



# **Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership, Nixon to Clinton**

*David Gergen*

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From Nixon to Clinton, Watergate to Whitewater, few Americans have observed the ups and downs of presidential leadership more closely over the past thirty years than David Gergen. A White House adviser to four presidents, both Republican and Democrat, he offers a vivid, behind-the-scenes account of their struggles to exercise power and draws from them key lessons for leaders of the future.

Gergen begins *Eyewitness to Power* with his reminiscence of being the thirty-year-old chief of the White House speechwriting team under Richard Nixon, a young man at the center of the Watergate storm. He analyzes what made Nixon strong -- and then brought him crashing down:

1. Why Nixon was the best global strategist among recent presidents. How others may gain his strategic sense.
2. How Nixon allowed his presidency to spin out of control. Why the demons within destroyed him. What lessons there are in Nixon's disaster.

Gergen recounts how President Ford recruited him to help shore up his White House as special counsel. Here Gergen considers:

1. Why Ford is one of our most underrated presidents.
2. Why his pardon of Nixon was right on the merits but was so mishandled that it cost him his presidency. Even in his brief tenure, Ford offers lessons of leadership for others, as Gergen explains.

Though Gergen had worked in two campaigns against him, Ronald Reagan called him back to the White House again, where he served as the Gipper's first director of communications. Here he describes:

1. How Reagan succeeded where others have failed. Why his temperament was more important than his intelligence. How he mastered relations with Congress and the press.
2. The secrets of "the Great Communicator" and why his speeches were the most effective since those of John Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt.

In 1993, Bill Clinton surprised Gergen -- and the political world -- when he recruited the veteran of Republican White Houses to join him as counselor after his early stumbles. Gergen reveals:

1. Why Clinton could have been one of our best presidents but fell short. How the Bill-and-Hillary seesaw rocked the White House. How failures to understand the past brought Ken Starr to the door.
2. Why the new ways in which leadership was developed by the Clinton White House hold out hope, and what dangers they threaten.

As the twenty-first century opens, Gergen argues, a new golden age may be dawning in America, but its realization will depend heavily upon the success of a new generation at the top. Drawing upon all his many

experiences in the White House, he offers seven key lessons for leaders of the future. What they must have, he says, are: inner mastery; a central, compelling purpose rooted in moral values; a capacity to persuade; skills in working within the system; a fast start; a strong, effective team; and a passion that inspires others to keep the flame alive.

*Eyewitness to Power* is a down-to-earth, authoritative guide to leadership in the tradition of Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*.

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