



Annie Leibovitz

## Presidential Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin Still Has Hope for America

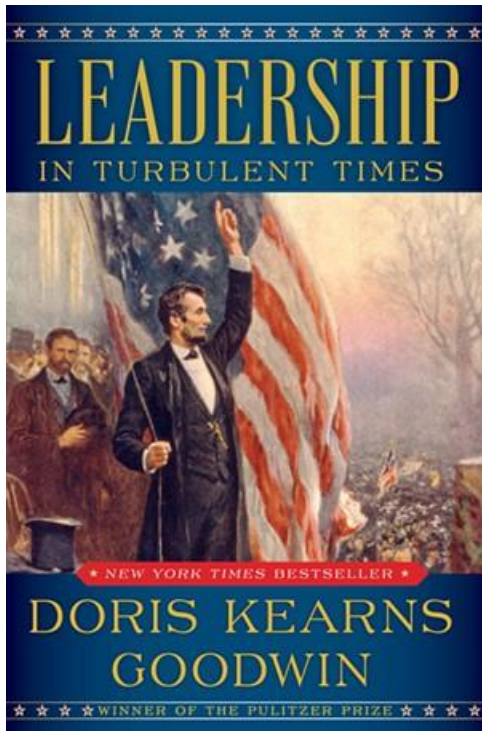
DANIEL PALUGYAI | NOVEMBER 13, 2018 | 8:00AM

Want some context to today's wild political swings? Look to presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin.

Goodwin's award-winning book *Team of Rivals* inspired the Steven Spielberg and Daniel Day-Lewis award-winning film, *Lincoln*. Her history of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt during World War II, *No Ordinary Time*, earned her a Pulitzer. And after a half-century of epic accounting, as well as consulting for presidents, documentaries, and films, the best-selling author is now rolling out her seventh book, *Leadership in Turbulent Times*.

In her latest tome, readers follow Abraham Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson through their trickiest travails. Two took over for dead presidents. Two died while in office. In between and throughout, with plenty of detail, Goodwin explains precisely what was used to personally malign them: Lincoln's growing up poor and suffering depressions so deep that friends took away his knives and scissors and razors. Teddy being bullied, and the death of both his wife and his mother on the same day in the same house. FDR's father's crippling heart attack, and of course his own polio, leading to his paraplegia. And LBJ's frequent hospitalizations due to anxiety and his major heart attack as Senate Majority Leader.

And through it all, we learn the passions and the pastimes, the people and even the pathos that animate their souls as they mend themselves: Lincoln's reading and theater habits, for example, and Teddy's excursions and two-hour workouts. The in-depth character and case studies culminate in the book's epilogue, which begins by teasing that "toward the end of their lives they harbored different thoughts about the afterlife of leadership, of death and remembrance."



Simon & Schuster

Both in the book and on the phone with *New Times*, Goodwin quotes philosopher William James: "Politics expands your horizons," she says. "These people chose that career and that it did provide them and the country with something great is, I think, an important lesson in a certain sense."

So can leadership have the same transformative effect on our current leaders? It's possible – though Goodwin does admit that "it's almost like the Congress has been at war so long we don't even know what peace is like."

After touring with *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Goodwin plans to contribute to a History Channel documentary on George Washington. Along with a friend, she also plans to unveil a movie production company and with it, a film

she will produce on Ida Tarbell, the investigative journalist she wrote about in her book, *The Bully Pulpit*.

But right now, she's watching the political world with a mix of worry and hope – both rooted in history.

“What Teddy Roosevelt warned was that democracy would founder if people in different regions and parties and religions see each other as the other,” she says. “He spent a lot of his time on whistle-stop train tours going all over the country, not just to places that he’d won where his progressive people were, but to try to talk about common American traits and to talk to the American people about feeling a sense of connection to your fellow Americans even if you come from different parts.

“I think the hopeful signs right now are the awakening of people who had never run for office before, especially record-breaking numbers of women running. The answer to it is not to just talk about how troubling the time is but to say, ‘Maybe more people have to get in and we can change the tenor of it if more people can get in,’” she adds. “The races have captured the interest of the nation, and that’s what’s interesting about politics right now. I’m not sure that in ordinary times you’d be seeing so much ... but they seem to symbolize something.”

**Doris Kearns Goodwin.** *Appearing at the Miami Book Fair. 6 p.m. Thursday, November 15, at Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus, 300 NE Second Ave., Chapman (Bldg. 3, Second Floor), Miami; [miamibookfair.com](http://miamibookfair.com). Tickets cost \$20.*

RELATED TOPICS: [ARTS](#) [BOOKS](#) [CULTURE](#) [POLITICS](#)

---

Use of this website constitutes acceptance of our [terms of use](#), our [cookies policy](#), and our [privacy policy](#)

©2018 Miami New Times, LLC. All rights reserved.