



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 12, 2024

Stutterin' Joe? Actually, He Was Once Called "The Great Talker"

Self-delusion is an amazing thing. Despite Joe Biden's nation-shocking debate performance, there are still those refusing to see that the emperor has no clothes. In particular, heard is the notion that "Biden isn't cognitively impaired, no, no — he just has a stutter." A longtime commenter at my website just [asserted this](#) with all sincerity on Wednesday. Then there was MSNBC's Joe Scarborough and his wife, Mika Brzezinski, who had the [following exchange](#) on a recent episode of their show, *Morning Joe*:



AP Images

Joe Biden speaking at Harvard in 1987

Brzezinski: Everyone was watching the Stephanopoulos interview, and obviously the debate performance. Joe Biden, it's not like this is the first time he flubs his words...

Scarborough: He's been doing it for about 54 years...

Brzezinski: Yeah, no, how old is he? He has a stutter, on top of that, he flubs his words. He mangles his words. He's not an expert in elocution and Ivy League phraseology, and never will be. But now everyone's looking at it like it's new.

The Great Talker

If this isn't gaslighting, then Scarborough and Brzezinski suffer memory issues akin to Biden's. In fact, as commentator William Sullivan put it Wednesday, the notion that Biden was always a poor communicator is "utterly ridiculous." As he [explained](#):

Few Americans might know it, and even fewer might believe it after having witnessed the decaying specimen that has been serving as president these past years, but there was once a time when Joe Biden was referred to by a fawning media as "The Great Talker."

Nearly fourteen years ago, that's how I vividly recall fangirl Lisa DePaulo referred to him in a [GO interview](#). The polished Barack Obama was "the Great Orator," she suggested, while she labeled the coarse Joe Biden as "the Great Talker." She acknowledges that Biden can't



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“raise the rafters like his boss,” but “nobody can flat-out *talk* like Joe Biden.”

... Just as a professional wrestler fashions a persona, Biden had adopted the stage name of “Scranton Joe,” champion of the middle class against the Washington elites and big corporations.

And while DePaulo suggests that she doesn’t share his affection for their mutual hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania, she appears to revel in his quaint Scranton-isms like “Yer’ kiddin’ me!” and “I’ll be damned” and “God love ‘em,” and is thankful that “the Scranton thing” gets her an extra twenty minutes of interview time and a “big hug.”

Joe Biden has always been gaffe-prone, that’s certain. But his propensity to sometimes do and say stupid things is not the same as saying that he has *always* been unable to communicate with people as he appears to us now. We have countless hours of video of him leading spirited inquisitions on Capitol Hill over several decades, including partisan witch-hunts against Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas — and all without any hint of his recent cognitive or speech problems.

A little time spent at YouTube bears this out, too. In the video below, which includes clips of Biden speaking unscripted, the then-senator articulates every sentiment, virtually without a hitch.

The following 1993 footage of Biden speaking about “predators” tells the same story: He doesn’t read, but *speaks*, engagingly and almost perfectly.

Then there’s the below video, from ’86, in which Biden gives an impassioned speech on apartheid. Note the flawless delivery of the apparently unscripted remarks beginning at 0:24.

The comments underneath the last video say it all. “Who’s here after the 2024 debate to check on his factory settings?” asked one respondent. “Wow. Day and night,” remarked another, referencing the difference between the ’86 and 2024 Bidens. “He was a great speaker back then...,” a yet different poster added.

Without question. You don’t have to like Biden to acknowledge that he was quite a gifted orator for most of his political career. He’d deliver remarks fluently without any “uhs” whatsoever, and seldom hesitating to search for words (*unlike* off-Teleprompter Obama), a fairly rare ability. Is this surprising, though? It’s difficult succeeding in politics, let alone for more than 50 years, without presenting yourself well; speaking effectively is part of this.

An Effective Politician

Remember also that for all Biden’s faults, he did not get an entrée into politics by way of family name, as a Bush or Kennedy might. Coming from a middle-class family with no history of running for office, he pulled himself up by his bootstraps in that arena by virtue of being *an effective politician*.

This is not necessarily a compliment. A politician often succeeds for the same reason a formidable snake-oil salesman would: He sells you a bill of goods using clever marketing and a *smooth tongue*. People with speech impediments don’t make the cut. If Biden functioned when getting his feet wet the way he does today, we’d never have heard of him.

For those still not convinced (people with reasoning stutters?), watch [this NBC News segment](#) featuring Dr. Tom Pitts, a board-certified neurologist and *Democrat*. He explains, medically, why what Biden exhibits today doesn’t even remotely resemble a stutter.



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In truth, this whole argument is silly. More interesting is the phenomenon of human rationalization, whereby people will convince themselves that ridiculousness is reality in deference to their own desires.

Moreover, Biden's bigger problem, and *ours*, is his lack of competence. As Obama himself once reportedly put it, "Never underestimate Joe's ability to f*** things up."

So perhaps the only thing we can say about The Great Talker is that, finally, his articulation matches his ability.



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