

# Buzzworthy Speeches of 2013

7 speeches that caught the public's interest in a major way.

BY DENISE GRAVELINE

They accepted awards, encouraged graduates, shared ideas at TED—and at the same time, these speakers in 2013 inspired, stunned, excited or challenged their audiences, in person and online. They delivered “buzzworthy” speeches. By definition, buzzworthy speeches attract the public’s interest and attention, whether through media coverage, word of mouth or social media sharing. Such speeches get the rest of us talking, long after they’re over.

We’ve selected seven speeches that, for various reasons, were compelling, popular and shared on media platforms in the U.S. and around the world.

**February 26:** Irish rock star and humanitarian Bono spoke at TED2013, in Long Beach, California, to share “The Good News on Poverty.”

Known for immersing himself in the causes he supports, Bono says in the speech, “I have truly embraced my inner nerd. So exit the rock star. Enter the evidence-based activist—the factivist.” He takes the audience on



Bono

a tour of the developing world and states the statistics that outline its progress in reducing extreme poverty. Bono helps the audience envision a not-so-distant day when poverty could be eradicated. “And if you live on less than \$1.25 a day, if you live in that kind of poverty, this is not just data. This is everything.” Bono’s talk drew attention from his music fans as well as followers

of his philanthropic work, making it the one of the 20 most-viewed TED talks of the year. <http://ow.ly/qWADa>

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**March 1:** Former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Joshua Prager recounts his trip to Israel in his TED2013 talk “In Search

of the Man Who Broke My Neck.” Just 19 when a car accident made him a hemiplegic (someone who is paralyzed on one side of the body), Prager became a reporter, pecking out stories with one finger. When he went back to



Joshua Prager

Israel (where the accident had occurred) and found the driver, he found more—and less—than he had hoped for. He learned that “what makes most of us who we are, most of all, is not our minds and not our bodies and not what happens to us, but how we respond to what happens to us.” He says, “You know death, and so you may wake each morning pulsing with ready life.” TED.com viewers rank this as one of the most inspiring talks of 2013, perhaps because his two stories—one about his

amazing recovery and the other about confronting the man responsible for the accident—end in a positive way. <http://ow.ly/qWAFK>

**May 4:** Major media and social media paid attention to Twitter CEO Dick Costolo’s 2013 commencement speech

at his alma mater, University of Michigan. He encouraged graduates to take risks and to live in the moment, noting that no one who helped start Twitter could have envisioned that it would play a major role in



Dick Costolo

presidential elections and natural disaster relief. Perhaps as a result of his early career in improv theater, Costolo connected with the audience on many levels through his humor and self-deprecating manner. He said, “When I was your age we didn’t have the Internet ... that’s how bad it was.” When you want to create a buzz, it helps to run the company that’s the second-largest social network, with more than 500 million users—not just to get Twitter users talking, but to get additional media attention. <http://ow.ly/qWAJs>

**July 12:** Malala Yousafzai’s speech at the United Nations, on education for women and girls, took place less than a year after the Pakistani teenager was shot in the head by a Taliban terrorist—a fact that captured the attention of people and media worldwide. Yousafzai had given only a short

video statement after her recovery and prior to this speech, there was a lot of buzz about her ability to speak after a major brain injury. Her United Nations address, broadcast live on television and social media, called for more access to education for women and children around the world. It was given on her 16th birthday, dubbed “Malala Day,” but she said, “Malala Day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights. I speak not for myself, but so those without a voice can be heard.” <http://ow.ly/qWALz>



Malala Yousafzai

**July 18: TV anchor Robin Roberts’ speech at the ESPY** (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) Awards came after she had waged a very public battle with breast cancer and myelodysplastic syndrome. She spoke just before she was to begin treatment for further complications of her disease. Much loved in the broadcasting world as the anchor of ABC’s *Good Morning America*, and with a nationwide audience already following her illness and recovery, Roberts delivered a speech that received



Robin Roberts

extensive media coverage and social media sharing, such as in USA Today.com, *Extra* and *The Huffington Post*. An anchor for the ESPN network at the start of her career, Roberts spoke directly to her viewers and to previous winners of the award: “I draw strength from you. You give me the courage to face down any challenge, to know when fear knocks, to let faith answer the door.” <http://ow.ly/qWANp>

**August 11: Ashton Kutcher’s acceptance speech at the 2013 Teen Choice Awards** went viral with more than 6 million views on YouTube and thousands of retweets (he has 15 million Twitter followers and an equal number of Facebook fans). The speech received major news coverage from *The Huffington Post*, *Business Insider* and *Forbes.com*. The first celebrity to gain more than a million Twitter followers—he accomplished the feat in 2009—his fan base was one key to this speech’s popularity. Kutcher quickly downplayed his achievements and revealed his real first name—an unexpected element for many viewers—saying, “There are some really amazing things I learned when I was Chris.” He urged the audience to work hard, be smart and build, rather than just live, their own lives. “The sexiest thing in the entire world is being really smart. And being thoughtful. And being generous.” <http://ow.ly/qWAP2>



Ashton Kutcher

**August 24: Today, Bulgarian native Presiyan Vasilev** lives in Chicago—but he’s a world citizen as the winner of **Toastmasters’ 2013 World Championship of Public Speaking**.



Presiyan Vasilev

His “Changed by a Tire” speech was posted on the Toastmasters International Facebook Fan Page, and it became the year’s most popular post on that site. He didn’t just talk about the experience of a car breaking down and the challenge of replacing a tire, but he also demonstrates it (complete with sound effects) in a physical and funny speech that was covered internationally. His message about the importance of being able to ask for help inspired as well as amused the audience: “I believed reaching out was a weakness, but I discovered my weakness was in refusing to reach out.” Everyone loves a contest winner, and no doubt Vasilev’s fellow Toastmasters were his secret weapon in creating buzz around his winning speech. <http://ow.ly/qWBkJ>

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