

# Inclusive Leaders in Action

AACUC  
Commitment to Change



## Purpose of the Series

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Disparate effects of the global pandemic and the police murder of George Floyd have heightened awareness of social injustices that cost lives, health, wealth, and national vitality. As a result, many leaders have expressed or renewed their commitment to change. But how do you transform commitment into meaningful action? What prepares you to be an inclusive leader that meets the challenges of our time? Fortunately, we don't have to speculate about answers. History is a wise guide.

**Inclusive leadership is not new.** It is the centuries-long work of strengthening democracy to help America fulfill its aspirations to become a *more perfect union*. Many different people have engaged in the heroic work of transforming diverse colonies of commerce, guided by imperial impulses, into a country of diverse people, guided by conscience. Inclusive leaders have served as midwives through cultural convulsions out of rapacious capitalism to birth a more equitable socio-economic and political system. Who are these inclusive leaders? They are people of different nationalities, races, genders, faiths, and occupations. Among them are business leaders.

**Who are these inclusive business leaders?** They are people like you, people that you know, and like the person that you want to become. Inclusive leaders come from elite and ordinary backgrounds. Some were religious and reserved; others were gregarious scoundrels. Some attended elite colleges; others were self-taught. Some amassed fortunes; others were middle-class. Some sought the political spotlight; others worked stealthily in the shadows. Some possessed an enduring commitment to conscious capitalism; others awakened later and evolved. And because of social structures of their time, many inclusive business leaders were white men who used their power, expertise, wealth, and connections to build a democratic society. However, few if any monuments have been erected in their honor. Their contributions have been obscured by time, cultural indifference, and reductive conversations about diversity and inclusion. Yet these complicated, quirky, cunning, imperfect, and courageous leaders illuminate paths for leaders today. Their actions offer insights that can equip today's leaders to continue the noble project of creating a *more perfect union*. That is the goal of the *Inclusive Leaders in Action* series.

**The *Inclusive Leaders in Action* series is a unique synthesis of history, biography, business, civics, and psychology.** The articles will focus on inclusive business leaders and bankers who had profoundly positive effects on perfecting the nation – from the American Revolution, to Abolition, to Reconstruction. Frameworks from management and psychology help us translate those insights into practical actions that today's leaders can take to create more democratic, inclusive, and prosperous organizations.

**Why look back?** We are living through a time of revolutionary social, economic, political, and technological change, which typically happens in 50- or 100-year cycles. The industrial revolution, the digital revolution, and Civil Rights era are illustrative of such cycles. These epochs are disruptive, unsettling, frightening, and vulnerable to exploitation by predatory actors. Therefore, we need practical wisdom to guide us through inevitable uncertainty, conflicts, and pitfalls. But we needn't reinvent the wheel. History's inclusive leaders provide insights to help us effectively navigate these monumental changes so that we too can work to fulfill America's democratic ideals to become a more perfect union.



*“Because being American is more than a pride we inherit – It's the past we step into, and how we repair it.”*

- Amanda Gorman