Excerpts from Where Have All the Leaders Gone? by Lee Iacocca with Catherine Whitney, Scribner, 2007

PART 1: WHERE HAVE ALL THE LEADERS GONE?
I. Had enough?
p. 5 Where are the voices of leaders who can inspire us to action and make us stand taller? What happened to the strong and resolute party of Lincoln? What happened to the courageous, populist party of FDR and Truman? There was a time in this country when the voices of great leaders lifted us up and made us want to do better. Where have all the leaders gone?

II. People and priorities: It’s that simple
p. 15 “Here’s what management is about: Pick good people and set the right priorities.” p. 16 If we’ve learned nothing else from George Bush’s presidency, we’ve learned that it matters who is in the cabinet. It matters who the advisors are – the people who have the President’s ear.

III. Can you show me where it’s working?
p. 26 When pollsters ask ordinary people what they really care about, in order of importance, here’s what they say: (1) the war in Iraq, (2) jobs, (3) health care, (4) education, and (5) energy. Those seem like reasonable priorities to me. But in 2006, when it came to legislative priorities – that is, actually doing something – the liveliest debates were about side issues…. The Constitution of the United States was drafted in fewer than one hundred working days. That was quite an accomplishment. It’s fair to ask our legislators, "What have you done for us lately? What can you show us that's working?"

IV. Aren’t we supposed to be the good guys?
p. 37 A true leader always strives to inspire. That doesn’t mean he can’t express outrage. But he motivates people to act by appealing to the good in their hearts, not the evil in the hearts of others. He motivates people with possibility, not with threats…. We can’t bully the world into submission. We can’t expect to win cooperation by calling people evil. You don’t have to talk tough in order to be tough.

V. How much do we love democracy?
p. 40 How about a regime change right here in the United States? Instead of trying to establish democracy in countries that don’t want it, why not try to reestablish democracy where we’ve lost it?… It drives me crazy that Americans don’t vote. We should be ashamed. It is plain hypocrisy for us to hold up our system of government as the best there is, yet fail to practice the most fundamental action of a free people – voting.

p. 46 The real genius of the Constitution, it seems to me, is that it has retained its fundamental values while giving us the freedom to adapt to the times. You can read the Constitution all day long and you won’t find an answer to most of the big problems and questions we face today…. But through the Constitution, we intrinsically understand who we are. We say, “This is what we stand for.” Its meaning should be imprinted on every heart. It should come to mind every time we vote.

PART 2: WHERE HAVE ALL OUR FRIENDS GONE?
VI. Will the real leader of the free world please stand up?
p. 62 A leader has to know who his true friends are, and it’s not always the ones who agree with everything or follow you blindly. With a true friend, there’s got to be equality. You share the good times and you share the bad times. There’s got to be respect. If your friend takes a principled position for the other side, you don’t have to like it, but you don’t call him names, either. These basic rules apply on the world stage as much as they do in your personal life.

VII. Meet the coalition of the UNwilling
p. 78 The cost of human life is the greatest tragedy of Iraq, but don’t forget the other costs. Let’s look at it from the perspective of a CEO. When you decide to launch a project – whether you’re building a car or starting a war – one of the first things you do is look at the cost/benefit picture. That is, what are we getting for the money. p. 79 Don’t forget. That’s your money they’re spending. Do you want to throw it into an Iraqi sinkhole, or do you want to provide health care? Do you want to hand it over to Halliburton, or do...
you want to make sure American kids go to college? p. 80 We could put a dent in some of the most pervasive problems we face as a nation. So, the next time someone in government says we can’t afford health care or education or border security, just remember, it’s all about priorities.

VIII. What will we do for oil?
p. 89 When are we going to stop denying that the energy policy of the United States is run by the oil cartel? p. 94 It’s the job of a leader to make tough decisions – to look ahead and say, “What can we do right now to help solve the energy crisis?” There just has to be more to a long-term energy strategy than finding ways to get our hands on additional oil. We’ve got to take the long view…. If I were in charge of energy, my policy would go something like this: 1. I’d ask for sacrifice. [carpooling, reduced consumption] 2. I’d push for a gas tax…. 3. I’d use the gas tax to develop alternatives…. 4. I’d break the oil cartel…. What’s the best way to start? Bring down the demand by vigorously exploring alternative energy sources. 5. I’d demand higher standards from Detroit… 6. I’d consider restoring the nuclear option…. 7. I would create a sense of urgency.

IX. Free trade must be fair trade
p. 103 The ideal of NAFTA – to set in motion a collaborative process in our corner of the world, where trade would not only be free, but also fair – was noble enough. But NAFTA has yet to fulfill its goal of attracting other countries to our south…. In the long run, that will need to happen to make NAFTA viable. And it’s hard to ignore the continued decline of U.S. manufacturing, which hasn’t been stemmed by NAFTA…. We worship at the altar of free trade, and it’s killing us. At the very least, it’s time we started charging admission to the American market.

X. Don’t fence me in… or out
p. 117 [L]et’s start with this premise: First, globalization is inescapable. And second, because globalization in inescapable, it’s good. That’s another way of saying that what we can’t prevent we must embrace. p. 119 Countries build walls when they lack the creativity to solve complex problems. And there is nothing more complex than figuring out how we’re going to relate to the world outside our borders.

PART 3: IS CAPITALISM LETTING US DOWN?

XI. Where does all the money go?
p. 129 Where do we go to borrow money? To other countries. Almost 50 percent of U.S. debt is held by foreign banks. We go to China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, or one of our other lenders, and we say, “Listen, we need $300 billion to pay for the war in Iraq. That’ll get us started. And we need $600 billion for a permanent tax cut. Our kids will pay you back.”

p. 134 I propose that we take back control of our money. How? By voting for people who will honor their commitment to the citizens of this country. It’s our right. It’s also our obligation. Why don’t we start by NOT voting for the candidate who promises tax cuts. Why don’t we start by demanding a National Borrowing Freeze. Let’s cut up the credit cards. As I mentioned earlier, when I was chairman of the Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Centennial Commission, we raised millions of dollars from ordinary people all over America…. One morning I opened a letter with two one-dollar bills attached. The letter was written in a child’s hand. “Dear Mr. Iacocca,” it read. “Here’s my allowance for the week. Spend it wisely.” That got me. Spend it wisely. The future generations are depending on us to use our heads. Are we up to the task?

XII. Will we ever trust corporate America again?
p. 145 Instead of living by the deadly sins, corporate America should try living by some of the virtues…. Our capitalist system holds the promise that every American can succeed, but if we don’t infuse it with some humane values, it deteriorates into a winner-take-all setup, which doesn’t really serve our free enterprise system or our common good.

XIII. Chrysler’s lesson: Resist the urge to merge [notes omitted due to space constraints]

XIV. Can anyone around here run a car company? [notes omitted due to space constraints]
XV. Who will save the middle class?
p. 186 America needs the middle class. You can’t run a country with just the very rich and the very poor. The middle class keeps the economy rolling…. The middle class has been called “the silent majority.” But it hasn’t been so silent lately, because people are scared. I have to say I’ve never before seen this level of anxiety from working people.

p. 192 Twenty-three years ago, in my first book, Iacocca, I proposed that we establish something comparable to a Marshall Plan for U.S. industry. I even had a name for it – the Critical Industries Commission. It would provide a setting for government, labor, and management to find a way out of the mess we were in. It would require collaboration. It would also require equality of sacrifice…. Then the commission could get down to the business of figuring out how to strengthen our homegrown industries.

XVI. The blame game is killing us
p. 196 America’s ability to compete is directly tied to the lawsuit frenzy. You see, the first thing you have to do in order to compete is take a risk. If you can’t afford to take a risk, you can’t afford to compete. As Americans, we’ve always pictured ourselves as daring and entrepreneurial, but today we’ve grown so litigation-obsessed that nobody wants to take risks anymore.

PART 4: CAN AMERICA BE GREAT AGAIN?
XVII. Are we too fat and satisfied for our own good?
p. 205 Leadership isn’t just a matter of putting someone at the front of the parade – unless you’re a lemming. All of us have to develop leadership qualities and nurture them in our children. Qualities such as responsibility, accountability, discipline, and community spirit.

XVIII. Bring back brain power
p. 215 You know you’re in trouble when the President of the United States asks, “Is our children learning?” But it isn’t just the intellectually challenged who are missing the boat on education. We’ve all got to get real – and get serious – because our ability to compete and prosper as a nation depends on our children being well educated and prepared to live in this complex world. p. 221 A word to parents: The biggest favor you can do for your kids is to have plenty of books around the house. Read to them, read around them, be a family that reads…. Show me a kid who loves to read… and I’ll show you a kid who’s going to do well in life.

XIX. Three men who taught me to lead
p. 235 Parents have to provide some direction for their children about the people they emulate. You have to talk openly with them about the people they admire… Your children may roll their eyes, but trust me, they’re listening and thinking about it.

XX. Get off the golf course and DO something
p. 244 I like to look at life as having three stages. The first is learning. The second is earning. And the third is returning…. [If] you think of retirement as a time of returning – of giving something back to society – it can transform your life.

XXI. 2008: A call to action
p. 257 I’m hoping that now that you’ve read what I have to say about leadership, you’re feeling some passion for the idea that we have to get it right in 2008…. I’m going to ask you to do three things: 1. Give Something Up p. 258 As adults we know that money doesn’t grow on trees, so when your favorite candidate starts telling you he’s going to cut your taxes, fund your college education, and give you cheaper prescription drugs, you ought to be thinking, What’s the trade-off? What will I have to give up to get what I want? p. 259 2. Put Something Back In – Democracy is a two-way street. It’s not enough to reap the rewards of living in this wonderful country. Each of us has to put something back in. p. 260 3. Elect a Leader – p. 262 What are the leadership qualities that these times cry out for? I’m going to go out on a limb and name four in 2008: curiosity; communication; character; and competence…. As you listen to the candidates, keep your checklist in front of you. Ask, Is this a curious, competent communicator? Is this a person of character? Don’t settle for less. Where have all the leaders gone? They’re right here, in this great country. But they need to be called forth.