

# Workshop: Listening Rhetoric

Now What? Asian Americans and Social Justice  
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Columbia University Undergraduate Writing Program

## Jonah Berger

Whether buying clothes,  
voting on political issues,  
or driving courteously,  
people recognized that social  
influence had an impact.  
*Except when it came to them.*  
People could see social  
influence affecting others'  
behavior, but not their own.  
(*Invisible Influence* p. 9)



# Geoffrey Cohen

- — — Asked conservative and liberal study participants whether they supported these government welfare policies for couples who have a child:

## Generous policy

\$800/month for 8 years  
Full health insurance  
Job training  
Food stamps  
Housing subsidy  
Childcare subsidy  
Free community college  
A job

## Stringent policy

\$250/month for 1 ½ years  
Partial health insurance



## Geoffrey Cohen

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“If their party endorsed it, liberals supported even a harsh welfare program, and conservatives supported even a lavish one... By contrast, policy content had no direct effect for either partisan group.”

(“Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs” pp. 810-811)



## Geoffrey Cohen

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“The factors that participants claimed to have affected their attitudes diverged from the factors that actually did. They asserted that the ‘details of the proposal’ and their own ‘philosophy of government’ contributed to their attitude most, but that ‘what the typical Democrat or Republican believes’ contributed least. The results are consistent with the contention that **people base their attitudes on social meaning.**” (p. 811)

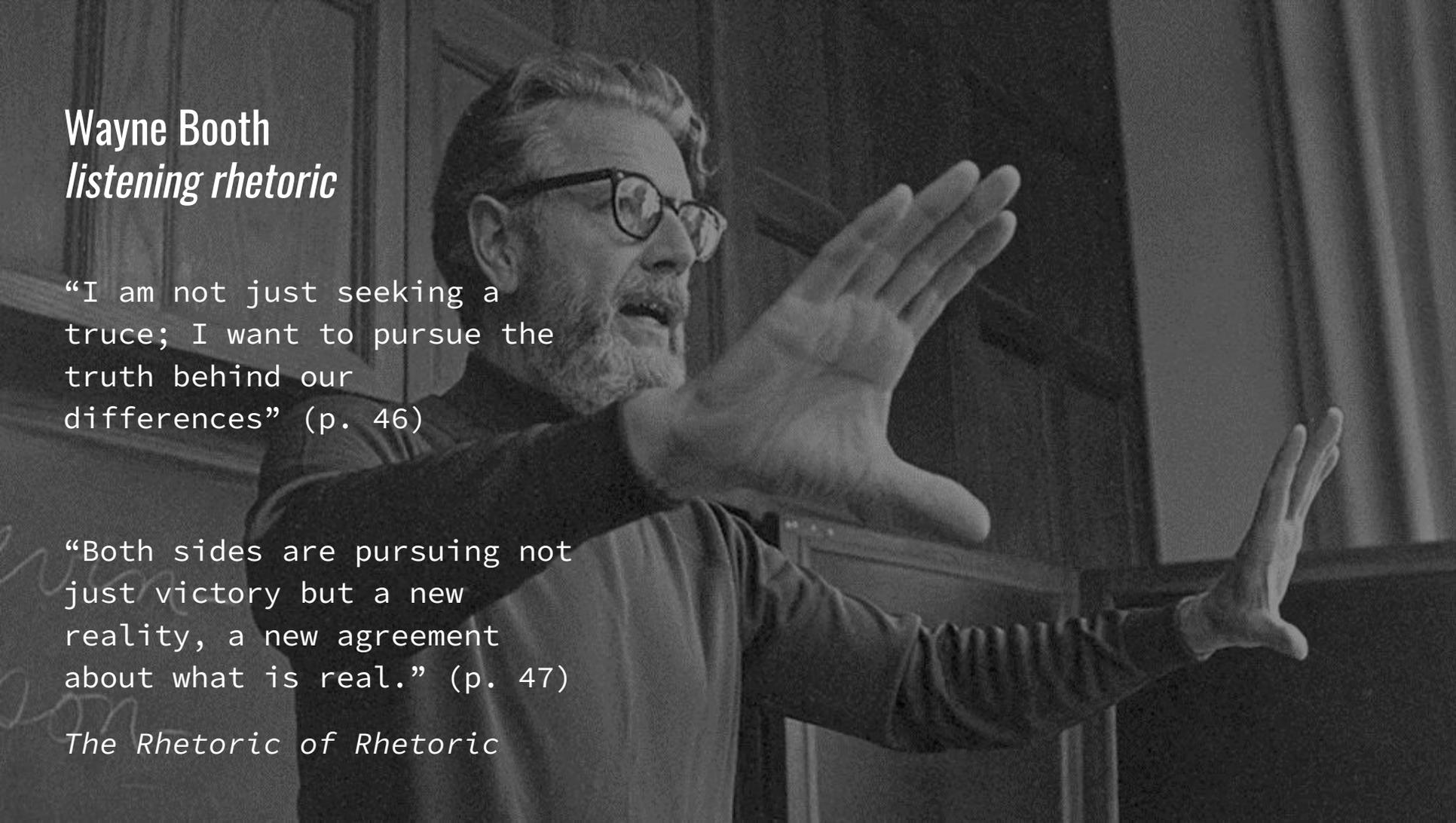


# Write about...

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... a time when you experienced a communication gap: either you felt unheard by someone else or you realized that you didn't hear the perspective of someone else.

**How do you know when someone  
is really listening to you?**



**Wayne Booth**  
*listening rhetoric*

“I am not just seeking a truce; I want to pursue the truth behind our differences” (p. 46)

“Both sides are pursuing not just victory but a new reality, a new agreement about what is real.” (p. 47)

*The Rhetoric of Rhetoric*

# Productive listening rhetoric ...

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- ... is non-judgmental
- ... learns rather than looks for faults
- ... discovers underlying beliefs and values
- ... resists making assumptions about a person's motives
- ... starts from where the speaker is and what the speaker knows
- ... seeks to find mutual understanding

# Listening strategies:

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- Phatic language.
- Not interrupting.
- Body language: Mirroring. Openness. Posture.  
Matching energy level.

# Listening strategies: Acknowledging

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- It sounds like you have strong feelings about that.
- It sounds like you've really thought about it.
- It sounds like you've been through a lot.

# Listening strategies: Eliciting

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- What led you to arrive at that perspective?
- Where does that perspective come from for you?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- What was that experience like for you?
- What did that experience mean to you?

# Listening strategies: Saying back

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- Warrants: Underlying assumptions, values, beliefs
- Arguments

# Freewrite:

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Describe a paradox of your identity. Do you belong to 2 different groups that we don't often see together? Would someone be surprised that you belonged to two groups?

# Bryant Fong: Bay Area Activist

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# Partner Work

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Interview your partner about the paradox of their identity. Learn as much as possible. Say back.

*The say-back test:* What does your partner capture that feels like a true and generous understanding of what you said? What did they miss/skew that feels important to you?