REVISITING THE GREAT THE ROLE GOVERNMI TOD TO STORY CONTRACTOR WANTED MANTER WALLERANT COM Edited by TERRY BABCOCK-LUMISH and JOANNE VELLARDITA



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	4
SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE	6
FOREWORD	8
MARK K. UPDEGROVE	11
ROBERT A. CARO	14
LUCI BAINES JOHNSON	22
WILLIAM J. VANDEN HEUVEL	24
MICHAEL BESCHLOSS	26
RANDALL B. WOODS	31
IRA KATZNELSON	39
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	43



PREFACE

In January of 2011, Roosevelt House Advisory Board member and President Lyndon Baines Johnson's Chief Domestic Advisor Joseph Califano introduced the idea of a conference considering Johnson's domestic legacy. We could think of no more fitting a venue than Roosevelt House, the former home of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After all, President Roosevelt was President Johnson's hero, and historians trace the inspiration for LBJ's ambitious Great Society to FDR's historic New Deal legislation.

Roosevelt House, a landmarked double-townhouse on East 65th Street on Manhattan's Upper East Side, was the historic New York City home of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and Franklin's mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt. After Sara's death in 1941, President Roosevelt was pleased to sell their home to Hunter College for use as a student center. An integral part of the College since 1943, the House has undergone an extensive renovation and reopened in spring 2010 as the home of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College.

The transformation of Roosevelt House into a state-of-the-art facility for the College provides the first living memorial to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt in New York City and an exciting opportunity to build on their far-reaching contributions to the nation and the world. Located in the heart of the city, the Institute provides a platform from which high quality scholarship informs public debate and public life.

On March 14-15, 2012, it was a privilege to convene many of the country's leading scholars and policymakers for Hunter College's first Presidential Leadership Symposium entitled, "Revisiting the Great Society: The Role of Government from FDR and LBJ to Today." Over two days, a distinguished roster of participants considered lessons learned from Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society with an eye toward understanding how to make Washington work today.

This symposium provided an in-depth look at the domestic side of President Johnson's administration from scholars and practitioners alike, including those who contributed to delivering legislation intended to open opportunity, prevent discrimination, and provide for the health and education of all Americans. Considered were three core themes: presidential



leadership, the role and responsibility of the federal government, and the political realities of implementing ambitious public programs.

President Johnson said at the 20th anniversary of President Roosevelt's death:

Today's America is his America more than it is the work of any man...He had the gardener's touch. In some mysterious way, he could reach out, and where there was fear, came hope; where there was resignation, came excitement; where there was indifference, came compassion. And perhaps we can remember him most, not for what he did, but for what he made us want to do. We are trying to do it still. And I suppose we always will...

We are now in a new century. During a time of continued international conflict and economic challenges, the coming 2012 election marks an inflection point in our history, a measure of how well our democracy mediates sharply divergent views on the role of government and contending interpretations of the values and principles upon which our nation was founded.

At Hunter College and throughout a growing Roosevelt House community, we pride ourselves on a continued commitment to our motto, "mihi cura futuri." The care of the future is mine. Grounded in the lessons from past leaders, this is what we are about today as we try our best to prepare students to be innovative leaders for the future.

President Jennifer J. Raab Hunter College

lennje f. Raab

Interim Director Jonathan F. Fanton Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

2012 PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

MARCH 14-15

DAY 1 - PUBLIC PROGRAM

WELCOMING REMARKS

Jennifer J. Raab, President, Hunter College

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Mark K. Updegrove, Director, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Robert A. Caro, Author of The Years of Lyndon Johnson

OPENING SESSION - PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: MAKING WASHINGTON WORK

Moderator

Bob Schieffer, CBS News Chief Washington Correspondent and Moderator of Face the Nation

Panelists

Joseph A. Califano, Jr., LBJ's Chief Domestic Advisor; former US Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

Ervin Duggan, LBJ's Staff Assistant; former President of PBS

George McGovern, former Democratic Presidential Candidate, US Senator, and US Ambassador to UN Mission in Rome

Walter F. Mondale. 42nd Vice President of the United States and former US Senator

Bill Moyers, LBJ's Special Assistant; President, Schumann Media Center

DAY 2 - ACADEMIC CONFERENCE

SETTING THE STAGE

Jonathan Fanton, FDR Fellow and Interim Director, Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES Michael Beschloss, Presidential Historian

SESSION 1 - POVERTY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, THEN AND NOW

Moderator

Cordelia W. Reimers, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York

Panelists

Richard B. Freeman, Herbert S. Ascherman Professor of Economics, Harvard University

Robert H. Haveman, Professor Emeritus of Public Affairs and Economics and Research Associate at the Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Frances Fox Piven, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Sociology, CUNY Graduate Center

Leticia Van de Putte, Texas State Senator

SESSION 2 - HEALTH CARE

Moderator

Drew E. Altman, Ph.D., President and CEO, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Panelists

Joseph A. Califano, Jr., LBJ's Chief Domestic Advisor; former US Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

Theodore R. Marmor, Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Public Policy & Management, Yale University

Louis W. Sullivan, former US Secretary of Health and Human Services; President Emeritus, Morehouse School of Medicine

Steffie Woolhandler, Professor of Public Health, CUNY School of Public Health, Hunter College

Speaker: Randall B. Woods, John A. Cooper Professor of History, University of Arkansas; Author of LBJ: Architect of American Ambition

SESSION 3 - EDUCATION

Moderator

Joseph P. Viteritti, Thomas Hunter Professor of Public Policy, Hunter College

Panelists

Patricia Albjerg Graham, Charles Warren Professor of the History of American Education Emerita, Harvard University

James P. Comer, M.D., Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale Child Study Center; Founder, School of Development Program

David Steiner, Dean, School of Education, Hunter College; former New York State Commissioner of Education

SESSION 4 - CIVIL RIGHTS

Moderator

Jonathan Rosenberg, Professor of History, Hunter College

Panelists

Taylor Branch, Author of the historical trilogy, America in the King Years

Henry Cisneros, former US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Mayor of San Antonio; Executive Chairman, CityView

Nick Kotz, Author of Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Laws that Changed America

The Honorable John Lewis, United States House of Representatives; former Chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

Ira Katznelson, Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History, Columbia University

FORFWORD

"The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: if it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something."

★ PRESIDENT FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT
1932

"I do not believe that the Great Society is the ordered, changeless, and sterile battalion of the ants. It is the excitement of becoming—always becoming, trying, probing, falling, resting, and trying again—but always trying and always gaining."

★ PRESIDENT LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON 1965

Decades since FDR's White House tenure and that of LBJ, there remains much to learn from history.

Certainly, today looks markedly different from the Roosevelt and Johnson eras. Technology has revolutionized not only how we as a society view our homes and workplaces, but also our time horizons, mobility, and ability to communicate across borders and boundaries with ease and speed.

In an increasingly global and interconnected world, we are faced with different means of political engagement and a broader definition of "community." Public service is not only government service. Across the globe, we are seeking and discovering solutions from increasingly diverse institutions committed to effecting positive change: social entrepreneurs, public-private partnerships, microfinance institutions, philanthropic foundations, and more.

And yet, we as a society are still considering many of the very same questions FDR and LBJ confronted, from education and health care, to economic opportunity and the assurance of basic human rights and dignity. The responsibilities of the federal government remain at the core of public debate, and it requires little more than a glance at the daily news to see that the president and the presidency are as hotly debated and contested as ever.

In the midst of continued economic and geopolitical tests, Roosevelt House's first Presidential Leadership Symposium was organized to consider the challenges of developing and implementing ambitious domestic policy agendas. With the 2012 presidential election heating up, we convened members of President Johnson's core group of advisors, in addition to noted presidential biographers, historians, political scientists, economists, and practitioners. The purpose of the symposium was to draw upon lessons learned from the New Deal and the Great Society, exploring implications for presidential leadership and governance today.

This volume includes the formal remarks delivered throughout the course of our two days together. We encourage you to explore our website to view proceedings not captured herein and which are briefy described below.

Our opening panel discussion considered "Presidential Leadership: Making Washington Work." The goal of this session was to hear from those directly involved in the Johnson administration about their days in Washington. Moderated by Bob Schieffer, the panel explored issues of presidential courage and leadership. Schieffer led Joseph Califano, Ervin Duggan, George McGovern, Walter Mondale, and Bill Moyers, in a wide-ranging discussion of their experiences designing and implementing an ambitious domestic agenda.

During Day 2 of the symposium, we went in depth with four issue-specific panels, the first of which considered "Poverty and Economic Opportunity, Then and Now." LBJ declared "war" on poverty in 1964, making it a national priority through his State of the Union address and taking legislative and executive action that reduced poverty from 19 to 12 percent from 1964 to 1969. Despite the creation of programs to improve living standards for America's poor, the national poverty rate has remained steady since the 1970s. Many of the programs started under the Johnson administration, including immigration reform, are currently under attack in Washington and around the country.

Moderated by Cordelia Reimers, this session explored the roles and responsibilities of the federal government in the provision of services and a social safety net for American families and communities. Joining Reimers were panelists Richard Freeman, Robert Haveman, Frances Fox Piven, and Leticia Van de Putte.

Moderated by Drew Altman, our second topical panel, "Health Care," considered the early history and continuing legacy of LBJ's major health initiatives, including Medicare, Medicaid, and community health centers. These public programs, born under LBJ, continue to profoundly shape the landscape of American health care, and remain center-stage in the contentious debate over the appropriate role for government in the provision of care. Panelists included Joseph Califano, Theodore Marmor, Louis Sullivan, and Steffie Woolhandler.

The purpose of our "Education" session, moderated by Joseph Viteritti, was to explore LBJ's conviction that education can cure both ignorance and poverty. A former teacher himself, LBJ prioritized education, with particular focus on supporting poor children. With the goal of creating life-changing opportunities, his administration provided federal resources for Head Start, public schools, higher education, and libraries. Panelists Patricia Albjerg Graham, James Comer, and David Steiner, discussed the passage and consequences of critical legislation. Their conversation included, for example, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and its later influence on President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation and President Obama's Race to the Top innovation challenge.

Finally, our "Civil Rights" panel examined the challenges the LBJ administration confronted with respect to the civil rights struggle. Upon taking office in 1963, LBJ expressed a commitment to fulfilling the previous administration's stated













goal of passing civil rights legislation. Despite growing support, this would be extremely difficult. The passage of federal laws to address America's most intractable problem—institutionalized racial oppression—would require considerable skill and determination on the part of LBJ and those working with him. This panel considered how the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act were passed. Jonathan Rosenberg led a discussion that included Taylor Branch, Henry Cisneros, Nick Kotz, and John Lewis.

Roosevelt House's Public Policy Program is based on the understanding that the preparation of an informed citizenry is essential to a healthy democracy. So that we may all develop the knowledge and skills to be active participants in a democratic society, we look forward to more discussions such as those we shared over the two days together.

Joseph Califano encourages us to remember LBJ's signature admonition: "Do it now. Not next week. Not tomorrow. Not later today. Now."

Whether you are a student of history, a seasoned practitioner, a first-time voter, or otherwise, we hope this compendium will provide you with a sense of this spring's proceedings, and more so, encourage you to effect positive change, no matter the obstacle, today.

As you read, recall how far we have come in just a few generations, but also consider where we must go. As you consider your community, however defined, what can and will you do?

Onwards,

Newman Director of Public Policy Terry Babcock-Lumish Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute

[&]quot;This is our moment. This is our time... where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: yes, we can."

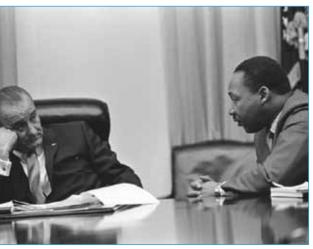
[★] PRESIDENT-ELECT BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA 2008

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

MARK K. UPDEGROVE

DIRECTOR OF THE LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM





It is altogether appropriate that this conference be held at Hunter College and at Roosevelt House, where we will convene tomorrow. Lyndon Johnson was a protégé of Franklin Roosevelt, who served as president when LBJ was elected to Congress in 1937.

LBJ—a New Dealer by background and at heart—believed in FDR and his vision for America. In many ways, the seeds of LBJ's Great Society were planted in the fields of FDR's New Deal. As Johnson often said to his aides during his administration, "I really intend to finish Franklin Roosevelt's revolution."

But LBJ's passion for social justice came well before FDR landed in the White House. In 1965, before a joint session of Congress, LBJ talked about his formative experiences teaching poor Mexican-American schoolchildren as a young man in Cotulla, Texas.

With those memories seared in his conscience—and racial strife alive and well in the mid-'60s—LBJ took his own revolution where FDR had not, enlisting in the cause of civil rights, and determined to put a legal end to racial apartheid in America.

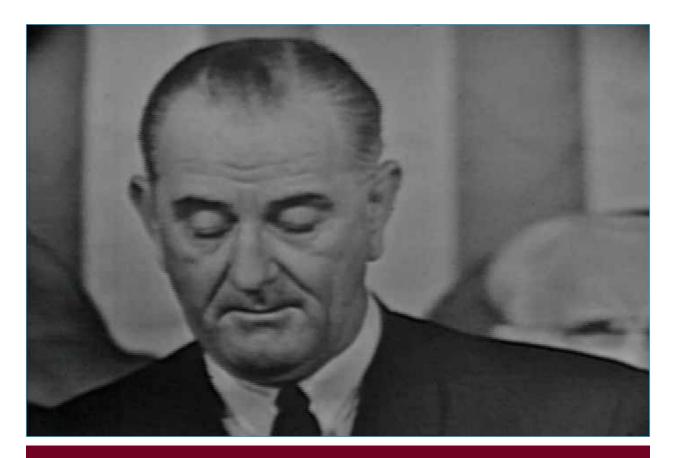
On November 25, 1963, on what was his second full day as president, Johnson called Martin Luther King, Jr. and initiated what would become one of the most important partnerships of the twentieth century.

"All men are created equal" is an inherent part of the American creed. By working with Martin Luther King and others toward the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and other civil rights measures, LBJ—more than any other President—helped to fulfill the promise of equal rights for all Americans. That legislation came at a cost.

When Johnson's friend and mentor, Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, warned him that passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would result in the Democratic Party's loss of southern states and his loss of the presidency in the fall election, Johnson replied, "If that is the price of this bill, I will gladly pay it." In fact, the Democrats did lose the South, but Johnson won the 1964 election by a landslide.



CLICK TO LISTEN TO A CONVERSATION BETWEEN LBJ & MLK OR VISIT: WWW.ROOSEVELTHOUSE.HUNTER.CUNY.EDU/LBJCONFERENCE2012/LBJ-TO-MLK/





CLICK TO WATCH LBJ'S "VOTING RIGHTS ACT" SPEECH:

WWW.ROOSEVELTHOUSE.HUNTER.CUNY.EDU/LBJCONFERENCE2012/VOTING-RIGHTS-ACT/

He used his mandate to fulfill other promises, enacting Medicare, Head Start, federal aid to education, integration reform, and environmental conservation, and taking measures to weaken poverty's hold in America as the poverty rate plunged from 19 percent to 12 percent during his tenure in the White House.

The Great Society might have swept even further into American life if not for the mire of Vietnam, a conflict Johnson inherited from Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. As LBJ escalated the war, with no resolution in sight, division spread throughout the country. On any given day of the latter days of his presidency, protesters might be heard outside the White House gates chanting: "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?"

LBJ agonized over the war, which resulted in the loss of 36,000 American troops by the time he left office in 1969.

As this conference will reflect, LBJ's formidable legacy of liberty continues to resonate, uniting us today far beyond the divisions of yesteryear.

"Come, let us reason together" was Johnson's favorite biblical passage. By reaching across the aisle, appealing to reason and fostering togetherness, he not only continued FDR's revolution, but also left his own indelible mark on America. While he may have been the consummate political animal, his ultimate aim was to use his power to do the greatest good for the greatest number.

Hey, hey, LBJ, my oh my, we could use you today!







"I REALLY INTEND TO FINISH FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S REVOLUTION."

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

ROBERT A. CARO

AUTHOR OF THE YEARS OF LYNDON JOHNSON

The role and responsibilities of government are the themes of this symposium, focusing on Lyndon Baines Johnson, 36th president of the United States. Lyndon Johnson's concept of the role of government will be explored in detail in the panels tonight and tomorrow.

But to begin this conference, I'm going to talk about the *origins* of this concept—its most fundamental beginnings—where his belief in the role of government began. Not the beginnings in Washington, but rather, the beginnings *long before* Washington.

I will also talk about the origins of the program in which he announced his views to the American people. Just seven weeks after President Kennedy's assassination, in his first State of the Union address, Johnson clearly enunciated his concept of what the role of government should be. It's the program with which he began his Great Society: the War on Poverty.

For LBJ, the beginnings are all in the place he came from, the place in which he was born and raised: the Texas Hill Country. I've talked before about the Texas Hill Country, but I don't think you can talk about it too much, particularly in New York City! I saw what it was like myself, and it was quite a shock.

In the years when I began my work on Lyndon Johnson, there was a 9 o'clock plane from LaGuardia to Austin. I'd take that plane and, upon arrival, rent a car and drive out of Austin to the Hill Country. On those days, I felt as if I was going from one end of the earth to the other.

Now, of course, Austin has pushed out into it, but back then, the Hill Country began just at the western edge of Austin and rolled further west. It encompasses 23,000 square miles, which is an area big enough to contain all of New England and still have room for Pennsylvania.

I'll never forget the first time I drove out there. About 40 miles out of Austin, as you're heading toward Johnson City, there's a rise. They call it a round mountain, but it's really just a tall hill. I came to the top of that rise and something made me pull my car over to the side of the road, get out on the shoulder, and look down in front of me.

I was looking down at a valley. (I later learned it was 42 miles long and about 15 miles across.) As I stood there and looked at it, I felt there was not a single human thing to be seen—just a vast emptiness.

And then something happened. Perhaps a cloud moved away from the sun? All of a sudden, there was a glint off a little huddle of houses in the middle of that empty space. That was Johnson City, Texas. I think I stopped the car then because I realized I was confronting something that I had never experienced and that I really wasn't equipped to deal with.

When Lyndon Johnson was growing up there, the population was 367 at one point. When I came along, it remained sparsely settled, about three people per square mile. The first settlers called it the "land of endless horizons," because every time you got to the top of one line of hills, you found that there was another one beyond it. For a large part of Lyndon's boyhood, the Johnsons didn't even live in Johnson City. They lived 18 miles outside of the town on the Johnson Ranch.

It was a land of incredible loneliness. Lyndon's brother, Sam Houston Johnson, once told me a story that reveals their isolation. There was one corner of the ranch that came down to what they called the "Austin-Fredericksburg Highway," which was really an unpaved path between Austin and Fredericksburg. Sam described to me how he and Lyndon would go down and sit on this corner of their fence hour after hour, hoping for a new face to come along, so they might have someone new to talk to.

It was a land of incredible poverty. There was almost no cash there. You could earn a dime from selling a dozen eggs, but you had to go to Marble Falls, 22 miles across the hills, to sell it. A friend of Johnson's, Ben Crider, told me how, on Sundays, he used to ride those 22 miles very carefully, carrying a dozen eggs in a basket in front of him, so that they wouldn't break—22 miles like that to earn a dime.

I began to realize that, coming from New York, I simply did not understand. I came back and told my wife, Ina, "I'm not understanding these people, and I'm not understanding this country. Therefore, I'm not understanding Lyndon Johnson. Would you mind if we moved there?" Ina agreed, of course, and for three years, we rented a house up in the Hill Country.

I would spend day after day driving around interviewing. Every interview seemed to be 180 miles from the one before. I spoke with people who grew up with Lyndon Johnson, who went to college with him, and the members of his first political machine.

He died so young, at the age of 64. And I came along so soon afterward that the people in Johnson City who knew him were just about all still there. His best friend in high school, Truman Fawcett, had moved to a bigger house, but he was still in Johnson City. His first girlfriend, Kitty Clyde Ross—Kitty Clyde Leonard now—actually still lived in her parents' house.

I began to understand the land and the man. That's what happens when you move to a world that opens up to you in ways that you can't even imagine.

I didn't really understand what effect Johnson's education had on him until I visited his college and found the textbooks that they had used. They were like textbooks that would be used in high school in New York. That was his college education. I found a friend of his, a guy named Joe Berry, who later became a professor at Bryn Mawr, who said, "You know when I got to Bryn Mawr, I realized I couldn't talk to anybody about anything. I felt I had been cheated out of an education." That's part of Lyndon Johnson's upbringing.

Hugh Sidey, a wonderful journalist for *TIME* magazine, has a poignant scene in his book on Johnson's presidency. Following Cabinet meetings, Johnson would often say, "You know, I had two Rhodes Scholars at the table, all these guys from Harvard, and one graduate of Southwest Texas State Teachers College!" Sidey said Johnson would always laugh loudly at that. Maybe too loudly.

Living there, I learned how truly remarkable were his unique abilities to use the powers of government to improve the lives of people. While I was interviewing in the Hill Country, I came to realize that I was hearing the same thing over and over. People would tell me stories about Johnson's ruthlessness and his cruelty, just for the sake of being cruel.

But then, I would also hear over and over, "No matter what Lyndon was like, we loved him because he brought the lights." Well, I knew what "brought the lights" meant. In 1937, when Johnson became a congressman at the age of 28, there was no electricity in the Hill Country. During his term as congressman, he succeeded in bringing electric power to the region.

Because I came from New York City, where electricity is a given—just flip a switch, and it's on—I understood intellectually what bringing electricity meant. But I didn't *really* understand what it meant for the lives of the people of the Hill Country. For example, because they didn't have electricity, they didn't have movies, and they didn't have radio programs.

Among the most poignant things so many of these farmers and ranchers would say was, "We loved FDR." "He saved my farm." "He saved my ranch." "We heard all *about* these wonderful Fireside Chats, but we couldn't *hear* the Fireside Chats." The only radios they had in the Hill Country were crystal sets. They would describe sitting there while Roosevelt was talking, moving the needle back and forth on the dial, trying to make his voice come in clearly.

But movies and radio are just entertainment. Not having electricity means something a lot deeper than that. You can cite any number of things that you can't have without electricity.

But, the deprivation is understood most fundamentally, most poignantly, in water.

In the city, we turn on a faucet, and because of electric pumps, we have water. However, in the Hill Country, water came from streams and wells. Those streams are generally small and dried up for a large part of the year. The water table is about 75 feet deep, so they had to dig that 75 feet and bring the water up from below.

According to the Department of Agriculture, at that time, the average farm family used 200 gallons of water each day. That's 73,000 gallons or 300 tons of water per year! Water that had to be brought up from the wells by the wife in each home because the husband was out in the fields working all day.

There was so little cash in the Hill Country that as soon as the children got old enough to work, boys and girls both had to work what they called, "off the farm." They would work on more prosperous farms in nearby areas of Texas, for a dollar a day, to earn some cash. The woman of the house would be left alone.

I had a hard time getting these women to talk to me at the beginning because, incredibly enough, they were very shy about talking to someone from the city! So, Ina learned to make fig preserves, and she became friends with the women. Then, I could go back, and they would talk to me more freely.

They would say to me, "You're a city boy. You don't know what bringing the water meant." They would go to their attic or their garage, and bring out a bucket for water, often with the frayed old rope still attached. They would take me over to the wells, which were always covered by boards. They would push the boards aside and drop the bucket in. Then, they would say, "You're a city boy. You don't know how heavy a bucket of water is. Now pull it up."

And, of course, you find out a bucket of water is *heavy*. In fact, very often, *too* heavy. They would put the rope over a metal rod above the well, and then do what they called, "walking away," hauling the bucket up as they walked and pulled the rope.

And that's the way they had to bring up all this water they needed for household duties. Then they would say to me, "You know, it's easier to get it to the house if you do it two buckets at a time. Do you know how we did that?" I'll never forget the first time a woman went into her garage and showed me her *yoke*. That's how these women carried the water, with yokes over their shoulders like cattle.

Frequently in my interviews with the women, they would ask, "Do you see how bent I am?" In fact, I had noticed that these women seemed a great deal more stooped than city women. I thought it was just because they were old, but they would say, "I got bent like this before my time. My back got bent like this when I was young." These women were stooped at 40, stooped at 35. One woman said to me, "I swore that I wasn't going to look like my mother looked, but then the babies started to come, and I had to bring the water. I knew I was going to look exactly like my mother."

They would show me what wash days were like when they didn't have electricity. They would take out four "number 3" zinc wash tubs, line them up on the lawn, and build a fire under each one.

The first tub was for the lye soap. They didn't have enough money to buy store-bought soap, so they had to make their own soap using lye. There was an expression in the Hill Country: "Lye soap peels the skin off your hands like gloves." The first load goes in to be scrubbed in the lye soap. The women would say to me, "You're a city boy. You don't know how heavy a load of wet wash is on the end of a broomstick, do you?" They would hand it to me, and it is *very heavy*.

Then, there was the rinse tub, the bluing or starch tub, and the final rinse tub. They had to transfer the loads on the end of a broomstick to each of these tubs. On an average wash day, as near as I could tell, there were eight to 10 loads of wash in a Hill Country family. The women who shared their experiences with me would say, "I'll never forget how my back hurt on wash days."

Tuesday was ironing day. I won't bore you by going through every day of the week. I named a chapter in my book after what they called Tuesday: "The Sad Irons." Because they didn't have electricity, an iron was a hunk of metal with a wooden handle that they would transfer from iron to iron. You would have to get the irons hot on the stove, and that meant standing next to the stove all day to do the ironing. Know that it's nothing in the Hill Country for the temperature to reach 105 or 106 degrees. These people were living lives out of the Middle Ages. They were living like peasants.

And here is the political genius of Lyndon Johnson. When, at the age of 28, he runs for Congress, he gears his campaign to the women. The line that he uses is, "If you elect me, you won't look like your mother. If you elect me, I will bring electricity." Well, they elect him, but no one really *believes* that he can bring electricity.

There is no dam source in the Hill Country. A dam has been started at the edge of the Hill Country, but it's the Depression, 1937. The company that started the dam has run out of money, and so the work is stopped. Even if you build a dam, how are you going to get electricity out to these scattered, isolated farms, one by one, laying lines across the hills?

In Congress, Johnson works relentlessly to get the dam built. Every time he sees FDR, he asks him for the money. He has intermediaries, and Roosevelt's own aides ask for the money. Finally, Roosevelt says, "Oh, give the kid the dam." Johnson then persuades the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to violate all their own rules and lay the lines. There was supposed to be a minimum population of 10 people per mile or the REA wouldn't lay lines. The Hill Country didn't meet that requirement, but Johnson gets the REA to do it anyway.

And electricity comes to the Hill Country. These people of the 10th Congressional District are brought, in a stroke, by one genius of a man using governmental power, into the twentieth century. In my writing, I consider the *effect of power* on the powerless and how power is used *on* the powerless. I also try to write about how power is used *for* the powerless.

We see in the Hill Country the beginnings of what I'm talking about, the beginnings of something beyond politics in Lyndon Johnson. He possessed something more than an understanding of what should be done to help people who were fighting forces too big for them to fight themselves. It was clear they were never going to get electricity on their own. No private company was going to do it. It wasn't profitable enough. His gift was not just the *capacity to understand* what should be done, but the *ability to help*.

This is the gift that Lyndon Johnson had, and quite a rare gift, really. His talent was to use the powers of government to help people trying to fight forces too big for them to fight alone. His father, a populist legislator who served six terms in the Texas House of Representatives, used to say that the proper function of government was to "help people caught in the tentacles of circumstance." The tentacles of circumstance—fighting things too big for you to fight yourself.

Now, we go forward to 1963. President Kennedy is assassinated on November 22nd, and Lyndon Johnson becomes president. Under President Kennedy, there had been some vague, hardly defined, early discussions of an anti-poverty program because over one-fifth of the United States—33 million people in that year—were still living below the poverty line.

On the day after the assassination, Saturday, November 23rd, at the end of the day, in his office in the Executive Office Building—he hasn't yet moved into the White House—Lyndon Johnson meets with four of President Kennedy's economists: Walter Heller, who is Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA); Kermit Gordon, the Director of the Budget Bureau; Douglas Dillon, the Secretary of the Treasury; and Gardner Ackley, a deputy to Heller who would then go on to serve as CEA chair himself.

The meeting is about the budget. Johnson is coming in at the middle of the budget process, knowing very little about it, and has to be brought up to speed. It's a long meeting. At the end,

Heller is leaving, walking out the open door with Lyndon Johnson beside him. (We know what Heller said and Johnson's response because both Heller and Ackley left notes on the meeting, which coincide exactly.) Heller mentions the anti-poverty program. Johnson shuts the door and says, "That's my kind of program. I'll find money for it one way or another."

During the meeting, Johnson had said a lot of things about the budget and his various priorities, and Heller had formed an impression. I'll read from Heller's notes: "His other remarks were a little calculating, a play for support. There he was, Lyndon Johnson, the politician. Not about this however."

Standing at that door, Heller suddenly feels that there was no calculation at all in Lyndon Johnson's response to poverty. It was so spontaneous, so immediate and instinctive. It was an intuitive and uncalculated response.

All his life, people who worked for Johnson knew about those moments of instinctive, uncalculated reactions, always in response to social injustice and need. Those of you who have read my books know there was a moment like that in 1949 when he learns that a Mexican-American soldier, killed in the Philippines during World War II, has been denied burial in the cemetery of his South Texas town because he's not white. John Connolly and Walter Jenkins are standing there

"A GENIUS FOR TRANSMUTING COMPASSION INTO GOVERNMENT ACTION" when Johnson is handed the telegram. Johnson reads it and, without a moment's hesitation, says, "By God, we'll bury him in Arlington!"

All through his life there are these moments, and here is another one. That December in 1963, Johnson goes for a two-week Christmas vacation at his Texas ranch (the ranch that his father had lost and that he has now bought back.) When Heller and Kermit Gordon meet with him there, Heller finds out that his analysis of Johnson's response to the anti-poverty program was correct. His words were not meaningless:

Johnson has found new money, a half billion dollars for an anti-poverty program.

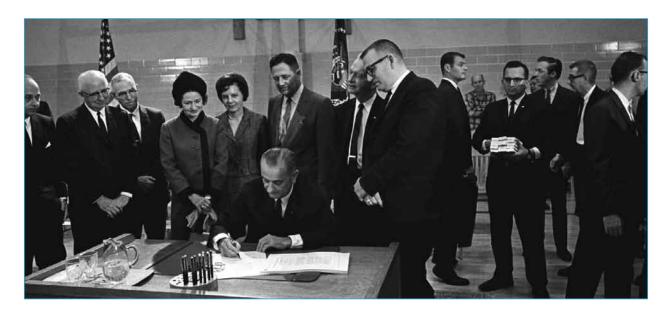
They find he is determined to push it through Congress, and he gives them a lesson in political tactics. They had conceived of a targeted demonstration program with programs in a *limited* number of cities. Johnson tries to make them understand that a limited number of *districts* means that a limited number of *congressmen* are going to get benefits from that program.

Lyndon Johnson says in his memoir, "I was certain that we could not start small and propel our program through Congress." His quote goes something like: "I knew we had to do it big, or we wouldn't get it through Congress at all." He keeps asking them, "How are you going to spend all this money? I've earmarked a half billion dollars to get this program started, but I'll withdraw it unless you fellows come through with something that's workable."

He is very determined. When you ask where this determination came from, as always with Lyndon Johnson, part of the explanation is political. He had an election coming up in 10 months. He was weak in liberal urban areas, and a campaign against poverty would strengthen Johnson in these areas. Part of it is always political.

But, as always with Lyndon Johnson, part of the explanation is something other than politics. When he was thinking about this anti-poverty program, he was back in the Hill Country where his father had gone broke and where he had grown up in poverty on the ranch.

How do we know that those beginnings were very much in his mind as he's dealing with the anti-poverty program that Christmas? Well, he talks often during those weeks about a particular thing in his boyhood: having to get up early. Most of the books on Johnson quote a very cute remark



that he once made to reporters as he was flying down to the ranch. He said, "I've always been an early riser. My daddy used to come to my bedroom at 4:30 in the morning when I was working on the highway gang right out of high school. He'd twist my big toe real hard so it hurt, and he'd say, 'Get up, Lyndon! Every other boy in town's got a half-hour head start on you." That's sort of cute.

But there's nothing cute about other things he said about being poor. I interviewed an old Hill Country ally of his, a guy named E. Babe Smith, who went back a long way with Johnson. He recalls that Johnson called him very early one morning. Johnson said he hoped he hadn't woken him and then said, "I'm sure I haven't because you were a poor boy too, and therefore, you must have been getting up early all your life, just like me." This is the quote: "That's the only way we can keep up. Otherwise, they're too far ahead of us."

On a call to Arthur Stehling, an attorney in Fredericksburg who's known him since his boyhood, he says, "We always get up early, don't we?" when Stehling answers the phone on the first ring. "We can't make it unless we do."

At the ages of nine and 10, Lyndon Johnson had worked in the cotton fields beside his cousin, Ava, picking cotton on their knees all day under the broiling Hill Country sun. That same Christmas of 1963, we learn from the back-up diary that his aides kept, Johnson and Lady Bird visit Ava in Johnson City to bring her a poinsettia. I asked Ava what she remembered of that visit. She didn't remember much except that she was sure they had talked about picking cotton. She said whenever she and Lyndon got together, the subject of cotton came up. "We always talked about the cotton. We just hated that so much."

"Hate" is a word that occurs frequently when people talk about Lyndon Johnson's feelings about poverty. Johnson's longtime cardiologist, Dr. Willis Hurst, notes in his memoir, "He hated poverty and illiteracy. He *hated* it. He hated it when a person who wanted to work could not get a job."

Dr. Hurst also recounts an incident that occurred when he was accompanying Johnson during his vice-presidency on a trip to Iran. As they pass by a group of poor children, someone remarks that the children are wearing rags. Johnson flies into a rage and says, as Hurst recalls it, "Don't say that. I know rags when I see them. They had *patched* clothes. That's a lot different from rags."

When I read this, I suddenly remembered a story that Lyndon's brother told me about their childhood. I couldn't quite recall it, which is why I didn't quote it in the book, but I do remember Sam describing their poverty. He said that he and his sister, Rebecca, had to wear patched clothes. He said, "But, they weren't rags."

So, these are the beginnings of Lyndon Johnson on the anti-poverty program. You understand how much it meant to him if you just listen to the words with which he introduced the War on Poverty in that first State of the Union speech. He flew back to Washington from the ranch in Texas to deliver it on January 8th, 1964.

The very writing of the speech is interesting. Johnson had persuaded Ted Sorensen, the great speechwriter for John F. Kennedy, to stay on to help him with his speeches for a short while. He had flown Sorensen and his three little boys down to Texas. They stayed at the Lewis Ranch, which is some miles away from the Johnson Ranch. One of Sorensen's sons recalls, "Dad was supposed to spend time with us that Christmas," but all he remembers is his father scribbling away in a little room at the end of the hall.

Several evenings Sorensen went down to the ranch, talking to Johnson about the speech. When you analyze those drafts—you can see them in the Johnson Library, draft by draft—you see how much of it came from Johnson. When he delivers the speech, he uses real Lyndon Johnson words. For example, Sorensen had written, "This administration declares unconditional war on poverty in America." The speech, as delivered by Lyndon Johnson is: "This administration, today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America." He had added four words: today, here and now. Lyndon Johnson words.

The speech said, "Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope, some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help that one-fifth of all American families with incomes too small to even meet their basic needs. Our chief weapons will be better schools and better health and better homes and better training and better job opportunities. To help more Americans, especially young Americans, escape from squalor and misery and unemployment rolls."

You know, it's interesting to watch that speech on tape today. As Lyndon Johnson says those three words—squalor, misery, unemployment—his eyes, behind the thick glasses he had to wear for speeches, narrow. I wrote, "His lips, set already in that grim tough line, tighten, then twist into an expression close to a snarl. He continued with words that, while none of them applied specifically to the circumstances of his own life, might nevertheless have had special resonance for someone who had grown up in poverty—and who knew it was only because he hadn't been given a fair chance."

Of course, Lyndon Johnson passed the War on Poverty, and he passed so many of the other bills that will be discussed during the rest of this symposium. He demonstrated in his presidency what he had demonstrated as a young congressman: a rare gift, a talent beyond talent. His talent was a genius for transmuting compassion into government action that would make the compassion meaningful.

The life of Lyndon Johnson is a very complicated life, but two aspects of that life shine brightly through all the complications and dark episodes. One is the compassion, his sympathy and empathy for people—poor people, people of color, people "caught in the tentacles of circumstance." The other is the great gift—the talent beyond talent—to make compassion meaningful. Meaningful how? To help people fight forces too big for them to fight alone. This is the proper role of government.

And, as I said at the start of my talk, it all went back to his beginnings in the Hill Country of Texas.



REMARKS ON BEHALF OF THE JOHNSON FAMILY

LUCI BAINES JOHNSON

FOUNDER OF LBJ FAMILY WEALTH ADVISORS, LTD.

It is a great honor to represent my family at this symposium that looks back at the Johnson administration and reflects upon its place in history.

My children have often asked me how I think their grandfather will be assessed by history. I have always responded, "It depends upon who is doing the writing."

Many here tonight are writing that history, as Daddy would say, with the "bark off."

Mother's brave decision to open the White House telephone tapes 50 years early, in order to ensure they were preserved, was proof she wasn't afraid of history with the "bark off" either.

Have there been discoveries on the tapes that have been "challenging" for my family? Sure! Life with Lyndon Johnson was always challenging. He was larger than life.

Daddy's Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs, Joe Califano, tells one of my favorite larger-than-life stories. Just five days into Joe's job, Daddy asked him to join him in the pool where, in the deep end, he shared with Joe some of his dreams for a Great Society: a program to straighten out America's transportation mess, a plan to rebuild America's decaying cities, and a fair housing bill.

Daddy poked at Joe's shoulder to impress his great expectations of him. At 6'3", Daddy could stand. At 5'10", Joe could only tread water. This was Joe's first exposure to "the Johnson treatment" and the "long arms of Lyndon Johnson." It was good training. All who helped to create and pass the thousand pieces of landmark legislation throughout Daddy's administration were forced to make great plans to achieve great goals while treading impossible waters!

I was a fly on the administration's wall when hundreds of bills that forever changed America were passed: Civil Rights and Voting Rights, Head Start, Elementary and Secondary Education, financial aid for college students, pollution laws, public radio and television, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, consumer laws, Medicare and Medicaid, immigration reform, and so much more.

The most personal and public events were all intertwined for me. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was signed on my 17th birthday. No one will ever get a greater birthday present. I stood behind my father as an eyewitness to history at the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

In the last days of the administration, my former husband volunteered for Vietnam. Often the last thing I heard before I went to bed was "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many boys did you kill today?" I saw Daddy anguish over how to honorably extricate us from the war while protecting our troops and our allies and, all the while, seeing the hope for his Great Society in peril. I saw it all as the daughter of the commander-in-chief and as the wife of an enlisted man in the Air Force.

I believe my father chose not to run for a second term with the hope that by giving up his political life—which was really life itself for Lyndon Johnson—he could expedite the peace process. Like many dreams, it was not meant to be.

The "long arms of LBJ" is how many historians describe Lyndon Johnson's powers of persuasion. But tonight, historians, I'm going to destroy the myth with the facts.

I bought Lyndon Johnson's shirts. At 6'3", with a 17" neck and a 33.5" sleeve, Lyndon Johnson didn't have long arms at all. His arms were unusually short for his height, but his powers of persuasion were so great, you never knew it. I believe he tried with every moment that he had to use those powers to make life better for his fellow man.

I hope, as you assess his life and times with "the bark off," that you will come to that conclusion too. Or, at least you will determine how hard he tried!









REMARKS AND TOAST

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. VANDEN HEUVEL

CHAIR EMERITUS AND FOUNDER OF THE FRANKLIN AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE, AND CHAIR OF THE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT FOUR FREEDOMS PARK

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT AND LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON: ARCHITECTS OF A NATION

If ever two presidents were united in spirit and vision, bound as teacher and student, as master and disciple, as founder and heir, they were Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. Both transformed the nation by social revolution that made hope, opportunity, and justice for all Americans our national commitment.

Franklin Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. His loss was a profoundly sad event for the nation and much of the world. For Lyndon Johnson, it was devastating. In a *New York Times* story the next day, Congressman Johnson was quoted as saying: "He was just like a daddy to me always. He always talked to me just that way. I don't know that I'd ever have come to Congress if it hadn't been for him, but I do know I got my first great desire for public office because of him."

Lyndon Johnson's first campaign for Congress is where the extraordinary relationship between a powerful president from upstate New York and an ambitious young politician from rural Texas begins.

When a Congressional seat became vacant in 1937, Lyndon Johnson was one of nine candidates—and the least favored for the contest. Roosevelt had just won the district by a nine-to-one margin. The special election took place just at the time that President Roosevelt had proposed his Supreme Court reorganization plan.

Lyndon Johnson embraced the president's proposal without reservation. "I didn't have to hang back like a steer on the way to the dipping vat," he said. "I'm for the president. When he calls on me for help, I'll be where I can give him a quick lift, not out in the woodshed practicing a quick way to duck." If you want to help the president, he told voters, then vote for me.

Campaigning day and night, never giving a speech without mentioning Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson won a stunning victory, which was widely hailed as a vote of confidence for the president and his Court plan. "The people in my district are as strong as horseradish for Roosevelt," Lyndon told an interviewer.

Shortly after Johnson's victory, President Roosevelt visited Texas and made sure he met his young protégé. The new congressman traveled in the presidential cavalcade to thunderously cheering crowds in Galveston. He rode with the president in his private railroad car to College Station and then Fort Worth.

The president told LBJ that if he needed any help when he got to Congress, to "call Tommy"— Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran—one of FDR's key aides. In a conversation later with Harold Ickes, the president told Ickes: "In the next generation, the balance of power will shift south and west, and this boy, Lyndon Johnson, will be the first southern president since the Civil War."

Both FDR and Lyndon Johnson were excellent storytellers, and stories were a constant part of how they operated. Probably no one was better at it than President Johnson, but he had some early lessons from the master. The first 15-minute meeting LBJ had with President Roosevelt was arranged to get FDR's support for a Rural Electrification Administration (REA) grant, which was being denied because the population density in Johnson's Hill Country did not meet REA specifications.

Johnson never had a chance. FDR talked about the impact of heavy work on the physique of Russian women and then lectured on the design and utility of multi-arch dams. Then, the door of the Oval Office opened, and Missy Le Hand reported that the next appointment had arrived.

Another meeting was quickly arranged. This time, LBJ was determined not to be filibustered. He came armed with charts, maps, and statistics, and before the president could speak, LBJ cried out, "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink! Public power everywhere, and not a drop for my poor people." For the next 10 minutes, Johnson never stopped talking. Roosevelt loved histrionic talent—he had just seen a masterful performance—and LBJ got the REA funding.

Lyndon Johnson did more for equal opportunity and racial justice in America than any president since Abraham Lincoln. He carried the New Deal into the next era of major reform, and using his great intelligence, energy, and political skill, he solidified its foundation and raised the New Deal to great new heights. Lyndon Johnson's genius created the Great Society. It is an extraordinary legacy.

Lyndon Johnson's first words to the nation in the tragic days of November 1963 were to invoke the name of FDR in asserting America's confidence and capacity to survive any crisis. Lyndon Johnson's final action on the last morning of his presidency was to sign a proclamation establishing the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Park, a final gesture of respect and devotion to the man who had so deeply influenced his life.

As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has written: "Our world today is the world of the Four Freedoms, Franklin Roosevelt's world, constructed on his terms, propelled by his hope and his vision..." Lyndon Johnson would agree. And Franklin Roosevelt would have said that America's greatness today owes much to the genius of Lyndon Johnson.

Please join me in a toast to the memory of two great presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lyndon Baines Johnson!



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

MICHAEL BESCHLOSS

PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I would like to begin with a brief account of how I first met LBJ myself. Although I never had the pleasure of meeting him in person, I feel as if I did. When I was seven years old, just after John Kennedy's assassination, I wrote a letter to President Johnson suggesting that a large carving firm be hired to preserve President Kennedy's image on Mount Rushmore. I am sure he would have had mixed views on that request.

About a week later, I received a letter from Juanita Roberts, his great secretary, saying, "President Johnson has received your letter and has asked me to thank you for writing." I showed it around to my friends. Skeptics all, they said, "It's obviously a forgery. A president's secretary would never bother writing to you." But, my letter turned out to be authentic. Beginning then, and for the rest of my life, I have been an LBJ man.

Of course, the real reason I feel as if I knew him is because I have listened to the roughly 650 hours of tapes LBJ made of his private conversations, most of which took place on the telephone. My project began with a dinner with the great presidential library director, Harry Middleton, whom I always think of as the Joe DiMaggio of presidential library directors. When Middleton told me that the president had taped for almost the entire span of his presidency—from November 1963 to January 1969—and that the collection would soon be open to the public, I believed, and Middleton agreed, that the archive would revolutionize the way that we see President Johnson. And so my work began.

We know that President Johnson held strong views about when this material should be shared and how it should be used. We also know that it is due, in large measure, to Mrs. Johnson's courage and respect for history that it is now possible, 50 years earlier than LBJ intended, for all of us to listen to and learn from those tapes. It has changed the way that we see and understand him, and has certainly made me feel as if I knew him.

This symposium will present rich and engaging panel discussions on the issues with which Lyndon Johnson engaged and his great accomplishments. I would like to talk about some of the qualities that made him, in my view, one of the most effective presidents in American history.

As I talk about these qualities and offer some examples, I would ask that we reflect on the fact that, for the most part, these are qualities very different from the ones many Americans now consider as they seek a potential president. I think that tells us a great deal about our system. As we meditate on what made LBJ such a great president, we should also think about *why* our system has evolved to the point at which, I believe, it is now very difficult, if not impossible, to nominate and elect a president of LBJ's skills and caliber.

To begin, LBJ was in Washington for 32 years. He was an excellent politician. (If you said *that* about a candidate now, it would poison the well against him.) That experience was at the very center of what made LBJ as effective as he was. There are myriad examples of his political skills. I'll mention just two.

After the 1964 landslide election, LBJ had an enormously lopsided Democratic Congress—House and Senate. A neophyte might have thought, "I'm going to get almost anything I want, probably for the next four years, so let's just do this leisurely." That is not the advice LBJ gave his aides.

Rather, he cautioned, "You think this landslide is something that's going to give us a blank check. You're wrong. We've got exactly six months. I'm going to be calling on an awful lot of

members of Congress to make sacrifices. Many of those are members of the House who got elected from districts that are not normally Democratic. They're going to be very worried about running again in 1966, and there are only so many times that they're going to agree to do something that I have asked them to do for the president's sake. Then they're going to rebel."

I think that Joe Califano will confirm that most of the people on the White House staff thought LBJ was too pessimistic about what he could do with that landslide. However, a reading of history shows that he was absolutely right.

In September of 1965, he returned to Washington from a vacation. The Congress had defeated him on a rent supplements bill for the District of Columbia, which should have been perfunctory. The Congress had begun to rebel. Most of the legislation that we think of as cornerstones of the Great Society was passed in those first six months of 1965. That is what it can mean when you have a president who is an excellent politician—as much as that is an epithet these days.

Secondly, this was a man who knew how to deal brilliantly with the opposition. The best example of this is the wonderful relationship he had with Everett Dirksen, the Republican Senate Minority Leader from Illinois. The two disagreed on just about everything but remained close friends. This was very much in the spirit of the founders who believed that politicians—public servants—could disagree and duke it out all day because that is the way you get the best policies. But, at the end of the day, they could have a tankard of ale together and be friends. I am sure LBJ and Dirksen didn't have a tankard of ale, but they did drink other things together, and they were great friends.

The cardinal example of the value of their relationship took place in the spring of 1964 when the president was working to get the civil rights bill through the Senate. It was a very hard time—most southern Democrats were not going to be for this bill, and he needed Republicans. LBJ was able to go to his old friend Dirksen, whom he knew inside and out, saying essentially two things.

First, "Ev, if you're going to think about supporting this bill, I'll make it easy for you so you won't have to save face. This is what I'll do: you will announce that you've got about 131 objections to the civil rights bill, and you will never vote for it until every single one of them is satisfied. Every day you'll give a press conference, saying the White House has caved in on Number 27. On the next day, the White House has caved in on Number 14, and so on."

The second thing he said was perhaps even more powerful. (He knew that Dirksen was a bottomless well for flattery.) "Ev, I know you've got some problems with this bill, and I hope I can help you politically. Look at it this way: If you are for it, the Republicans will be for it. The bill will pass, and if it passes, it's going to change the country. And, if it does, 100 years from now, the schoolchildren of America will know exactly two names: Abraham Lincoln and Everett Dirksen."

I'm afraid that even here at Hunter College, despite the excellence of teaching, probably not every student knows the name of Everett Dirksen. Although, perhaps by the end of this conference, they will. Of course, Dirksen liked what he heard. While that is not the only reason he was for the bill, in the end, he supported it. That is what it can mean to have a president who is a brilliant and experienced political tactician.

Historians often question the relationship between politicians' words and their real motives. Does a wonderfully written speech simply reflect a president's ability to hire great writers who craft speeches he may barely understand and may not even stand behind? Do the words reflect his true purpose? The ability to answer these questions in reference to LBJ may be the most important value of the tapes.

We can hear him, especially in 1964 and 1965, as he wrestles with the challenges of the Great Society, working to get those programs passed. He talks in private about poverty and civil rights. If anything, he is more radical in private than he is in public, saying, "I can't say these things in

public yet because the time isn't right." For those who question Lyndon Johnson's true intent, I say, listen to those tapes, and the question is adjourned.

Another important quality for a president is the willingness to take political risks. We are all aware of presidents who are intoxicated with popularity, with getting reelected, and once reelected, failing to fulfill the promises made for their second term. By then, they're raising money for their presidential library or working to designate a successor. Perhaps they want their children to be president, or their grandchildren. And so on. We don't often get profiles of courage in that second term.

In Johnson's case, you can have no doubt that the popularity that was demonstrated in 1964 was a reservoir of power that was handed to him. He then used it to address the tough problems: health care, education, poverty, and civil rights.

We are not going to focus on the Vietnam War in this conference, but in reference to that war, the tapes poignantly reveal a great deal about the depth of Johnson's humanity. Throughout American history, many wartime presidents have steeled themselves against the decisions that send young Americans to their deaths. There have been presidents who have said that in order to make the best decisions for the country, it is necessary to think of soldiers as numbers or chess pieces. That is the very opposite of Johnson's view.

Lyndon Johnson did it the way I think it should be done. Perhaps it was unwitting, but I believe he acted very much in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln. Under the duress of sending young men off to die in the Civil War, Lincoln once remarked to a friend, "Can you imagine me making these decisions? I, who could not even kill a chicken, I'm sending off hundreds of thousands of young Americans to lose their lives. Can you imagine what torture this is for me?"

Rather than distance himself from those decisions, he made certain he was confronted daily with their results. If you have not yet visited the summer house in which Lincoln lived in Washington, which is now called "President Lincoln's Summer Cottage," it is worth going if you have the chance. This is where Lincoln spent each summer, about a quarter of his presidency.

When he was told a new national cemetery was needed because so many young men were dying, Lincoln said, "Put it across the street from my summer house. I want to wake up every morning and see those graves being dug, those caissons coming with the caskets. I don't want to ever forget the cost of the political decisions I am making."

Lyndon Johnson, in my view, felt very much the same way. In 1964, when we began to get deeply involved in Vietnam, Mrs. Johnson notes tellingly in her diary, "I don't think that Lyndon is capable of being a wartime president because he is so emotionally wrapped up in this. I'm not sure he can go through four more years." To some extent she was right, but I think that speaks very well of LBJ as a commander-in-chief.

Yet another skill that is worthy of seeking in a future president is the ability to recognize talent. Johnson was an amazing judge of talent. Look at the Johnsonians with us in this room, along with the senators who served in his time. They were the leadership of the Democratic Party for the next generation or more.

Frequently, you'll find presidents who are not secure in themselves and who choose a Cabinet of sycophants or people whose talents are not as great as their own to ensure that they will always shine. That was the precise opposite of LBJ's point of view. A very big part of being president is the ability to select the best people. My guess is that this ability has not been mentioned once during the primary campaign of the last couple of months.

I don't think I need to tell anyone here that LBJ was, in his own phrase, a "can-do" man. Personally, if I wanted to get something difficult done—in almost any area of American life—he's the president that I would want in place to do it. Possibly one of the best examples of this, and

certainly one of the most vivid, occurred after his presidency. I have always thought that this story was apocryphal, but I am always assured by those who would know that it is basically true.

In 1971, when the Lyndon B. Johnson Library opened to the public, visitors were not coming in the great numbers that President Johnson had hoped. As the story is told, a message was sent to the man who makes announcements in the University of Texas football stadium across the street, which can attract about 110,000 people on certain days in the fall.

As the tale goes—please forgive the language—LBJ's instructions were, "Tell them to announce that anybody who wants to take a leak or get some cool water can do it at the Johnson Library across the street." Well, the announcement was made, and thousands of people came in. They even bought a few copies of his memoirs. By the end of 1971, the Johnson Library was the best attended presidential library in the United States. That's what LBJ meant by a "can-do" man.

Very important in a president.

"I'VE GOT POWER, AND I INTEND TO USE IT." Then, there is his great loyalty. You will hear it from almost every person who ever worked for him. He was tremendously loyal, and in ways that would not have been expected. I offer two cases.

In 1967, the daughter of Dean Rusk, LBJ's Secretary of State, famously married an African-American man. Recall that it was only in 1967 that marriage between a black person and a white person was finally no longer outlawed in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Dean Rusk, in his dutiful way, went to the president and said, "Mr. President, this may cause you problems,

and you've got enough problems. I'll be happy to quietly resign in a way that people don't know the reason for my resignation." Johnson said exactly what you would hope and expect, which was, "Get out of my office. I don't want to hear this again!"

There is another instance of this, from perhaps an odd source, Richard Helms, the director of the CIA. About the same time, in 1967, Helms was getting divorced and planning to marry an Englishwoman. He has told me that he went to the president and said, "You know, my getting divorced may cause you problems. I'm the head of the CIA, and I'm marrying a foreign national." Johnson said essentially what he had said to Rusk: "Get out of here, and just do your job." Again, that is what you would want from a president, but I can tell you it does not always happen that way.

Looking at his marriage tells us much about who he was. In politics, one frequently finds spouses, both men and women, who are there to boost the spirits of the candidate and attest to his or her great character. Lady Bird Johnson was definitely not what is sometimes thought of as a doormat wife. We learn this from the tapes, but there are a great many other sources.

She loved him, and she believed in him. But—and I think their daughter Luci will attest to this—she was also looking at him every single minute and saying, essentially, *Are you being your best self*? If he wasn't, he heard about it. That was an enormous contribution to this president. I believe that Lyndon Johnson could not have been president if Lady Bird had not been as intense a presence as she was so much of the time.

A quality that may surprise people is the depth of his spiritual life. I think at the time he was president, most Americans—even those who watched him pretty closely—would not have thought of him as a particularly religious or spiritual person. Here again, in my view, he was very much in the tradition of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, an agnostic for most of his life, once said, "I don't see how you could be a wartime president without becoming more and more religious and allowing that to steady you and give you some comfort in the decisions that you have to make."

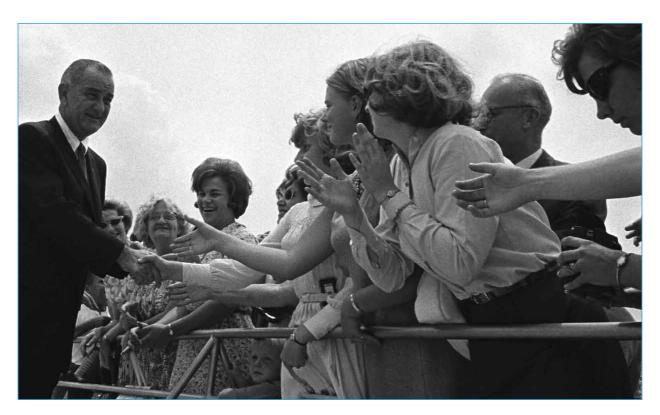
Luci Johnson has told us that, as Vietnam wore on, LBJ spent more and more time in a little church in southwest Washington. He sometimes went there before dawn—times when people didn't know it. Mrs. Johnson told me that, at times, she felt President Johnson might convert to Catholicism. There is a story here of an inner life that tells you good things about him. I believe that if you're assessing a potential president and you don't find that kind of spiritual quest, you're going to lose something important if that candidate serves.

Finally, I think that the ultimate test of a president is this: Is this a person who engages with the most basic and most difficult challenges of his time? Or is this someone who attends to lesser issues that will not be controversial, seeks to preserve popularity, and gives the illusion of accomplishments while, at the same time, bucking the big problems to a successor? Many presidents have done that. Lyndon Johnson did not.

You will be hearing a great deal about those challenges in the panel discussions today: civil rights, poverty, health, and education. These are the tough issues that LBJ confronted. "This is what I was elected for, and if I leave the presidency as powerful and popular as the day I went in, then I haven't used it. I'm president. I've got power, and I intend to use it." It is not always the case.

I'll conclude with the thoughts on our current political system with which I began my talk. A process for choosing presidents, and particularly a primary nominating process that chooses a nominee within a political party, ought to be a process that puts the candidates through an obstacle course, testing them on the essential characteristics and skills that we have learned make good presidents. I regret to say that I think our current system has evolved—in both parties—in such a way that LBJ, one of the greatest and most effective presidents in American history, would have a very hard time getting nominated. I'll close with the request that we reflect on that and on the possibility that our system does not yield presidents as effective as we need and as we once had in the person of Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Thank you all very much.



RANDALL B. WOODS

JOHN A. COOPER PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, AND AUTHOR OF *LBJ: ARCHITECT OF AMERICAN AMBITION*

THE GREAT SOCIETY: A PERSPECTIVE

As a constellation of ideas and as a vision of America, the Great Society had been taking shape in Lyndon Johnson's mind since he first heard the Great Commoner, William Jennings Bryan, orating on behalf of the people on his parents' Victrola in Johnson City, Texas. From his father's fervent populism and his mother's liberal Baptist faith, from his experiences at the Welhausen Elementary School in Cotulla, Texas, from Sam Rayburn and Charles Marsh and Franklin Roosevelt, from his love for the American political process, from his own messianic aspirations for himself, came a cornucopia of programs that were intended to make America that land of social, economic, and political excellence that Sir Thomas More had dreamed of in 1519.

What is exceptional about the thousand pieces of legislation that Congress passed during the Johnson presidency was that they were enacted not during a period of great moral outrage by the middle and working classes at wealthy malefactors, not amid fears that the country was about to be overwhelmed by alien, immigrant cultures, and not under the weight of a crushing economic crisis that threatened the very foundations of capitalism. There seemed to be no sweeping mandate for change. JFK had barely beaten Richard Nixon in 1960. Much of the country was conservative. The Great Society was conceived and implemented during a period of growing prosperity. Somehow Johnson persuaded a well-off majority—predominantly white—to act on behalf of a disadvantaged minority, largely African American and Hispanic.

What I want to do today is bring you up to date on how historians and social scientists view the most significant Great Society programs nearly a half-century after their inception.

The War on Poverty was built upon existing programs—Aid to Dependent Mothers and Children, and Social Security, among others—which the Johnson administration succeeded in broadening and deepening. The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) was an omnibus bill that included a reinvented Civilian Conservation Core, Legal Services, Volunteers in Service to America, the Neighborhood Job Corps, and later, Head Start.

The most innovative and controversial aspect of the administration's War on Poverty was, of course, the Community Action Program (CAP) in which the poor would help plan their own rehabilitation and empowerment. On the positive side, CAP helped bring have-nots into the democratic process. The program created a "reform constituency," producing a network of local NGOs that would serve the poor long after the Office of Economic Opportunity passed into history. On the negative side, it alienated urban political machines, mostly Democratic, who saw community action participants as rivals for power.

LBJ, like Bill Clinton, insisted that the goal of his welfare programs was to end welfare by eliminating the need for it. But the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) had as its objective filling the welfare rolls to the breaking point, in hopes of destabilizing the system. Some of the organization's activists were Black Power adherents; but some, such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan, were liberals who favored a guaranteed annual income. Whatever the case,

"A CORNUCOPIA OF
PROGRAMS THAT WERE
INTENDED TO MAKE
AMERICA THAT LAND OF
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC,
AND POLITICAL
EXCELLENCE"

the actions of the NWRO played into the hands of conservatives, who used it in their ongoing war on the nation's "bloated welfare system." The War on Poverty was attacked on the left because it did not do enough, and on the right because it tried to do too much. According to Allen Matusow, Johnson's poverty program failed because it was underfunded, emphasized individual opportunity, and involved accommodation with local political machines and vested interests.

From the conservative camp, George Gilder, in *Wealth and Poverty*, denounced the EOA and other programs as "demoralizing blandishments" that created an epidemic of dependency, which resulted in "a wreckage of broken lives and families worse than the aftermath of slavery." Public opinion polls at the time showed the American people almost evenly split as to whether poverty was a matter of individual responsibility or the result of conditions and events beyond the individual's control.

What made Johnson's War on Poverty different from previous efforts at what social scientists term "relief-giving" was that it targeted African Americans. The real motive behind efforts to alleviate poverty, skeptics claim, was not compassion but a desire to regulate the supply of cheap labor and maintain social control. As the largest and most disadvantaged group in society, blacks were most likely to lead the revolution. There was certainly some of that motive in LBJ's programs. In trying to sell Project 100,000—a scheme to help some of the masses of young men who failed the Armed Forces Qualification Test each year—Johnson told Richard Russell, a skeptic, that if the government did not help down-and-out young blacks, they would soon be storming the country's gated communities.

Johnson would become a critic of CAP because it threatened local Democratic political machines. He made it clear that he remained committed to the traditional progressive value of equality of opportunity, as opposed to entitlements. Ironically, white working- and middle-class Americans came increasingly to view the War on Poverty as a strategy of income entitlement, something they deeply resented. Another group of critics charged that the War on Poverty led to a rising level of expectations among African Americans, which, when they were not met, produced the wave of urban violence that swept the country in the 1960s, prompting a backlash among whites.

The consensus among scholars seems to be that, despite its flaws, the War on Poverty did affect the country's poor in positive ways. Most obviously, it kept Michael Harrington's *Other America* on the public's radar screen. In some communities it brought the poor, especially disadvantaged African Americans, into the political process. And it left behind a network of support that has endured. In his study of New Orleans, Kent Germany found that the War on Poverty, especially CAP, created a "Soft State," comprised of federal bureaucracies, neighborhood groups, state social agencies, and nonprofit organizations that, after 1970, distributed more than \$100 million in federal funding, primarily in black communities.

Even the Great Society's harshest critics acknowledge that it contributed enormously to the Second Reconstruction, racial justice, and black empowerment. There is no doubt that LBJ built on a deep commitment of the Kennedy administration, and specifically on initiatives launched by Robert Kennedy's Justice Department and Bob McNamara at the Pentagon.

The historiographical debate focuses on LBJ's motives. Was he a sincere, compassionate racial reformer or a mere political opportunist? How much credit should he receive for passage of the 1964 and 1965 Civil Rights Acts? What about his countenancing of the FBI's wiretapping of Martin Luther King and his spying on the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention? According to Kent Germany, Johnson was absolutely sincere. For him, growing up in Texas, Jim Crow was not an abstraction. "Throughout his life, he had seen segregation compromise the country's capacity for greatness. It had wounded him and damaged people he cared about."

Prior to the presidency, Johnson's record was ambivalent at best. He went out of his way to help blacks as director of the Texas National Youth Administration (NYA), and he was one of three Southern solons not to sign the Southern Manifesto. Nevertheless, as a senator representing a state of the former Confederacy, he voted in favor of segregationist measures at least six times. During the early days of the Watts riots of 1965, he retreated to his ranch and all but cut off communication with the White House. By 1967, angry at the ongoing ghetto riots, at criticism from black radicals, and at King's decision to join the antiwar movement, he virtually directed the FBI and CIA to find a link between the Black Power Movement and an international communist conspiracy.

Nevertheless, as Jeff Woods points out, during the crucial period from late 1963 through 1965, Johnson made the decision that civil rights was an issue whose time had come. If his beloved South was not to be forever relegated to a political and cultural backwater, it would have to accommodate itself to equal rights and integration in both public places and housing, and ultimately to equal opportunity.

Using the White House tapes and Joe Califano's diaries, Nick Kotz has shown how Johnson utilized his incomparable political skills—rooted in a thorough knowledge of each legislator and his or her constituencies—to break or stall filibusters and guide through Congress the most important civil rights measures in the nation's history.

There are the ever-present Kennedy loyalists, such as Irving Bernstein and Hugh Davis Graham, who depict Johnson as nothing more than Bobby Kennedy's instrument in the effort to get the Equal Accommodations and Voting Rights bills through Congress. In the matter of Hoover's spying on King and the 1964 Democratic Convention, David Garrow and Kenneth O'Reilly accuse Johnson of an egregious abuse of federal power. Meanwhile, Nick Kotz and Taylor Branch take pains to point out that at the very same time Johnson was exploiting the FBI and tolerating Hoover's racism, he was pressuring the agency relentlessly to pursue the killers of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. According to Michael L. Belknap, at one time, under COINTELPRO, "over 15 percent of the KKK was working for the FBI."

Historians typically designate the signing of the Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965, as the high point of the civil rights narrative, and as a dividing line between an early 1960s of hope and idealism, and a late 1960s of discord and disruption.

As far as Southern politics were concerned, LBJ's championing of civil rights was a mixed bag. Between 1964 and 1968, the percentage of white Southerners voting for Republican presidential candidates grew from less than 50 percent to more than 70 percent. Perhaps black apathy had something to do with it. As Numan Bartley has pointed out, "the South harbored 44 percent of the nation's poor people," while it "received 20 percent of the antipoverty program's expenditures." This relative neglect, coupled with white outrage at the passage of the Voting Rights and Equal Accommodations Acts, may have helped throw the South into the arms of the Republican Party. But, 10 years after that legislation, former race baiters such as George Wallace and Strom Thurmond were openly appealing for black votes and often receiving them. And, during the 30 years following passage of the Civil Rights Acts, the nation elected presidents from Georgia, Texas, and Arkansas.

In their book, *The Heart of Power*, David Blumenthal and James Morone conclude that "LBJ was the most important health care president the United States has ever had." Bob Dallek sees Medicare and Medicaid as another example of a projection of Johnson's personal concerns into national policy. The Texan himself cited the haunting memory of his stroked-out paternal grandmother enduring a lingering death at the family home in Johnson City. In this vein, Edward Berkowitz and others note that LBJ's health care program began with another

declaration of war, this time against heart disease, cancer, and strokes. Johnson's concern with health issues began well before he became president. In the 1940s and '50s, in the House and Senate, he led the way in side-stepping political opposition to national health care by dramatically increasing federal funding for medical research through the National Institutes of Health.

As president, he publicly committed to a program of national health insurance in his 1964 Special Message to Congress on the Nation's Health. As other Great Society programs, federally supported health care would simultaneously serve a number of constituencies, some of them traditionally at odds. The president pitched health care reform as part of the War on Poverty, but he realized it was also a gift to the American middle class. Medicare would relieve families of having to choose between paying for health care for their aging parents and college tuition for their children.

Moreover, though Johnson did not emphasize the fact, national health care measures would be secondary civil rights acts in that they promoted desegregation of hospitals and clinics across the South. According to historians of the Johnson health care policies, such as Theodore Marmor, the president was the political mastermind behind passage of Medicare in the spring of 1965, leaving conceptualization to his subordinates. Rather than try to steamroll Wilbur Mills, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, who was determined that any new health care reform be fiscally sound, Johnson had Social Security chief Wilbur Cohen cultivate the Arkansan, instructing Cohen to ensure that Mills would get the credit for an issue whose time had come.

The strategy paid off when, in the wake of the 1964 election, Mills, with Cohen in the background, came up with a three-tiered plan that produced federal funding for hospital construction, a national plan for hospital insurance, and a voluntary program to cover part of the cost of physicians and other services. Ironically, unlike Social Security, Medicare became an actuarial disaster, with the federal government acting as paymaster with scarce control over costs.

As with other Great Society programs, scholarship on education policy is rather spotty, but those who have tackled the subject are almost unanimous in their conclusion that Johnson's was the first "education presidency." Indeed, Lawrence MacAndrew terms the signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as "nothing short of a legislative miracle."

Scholars have identified the three principal obstacles to federal aid to education: race, religion, and Rules. Frank Munger and Richard Fenno explore the white South's fear that education reform would be just another opening wedge for Washington to impose integration on Dixie. Diane Ravitch attributes the opposition of parochial school supporters, primarily Catholics and evangelicals, to paying taxes in support of schools their children would not attend.

Finally, James Sundquist focuses on the anti-statist, conservative House Rules Committee. As Johnson had envisaged, passage of the Equal Accommodations Bill and Voting Rights Act took much of the steam out of racist opposition to federal aid to education. Next, a bill focusing aid on individual students rather than schools quieted the parochial-versus-public storm. The president personally took care of the Rules Committee, boxing in its reactionary chair, Judge Howard Smith.

Those who have studied implementation of ESEA give it mixed reviews. While the number of young people earning high school diplomas during the 1960s increased from 60 percent to 75 percent, and the number attending college grew from 22 to 32 percent, Irwin Unger notes that academic achievement for African Americans and poor whites showed little or no improvement. Federal money there might have been, but control of educational policy remained in the hands of state and local authorities.

What of Lyndon Johnson and the environment? Students of the subject began by placing the modern environmental movement, which commenced following World War II, in historical perspective. Those concerned with the exploitation and protection of the physical world were part of the "conservation movement." They were divided between resource conservationists—

preventing waste through the efficient use of resources—and preservationists—those who were more interested in saving what remained of the wilderness. By the time LBJ came on the scene, especially after publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, quality-of-life issues such as pollution control, wariness toward nuclear power, and a critique of consumerism had joined with the interest in preservation of natural places.

Typically, LBJ wanted to do something for everyone. Between 1963 and 1968, the president signed into law approximately 300 conservation, beautification, and environmental measures—more than in the preceding 187 years combined. The federal government authorized 35 additions to the National Park Service.

The literature on the environment movement of the 1960s is, to say the least, incomplete. As Paul Conkin points out, consumer safety and environmental legislation were part of the Great Society's efforts to respond to the needs of "non-poor Americans." In a major address to Congress in February 1965, LBJ proclaimed that the nation should not be concerned "with nature alone" but with "the total relation between man and the world around him." Victoria Garcia traces Johnson's sensitivity to environmental issues to his upbringing in the Texas Hill Country where water and its periodic scarcity had dominated the lives of farmers and ranchers since founder Stephen Austin brought the first American settlers to the region.

Then, there was LBJ's relationship with Lady Bird, a lifelong devotee of "beautification" (a term she hated). Irwin Unger argued that she was "the most potent force" working for landscaping in Washington, D.C., campaigning against the proliferation of highway billboards, and generally heightening public consciousness of outdoor aesthetics. Some scholars, such as Paul Conkin and Vaughn Bornet, argue that it was Stuart Udall who educated LBJ on the importance of contemporary environmental issues. Prior to his presidency, according to Bornet, Johnson was nothing more than a "water-respecting, horizon-loving Southwesterner." Educated by Udall, he became the bridge between the old conservationism and the new environmentalism.

Historians of the Wilderness Act note that, for the first time, the federal government took the offensive, setting aside four new areas totaling 9.1 million acres, rather than just trying to defend existing tracts. Environmental historians credit the Johnson administration with pushing through Congress the first major antipollution measures: the Water Quality Act of 1965 and the Clean Air Act of 1967. They note, however, that the latter measure was as much influenced by the coal industry as by environmentalists. The 1967 Air Quality Act was the first to attempt to control lead emissions, but it amounted to a very small step in what would become an ongoing battle between reformers and the automobile industry.

According to David Steigerwald, the Johnson administration was more attentive to the special needs of the American city than any presidency before or since. Among its accomplishments were the establishment of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Model Cities Program, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Most historians credit LBJ and his lieutenants with good intentions, but nearly all are critical of the results. When LBJ entered office, three broad developments had come together to threaten the modern city: deindustrialization, which deprived urban areas of jobs and tax bases; the postwar diaspora of Southerners into the metropolitan areas of the North and West, which was fraught with racial implications; and problems of both housing supply and distribution.

James Gregory has chronicled the magnitude of white flight from the South. Just over 4 million Southerners fled Dixie in the 1940s, slightly more than 4,250,000 in the 1950s, and some 3,326,000 in the 1960s. White out-migration dwarfed the movement of blacks into Northern and Western cities. That population flow contributed to an already severe postwar housing shortage, and the resulting competition for housing greatly exacerbated racial tensions. Aided and abetted by the

Federal Housing Administration, local authorities and real estate agents systematically created or augmented the ghettos that were to explode in the 1960s.

Hardly an urbanite when he came to the presidency—although he would live most of his adult life in Washington, D.C.—Johnson was determined to compel the country to rise above its anti-city bias and support a national policy for urban renewal. His Special Message to Congress on Cities came on March 2, 1965. As Howard Gillette points out, the steps he recommended reflected two principal forms of American urban policy. The first aimed at redesigning the physical environment in order "to make cities beautiful," and the second dealt with socioeconomic conditions in order "to make cities just."

Johnson asked for and eventually obtained from Congress a new Department of Housing and Urban Development. He named Robert C. Weaver, an African American, to run the agency. Efforts to use HUD's control of resources to compel municipalities to participate in public housing programs and to commit to open housing invariably ran up against conservative congressmen and mayors who denounced Johnson and Weaver as dictators out to deprive middle-class whites of the freedom of association and the right to dispense with their property as they saw fit. Model Cities, which aimed at integrating social, economic, and physical reforms in target cities, died aborning because of these same attitudes and, ultimately, insufficient funding.

The law-and-order theme that boosted George Wallace and Richard Nixon's campaigns in 1968 was rooted in the urban rioting that swept the country in the mid- and late-1960s. Most historians agree that the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, anemic though it might have been, was an amazing achievement in the midst of this carnage. It is clear that Johnson decided in 1965-66 that a solution to the urban crisis was crucial to the future of the country, and that open housing was fundamental to racial justice.

He seems *not* to have understood, however, that while some whites would accept equal accommodations, school integration, and voting rights, residential integration was something else again. When, during the Congressional debate over the 1966 Housing Bill, Senate liberals behind Paul Douglas engineered an agreement with the House, Sam Ervin and Everett Dirksen mounted a successful filibuster. Republicans, and even some moderate Democrats, joined the Dixiecrats in declaring their undying opposition to open housing legislation. Only after Martin Luther King's assassination was the White House able to get the Fair Housing Bill through Congress, and then only by the slimmest of margins.

Scholars who study the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s are divided between "urbanists"—such as Wendell Pritchett, Gareth Davies, and Stephen Meyer, who emphasize long-term demographic patterns, the housing shortage, and ingrained practices and policies—and "backlash" historians—such as Thomas Sugure, Rick Perlstein, and Matthew Lassiter, who argue that middle- and upperclass whites had been persuaded to acquiesce in the Second Reconstruction until radicalized blacks began tearing up their cities. A consensus view has now emerged to the effect that racism and segregation had always existed in the cities of the North and West—institutionalized or not—and that the in-migration of white Southerners merely exacerbated the problem.

This was a truth all too apparent when Martin Luther King journeyed to Chicago to campaign for open housing. The few bright spots were southern cities like Atlanta, where moderate whites and black community leaders crafted a persuasive new vision of what the South could be. As Lassiter put it, one could jettison that old racism for a race-blind "suburban synthesis of the gospel of growth and the ethos of individualism at the heart of the middle-class American Dream."

These are only some of the aspects of the Great Society; there were a great many others. The Immigration Act of 1965 did away with the national quota system and reversed the trend begun during the 1920s toward a less, rather than more, diverse society. Critics have admonished the

Johnson administration for giving into demands from nativists for yearly quotas, but it is undeniable that by 2000, the country looked more like it did in 1900 than it did in 1950.

Then, there was the legislation creating the National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts, as well as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The fate of Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and women figure in the policies of the Great Society and are just beginning to generate a body of literature.

Nevertheless, despite all that has been written—most of it within the last 15 years—the Great Society remains one of the most understudied phenomena in American history. Since Johnson's departure from office—and really, since 1966—the reforms of the 1960s, which together with the



New Deal and the Fair Deal, establish the socioeconomic landscape in which we now live, have been mentioned in the national political debate only in negative terms.

Not surprising for conservatives, but what about liberals? Bill Clinton delivered a speech at the Johnson Library without ever mentioning LBJ's name. In his Oval Office, there were busts of every twentieth-century Democratic president except Johnson. When a Clinton did mention the Texan in positive terms, look what happened to her.

Why this failure to defend some of twentieth-century liberalism's greatest achievements? The standard answer is that liberals have never forgiven LBJ for Vietnam. That may be true, but why blame Johnson more than Kennedy? The Texan was responding to JFK's foreign policy team, after all. Or, for that matter, Eisenhower? The Korean War and Harry Truman were as unpopular with the American people as Vietnam and LBJ. The simple answer is that we lost in Vietnam, and Truman won—or at least achieved a stalemate—in Korea.

But there is more to it than that. The antiwar movement of the 1960s transcended the Vietnam conflict itself, tapping into the youth revolution, the Free Speech movement, and ironically, the civil rights movement. The turning points for LBJ's reputation, and that of the Great Society, may have been the Detroit race riots and Martin Luther King's decision to lead the black community into the antiwar camp. This broke the moral connection between the war in Vietnam—to save our Asian brothers from the scourge of communism—and the Second Reconstruction that Johnson worked so hard to establish.

In addition, keepers of the Kennedy flame have waged unrelenting war against the Johnson legacy, mounting a campaign within and without academia, to convince people that had he lived, JFK would have withdrawn from Vietnam, rather than escalate. They fail to point out, among other things, that the principal hawk in the administration was Bobby Kennedy. (Indeed, in 1964 and 1965, LBJ was as concerned about hardliners within his own party as he was about Goldwater and the Republicans.) As far as domestic policy was concerned, Kennedy loyalists saw the reforms of the 1960s as pure Camelot.

At a speech delivered to the 18th annual convention of the Americans for Democratic Action in the spring of 1965, Arthur Schlesinger attributed the concept of the Great Society entirely to New Frontiersman Richard Goodwin. In this view, all of LBJ's men—Jack Valenti, Horace Busby,

and George Reedy—were against the idea. Schlesinger went on to hail the triumph of Goodwin's proposals as "a clear victory of the liberal cause of American politics over the messianic conservative complex of the Texas mafia."

Some New Frontiersmen were willing to give Johnson the benefit of the doubt—Orville Freeman, for example—but most were not. During a 1969 interview on his time in the White House, Kenny O'Donnell said of Johnson, "All I can say is that, in my opinion, he was the worst politician I've ever seen in my life...just unbelievably bad." Of the JFK-LBJ legacy, Harry McPherson has observed, "As Hamlet says to his uncle, 'he was to you "as Hyperion to a satyr.""

By the middle of 1966, public intellectuals had turned against Johnson, primarily over Vietnam. In an article in *The New York Review of Books*, Hans Morgenthau declared that a war apparently being fought to preserve American credibility was, in reality, destroying it. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the man who had provided moral justification for the crusade against the Axis, the conflict in Korea, and containment in general, told *The New Republic* that "the analogy between our defense against Nazism and our defense of South Vietnam against the Communist North is flagrantly misleading."

As rioting ravaged the cities of the North, congressmen and senators—many of them liberals, increasingly disenchanted with the war—launched a series of hearings actually blaming flawed and underfunded Great Society programs for the violence. Johnson was blown away. Criticism from George Wallace and Richard Nixon he could understand, but not from the very men and women who had helped pass his legislation. With the publication of Theodore H. White's *The Making of the President: 1964*, the image of Johnson the Usurper appears full blown. The 36th president is portrayed as an obsessively vain, ambitious man without values or magnanimity. He came across as not only an accident of history, but as a completely unworthy successor to his cultured, idealistic, and sophisticated predecessor.

Johnson was more than partly responsible for his image problems. It was his idea to continually invoke the martyred Kennedy in his drive to pass health, education, civil rights, and anti-poverty legislation. More importantly, he proved a disaster with the media. Accustomed to the environment in Texas, where politicians openly bid for the support of newspapers and radio stations, Johnson took that same approach with the national media: *If you give me favorable coverage*, *I'll let you in on all the good scoops*.

This at a time when syndicated columnists—self-proclaimed objective observers of events and protectors of the public interest—were coming into their own. Johnson deeply offended people like Tom Wicker, Walter Lippmann, Joe Alsop, and Scotty Reston, repeatedly scoffing at their claims of disinterest. In his view, newspapers, radio, and television stations were businesses. Journalists were employees of those businesses; they did what their corporate bosses told them to do.

It may have been that, Vietnam aside, the architect of the Great Society simply came from the wrong side of the cultural tracks.

"He could get up and make a speech at Howard University on the Negro family and what we would do about the Negroes, which was one of the most inspiring speeches I have ever heard in my life," John Chancellor told an interviewer. "And yet, what did you see when the speech was being made? You saw somebody with that long face, and the regional accent, and that sort of high-collar white shirt, and that sort of luminescent suit he used to wear. That all added up to a visual impression of a man who couldn't possibly be saying anything good about blacks."

We would like to believe that, in America, what you do is who you are. Alas, in public life, that is all too often not the case.

CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

IRA KATZNELSON

RUGGLES PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

I had not initially thought to tell these four stories, but this afternoon I am inspired by this concluding panel on civil rights.

The first that came to mind as I was listening occurred in **1939**. The Atlanta Junior League held a celebration in honor of the Atlanta premiere of "Gone with the Wind." It was a segregated event, but the Ebenezer Baptist Church choir provided the entertainment. A 10-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., dressed as a slave, sang in that choir.

In **1944**, after D-Day, with 12 million American troops in the field—one million of them African Americans—the questions arose in the Congress, how should they vote? Could they vote? No politician—not even a segregationist politician—would say they couldn't vote, but the southern members of the Democratic Party at that period did not want those black soldiers to vote.

It was impossible to get an absentee ballot out in the field to people in the Pacific Islands or on the beaches of France. Franklin Roosevelt proposed the Green-Lucas bill, by which each soldier in the field would be handed a ballot on which they could write down the name of their preferred candidate—Dewey or Roosevelt—or they could vote for their senator or congressman.

At a critical turning point, the Congress did not vote for the Roosevelt bill. Instead, they voted for a bill sponsored by Senator James Eastland and Congressman John Rankin, both of Mississippi. Eastland got up in the Senate—this is an exact quote, not a paraphrase—and said, "Our boys are fighting for white supremacy." He absolutely rejected the idea of an open soldier ballot.

The bill that passed in the House and the Senate only could pass because the Southern Democrats were joined opportunistically by Republicans. Opportunistically, because they understood from Gallup polling that three out of four soldiers were inclined to vote for Roosevelt, not Dewey, in a close election. There you can see the beginnings of a somewhat unholy alliance, which found various forms of expression later. This includes the Goldwater campaign of 1964 and a rejection of the Civil Rights Act, which did win five Southern states for the Republican Party.

Most Republicans were in favor of civil rights, and we would not have had the Civil Rights Act if not for the Republicans and Ev Dirksen. However, I think there is a complex story here.

The third date that strikes me is **1949**. Lyndon Johnson delivered his maiden speech to the United States Senate in the midst of a filibuster against fair employment, when he spoke for roughly an hour and a half. Every third paragraph

"ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATIONS IN AMERICAN HISTORY."

began with the phrase, "We of the South," in which he was shifting his identification from the Hill Country to Texas as a whole, including east Texas. He was embraced after that speech by twenty Democratic senators who surrounded, hugged, and welcomed him to the club of Southern senators.

All the more remarkable then is what we've heard today, that just 15 years later, he gave not only his 1965 address to Congress—"We shall overcome"—but also that brilliant speech at Howard University, standing before Frederick Douglass Hall, announcing the birth of affirmative action. That is one of the most remarkable transformations in American history.

The last date I want to mention is **1952**. Adlai Stevenson's vice-presidential candidate was Senator John Sparkman of Alabama. He was a segregationist—a liberal, but a segregationist. Following the Dixiecrat Revolt of 1948, Sparkman was deliberately chosen to ensure the Southern and non-Southern Democratic Party coalition could hold together.

That brings me to the central point that I would love to have us talk more about: it has to do with the texture—not of the *two*-party system in Congress—but of the *three*-party system in Congress during the New Deal era, the Truman years, the Eisenhower years, and into the Johnson years. That is to say, we had a Congress formally divided into Democrats and Republicans, but it really was a three-party system.

We had 17 states in the Union—not just 11 Confederate states—but 17 states that mandated racial segregation under the law. They were the same 17 states that on January 1st, 1967, banned interracial marriage. They were the same states that practiced chattel slavery on the eve of the Civil War, plus West Virginia and Oklahoma. There was an absolute continuity of Southern representation on the basis of white supremacy.

The New Deal was both *more* and *less* radical than the Great Society. We talked last night and today about comparisons and the way in which President Johnson sought to fulfill the New Deal. I think it's slightly more complex, and I hope that we have further conversations about this topic. I believe the Great Society was less radical, in that the early New Deal tackled fundamental questions about capital and labor in a deeper sense.

The National Recovery Administration, which was mentioned last evening, questioned the basic capacity of private capital, on its own, to invest properly to resurrect the economy. Radical experiments were conducted of the kind we can't even imagine today. By the time Lyndon Johnson became president, the Keynesian economists thought that we had solved those problems: we knew how to balance employment and inflation. They were absolutely confident, and the result was that the Great Society could be launched within the ambit of an assumption that we knew how to solve problems of prosperity.

Today, we no longer have that confidence. We're not quite sure that we possess the means. In some sense, we've returned to the slightly more radical challenge that confronted President Roosevelt, as opposed to the more assured sense of economic capacity in the Johnson years.

The Johnson administration was so much more radical in the character of race, which we have just been talking about. It was impossible for Franklin Roosevelt to succeed—even as he and Eleanor had fully wanted to—in creating an egalitarian America in racial terms. Not one piece of legislation of the New Deal could have passed without those 34 United States senators from the segregated South.

Remember that the South had extraordinary advantages in the House because black people weren't voting. Many poor whites were not voting. We give representation on the basis of population, not voters, so the white segregationist South was always overrepresented in the Roosevelt years. There was not much he could do about that.

Lyndon Johnson broke that hegemony, that domination of the segregationist South, the "We of the South," with which he had identified as a new senator. I believe that we have understated the courage of that achievement. He smashed not only the barriers of those signs of "colored" and "white." He permanently smashed the South's capacity to act as a wholly distinctive region.

Of course, it generated realignment, and the South has played a critical role in modern conservatism. But, it is not a unique role; it is part of the Republican Party. We now have a two-party system. We no longer have a three-party system, and for that, we have President Johnson to thank.

Now, two final remarks. In the period before the three-party system was shattered, a critical moment of alliance between Republicans and Southern Democrats happened following the Green-Lucas bill. In 1947, there was a Republican-majority Congress that passed the Taft-Hartley Act. The Taft-Hartley Act was vetoed by President Truman and passed over his veto by a coalition of Republicans and unanimous Southern Democrats.

Why? Republicans didn't like labor power because they were pro-business. They had a right-to-left ideological view. But, Southern Democrats had voted for the Wagner Act—with a footnote here that farm workers and maids were left out. That was their condition for voting for the Wagner Act,

just as the Social Security Act in 1935 left out farm workers and maids. That is not how Roosevelt proposed it, but that's how it got through the Southern wing of the Democratic Party.

When it came to labor, the white segregationist Southerners were deathly afraid that a truly national labor movement would undercut the political economy of the low-wage, racialized South. The AFL and the CIO were both actively organizing in the South. The Southerners joined with the Republicans to pass a bill that had Right to Work laws, which made it virtually impossible for trade unions to organize in the South. At the end of the Second World War, unionized private wage labor in the South approached 20 percent. (Today, we have seven percent in the whole country.) Within a decade, it was down to about five percent, and that low-wage, racialized South persisted.

The point I want to make is that this history had consequences for the character of the modern civil rights movement. Because a truly national labor movement—organizing in the South, and with many passionately interested in race relations—and a civil rights movement would have been a natural alliance.

Instead, there was a separation, and that separation had many effects, including the ways in which a unionized white working class in the North resisted many civil rights gains. The Southern Democrat-Republican alliance of the late 1940s paved the way for what became a deep schism by the time President Nixon was elected in 1968. What happened thereafter confined the labor movement to a Northern base, with little appreciable role in the South.

If we were to have more of these conversations, I'd love there to be more discussion on the relationship between war and reform. This is not a way of saying, "Let's beat up on the Vietnam question." Rather, it is to ask more complex questions.

The Second World War was fought with America's last segregated army. The contradiction of a war against fascism fought with segregated forces became insupportable. Out of that contradiction came a commitment by young African Americans and some white allies to end that system. Out of that came the desegregation of the military under Harry Truman. Out of that came the beginnings of a radical transformation. There is a complex relationship between war, civil rights reform, and the end of the New Deal, when the domestic reform moment moved from "Dr. New Deal" to "Dr. Winthe-War."

Finally, in the mid- to late-1960s, it isn't just that the Vietnam War, along with the conflagrations in our cities, changed the atmosphere and the mood, creating bitterness and conflict that made further gains of the Great Society more difficult to achieve. It is also that there was a tight and complex relationship between those events and the subsequent development of the conservative movement in America, which grew out of reactions to the Vietnam War and to upheaval in race relations.

There was also, however—and it is hard to say this—a remarkably positive consequence of the Vietnam War. It was the first war fought in American history in which authority in the military crossed racial lines. We saw some of this in Korea, but in Vietnam, command crossed racial lines in a way that generated a central American institution—the United States Armed Forces—that was egalitarian in racial terms. These opportunities gave birth to leaders such as retired General Colin Powell, who transformed possibilities in America of the kind that helped bring us President Barack Obama.

So, there we are. This has been an absolutely stunning event, and there is a lot to talk about. I'll just end by saying that as I went to bed last night, I didn't quite have a dream—I wasn't asleep yet—but it was a kind of dream. I considered the counterfactual of an America that had experienced President McGovern, President Bradley, and President Mondale.

Thank you very much.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CLAUDIA ANDERSON

EMILY APPLE

MARY SARAH BAKER

JANE BRODY

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

KEVIN CAMPBELL

ROBERT A CARO

ST. ELMO EDWARDS

MARA FLSFR

JONATHAN F. FANTON

JUDITH FRIEDLANDER

LORRAINE GALLUCCI

DEBORAH GARDNER

DYLAN GAUTHIER

REGINA GREENWELL

MEREDITH HALPERN

MARGARET HARMAN

TINA HOUSTON

DAVID HIMMELSTEIN

LUCI BAINES JOHNSON

IRA KATZNELSON

ELIZABETH KNAFO

ERIKA L. KURT

ANNE LYTLE

VINCE MARGIOTTA

PHILLIP R. MARKERT

LYNN MUCKERMAN

ELLEN S. MURRAY

NKECHI NNEJI

DONALD J. O'KEEFE

SINDY PIERRE-NOEL

JENNIFER J. RAAB

CORDELIA W. REIMERS

JIM ROSE

JONATHAN ROSENBERG

FAY ROSENFELD

JANIE SIDES

ALICIA SIEBENALER

RON SKOBEL

EILEEN SULLIVAN

MARK K. UPDEGROVE

WILLIAM J. VANDEN HEUVEL

JOSEPH P. VITERITTI

ANNE WHEELER

RANDALL B. WOODS

STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER

CHRISTINE ZARETT

THIS SYMPOSIUM WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF:

BEN BARNES





















