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>> Salvatore Scibona: Welcome to the New York New York Public Library. Tonight we present the second in our series from the Cullman Center presentation live from NYPL. David Bell will discuss Men on Horseback the power of charisma in the age of revolution. He is joined in conversation by the renowned historian Annette Gordon-Reed. Access to our collections and a living stipend so they can focus exclusively on their work during the fellowships. The fellows are some of the best academics, playwrights, poets, and artists at work today. Use the unparalleled collections housed here. The program was founded in 1999 today it has supported the work of more than 300 fellows. We're now accepting applications for the 2021 and 2022 year. Anyone interested in applying is welcome to visit the Cullman website and submit an application. And both past Cullman center fellows about Ball's new book life of a Klansman. If you haven't already you can purchase Men on Horseback. On.NYPL.org/shop live. We'll drop it in the chat in Zoom as well.

David A Bell is the Lapidus Professor in the Princeton History Department. Before returning to Princeton in 2010 he taught at Yale and Johns Hopkins where he served as Dean of the Faculty. A specialist in French history, he is author of seven books, including The Cult of the Nation in France, and The First Total War. He has held Guggenheim, Wilson Center, and ACLS Fellowships and is a regular contributor to The New York Review of Book.

Annette Gordon-Reed is the Charles Warren Professor of American Legal History at Harvard Law School and a Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. Gordon-Reed won sixteen book prizes, including the Pulitzer Prize in History in 2009 and the National Book Award in 2008, for The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family. Her other works include Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy, Vernon Can Read! A Memoir, a collaboration with Vernon Jordan, Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History, a volume of essays that she edited, Andrew Johnson, and, most recently, with Peter S. Onuf, "Most Blessed of the Patriarchs": Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of the Imagination. She is the current President of the Ames Foundation. A selected list of her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship in the humanities, a MacArthur Fellowship, the National Humanities Medal, the Frederick Douglass Book Prize, and the George Washington Book Prize, and the Anisfeld-Wolf Book Prize. Gordon-Reed was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2011 and is a member of the Academy's Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences. In 2019, she was elected as a member of the American Philosophical Society. She worked on "Most Blessed of the Patriarchs" during her Cullman Center Fellowship in 2010 to 2011.

Before I invite David and Annette on, this event is being recorded.
Not you but just the event itself. David will take some of your questions at the end. You can send them at any time during this program by typing your question into the Q and A box at the bottom of the Zoom app. We'll try to get David to answer as many as he can. Please help me welcome Annette Gordon-Reed and David Bell.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Hello.

>> David A. Bell: Hi.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Well this is great to be here and congratulations on finishing the book. It's a wonderful book and I wanted to ask you, how did you decide to write it?

>> David A. Bell: Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to be here or here virtually at least. I just wanted to thank the Cull Man Center and Salvatore Scibona. I'm so delighted this could be happening tonight. Before writing this book I wrote a book which was called The First Total War about the revolution evolutionary Napoleonic wars in Europe and it got me interested in militarism and military heroes. And how they could capitalize. I wrote a short biography of Napoleon Bonaparte and I became interested in the question of charisma and his charisma and it led me to think about the broader problem. I didn't want to write another book Napoleon but a different book of all the characters who turns out had a lot in common.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: I never bothered to stop to figure out who he was because it seemed tangential to what I was doing. The why and who he was and is is relevant to your story about charisma and revolutions.

>> David A. Bell: Pasquale was a Corsican and lead of independent Corsica. During the 13 years he made an enormous impression on European and also on American opinion. He was himself was a very charismatic figure and he was commanding and inspiring to a lot of people and become a darling of the British press and the American press and he really became a kind of model for charismatic leaders later. Most directly from Napoleon but in fact during the American Revolution people were going back to poems and other things written about Paoli and rewriting them to be about George Washington and I realized with Paoli had an effective way of not only him but introducing the subject.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: You talk about Democratic and charismatic figure and there's a difference between a Democratic charisma and what had gone before. What is the change that made someone like that have the kind of effect he did in the world.

>> David A. Bell: That's a great question. Someone like Paoli or Democratic figures had a different kind of appeal from the monarchs who had proceeded them. If you look at European monarchs were distant
figures. Louie of France didn't want to be on the same plane as the people applauding him. He loved the people, but not that much, he wanted them to obey them.

To Paoli it mattered that people liked him and adored him. Print technology made it possible for people to feel they had an intimate bond with these leaders whom they didn't personally know. This was something really new and made these people different from the earlier monarchs.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: The print revolution is a good thing to find out about the leaders and people for whom they're going to be voting. I get a sense there's a kind of cautionary tale in all of that. Talk about how media is good in this era and how it works well in this era but lead to see problems for some of these leaders.

>> David A. Bell: Sure so the 18th century saw explosion of newspapers above all in Britain but also in the American colonies and then during the French revolution in France and the Haitian and South American revolutions throughout South America. People were able to follow their leaders in real time and get reports on them day by day so the leaders became living persons for them, almost like characters in a novel. At the same time the literature tended to be written in a style of a sentimental novel. Paoli was not just reported on that he did this or this but people reported on what he was wearing and eating and what he was saying and describing him the way the novelists of the period were describing their characters and it was a shift and allowed people to form intense imagined bonds with figures on the printed page. When what you have is kind of bond of acclamation on the one hand it was good. The Constitutions were abstractions and a set of rules that were kind of the bones of the new regimes, and they didn't have flesh on the bones. If you had somebody like Washington and who was absolutely adored by the free American population for a long time then Washington served as a way to make people love the country and the new regime and the constitution that Washington had helped preside over the birth of and that's good and Democratic regimes need people to identify with and not just rules. If the identification becomes too strong then it becomes stronger than the constitutional rules. People decide to trample on the constitution to run roughshod over the Constitutional rules and it's a double-edged sword for that reason.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Institutions don't matter but it's really the person. They start out embodying it but it becomes about the individual: That is the basis of the people you study -- what is the basis of the love for each of these people? These are very different societies and it's interesting how Washington circulates through the stories of these other people and I guess that goes to your point about charisma becoming transnational things at this point. There were people in society that love the individual and also New England people fixating on people far away. How do they get that feeling, evoke that feeling in people.
David A. Bell: Well that's a great question. I think there are a number of things that played into it. One is — and I think in some ways the most important doesn't have anything to do with them personally. It has to do with the fact that people in these countries needed someone like them and somebody to fixate on and somebody to love. All of these countries were in crisis and these new regimes were very fragile. The United States and the revolutionaries were afraid of being hung as traitors. It helps to have a savior figure you can believe in so people were certainly going out and looking for this. They found it with somebody like Washington because he acted the role really, really well. He looked really great. He was tall and handsome and he had perfect bearing and posture which mattered a lot at the time. People were always commenting on his grace. There was a wonderful letter by Abigail Adams to her husband when she first sees him. They weren't use to these people coming up on horseback with the perfect wigs and the perfect uniform and bearing and the air of command that might have been acquired for a lot of really bad reasons and they were really impressed and she writes a letter to her husband he's like a temple built by hands device, divine. You can see John Adams getting the letter and being jealous.

Annette Gordon-Reed: John Adams.

Annette Gordon-Reed: John Adams was jealous of everybody.

David A. Bell: There was a longing for a figure like this and it was helping that they were covered in the papers and people feel they knew these people as friends and not wooden images.

Annette Gordon-Reed: It's interesting to think of how people loved a monarch but they couldn't imagine themselves in Versailles; right? and they couldn't do that or they couldn't imagine themselves in Mount Vernon but he's closer to them than the Sun King would be so that sense of familiarity makes people feel they're connected to people. It's like Hollywood. Celebrity and charisma, is that the same? You were talking about people looking at a star and wanting to know who they were going on with and what they were eating. It's a similar kind of glomming onto the individual person. For Washington it's his bearing and people in the country needed this and you also talk about the fact that he was sort of well up until the Jay Treaty had sort of a teflon quality. If it's love — and this is the other danger, I suppose. If it's about a claim and loving an individual you sort of overlook problems. You talk about him as a military leader, the fact that he failed so much didn't really matter.

David A. Bell: Absolutely. This is the extraordinary thing about Washington. This adoration for him began before he deserved it. He forced the British out of Boston and he suffered the worst defeat at the battle of Brooklyn and Manhattan and his forces were chased across New Jersey and they almost disappeared. They went down by 90 percent.
There were British officers writing home saying it was almost all over and we're going to get rid of this scum in the next couple of months. His subordinates were saying this guy doesn't know what he's doing and we have to replace him. All through this, even while his subordinates were worried there was not a single amount of criticism in the American press at that time. He won the battle of Trenton and came into Princeton and won that and it turns into a tsunami of praise. What you said about celebrity is right. Started in the 18 century because of this media revolution started by newspapers. I think charisma depended on this. The modern form depended on this celebrity culture and I think every charismatic figure was a celebrity of course. Not every celebrity had a political charisma that, like Washington, could be seen as a national leader and to be seen as ruling in the place of a king. Franklin wasn't that.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: When you talk about qualities required. Military leaders, redeemers. People who redeem the society or can be constructed as founding father types. That's not Franklin. That's not Franklin's image. He's Dr. Franklin was witty and a scientist and all those kinds of things and he has his own persona. And being on horseback as well. What's with the horseback thing? In some places enslaved people were not allowed to ride horses. James Hemings and Robert rode horses and that was a big deal they're symbols of power.

>> David A. Bell: They're symbols of power and majesty. They're symbols of power and The Calgary. Someone with a sword striking down from a rearing horse was a terrifying sight for people. It really did express the power of these people very effectively. What you say about the slaves is interesting. One of the rare slaves in the French colony that became Haiti. Haiti was allowed to ride horses and became famous by taking big risks and breaking horses. Jumping on their bare backs. He was an incredibly talented figure on horseback and that certainly contributed today to his charismatic reputation among black inform followers and white politicians as his equal because he was able to ride on horseback like they were.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: He might be the opposite of a Washington. The source of his charisma. Besides a horse. There was a suggestion that he was eloquent.

>> David A. Bell: Toussaint -- one of the leaders although not initially one of the most prominent leaders of this enormous rebellion of enslaved people that happened in 1791 in San Domingo. He became the dominant figure, the leader of the former enslaved people, but he was also -- at the same time he decided to go back and become an ally of the French and became a Major General in the French Army and deputy governor and governor of the colonies themselves. There were two constituencies from him. [Inaudible] and the former slave people. Majority of the adult population in San Doming had come from Africa and at least had some spoken language. His parents had spoken
language. We only have the testimony of French officials and it's suspect testimony. We also had the impression he made on the French officials themselves and through them and other observers on educated opinion or white opinion in the Atlantic world — in those reports the charisma is like that of Washington. Being crowned the laurel leaves. Arching into town and all of this taken from the symbolic vocabulary of the Roman Republic. He was a brilliant man and was able to adapt to this very well. He never had formal education but he was able to master eloquent French and appeal to these white constituents —

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: There was a level of condescension? Admiring in some ways but a part of it that's not so admiring. The sort of racial rules still applied.

>> David A. Bell: Absolutely. So I mean there was a long tradition in British and French literature of portraying the exceptional African of royal blood. Sort of comparing these figures to the run of the mill of the African population who was looked down upon. So seen and portrayed as this exceptional African, of course, because as he began to assert himself more and took control of the colony he came into conflict with a lot of French officials. As he did the ones supporting him as they thought they could control him, became hostile and started describing him in horrific racial terms.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Napoleon -- your specialty. Anti-Washington. What was the source of his appeal? From your description and others he's not physically imposing person. Tell us how.

>> David A. Bell: Napoleon is — it really helps to have a good painter, right? We all know the picture of Napoleon on the rearing horse. The classic of the period. So I mean he was actually a terrible horseback rider and by far the worst horseman of all the figures I had looked at. Partly because he was short. He wasn't physically possessing. He was described as having greasy long hair and long Italian nose and permanent scowl on his face. When he became Emperor he was able to hire all the good painters obviously and create a physical image that was considerably flattering to him. The quality people talked about was his genius. It wasn't his exceptional physical qualities but it was his exceptional mental ones. He was a military genius. He was able to control different units on the battlefield with remarkable skill and one of higher proportion of the battles he fought than almost any other commander of the period and he had incredible mental capacity of the period. Unlike Washington, Napoleon was always making his persona. Washington was made for him but Napoleon was there controlling the propaganda. He always made sure they talked about him as a very stable genius.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Washington's -- the cult around Washington comes from the outside. And Napoleon who knew about Washington — obviously what did he think about Washington? Napoleon cultivates the sets of charisma. Propaganda is a part of his story. What did he think
about Washington?

>> David A. Bell: To a certain extent Napoleon's attitude toward most people is what can they do for me? Certainly that was the case for Washington. I don't think Washington made much of an impression on him in reality because I think Napoleon was mostly impressed by Napoleon. But Washington did something very convenient for Pope Napoleon which is that he died and it was only a few short weeks after Napoleon had taken power. His regime was weak and fragile.
In the beginning he needed to convince the people he was a friend of the revolution. What better way to do this than to stage a grandiose ceremony for George Washington in 1800. Which is what he did as soon as the news came to France that Washington had died. In this he constantly insisted on the parallel of Washington. He kept saying I'm the French Washington but I'm a better soldier than he was and I've had to overcome greater obstacles and I'm basically the French Washington. He loved to be called that in the beginning and once you decided to become a dictator Washington got put out of the picture.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Why was it a good move for him? You would think after the quasi war people would not be feeling good about the United States.

>> David A. Bell: There was a debate about this. Naval conflict fought between France and the United States and there were people in the French assembly at the time who said we shouldn't be honoring him. He's the enemy. Washington always had this reputation that was able to rise before or after the conflicts. Remarkably one of the places he was popular was in England in the American Revolution when he was the head traitor fighting against the head of Britain. He was always popular in Britain. He was popular in France. A lot of the French officers had written these adulatory things about Washington and that overrode the hostility that was over by 1800. I think Napoleon felt that he could still capitalize on Washington's death.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: So how did the charisma run out for him. If people loved him at one point and loved his genius, his military genius and so forth -- when you have that kind of charisma, how does it go wrong?

>> David A. Bell: Napoleon himself described it very well. He said this was a new state and everything depended on me. He said the state was me. He was playing on the line of Louis the 14th. It depended on every one of the successions successes of my battle battles but he started to lose. The remarkable thing about Napoleon Bonaparte is he lost the war in '14 and driven into exile and the next year he came back and the country rallied to him, showing that after all these defeats and millions of people who died because of him, they were still ready to rally for him.
Largely incompetent and he was able to take power and rule France for
20 years or so just on the strength of his name. So I think the charisma did last, actually, of Napoleon. Although it did dip certainly with the defeats.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Uh-huh so he saw what the problem was right there from his inability to keep winning for the people.

>> David A. Bell: Absolutely.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Boulivare who saw his coronation. Tahaiti these points of connection between them. What was the source of his charisma.

>> David A. Bell: The connections are fascinating. He was there and watched Napoleon being crowned Emperor and he was impressed by it.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: He thought it was about love and he saw that legitimacy depends upon love.

>> David A. Bell: That's what he wrote and told his reporters. His charisma came from military victory at the beginning and he won the admirable campaign recap which occurred in Venezuela. He led a small Army across the Andes. A torturous march. He comes down in what's now Columbia and beats off Spanish there so initially his charisma comes from military victory and also is able to pose as the father of his countries. Bolivia named after him. He gives constitutions. That's another interesting thing which I probably didn't emphasize size in the book but all of these people are seen as law-givers at some point. All write constitutions or participate in the writing of them and give them as law-givers to their countries and I think Bolivar's charisma comes from this particularly.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Where does it leave women?

>> David A. Bell: I mean, it's interesting. I mean you know I think that -- I mean I think as in many ways the age of revolutions marks in some ways a moment of retreat for women. For women in the public sphere certainly. I think it was possible to have female monarchs who were able to have great charisma. Elizabeth in England and Katherine. Women did not have the vote and in many cases women were excluded from most areas of the public life and Harding to establish this sort of charisma. It depends on the military role and made it difficult for women to establish. It depended upon this intimacy and the press and the charismatic people and gazing at them and for women it was hard to establish this role and without being indecent. Marie Antoinette -- it was easier to attack these women on a sexual left and I think it was much, much more difficult for women in that period to establish a charismatic role for themselves.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Even if you're not talking leadership, that's
the model leadership and it trickles down into society in general and think about the women's roles and why they can't be in the public and -- this was a time that for opening up the world in general. For women it represents two or three steps backwards in lots of ways because they couldn't participate in the same way. So what happens to charisma in the age of revolution. What changes? Because obviously we get more -- press becomes even much more diverse, much more widespread. Why does it end or does it end?

>> David A. Bell: I don't think it ends. I think it takes off from there. I think certainly in the history of the United States the charismatic model established by Washington molded the presidency. I think that the same notion of always trying to establish a kind of friendly relationship, an intimate relationship with the voters, the idea of posing as an evolutionary figure, as the figure able to re-found the country it just keeps coming back and back again and again. Jackson and Lincoln and Roosevelt. I think it develops as media develops. When you get radio and television you get a very different kind of charismatic image different than print.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Charisma matters but is it a different kind of revolution? How does that -- it's not -- I don't think of it as. Well what revolutions have we had with charismatic figures? Does it take place in the confines of the Reagan revolution?

>> David A. Bell: The extended that people were raid to call it the Reagan revolution was important. Hitler who had a charismatic appeal to the Germans and Stalin similar to the Soviet Union and Fidel Castro. All of these figures were enormously charismatic and they're different in destructive ways. It's fascinating candidates tend to pose as evolutionary revolutionaries -- He is the perfect, I mean they once said about Al Gore he's an old man of what a young man's idea should be. They have to repeat the gesture even if they can't actually -- they don't want to lead an actual revolution of course. Too many people get their heads chopped off. But they do want to try.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: What does it mean for the future of democracy? We think of revolutions comes into the age of enlightenment and the age of reason. Maybe we should have a sharp dichotomy between love and reason. The sense is people aren't making decisions based upon handwrite heads. They're making decisions based upon their hearts and that is a problem for -- you know for the future of democracy. Can it be a stable thing if people are loving a leader so much that when they do things that don't make any sense, it doesn't matter what they do, what they say, how they go. Does this suggest that democracy is not a great -- democracy may not be the best thing in the world here.

>> David A. Bell: There's a great tension in democracy. Because on the one hand people have a set of rules and constitutions and laws they
need to follow and they recognize the need to follow for the common good. Then at the same time figures of foci of tense emotions. Peoples are thinks democracies are thinking with both their heads and their hearts. Then people were following their hearts over their heads and following Bonaparte when he established a dictatorship and Bolivar who became Dictator in several South American countries. In the United States we've been very fortunate. We were very fortunate in George Washington who really did not want to exploit this love that so many people had for him. You can think of politicians today who would love to exploit that kind of L I think it depend love. I think it depends on the media. I think social media unfortunately is really, really good at this because the puts the leader literally at the same level. You read a post from your crazy uncle and you read a tweet and Donald Trump -- it's on the same level so it's easier to see these people almost as friends, as people you know personally and feel this strong emotion that I think a lot of the people in this country do feel for the current President. I think it's important to acknowledge that even if you don't support him. I think people do feel this support for him.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Your mic is hitting your -- button. Love and future of democracy, what do you predict about -- are there ways to counter the problems?

>> David A. Bell: I always think historians make really bad prophets. I think it's important to recognize what is going on. And I think it's important to -- I think it's also important that we not reject charisma because I think it's necessary. It's necessary to hear that we can have figures to strengthen people's attachment to the laws as I think Washington did so I think it's important to -- just to give one example. Some people have been saying to Joe Biden you should stay in your basement and let Trump destroy himself. I think that's bad advice. I think he needs to give people a reason to like him. He needs to come out and show people why he's someone to show strong emotion for and not simply be there as the anti-Trump.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: This has been a wonderful question. Let's take questions. Was Washington the most democratically inclined?

>> David A. Bell: We should not forget that Washington was ready to leave a large portion of the American population in bondage. If we want to think of America as a Democrat it remained an incredibly imperfect one until the 1960s. Speaking for the freedom of all people. On the other hand friend (French) as time went by he was willing to take quasi Dictatorial powers. Washington was not.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: I think you have to flip your button. That's what's hitting it.

>> David A. Bell: Oh my bottom button. I'm sorry.
Annette Gordon-Reed: I would love to hear more about democracy and charisma. David's contrast of old styles of charisma and the new style. Joan of Arc could she be seen as a prototype of charismatic --

David A. Bell: Joan of Arc is a figure of faith. She is somebody who's seen as receiving her gifts from God and is being an instrument of God. Washington was often called an instrument of God but they didn't mean this literally the same way but they meant this with Joan of Arc. This was one of the ways it was possible for women to possess this kind of charisma. There were many women in the early modern period who did have this literally saintly charisma. If you look for printed works before the age of revolution, are talking about people's lives in the ways that newspapers and pamphlets would talk about I can't remember Washington and Paoli is and others these earlier works were the lives of the saints. This earlier model did allow for someone like Joan of Arc to possess the charisma. She was seen as leading the people and not receiving power from the people. Democratic figures are seen as choice of people, not as God.

Annette Gordon-Reed: Talk about the process of writing about these men -- characters of the novel -- in their own time and loved in their own time. How did you feel about them and what stylistic choices did you make about a writer I immersed into their world?

David A. Bell: That's a great question.

Annette Gordon-Reed: It is.

David A. Bell: It can be difficult because you get swept up in the rhetoric, in their own writing. These people were all really good writers. Washington was ridiculed at the time for not being educated. Adams was saying Washington's greatest strength was being handsome. You get swept up in what they write about themselves and you get swept up in what people are writing about them. Bolivar was somebody I did not know that much about before I started the project. I got very, very attracted to him. In the wrong -- on the one hand you have to step walk a bit and not repeat what these earlier writers had written but at the same time you want to make them come alive and give a sense of them as people who did all have this great sense of destiny. Who had this great sense of having been chosen. Napoleon Bonaparte was someone at age 30 was the greatest military ruler since Julius Caesar. And someone born into slavery and treated as equal by the French officials. The first African American didn't become a general in 1940. This sense of destiny that they all had. You do want to try to convey that. I just tried to balance these things as best I could and it's a great question. And to see whether I did it successfully or not you have to read the book.

Annette Gordon-Reed: Another question. I would love to hear more about the other face of charisma. If these figures elicited love and acclaimed and they also elicited negative feelings. How do they shape the character content of their charisma.
David A. Bell: Another really great question. You can only truly hate somebody if you've first loved them. That's certainly the case with a lot of these characters. If you want a very good sense of how this works with Napoleon read Tulsa's War and Peace. The principal character is somebody who starts off unenamored of Napoleon and unenamored of his charisma and ultimately is trying to murder him. There was a sense of everything that Napoleon was a symbol of. The French revolution and symbol of hope and everything he was betraying. He was the most famous figure in the century even as he was loved. Even Washington stirred up incredible particle hatreds. With the Jay Treaty and before the Jay Treaty. So I think with all of these people these things come together. Bolivar also who was probably the most broken by this because by 1829 and 1830 all the questions he had liberated all the countries turned against him. He went off into exile and almost completely ignored and hated and despised by the people who loved him only years before. The General and his Labyrinth and it's precisely a description of Bolivar in his last month trekking to the in Bogota. Hated and reviled like this. It would not have been unusual in America in 1800 to see a picture of Washington on people's wall. To see 20 years later a picture of Bolivar on someone's wall. My grandparents had had a picture of Roosevelt up.

Annette Gordon-Reed: Jefferson always hated Napoleon. Why did other figures not follow Washington's example of surrendering power.

David A. Bell: I think it's a good and complicated question. It depends both on the figures in question and it depends on the circumstances. I think you know in some ways the United States was quite lucky in that you know certainly after I don't recollect Yorktown there was no threat and there was strike and Washington could have resigned from the Army and resigned from the presidency. There was no pressure for him to stay there. No one was saying to him you have to stay here or the country about collapse. The other circumstances were much more dire. Bolivar ran the first Republic after the first two had collapses. Bonaparte was constantly at war against vast European coalitions. It was a sense these people had of their country. Bolivar and Bonaparte said very explicitly the countries we are ruling are incredibly divided. Bolivar we have Native Americans and Africans and they're savage. We have to have a strong figure for everybody to turn. Napoleon said we live in this incredibly divided country and we need a person to bring it together and these people were incredibly ambitious in ways I think Washington was not. There were reasons why these worries went in one direction and others in different ones.

Annette Gordon-Reed: Napoleon reflects on this in talking about Washington's example. He said he understands that -- I don't know if it's an excuse but he saw himself in a completely different place than Washington. That was an example people thought is he really going to
do this. It makes no sense for him to do that. Napoleon was I can't do this because of the nature of our society. What comes through in the writing, what is charismatic depends on the need of the culture and different societies. Who knows if people who have taken Napoleon in the United States or whatever. It's very culture specific, right?

>> David A. Bell: Absolutely and these cultures were all changing very rapidly during this period. The United States in 1800 was a very different place than 1775. France changes enormously. There's a can you go which her in constant motion which -- but as you said Napoleon himself said I could never have been the French Washington. It would have been impossible. I quote this at the beginning of my chapter on him. One thing which surprised me when I was reading through what these men had written was the extent to which they were such keen opener observers of themselves. John Adams was really keen on seeing how Washington becomes this character of convention. And Napoleon is lucid about his own career, particularly and he's in exile. They're all incredibly keen about the sources of their own power and frank in ways that don't always do them credit.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Is that necessary or why they rose to this point that they actually knew themselves?

>> David A. Bell: I think so.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Self-knowledge or actually thinking about this they're not wandering aimlessly. They're strategic.

>> David A. Bell: Lincoln is very much the same way a very keen observer of himself and the presidency and politics of the time. These people all have particularly Bonaparte have strong narcissistic qualities and the hits a limit. Even if after they were defeated.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: Well we're running out of time here but I did want to ask you -- when ear writing a book what message did you want people to take from this? Is there a cautionary tale or something you would like to see Americans in our democracy to think about and consider in the lives of these people?

>> David A. Bell: I think a couple of things. One is to recognize that you know this kind of charismatic leadership is not alien to our system and it's been part of our system from the start. Democracy shadows self in a way and we can't get away from it and we shouldn't scorn it. When there are people who come up who are really unfortunate or sinister examples of anti-- charisma turning in bad directions you need someone to oppose them rather than saying we're not going to play the game.

>> Annette Gordon-Reed: This has been wonderful and thank you for participating.
David A. Bell: Thank you for the wonderful questions and thank you for taking the time to do this with me.

Annette Gordon-Reed: Thank you. You're very welcome. Goodnight.

David A. Bell: Goodnight.