

# “WHAT THE HELL’S A PRESIDENCY FOR?”

MAKING WASHINGTON WORK



## REVISITING THE GREAT SOCIETY

THE ROLE OF  
GOVERNMENT  
FROM FDR &  
LBJ TO TODAY

The 2012 Roosevelt House Presidential Leadership Symposium

A Report and Reflection by  
**Joseph A. Califano, Jr.**

Edited by Christine Zarett

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Cover Image: President Lyndon B. Johnson and Joseph Califano, Jr., 1968.



## PREFACE

A MESSAGE FROM  
JENNIFER RAAB AND JONATHAN FANTON

On March 14-15, it was a privilege for Hunter College's Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute to host "Revisiting the Great Society: The Role of Government from FDR and LBJ to Today." Over two days, a distinguished roster of scholars and practitioners considered lessons learned from Roosevelt's New Deal and Johnson's Great Society with an eye toward understanding how to make Washington work today.

In 2012, we published a compendium from the conference which included the keynote addresses by Robert Caro, Michael Beschloss and Randall Woods. We are pleased to present this second publication from the conference, which includes a discussion of the conference panels on Education, Health, Civil Rights and Poverty during the Johnson administration.

We include personal reflections from Joseph A. Califano, Jr., derived from his deep experience in public life as President Lyndon B. Johnson's chief advisor for domestic policy and as the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare during the Carter Administration. Mr. Califano helped to plan this symposium and served as a participant on two of the panels. Rather than transcripts of the proceedings, this publication distills the lessons learned about LBJ's presidential leadership.

Joseph Califano's essay identifies eight qualities of leadership that made Lyndon Johnson so effective. Included among them are knowing how to work with Congress, a laser focus, a zest for the political process, courage and good timing, and a willingness to deploy the full powers of the presidency. Each is illustrated with textured examples drawn from Joseph Califano's direct observations as part of the Johnson inner circle.

These lessons will be valuable to future presidents and political leadership.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to Joseph Califano, Jr. for this publication, his role in the conference, and his commitment and service to the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute as a member of our Board.

All the best,

**President Jennifer J. Raab**  
Hunter College

**Jonathan F. Fanton**  
Interim Director  
Roosevelt House  
Public Policy Institute



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Joseph A. Califano, Jr.** has had a distinguished career in public service. After service in the Navy, Mr. Califano joined the Kennedy administration in 1961 and served as General Counsel of the Army and Special Assistant to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense. From 1965 to 1969 he served as Special Assistant for Domestic Affairs to President Lyndon Johnson. From 1977 to 1979 he was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the Carter administration.

Mr. Califano is the Founder and Chairman Emeritus of CASAColumbia, a research organization that works to translate knowledge about substance use and addiction into policy and practice. Mr. Califano received his Bachelor of Arts degree from The College of the Holy Cross and his LLB from Harvard Law School, magna cum laude. He serves as a member of the Roosevelt House Advisory Board.



## INTRODUCTION

On April 12, 1965, the 20th Anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt's death, President Lyndon B. Johnson said of FDR, "Truly, today's America is his America more than it is the work of any man."<sup>1</sup>

In 2012, the 40th anniversary of the death of Lyndon Johnson, it is fair to say that today's America is LBJ's America more than it is the work of any man. As William vanden Heuvel, Chair Emeritus and Founder of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, put it, "Franklin Roosevelt would have said that America's greatness today owes much to the genius of Lyndon Johnson."<sup>2</sup>

This fact—and the fact that so few Americans and college and graduate school students are aware of this fact—were behind the decision of Hunter College President Jennifer Raab and the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute to hold its symposium, *Revisiting the Great Society: The Role of Government from FDR and LBJ to Today*. The timeliness of the symposium has been underscored by the political and policy debates about the future of virtually every major Great Society program from Medicare, Medicaid and Food Stamps to student loans, the need for Public Broadcasting and the effectiveness of Head Start. Of special importance as our country seeks ways to free a national government tangled like Gulliver in the Lilliputian string of partisan politics and special interest money, the Roosevelt House symposium on March 14 and 15, 2012, sought to identify any lessons from Lyndon Johnson's presidency that may help America, its government, its President and its Congress untie the twisted knots of gridlock.

As John Andrew III explains in his book, *Lyndon Johnson and The Great Society*, "One can no more talk of the Great Society without Lyndon Johnson than one can recall the New Deal without Franklin Roosevelt. And this is no accident; Johnson wished to be

remembered as a great president, to be spoken of in the same terms as his early hero, FDR. Warts and all, he embodied the essence of managerial liberalism."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in a special edition of *Newsweek* on presidents in September 2012, a panel of historians rated Lyndon Johnson as the third greatest president since the beginning of the 20th century, behind Franklin Roosevelt and Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>4</sup>

LBJ's Great Society programs, as his most meticulous and demanding biographer Robert Caro found, "wrote mercy and justice into the statute books"<sup>5</sup> and recast American society. But those monumental social policy achievements have been shrouded in the Vietnam War he waged, in the political toxicity of the characterization "liberal" for so many Democratic and Republican politicians, in the personal mannerisms that this big-eared Texan developed growing up in the dirt poor Hill Country with no electricity or running water and none of the social graces Ivy League academics and American media elites admire, and in the blinding media glare of the mythical Camelot he succeeded. As a result, most Americans have little if any sense of the defining mark with which Lyndon Johnson has branded today's America.

Even fewer appreciate how FDR shaped LBJ's political persona and domestic policies. In his essay, "Lyndon Johnson Means and Ends, and What His Presidency Means in the End," David Shribman writes "for him [Johnson], the New Deal did not end with the Roosevelt years. For Johnson, the New Deal was a process, not a program. It was an idea, and the idea was alive in Lyndon Johnson on the Friday that John Kennedy was killed as it had been in the years [1935-1937] when Johnson ran the National Youth Administration [in Texas]."<sup>6</sup> Johnson himself spoke of this ambition for America at the University of Michigan in 1964 where he said, "But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe

harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.”<sup>7</sup>

At the Roosevelt House symposium, historian Randall Woods pointed out:

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.<sup>8</sup>

LBJ’s mastery of the nation, and his genius for making Washington work in order to put on the statute books the most progressive legislative agenda in our nation’s history, is commonly attributed to his unique knowledge of the nation’s labyrinth of capital corridors and power elites, not only in politics and government, but in business, labor, health care, education, race, religion, and poverty. “He had a romance with Washington, with power, with the idea that it was possible to harness the tax revenues and regulatory power of the federal government and use them to transform the nation. . . .”<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, though caricatured as a Texan, by the time Lyndon Baines Johnson became President of the United States he had been in Washington more than 30 years, meticulously mastering the interests of every state, congressional district, private institution, and profession. He was a person of the capital and the nation, not of Texas. Michael Beschloss noted in his keynote address, “LBJ was in Washington for thirty-two years. . . . 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.”<sup>10</sup>

The landmark laws that LBJ proposed and convinced Congress to pass are what give rise to consider his time in the nation’s highest office unique.

Here are some highlights:

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations and employment based on race, sex or religion), Voting Rights Act of 1965, Fair Housing Act of 1968, Immigration Reform, Age Discrimination, Bail Reform, and Fair Federal Juries.
- Medicare, Medicaid, Federal Employee Health Benefits, Nurse Training, Heart, Cancer, Stroke Program, Mental Health Facilities, Medical Libraries, Child Health, Community Health Services, Child Nutrition, Child Safety, Partnership for Health, Public Health Reorganization, Deaf-Blind Center, and Health Professions Training.
- Aid to Elementary and Secondary Education, Vocational Education, Indian Vocational Training, Manpower Training, College Facilities, Head Start, Education Professions, Teacher Corps, College Work Study, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Guaranteed Student Loans, Aid to Handicapped Children, International Education, and Higher Education.
- War on Poverty, Food Stamps, Social Security Increase (in minimum benefits), Anti-Poverty Programs (Legal Aid, Job Corps, Foster Grandparents, Community Action), Rent Supplements, Summer Youth Programs, Aid to Appalachia, Economic Opportunity Act.
- Consumer Protection, Pesticide Controls, Truth in Packaging, Truth in Lending, Bank Protection, Traffic Safety, Tire Safety, Child Safety, Wholesome Meat, Truth in Securities, Hazardous Radiation Protection, and Product Safety Commission.
- Public Broadcasting, Freedom of Information, Kennedy Cultural Center, Hirshhorn Museum of Sculpture, and National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

- Regional Development, Model Cities, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Urban Mass Transit, Safe Streets and Crime Control, National Crime Commission, Drug Enforcement Administration, and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention.
- Clean Air, Clean Water, Motor Vehicle Pollution Control, Scenic Rivers, Aircraft Noise Abatement, and Highway Beautification.

“By the time the Eighty-ninth Congress adjourned in October 1966, LBJ had asked for 200 major pieces of legislation; Congress had approved 181 of them. In itself this tidal wave of new laws transformed the role of the federal government in the lives of most Americans.”<sup>11</sup> And scores more landmark laws came in the 90th Congress, despite the loss of 48 Democratic seats in the House and three in the Senate in November 1966, largely a consequence of LBJ’s relentless commitment to civil rights for blacks. William vanden Heuvel summed up Johnson’s achievements as follows:

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 possible reform, and using his great intelligence, energy, and political skill, he solidified the foundation and raised the edifice of the New Deal to great new heights. Lyndon Johnson’s genius created the Great Society. It is an extraordinary legacy.<sup>12</sup>

There is a tendency to conclude that the remarkable Great Society achievements of LBJ’s presidency leave little to teach other presidents because none are likely to have his encyclopedic knowledge of the Congress, the Executive, the Judiciary, the state houses and the nation’s power structures. The Hunter College symposium at Roosevelt House challenged that tendency and sought to identify what characteristics and lessons of the LBJ presidency might help future Presidents be more effective and achieving leaders.

In the pages that follow, I will attempt to synthesize some of those lessons, offering reflections on the symposium’s keynote addresses, panels, and my own personal experiences working with LBJ.



Bill Moyers, Walter Mondale, and George McGovern at the Making Washington Work Panel, Roosevelt House Symposium, March 14, 2012.

## SYMPOSIUM DAY ONE

The first day of the symposium began with introductory remarks from Jennifer J. Raab, Hunter College President, and Mark K. Updegrove, Director of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, followed by a keynote address from Robert A. Caro, author of *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*. The introductory remarks and keynote addresses were printed in the first conference publication. The evening continued with an extraordinary panel discussion titled, “Presidential Leadership: Making Washington Work.”

*“LBJ’s formidable legacy of liberty continues to resonate, uniting us today far beyond the divisions of yesteryear.”*

— **Mark Updegrove**

Director, LBJ Presidential Library and Museum



## OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

### ROBERT A. CARO

After introductions by Hunter College President Jennifer J. Raab and LBJ Presidential Library Director Mark Updegrove, LBJ biographer Robert Caro delivered the opening keynote address. Caro gives no quarter to his subject, so special notice was taken of his assessment of Lyndon Johnson in his book, *Master of the Senate*, where he states:

In the twentieth century with its 18 American presidents, Lyndon Baines Johnson was the greatest champion that black Americans and Mexican-Americans and indeed all Americans of color had in the White House, the greatest champion they had in all the halls of government. . . . He was . . . the lawmaker for the poor and downtrodden and the oppressed . . . the president who wrote mercy and justice into the statute books by which America was governed.<sup>13</sup>

Caro described how Congressman Lyndon Johnson, age 28, persisted, cajoled, and pleaded with anyone in Washington who would listen in order to have the Rural Electrification Administration bring electricity to the abjectly poor Hill Country where he had grown up and which he had been elected to represent. LBJ persistently lobbied FDR and his aides. FDR finally said, “Oh, give the kid the dam,” which brought electricity to the Hill Country and transformed the lives of those living there.

Caro’s point was that Johnson knew that no individual, no private company, nor the state of Texas, nor any local government, was going to do that, and Johnson knew how to get it done. Johnson’s “gift,” Caro said, “was not just the capacity to understand what should be done, but the ability to help . . . a rare gift, talent beyond

talent . . . to help people fight forces too big for them to fight alone.”<sup>14</sup> The other point, of course, is that LBJ learned the value of tenacity at an early political age.

Caro said that Johnson’s commitment to wage war on poverty came from his gut, from his experience with poverty in the Hill Country. In preparing his first State of the Union address to Congress, working over a speech writer’s draft, Johnson added the italicized words to introduce his war on poverty: “This administration, *today, here and now*, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.”<sup>15</sup> In mounting the War on Poverty, Johnson demonstrated “a talent that was genius for transmuting compassion into government action that would make the compassion meaningful.” This, Johnson saw, as “the proper role of government.”<sup>16</sup>

So here are three lessons for future presidents from LBJ:

- Tenacity is an essential ingredient of public policy success.
- Understand the proper role of government.
- Translate your compassion into government action.



## PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP: MAKING WASHINGTON WORK

George McGovern, South Dakota senator, blistering and unrelenting opponent of the war in Vietnam, and Democratic candidate for President in 1972; Walter F. (Fritz) Mondale, Minnesota senator named to succeed Hubert Humphrey when Humphrey became Vice President, then elected in his own right, and Democratic candidate for President in 1984; Bill Moyers, LBJ's confidante and press secretary; Ervin Duggan, a Johnson aide, FCC Commissioner and President of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and I, who had served as LBJ's top domestic policy aide, were the panelists. Bob Schieffer, CBS News Chief Washington Correspondent and Moderator of *Face the Nation*, moderated the panel.

Through anecdotes and reflections of these experienced participants a picture emerged of the qualities that made LBJ such an effective mover and shaker in Washington, a President who knew how to make Washington work.

*FIRST, LYNDON JOHNSON, PERHAPS THE MOST LIBERAL  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN THE NATION'S HISTORY, KNEW HOW  
TO WORK WITH THE ENTIRE CONGRESS, ESPECIALLY  
REPUBLICANS AND CONSERVATIVES.*

To understand the importance of this, remember that in the 1960s, about 20 Senate Democrats who controlled all the key committees and a critical mass of senior House Democrats also in control of key committees, were from the Deep South. They were vehemently anti-civil rights and pro-segregation, unyieldingly conservative about federal spending, and distrustful of federal involvement in state and local matters. They were invariable allies with conservative Republicans. This Congressional composition meant that a significant number of (moderate) Republican votes were required

in order to enact pretty much every landmark Great Society bill.

LBJ insisted that his senior White House staff (five people; LBJ's total White House staff never exceeded 25) treat Everett Dirksen, the Senate Republican minority leader and Gerald Ford, the House Republican minority leader, with the same attention, accommodation and respect

they accorded Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield and House Speaker John McCormack. Bill Moyers recalled that at LBJ's direction he spent more time with Republicans than with Democrats. Fritz Mondale said that whenever he suggested some piece of legislation to President Johnson, LBJ's first question was, "How can we make this a bipartisan deal? That's what Johnson did in his time. I don't think it's being done now."<sup>17</sup> Michael Beschloss summed it up: "This is a man who brilliantly knew how to deal with the opposition."<sup>18</sup>

Johnson instructed all his staff to return every call from a member of Congress the same day it was received. "Get back to them that day or night, wherever they are, in the office, at home, in a bar, with their girlfriends, traveling," he told me. Whenever LBJ saw any of his staff standing around or talking to each other at a White House reception, he reprimanded them: "You are working. You have plenty of time to talk to each other. You talk to these members [of Congress], find out what they think, what they want, what they need."

Bob Schieffer, quoting from Harry McPherson's (special counsel to LBJ) book, *A Political Education: A Washington Memoir*, pointed out that "Johnson and his helpers practiced the non-intellectual art of personal politicking,"<sup>19</sup> without which no President can succeed in accomplishing great things. When Moyers noted that the Republican party since 2008 has been the "Party of No," and that it is difficult to deal with them, others suggested that today's Republicans were perhaps no more difficult than the intransigent, pro-segregation Senate

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Democrats who controlled the key committees in Johnson's day.<sup>20</sup>

How LBJ convinced Congress to pass the Economic Opportunity Act and create the Office of Economic Opportunity is a lesson for future presidents in the value of liberal/conservative bipartisanship. When LBJ asked Congress to pass this legislation, he knew he faced one of the toughest Congressional battles of his presidency. "He chose Phil Landrum, a conservative Democrat from Georgia, who was familiar with rural poverty in his district and who had authored the Landrum-Griffin Act (a law that curbed union power), to be the floor manager in the House. With Landrum, Johnson was able to blunt some of the savage opposition he anticipated from conservatives and southerners."<sup>21</sup> Getting the bill through the House also required some ruthlessness discussed below.

LBJ also knew how important it was to show appreciation to those in Congress who helped. For decades the federal government had been unable to get its act together to support elementary and secondary education and help local school districts. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act he proposed was aimed at providing funds to poor school districts, but he crafted it in such a way that every Congressional District had some schools that qualified. Nevertheless, a persistent insurmountable hurdle remained. Catholics opposed such aid unless it included parochial schools. Protestant Evangelicals and secular urban Jews opposed any aid to Catholic schools. In 1965, LBJ pulled these clashing interests together (on one occasion, he corralled Catholic Cardinal Spellman of New York, southern preacher Billy Graham and Arthur Goldberg fully clothed, sweltering as they stood next to the indoor White House pool to discuss his bill) and eventually convinced Congress to pass his legislation. Key was a provision that allowed Catholic schools to receive aid for books and equipment (a provision the U.S. Supreme Court held constitutional 35 years later in 2000). The idea came from Brooklyn Congressman Hugh Carey, so LBJ asked House Speaker John McCormack to delay sending the bill to the White House after it passed so that he could sign it on Hugh Carey's birthday.

## SECOND, LBJ HAD A LASER LIKE FOCUS.

Lyndon Johnson was single minded and tenacious in pursuing his objectives. "You had to run just to [keep] up when he was walking," Moyers said. "It was exhilarating and sometimes punishing, but you were satisfied that the result made the effort worthwhile."<sup>22</sup>

Johnson had a clear sense of what he wanted to do with his presidency and he went after it with all his energy and caginess. When in early 1964 he told aides that he was going to press for the Civil Rights Act to end discrimination in public accommodations and employment, they urged him to reconsider, to protect his presidency and not to risk such controversy in a presidential election year. "What the hell's a presidency for?" he snapped, and went about getting his bill passed.<sup>23</sup> As Randall Woods writes in his biography, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition*, "As the civil rights bill was being transferred from the House to the Senate, LBJ let it be known that he would not compromise, not even if the filibuster lasted the rest of the year."<sup>24</sup>

For LBJ, civil rights was a moral issue. In his essay "Lyndon Johnson, the Great Society and the 'Twilight' of the Modern Presidency," Sidney Milkis writes that, "What is often overlooked is how the fight for civil rights reform saw Johnson's mastery of the legislative process joined to moral leadership—how LBJ used the presidency to pique the conscience of the nation."<sup>25</sup>

Mondale noted that Johnson "genuinely and profoundly felt for poor people. Every day of his life he wanted to make progress and make the lives of poor people better." Mondale said he would "never

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core poor. “The people I want to help,” he would say, “are the ones who’ve never held real jobs and aren’t equipped to handle them. Most never had enough money and don’t know how to spend it. They were born to parents who gave up hoping long ago. They have no motivation to reach for something better because the sum total of their lives is losing.”

The foundation of Johnson’s strategy was a growing economy. If wages and profits increased, most Americans would prosper, job opportunities would expand sufficiently to make room for affirmative action for blacks without threatening whites, and higher federal revenues would finance Great Society programs without additional taxes. Johnson considered a robust, noninflationary economy so critical to his domestic programs that he spent more time on economic matters than on any other subject during my years at the White House.

The War on Poverty, as he saw it, was to help those who, on their own, had no chance of getting their fair share of economic growth. For poor people capable of helping themselves, the goal was to offer the kind of assistance most Americans receive from their parents.

forget” the night in March 1965 when LBJ asked a Joint Session of Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act. “I knew he was going to do everything possible to create what is really a revolution. He got civil rights, no one else did. He got these big changes in education. He changed this country. We should be forever grateful.”<sup>26</sup>

Different from Roosevelt’s New Deal, which had confronted vast unemployment and a national emergency among blue- and white-collar workers, Johnson’s War on Poverty targeted the hard-

For the old and disabled, the object was to make life bearable. So viewed, the War on Poverty encompassed a vast range of programs: those to offer a hand up (aid to education, child health and nutrition, adult literacy and job training), and those to assist people who might never be able to help themselves (Medicare for the elderly and disabled, cash payments through Social Security, veterans disability and supplemental security income, and nursing home care through Medicaid).<sup>27</sup> However varied the weapons, LBJ never lost his focus on the target: eliminating poverty in America.

*THIRD, LBJ UNDERSTOOD THE PROCESSES OF GOVERNMENT.*

LBJ understood the legislative process and knew the importance of sequencing in dealing with Congress. When President Kennedy and his brother Attorney General Robert Kennedy, under pressure from blacks, decided to propose the civil rights bill, LBJ urged them to hold off sending it to Capitol Hill until the Congress had passed the tax reduction and appropriations bills. Johnson argued that it would be impossible to break a filibuster because non-southern senators would be worried about their bridges, dams and local projects and giving constituents tax relief. That concern would eventually morph into enough pressure to take the civil rights bill off the floor in order to vote on those other bills. The Kennedys did not listen to LBJ and the bill languished.

When LBJ became president, he followed his sequencing strategy, convinced Congress to pass the tax bill and appropriations bills, and then pressed for his civil rights bill and got it enacted. Randall Woods explained the importance of sequencing:

The order in which the components of the Great Society were presented to Congress would be extremely important. Federal aid to education, the antipoverty program, voting rights, Medicare, welfare reform, area redevelopment, and aid to urban areas would all be voted on by the same representatives and senators who were politically, emotionally, and/or ideologically attracted to or repelled by a particular proposal. The task, as Johnson

viewed it, was to prevent the coalescing of Republicans and southern Democrats into an anti-reform bloc.<sup>28</sup>

Moyers said that Johnson loved to cite the Constitution. He recalled that when Georgia Senator Richard Russell, leader of the Southern Democrats, was in the Oval Office, the President asked for a copy of the Constitution. As Russell said he would filibuster the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Johnson handed Russell the copy of the Constitution.

"Read this, Dick," he said.

"I know and love the Constitution, Mr. President," Russell responded.

"Read it," LBJ said, "Tell me where it mentions filibuster. There's nothing in the Constitution about filibusters, Dick."<sup>29</sup>

As David Blumenthal and James Morone explain in their book, *The Heart of Power, Health and Politics in the Oval Office*, "The president [Johnson] delegated the details, kept his eye on the principles, and oversaw every jot and turn of the internal politics. On important votes in Congress, he had the highest box score of any modern president."<sup>30</sup>

He also knew that passage of a law was often just the beginning, or at best the end of the beginning. Thus as he fought for Medicare and Medicaid, he insisted that we corral half the Republicans to vote for the legislation and try to make peace with physicians and hospitals. "Otherwise," he said, "They'll kill us in the appropriations committees and in the states where they have governors, and their allies in the big corporations will put up roadblocks." He pressed hard to get doctors to service Medicare and Medicaid, to get schools desegregated after the civil rights bill passed, to get minority voters registered after the Voting Rights Act passed (he had the Attorney General prepare lawsuits so they could be filed the day after the act was passed).

#### *FOURTH, LBJ WAS A SPONGE SOAKING UP POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE.*

Johnson always knew an individual politician's price—a picture with the President, an invitation to a state dinner, a letter to his son or daughter, a dam, a contract, an appearance at a fundraiser, credit for an idea or law. He had an instinct for what politicians appreciated and feared; he knew how to go for an individual's jugular, and never hesitated to do so when necessary to achieve one of his objectives. Ervin Duggan noted that Johnson had a real sense of operational intelligence—not just intellectual intelligence, but knowing everything about people and political forces, and knowing how to get things done.

Moyers observed that LBJ was always learning, measuring, and assessing others. "You thought that when he was talking he was only talking, [but always] he was listening to your responses and to the silence between the sentences of your response. He always knew other people's price."<sup>31</sup>

When he signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, LBJ did not give the first pen to Martin Luther King as most expected. He ostentatiously gave it to Everett Dirksen, the Senate Minority Leader whose support had been essential to breaking the Southern filibuster. The key to passing the civil rights bill was Republican support and that had "meant winning over Minority Leader Everett Dirksen. At LBJ's direction, [Hubert] Humphrey, [Mike] Mansfield, and Nick Katzenbach [then Deputy Attorney General] met almost daily with Dirksen and in essence let him write the bill. There was no change in substance, but the language was Dirksen's and [the Illinois senator] could proudly claim to be the coauthor. [Moments after the Senate passed the bill] Johnson called the minority leader to thank him."<sup>32</sup>

Fritz Mondale recalled that when he was floor manager of the Fair Housing Bill in 1968, he failed on three tries to break the Southern filibuster. Majority Leader Mike Mansfield told him that he had one more chance; if he failed, Mansfield would take the bill off the floor so he could handle other Senate business. Mondale called LBJ, who reviewed the no votes to see who could be turned around. The President was in Puerto Rico. I was with him in a steaming hot room waiting to board Air Force One for the trip back to Washington.

Johnson thought Alaskan Senator Bob Bartlett, who had never voted to break a filibuster, could vote to break this one with no political blowback from his home state. Mondale said Bartlett wanted an auditorium in Anchorage. Johnson promptly hung up on the Minnesota senator. Several minutes later Bartlett provided the final vote needed to break the filibuster. The next day, the government announced that it was funding a new auditorium in Anchorage—thanks to my call, at LBJ’s direction, to the Maritime Administration immediately after LBJ had hung up on Mondale.<sup>33</sup>

#### FIFTH, JOHNSON USED EVERY POWER HE HAD.

Johnson had no inhibitions about using any lever of power he had to put his Great Society agenda in place. “Men are moved by love and fear,” he once told me. “The trick is to find the right mixture.”<sup>34</sup> In his review of Caro’s *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Passage to Power* (titled “Read This Book Obama!”), David Frum wrote that he was struck by “Caro’s disconcerting message: Johnson didn’t do it by inspiring or exhorting. He did it by mobilizing political power, on a scale and with a ruthlessness that arguably surpassed all other presidents, before or since.”<sup>35</sup> In Caro’s words:

For a man with a gift for acquiring power, whatever office he held would become powerful—because of what he would make out of it. . . . Johnson felt he had that gift . . . . At every stage, the gift had been maximized by the ruthlessness with which he grabbed for the power he perceived and with which he wielded the power once he had it, but nothing could diminish the brilliance of the perception.<sup>36</sup>

LBJ knew how important it was to make it clear to the Congress that he intended to wield that power. Early in his presidency, he worked to defeat “a seemingly innocuous measure, involving the sale of wheat to Russia that would have curtailed the President’s authority in foreign affairs. Grasping the instant he heard about the bill that it had been introduced because conservatives, emboldened by their victories over Kennedy, were confident that they could

defeat a President—that, as he put it, ‘They’ve got the bit in their teeth,’ and thought they ‘could bully me’ the way they believed they had bullied Kennedy—he decided in that instant that the way to yank out the bit was to make the bill a test of strength with Congress, and to win the test. A simple majority was not going to be enough to teach Congress a lesson. ‘I hope that [bill] gets *murdered*,’ he snarled, and, sitting in the Oval Office, he kept telephoning senator after senator, cajoling, bullying, threatening, charming, long after he had the majority, to make the vote overwhelming enough to ensure the lesson was clear. The vote was overwhelming, and when, a week later, conservatives attempted a maneuver that would have overturned it, Johnson had a maneuver of his own ready. His tactic was so risky that congressional leaders warned him not to use it; he used it—and murdered the bill once and for all. ‘At that moment the power of the federal government began flowing back to the White House,’ he was to say. And boastful though that statement might be, it was true.”<sup>37</sup>

I remember once alerting President Johnson that a secret grand jury was about to conduct a criminal investigation of two senators. I had no idea how he would react. I wondered whether he would ask the Justice Department to lay off. The President told me to have the Justice Department let the senators know, “as a courtesy,” that they were under investigation and to keep the investigation going until we could get their votes on a couple of key bills. “After that,” Johnson said to me, “tell them to do whatever’s right. But keep this grand jury going until we’ve gotten their votes on our legislation.”

Another memorable incident occurred in our push to establish a new cabinet-level Department of Transportation. LBJ faced John McClellan, a stony-faced, crafty Arkansas Democrat, who chaired the Senate committee with jurisdiction over the bill. McClellan refused to let the bill out of his committee. I was the point person for the President on the bill and McClellan could not find time even to meet with me.

I reported my frustration to the President one night over dinner in the private quarters. Johnson suggested that I leak, off-the-record



to a friendly reporter, that “there are some who say McClellan is holding up the Transportation Department because he wants the Corps of Engineers to build a dam on land he owns. That way he’ll get a lot money when the government buys the property.”

“Is that true?” I asked. Johnson leaned back in his leather chair as he recalled:

The first time Mr. Kleberg<sup>i</sup> ran for Congress, he was back home making a tub-thumper campaign speech against his opponent. I was sitting nearby listening. Mr. Kleberg said: ‘It isn’t easy, but I guess I can understand why the good citizens of the hill country might let themselves be represented in Washington by a man who drinks too much. It isn’t easy, but I guess I can even understand why the good citizens of the hill country might even let themselves be represented by a man in Washington who carouses with city women while his wife and children are back here working the land. But, as God is my witness, I will never understand why the good people of the hill country would let themselves be represented by a man who takes female sheep up into the hills alone at night!’

“Well,” pausing for emphasis, the President continued, “when he finished, I said, ‘Mr. Kleberg, that’s not true!’”

“And you know what Mr. Kleberg did?” Johnson asked, leaning toward me as he peered into my eyes. “He just looked at me and said, ‘Then, let the son of a bitch deny it!’”

Johnson and I both laughed, and then he paused and said quietly, “You just let John McClellan deny it.”<sup>38</sup>

In early June 1967, I remember when the House voted down the administration’s bill to increase the debt limit, thus threatening to bring the federal government to a halt because it couldn’t borrow any money after June 30 (in those days the end of the government’s fiscal year). It was a major setback for the administration, and

compounded Johnson’s difficulties with Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur Mills, who had reluctantly managed the bill on the House floor at the President’s insistence. The President wanted a list of the Democrats who had voted against the increase. When he saw certain liberals on the list, including Richard Ottinger, whose district included part of the wealthy New York suburb and county of Westchester, he asked why they had voted that way. I told him that most of them had done it as a protest against the Vietnam war, which they thought was shorting domestic programs like public housing. “Okay,” Johnson said, “I want you to tell Ottinger that there’s plenty of money for domestic programs, especially housing. Tell him we’re prepared to put a public housing project right in the middle of his fancy Westchester district to demonstrate to him and his constituents how much money there is for domestic programs. Maybe that’ll help him to vote an increase in the debt limit.”<sup>39</sup> (I did and Ottinger changed his vote.)

To head the Office of Economic Opportunity, Johnson picked Sargent Shriver. He admired Shriver’s skills as a political salesman and sought to capitalize on the popularity of the Peace Corps. In putting the early phase of the program together, Shriver had enlisted Adam Yarmolinsky, my predecessor as Robert McNamara’s special assistant at the Defense Department. Yarmolinsky was slated to become Shriver’s deputy once Congress established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).

As the OEO bill reached the floor of the House in August 1964, a tight vote was expected. The North Carolina delegation and several House Democrats it had recruited as allies demanded a commitment that Yarmolinsky would have no position in the OEO in exchange for their support. Their problem was the alleged Communist affiliations of his parents and Yarmolinsky’s own alleged radical sympathies during his youth.

In three wild days of House voting, floor manager Phil Landrum (with LBJ’s approval) had to give governors veto power over Community Action programs and accede to a loyalty oath for Job Corps enrollees.

<sup>i</sup> Richard Kleberg, part owner of Texas’s huge King Ranch, was the congressman who first brought LBJ to Washington as an aid.

And he had to announce on the House floor that Yarmolinsky would have no role in the poverty program: "I have been told on the highest authority that not only will [Yarmolinsky] not be appointed, but that he will not be considered if he is recommended for a place in this agency." With those assurances, the bill was passed.

As this transpired, I was sitting in the Pentagon as McNamara's special assistant. The Saturday morning after the House vote, I told McNamara that I was shaken by the treatment of Yarmolinsky. He told me, "The important lesson here, Joe, is this. When the President, or one of his major programs, is involved, none of us is important. Everyone's expendable."<sup>40</sup>

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FORCE AND HELP  
YOUR FAMILY."

absolutely loved LBJ. The opportunity meant we too could live a life of dignity and we could graduate from high school and people could go to college. I think particularly for women, the fact that you could have

This was end-justifies-the means political hardball played with metal bats, but in his keynote historian Randall Woods summed up "the consensus of scholars: despite its flaws, the War on Poverty did affect the country's poor in positive ways. . . . It kept Michael Harrington's *Other America* on the public's radar screen. . . . brought the poor, especially disadvantaged African-Americans, into the political process. And it left behind a network of support that has endured."<sup>41</sup>

Leticia Van de Putte, Texas State Senator, noted that "in the Southwest [the poverty programs] applied to Mexican Americans and Latinos who

child care, health care and Head Start, you might actually be able to get into the work force and help your family."<sup>42</sup>

Although Woods remarked that the Great Society, notably its War on Poverty, is often mentioned in negative terms, its impact is impressive: The Census Bureau reports that the poverty rate dropped from 22.2 percent in 1960 to 12.1 percent in 1969.<sup>43</sup> And the rate has never been lower than that; today it is above 15 percent.<sup>44</sup>

*SIXTH, LBJ WAS COURAGEOUS,  
OPPORTUNISTIC AND TENACIOUS.*

LBJ knew the cost for much of what he did would be his political career. When he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he told Bill Moyers, "We are turning the South over to the Republican Party for my lifetime and yours."<sup>45</sup> McGovern said LBJ left no doubt that the interest of the country was most important to him, more than his own. That, McGovern said, was what gave strength to his extraordinary power to persuade or at least get cooperation from those he could not persuade.

Moyers said that Johnson wanted to put himself on the right side of history. When asked about his early years battling against civil rights legislation, LBJ said, "Very few people have a chance to correct the mistakes of their youth and when you do, do it, and I have that chance and I'm going to do it now." And, Moyers added, he wanted to advance the franchise of democracy.<sup>46</sup>

Even in tragedy Johnson looked for opportunity. He had pressed the Congress to pass his fair housing bill for more than two years. He finally had gained Senate approval on March 11, 1968. But there was little hope of getting the House to pass the Senate bill. Urban representatives, normally civil rights supporters, were besieged by middle-class white constituents who wanted to keep blacks out of their predominately white Jewish, Irish and Italian neighborhoods. From the tragedy of King's assassination on April 4, 1968, Johnson saw the opportunity to salvage a national fair-housing bill—and he was prepared to use the tragedy to get it.



The day after King's assassination, he sent a letter to Speaker of the House John McCormack and a personal note to House Minority Leader Ford asking them to pass the Senate bill.<sup>47</sup> Four days later Illinois Republican John Anderson (who later ran for President) provided the crucial swing vote in the House Rules Committee to send the bill to the House floor where it passed with bipartisan support.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, LBJ had tried to pass his gun control legislation for three years to no avail. When Robert Kennedy was assassinated, he pressed Congress publicly (and privately) to pass his gun control bill. He didn't get all of it, but he convinced Congress to enact legislation to eliminate mail order sales, sales to the young, and importation of "\$10 dollar specials."<sup>49</sup>

*SEVENTH, JOHNSON HAD A MARVELOUS  
IF TOUGH SENSE OF HUMOR.*

When Frank Church, Senator from Idaho, came to see LBJ about his concern over the Vietnam War, he kept citing Walter Lippman, at the time perhaps the most influential Washington columnist, as a source of his analysis of the situation in Vietnam. Finally LBJ cracked, "I'll tell you what Frank, the next time you want a dam on the Snake River in Idaho, call Walter Lippman."<sup>50</sup>

On a Sunday morning, in the White House living quarters, the President and I were watching an interview with Republican Senator Mark Hatfield on a religious broadcast. The Republican Senator was a sharp and persistent critic of LBJ's Vietnam War policies. Hatfield, a born-again Christian, told the interviewer that sometimes, as he drove along the vast empty stretches of Oregon, he was so moved by the beauty God had given us that he would pull his car over to the side of the road and get down on his knees to pray. The President slapped my knee and with a mischievous twinkle said, "Don't ever trust a sonuvabitch who pulls over to the side of the road to get down on his knees and pray!"<sup>51</sup>

Two nights after King's assassination, during the worst week of the Johnson presidency, he still maintained his sense of humor. That evening I gave the President a report that Stokely Carmichael,

his rabble-rouser fist clenched to symbolize militant black power, was organizing a group at 14th and U Streets Northwest to march on Georgetown, the posh Washington enclave where many newspaper columnists, television reporters, and *Washington Post* editors lived, and burn it down. The President read the report aloud, smiled, and said, "Goddamn! I've waited thirty-five years for this day!"<sup>52</sup>

*"THERE  
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SHARED THAT."*

*EIGHTH, LYNDON JOHNSON HAD  
A ZEST FOR POLITICS.*

LBJ could not get enough schmoozing with other politicians, especially members of Congress. He respected them and enjoyed their company. As *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen wrote, "Johnson, of course, was a creature of Congress. He knew the key players and, if he didn't he made it his business to remedy that."<sup>53</sup>

Ervin Duggan recalled asking LBJ what politician he most admired. Johnson responded, "Dwight Eisenhower. He was the first person I called after I called Rose Kennedy when John Kennedy was assassinated. I asked him to come to Washington the next day and meet with me. Eisenhower said that he was a military man and that he would come to Washington but preferred to write me a memo. I followed all the advice he gave me in that memo during all my early weeks as President."<sup>54</sup>

Here is an excerpt from the memo Eisenhower wrote the next day:

A. Point out first that you have come to this office unexpectedly and you accept the decision of the Almighty, who in his inscrutable wisdom has now placed you in the position of highest responsibility in this nation.

B. You are sworn to defend the Constitution and execute the laws. In doing so you will follow the instincts, principles and convictions that have become a part of you during many years of public service . . . it will be your purpose to implement effectively the noble objectives so often and so eloquently stated by your great predecessor.

C. You realize that if we are to have effective implementing programs, the first necessity is a close cooperation with the Congress. To achieve this cooperation, you will go more than half way.

D. Equally it is your purpose to establish and sustain the closest possible relation with every segment of the American economy so as to achieve a healthy climate for economic expansion and reduction in unemployment.<sup>55</sup>

Eisenhower also suggested that LBJ press for an immediate tax cut and for a tight budget. It was a remarkable move by LBJ to seek out Eisenhower's advice. That advice was shrewdly keyed by the former president to play to all the instincts that he knew LBJ would have.

When Bill Moyers worked for LBJ as an aide in the Senate, Johnson told him to go and watch an Eisenhower press conference. "You will see what a brilliant politician Eisenhower is," LBJ said, "He knows how to get what he wants by not appearing to want it."<sup>56</sup>

Duggan stressed the importance of Johnson's zest for politics. "There has never been a great president who didn't have a zest for politics. FDR and LBJ shared that."<sup>57</sup>

Several of the panel participants noted what a good dealmaker LBJ was and that while he gave when he had to, he never gave more than he had to. Bob Schieffer said this was apparently true personally as well as politically. He recalled the first time he saw LBJ. Schieffer was 11 years old in 1948 when Johnson, running for the Senate, came to his home town in a helicopter wearing an expensive Stetson hat. At the end of his tub-thumping speech, he took off his Stetson and threw it into the crowd. Schieffer was wowed by this because Stetson hats were so expensive. Years later he was telling this to

Jake Pickle, who succeeded LBJ as congressman from the Hill Country. Pickle laughed and said to Schieffer, "Hell, I was the guy in the audience who always had to get there ahead of LBJ in order to catch the hat and run around behind him and hand it back!"<sup>58</sup>

Moyers said it is important for a President to like and enjoy the company of other politicians. "President Obama does not enjoy personal persuasion. He does not like other politicians."<sup>59</sup>

McGovern said that as a history professor, "With the exception of FDR who had four terms in the White House, LBJ was the greatest president of the twentieth century. I don't understand why anyone would ridicule a president who was trying to build a Great Society in the United States."<sup>60</sup> McGovern acknowledged that LBJ had made a terrible mistake on the Vietnam War, but noted that the historical records show that he inherited it and wanted no part of it, "He just didn't know how to get it off his back."<sup>61</sup>

LBJ loved government. "He was proud of the U.S. government," McGovern said. "When I went to see him after I got the nomination for president in 1972 and asked him for advice he said, 'George, you've been a great critic of your government the last 10 years. If I were you I would [run] for president telling the country how much they have done for you and how much the United States government means to you. Tell them about your war days. Tell them about you as a junior senator from South Dakota, the debt you feel to the people of the United States.' He couldn't have given me better advice."<sup>62</sup>

Moderator Bob Schieffer ended the panel with a comment about polling.

And every time I think of that day [when I first saw LBJ] and I think about how politics was then, you talk about how he had this great zest for politics. Politicians knew who the people were that they were talking to. They weren't relying on a piece of paper that some pollster had given them. They weren't relying on some poll that somebody had written. They knew who they were talking to. All of you talked about it in a certain way. He knew who the people were that he represented and that's why

he was able to do [so much]--he knew who the people were in the Senate that he dealt with. He knew who the people were in the government. That's how he was able to get so much done.<sup>63</sup>

(In LBJ's day, there were polls by Lou Harris and Oliver Quayle every several weeks. Today, the White House, the Congress and the Democratic and Republican National Committees receive tracking polls almost daily.)



Jonathan Rosenberg, Nick Kotz, John Lewis, Henry Cisneros, and Taylor Branch (not shown) at the Civil Rights Panel, Roosevelt House Symposium, March 15, 2012.



## SYMPOSIUM DAY TWO

The second day of the symposium featured a full-day academic conference at the Roosevelt House. The panels featured a distinguished roster of scholars and policy makers and discussed Civil Rights, Health Care, Education, and Poverty and Economic Opportunity. Jonathan Fanton, Interim Director of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, introduced the second day of speakers and panels:

Presidential leadership has never been more important. And so, too, is the art of politics. As Johnson said of FDR, 'He knew that leadership required not only vision but the skill to move men and to build institutions. And like every one of our great presidents, President Roosevelt was a great politician. He proved again and again that politics, scorned by so many, is an honorable calling.' We have much to learn from Lyndon Johnson's leadership as we gather in the home of the man from whom he learned so much. Perhaps we will distill some lessons from their experience which will benefit our current leaders.<sup>64</sup>

In the following sections I will report and reflect upon selected conference panel sessions—those on Civil Rights and Health Care—and offer some concluding thoughts on what we can learn from Johnson's leadership in these areas.



Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Lyndon B. Johnson  
in the Oval Office, 1963.

## CIVIL RIGHTS

There is no finer example of how honorable politics can be than in the civil rights achievements of the Johnson presidency. Taylor Branch,

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author of the historical trilogy, *America in the King Years*; Henry Cisneros, former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and Mayor of San Antonio; Nick Kotz, author of *Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Laws that Changed America*, and Hon. John Lewis, member, United States House of Representatives (D-5th District, GA) and former Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (1963-1966), constituted the panel on Civil Rights, which was moderated by Jonathan Rosenberg, Professor of History, Hunter College.

The discussion focused on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. A recording of a telephone conversation between President Johnson and Martin Luther King on January 15, 1965 was played at the start.

**LBJ:** There is not going to be anything though, Doctor, as effective as all of them [blacks] voting.

**MLK:** And it is very interesting, Mr. President, to notice that the only states that you did not carry in the South--the five Southern States--had less than 40% of the Negroes registered to vote ... I think a recent article from the University of Texas brought this out very clearly so it demonstrates that it is so important to get Negroes registered to vote in large numbers and it would be this coalition of the Negro vote and the popular white vote that would really make the new South.

**LBJ:** That is exactly right. I think it is very important that we not say that we are doing this, and we are not doing it, just because it is Negroes or Whites. We take the position that every person [who is] born in this country and reaches a certain age that he has a right to vote, just as he has a right to fight, that we just extend it whether it is a Negro, a Mexican or whoever it is. And number 2, we don't want special privilege for anybody. We want equality for all and we can stand on that principle. I think you can contribute a great deal by getting your leaders and you yourself taking very simple examples of discrimination where a man's got to memorize Longfellow or whether he's got to quote the first ten amendments or he's got to tell you what amendment 15, 16, and 17 is and then ask them if they know and show what happens and then some people don't have to do that, but when a Negro comes in he's got to do it, and if we can just repeat and repeat and repeat.

I don't want to follow Hitler, but he had an idea that if you just take a simple thing and repeat it often enough, even if it wasn't true--why people accept it. Now, this is true and if you can find the worst condition that you

run into in Alabama, Mississippi or Louisiana or South Carolina where I think one of the worst I ever heard of is the president of the School at Tuskegee or the Head of the Government Department there or something being denied the right to cast a vote and if you just take that one illustration and get it on radio, get it on television, get it in the pulpits, get it in the meetings, every place you can, then pretty soon the fellow who didn't do anything but drive a tractor would say well that is not right, that is not fair. Then that will help us for what we're going to shove through in the end.

**MLK:** You're exactly right about that.

**LBJ:** And if we do that, we'll break through. It will be the greatest breakthrough of anything, not even excepting this '64 Act. I think the greatest achievement of my Administration, the greatest achievement in Foreign policy—I said to a group yesterday—was the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but I think this will be bigger because it will do things that even that '64 act couldn't do.<sup>65</sup>

This exchange is a potent example of how a president can reach out to individuals outside the government to enlist their help to pass progressive legislation. It illustrates how LBJ asked Dr. King to dramatize for the American people the plight of blacks denied the vote and the unfairness of denying the vote to anyone. It shows LBJ's conviction that as the people of the nation got to see this deplorable situation, it would help him persuade the Congress to pass his Voting Rights Act. It demonstrates that LBJ believed that the Voting Rights Act would be the most important piece of legislation of his administration.

Hunter College Professor of History Jonathan Rosenberg read an excerpt from *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* by John Lewis, which described the first attempted march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, and said that the task of the panel was "to consider civil rights in the age of Lyndon Johnson. We want to understand how LBJ and those who worked with him operated. What LBJ and others did, how they did it, in order to see

what lessons might be helpful to our people and our leaders in Washington today."<sup>66</sup>

Selma, the capital of Dallas County, Alabama, was the worst county that King could find. On February 9, 1965, King came to the White House to report to the President on his campaign to register blacks there.<sup>67</sup> Dallas County's population was almost 60 percent black; most of its 30,000 voting-age population was black, but only 335 out of the 10,000 registered voters were black. Voters could register only two days a month, after completing a form with more than fifty blanks, writing passages from the Constitution as officials read them aloud rapidly, and answering complex questions about the Constitution and American government. The county had effectively resisted a federal court injunction to end discrimination in voter registration since November 1963.

Johnson told King that he would soon send voting rights legislation to Congress. He thought that the public pressure of Selma would help and hoped there would be no violence."<sup>68</sup> The initial march was scarred by Bloody Sunday, with more than 90 marchers beaten and injured, and one, James Reeb, a minister from Boston, killed.<sup>69</sup>

On March 13, 1965, six days after Bloody Sunday, Johnson met with Alabama Governor George Wallace at the White House and saw that the Alabama segregationist would never protect the marchers. Taylor Branch described Johnson's meeting with Wallace where the President pressed the Alabama governor to let everyone vote. When Wallace said he couldn't control what was done locally, Johnson told him "Not to bullshit me," reminding Wallace how he controlled the voting in the state in the 1964 election in order to defeat LBJ there. When Wallace said he could not protect the marchers, Johnson said, okay, then, we will protect them because there's a federal court order allowing them to march.<sup>70</sup>

On March 15, Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress to urge passage of the voting rights legislation he proposed that evening. A surge of support for the civil rights movement followed the president's speech.<sup>71</sup>



LBJ federalized the National Guard of Alabama on March 20 to protect the Selma-to-Montgomery marchers and he kept careful watch over them.<sup>72</sup> Working then as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's Special Assistant, I was charged with reporting every few hours to the White House based on reports I received from the National Guard troops protecting the marchers because the President wanted to be up to the minute on what was going on. Here are excerpts of some reports I sent to the White House.

**Report 1:** as of 1200 on March 22, 1965, 'the march began at 0806 Selma time this morning . . . about 392 people in the column, of which approximately 45 are white....In mid-morning there was a report that another bomb had been found in a Birmingham school. A demolition team was sent to take care of it.'<sup>ii</sup>

**Report 2:** as of 1400, March 22, 'the column stopped for lunch at 1230 Selma time at the beginning of the two lane highway by the town of Benton . . . The age of the marchers runs generally between 12 to 20. One-third are female.'

**Report 3:** as of 1600, March 22, 'four tents have been erected for tonight in the cow pasture near Big Swamp Creek . . . The marchers and the camp site will be protected by the 720 MP Battalion.'

**Report 7:** as of 1300, March 23, 'it is still raining and the marchers have asked permission to sleep on the highway tonight because of the rain rather than in the bivouac site. General Graham is reported to be favorably disposed, provided the marchers reach the four-lane highway by night.'

**Report 9:** as of 1000, March 24, 'the only incident so far today occurred when one of the logistical support vehicles of the marchers drove into a filling station. A white man in the filling station punched the driver in the nose . . . The bivouac area for tonight is just inside the city limits of Montgomery.'

**Report 10:** as of 1300, March 24, 'the march is still going smoothly . . . Their numbers have now swelled to over 1200.'

**Report 11:** as of 1630 March 24, 'the number of marchers has increased consistently during the afternoon. The latest estimate ran between 4,000 and 5,000 just before entering the bivouac area.'

**Report 13:** as of 1300, March 25, 'the marchers started over two hours late. The head of the column moved out at 1110 Selma time. There are approximately 10,000. Their progress is orderly.'<sup>73</sup>

I sent these memoranda to Jack Valenti, LBJ's closest assistant; Secretary of Defense McNamara; Nick Katzenbach, Deputy U.S. Attorney General, and Lee White, LBJ's civil rights aide and White House counsel. Valenti and White kept the President informed. The marchers safely reached Montgomery on March 25.

Panelist John Lewis, who had been one of the marchers, tried to paint a picture of "why it was necessary to pass [civil rights] legislation." He emotionally described the segregated world he grew up in, "My mother, my father, my grandparents, my great grandparents couldn't register to vote simply because of the color of their skin."<sup>74</sup>

John Lewis recalled LBJ's famous Voting Rights Act address to the Congress on March 15, 1965, forty-seven years ago to this day of the Roosevelt House Conference, which LBJ began with the words, "I speak tonight for the dignity of man and for the destiny of democracy." When Martin Luther King watched LBJ on television invoke the anthem of the civil rights movement, "And we shall overcome," he cried.

Henry Cisneros remarked that LBJ was mightily affected by his time teaching poor Mexican kids in Cotulla, Texas and the poverty of the Texas Hill Country in which he grew up.

Taylor Branch said, "Dr. King came back from his first meeting [with President Johnson] saying he was astonished because all the

<sup>ii</sup> On September 15, 1963, Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was bombed, killing four African American girls.

President talked about was how to get the Civil Rights Act [of 1964] passed and didn't mention communism or subversion once, which had been unfortunately the predicate of every conversation he had with President Kennedy. President Kennedy was always saying, 'You've got to get rid of this person or watch out for that person or we're in danger.' It was a striking difference."<sup>75</sup> Branch also said that the Johnson tapes offer an intimate look of what citizenship is.

If every American history student could listen to some of Johnson's phone conversations about what it is to run a people's government we would be a better country. . . . We know from these tapes that Johnson made that this was an extraordinary public servant dealing with one of the most difficult issues of all time, [an issue that] befuddled the country for a century and we need that example today as an example that we can—if we pull together and we talk about things in fundamental ways, the way Johnson did. We can tackle the most intractable problems ahead of us again.<sup>76</sup>

Nick Kotz noted that both LBJ and MLK were shrewd strategists as well as committed visionaries. As LBJ was giving King advice on where to march and how to rev up the media, King was reminding LBJ that the southern states he lost in his election bid in 1964 were those where less than 40 percent of eligible black voters were registered to vote.

Both Cisneros and John Lewis noted that LBJ knew he was turning the South over to the Republican Party for a generation, but he did, Lewis said, "What he felt was right in his soul, in his heart, in his gut." Lewis said that after LBJ signed the Voting Rights Act, LBJ had him and James Farmer, head of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), then two young Turks, in his office, and told them, "Go back to the South and get them by the balls . . . and get them registered . . . and run them out to vote."<sup>77</sup>

To understand what Johnson did for civil rights, reflect on the differences in the number of blacks in public office, running private corporations and law firms. In the 89th Congress (1965-1966) there were six black elected representatives in the U.S. Congress. In the

110th Congress (2007-2008) there were 43 (42 in the House and one in the Senate).<sup>78</sup> In 1964 there were 300 black elected officials in the nation.<sup>79</sup> In 1970 (earliest Census Bureau figures) there were 169 blacks elected to state legislatures, 715 elected to city and county offices, 213 elected to posts in law enforcement, and 362 elected to posts in Education, for a total of 1,459. In 2001, (latest Census Bureau figures available) there were 594 blacks elected to state legislatures; 5,456 elected to city and county offices; 1,044 elected to posts in law enforcement; and 1,928 elected to posts in Education, for a total of 9,022.<sup>80</sup> Today there are thousands more—and thousands of Hispanics in office as well.

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

Taylor Branch noted that with LBJ there was no respite. Immediately after the Voting Rights Act passed, Branch recalled, Johnson was calling senators saying, "Where's my Immigration Bill? The southerners are prostrate, but they're not going to be prostrate long. We pushed the Voting Rights Act through cloture and we can get [cloture] on immigration only if we do it rapidly."<sup>81</sup>

Branch noted, "The Immigration Act repealed racist immigration, the legal immigration [in] The National Origins Act of 1924 which was scientific Darwinism that blanked out most of the globe and Johnson came up to the Statue of Liberty and signed the bill. The Immigration Reform Act is a great piece of civil rights legislation. . . . and it has literally and figuratively changed the face of the country along with the civil rights acts."<sup>82</sup>

There is perhaps no better evidence of the combined impact of the Voting Rights Act and Immigration Reform than the phenomenal change in the demographics of the nation. Consider the pageant of faces gathered in Charlotte's convention hall at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, living proof of American openness and inclusion that LBJ advocated throughout his presidency: black faces, brown faces, the first-generation faces of Indian, Hispanic and Asian Americans, taking part now as citizens of *their* country. It



is a vivid reminder of the day in 1965 when he helicoptered to New York Harbor and signed into law the Immigration Reform Act which repealed the discriminatory quotas imposed in the nativist 1920s, when “No Trespassing” signs on America’s shores applied to most of the globe. “Never again,” he said, standing beneath the Statue of Liberty, “will the twin barriers of prejudice and privilege shadow the gate of freedom.”<sup>83</sup> And consider, of course, the votes cast to reelect Barack Obama in 2012 which in a sense makes LBJ and his civil rights and immigration reform the most important factor in presidential politics today.

## FAIR HOUSING

I learned of Johnson’s commitment to fair housing on July 31, 1965, when I was at his Texas ranch to discuss the legislative program. He was in the pool when I arrived; he signaled me to join him. We swam for a couple of minutes, then stopped about two-thirds of the way toward the deep end of the pool. At a husky and imposing six foot three, he could stand on the pool floor; at five foot ten I had to tread water because my feet couldn’t quite touch the bottom.

Poking my shoulder with a strong finger as though punctuating a series of exclamation points, Johnson started talking. He saw America as a nation with many needs: “We’ll put together lots of programs and we’ll pass them. But there are three big ones I want to be damn sure you do. One, I want to straighten out the transportation mess in this country. We’ve got to start by getting our own house in order. There are too damn many agencies fiddling with transportation. I want to put them all together in one cabinet department.”

I nodded, treading. He was so close to me, almost nose to nose, that I couldn’t move around him so I could stand on the bottom of the pool.

“Next, I want to rebuild American cities.”

“Third, I want a fair housing bill. We’ve got to end this Goddamn

discrimination against Negroes. Until people”—he started jabbing my shoulder as he recited each color—“whether they’re purple, brown, black, yellow, red, green, or whatever—live together, they’ll never know they have the same hopes for their children, the same fears, troubles, woes, ambitions. I want a bill that makes it possible for anybody to buy a house anywhere they can afford to. Now, can you do that? Can you do all these things?”<sup>84</sup> (I, of course, said, “Yes,” though I had no idea how.)

LBJ formally sent his proposed Fair Housing Act to Congress in early 1966. When he sent the fair housing bill to Congress, that action prompted the most vitriolic mail he had received on any subject—and I received (after doing the press briefing) the only death threats I ever received as a White House aide.

On March 11, 1968, after two years of tenacious (sometimes bare-knuckled) lobbying, the Senate finally approved the Fair Housing bill. But we had little hope of persuading the House to follow suit. Then, after King’s assassination Johnson told me we would at least get something out of this tragedy: the Fair Housing bill we had been unable to even get out of the House Judiciary Committee for more than two years. Amid all the rioting, LBJ kept pressing House leaders to pass the Fair Housing bill. They did on April 10. LBJ signed it the following day and at the ceremony made clear that he was still not going to let up: “I urge the Congress to enact the measures for social justice that I have recommended in some twenty messages. . . . These measures provide more than \$78 billion that I have urged Congress to enact for major domestic programs. . . . We have come some of the way but not near all of it . . . Much remains to be done.”<sup>85</sup>

The civil rights panel discussed differences between then and now: then each party had liberal and conservative members, now they are marked by ideological purity, one liberal, one conservative; money, always the mother’s milk of politics, is needed today in amounts inconceivable then; finally, we still have not fully digested the legislative and consequent changes put in place in the 1960s. Taylor Branch remarked that Clinton says that he can tell how

people will vote today by asking whether 1960s were good or bad for America: if they say bad, they'll vote Republican; if they say good, they'll vote Democratic.

John Lewis summed it up: "The legacy of President Johnson . . . he freed and liberated a nation . . . If it were not for the Voting Rights Act there would be no Barack Obama as President of the United States. That is part of the legacy of this man. We need to embrace what Lyndon Johnson did."<sup>86</sup>

"IF IT WERE NOT  
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RIGHTS ACT THERE  
WOULD BE NO  
BARACK OBAMA  
AS PRESIDENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES."



President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Medicare Bill with President Harry S. Truman, Lady Bird Johnson, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, and Bess Truman, 1965.

## HEALTH CARE

Drew Altman, President and CEO of the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, moderated a panel of Theodore Marmor, Professor Emeritus at Yale University; Louis Sullivan, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (1989-1993) and President Emeritus, Morehouse School of Medicine; Steffie Woolhandler, Professor of Public Health, CUNY School of Public Health, Hunter College; and myself.

Dr. Altman opened with a chart depicting the broad range of health initiatives of Lyndon Johnson: not just Medicare and Medicaid, but also Community Health Clinics; Heart Disease, Cancer and Stroke Centers; Medical Professional Training Programs; Desegregation of Hospitals; Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT); and related programs such as Head Start, School Breakfasts and Lunches, Food Stamps, and Legal Services. But, inevitably, the conversation became focused on Medicare and Medicaid and the achievements and new problems each program brought.

Perhaps the best commentary here is to set out Lyndon Johnson's experience in establishing Medicare and Medicaid. LBJ cited Medicare

as a major priority in his first speech to Congress, and followed up with a special health message to Congress in early 1964. His commitment to the legislation was total: "We are going to fight for medical care for the aged as long as we have breath in our bodies."<sup>87</sup>

Then pending Democratic proposals would have provided only hospital benefits for the aged. Johnson wanted more. Indeed, the focus of his attention was access to a wide range of health care, first for the elderly, eventually for the poor as well. But he recognized that to overcome the intransigence of doctors, hospitals, insurance companies, and their allies like the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, he would have to accept certain compromises. Some had already been made during the long legislative history of the Medicare legislation and were incorporated in his proposals, such as provisions assuring that hospitals would be paid their "reasonable cost" of providing service to the elderly. Inclusion of these concessions defused the American Hospital Association's opposition and that of Blue Cross and some commercial insurance companies.

Under intense pressure from Johnson, the Senate Finance Committee held public hearings on Medicare in August 1964. The committee refused to report out a bill, but Johnson mustered enough votes on the Senate floor to attach Medicare to a bill increasing Social Security benefits that had passed the House. (In those days, there were no automatic social security adjustments for inflation; benefits were usually increased just before each Congressional election.) Despite strong election-year pressures for the Senate to abandon the Medicare amendment in conference and let the Social Security benefits increase go into effect, Johnson refused to yield on the issue and the bill died in conference. During the conference, House Ways and Means chairman Wilbur Mills promised to give Medicare first priority in the next session. A few weeks later, when LBJ brought a two-to-one Democratic majority into the House on his coattails, Mills was ready to act.

After two months of hearings during which LBJ made clear that he intended to give credit for any legislation to Mills, the Ways and Means

Committee Chairman astutely proposed combining the Democrats' hospital insurance bill for the elderly with a Republican alternative to create a voluntary program of surgical/medical insurance for them, to be paid through individual premiums and general revenues. In addition, he suggested changing eligibility for the 1960 Kerr-Mills program (which provided limited care to poor elderly) to include most people on welfare and the "medically indigent" without regard to age, the proposal that would be called Medicaid. President Johnson quickly endorsed Mills' approach.

There was a price to be paid, however. In addition to acceding to the hospitals' demands for reimbursement of their reasonable costs, the legislation provided that these programs would pay physicians fees that were "reasonable," "customary," and in line with those "prevailing" in their community. While cost-based reimbursement was used in much of the hospital industry at the time, insurers did not commonly pay physicians according to their "customary" fees in the mid-1960s. Nevertheless, Johnson accepted this system to assuage American Medical Association fears that government would control doctors' fees. Medicare's adoption of this system had the effect of bringing it into wide use among Blue Shield and commercial insurers, something the medical profession had been trying unsuccessfully to peddle for years. As a result, physicians would gain even greater power to charge what the traffic would bear.

Johnson agreed because his focus was almost entirely on access, rarely on cost. Sitting in Johnson's small green hideaway office one day, White House and HEW lobbyists, Larry O'Brien and Wilbur Cohen (later to become Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare), responded to Johnson's demand that they move the Medicare bill out of committee. "It'll cost a half-billion dollars to make the changes in reimbursement standards to get the bill out of the Senate Finance Committee," Cohen said.

"Five hundred million. Is that all?" Johnson exclaimed with a wave of his big hand. "Do it. Move that damn bill out now, before we lose it."<sup>88</sup>

A "compromise" was born. It went beyond Medicare paying hospitals

on the basis of what their services cost, and doctors their reasonable, customary, and prevailing fees. To keep big government out of the practice of medicine, the legislation also turned over to insurance companies the tasks of paying and auditing doctors and hospitals and gave hospitals the right to pick which insurance companies they wanted as their auditors.

Thus a direct relationship between the providers and the federal government was avoided. Not everyone was happy. But these changes did turn some health insurers into allies of Johnson's proposal, neutralized the resistance of hospitals, and effectively gutted the arguments of the doctors whose opposition continued. So Medicare and Medicaid came out of their legislative birth pains in 1965.

In his keynote at the symposium, Randall Woods pointed to the success of LBJ's strategy:

As president, he publicly committed to a program of national health insurance in his 1964 Special Message to Congress on the Nation's Health. [Like] 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 of their children.<sup>89</sup>

In those days, the aging parents rarely had any health insurance as part of their retirement benefits.

Anticipating sharply increased demand for health care services, LBJ pushed through Congress laws to train more doctors and nurses, build more hospitals, and establish community health centers. Our Administration assumption was that it was playing by traditional economic rules: the more doctors and hospitals, the more competition, the more efficient and less costly the services.

By 1967 and 1968 we realized how misguided this assumption was. In his 1968 special message to Congress on Health in America, Johnson sounded the alarm on inflation in the health care system and cited three "major deficiencies" to be corrected:

- the tilt of insurance plans that "encourage doctors and patients to choose hospitalization"
- the fee-for-service system with "no strong economic incentives to encourage [doctors] to avoid providing care that is unnecessary"
- the fact that "hospitals charge on a cost basis, which places no penalty on inefficient operation."<sup>90</sup>

President Johnson requested authority from the Congress to "employ new methods of payment as they prove effective in providing high quality medical care more efficiently and at lower cost." He warned that unless the nation restrained hospital costs, its health bill could reach \$100 billion by 1975, and the cost of medical care for a typical American family would double in seven years.

Newspapers and leaders on Capitol Hill challenged Johnson's numbers and dismissed his words as hyperbole to get his program passed. Congress failed to act. As it turned out, Johnson's numbers weren't right. By 1975 America's health care bill actually hit \$133 billion. And the cost of medical care for an American family did not double in seven years, it doubled in less than six. And that was just the beginning of rocketing health care costs.

The rush of federal dollars to treat patients and increase the number of doctors was accompanied by a boost of funds for research on sophisticated medical techniques. During the 1960s, the federal medical research budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grew from \$200 million to \$1 billion. In 1965 Johnson pressed for and got Congress to pass the Heart Disease, Cancer, and Stroke bill, which created regional medical centers to provide sophisticated hospital care in every section of

the country. “You shouldn’t have to go to New York or Boston if you wanted the best health care,” he used to say arguing for his bill. The expansion of NIH and the creation of these centers increased the richness and intensity of medical care provided in hospitals across America.

The prevailing attitude was: if such care is far more expensive, so be it. Medicare was picking up the tab for the elderly and big business had now agreed to pay the bill for its employees, so plenty of money was available. The vicious circle kept spiraling costs upward with each turn: research funds created a demand for more specialized researchers and scientists, who created new demands for more research funds to support their work, and their spectacular discoveries made the American people willing to pay for more research and to train more specialists.

After all, in less than two decades, this investment in research had produced vital-organ transplants, psychiatric and anticancer drugs, electric-shock therapy to revive hearts that had stopped beating, surgical operations that reattached partially severed limbs, psycho-surgery that altered the mind, stunning advances in fetal medicine and the treatment of premature babies, extraordinary diagnostic machinery, and the ability to extend life for thousands who would have died of heart disease, cancer, stroke, or respiratory complications just a decade earlier.

Nowhere does the good news/bad news nature of the health care situation come into sharper focus than in the experience of the federal government. Medicare, Medicaid, and the research complex have led the way to a healthier nation, sharply increasing life expectancy (an increase due more to Medicaid which sharply increased life expectancy of the poor) and the quality of life for senior citizens and significantly improving the health of the poor.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, as the population aged and modern science created incredibly effective and expensive procedures, health care became 17.9 percent of the nation’s economy in 2009 and 2010, yet millions of Americans remained without health insurance.<sup>92</sup>

Medicare processes more than a billion claims each year and is the Nation’s largest purchaser of health care. Medicare now involves not just the LBJ programs of Hospital Insurance (Part A) and Supplementary Medical Insurance (Part B), but also Medicare Advantage and the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. Since 1966, Medicare enrollment has increased from 19 million to more than 50 million beneficiaries in FY 2012.<sup>93</sup>

In 1966, some 1.5 million people were enrolled in Medicaid.<sup>94</sup> Medicaid enrollment in FY 2012 will hit 57 million, about 18 percent of the 316 million U.S. population, including coverage of more than one out of every five children in the country.<sup>95</sup>

The key warning from the LBJ Great Society experience as the nation implements the Affordable Care Act of 2010 is this: the costs will be far higher than estimated. This is already evident thanks to the political power of the major elements of the health care industry—hospitals, physicians, pharmaceutical companies, medical equipment manufacturers, and insurers. Moreover, any administration and any Congress—regardless of party and campaign promises—are likely to respond to pressures from beneficiaries to maintain (and enhance) their coverage. This puts an enormous premium on health promotion and disease prevention to keep people out of the health (sick) care system and on more efficient delivery of health care services, from nurses in the primary care physician’s office to the most sophisticated tertiary medical centers.



## CONCLUSION

Change is difficult and often politically perilous. Change threatens the status quo of powerful institutions that have come to accept the current situation and manipulate it to serve their own interests and the comfort of individuals who have become dependent upon and accustomed to existing bureaucracies and programs.

Lyndon Johnson came to the presidency unexpectedly in the wake of a traumatic assassination; Franklin Roosevelt was elected in the midst of a traumatic economic depression. Both presidents faced wrenching challenges to the nation. Both were progressive, pragmatic and daring in their proposals to advance the American democracy.

One of the most remarkable traits common to FDR and LBJ was their willingness not simply to promote vast changes in their country, its government and its institutions, and the lives of its citizens, but also to accept the risk of failure and to recognize that changes and methods they fought hard to put in place—even ones like Social Security and Medicare—were not written in stone. Only the basic premises were, like attending to the financial security and health care needs of the elderly.

In 1965, Johnson said, “I do not believe the Great Society is the ordered, changeless, and sterile nation of ants. It is the excitement of becoming, trying, probing, falling, resting and trying again—but always trying and always gaining.”<sup>96</sup>

Johnson’s statement is an astonishing echo of one Roosevelt made in 1932: “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.”<sup>97</sup>

There are many lessons the LBJ presidency offers to future presidents, and many LBJ learned from FDR, discussed at this symposium. But the willingness to promote dramatic change, risk failure, try and try again, and recognize that the fundamental commitment to social justice must accommodate changing circumstances and situations—call it pragmatic progressivism, I prefer to call it courage—this is a characteristic much needed today and in the future if we are to protect and strengthen our democratic nation.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

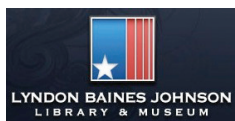
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# SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

## 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



## NOTES

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<sup>51</sup> 1969 Notes, quoted in Califano, *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: The White House Years*, 49.

<sup>52</sup> 1969 Notes, quoted in Califano, *The Triumph & Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson: The White House Years*, 279.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Cohen, "Lessons from LBJ," *Washington Post*, May 7, 2012.

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