



On Floods and Photo Ops: How Herbert Hoover and George W. Bush Exploited Catastrophes

Paul Martin Lester

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Presidents Herbert Clark Hoover and George Walker Bush were challenged many times during their political careers. *On Floods and Photo Ops: How Herbert Hoover and George W. Bush Exploited Catastrophes* focuses on the visual record of two such tests: the relief efforts led by Commerce Secretary Hoover during the 1927 Mississippi River flood and the Bush team's response to Hurricane Katrina. By concentrating on these two historic events, Paul Martin Lester discusses political photography, particularly the use of photo ops during catastrophes. He illuminates the evolution of a genre and explores the differences and similarities between these two American politicians. Hoover and Bush reached the pinnacle of political achievement, only to lose in the court of popular opinion.

From two photo ops that occurred almost eighty years apart, Lester offers a model for close readings and comparisons of images in practicing visual history. Under Lester's examination, these otherwise unremarkable photographs speak volumes about political response to natural disasters. He offers readers not just a deeper appreciation of these pictures but a methodology for seriously studying photographs and what they can reveal about a historical moment.

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