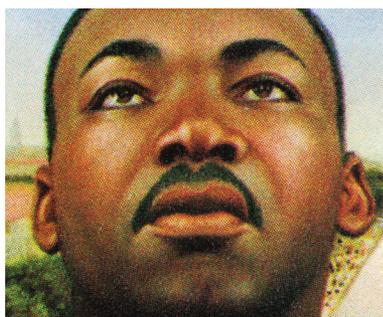


LESSONS FROM



8



GREAT LEADERS

Gaining inspiration from the past

BY YASMIN L. STUMP, ESQ.

Undoubtedly, 2021 has been a historic year that will not be forgotten easily. As I reflect upon this past year and think about leadership, I recall some of the greatest leaders in modern history who led during the most turbulent times involving war and grave civil injustice, as well as those whose inventions revolutionized the world and permanently changed our lives.

This article focuses on eight great leaders in modern history, who they were and what they did, the traits that they had in common to earn their places in history and what we can learn from them today. I call these eight leaders the “Eight Great.”



Who Were the Eight Great?

Susan B. Anthony was a passionate abolitionist and one of the most prominent leaders of the women's suffrage movement. After the adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which legally abolished slavery in the United States, Anthony continued to fight tirelessly for the rights of former slaves and women, including educational opportunities and women's right to vote, which came to fruition after Anthony's death through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

Winston Churchill's indelible image with a cigar in his mouth and bow tie at his neck is forever captured in photographs. He was voted "the greatest Briton of all time" in a 1940 nationwide BBC poll. He served as "chancellor, home secretary, first lord of the admiralty and [is] the most revered prime minister in British history for his efforts in leading the country during the second world war," according to Paul Russell, co-founder of Luxury Academy London, a multi-national company specializing in leadership training.

Albert Einstein, remembered for his bushy white hair and mustache, was a German physicist. He established the theories of relativity. In 1921, he won the Nobel Prize for Physics for explaining the photoelectric effect. The Britannica Online Encyclopedia considers Einstein the most influential physicist of the 20th century.

Henry Ford was an engineer by profession, most widely recognized for inventing the Model T, an affordable automobile that was available to the masses, and for creating the manufacturing assembly line. According to an April 2019 Bold Business article, "few have shaped the business world like Henry Ford."

Baby Boomers **Bill Gates** and **Steve Jobs** are recognized as computer technology giants who created and led Fortune 500 companies. Gates is a co-founder of Microsoft Corporation, and Jobs was the co-founder of Apple, Inc. and a majority shareholder of Pixar, which The Walt Disney Company later acquired. A 2014 article in "The Journal of Leadership Education" described Jobs as "an iconoclast who changed the way we do everything from how we listen to music and watch movies to how we teach our children."

Martin Luther King, Jr. and **Nelson Mandela** were both civil rights leaders who fought against social injustice and oppression in their countries — King in the United States and Mandela in South Africa. Both King and Mandela were recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize, and at the age of 35, King was the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Passionately Pursuing a Vision

Each of the Eight Great had a vision that he or she passionately pursued. Anthony's vision was to attain equal rights for former slaves and women. King and Mandela had the same vision in combating social injustice, although in different places. King was the leader of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1960s, and Mandela led the action to abolish apartheid in South Africa in the early 1950s through the early 1990s. Likewise, Churchill's vision was to save humanity from the spread of Nazism through the Allies' victory in World War II.

From the time he was a teenager and studied James Clerk Maxwell's equations, Einstein had a vision about light. He discovered an unknown fact — the speed of light remains constant no matter how fast one moves. This revelation led to Einstein's development of the theory of relativity, which ultimately ushered in the Atomic Age and changed the world forever through the creation of the atomic bomb.

Gates' vision "was for the world to have a computer in every household," as stated in inc.com in a 2016 article titled, "Jobs or Gates: Differences in Leadership." While at the helm of Microsoft, he launched the company not just to develop office software packages, but also to create new enterprise solutions and a web browser. Jobs' vision led to creation of the iPod, iPhone, iPad and retina display. Pioneers of technology innovation, Gates and Jobs revolutionized the way we live our lives today.

Overcoming Adversity and Persevering

Many of the Eight Great were less-than-stellar students in school. Einstein, the greatest physicist of the 20th century, flunked the entrance examination for the federal polytechnic school in Zurich, Switzerland. Gates was not a model student, and he dropped out of Harvard University only after two years. Jobs' high school grade point average was an unimpressive 2.65. Like Gates, he also dropped out of college but after only six months. Jobs was also fired from Apple, which he co-founded, in 1985, only to return in 1997 and later be named CEO and lead the company to its unprecedented success by the turn of the century.

Some of the Eight Great were even arrested and imprisoned. Mandela spent 27 years in a South African prison but later ascended to become South Africa's first Black president in 1984. King was also arrested many times in several cities in the southern United States for leading peaceful protests. His home was bombed in 1956. The official Nobel Prize website states that the FBI had him under surveillance as a communist. "[Yet, he continued] to fight for his beliefs even after numerous arrests and attacks on himself, his family members and followers during the marches and speeches that he made in many cities," noted to a 2014 Herald-Star article about the qualities of King's leadership.



In 1872, Anthony was arrested, tried and convicted for illegally voting in a presidential election in Rochester, New York, because women did not have the right to vote. Yet, she was undeterred in her quest for equal opportunity. In 1890, the University of Rochester trustees agreed to admit women at Anthony's relentless insistence with one caveat: she had to raise \$50k in pledges. On the eve of the deadline to do so, slightly short, she used the cash value of her life insurance policy to reach the required amount. At the age of 80, Anthony finally realized her vision of women being admitted to the University of Rochester.

Others of the Eight Great endured severe criticism. Churchill was criticized for making serious mistakes in his political career including supporting Edward VIII during the Abdication Crisis of 1936. Buyers criticized Ford for the lack of design options in his company's car models, which propelled the success of Ford's competitors. Unions also criticized him. "But demonstrating his humble nature and a capacity to learn from failure, Ford shifted his views and beliefs," commented the April 2019 online article in Bold Business.

Inspirational Communicators

Though many of the Great Eight were excellent and charismatic speakers, two stand out for their exceptional skills. Churchill was known for his commanding addresses to his fellow Britons. "[H]is superb speeches inspired the country and kept it going," wrote the World Affairs Editor John Simpson for BBC.

King's eloquence is unparalleled. His "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 in Washington, D.C. before an audience of 260,000 is considered one of the greatest of the 20th century.

Compassionate and Forgiving

Ford showed compassion to his employees. The Bold Business 2019 article reported that he shortened their workdays from nine to eight hours, paid them \$2 more per hour than the going rate and was a pioneer in diversity and inclusion.

Baylor University's Leadership blog stated that "[Mandela believed in] the morale persuasiveness of genuine acts of kindness." The blog added that after being in prison for almost three decades, Mandela forgave those who had imprisoned him and said, "Let us forget the past and think about the present." King also believed in forgiveness as embodied in one of his quotes. "I have decided to stick to love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."

Today, Gates is also known as a prominent philanthropist. In his 2016 article for Entrepreneur, John Rampton reported, "The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has donated billions of dollars to causes all over the world, making significant differences in the lives of children and adults."

Transformationalists

Most of the Eight Great are recognized as transformational leaders. Content Writer Ashley DiFranza of Northeastern University said transformational leaders "are people that have had an impact, whether it's on an organization or the country." Indeed, the Great Eight's accomplishments impacted generations and transformed the way we live our lives through their discoveries, innovation, technology and social change. 🌟



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