outlines three basic types of appeals, *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*, and discusses each. Under *logos*, he discusses the many "places" a rhetor might "go" when trying to find the material that would support an argument. One of these "places" or *topoi* is the example.

Aristotle on the Example *Topos*

The Rhetoric is based on lectures Aristotle offered, and, like many lecturers—even today's—Aristotle liked lists. And, so, we are told there are two types of examples. One is the example drawn from reality: in Aristotle's translated words, "the use of a parallel from the facts of history" (Aristotle 147). So, if we were arguing that city government could be effective, we would find a case (or more) where this was true. Aristotle does not say as much, but later discussants of argumentation make it clear that a rhetor needs a sufficient number of such examples—one will not do—and all of the examples must be "representative"—i.e. typical of the class under discussion. So, the cities we might point to should not, on some technical or statistical matter, be outliers. For example, one might not want to use Canberra, the federal capital city of Australia, in an argument, for Canberra was built from a sheep's pasture in the early Twentieth Century and therefore lacks many of the issues most cities, some a good bit older, have. It is in a federal district, the Australian Capital Territory or ACT, so one might think it could be used in an argument involving the District of Columbia, but its comparative recency invalidates its use. (And it

is worth noting that residents of the ACT have both the franchise and representation in both national legislative assemblies.)

The other type of example is what we term "fabricated." In general, Aristotle preferred arguments drawn from the truth as opposed to ones created in a rhetor's mind: he says, "for deliberative speaking the parallels from history are more effective" (Aristotle 149). So, this "fabricated" type would in "the master's" mind be inferior but still useful. If, sticking to the urban emphasis of this book, one wished to argue for intermodal transportation, one might devise an example where heavy rail, light rail, bicycles/scooters, walking, and a minimal number of trucks and automobiles coexisted—even inter-connected. This example might be thought of as simply illustrative, but, if it strikes an audience as plausible, then it does serve as proof that some of its elements might be adopted. Aristotle had doubts about the persuasiveness of the fabricated example, but there are times when it can sway people.

James Herrick and David Zarefsky on the Example

In recent decades, quite a few rhetoricians have treated Aristotle's ideas a passe. Yes, they are foundational, but they overlook important matters such as who has the power to speak and who does not or how identification might be evoked by the very words one uses or how a text may acquire resonance—and power—through other texts it evokes. This "rush" past Aristotle has left exploration of his ideas to a subgroup of rhetoricians, those who specifically study argumentation.

Thus, we find "the example" discussed primarily in the textbooks those who study argumentation have offered. Let's look at two very different textbook cases.

The late James Herrick, who authored multiple editions of *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments*, speaks only about the first of Aristotle's two types of examples. Herrick offers rules for using examples: it or they must be "representative of the class"; it or they must be "reported accurately"; and "a counter-example [should not be] available" (Herrick 214). All quite reasonable rules. Herrick's work is heavily indebted to the discipline of logic, especially informal logic (more so in earlier editions than later ones). That debt shows in how he emphasizes what is necessary to make an argument using an example logical in an everyday, not a mathematical, sense.

Heavily indebted to the discipline of rhetoric is David Zarefsky's *The Practice of Argumentation: Effective Reasoning in Communication* (2019). He notes two types of argument using examples, but they are not Aristotle's. Rather, Zarefsky differentiates types based on rhetorical purpose: generalization or illustration, the former being more rigorous. For both types, he cites several rules. He, like Herrick, emphasizes representativeness; rather than accuracy he emphasizes clarity. He also notes how the use of examples can lead a rhetor into the fallacies of composition and division, and he suggests that an argument may succeed or fail based on the number of examples.

The work of Herrick and Zarefsky, discussing the use of examples in argumentation but from arguably different traditions, offer much the same sense of "rules." They also ignore the fabricated type of example. When talking about this less-preferred type, Aristotle himself quickly shifts into a discussion of fables, especially those drawn from literature. Perhaps this shift has led most contemporary argumentation theorists to treat the fabricated example as somehow fanciful and not connected to argumentation that is presumably attempting to be fact-based and rigorous. Post-Cartesian rhetoricians—most from decades past, although acknowledging Aristotle's three proofs of *logos, pathos*, and *ethos*, have often favored the first, ignored (or dismissed as falla-

cious) the second, and treated the third as a precondition to persuasion. There is, then, as general orientation away from anything not "true." So, Herrick and Zarefsky—both of whom are fine scholars—are not alone in presuming that examples used in arguments should be "real" or "true." Making examples up would not only defy rationality but might be unethical, but, as Aristotle noted, rhetors can quite effectively devise something totally hypothetical and persuade auditors with it. And, in ignoring the "fabricated" example, they ignore something else, something Aristotle entirely misses as well: the rhetorical ploy that this study explores.

The Exhibit

What Aristotle misses is the ground between the two possibilities: an example that, although based in reality, involves a fair measure of either selectivity or exaggeration—maybe even invention or distortion. This book deals with this third type of example. I call it an "exhibit," not an example, to stress that a rhetor is placing it before auditors after having set it up. That "setting up" necessarily involves selecting what to highlight and what to suppress: it is unavoidable unless the subject is so small that one can readily take it all in. Exhibiting, however, is a rhetorical act: one chooses content and one rejects content for persuasive purposes. And what the rhetor does goes beyond simple choosing. The rhetor may choose and emphasize, or the rhetor may add to what has been chosen to better serve the rhetor's persuasive purpose. Selectivity, although arguably necessary, can mislead. Exaggeration and—worse—distortion can mislead even more.

The exhibit, then, exists somewhere on a continuum between reality and fiction. At the real end, what is chosen is undeniably true. It is not all that is true, which immediately causes the exhibit to be less true because incomplete. At the fiction end, what is chosen is invented, probably with some basis in fact so as not to be immediately dismissed

as untrue. No matter where on the continuum, the exhibit is offered by the rhetor as if "sufficiently" true, for an audience will, of course, quickly grant that an exhibit cannot cover all and will, the rhetor hopes, assume that an exhibit has omitted that which is not important to the matter at hand. The rhetor, of course, needs to be careful here, for, if an audience quickly notes an important omission, then the exhibit fails. However, the rhetor is usually pitching the exhibit to an audience that will be inclined to overlook omissions, not noticing them or pushing them aside. So, for example, in the 1970s and 1980s, those who wished to exhibit Washington, DC, as a failure of black government were usually addressing those who believed that black urban government could not succeed but those who wished to exhibit Washington, DC, as the success of black government were usually addressing those who believed that it, in the national capital and elsewhere, could be quite successful. (Thus, two very different versions of Mayor Marion Barry are exhibited.)

Exhibits, then, unless of very small entities, are inherently selective. They represent a fragment, which may be embellished for rhetorical purposes. The idea is similar to the "performance fragment" Erickson discusses in depicting how American presidents (and others in politics) communicate. An audience cannot take in all that a president does; so, those directing the communication pick a piece with a rhetorical goal in mind. If the goal is to depict the president as an international statesman, show him meeting and conferring with a foreign leader. If the goal is to depict the president as a bipartisan collaborator with the Congress, show him meeting and conferring with leaders of both parties from both houses. If the goal is to depict the president as connected to the people, show him greeting "average" Americans at the White House or shaking hands after a rally. Given the extent of press coverage, it would be difficult to go to the fiction end of the continuum—and use a presidential "deep fake," but selectivity is clearly functioning—as is omission. And those directing

political communication have been known to flirt with the fiction end: representing the president doing x while he's really doing y.

As a "Performance Fragment"

The "performance fragment" is typically chosen for rhetorical purpose. Erickson applies the idea to presidential communication (playing off of the work on the presidency of journalists Bob Schieffer and Gary Paul Gates and the work on presidential style of Robert Hariman) , but it is fairly clear that it could be applied to other public officials—governors, legislators, mayors, even judges. Somewhat less obvious would be its application to corporate chief executive officers or university presidents, but someone heading an entity, be it a business entity or a corporate entity, does perform in many ways. Not all can be seen; not all should be seen. So, which performance does one exhibit? Consider a university president. Present her with donors; present her with faculty; present her with students; present her hobnobbing with political figures. All are different exhibits, chosen, one would hope, to highlight either this president's acumen raising funds, rapport with the school's teachers, close connection to its students, or "in" with political figures who might affect university finances.

The discussion of "performance fragments" suggests that they are often deceptive, highlighting an aspect of the job with very positive rhetorical resonance. But, in theory, they could highlight the opposite if the goal were to discredit a leader, or they could just highlight an aspect without a strong rhetorical purpose: here is the president doing something predictably presidential. A similar range is possible when offering a place as a rhetorical exhibit. A city might "perform" a number of roles—cultural center, business center, tourists' mecca, criminals' and drug dealers' paradise. All might be true, but both in choosing just one and in what one then says, one is necessarily distorting the picture—moving it away from the truthful end of the

continuum. This can be done without good or ill intent, but, often, as described in the following chapters, this is often a rhetorical act with a very definite intent.

Consider New York City. As a place, it performs many functions—housing, feeding, entertaining, employing. A fragment chosen to salute the city might show residents and visitors strolling through Central Park. A fragment chosen to demean the city might show a slum area with gang members sitting on or near a stoop. A fragment that serves neither a positive nor a negative purpose might show a stretch of Fifth Avenue featuring a few tall buildings. Fragments select, and fragments often "push" an aspect of a place—or a president—that might be missed or overlooked.

The word "overlook" is important. The discussion of "performance fragments" has emphasized how they are more often than not visual. A president is shown doing something. Applied to a place, they are visual, but the visualization is more in the audience's mind. The audience is asked to picture the city in a certain way, either generalizing from something actually seen or creating the exhibition from whole cloth. The rhetor, then, paints a portrait but that portrait is not a literal one but, rather, how the audience then sees the place. An actual picture of Central Park or a slum area or Fifth Avenue might be offered, but the exhibit typically relies more on words that the audience then creates a visualization from. This is rhetorically important, for the reliance on words allows the rhetor to encourage a visualization that may indeed have no factual equivalent. The New York City slum the mind has created has no reality. It may be just a tad removed from reality, or a great distance removed from reality. It might be tied to what the auditor once saw on television or on a movie screen—or what the auditor actually saw but in another city. I recall, years ago, hearing about the Watts section of Los Angeles. I visualized it as looking like impoverished areas in Washington, DC, or Baltimore, Maryland. As I

discovered driving by Watts, it does not look like either. (I was expecting two- or three-storied row houses, not California-style ranchers.)

This study could easily be rooted in a revision of Aristotle. He cited two types of examples, overlooking an important third—important because its mix of fact and fiction gives it a power to deceive as well as persuade. Aristotle, student of Plato, perhaps did not want to talk about a *topos* so prone to deceiving people, but one cannot consider politics without admitting that techniques that can be used to deceive—as well as inspire—are widely used. Bringing the concept of a "performance fragment" into the discussion may strike some as over-theorizing the matter, but the concept puts the visual front-and-center. We see a president enacting the office—literally see, and we see a place in our minds based on a mix of what might be literally seen in news coverage and what a rhetor's words have evoked.

This study extends the concept of the "performance fragment" from people to a place, to the nation's capital city. It is "performed" in the sense that people live in the city and people play various roles governing the city. Those who live in the city might be rich or poor, white or black, white collar or blue collar, up-in-years or rather young. Those governing (in the broadest sense) might be mayors, council members, department heads, bureaucrats, police officers, fire fighters, even educators. It would be difficult to include all that is "performed" in a city on exhibition. And, so, we find selectivity in effect in any exhibition that might be offered. Selectivity in itself assumes rhetorical purpose, but, with presidents, it was arguably difficult to go beyond fact when selecting—not impossible but very difficult. However, going beyond fact is far easier with the national capital—with any city, especially if the audience for the message was not in or near the city.

Let's consider crime, which will surface in several later chapters. All cities have it, but it might require a run into fiction to depict Washington, DC, as "crime-infested." The city has had high crime rates at

points in its history, so the run into fiction would not be so dramatic as to raise doubts about veracity, especially by those far removed. But would a federal worker who lives in the city, commutes to an office daily, and goes out to lunch at various cafes and stays in town occasionally for drinks at various taverns believe the "crime-infested" depiction? They might say, "Yes, but in other areas." So, the exhibition, which those at a distance might totally believe, has a measure of believability with this resident worker but just a measure. What about workers who live well out into the city's suburbs, especially if the Metro stop they use is near their office and they eat in the office cafeteria? They know the city less and, therefore, might believe the "crime-infested" exhibition even more. A rhetor would not likely extend far into fiction—for fear of contradiction, but a rhetor could through selectivity, through emphasis, and through a degree of fabrication offer an exhibition that is only somewhat true. Such an exhibition would likely succeed with some audiences more than others, but that is only a problem for the rhetor if his or her desired audience is the one that will be likely to object. When Donald Trump calls to "drain the swamp," those at a distance accept the metaphor without, perhaps, fully unpacking it and assume that, yes, there's a swamp, whatever it might mean, to be drained. Those in Washington, DC, are likely to get stuck on the metaphor, noting that the swamp was drained close to a century ago. This audience might chuckle at the Trumpian metaphor, but this audience is not Trump's desired one.

Exhibits, then, based on what's selected and what's exaggerated, can be placed anywhere along the continuum from heavily factual to heavily fictitious. And, if of a place not a well-followed public figure, an exhibit can cross into the fictitious a bit. Audience affects what a rhetor might do; audience affects how the exhibit will be received. The "crime-infested" message might be scoffed at or thought to be partially true by residents; it might evoke fear from those who know the city but only on a limited basis; it might cause those living in