

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

El discurso de Ana Morales

A B2 story about leadership, justice, and what happens after a powerful speech receives more attention than the people it describes.

VOICE

JUSTICE

ACCOUNTABILITY

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ANTES DE LEER

Prepare to read

Ana is chosen to speak at her college graduation. Her speech about unequal opportunity becomes widely celebrated, but public praise threatens to turn a collective problem into one student's inspiring story.

Think critically

What responsibilities does a speaker have when using other people's experiences to support an argument?

Reading goal

Analyze rhetoric, representation, and accountable leadership. Examine how institutions can praise criticism without changing the conditions criticized.

THE STORY · PART 1

The speech they expected

Ana Morales was selected as student speaker at Central Valley College because of her grades, volunteer work, and ability to make difficult ideas sound clear.

The administration expected a five-minute speech about perseverance. Ana's first draft included the familiar ingredients: gratitude, obstacles overcome, and confidence in the future.

Then her classmate Jamal withdrew from graduation because he owed the college \$640. Another friend, Linh, had completed an unpaid internship by working nights at a restaurant.

Ana began questioning the word **opportunity**. The college offered doors, but students reached them carrying unequal amounts of time, money, health, and family responsibility.

She rewrote the speech around a central **argument**: access was not meaningful if only students with private resources could afford to use it.

Her adviser praised the writing but requested a less political tone. 'Graduation should unite people,' he said.

Ana replied that unity created by avoiding reality was temporary. Still, she revised several sentences that sounded accusatory rather than precise.

She also asked Jamal and Linh for permission before describing their experiences. Jamal agreed only if she explained that many students faced similar balances—not because he wanted sympathy.

The final draft used **repetition**: 'Talent is everywhere. Time is not. Intelligence is everywhere. Security is not. Ambition is everywhere. Access is not.'

Ana ended with three demands: emergency completion grants, paid campus internships, and public reporting on which students left college because of debt.

THE STORY · PART 2

When applause becomes an answer

The audience stood before Ana finished her final sentence. A video of the speech spread online, and news programs called her ‘the voice of a generation.’

The college president shared the video with the caption PROUD OF OUR STUDENTS. He did not mention the demands.

Ana received interview requests, a speaking contract, and an invitation to join a national leadership program. Jamal received messages from strangers asking for details about his debt.

He told Ana that the speech had turned his private difficulty into public **evidence**. He had given permission, but neither of them had anticipated the scale.

Ana apologized and helped remove identifying details from the posted transcript. The video itself could not be recalled.

At a television interview, the host asked how Ana had overcome hardship to become successful. The question transformed structural criticism into an individual **triumph**.

Ana resisted the flattering frame. ‘My success does not prove the system is fair,’ she said. ‘It proves some people survive unfair systems.’

Meanwhile, administrators announced a committee to study student affordability. There was no budget, timeline, or student voting power.

Public attention created pressure, but it also created the appearance that attention itself was progress.

Ana met with a student coalition that had researched emergency grants for years. Some members welcomed her platform; others resented that work became visible only when a charismatic speaker presented it.

She realized leadership could easily become a story about the leader, even when the message argued against individual explanations.

Turning a voice into a structure

Ana declined the national program unless it allowed her to bring two coalition representatives. She used the speaking fee to create a temporary completion fund, while publicly acknowledging that charity could not replace policy.

The coalition issued a scorecard with specific measures: money allocated, internships converted to paid positions, students reached, and reporting deadlines.

When the college president invited Ana to a private meeting, she requested that Jamal, Linh, and a coalition researcher attend.

The administration funded a one-year grant pilot and committed to paying all campus interns. It postponed the debt-reporting requirement, citing privacy and data limitations.

Ana described the result as partial rather than historic. That choice disappointed journalists who wanted a satisfying **resolution**.

A year later, the grants helped 112 students remain enrolled. The internship policy improved access, but limited positions meant new competition.

The coalition published both outcomes. Accountability required reporting achievements without converting them into proof that the problem was solved.

Ana watched her graduation speech again. The language still moved her, but she noticed how applause had allowed everyone—including herself—to feel morally complete for several minutes.

A speech could name injustice, concentrate attention, and expand what seemed politically possible. It could not substitute for budgets, rules, shared authority, or sustained work.

At her next public event, Ana spoke for less time and introduced organizers who understood the policy details better than she did.

Her leadership became less visible and more **distributed**. She did not disappear; she stopped treating the microphone as the center of change.

Justice may need a voice to enter the room, but it needs
a structure if it is going to remain after the applause
ends.

Words for speeches and accountability

opportunity	oportunidad
argument	argumento
repetition	repetición
evidence	evidencia
triumph	triunfo
charismatic	carismático/a
resolution	resolución
distributed	distribuido/a
accountability	rendición de cuentas
rhetoric	retórica

COMPREHENSION

Analyze rhetoric and leadership

A. Choose the best answer

1. What changes Ana's original speech? a) A job offer b) Classmates' unequal barriers c) The weather
2. Why is Jamal uncomfortable afterward? a) He dislikes graduation b) His private debt becomes public evidence c) He opposes grants
3. How does the television host frame Ana? a) As individual triumph b) As a researcher c) As a college president
4. What does the college fund? a) A grant pilot b) A new stadium c) The national program

B. Analyze

1. How does repetition strengthen Ana's original argument?
2. Why can institutional praise neutralize criticism without directly rejecting it?
3. What does 'distributed leadership' change about Ana's role and visibility?

C. Write

Draft a 6–8 sentence speech paragraph. Use one rhetorical device, acknowledge whose experiences support your claim, and end with a measurable demand.

ANSWER KEY

Review and reflect

A. 1. b 2. b 3. a 4. a

B. Suggested answers

1. The repeated contrast makes unequal resources memorable and shows that talent alone cannot guarantee access. 2. Praise can absorb the speaker into the institution's positive image while leaving demands unmentioned. 3. Ana shares authority, credit, and public attention with people who hold deeper knowledge and longer involvement.

Sample speech paragraph

We are told to work harder, wait longer, and ask for less. Students working two jobs already understand effort; their experiences shaped this demand. Hope without funding is a slogan, and access without time is a locked door. By September, the college should publish internship pay rates, convert every campus internship to paid work, and report how many students participate by income level.

KEEP GOING

Debate: When does celebrating a critic become a way to avoid the criticism?