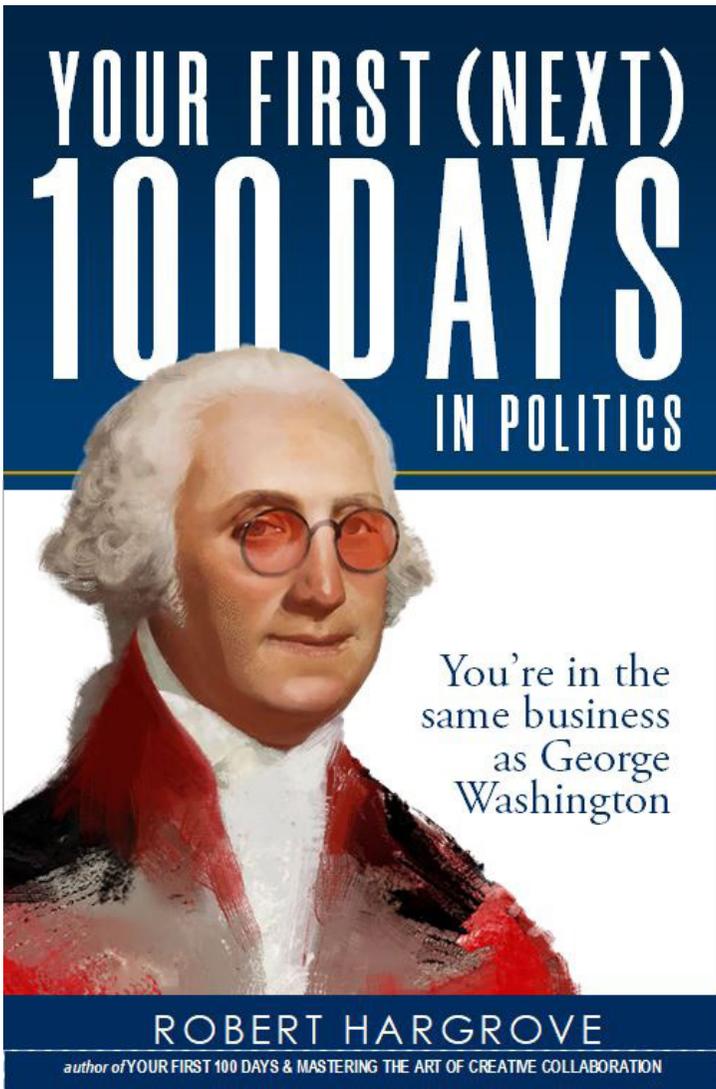


Please enjoy the first chapter of Robert Hargrove's latest book, *You First (Next) 100 Days in Politics*.

A Hero's Journey - Be the Leader America Needs



Chapter One

A Hero's Journey: Be the Leader America Needs

In today's turbulent times, American needs great leaders, not just in the White House, but in the State House, Town Hall, and the Schoolhouse, too (everywhere). This book is for newly elected officials, political appointees, and public managers who are ready to step up to the challenge of being the leaders America needs. It will show you how to use your first 100 days not just to onboard into a new role, but also to become the hallmark of your career.

I have spent my whole life chasing one goal: inspiring, empowering, and enabling leaders in politics, government, and business to find their greatness. I guess you could say I am both an expert and a student on the subject, having spent decades searching for and sharing the best ideas I can find.

I have written “landmark books” on becoming a leader anchored in America’s ennobling aspirations and enduring values, traveled the globe on countless red-eye flights to give keynote talks about the need for great leaders—not only at the top, but everywhere—and have had the privilege of coaching many people in positions of power in their first 100 days to find the courage to take on an impossible future and realize it.

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Jeffrey Pfeffer of Stanford Business School and author of *Leadership BS* says that the \$50 billion leadership development and training industry has failed. It teaches you about great leaders, breaks down the leadership characteristics and traits you should have, and provides 360 eye-opening feedback. Yet, for the most part, it does not give you direct access to becoming a leader who others will want to follow—nor does it make your vision of hope and change a reality in your first or next 100 days, because most of the stuff they teach is not actionable.

People are left asking themselves questions like: How do I become a leader who is as tough on Russia as Ronald Reagan, as kind and caring as Barack Obama, and as good a deal maker as John Boehner? Or how am I going to remember all the things that a great leader is supposed to do when the stakes are high, emotions are running strong, and there is no obvious path forward?

My goal in this book is not merely to teach you about being a great leader, nor is it to provide you with a first 100-day playbook that helps you onboard into your new role. Rather, it is to help you make your first 100 days the hallmark of your entire career by showing you a pathway that gives you direct access to being a great leader as a natural self-expression, with the ability to lead effectively in any situation.

I chose the words “direct access” carefully. I use direct access because it implies that there is a pathway to being the leader America needs, and that it is actionable. My intention here is to shine a light on that pathway that combines your goals, who you need to be, and what you need to do to achieve them.

To give you an idea of what I am talking about, take five to ten minutes to make three lists that you think would give you direct access to being the leader America needs. Start with a “To Be” list that represents who you need to be in the matter, then create a “To Do” list—which includes strategic to-dos—and then make a “To Connect & Collaborate” list—how you will work with others to make things happen. (More on this later in the chapter.)

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I also chose the phrase “first (next) 100 days” very carefully. It means you can use your first 100 days in office to do something to bend history in the right direction, or you can forget about the whole “first 100 day” lollapalooza and arbitrarily choose any next 100 days to do that, whenever the timing is right.

Abraham Lincoln is a classic example of a great leader. He used his first 100 days as president to seal his leadership with his team of rivals and preserve the Union at the outbreak of the Civil War and reminded people to choose the better angels of their nature stating that “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.” He then arbitrarily chose a period known as “Abraham Lincoln’s 100 Days” to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. (See more on this in the Lincoln interlude).

AMERICA NEEDS GREAT LEADERS NOW MORE THAN EVER

As Thomas L. Friedman points out in his New York Times Opinion piece “We Need Great Leaders Now—and Here’s What It Looks Like,” in ordinary times when our democracy is chugging along and there is peace and prosperity, great leadership matters—and leads to sustained success. Yet in extraordinary times, when America is facing a nation-encumbering crisis like the founding of the nation, the Civil War, the Great Depression, or today’s rapidly approaching post-pandemic world, great leadership not only matters more—but it also matters exponentially more.

In her book *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin asks: “Are great leaders born or made?” The answer she gives is “both.” Great leaders may have leadership in their DNA, possessing the qualities all great leaders have—ambition, empathy, responsibility, humility, self-reflectiveness. Yet it is the actual throwing one’s hat into the ring, extracting vision from a nation-encumbering crisis,

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and weathering the storm of making it a reality—that is often the crucible by which great leaders develop.

That is why today is such a golden leadership opportunity for elected officials, political appointees, and public managers, whether this is your first (or next) 100 days.

We live in uncertain times. As Tom Peters, author of *Excellence Now, Extreme Humanism*, points out, climate change is not only coming, but is already here, and as the Texas energy blackout in subzero temperatures showed, we are not prepared for it. We have recently been through one of the most fractious elections in American history, culminating in the armed insurrection on Capitol Hill, causing many to take note that for the first time since the Civil War, our democracy has been so divided that people were ready to go to war against each other.

The Covid-19 virus took well over 500,000 American lives, and the pandemic job-wrecking machine sent millions to collect unemployment checks. The murder of George Floyd led to mass protests all over the country in the name of racial justice, income equality, voting rights, immigration, and a path to citizenship. Schools, restaurants, airlines, and hotels were locked down for over a year, making us all feel like shut-ins.

One result of so much uncertainty is that leaders at every level experience a leadership stress test. The stress is not only felt by occupants of the White House, but also by governors and mayors, CEOs and entrepreneurs, heads of schools and coaches of youth sports.

Leading during a crisis is a stress test where your leadership strengths, as well as your vulnerabilities are on full display. Do you play the old “king of the rock” game—my way or the highway—or do you mobilize people around a shared purpose, collaboration, and compromise? Do you tend to sound off with preconceived opinions and beliefs, or do you work hard at making listening to your constituents your profession, and translating that into policies and programs?

Do the decisions and judgement calls you make on a day-in, day-out basis (on both the big and little stuff) result in your being consid-

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ered a national, state, or local hero, or are you considered someone who people secretly believe was the wrong choice for the job? Most importantly, are you very proactive in making your vision a reality and fixing problems, or are you more reactive?

In turbulent times like these, decisions (or lack of decisions) that cause even a slight delay in being able to pass something like a robust American Rescue Plan can result in millions of people not being able to pay their monthly rent or put food on their families' table.

In turbulent times like these, a president, mayor, or even a restaurant owner who politicizes the wearing of masks or getting a Covid-19 vaccine can suddenly become the catalyst for a super-spreader event, or the next surge in the disease.

In turbulent times like these, a CEO must be prepared to become someone who is a profile in courage. This must be a person who takes stands on issues—voter suppression, gun control, immigration—to contribute to an “enlightened democracy,” while at the same time, re-inventing the business model for a post-pandemic world, knowing that failure to do so will result in a long, slow decline, followed by irrelevance, followed by death.

In such turbulent times, a school superintendent's ability to collaborate with teachers in making the shift from 100% in-person learning to effective hybrid learning is often the difference between kids losing a year of school or finding ways to use virtual classrooms to accelerate their progress in math, English, history, and social responsibility.

You and I (all of us) need to realize that going to work in the morning is not just a job but an opportunity to demonstrate moral leadership. How long is it going to take for you to become the leader America needs in your organization? How long is it going to take for you to lead in impacting climate change by getting your organization to zero emissions, or to lead in protecting voting rights for all Americans in your community, or to lead in creating an inclusive economy, or to lead in immigration and a path to citizenship?

WHAT DOES GREAT LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

Great Leaders are transformational and transactional.

-James MacGregor Burns

In conducting Leadership Weekends with people all over the world, I am most often asked this handful of questions: What is great leadership? Are leaders born or made? What skills do great leaders have? What role models can I use? I prefer to answer such questions in a transformative, rather than merely informative way, and that is what I would like to take a shot at here.

Who Can I Use as a Role Model for Great Leadership?

One of the things you discover, if you study great leaders, is that behind every great leader there is a coach or mentor who serves as a role model of some kind. George Washington's role model was Cincinnatus, the Roman general who after victory returned to the life of the plow. Abraham Lincoln's role model was Washington. When he was a lawyer on the road and stayed in people's homes, Lincoln entertained their children with stories about Washington. Teddy Roosevelt's role model was Lincoln, who he idolized to the stars. Franklin D. Roosevelt's role model was Teddy Roosevelt.

I was struck when I sat down to write this book, amidst the chaotic ordeal of the Trump administration, that there was an absence of admirable, inspiring, successful leaders in America today whose stories could serve as a role model to the upcoming generations of leaders. The problem was not just in the White House, but equally in the halls of Congress, where many members place serving the nation's interest and the public interest behind serving their party's interest and their personal interest.

Even House Speaker John Boehner referred to his time in office as Speaker and head of the GOP as "the Mayor of crazy town"

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made up of a bunch of “publicity seekers” and “knuckleheads who are against everything.”

I see many signs that this backward slide is being reversed since the election of Joe Biden as president—in Jamie Raskin’s eloquent impeachment arguments against Donald Trump and the Big Lie, aimed at returning the country to its moral center—and again in the passionate proactive stance of Chuck Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, and Amy Klobuchar in moving the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 through the House and the Senate within Biden’s first 100 days.

Still, as we were a bit early into the new administration when I wrote this book, I chose to go back to the gold standard as seen throughout American history. Part of my purpose in writing this book was to inspire new leaders with stories about great American leaders as seen through the exclusive lens of their first 100 days. I also wished to raise the standard and set the bar for leaders going into politics and government, as well as for the public who must ultimately hold our leaders accountable for what they say and do.

America has had three undeniably great presidents we can identify with and learn from: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt, none of whom was a perfect human being; each had many faults and flaws. What makes their stories interesting is that despite their faults and flaws, they were all anchored to America’s ennobling ideas and enduring values so that they were able to rise to the occasion in applying these to the greater issues of their day.

What is a Great Leader?

If I had to define it, I would say that great leadership is having the ability to employ superhuman talents, gifts, IQ and EQ to mobilize people around a transforming vision that is big enough for people to subordinate their egos to, while at the same time having

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the ability to enter the world of transactional politics and master the mechanics of influence to advance the cause of freedom, equal justice under the law, and prosperity for all.

When Washington became president of the nation, there was no nation. People did not identify with being citizens of the United States but with their former British colony, and many people wondered whether the dream would die. Washington was a unifier, not a divider, and labored tirelessly at mobilizing people around the shared purpose of starting a new country that would be an “Enlightened Democracy.”

He used his first 100 days to establish the federal government itself, as well as to support the drafting of the Bill of Rights, ten amendments to the Constitution that were ratified soon after his first 100 days were completed. It was not long before people began to identify with being citizens of the United States, and the “Great Experiment” was underway.

All the great leaders of American history tend to be innate unifiers versus dividers, as demonstrated in a tweet by historian Michael Beschloss that showed a picture of the lining of the coat that Abraham Lincoln wore to Ford’s Theatre on the night he was assassinated. The hand-embroidered lining featured an eagle carrying a banner reading “One Country, One Destiny.”

Are Great Leaders Born or Made?

I would have to say that while some people seem to have leadership in their DNA code, great leaders are mostly made and often in the crucible of a crisis. According to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, Theodore Roosevelt said that if it were not for the American Revolution, George Washington would have spent his life expanding his Mount Vernon estate. If it were not for the Civil War, the name of Abraham Lincoln would not be known.

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All three of our great presidents were dedicated public servants who extracted a powerful vision from a national crisis. Curiously enough, none of them played the old “king of the rock” game, despite having a majority. Rather, they realized that to drive transformational change and get big things done, they needed bipartisan support, and as a result, they became masters of the mechanics of power and influence. Over time, they came to be held in warm affection and highly regarded by people on both sides of the political fence.

Each also demonstrated during their first or “next” 100 days that they were capable of success by securing early wins that built personal credibility, political capital, and momentum. George Washington ratified the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Abraham Lincoln preserved the Union by keeping the border states from packing up and leaving, and Franklin D. Roosevelt stabilized the economy and passed the New Deal legislation.

These great leaders are each very much with us today, reminding us that rock solid character and America’s ennobling ideals are the coin of the realm when we look at our dollar bills or watch an HBO special like David McCullough’s *1776* or Steven Spielberg’s *Lincoln*.

Following the 2020 election, President Biden evoked Washington and Lincoln in his inaugural address, making a plea for national unity and ending this “uncivil war” by summoning the “better angels of our nature” to be friends, not enemies. Many members of Congress on both sides also evoked Lincoln during the Trump impeachment hearings.

What Skills and Capabilities Do Great Leaders Have?

Washington, Lincoln, and FDR came from different backgrounds, yet they had a similar leadership DNA code made up of a handful of basic human qualities (the keyword being human).

Ambition: Washington, Lincoln, and FDR were all personally ambitious, which played a huge role in their seeking the path to power, yet

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they found their path to greatness in connecting personal ambition to their ambitions for the nation.

Empathy: Washington, Lincoln, and FDR also felt a profound, innate sense of human connection and empathy for people. Lincoln as a young boy scolded a group of friends for putting hot coals on a turtle's back, brushing them off, and setting the turtle free. His empathy for millions of Black people who were enchained and enslaved led him to have a vision of guaranteeing the rights promised in the Declaration of Independence to all Americans. Nicholas Hay, Lincoln's secretary, reported that after issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln made a trip to the army camps to visit wounded soldiers. On his way back, he passed a brigade of black soldiers who rushed forward to greet the president shouting: "Hurrah for the President. Hurrah for the Liberator." Their "spontaneous outburst" moved Lincoln to tears "and his voice was so broken by emotion that he could hardly reply."

Humility: When I say humility, I do not just mean humbleness and bowing and scaping. I mean the willingness to acknowledge you don't know all the answers when starting out and to be the first one to acknowledge and own up to mistakes. When FDR became president, he was terrified because he did not really have a 100-day plan. He told his team he was going to experiment: "We will try one thing and if that fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something."

Self-Reflectiveness: Following the humiliating Bay of Pigs invasion, John F. Kennedy met with former President Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower at Camp David, despite their testy relationship, and asked: *Where did I go wrong?* Ike asked a crucial question: "Mr. President, before you approved this plan, did you have everybody in front of you debating the thing so you got the pros and cons yourself and then made the decision, or did you see these people one at a time?" President Kennedy admitted it was mainly a presentation made by the CIA: "I just approved a plan that had been recommended by the CIA and

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by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I just took their advice.” Ike told him that is where he made a mistake and, next time, he should do it the other way—encouraging diverse opinions and debating the issues. Kennedy followed Ike’s advice and during the thirteen-day period of the Cuban Missile Crisis, his national security advisors (EXCOMM) held the longest executive offsite in history and, as a result, Kennedy was able to ward off the threat of WWII and thermonuclear warfare.

Self-Awareness (Self-Restraint): It is very easy to say things we later regret when the stakes are high, emotions are running strong, and disagreements suddenly seem too hot to handle rationally. President Obama so enjoyed reading Doris Kearns Goodwin’s book *Team of Rivals*, that he invited her to visit him in the White House to discuss it. He said one of the things he liked most about the book was the part where Lincoln would feel anger regarding his critics and write hot letters at night, putting them in his desk unsend and unsigned. Goodwin asked him with a big smile, “Did you ever try that?” he replied, “I do that all the time.” He said he discovered that leadership is not just making speeches or debating a point, it is often about what you do not say.

TREAT YOUR FIRST 100 DAYS AS A LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY, EVEN IF IT IS NOT

One thing I have learned in conducting leadership weekends and coaching leaders in business, politics, and government is that we all have greatness in our DNA. We all want to make a difference in other people’s lives, make an impact, and leave a legacy that will be remembered after we are gone, even if it is simply to make a positive contribution to a few folks’ lives.

The problem for most people is that they often lack the leadership opportunity where they can spread their wings and fly. Part of this has to do with the fact that leadership opportunities in politics and government bureaucracies are monopolized by a few very senior

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people at the top, such as the president, Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, or government bureaucrats. The issue is that these people often do not have knowledge of the challenges and opportunities, or the bandwidth and boots on the ground (local knowledge) to help fix all the problems that America faces.

To get around this, we need to democratize leadership so that more people, especially younger people, have more leadership opportunities. This starts with a shift in mindset from “leadership at the top” to “leaders everywhere.” It also involves people in more senior roles consciously and intentionally empowering younger people to take the lead in a myriad of situations.

Yet often a lack of leadership opportunity simply comes down to being in a job where you do not have real political power to drive historic change, consistent with the great public values of a people. My advice, if you are an elected official, political appointee, or public manager in your first or next 100 days, is to look at the job as your leadership opportunity of a lifetime (even if it is not), and approach it with a one hundred percent commitment to make the most of it, rather than having it be just the next step on the ladder.

YOUR FIRST (NEXT) 100 DAYS CAN BE THE HALLMARK OF YOUR ENTIRE CAREER

The fact is that there is an underlying truth that a leader’s power is often at its zenith when they first win an election (or get hired) and the face of their leadership is still new. They are basking in a halo of victory, they have a mandate to govern, and public opinion is on their side. The power of a leader to govern is even higher during a nation-encumbering crisis when someone takes charge and fixes the problems.

As such, when coaching clients in their first or next 100 days, I always ask them to approach this period not in terms of “onboarding” or “getting up to speed,” but as the hallmark of their entire career. This creates a powerful shift in mindset that gears people up to not waste

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any time in finding their voice, instead taking a stand on the issues they passionately care about and driving transformational change.

A good example of a leader who approached both his first and next 100 days as the hallmark of his entire career is Lyndon B. Johnson, who became president at the crack of a gunshot. As vice president, Johnson had complained of being kept out of the inner circle by Robert Kennedy and being in a “wretched state of powerlessness.” When the moment of leadership opportunity came, he jumped on it.

He flew back to Washington on Air Force One and, on that same day when he got home, he put on his pajamas and sat up in his bed surrounded by a few loyal friends. He told them that his most important and urgent priority was to convey to the American public that, even though one president on a trajectory to achieve greatness had died, another president was taking charge—one who would not only protect the Constitution but also build on the fallen leader’s legacy. Where JFK said, “Let us begin,” LBJ would say, “Let us continue.”

Then standing in his vision of the Great Society (not yet a bumper sticker), Johnson proceeded to sketch out his 100-day plan. Thinking out loud to those present, he wrote down five goals: 1) Pass JFK’s tax cut that had been stalled in Congress; 2) Pass a landmark civil rights act; 3) Pass a voting rights act; 4) Initiate a war on poverty; and 5) Pass a healthcare security act (which was to become Medicare). He was successful in passing every one of these bills he had set down in his 100-day plan, and he is remembered for having done so. It did not all happen in his first 100 days, but who is counting?

Once Johnson had his 100-day plan, he pursued it with commitment, passion, and zeal. He jumped into action, treating his 100-day plan as if he would passionately pursue it in the next ten minutes, or nothing at all. He called a meeting of his top advisors to introduce his major goals and priorities. When one of his advisors said he would burn all his political capital if he tried to pass a civil rights act, he delivered one of the most famous lines in American history: “Then what the hell is the Presidency for?” (More on this in the Johnson Interlude.)

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ACT AS IF WHAT YOU ARE DOING IN THE NEXT TEN MINUTES IS EVERYTHING

In ordinary times, people do not care a lot about who sits in the White House, State House, or City Hall, but in extraordinary times like we face today, they care a lot. That is why in the 2020 election cycle, more people voted for the presidency and other offices at the state and local level than ever before. As mentioned, we are at an enormous strategic inflection point where there is a real opportunity for a leader at every level to take a stand that a difference can be made and to drive historic change.

In times like these, the best leaders not only approach their first or next 100 days as the hallmark of their careers, but as if what they will do in the next ten minutes is everything or nothing at all. They approach their job not in a passive way of trying to figure out “the vision thing” or “standing their watch and reacting to events.” Rather they approach it with passion, commitment, zeal, and they use disciplined intensity to take a very proactive stance.

It requires full engagement on your part, empathizing with rising human aspirations and throbbing human needs, taking a stand that a difference can be made, and being very proactive. Today with the American dream fracturing, with millions being paid starvation wages, the GOP state representatives putting almost 300 voter suppression bills forward, police taking the lives of innocent Black people, and a humanitarian crisis on our border, anything else would be unconscionable.

Joe Biden served for eight years in the Obama administration and thirty-six years in the Senate, much of which was spent marked by “hail fellow, well-met” relationships, caution and compromise. There was not very much in Joe Biden’s character, personality, or in his voting record to suggest that he would be anything more than a sound, vastly experienced, capable, regular president, who would if nothing else cause millions of Americans to feel a sense of relief as if a huge weight had been lifted off their shoulders.

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He proclaimed that his victory was not just a victory for himself personally, but a victory in the battle for the soul of America. In just one short phrase, “America is Back,” he affirmed the American spirit—who we are and what we stand for—at home and around the world. Suddenly many people at home and abroad felt that his presidency might just be that.

Biden knew he had been presented with a remarkable leadership opportunity as the president of the United States, a role he had waited a lifetime for. The fact that he arrived center stage in the middle of a nation-encumbering crisis only made the process all that much more enticing. He jumped into action less like a grandfather, and more like an experienced fire chief facing a three-alarm blaze.

From his first hours sitting behind that big desk in the White House, he acted as if his first 100 days was really the next ten minutes. He started signing executive orders at a furious pace to restore America’s ennobling ideals and values after the previous administration had left them behind.

Biden said that “the president’s job is to care,” and he behaved as if he meant it. He worked hand-in-hand with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, “Help is coming. Help is on the way.” Together with Congress, he passed the American Rescue Plan and started working on the American Jobs Plan, immigration, and gun control. He promised that before the first 100 days passed we would put 100 million Covid-19 shots in people’s arms. He met that goal and upped it to 200 million shots in people’s arms and then surpassed that. There is a good chance that this will be remembered as the greatest single accomplishment of any president in his first 100 days in office.

* * * *

When John Kerry woke up on the morning of Nov 2, 2020, the day of Joe Biden’s election, he was a recovering Washington politician who had been a presidential candidate, Secretary of State, and served

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twenty-eight years in the US Senate. One might think that at the age of seventy-seven, there was not much of a future in store for him besides writing his memoirs and kissing and hugging his grandchildren. However, Kerry was convinced that while Donald Trump was in office, you did not spend your time sitting in a rocking chair. During the Trump presidency, he met with contacts from his long list of US diplomats and others around the world to apply pressure to preserve the Iran Nuclear Deal he had worked so hard to craft.

Shortly after the 2020 election, he received an unexpected call from President-elect Biden in which he was presented with a phenomenal leadership opportunity that would put him back in the saddle again. He was asked to be Joe Biden's special presidential envoy for climate, and as the man who had negotiated The Paris Agreement (climate accord), he considered the gig an opportunity of a lifetime.

The President not only announced that rejoining the Paris climate accord would be a cornerstone of American foreign policy, but he also appointed Kerry as a member of his National Security Council to emphasize it. According to Kerry, the President “gave me full authority and said, ‘you report to me directly, if you need me, walk over to the White House and come in and see me’—he couldn't have been more direct about it.” Biden understood that having somebody who has been in the belly of the beast, who knew the levers of government, would be critical to the outcome.

Kerry's new role put him back on the global stage and in the spotlight—a place he has always coveted. Kerry jumped into action. He got the Covid-19 vaccine and boarded a commercial red-eye flight to London, Brussels, and Paris with one aide and the unspoken mission of saving the planet. Kerry had a reputation for showing up at meetings with “obsessive zeal,” “hyper prepared”, and “ever optimistic” that there is a solution to the world's most intractable problem.

“I just emphasize to everybody,” he said, “this is exciting... the stakes couldn't be higher.” Kerry not only sought to make a Cassandra-esque plea to nations to cut emissions, but also insisted it was an

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opportunity for a global breakthrough—an opportunity to draw trillions in investment, create new industries and millions of new jobs, and the development of powerful new technologies.

At the Davos World Economic Forum, when asked “Can we do it?,” Kerry remarked, “We actually can. But not unless we summon greater political will, not unless we harness the full energy of the marketplace, not unless we ask the private sector to help our financial institutions mobilize essential trillions in innovation and the finances that we need.”

Kerry emphasized the point I am pushing in this book, “We all have to work together, this is a matter of multilateral leadership, not any one country or any one group of people... and I can’t wait to be at it with everybody.”

* * * *

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is another good example of someone who treated her first 100 days, not only as an opportunity of a lifetime, but also as the hallmark of her career. She breezed into Washington after being elected to Congress in 2018 without even enough money to rent an apartment. In less than a week, she was taking a stand on issues such as the Green New Deal, voting rights, cancelling students’ college debts—and in the process, stirring up a lot of attention.

During one of the breaks at the freshman orientation for new members of Congress, she reflected on how she had previously been a bartender who got into politics as a volunteer for Bernie Sanders. She would swipe her NYC subway card and walk through the turnstile unnoticed and get on a train in Queens with hundreds of people jammed into the cars.

When she took her oath of office and began her first 100 days, it was as if she went through a life-altering experience. “Literally overnight I went from no one caring who I was unless I was swiping my MetroCard too slow, to everyone being like ‘who is she, what is this?’

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... A couple of days after the primary, I was in my neighborhood and I turned around this corner to get on the street and this woman saw me and just started crying, she just broke down crying.” Ocasio-Cortez added, “It was just a completely alien change... it felt like everything I said had so much more weight overnight.”

She was determined to approach her first 100 days as the hallmark of her career and operated as if what she would do in the next ten minutes was everything, or it was nothing at all. She realized that even though she was the “new kid” on the block, this did not have to hold her back from being a passionate, relentless champion of democracy—*government of the people, by the people and for the people*.

She realized she could amass political power using her Twitter account as a bully pulpit to lead a moral crusade on the issues she passionately cared about. She ceaselessly and tirelessly sent out punchy tweets on the Green Revolution, voter suppression, dark money in politics. She soon had a 12.5 million following and as many as 500,000 “reactions” on her Tweets.

It would take her a while to win Nancy Pelosi over rather than compete with her, and to realize that one must learn the rules before going around them. However, she picked her battles, focused on friends and allies, ignored enemies and soon began to secure tangible early wins that would build rapid momentum.

One of the things that made her stand out from the crowd is that she held herself publicly accountable for the result of her first 100 days and beyond. On Dec 11, 2020, she sent out a video via Twitter where she declared the accomplishments of her first term, which were numerous. “I authored and introduced the Green New Deal Bill with Senator Ed Markey and secured 115 House and Senate co-sponsors on it. Regional versions of the New Green Deal were also adopted by ten local governments.” She may not have succeeded in passing the bill, but she was successful in putting it on America’s political and economic agenda. She also introduced more amendments to bills than ninety percent of her freshman class.

BECOMING A LEADER

There are two approaches to being the leader America needs: one is based on transactional learning, the other is based on transformational learning. The transactional learning approach is one where you try to learn about leading by reading a book or spending time in a classroom. This approach is based on studying great leaders, analyzing leadership characteristics and traits, and doing 360 feedback on your strengths and vulnerabilities.

Transactional learning teaches you about being a great leader but does not actually give you access to being a great leader when you show up for work Monday morning. What you get out of most books and courses are the seven steps to epiphany, a gazillion PowerPoint bullets, and a long list of things to try to remember.

The transformational learning approach, by contrast, is designed to transform you into being a great leader. My transformational approach is designed to give you direct access, a direct pathway to being the kind of leader America needs today as a natural self-expression, without having to go through the long process of the many steps in the transactional approach. As I said in the beginning of the chapter, I chose the word direct access very carefully to imply there was a straight and clear pathway for you to follow that is actionable.

One of the simplest ways to understand the transformational learning approach is to read the stories of people like Lincoln, FDR, and LBJ. Upon taking their oaths of office and becoming president, each of them reported something to the effect of a weird “transforming feeling” when they walked around the White House halls late at night and saw the portraits of great leaders from American history. Recognizing their own responsibility to contribute to the everlasting life of the nation had the impact of connecting their personal ambitions (to amass political power) to their ambitions for the nation.

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The Pathway to Becoming a Leader

- Read and recount stories of great leaders in their first 100 days
- Find the path to power and influence
- Take a stand for something bigger than yourself
- Employ the power of shared purpose, collaboration, and compromise
- Use “action learning” to produce results and develop as a leader

Let’s look at each.

1. Read and Recount Stories of Great Leaders

I believe that the first thing you can do to gain direct access to being a great leader is to become both a student and teacher of American history. When you read and recount stories of America’s great leaders, you immerse yourself in America’s ennobling ideals and enduring values.

Abraham Lincoln once said that the greatest way to protect our democracy is to read, react, and recount stories of the great leaders, of the Founders, and rededicate yourself to their ideas and ideals. When Lincoln was riding the circuit, he would stay in homes of different families and would often tell mothers to read to their children bedtime stories of great leaders if they wanted them to become leaders in society.

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt recounted that as children they read stories about great leaders, which fostered a desire to become like them when they grew up. Washington wanted to be like Cincinnatus, Lincoln wanted to be like Washington, Roosevelt wanted to be like his third cousin Teddy—who he idolized.

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I have super-charged and power-packed this book with stories about the great leaders of American history who lived in times as turbulent and polarized as our own to help you apply the lessons of the past to your life today, as well as a way of transporting you to them and the ennobling aspirations and enduring values they stood for. I am talking about an enlightened democracy based on freedom, equal justice under the law, and prosperity for all. You will discover that you have direct access to becoming a leader as a natural self-expression when you speak, listen, and act from these ennobling ideals and enduring values—and you are not a leader when you wander elsewhere.

I believe that while Donald Trump and his administration seemed to feel nothing but thinly disguised contempt for these values, there have been many signs of hope emerging on the political scene recently from leaders in both parties including John Boehner, Mitt Romney, Liz Cheney, Chuck Schumer, and Amy Klobuchar.

If you were looking for a senator or congressional representative to put on an 18th century gentleman's suit and play the role of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, or Alexander Hamilton to prosecute the Donald Trump impeachment trial, Congressman Jamie Raskin would have little trouble fitting into their inner circle on the topic of Constitutional Law and Intent.

In his brilliant Senate prosecution against Trump in 2021, he wasn't merely trying to hold a president to account for being the Inciter-in-Chief, he said his goal was to provide a "moral center," to defend American history. "President Trump may not know a lot about the Framers of the Constitution," said Raskin, "but they certainly knew a lot about him" when they designed the Constitution to prevent an abuse of power that would divide our country and destroy our democracy.

He then went on to quote Republican Representative Liz Cheney: "On January 6, 2021, a violent mob attacked the United States Capitol to obstruct the process of our democracy and stop the counting of presidential electoral votes. This insurrection caused injury, death, and

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destruction in the most sacred space in our Republic. The President of the United States summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack. Everything that followed was his doing... There has never been a greater betrayal by a President of the United States of his office and his oath to the Constitution. I will vote to impeach the President.”

Raskin said of Cheney, “She was right; she based her vote on the facts, on the evidence, and on the Constitution.” Raskin concluded, “President Trump must be convicted for the safety and security of our democracy and our people.”

2. Find the Path to Power and Influence

Robert Caro, the iconic presidential historian and author of *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* series says that the ability to be a great leader depends less on your vision when you are starting out and more on your ability to amass political power. When someone challenged him on that in an interview he said, “Would you rather be a leader with a vision and no political power to make it happen, or a leader with no vision, but the ability to come up with one?”

Caro’s question spoke volumes in terms of recognizing what seems like the obvious: one of the things that gives you direct access to being a leader is the ability to amass political power so that you can begin to make your vision of hope and change a reality. One way to do that is to throw your hat into the ring and run for office, and then climb to the next rung on the ladder. After John F. Kennedy ran for Congress as a war hero, he then ran for the Senate, during which time he published his book *Profiles in Courage*.

Yet Kennedy soon became frustrated with the little power and influence he could wield as just one of one hundred senators and decided to climb further. He said, “I want to become president of the United States because it is the center of action.” He added, “A president

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can get more done with a stroke of a pen in one day than a senator can in six years.”

Yet, when Lyndon Johnson became president, he proved that his years as “Master of the Senate” had made him a much more effective legislator than Kennedy who passed no major bills during his time in office. Johnson had an incredible capacity to translate his natural-born empathy into strategies for amassing political power and then translating that into government action.

Caro’s book about Johnson, *Master of the Senate*, is about how he amassed political power by befriending the grand old daddies of Congress (like Richard Russell), got on the right committees, and learned the arcane rules that determined the way the Senate worked, as well as about what he did with that power. Johnson not only became Master of the Senate for six years but made the Senate work better than it had since the Civil War. And then, when he became president, he used his power and influence to pass the landmark civil rights bills.

Political power rests in never forgetting that you are the steward of the people. -Theodore Roosevelt

The Difference Between Being In and Out of Power. On the morning of January 6, 2020 at 7 a.m., Senator Chuck Schumer got into his car in Park Slope, Brooklyn, having slept just three hours after it was announced that Georgia had officially elected two Democrats to the US Senate, ensuring that he would be the next Senate Majority Leader. He had suffered through the previous fifteen years or so with Mitch McConnell in the Senate Majority Leader role, relegating Schumer to a wretched state of powerlessness where every proposal by Democrats was blocked.

He had dreamed of a moment such as this. “My first reaction is joy. You know, when you have set a serious goal [such as becoming Senate Majority Leader] and it takes a long time to get there, there

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are detours in the road and logs in the pit, when you get there, Whoa! What a feeling.”

“So that was expected. But about three minutes later, I had another feeling, and I call it one of awe,” he remembered. “Like, when the angel saw the face of God, they trembled in awe.”

Schumer had gotten so used to not being able to realize his vision and values that he had almost forgotten what they were. Seeking to find his ground, he labeled himself alternatively a Law-and-Order Guy, Angry Centrist, and Business Democrat who dined at JP Morgan the night of the 2008 election.

Now was the opportunity to make his vision of an “Enlightened Democracy” a reality, and he decided to take a progressive stance and make an abrupt shift to the left (in part considering a primary challenge from AOC in the next election in New York). Schumer said he learned a powerful lesson from Theodore Roosevelt, and that is that the power of a president or senator lies in never forgetting that you are “the steward of the people,” not the steward of Congress, or a political party.

Schumer visits every one of New York State’s sixty-six counties every year and spends more time listening to people’s rising aspirations and throbbing human needs than he does talking. When the pandemic struck, Schumer stood out for his empathy, promising as the economy collapsed that he and his Senate colleagues would prevent foreclosures and evictions—the biggest concern of New Yorkers. He also promised relief so people could put food on the tables.

It was Schumer who convinced President Biden to shift from a \$1 trillion American Rescue Plan to an almost \$2 trillion American Rescue Plan to help Americans with small businesses and families in dire need. It was Schumer who guided the bill through Congress, bringing West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin onboard. It was Schumer who, when the bill passed, went before the cameras and declared: “Help is on the way. We can get things done to make lives better. Help is on the way!”

3. Take a Stand for Something Larger Than Yourself

Taking a stand is one of the most powerful things an ordinary individual can do to gain access to the possibility of being a great “real” leader. Yet what does it mean for an individual to take a stand? If you look at Twitter, which is where many politicians express themselves, taking a stand is often thought of as giving your opinion on something, or taking a side on an issue, or making a statement about what should be.

The truth is that taking a stand is none of these things. Taking a stand is exercising your power as an ordinary individual and stepping up when faced with a situation that is inconsistent with the American spirit—who we are and what we stand for (human values). It is acting in a way that matters instead of acting as a bystander.

Think about America’s Founders signing the Declaration of Independence in the face of British tyranny. Think about Abraham Lincoln, a prairie lawyer, taking a stand for the abolition of slavery in the Lincoln Douglas Debates. Think about Franklin Roosevelt declaring war on Nazi Germany in WWII.

On April 21, 2021, I was watching CNN and saw the headline “Breaking news.” Derek Chauvin was convicted in the murder of George Floyd on all three counts. Like most Americans, I breathed a sigh of relief. If 17-year-old Darnella Frazier, a witness to the murder, had not decided to take a stand, taking out her smartphone and making a nine minute and twenty second video which she then posted to Facebook, instead of just being a bystander, it is doubtful that a conviction would ever have come to pass.

You are being a leader, when you take a stand that a difference can be made and act in a way that matters, rather than being just a bystander.

Similarly, had Governor Ted Walz of Minnesota not taken a stand by calling his friend Attorney General Keith Ellison and ask-

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ing him to personally investigate the Floyd case, the chances of getting a conviction through the local Hennepin County DA, a known racist, would have been equally doubtful.

And had many people (called by Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis the “office of the citizen”) not gathered night after night to sing, march, and protest, the result might have been very different.

I give Governor Walz a great deal of credit for taking a stand, not only for making sure the case was prosecuted and justice achieved for George Floyd according to the principle of equal justice under the law, but for making it a landmark case that contributes toward putting an end to systemic racism in his state and in the rest of America.

Walz, in making a statement after the conviction was turned in, took a stand for a new shared vision of Minnesota. He said that Minnesota was widely considered by many to be one of the best states in the country to live in according to the Happiness Index—women in leadership, economic opportunity, education, and healthcare. Yet, he added, high marks depend on whether you were a White person or a Black person.

He threw down the gauntlet to his administration and to the Minnesota legislature (half Democrat and half Republican) to join with him in making Minnesota the best state in the country for all its citizens.

4. Employ the Power of Shared Purpose, Collaboration, and Compromise

The meteoric rise in politics of Bernie Sanders is a vivid example of the fact that leadership emerges the moment an individual takes a stand that a difference can be made. Although he is seventy-nine years old and calls himself a Democratic Socialist who was born in Brooklyn, New York, he has won more than twenty state primaries in Vermont. His strength is his ability to speak with passion, authentic-

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ty, and empathy where he makes a psychic connection with plain and simple Americans for whom the American dream is fracturing. His typical tweets run along the lines of: “It’s wrong that billionaires pay less taxes than a schoolteacher, police, or fireman,” or “I happen to believe that getting an education should not leave you in crippling debt for decades.”

Bernie, as a progressive senator, has put many issues on the political and economic agenda—the Green New Deal, Medicare for All, Cancelling Student Debt, among others. Yet he has signed his name to very few pieces of major legislation and although he has played a role in introducing amendments to main bills, his strength of “being a crusader,” may also be his weakness. He is not seen by leaders in the Senate as being very effective in leveraging the power of shared purpose, collaboration, and compromise to get big things done.

In contrast, when Speaker of the House John Boehner was in power, he took few strong stands on issues but was known for his proficiency as a dealmaker. He consistently broke the Hastert Rule that said that no bill would come before Congress unless it was supported by most of the party in power. He created the “Boehner rule” which said a bill could pass with a minority of a majority. He guided many major bills to passage that would help the American people by bringing Democrats and Republicans onboard.

Boehner retired from office when he felt that “knuckleheads” in his own caucus, like Ted Cruz and Kevin McCarthy, were less interested in leading and legislating than they were in fundraising and drawing attention to themselves by taking outrageous positions on issues.

You are being a leader if, when you are trying to reach a goal and a stalemate arises, you reach across the aisle and get people to sit down together and negotiate.

Chuck Schumer, on the Democratic side, may be a good example of Jefferson’s idea of a leader: “Great leaders are neither dictators

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or dreamers, but masters of the mechanics of influence.” Schumer’s political power may have a lot to do with his ability to make human connections with colleagues, whether they agree or disagree with him. He loves the famous Ben Stein quote “Personal relationships are the fertile soil from which all advancement, all success, all achievement in real life grows.”

Schumer gets things done by staying in communication, targeting bipartisan issues, and marching toward common ground. He calls most of his forty-nine Democratic colleagues daily, and some even more often, reminding them they can do whatever they need to do in support of their state’s politics, if they stick with him on the big votes. “Even if Schumer is up to his ass in alligators, he answers the phone and he’ll say, ‘Tammy, I’m talking to the president, can I call you back?’” said Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois. Other senators also feel they have a special relationship to Schumer since he calls them so often.

Dealing with Democratic conservative Manchin is another story, one that is friendly but contentious. For years, Schumer and Manchin made an unlikely pair. They were comfortable being very direct with each other, which could occasionally lead to intense arguments, but it also paved paths for cooperation. Still, when people in West Virginia asked Manchin about his best friend in the Senate, he would point to Schumer.

With the American Rescue Plan Act, which at first seemed easy to drive through the Senate with a majority of one, Manchin jammed the Senate into a surprise halt by flirting with a Republican provision to just extend unemployment insurance instead of the Democratic plan, which was more expansive.

For twelve hours, Schumer and other middle-of-the road Democrats in the Senate worked on the West Virginian, trying to build a shared purpose and collaboratively problem solve and find compromise policy that would work for Manchin, the rest of the Democratic caucus, and the more liberal House Democrats, all of whom would have to vote “yes” on the bill.

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Schumer acted as the project manager with Biden and White House chief of staff Ron Klain all day. Schumer said of his relationship with Klain, “We can almost finish each other’s sentences.” He got Manchin on board only after paring back the plan and making the case that if he sided with Republicans, he risked tanking the entire package.

5. Use Action Learning to Produce Results and Develop as a Leader

There are two approaches for learning to lead. As mentioned before, the first approach is learning from a book or classroom, which is pretty theoretical. Your typical leadership weekend can spark your motivations and aspirations, as well as provide you with descriptions and explanations of leadership. You walk out the door with a list of things to remember but without a way to access being a leader when you show up for work Monday morning.

The other approach to learning to lead is what I wrote about in my book *Masterful Coaching* and is one that gives you direct access to being a leader as a natural self-expression. It is not based on theoretical learning but rather on “action learning.” This involves learning to lead in the process of making your vision of hope and change a reality. You start with your vision of hope and change and then think backward to a live project, goal, or outcome that can be tracked. You learn to lead in mobilizing people around a shared purpose and overcoming adversity as you strive to achieve it. This is an approach that gives you direct access to being a leader.

One way to get your arms around the “action learning” approach to being a leader is to make three lists: 1) a To Be List, 2) a To Do List, and 3) a Connect and Collaborate List.

Create a “To Be” List

How do you want to play it? Today America has been through a nation-encumbering crisis of epochal proportions. People’s lives have

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been disrupted by the pandemic, lost jobs, and civil unrest. Whether you work in Washington, the State House or City Hall, think about your main objective during the coming period and ask yourself: Who do I need to be in the matter? Then when you show up in the morning, you may soon discover that you actually feel that way. Here is a sample “To Be” list to get you started.

- Be positive
- Be ambitious
- Be passionate
- Be compassionate
- Be goal-oriented
- Be collaborative
- Be self-reflective

Create a “To Do” List

Let’s say that you are about to start your first or next 100 days and you want to make it the hallmark of your career. What would be an opportunity to both make your vision of hope and change a reality and to transform yourself into a real leader in the process? Here is a sample “To Do” list using the action learning approach:

- Formulate a vision of hope and change
- Mobilize your team to make the vision reality
- Ask: What is a key objective I want to achieve?
- Designate specific key results that are measurable
- Focus on actions you need to take in the next 24 hours
- Expect that each step you take will create support and opposition
- Grow through adversity: Pain + Reflection + Determination = Progress

Create a “Connect and Collaborate” List

It’s a great idea to be a visionary leader and to want to get big things done, but the reality is you can’t do it alone. Nor can you do it

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with people only on your side of the political fence. One of the most powerful tools you can use is to form fast collaborations and hold Camp-David-like meetings to deal with a looming crisis, big goals, or complex problems.

The key is to bring unlikely collaborators together to light creative sparks through a dialogue where diverse views and perspectives are seen as a strength in coming up with win/win solutions. It is important in any collaboration to not just talk, but also be outcome oriented.

Here is a sample “Connect and Collaborate” list:

- Follow George Washington’s rules of civility
- Never waste a lunch with supporters and opposers
- Look for existing areas primed for bipartisan action
- Set a shared goal people can subordinate their egos to
- Form “fast collaborations” to solve big problems
- Get all stakeholders in the room and explore diverse perspectives
- Come up with exciting win/win solutions

Put your lists in a place where they are easy to access and review. They become a powerful reminder that who you “be” is as important as what you “do,” and to get big things done, you can’t do it all on your own. Learn to collaborate!