

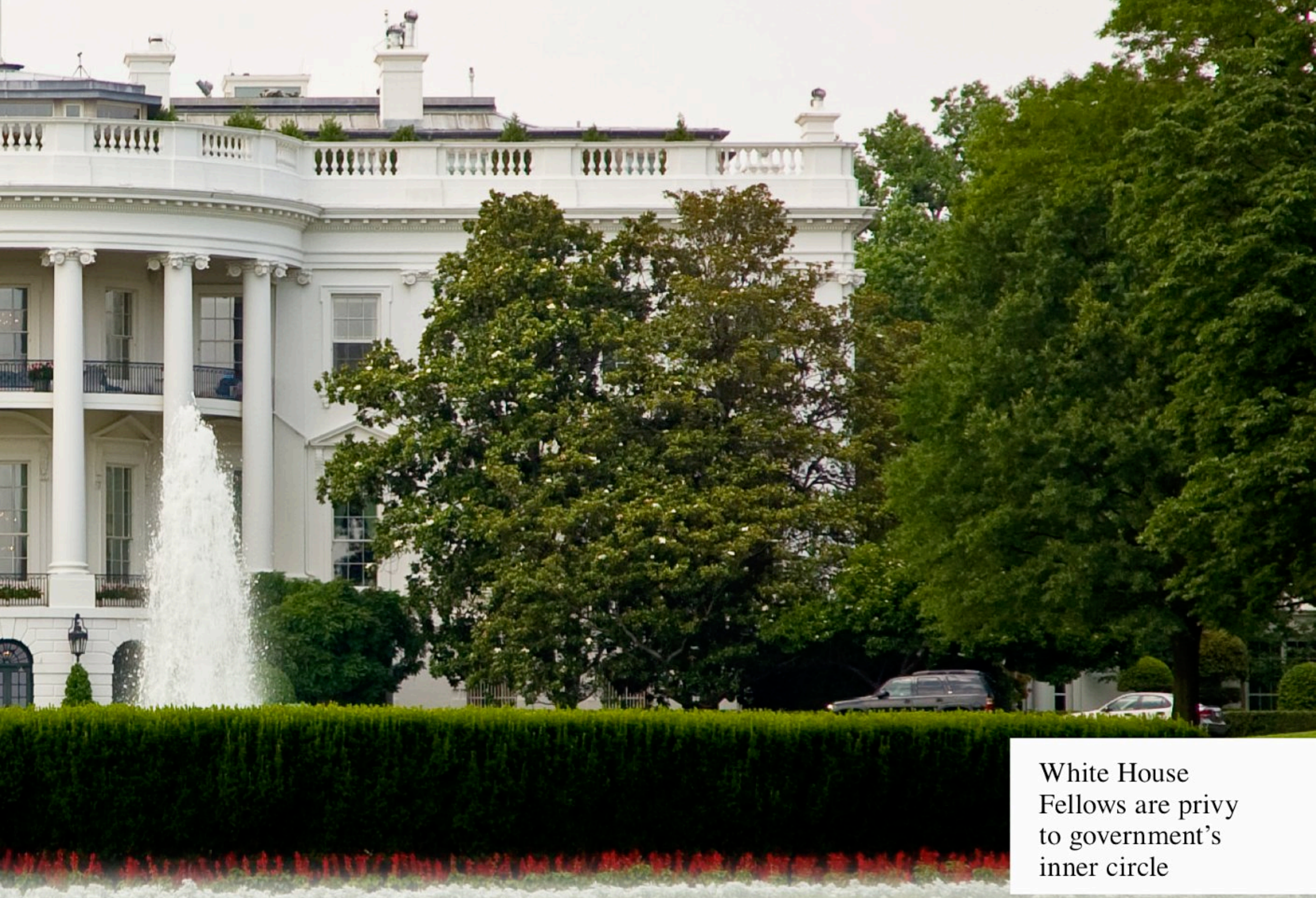


# ‘LEADERSHIP LESSONS OF THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWS’

In his new book, Charles Garcia details the insights of some of America’s top leaders and says they are lessons we all need to hear

By Kevin Doyle





White House  
Fellows are privy  
to government's  
inner circle

**A**s the world struggles to shed the shackles of the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, leaders of vision and foresight seem lacking. Author Charles Garcia contends that view is untrue and says many individuals, both past and present, have insights worth heeding.

While their experiences may be personal, the lessons detailed by Garcia in his new book *Leadership Lessons of the White House Fellows* are universally applicable. Created in the 1960s by President Lyndon B. Johnson and John W. Gardner, former president of the Carnegie Corporation, the White House Fellows Program has had more than 600 graduates. Garcia

interviewed 220 leaders for his book, yielding approximately 5,000 pages of transcripts. "They're just incredible people from all walks of life," Garcia says.

Garcia – a White House Fellow and U.S. Air Force Academy graduate – wrote the 2003 New York Times best-seller *A Message from Garcia*, a personal response to the 1899 pamphlet *A Message to Garcia* that remains required reading in the U.S. military. The inspirational essay written by Elbert Hubbard details the initiative of U.S. Army Major Andrew Summers Rowan to deliver a message to Calixto Garcia Iniguez, the leader of Cuban insurgents fighting the Spanish at the onset of the Spanish-American War.





Colin Powell



Doris Kearns Goodwin

When challenged by his editor “What’s next?” Charles Garcia had no ready answer. “She asked me ‘What book would you love to read? If it’s not out there, then that’s the one to write,’” Garcia recalls. “I was a Fellow in 1988-89. There were 14 people in my class and I knew perhaps a dozen more and there were just no books on the Fellows.”

A project was born and Garcia settled on 35 individuals for inclusion in the book, among them: Colin Powell, former U.S. Army General and Secretary of State, historian Doris Kearns

Goodwin, former Citigroup Vice Chairman Pete Dawkins, West Point graduate, Rhodes Scholar and Supreme Allied Commander Europe of NATO Wesley Clark, and NBC Television chairman Jane Cahill Pfeiffer, the first woman accepted to the program in 1966. He later spoke with nearly 200 more former Fellows.

“At the end of the day, leadership is about relationships and connecting with people,” Garcia says. “You don’t have to be just in business; a parent, teacher and coach can apply these lessons as well.”

**“At the end of the day, leadership is about relationships and connecting with people. You don’t have to be just in business”**

Charles Garcia, Author & former White House Fellow





Peter Dawkins

### Insights and lessons from some extraordinary fellows

Pete Dawkins had polio as a child. Accepted to the U.S. Military Academy, he was football captain, Brigade commander, won the 1958 Heisman Trophy as college football's top player, and played hockey. A Rhodes Scholar, White House Fellow and one of the youngest generals in history, Dawkins is also the retired Vice Chairman of Citigroup.

"He said he was successful because of his 'laser-like focus on people.' At Citigroup he was in charge of 18 people and made it a point to have at least two contacts with every one of those people every day, to know what and who was important to them," Garcia relates.

Ron Lee was in the first class of Fellows President Johnson welcomed to the Oval Office in 1965. An African-American from Brighton, MA, Lee wanted to work for Larry O'Brien, architect of



General Wesley Clark

John F. Kennedy's two successful Senate races and his 1960 presidential campaign. O'Brien orchestrated Johnson's landslide 1964 election and helped craft the Great Society legislation designed to eradicate racial injustice and poverty. Lee could envision no better mentor.

As Postmaster General, O'Brien gave Lee authority to examine the agency's segregationist practices. In 31 months as O'Brien's aide, Lee hired minority postmasters to oversee the nation's four largest postal responsibilities, hired an additional 50,000 minority employees and helped increase their average pay by 40 percent. Garcia writes "Lee's determination to level the playing field for others will inspire any leader to help build a winning team."

Air Force Major John Pustay had already accomplished much when chosen for the Fellows program in 1966, assigned to work for Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Following





President Lyndon B. Johnson, co-creator of the program

a meeting with President Johnson and key advisors to select bombing targets for Operation Rolling Thunder in Vietnam, the President asked Pustay to stay behind.

"John was the last one to leave and the President taps him on the shoulder and asks him if he would like to have a bourbon and branchwater. John told me the president started tearing up. He said to the president 'I didn't know that making decisions for bombing targets was so emotional.' The president said 'This is still Jack's house and nobody respects me but Lady Bird.' John never forgot that, at the end of the day, leaders are still human beings and that really helped him through his entire career," Garcia explains.

Robert Quincy served as a Fellow at Housing and Urban Development (HUD). He represented the HUD secretary at an interagency effort promoting fundamental change in South Africa. His success at HUD

led to a transfer to the State Department midway through his Fellowship year, working as a foreign policy advisor on the Africa Bureau. On one mission to South Africa, Quincy was Coretta Scott King's diplomatic escort officer and accompanied Nelson Mandela on a flight back to New York.

In his book, Garcia writes: "At one point during the eighteen-hour South African Airways flight, Mandela and Quincy were standing up talking with each other in the aisle when one of the male flight attendants asked them to sit down so that they could serve dinner. 'I was shocked. The attendant shouted at Mandela in a loud, rude and disrespectful manner. I was hardly able to restrain my own anger because I'm part of this humiliation,' recalled Quincy.

However, he decided to hold his tongue and see how Mandela wanted to handle it."

Quincy learned Mandela believed losing a battle to be different than losing the war. Mandela considered the incident inconsequential. Garcia writes "Mandela cautioned Quincy to 'never take your condition so seriously that it impedes you from accomplishing your personal mission, which, in my case, is a free democratic election in South Africa.'"

## How did we get here?

Garcia serves on the boards of Fortune 500 companies and the Board of Visitors of the US Air Force Academy, has owned an investment banking company, and now finances other people's dreams as head of Merchant Banking for Cabrera Capital Markets.

The world's economic crisis, he says, boils down to "a lack of accountability and a lack of



leadership in business, politics and society in general. There is a lack of statesmen and a lack of integrity, which is the longest chapter in the book. There really has been just an overall breakdown with people focused on money, greed, power, prestige and fame, all the wrong things. Reality TV shows are the values being inculcated into society."

Astonishingly, Garcia says 81 percent of the incoming class at college universities recently admitted in an anonymous survey to cheating in high school and another 40 percent admitted to having stolen something in the last six months. "We need many more leaders of integrity. We can agree to disagree about our politics but let's start doing things the right way," he says.



Charles Garcia author and former White House Fellow

## Where are we headed?

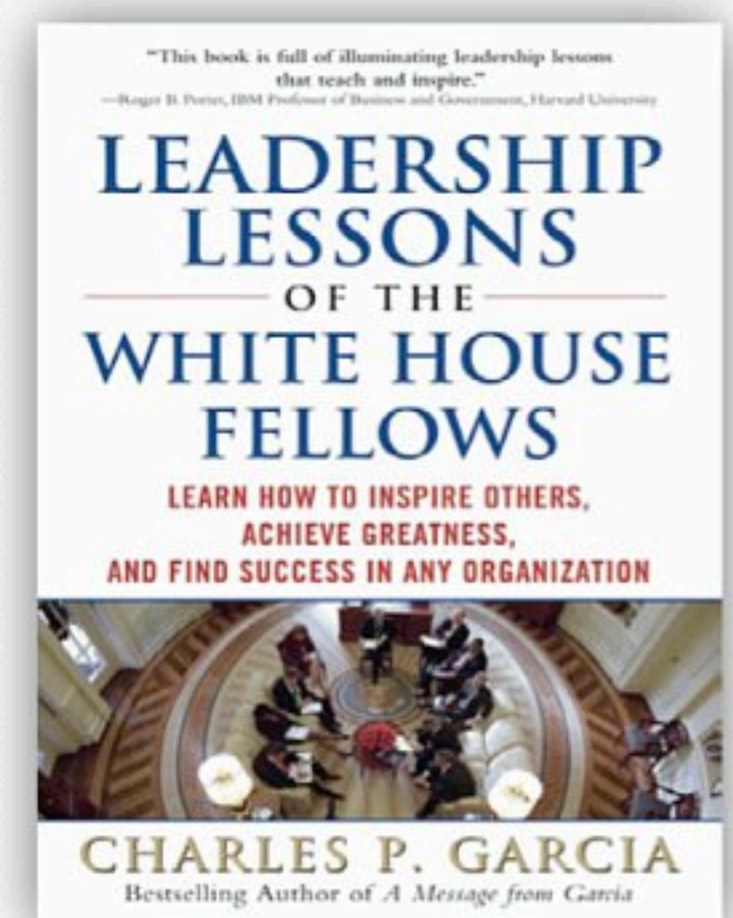
Garcia says that, moving forward, successful leaders and businesses must be tenacious and adaptable. "The smart companies are growing and making acquisitions. People need to make the hard decisions that have to be made in order to survive. Sometimes people have to exit certain businesses and instead focus on something that may have only been 10 percent of the business a few years ago but may be 60 percent now," he says.

Collaborating with other companies on large projects, and being willing to take on a private equity partner are also steps bold leaders might consider.

In the final analysis, Garcia says learning to strike a balance in one's life may be the most valuable lesson of all.

"One of the most important things I learned from John Gardner was to lead a balanced life. There are three important components in my life. The people I love are the most important. Then come the things I'm passionate about, that make me come alive. Finally, I have a strong faith in God. I try to balance those three things and I found during my interviews that the people who have that balance were also the best leaders," he concludes. ■

## THE BOOK



**PURCHASE**