

Leadership Part 3

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Bravery is a quality a leader must show whenever it is needed.

If the leader does not have bravery naturally, then he or she must acquire it. Life supplies many opportunities for training. No leader ever knows exactly what is coming, or all the things he should prepare for. He can, however, know that he doesn't know, and prepare mentally for that. Be light on your feet, because you will be moving a lot.

Leadership has been revisited often in the sixteen years of the Manager's Bookshelf column. Leaders can make or break an organization and help or hinder the careers of individuals. While there is no one answer or formula for successful leadership, the question of what makes a good leader is vital, hence the plethora of books, videos, seminars, and more on the topic. Do we follow as lemmings just because our leaders are leaders or do we follow because they inspire us to strive, attain, and better ourselves and world? Do we settle for good when we should demand best? Does the leader encourage us to be the best? Is the goal self promotion or betterment of all? These are question to ask of leaders. Let's look at how some have answered these questions.

Previous columns have referenced fictional leaders, often in rather negative terms. While many readers might indicate they are influenced by these fictional leaders, there are countless examples from the actual world that provide much more realistic examples, whether good or bad. This column is going to take a look at a number of inspirational leaders from a wide range of countries, time periods, and occupations. While this is only a small number of the people who come to mind when thinking of leaders who have made a difference for good in our world, each example resonates in time, location, bravery, or a number of other characteristics that can inspire and instruct. Everyone will question why some of these were selected and not others. The selection was difficult. Generally, names that are widely recognizable are included. Most readers have been fortunate enough to have a list of colleagues, friends, and local leaders who are as much role models as those mentioned here. Quality leadership, guidance, and encouragement are invaluable.

A leader must know who he is, and who he is dealing with; and then he must lead.

"Countries, Companies, and Cultures rise and fall because of their leaders. Who a leader is and what a leader does defines the future success or failure of all in their custody."¹ As an introduction to our look at individual leaders, *Leading for Success: the Seven Sides to Great Leaders* is an excellent beginning. The book does not minimize the importance of leadership, noting that leadership needs to be customized to each situation, so one leadership style is not sufficient. That is evident from the wide range of styles evidenced in the writers who will be reviewed in this column. According to the authors, there are a wide range of skills and behaviors that are necessary. The seven sides that are discussed in the book are being great, crafting the future, surfacing sentiments, finding ways through, engaging, driving for success, and developing leaders. Each earns a chapter of explanation, case study comments, "walk the talk" sections of activities for the reader, and ends with a list of terms that summarize the chapter. The last chapter clarifies the circular process of the seven sides in that "through the seven sides we have come full circle in developing others to become great as well as be more great ourselves."² The book concludes by making

it clear that being great involves having all sides ready to use and knowing when to use them [the seven sides] and in what mix. It is clear that being great is about doing this as a willing duty to others and gaining respect through hard-earned work for followers. It is clear that real greatness is worked hard for but not "worn" like a medal with pompous pride. It is humble achievement, worn with modesty and an attitude that there is always more to learn and improve upon.³



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It is well worth the time to read to book, and then to consider the points as you think about your leadership or that of the people discussed in the rest of the column.

Many American children learn the lines penned by Henry Lee for George Washington's eulogy—that he was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” The leadership of Washington was complex. He was a farmer, surveyor, military leader, and the first president of a fragile country. All of these roles required a variety of leadership skills. Historian Brookhiser's book, *George Washington on Leadership*, calls him our greatest leader and our first CEO, but acknowledges that there was a definite learning curve.⁴ Washington grew into leadership, as most leaders do. Rather than serving as yet another biography of Washington, the book is topical rather than chronological and focuses on the problems and situations of his life and how he met and learned from them. The introduction concludes that “Washington's problems were the same problems that every leader faces now; the details have changed, but not the essence. Very few readers of this book will be revolutionaries or presidents; more will be in politics; many more will be in business or the military. Washington's solutions, and occasional failures, are invaluable to them all.”⁵ The case may be made that there is a revolutionary in many a librarian, and that business and politics are part of the job. So, there is much to learn for all here. Readable, interesting, and providing insight that many of us did not know about the man and his times, this book is a must-read.

Noted historian Doris Kearns Goodwin has written a massive tome on Lincoln, *Team of Rivals*.⁶ The book, more than 750 pages of text and 120 pages of references, is written from the perspective of Lincoln and the people he chose to be in his cabinet, men who had been his rivals and some of whom had been outspokenly critical. She notes in her introduction that the book is the

story of Lincoln's political genius revealed through his extraordinary array of personal qualities that enabled him to form friendships with men who had previously opposed him; to repair injured feelings that, left untended, might have escalated into permanent hostility; to assume responsibility for the failures of subordinates; to share credit with ease; and to learn from mistakes.⁷

She recognizes his characteristics of “kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty, empathy,” refusal to be provoked by petty grievances, even-temperedness, and “unflagging faith in his country's cause.”⁸

With detailed information about the group of men who challenged and then worked with Lincoln, Goodwin develops not only a history so detailed that you feel as if you are there, but also an account that would benefit the serious student of leadership styles. Very few people ever needed to lead in the crucible that was the United States of Lincoln's

presidency, and it is no stretch to say that no librarian has ever or should ever have a situation like his. But there are lessons to be learned from this man who has inspired so many. To select the best people for a position even if they might have opposed you, to be open to the disparate opinions but strong enough to stand up for what one believes right, to have the courage to act for what is right—these are just a few of the themes that are made clear in this book.

Harold Holzer is the author of a number of books on Lincoln. While all are commendable, *The Lincoln Anthology* is an excellent way to discover the wealth of material written about Lincoln. He writes that it is “a conversation, held across “all distances of time and of space,” about Abraham Lincoln and his complex and protean legacy.”⁹ More than one hundred writers share their prose and poetry about this man who has shaped a country and a people and quite probably more than one country. Holzer, on a special *Bill Moyers Journal* episode on PBS noted that

Lincoln said, “Let us believe that George Washington is perfect because it helps us strive to perfection.” There are many modern politicians, including Mario Cuomo, who we both know, who say, Let's not denigrate Lincoln publicly. Let's keep him on a pedestal, because it makes others aspire to join him on the pedestal. It brings out the best in modern leaders. And I think there's something to be said for that, as well.”¹⁰

What Lincoln said about Washington is just as true to his legacy. There are few leaders more worthy of being put on a pedestal and inspiring emulation than Lincoln.

The aforementioned Cuomo himself is the author of *Why Lincoln Matters*.¹¹ Couching his introduction in the events of September 11, 2001, and the wars that followed, he writes, “We are left with no reassuring political orthodoxy, no uplifting cause, no inspiring rationale. We yearn for a vision worthy of the world's greatest nation. With all of his imperfections, that is what Abraham Lincoln bought us—and can help bring us again.”¹² As he continues,

to Lincoln this wasn't just a lovely, lofty dream or divine poetry to soothe the soul by wrapping it in high aspiration. It was the specific, achievable goal of flesh-and-blood humans who would have to find ways to provide education, food, employment, security from assault, and, most of all, equality of opportunity and the right to be treated with dignity for all people. He understood it could not be spoken or prayed into existence, rather it would have to be built by the work of our hearts and hands, consistently and patiently.¹³

Pick one or all of these books on Lincoln to see the complex leadership of a man in very difficult times.

One hundred percent of leadership is showing up—at the necessary moments.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a leader of a movement that bridged many labels—race, economics, class, ideologies. His legacy has inspired many other leaders. The books written on King are so numerous it is difficult to select just a few. In *Ring Out Freedom!* Sunnemark¹⁴ states:

King not only had to interpret the black world to the white worlds; the opposite was also true. This was more of a need for someone to create particular frames for a process of communication inside which individuals from many different worlds could find room for and be involved in an ongoing exchange of meanings.¹⁵

Sunnemark develops the legacy, the leadership of King beyond the “I have a dream” speech and actually states that his legacy shouldn’t be focused on that particular moment but should go beyond to the causes he embraced to the end of his too short life. “Ideally, King’s legacy should be about continuing this challenge rather than establishing and fossilizing the affirmation. It should be about developing the accusation rather than celebrating a frozen memory.”¹⁶

Jackson’s *Becoming King*¹⁷ takes a more focused look on a segment of King’s life—the years he spent in Montgomery and how the people he met and the circumstances he faced there molded him and he Montgomery. The book has a distinctly religious point of view, but is a well-researched look at the development of an exceptional leader. Jackson writes:

In many ways, King left Montgomery the same as when he arrived six years earlier . . . In other ways, however, King was a transformed person. Evil was no longer a theory, but something he and his fellow activist faced day in and day out . . . and King was prepared to suffer and even die to resist this evil.¹⁸

His leadership and bravery are examples to all that making a difference can mean difficult choices and vulnerable stands, but these can accomplish so much. Select one or both of the books and take a fresh look at all the man has done beyond our few iconic memories. A stellar example of brave leadership in very difficult times.

*Gandhi: The Man, His People, and the Empire*¹⁹ is written by Mohandas Ghandi’s grandson, Rajmohan Gandhi. He notes that he wrote the book to tell Mohandas Gandhi’s “story from the perspective of his evolving mind . . . swells on his relationships . . . conveys a measure of what he took on, and shows how building a team was a great part of his life.”²⁰ Gandhi was an inspiration to a number of leaders and is thought by many Indians to be a combination of a “(nonviolent) George Washington, an Abraham Lincoln, and a Saint Francis.”²¹ Rajmohan creates a detailed study

of the both the political leader and the personal man. A complex book with a wealth of information and copious notes and references, it is well worth the effort to learn more about an extraordinary leader. There are a number of books about Gandhi and his own autobiography to select from but this long book of over seven hundred pages provides a scholarly, yet very human look at one of the great leaders of the last century.

Nelson Mandela often is mentioned in the same sentence as Gandhi. And like Gandhi, there are numerous books on the man, his accomplishments, and his philosophy. Two that are notable are *Mandela!* and *Mandela: a Critical Life*. *Mandela!* is mainly a collection of photographs but the story they tell is extraordinary.²² With less than two dozen pages of text, *Mandela!* is a pictorial of South Africa that strikes at the heart and illustrates better than many words could the situation in which he found himself as a leader in the movement for civil rights. The introduction closes with a story of Mandela playing with children of a rugby star. One child asked why he had been in prison if he didn’t steal anything. Mandela replied “I’m afraid I did steal something. I stole freedom for our people.”²³ Intriguing book that will give you much to think about.

Lodge’s book²⁴ on Mandela references a number of other published books as well as original documents resulting in an insightful look at the influences that molded a man who was willing to “acknowledge goodness where he finds it . . . draws moral and political sustenance from encounters in which everyday courtesy, consideration, and even generosity soften conflict,” and the belief in

the importance of defeating one’s opponents without humiliating them were deeply engrained. They shaped a politics of grace and honour that, notwithstanding its conservatism, was probably the only politics that could have enabled South Africa’s relatively peaceful transition to democracy.²⁵

The last paragraph of the book summarizes not just Mandela, but the traits of a good leader: he didn’t demand unconditional devotion, he wanted his compatriots to be assertive citizens, not genuflecting disciples, and his politics were inviting and accessible.²⁶ These are leadership traits that encourage and engage, not self-aggrandize and separate and are applicable to many situations.

Finding the right strategy for changing conditions always takes a major investment of thought and action, and often the new strategy changes the conditions yet more. A leader must be flexible enough to leave old worlds, and tough enough to survive in new ones.

Some significant leaders aren’t very well known. Sarah and Angelina Grimké may not immediately come to mind but their accomplishments are worth comparison with the others in this column. Gerda Lerner’s book²⁷ on the Grimké

sisters is well worth careful reading. They were born in the time of slavery in South Carolina, also a time when the role of women was tightly restricted. Their father was a judge, planter, and slave owner, an important and upstanding member of his society, and a strong believer in the status quo. Girls did not need the education of boys, fathers ruled, and household and slaves were kept in their place. So, it was quite a travesty, as well as against the law, when his daughter Sarah taught her slave to read. This was just one early step outside the normal boundaries of the life of a young woman of her class. Eventually, Sarah and the young sister she mothered, Angelina, joined the Society of Friends, moved north, and spoke and wrote passionately about abolition of slavery. Angelina was the first woman to speak in front of a legislature.²⁸ They were excellent public spokeswomen for their causes of abolition and women's rights until they retired to write works that influenced a number of people. It was noted that they were the voice of those who had actually witnessed slavery first hand and the power of their voices were almost without peer. Lerner's book ends with

Perhaps women would not quite, as Angelina had liked to say, "turn the country upside down," but they would stand upright, and no man—guardian, father or husband—would "keep his foot upon their neck." . . . To their contemporaries, especially to abolitionist women, they were heroines and respected leaders.²⁹

Unfortunately, the Grimké sisters are largely ignored in histories. Their courage, intelligence, and leadership skills in the movements that framed their lives were exemplary and well worth reading about. Lerner includes appendixes with writings of the two and a bibliography. Wonderful, inspiring reading.

Before Lincoln ended slavery in the United States, there was a strong abolitionist movement in Great Britain. William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and others may have reclaimed some of their name recognition after the 2007 movie *Amazing Grace*.³⁰ While fictionalized as most historical movies are, this moving depiction of the long campaign to outlaw the slave trade in Great Britain provides a clear look at the tenacious, moral leadership of a number of people to right a terrible wrong at great cost to themselves. The movie shows several leadership styles—the cunningness of both William Pitt the Younger and eventually William Wilberforce himself, the outspokenness of Thomas Clarkson, the inner strength of the former slave Olaudah Equiano, the quiet assurance of Hannah More, and the complex emotions of John Newton, writer of the hymn "Amazing Grace" and a major influence on Wilberforce. There are a number of books that provide insight into this long, courageous battle to outlaw a moral and ethical horror that had impact on politics, economics, society, and individuals on three continents. While this is a historical look at a dark time in our

history, the shining leadership of these people serves as an inspiration to many as they struggle with injustices in our society in this day and age. Leadership of this level is still needed, unfortunately for some of the same reasons. While we might face much less dramatic situations in our roles as librarians, they can provide inspiration and guidance for us all as we address fairness, justice and social concerns in our libraries, our communities, and the greater world. As information specialists, librarians may be more aware of many of the situations that need to be addressed than the average citizen. A reading of a selection of books on or by Wilberforce,³¹ Clarkson,³² Equiano,³³ or others in the abolitionist movement can be both inspiring and informative.

If a leader leads in the forest, and no one hears him, is he really leading?

A great part of any leader's time is spent in making himself known, by communicating to others: to his organization, to his public. For more recent information on Aung San Suu Kyi you will need to read newspaper or magazine articles since she is on trial as this column is being written. But for a look at the leadership shown by a Nobel laureate under house arrest and detention, Victor's book³⁴ is inspiring. Suu Kyi is also called "The Lady" as a title of respect as well as fear of using her name by her followers in Burma.³⁵ An indication of her importance to her country, a cab driver told Victor that "The Lady is Burma. . . . She encompasses the hopes and dreams of the people."³⁶ Almost two decades of house arrest and separation from husband and sons has been the price she has paid to speak out for democracy for her people. Also of interest is Suu Kyi's book *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*, edited and with an introduction by her husband Michael Aris.³⁷ Her son Alexander, in his speech delivered when accepting her Nobel Prize, quoted from this book: "To live the full life," she says, "one must have the courage to bear the responsibility of the needs of others . . . one must want to bear this responsibility," and "the quest for democracy in Burma is the struggle of a people to live whole, meaningful lives as free and equal members of the world community. It is part of the unceasing human endeavor to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of his nature."³⁸ Hers is an inspiring life of courage, dedication, and vision. Both books are worth reading.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the first woman leader of an African country and president of Liberia. The title of her book, *This Child Will Be Great*,³⁹ refers to a comment made by an elderly man who came to see her when she was a baby. She writes, "My feet are in two worlds—the world of poor rural women with no respite from hardship and the world of accomplished Liberian professionals . . . I draw strength from both."⁴⁰ The book is an autobiography of the complex life of poverty, abuse, political coups, exile, house arrest, jail, and finally election to the presidency of her country. Her life story is inspiring to for its tenacity,

courage, and drive, as well as the number of pertinent comments on leadership. She states,

Leadership has many challenges, and those challenges are serious. Too often people, in their eagerness to stand and shout, "Follow me!" neglect to consider the downside. They do not, for example, consider the possibility of ostracism. . . . You have to be prepared to be very lonely sometimes.⁴¹

And, she says, "leadership requires stamina. It requires a whole lot of acceptance, the ability to remain committed to your cause and to have the courage of your convictions. It requires understanding that sacrifices will have to be made."⁴² The last statement is critical. Several of the people reviewed in this column made the ultimate sacrifice to lead in a cause of importance. All made sacrifices of many kinds. All good leaders must put a great deal of effort and care into their mission, librarians as well as politicians.

Greg Mortenson's *Three Cups of Tea* has been a best-seller, rewritten for children, been the center of study for both secular and religious groups, and inspired many people.⁴³ While more a travelogue and how-to book about getting around and building in the rough terrains of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the book also is a very clear indication of how everyone can be a leader, an inspiration, and make a significant difference. As a mountain climber, Mortenson discovered how special the people were in the mountainous areas of Pakistan, and he discovered the extraordinary selflessness of the people even in their extreme need. Life was difficult, medical assistance scarce, weather conditions harsh, getting enough food a challenge. Yet, they shared all and had a code of hospitality that was heartwarming. Over years, this quiet man became a champion of the area, building schools and including girls in the education process. He earned the respect and love of the people he helped and the very hard-won support and admiration of people around the world as he gave talks and eventually wrote his book. His is not the story of a man who craved attention, admiration, power, money, or prestige. His is the story of a simple man who saw a need and felt the call to address that need for no other reason than to help others. His leadership is a very quiet one, vocal only out of necessity. Tenacious, creative, and seemingly never tiring or frightened are adjectives to describe Mortenson. The book is fast reading and very inspiring. Everyone should take a look at this book and consider how this form of leadership might transform their world in some way.

Cuomo's quotes about vision and inspiration regarding Lincoln might be the major point of looking at historical leaders. They provide real, documented examples of leadership. While there are so many fictional examples, these are real people. They are us—us as we'd hope to be if faced with their situations. Unflinching in standing up for the rights of the downtrodden, defending freedom, speaking for the speechless. Most of these situations are not part of our

everyday life in the library—or, are they? Is there not great leadership in defending access to materials for all, staying late to help the student without a computer to find the necessary information for a paper, guiding a library through time of crisis so the doors stay up to serve the public, protecting rights of privacy, leading and encouraging a staff in times of financial crisis? The list can go on. Leadership is in the small things and the large, the obscure and the obvious. Rosa Parks is remembered for her leadership in sitting on a bus. Lincoln is remembered for leading a country. Both are memorable leaders who can inspire and teach. Their legacy continues as does that of the many leaders in libraries at all levels as they chart new paths in an increasingly complex and important information world.

Dedicated to those whose leadership is in places and tasks that may be overlooked or undervalued, and to Marine Captain Jessica S. Conkling and others like her who gave their all leading people in the task of defending a country they loved. Epigraph quotes and bold headings are from Richard Brookhiser in George Washington on Leadership (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

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