CONDOLEEZZA RICE INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Condoleezza Rice
U.S. National Security Advisor
August 2, 2011
Total Running Time: 36 minutes and 11 seconds

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INTERVIEWER:
Dr. Rice, you have written a book that paints a very vivid picture of your parents and the life that they created for you in the deep South. Can you tell me about that time, where you grew up and your life as a young girl a little bit?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama and Birmingham was, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the most segregated big city in America. It was a place where you couldn't go to a restaurant or to a movie theater. I didn't have a white classmate until we moved to Denver when I was 12 years old. But yet, I lived in this wonderful community of educators and professional Black people. My parents were, in many ways, typical of our community. They believed firmly in education, –

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Condoleezza Rice & Her Parents

Doctoral Graduation, University of Denver, 1981

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
–they believed that there was nothing that you couldn't accomplish. I've always said that my parents had me absolutely convinced that–

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Condoleezza Rice In Front Of The White House

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
–even if I couldn't have a hamburger at the Woolworth's lunch counter, I could be President of the United States if I wanted to be. And so they were extraordinary people.

INTERVIEWER:
How did they do that? How did they shield you from this? What was it?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Birmingham was a place where, in some ways, it was so segregated that parents could shield their children from some of the harsher aspects of segregation. We had our own dance lessons, we had our own lessons in etiquette, we had our own schools where the teachers were all Black, the students were all Black, and so you could have a tremendous emphasis on achievement and on working hard. And for them and for people like them, education was really the great shield against racism. It was what would

armor you against the harsher elements of Birmingham. And it worked very well in this tight-knit little community. But, of course, you couldn't completely shield your children from some of the ugliness of segregation and those times were there when you had to confront it face to face.

INTERVIEWER:
Tell me a little bit about your memory, specific memories, of when it became obvious to you what racism was.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
From the very start in Birmingham, you had little dust ups with racism. I can remember being five years old and going to see Santa Claus and you know the drill, you stand in line, the little kid goes up and tells Santa Claus what he or she wants for Christmas.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Condoleezza Rice, On Santa's Lap

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
And this particular day, this Santa Claus was taking the little white kids and putting them on his knee and holding little Black kids out from him. And my father looked at my mother and he said, "Angelina, if he does that to Condeleeza, I'm going to pull all that stuff off of him and show him to be the cracker that he is." And as you can imagine, this little girl now there's all this trepidation, "Who's going to go off here? Santa Claus? Daddy? Santa Claus? Daddy?" Fortunately, I think Santa Claus read my father's body language and

my father was a big man. He was 6'2", he was built like a football player. And so when I came to Santa Claus, he put me on his knee and he said, "So little girl, what will you have for Christmas?" But I thought, "What an incredibly racially charged incident around, of all things, Santa Claus."

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
So there were always those times when you had to come face to face with racism. But perhaps in its most important manifestation would've been '62 and '63 when the Civil Rights movement encountered violence pushback from George Wallace, the Governor of Alabama in the State House, and the Public Safety Commissioner, as he was called, Eugene Bull Connor. And Eugene Bull Connor was a scowling ugly man who used to get on television and talk about how the, "Negras needed to be separated from honest white folk." And in 1963, the turn toward violence really culminated in September of that year when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed and I lost a little classmate in that bombing.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
16th Street Baptist Church
Birmingham, Alabama, September 15th, 1963

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
When we heard the bomb go off and we actually felt it in my father's church that Sunday morning, everyone knew that there'd been a bombing. Birmingham had come to be known as Bombingham and bombs going off in neighborhoods was an almost daily occurrence. But when we realized that it

had happened at 16th Street Baptist Church and then within a matter of moments or so, the names of those who had been killed came through in the sort of telephone tree that people had established, suddenly it was very personal because Denise McNair had been in my father's kindergarten. There's a picture in my book of my father handing her her kindergarten graduation certificate. Everyone knew the McNairs in the community. And I remember as a child just not understanding how people could hate us that much and for the first time really being pretty scared.

INTERVIEWER:
You talked about your parents arming you with education. It wasn't just education, you were kind of a busy child. As I read this book, tell me about all of your activities.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
My parents, I think, raised me on the proposition that if you kept the kid busy, then perhaps she couldn't get into trouble. I also told them once that, of course, I was an only child and it's easier to be an only child than to be the parents of an only child. And so I just had lots and lots of activities in addition to sort of the normal activities with friends like playing stickball in the streets. I had piano lessons, and I had ballet lessons, and I had French lessons. Every lesson known to humankind, I always said, my parents wanted me to engage in. But it was fun and it gave me a way to enjoy Birmingham and my life in Birmingham despite the circumstances in which we were living.

INTERVIEWER:

You were performing at a very young age. Did you like that? Tell me about that.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

I started to play piano when I was very, very young. My grandmother taught piano lessons and so after her students had finished, I would go and bang at the piano pretending to play. And so one day she finally asked my mother if she could teach me to play. And so I started taking piano lessons and by the time I was four and a half or so, I was performing in little concerts, and I loved it. I never was very nervous performing and my mother would dress me up in very cute fine dresses, including one concert with a little fuzzy hat on my head, which I could still never figure out why she did that. But I loved to perform and to this very day I love to perform in piano.

INTERVIEWER:

In retrospect, do you think that was a good skill for you to have that?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

I'm quite confident that part of the reason that my parents were so insistent on my performing was that they understood that it was really a way to build confidence. I really never feared being on stage because I had done it before. And I can remember several times in my adult life, subsequently, when I had to do something difficult, speak in front of an important group, I would think, "You've done this a million times before and it's a lot easier to miss a note playing Mozart than it is to give this speech." And so I think it was a way to instill confidence.

INTERVIEWER:
You write about your parents as kind of a solid team in raising their beloved only daughter. Did you identify with one more than the other?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
When you're an only child, you have to be there for both mother and daddy. And my upbringing very much reflects that. Because my father, who was someone who loved politics and history, he was a Presbyterian minister, but he'd also been a football player, he was a football coach when I was born. And so I really did take on a lot of his interests. I loved history and I loved politics on television, and I loved sports. And from the time I was three years old, it was the NFL on Sundays with my dad. My mom, on the other hand, was a proper Southern lady and I don't think my mother ever picked up a ball or bat of any kind. And her bailiwick, her territory was music and the arts. And so it was music, and piano, and the arts with my mother and sports and history with my dad. And so I came out with both sets of interest and enjoyed my parents and it was a wonderful way to be a part of both of their lives and to have them be a part of my life.

INTERVIEWER:
It strikes me that your interest in athletics has also stood you very well in your career and in your life. It's a connection, isn't it?

ON SCREEN TEXT:
International Journalism Program Launch

Washington, D.C., December 13th, 2005

00:09:04:00

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Sports, athletics is a great connection to people, it's a great connection. Sometimes if you're the only woman in the room, if you actually know who won the game the Sunday before or who's most likely to get to the Super Bowl, it can break a little bit of the ice. I remember working for the Joint Chiefs of Staff when I was a young professor. I took a year's leave and I worked for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And it was in the basement of the Pentagon with five military officers in the strategic nuclear division of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And the first day they said, "The rookie makes the coffee." And I don't know, maybe they were really testing me. And so I said, "Fine." So I made the coffee and I made it so strong, which is the way I make it, that nobody could drink it. So I wasn't ever asked to make the coffee again. But then I won the football pool that week and from then on, I was kind of in. So sports was a great way to break the ice sometimes.

INTERVIEWER:
You've talked about becoming aware of the Civil Rights struggle that was going on, but also when you were growing up, the women's movement was coming up. Were you aware of that? Did that enter into your consciousness at all and if so, how?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
I was very aware, of course, of the twin movements towards Civil Rights that were taking place, the movement for the empowerment and justice for Black

citizens which, frankly, impacted our lives more than the second great movement, which was the women's movement. If you were Black in Birmingham and you couldn't go to a restaurant the day that you could was a big day. If you were Black in Birmingham and you were a little girl who loved to play the piano and you could suddenly go to the Birmingham Southern Conservatory of Music in 1964, that meant a lot. And so the Civil Rights movement was the most important. But the women's movement was obviously a part of my growing up too. To be fair to my parents, though, they had always had a kind of marriage of equals. My father, I think, was a feminist from the day I was born. There was nothing his little girl couldn't do and he modeled that in his relationship with my mother.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
When they married, they had met teaching at the same school in Fairfield, Alabama. But the city of Fairfield had a nepotism rule and so one of them had to leave once they married. My father was the one who left. And I asked him, I said, "Daddy, why did you leave rather than mother?" He said, "Well, she had been there first. It only seemed fair." And so from a very early age, I saw my parents as equals. My mother worked my entire life. In fact, in my community in Birmingham, almost all of the women worked. And so, I didn't have this notion that there were things somehow that women couldn't do.

INTERVIEWER:
And what about in your school or other areas? Were you ever discouraged as a girl?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
In Birmingham, I don't think I was ever discouraged as a girl. In fact, in our classrooms, we had very strong women teachers as well as very strong men teachers. I do remember that going to Denver for the first time and going to an all girls Catholic school, I was really glad that I was in an all girls school. Because some of my friends were experiencing, in their schools and their high schools, those subtle messages that girls don't do math, girls don't do science. But if you're in an all girls school, they couldn't send those messages. And so I actually became quite supportive of single sex education, which I sometimes think can bridge some of those difficulties for girls.

INTERVIEWER:
Can you tell me about the turning point in your life that led to your current career? I mean, how did this happen-

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Yes.

INTERVIEWER:
… that you got interested in, especially Russia of all things on the political side, tell me a little bit.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
From as long as I could remember, I was going to be a concert pianist. That's what I'd studied to be. I went off to college to be a piano performance major. And at the end of my sophomore year, I went to the Aspen Music Festival

School, which was a place that a lot of prodigies went. And I was 17 and there were 12 year olds who could play from sight, things that had taken me all year to learn. And I thought, "Hmm, I'm pretty good at this but not great. And if I'm not careful, I'm going to end up teaching 13 year olds to murder Beethoven for a living." A fine profession, but not one that really attracted me. And so I went home and I had this terrible conversation with my parents, "Mom and dad, I'm changing my major." "What are you changing it to?" "Well, I don't know." "Well, you don't know what you're going to do with your life?" "Well, it's my life." "Well, it's our money. Find a major." And so I went back to college desperate to find a major. I tried a couple—I had a couple false starts. English literature didn't work out, state and local government didn't work out.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

And then in the spring quarter of my junior year, I wandered into a course in international politics taught by a Soviet specialist, a man named Josef Korbel who was, ironically, Madeleine Albright's father. And Josef Korbel opened up this world to me of diplomacy, and international politics, and things Russian. And all of a sudden I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to study the Soviet Union. And I went home and I said, "Mom and Dad, I found it. I want to study the Soviet Union." And fortunately, they didn't say, "Well, what's a nice Black girl from Birmingham, Alabama talking about being a Soviet specialist?" They said, "Honey, go for it." And I did. And that's how I ended up in international politics and, more specifically, studying the Soviet Union.

INTERVIEWER:

Now it strikes me that you wound up a national security policy studying military. It must have been a totally male dominated field. What was it like breaking into that? This is what we're talking the late 70s now, right? Tell me about that.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

That's right. Well I really got involved in the field first as a Soviet specialist, but then became very interested in military affairs. And so I studied military affairs. It's how I ended up at Stanford, in fact. Because the Ford Foundation had a fellowship for Soviet specialists who wanted to know hardcore bombs and bullets, military affairs. And so I came to Stanford to what was called then, the Arms Control and Disarmament Center. And most of the time, there really wasn't much in the way of prejudice toward a woman wanting to study that. In fact, three of the other fellows at Stanford in that program were women. So all of a sudden we had four women doing military affairs at Stanford. We probably were the only four in the country, but here we were together. And that was a nice sisterhood that eased us, I think, into this very male dominated field. From time to time, I would run across someone who would say, "Why are you interested in this?" And I knew that the subtext was, "What's a nice girl like you?" I actually had a Russian general say to me once, "What's a nice girl like you doing interested in these military affairs?" But over time, that passes and you realize that if you become known as capable at what you're doing, if you work hard at it, those prejudices tend to go away.

INTERVIEWER:

There's a kind of pride in it too, isn't there?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Sure, there's a pride in it because you're in a field that challenges you every day to overcome stereotypes about what women can do. And it can actually be a good stimulus to be even better at what you do.

INTERVIEWER:
You went into academia, you had early success, then your career took a turn into public service. How did that happen?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
I was at Stanford as a young professor. I'd been at the university three years and there was a seminar in which Brent Scowcroft spoke. And Brent was a legend in international policy and in international studies. He had been the National Security Advisor to President Ford and was very well known. And so at the end of his speech, I asked him a question. A question that I now, in retrospect, realize was a little sharp on the edges, and he answered. And afterwards he came up and he said, "Well, that was a very good question." And we started to talk and he started to champion my career. He got me involved in something called the Aspen Strategy Group where a lot of the notables in international politics gathered every summer. And when President George H.W. Bush was elected and Brent was asked to be his National Security Advisor, Brent asked me to come with him to the White House to be his Soviet specialist.

INTERVIEWER:

Is there a particularly intense moment that you remember? Like maybe the first time or sometime where you're going, "Whoa?" Or just.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

As many jobs as I've had, and I've had a few, that had a lot on the line, so to speak, the moment that I remember most thinking to myself, "How did I land here?" Was actually not in the White House, it was at Stanford. Because when I went to my first faculty meeting and I looked around and there were all of these giants of the field in political science, and I looked around and I thought, "They make a mistake? How did I get here?" I think that first time when you are in your first really professional environment is probably the hardest. After that, I had been on the Stanford faculty when I went to become a special assistant for National Security Affairs and the Soviet specialist. And it takes a little getting used to go in the Oval Office and to realize all the people that had been there.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

But once I had done that, it became somewhat easier to go back as National Security Advisor because I'd been in the White House. And then to go on to be Secretary of State because I had been National Security Advisor. And so in a sense, I was fortunate that my career built one upon another giving me an opportunity to become accustomed to those high pressure, high stakes rooms little by little

INTERVIEWER:

I'm thinking about reading about your encounter the first time you met Gorbachev when you were advising the president about how to handle the collapse of the Soviet Union.

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Yes.

INTERVIEWER:
And the president, first President Bush said something to Gorbachev about ... And I'm just wondering how you dealt with the pressure of that responsibility? Tell me, yeah.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Well President George H. W. Bush, I was his Soviet specialist and we met Gorbachev and President Bush turned to me and he said, "This is my Soviet advisor, Condoleeza Rice, and she tells me everything I know about the Soviet Union." And Gorbachev said, "Well, I hope she knows a lot." And I thought, "Well, thank you very much." But it was really quite a nice moment. And, in fact, I felt very grateful to President Bush for that little vote of confidence.

INTERVIEWER:
Other people have commented on how good you are speaking extemporaneously.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C., mAY 5TH, 2006

INTERVIEWER:

Many people admire that skill and wonder how could they do it too? Do you have any tricks?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

I've been fortunate to be a pretty good extemporaneous speaker and I think some of it's genetic. I told my father once, who was a terrific extemporaneous speaker, I said, "You know, Daddy, I think maybe I got a little of your talent for that. Thank you." And he said, "You should've heard your grandfather." Who was also a Presbyterian minister. He said, "He spoke in whole paragraphs." And so maybe a little bit of it comes from that. But I think you can get better at public speaking. I think I've gotten better over the years. The first is to be sure that you really know what you're talking about. No one can hide the fact that you don't know what you're talking about with good rhetorical skills. Secondly, you have to do it a lot. I tell my students all the time that they have to be equally good in written and oral argumentation. And being good in oral argumentation means being able to state a case and sustain the evidence that your case is right.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

It's something I don't think we teach enough in the schools any longer. And it's not just what you learn in the classroom. I was once asked when did I start doing public speaking? Well, when I was about three in that first Easter program at church. And then reciting those poems or learning my lines for the school play. And one of the things that concerns me is that we're not

giving our kids a lot of those opportunities any longer. The schools are cutting out the arts which they consider, I think misguidedly, to be extracurricular activities. Well that's very often where you get the confidence to be able to stand up and give a speech.

INTERVIEWER:
You were very new into your career at the National Security Council when you were the head of the council when 911 happened. Can you take me back to those months and was there a time when you just thought, "Wow, the responsibility of this, this is just so momentous. What's going on?" What was that like?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
September 11th was one of those days that started like any other day. I was at my desk, the president was in Florida. For the first time, neither Steve Hadley, the Deputy National Security Advisor, nor I had gone with him because he was only going to be gone for four hours. And then my assistant came in and said that a plane had flown into the World Trade Center. Later we learned a second plane. And I thought, "My God, this is a terrorist attack." And at that point, you don't really take the time to stand back, reflect, think; you just act. And for several days that's really what we did. We had to try and protect the country. We were certain that there was a follow on attack coming. But as time went on and as you were faced with difficult decision after difficult decision, decisions that no president had faced, you began to think about the momentousness of what had happened.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

That on your watch, the territory of the United States had been attacked in its major cities: in New York, in Washington DC, a plane had gone down in Pennsylvania. And it had been done by a stateless group of terrorist extremists operating out of a failed state called Afghanistan, and probably spending $300,000 to do it. And it changed forever our concept of security and it makes you absolutely determined never to let it happen again. And I think that for us, every day after September 11th was September 12th over, and over, and over again.

INTERVIEWER:

You were a very high level public servant, a political appointee. With that territory comes criticism. I'm wondering, people have said a lot of things about you, criticized you. What's been the most painful and how do you deal with it when you're really the target?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

Well you have to learn with criticism that it comes with the territory. And that if you aren't prepared to be criticized, then you're probably not prepared to take hard decisions. Because if you are universally loved, you've most certainly not done anything very important or consequential and I reminded myself of that every day. I think in some ways the most painful criticism is that you somehow don't care about the consequences of war, that you are somehow enured to or not in any way touched by the lives that are lost in, for instance, the conflict in Iraq, that it was somehow a callous decision, that

somehow we wanted to go to war. To prove what? What President, what National Security Advisor wants to go to war?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
And so for me, those were the most painful criticisms because they were so untrue. Criticisms of our policies or criticisms of something that you might have said, that just flows, it's like water off a duck's back. But the idea that you somehow didn't care about human life, that's very difficult to take.

INTERVIEWER:
What about criticism from other African Americans that you didn't care about issues important to African Americans?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
To African Americans who said that sort of thing, I said, "Nobody needs to tell me how to be Black. I've been Black all my life." And that I absolutely had no time for and really didn't care. Because we, as Black people, should've finally gotten to the place that we can have different interests and different views. I cared deeply and do care deeply about the plight, particularly of Black kids, who are trapped in poverty, who are trapped in that witches brew where poverty and race come together, who are trapped in bad schools where they're being warehoused, where they won't learn to read by the time they're in third grade and so they, therefore, won't learn to read. That's why most of my activities that are related in any way to charitable concerns have had to do with education and trying to improve K-12 education.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
And it's not something I've come to recently. I started, in 1992, a program called The Center for New Generation, which was for kids who did not have means to have some of the experiences that I had in instrumental music, and in hands on arts and sciences, and language arts. So those are issues that are deeply important to me. But to those who don't know what they're talking about and say those sorts of things, you know, I just don't have time for that.

INTERVIEWER:
Tell me about being appointed Secretary of State.

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Secretary of State Ceremonial Swearing-In
Washington, D.C., January 28th, 2005

INTERVIEWER:
The day, the call, and what did it mean to you?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Immediately after the election, President Bush was sitting at his desk and Senator Kerry had conceded that Wednesday morning because it was that Wednesday morning that the election was finally over in 2004. And I walked into the oval and I said, "Congratulations, sir." And he looked at me and he said, "You know I want you to be Secretary of State?" And we had talked about it a little bit because Colin Powell had let the president know that he didn't want to serve a second term. And I said, "We'll talk about that later,

we'll talk about that later." Because I had to think about it a little bit, believe it or not. It wasn't that I was not honored, I was absolutely honored, but I was really tired after four years. And I thought I might come back to Stanford and I wanted to think about what I would try to do as Secretary of State. And so I actually didn't say yes right away. It took a few days until we were up at Camp David a few days later that we talked about it again and I said, "I would be honored to be Secretary of State."

INTERVIEWER:
What was the tipping point for that?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
I always knew that the most important thing to do after the wars, and the attack, and all was to put emphasis again on diplomacy and on rebuilding some of the relationships and some of the structures that had been damaged by the war. I was a great proponent of taking down Saddam Hussein. In doing so, I know that we made some of our friends angry, although we had plenty of friends who were with us. And I knew too that after 911, the structure of the international system was undergoing major change, that's what happens after a big cataclysm, and we needed to try and say how we were going to move forward. And when I had that conversation with myself, I thought, "I think I can do that as Secretary of State." And that's what ultimately led me to want to be Secretary of State.

INTERVIEWER:

I understand you have a new book coming out. You've been doing some reflecting about your time, the past. Those eight years in Washington, right?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER:
From 2000 to 2008. Did you have new insights or thoughts about really what went down or what might've been different or?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
The great thing about having a little time to step back and look over the whole course of where you've been is that you see the long arc of what you've done. And I think in retrospect looking back, I was able to see places that we might've taken a little bit more time to explain what we were doing. After 911, we were injured and we were determined not to have it happen again, and we moved very fast. And sometimes maybe we didn't bring others along, particularly some of the allies. I think in looking out, I was able to see a Middle East that took a very different shape after 911 and after the President's declaration of a freedom agenda that really said that no man, woman, or child should have to live in tyranny, including in the Middle East, where for 60 years U.S. policy had emphasized stability over democracy and gotten neither.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

But the most important thing in looking back was that I was able to see that the Arab Spring playing out in the streets of Egypt, and Tunisia, and in the bloody circumstances of Syria was actually, I think, something that we saw coming and tried to head off. We tried to say that the authoritarians in the region should reform before their people were in the streets. That was the idea behind the freedom agenda. It wasn't that we thought it could happen tomorrow, that there was going to be democracy in the Middle East overnight, but we were right in saying that when people are denied their freedom, dangerous things happen. And so for me, it was a kind of vindication of a policy that, at the time, some said was naive, or didn't take into account the realism of the world, or didn't take into account U.S. interests.

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
The freedom agenda, I think, is what I'm most grateful that we started down that road. And I know too and in reflecting that the arc of history is long, not short, and that whatever we did in eight years will probably not really be judged fairly for a very, very long time and that's okay. I can live with that.

INTERVIEWER:
You've played all over the world. Tell me a highlight of what you've done and also can you tell me what your favorite music is and why?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
I have very eclectic taste in music. I love everything from Led Zeppelin, and the Gap Band, and Cool in the Gang, all the way up to Brahms and Mozart. So I have very eclectic views about music. But my favorite composer is Brahms.

Passionate without being too sentimental is the way that I would describe Brahms. And probably my greatest moment in music was playing Brahms with Yo-Yo Ma, the great cellist, who asked me to play with him for his National Medal of the Arts. And as we were playing, I thought to myself, "I am not confused. I'm not doing this because I'm the world's greatest pianist. I'm doing it because I'm the National Security Advisor. So I made a good decision to change my major."

INTERVIEWER:
All right. Here's the quick fire questions. What's the most meaningful piece of advice that you've ever received?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Most meaningful piece of advice that I have ever received is to be willing to accept some ambiguity about where you're going. Very often with my students, they want to know at 20 what they're going to be doing at 35 or 40. They want to plan every step of their life and sometimes you have to let life happen.

INTERVIEWER:
Do you have a piece of advice that you regularly give to young women, particularly?

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CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Well the advice that I give to all young people, particularly to young women or to young minorities, is don't let anybody else define what you're going to

be because of your agenda or of your race. If you decide that you are interested in the Soviet Union, you may be female and Black, but you're interested in the Soviet Union. And it's worked out pretty well for me.

INTERVIEWER:
Yeah, I'll say. What was your first paying job?

00:34:20:00

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
My first paying job was as a clerk in the purchasing office at the University of Denver. When in those days you had carbon paper and you had six copies. And if you made a mistake, you had to start over because you couldn't possibly correct six copies.

INTERVIEWER:
I remember that. The three adjectives that best describe you?

00:34:43:00

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:
Three adjectives that best describe me. I am pretty intense, I am pretty dedicated to whatever I start, but I'm really a happy person. I love life.

INTERVIEWER:
And the last one, what person you've never met has had the biggest influence on your life?

00:35:07:00

CONDOLEEZZA RICE:

Oh that's a good question. I've never been asked that before. Oh, because I've met so many people now. That's a problem, yeah. Well, I mean, look, I could give you my … but it may sound a little strange. Look, I'm a very religious person, I'm a very religious person. And there are religious figures that I would have given anything to meet. I would love to have sat down with the Apostle Paul. I would love to have sat down with Martin Luther. And so, I've met almost every political figure that I would want to meet, but when it comes to the essence of who I am, my religious beliefs shape that in ways that are far more fundamental than any political beliefs that I hold. And I think I would love to have sat down with those two great religious figures.

END TC: 00:36:11:00