



Icons of Democracy: American Leaders as Heroes, Aristocrats, Dissenters, and Democrats

Bruce Miroff

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"In an era when American leadership seems sunk in petty power struggles and shallow media spectacles, some of our icons have much to teach us about the forms of leadership that can still speak to the democratic possibilities of the American people," writes Bruce Miroff. In *Icons of Democracy*, Miroff looks at how nine American leaders have either successfully encouraged or undermined citizens' participatory role in their democracy and helps us rediscover what leadership has meant in the past and how it can reinvigorate public life today.

In a blend of history, biography, political science, and political theory, Miroff offers examples of the finest democratic leadership as well as cautionary tales of prominent leaders whose styles were essentially aristocratic. His study examines John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eugene V. Debs, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr., as leaders who embodied or advanced democratic ideals. He also presents iconoclastic analyses of Alexander Hamilton, Theodore Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy, in which he concludes that these leaders actually discouraged a truly participatory democracy. In addition, in a new preface to this edition he criticizes Bill Clinton as a postmodern leader more concerned with political fashion than democratic vision.

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