

# Human Rights as Presidential Success: The Truman Era

**Hope Schuhart**, author

Dr. David J. Siemers, Political Science, faculty adviser

Hope Schuhart will graduate from UW Oshkosh in May 2011 with a degree in political science.

Dr. David J. Siemers is a professor in the Department of Political Science. He received his Ph.D. from UW Madison and has taught at UW Oshkosh since 2001. Siemers' most recent book is *Presidents and Political Thought*, published by the University of Missouri Press.

## **Abstract**

Political success has traditionally been defined in terms of glory in battle and control over access to resources. This definition continues to be reflected in modern rankings of American presidents, which often measure executive success by personality traits, partisan influence, and attempts at increasing power while in office. However, the core purpose of American government, as stated in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, is to safeguard the human rights of American citizens and protect them from rights abuses. It follows that as the official defender of the Constitution, a president's human rights record should be the standard and primary criterion for measuring executive "greatness" or success. Because other evaluations have thus far neglected to employ such a criterion, this paper uses Harry Truman, who was president at the time of the United States' ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as a beginning example of evaluating presidential greatness based on contributions to human rights.

## **Introduction**

Throughout human history, political leaders have striven to achieve glory and greatness by leading armies into battle, conquering vast tracts of land through violence, subjugating and enslaving the people who lived there, usurping other leaders, looting the coffers, and monopolizing resources to maintain control. After being subjected to unwarranted searches and seizures and being denied fair trials by the British, political figures in colonial America created a list of human rights and defined them as inalienable. These leaders then placed their new government under the law in case it tried to take those rights away. The result was a constitution which, despite certain flaws, gave citizens fundamental assurance of the prevention of human rights abuses. Consequently, when a president of the United States, upon his or her inauguration into the executive office, takes the oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, he or she is vowing to protect human rights. The president's activities—such as proposing legislation to Congress, commanding the military, and nominating officials to federal positions—must therefore be evaluated in terms of this humanistic model. The president has a legal duty to protect the human rights of Americans and, as the figure who makes treaties and manages international affairs, a moral duty to use their relationships with foreign diplomats to encourage the protection of people's rights around the world.

Despite the enormous amount of literature on the presidency, little has been written about human rights as a particular measure of executive performance. Related works describe presidential involvement in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, while others detail Jimmy Carter's policies or the fate of civil liberties in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001. But comparative studies of presidential performance seem to ignore human rights as central to "greatness," preferring instead to measure strategy, power expansion, and personality. In the revised edition of *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, Richard Neustadt wrote that an executive needs four main things for success: a historically relevant purpose, an understanding of power, the ability to withstand pressure, and a lasting legacy within policies and party (1991, 167). Marc Landy and Sidney M. Milkis echoed similar sentiments in their book, *Presidential Greatness* (2000). They defined presidential success as bringing about bold regime change, leaving behind a legacy, revolutionizing a political party, and bearing "a large share of responsibility for the public's civic education" (3–4). They selected five presidents (Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt) who "have already been deemed worthy of such enduring respect and reverence" by the American people and "hope to find some common thread" (2) among them. Clinton Rossiter claimed in his book *The American Presidency* (1956) that greatness is measured by activity and initiative during crises as well as a taste for using power, while Charles F. Faber and Richard B. Faber in their work *The American Presidents Ranked by Performance* (2000) returned to traditional measures of success: administrative accomplishments and personal qualities.

The criteria used by previous scholars are undoubtedly important considerations, but none address human rights as any kind of measure at all. This oversight could be compared to analyzing an employee's adherence to their job description without assessing their contribution to the company's underlying purpose, its *raison d'être*. If human rights protections are the core purpose of American government, as stated in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, it seems a president's human rights record should be the *primary* consideration when determining his or her success in office. But, mysteriously, this is not the case.

Numerous quantitative studies and polls on the topic have made the same error. The first landmark study to do so occurred in 1948 and was repeated in 1962, when Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. distributed surveys to professional historians asking them to rank presidents according to their performance in office. The process was reproduced by his son Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. in 1996, and similar surveys of experts were conducted by Gary M. Maranell in 1968, David L. Porter in 1981, Steve Neal in 1982, Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing in 1982, William J. Ridings Jr. and Stuart B. McIver in 1989, and the Siena Research Institute in 1982, 1990, 1994, 2002, and 2010. Some polls did not use specific criteria to measure performance and relied only on the overall opinion of historians and political scientists, while others used categories such as charisma, intelligence, decisiveness, and administrative achievements. Like the qualitative studies, the polls excluded human rights as a specific marker of success. The pattern in previous literature is a repetitive review of presidents' personal glories, political maneuverings, and attempts at increasing executive power. They have so far ignored the bedrock of modern democratic leadership—human rights.

One can only guess as to why human rights is not a standard measure of "greatness" or success in the history of the American presidency. Perhaps the concept

of human rights is considered naïve and too idealistic. If that is the reason, it is certainly not a valid one. Principles, though one may never meet them perfectly at all times, still serve as a moral North Star to keep one on course and are still legitimate even when violated. Or perhaps human rights is not on the scoreboard because it seems faddish, abstract or vague. That, too, is a weak argument. The United States is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which spells out in no less than 30 articles exactly what human rights entail, and the content of the document is as relevant now as it was in 1948. The point of this paper, then, is to make the case for adding human rights as a standard measure of presidential effectiveness, as a screen through which to filter the behavior of our presidents. The focus will be on the major activities of Harry Truman, who was president at the time of the American ratification of the UDHR.

### ***New in the History of Nations***

One of Harry Truman's most significant human rights successes was the implementation of the Marshall Plan. In the spring of 1945, the United States was working with other Allied forces to determine the next steps for Germany, which had not only twice disrupted all of Europe with its practice of traditional methods of conquering but also had organized and implemented an unprecedented system of human rights abuses. While Truman believed that the German military should be dismantled and its industry tightly controlled, he also believed, on the advice of Secretary of War Henry Stimson, that punishing Germans to the point of starvation and deprivation would do little but redirect them into a "non-democratic and necessarily predatory habit of life" (Truman 1955, 236–7). By the summer of 1947, under Joint Chief of Staff Directive 1779, American forces permitted German civilians a standard of living similar to the rest of Europe. Additionally, in June of that year, Secretary of State George Marshall said in a speech at Harvard that American foreign policy "is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist" (Marshall 1947, par. 7). Truman stated that he and Marshall "were in perfect agreement" and immediately made Marshall's plan part of his legislative agenda (Truman 1956, 113). Congress passed the European Recovery Act in the spring of 1948, and it continued as planned until 1952. As Truman explained in his memoir, *Years of Trial and Hope*:

We set up the means to feed and clothe and take care of the physical needs of the people. We rehabilitated the conquered nations instead of attempting to keep them conquered and prostrate. We asked for no reparations. This was something new in the history of nations. The traditional practice had always been for the conqueror to strip the defeated countries and to make off with whatever spoils were available. Our idea has been to restore the conquered nations of Germany, Italy, and Japan to prosperity in the hope that they would understand the futility of aggression as a means of expansion and progress. We had to refute the historic claim that a nation must use aggression and military means to gain markets. . . . No neighbor of ours is afraid of us, and they like to do business with us because we accept their competition instead of demand their subjection. (1956, 238)

This humanistic, cooperative approach gained momentum when the United Nations conference met in San Francisco on April 25, 1945, as Franklin D. Roosevelt had planned before his death. Its Charter was officially ratified that October, and, in his first speech before Congress, Truman summarized the mission of the United Nations, stating, "While these great states have a special responsibility to enforce the peace, their responsibility is based upon the obligations resting upon all states, large and small, not to use force in international relations except in the defense of law. The responsibility of the great states is to serve and not to dominate the world" (Truman 1945, par. 42).

Truman's use of atom bombs in Japan may seem completely contradictory to his calls for global service and responsibility. Their detonation on civilian targets may seem like the worst violation of human rights possible. However, the war itself was perpetuating rights abuses in addition to draining precious resources for all countries involved. Truman was facing immense domestic pressure to end the fighting immediately, but that required even more destruction. If the president continued using traditional firepower on Japan, the fighting may have dragged on for many more months or even years, costing billions more in taxes and causing innumerable deaths on both sides. Russian troops were anticipated to have been advancing into Japan to assist Allied forces, but again, a traditional invasion would likely have extended the war. Indeed, there seemed to be no right answer, no conceivable way to humanely end the war, but, of all the options, *quickly* seemed the least cruel. And in order to end the war for good, Truman insisted on total and unconditional Japanese surrender but explained, "unconditional surrender does not mean extermination or enslavement of the Japanese people" (McCoy 1984, 22). After the bombing, Japan saw complete demilitarization but increased voting rights and other civil protections set down by occupying American forces; the restructuring of the Japanese economic and legal system paved the way for the island nation to adopt modern human rights practices.

In January 1949, Truman outlined humanitarian policies for the rest of the world as well. He created the Point IV program, which transported sanitation and food production technologies to "backward" areas that had long suffered under the "curse of colonialism," a travesty that Truman had "always hoped to see . . . disappear" (Truman 1956, 232). The plan received its name from the fourth of four legislative requests Truman had outlined in his inaugural address, and when asked by the press to explain his idea in January 1949, the president explained that he did not know the details yet but that he had spent much of his time "going over to that globe back there, trying to figure out ways to make peace in the world" (231). To sort out the details, that year he gathered officials to begin planning the program's proposal, which was approved by Congress in October 1950. Because the program focused on technological training to "any country that wanted it" (239), Truman touted Point IV as having "nothing in common with either the old imperialism of the last century or the new imperialism of the Communists" (234). By 1951, the program was underway in 33 countries, and it provided the inspiration to newly elected Senator John F. Kennedy, who would later use the program's concepts for his Peace Corps (McCoy 1984, 210).

### ***Containment***

Truman's containment policies were mostly out of line with human rights principles, with a few small exceptions. By 1946 the United States had already

developed a mistrust of Russia, which was intensified by American Ambassador to the Soviet Union George Kennan's now-famous "Long Telegram," sent to Truman that same year. The telegram described Russian authorities as understanding force better than logic and calling Communism "a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue" (Kennan 1946, 19). Truman also increasingly believed that Communism was contrary to human rights, condemning it as "slavery" and "a false philosophy" that "purports to offer freedom, security, and greater opportunity to mankind. Misled by this philosophy, many peoples have sacrificed their liberties only to learn to their sorrow that deceit and mockery, poverty and tyranny, are their reward" (Truman 1949, par. 11). These beliefs formed the foundation of his war policy. In 1950, Truman approved National Security Council Report 68, which called for a militaristic containment of Communism. This report would serve as a manual for U.S. foreign relations until it was declassified in 1975.

In 1949, after trumping the Soviet blockade in Germany with the Berlin Airlift and sending economic assistance to Greece and Turkey to quell Communist rebellions there, the United States entered into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a military alliance with 11 other countries, to fortify their resistance to Communist aggression. When news broke that the relatively large North Korean army, backed by the Soviet Union and newly Communist China, had invaded United States-supported South Korea in 1950, the Soviet Union had already obtained and tested nuclear weapons of its own. Truman responded quickly, but, to calm fears of nuclear warfare, he told Americans "we are not at war" and privately stated "I do not want any implication . . . that we are going to war with Russia at this time" (Hess 2001, 27–8). He described the army-to-army battles in Korea as a "police action" and referred to the North Korean army, which was well over twice the size of the South Korean army, as "bandits" who were on a "raid" (27). Truman had been advised that Congressional approval was unnecessary because of the initially widespread public and bipartisan support for the war and so never requested such approval at all (31–6). Instead, the conflict seemed the perfect opportunity for the West to show a united front against Communism. Truman therefore relied on approval from the United Nations, so the conflict came to be viewed more as a United Nations war than an American one. This and other aspects of the conflict were murky and strange—was the United States really at war or not? What was the objective of the counter-offensive? What role was the United Nations supposed to be playing, exactly? And was the conflict causing a state of domestic emergency?

Unfortunately, murky areas are often where human rights are violated, where principles are fudged to achieve a different goal. When private steel mill strikes interfered with domestic prices and military equipment production, Truman ordered the mills to be seized. But unlike his abuse of war powers, the seizures were laid before the Supreme Court in the *Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company v. Sawyer* case and declared unconstitutional. Truman ordered that the mills be returned but threatened to use the Selective Service Act to draft the workers who continued to strike. This was a damaging move for a Democrat who had claimed to be pro-labor and not consistent with human rights ideals about fair labor practices.

Truman permitted other rights abuses on American soil as well. The constant rhetoric over containment created a ripe environment for politicians like Joseph McCarthy and Richard Nixon to use fear and suspicion to advance their own careers.

Truman had detested both men but did not publicly speak against them so as not to appear “soft” on Communism. Instead, he allowed Nixon, McCarthy, and others to perpetuate the hysteria, which led many innocent people to be ostracized, blacklisted, and fired from their jobs. In 1947, the president even signed Executive Order 9835, which created the Federal Employees Loyalty Program to investigate and fire hundreds of people for perceived Communist activity. This violated many employees’ civil liberties and was clearly against human rights principles of protection from preemptive persecution and unwarranted searches. And while Truman did not allow the House Un-American Activities Committee to force loyalty oaths on its members, he only later condemned McCarthy as a sensationalist demagogue (Truman 1956, 284). In this case, he submitted to public frenzy instead of attempting to tame it, as the framers of the Constitution had recommended.

### ***The Middle East***

Unlike Truman’s use of atom bombs, his recognition of Israel first appears to be a major human rights success, but, upon further inspection, the issue is similarly complex and controversial. In 1945, the British had reneged on their Balfour Declaration promise of granting entrance into Palestine to Jewish concentration camp survivors, so 100,000 Jews remained globally homeless, waiting in squalid refugee camps while most Western countries, including the United States, claimed to have reached their Jewish immigrant quotas. Truman, however, wrote in his first memoir, *Year of Decisions*, “It was my feeling that it would be possible for us to watch out for the long-range interests of our country while at the same time helping these unfortunate victims of persecution to find a home” (1955, 69).

The president began the diplomatic process by meeting and corresponding with the British many times in an attempt to work out an agreement for Palestine. An Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, composed of six British and six American scholars and statesmen, examined policies and conducted interviews in the United States, Great Britain, Egypt, Austria, and Palestine to fully investigate the issue. Their report recommended that Palestine become neither an Arab state nor a Jewish one but a neutral, internationally protected area, a safe haven for all peoples. They wrote, “We, therefore, emphatically declare that Palestine is a Holy Land, sacred to Christian, to Jew and to Moslem alike; and because it is a Holy Land, Palestine is not, and can never become, a land which any race or religion can justly claim as its very own” (Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry 1946, chap. 1). The Committee predicted that conflict would result if a non-neutral state was attempted, saying, “We have reached the conclusion that the hostility between Jews and Arabs and, in particular, the determination of each to achieve domination, if necessary by violence, make it almost certain that, now and for some time to come, any attempt to establish either an independent Palestinian State or independent Palestinian States would result in civil strife such as might threaten the peace of the world” (Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry 1946, chap. 1). Truman believed the report was “fair” (Beschloss 2007, 201) but noted that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were against a Jewish state because they “were primarily concerned about Middle East oil and in long-range terms about the danger that the Arabs, antagonized by Western action in Palestine, would make common cause with Russia” (Truman 1956, 149).



The issue had also been turned over to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, which recommended a partition plan of a half-Arab, half-Jewish Palestine, with Jerusalem as an international city. Jews had mixed feelings about this proposal while the Arabs completely opposed it. Truman “instructed the State Department to support the partition plan” believing that “a great industrial system could be set up under the Jews, and the productive potential of this region could be used to the mutual benefit of the Jews and Arabs” (1956, 155–56).

The president was also swarmed with public pleas to support a Jewish state; he received thousands of letters, telegrams, and phone calls from Zionist constituents and transnationals insisting that he was anti-Semitic for any considerations he gave to the Arabs. Truman had been notified that the Negev Desert in southern Palestine was especially important for nomadic Arab Bedouin tribes who had used the area for centuries for seasonal grazing and subsistence (Beschloss 2007, 214), so he initially resisted public pressures but eventually submitted to them. George Marshall accused the president of meddling with the Middle East merely to gain the Jewish American vote (198). On May 14, 1948, Britain pulled out of Palestine. The new country would be called Israel, and Truman gave it *de facto* recognition within minutes of the change. Later he would add *de jure* recognition.

Although Truman cannot be held entirely responsible for the decades of violent fallout from the establishment of a Jewish state (he had warned Israel that the United States would not give monetary or military support at that time), he planted a seed of relations with Israel against the recommendations of all his advisers and all the people who had investigated the situation in depth. He had been advised that a Jewish state would lead to further conflict and thus further human rights violations, but he dismissed this advice as well as alternative solutions to the problem. As the Committee pointed out, he could have supported a neutral (non-Arab, non-Jewish) state while pushing for higher immigration quotas in the United States. If Congress had refused, then Truman could have, as Eleanor Roosevelt suggested, negotiated to help settle them in “one of the Allied nations that won the war” (Beschloss 2007, 200). The Jewish people certainly deserved special protection from further abuses, but the formation and recognition of Israel was not the recommended alternative, and human rights abuses continue to plague the area. Despite decades of assistance from some of the world’s richest countries, Israel is still under frequent attack by its Arab neighbors and is sometimes even the aggressor. The tragic irony is that in an attempt to resolve a particular human rights situation, Truman traded one set of rights violations for another.

### ***Domestic Agenda***

On the domestic front, Truman had more solid ideas for human rights-centric proposals but was unable to pass many of them through Congress. As a New Deal Democrat, the president made numerous legislative recommendations that promised all Americans a “Fair Deal.” However, the Republican 80th Congress was simultaneously trying to disassemble Roosevelt’s New Deal. Truman despised these Congress members, claiming that “The real threat of Communism in this country grows out of the submission of the Republican policies of the 80th Congress—policies which threaten to put an end to American prosperity” (Wallace 2004, 306). After the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill for national health care was rejected by Congress,

Truman proposed his own plan for a public health insurance option, which he stressed was nothing like “socialized medicine,” a term “some people were bandying about” (Truman 1956, 19). He called the general sickness of the American population the “blot” and “disgrace for the greatest republic in the history of the world; first in everything but the basic responsibility of making healthful individuals” (18). In 1952, the President’s Commission on the Health Needs of the Nation reported that more money was spent on tombstones and monuments than on medical research in the United States each year, but these and other findings did not influence the 80th Congress as much as the intense lobbying by the American Medical Association. During this time, other Western countries like Great Britain and France were adopting national health care or similar insurance programs and even beginning to establish norms of health as a human rights issue and not a luxury while the United States remained under the thumb of medical lobbyists. Truman concluded, “Democracy thrives on debate and political differences. But I had no patience with the reactionary selfish people and politicians who fought year after year every proposal we made to improve the people’s health. I have had some bitter disappointments as President, but the one that has troubled me most, in a personal way, has been the failure to defeat the organized opposition to a national compulsory health-insurance program. But this opposition has only delayed and cannot stop the adoption of an indispensable federal health-insurance plan” (Truman 1956, 23).

In fairness, some legislative failures were due to the Treasury’s depletion by the Korean conflict, but Truman did have some success with other rights-related legislation, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act Amendment of 1949, which increased the minimum wage; the Housing Act of 1949; and the Social Security Act of 1950. Additionally, he was able to increase military capabilities while decreasing spending with the National Security Act of 1947, which also created the Air Force, CIA, and other departments (McCoy 1984, 116).

Truman’s greatest contribution to human rights was his initiatives toward racial equality. A veteran himself, Truman had a deep respect for all Americans who had served in the armed forces (Gardner 2002, 21–2). He was particularly repulsed to discover that African American veterans of World War II, who had fought alongside whites in defeating the racism and human rights abuses of the Axis powers, were welcomed home with savage beatings and even lynchings by racist white mobs who almost always went unpunished. The discord between American principles and practices, then, became painfully obvious as the United States attempted to endorse justice and equality worldwide while millions of its own people were being, and had been for centuries, systematically oppressed, harassed, beaten, tortured, and terrorized.

Truman had first pledged to work for the end of racial violence when he ran as a senator in 1940, but at the end of World War II, with a long, complicated list of urgent domestic and international concerns, mainstream American society was hardly concerned with civil rights. In fact, 82 percent of Americans in a nationwide Gallup poll said they were against civil rights reform (Gardner 2002, 106). Despite a lack of support, on December 5, 1946, Truman issued Executive Order 9808, which created the first Presidential Civil Rights Committee to obtain a full factual picture of the state of racial affairs in the United States. Their report, submitted several months later, detailed the extensive inequalities and miserable treatment of blacks in all aspects of American



life. In response, Southern members of Congress threatened to withdraw support for Truman's international programs if he did not back down from civil rights. Truman refused. In a letter to a friend, the president wrote, "I can't approve of such goings on [segregation and racist violence] and I shall never approve of it, as long as I am here, as I told you before. I am going to try to remedy it and if that ends up in my failure to be reelected, that failure will be for a good cause" (131).

On June 20, 1947, Truman became the first sitting president to address the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In his speech, he explained, "We must make the Federal Government a friendly, vigilant defender of the rights and equalities of all Americans. And again I mean all Americans. . . . We cannot wait another decade or another generation to remedy these evils" (Truman 1947, par. 15). In his special address to Congress on February 2, 1948, Truman made numerous recommendations to enforce civil rights laws that already existed and to create new legislation for the creation of permanent civil rights committees and their extension into U.S. territories and possessions. On July 26, 1948, Truman signed Executive Orders 9980 and 9981, which desegregated the federal workplace and the military, respectively. Prior to Executive Order 9981, black troops were assigned to the dirtiest, lowest-paying jobs in the military, most often cleaning and food service. After the orders went into effect, African Americans were granted access to higher positions. This allowed them some degree of economic advancement and stability, which then enabled a growing black middle class to be instrumental in the larger civil rights movements of the 1960s. Executive Order 9981 also created the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services to investigate the effects of the order. Additionally, Executive Orders 10210 and 10308 of 1951 prohibited military contractors and vendors from discriminating based on race, color, creed, or national origin.

By using his presidential power to enforce civil rights, Truman set up the American legal system to accept full protections of human rights. And unlike his successors Lyndon B. Johnson and John F. Kennedy, Truman did not wait for public pressure to do so. NAACP administrator Roy Wilkins wrote to Truman:

We have had in the White House great men—great diplomats, great politicians, great scholars, great humanitarians, great administrators. Some of these have recognized inequality as undesirable, as being at variance with the democratic principles of our country; but none has had the courage, either personal or political, to speak out or act in the Truman manner . . . As you leave the White House you carry with you the gratitude and affectionate regard of millions of your Negro fellow citizens who in less than a decade of your leadership, inspiration and determination, have seen the old order change right before their eyes. (Gardner 2002, 223)

The National Association of Human Rights Workers agreed. For Truman's civil rights work, in 1972 they granted him an award with the inscription, "In tribute to President Harry S. Truman who turned the nation's conscience to the task of making equality a reality. Nothing he did aroused more controversy or did him greater honor" (228). Retired Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, who accepted the award in Truman's place (the president was in ill health and near the end of his life at that time), said the Human Rights Association "regarded Harry Truman as the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln that this country has ever had" (228).

The TNT that Truman had implanted into the folds of segregation was indeed exciting, but he also had some significant missteps in regards to human rights. Previous scholarly assessments have often rated Truman near the top 10 “greatest” presidents because of his decisiveness and his “glories” with political maneuverings like the Berlin Airlift. But if he were to be judged on his human rights record alone, he would still do fairly well because of his implementation of the Marshall Plan, his Civil Rights initiatives, his health care proposals, and his Point IV program. If one were to systematically apply the human rights filter to all previous presidents, many of them would have similarly mixed records, others would emerge as surprise winners, and others may slip a notch or two in their rankings. We already know that Franklin Roosevelt’s record was sullied by his internment of Japanese Americans, that Woodrow Wilson’s international peace efforts were blotted by his promotion of segregationist policies within the federal government, that Washington and Jefferson were slave owners until their deaths, and that Jackson was responsible for the forced dislocation of thousands of Native Americans. But if we were to judge our heroes in a more detailed way using the human rights measurement, other deeds toward humanity, both appalling and admirable, would likely emerge in importance and push traditionally valued traits like “charisma” into the shadows. If the rights category were to become popular in polls and surveys, it could possibly influence future presidents (who are no doubt conscious of how they will be recorded in history books) to consider human rights as a distinct and common section of their policy agenda. In the opposite case, continued neglect of a human rights measurement both by academics and the general public is not only a deep insult to our humanity but also runs the risk of discarding the fundamental principles that have made the United States *truly* glorious and great.

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