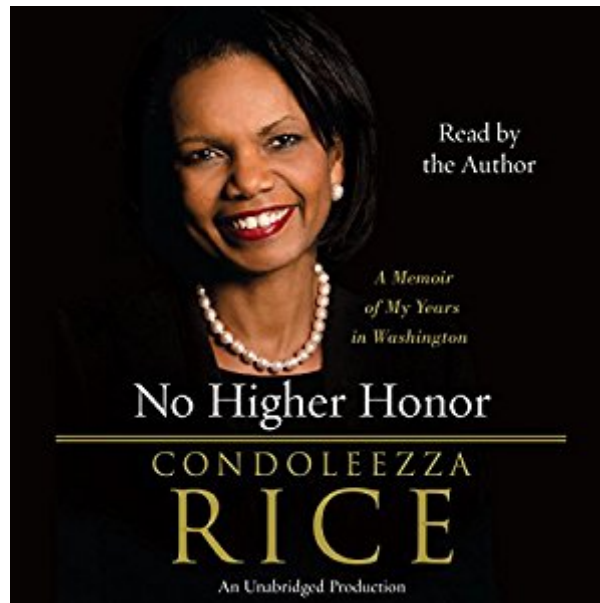




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No Higher Honor: A Memoir Of My Years In Washington



Synopsis

From one of the world's most admired women, this is former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's compelling story of eight years serving at the highest levels of government. In her position as America's chief diplomat, Rice traveled almost continuously around the globe, seeking common ground among sometimes bitter enemies, forging agreement on divisive issues, and compiling a remarkable record of achievement. A native of Birmingham, Alabama who overcame the racism of the Civil Rights era to become a brilliant academic and expert on foreign affairs, Rice distinguished herself as an advisor to George W. Bush during the 2000 presidential campaign. Once Bush was elected, she served as his chief adviser on national-security issues - a job whose duties included harmonizing the relationship between the Secretaries of State and Defense. It was a role that deepened her bond with the President and ultimately made her one of his closest confidantes. With the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Rice found herself at the center of the Administration's intense efforts to keep America safe. Here, Rice describes the events of that harrowing day - and the tumultuous days after. No day was ever the same. Additionally, Rice also reveals new details of the debates that led to the war in Afghanistan and then Iraq. The eyes of the nation were once again focused on Rice in 2004 when she appeared before the 9-11 Commission to answer tough questions regarding the country's preparedness for - and immediate response to - the 9-11 attacks. Her responses, it was generally conceded, would shape the nation's perception of the Administration's competence during the crisis. Rice conveys just how pressure-filled that appearance was and her surprised gratitude when, in succeeding days, she was broadly saluted for her grace and forthrightness. From that point forward, Rice was aggressively sought after by the media and regarded by some as the Administration's most effective champion.

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Customer Reviews

This lengthy book is an extremely detailed summary about national and international events that occurred between January, 2001, and January, 2009, that involved Dr. Rice's distinguished service as National Security Council Director and as Secretary of State. The details are extensive and deep. This book is a must for readers who need to know the intricacies of every security issue and diplomatic issue during that time frame. It provides the critical 'ring-side' seat of how history was made during the Bush_43 presidency. The arduous task of international relations is described and reviewed as a cumbersome process, often ruled by 'Murphy's Law.' Many of these problems are intractable with no immediate solution in sight. The first and starts are often reversed and have to be continuously redone and revisited. I found the chapters dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 and the nettlesome diplomatic issues surrounding the Middle East, North Korea, China and Russia insightful. Partial progress on a variety of fronts was made, but set-backs also occurred. Notable successes were also achieved, but the reader needs to read the book to fully grasp the outcomes and details. The book clearly demonstrates that President Bush was cognizant of issues confronting him and could make a quick decision as to what needed to be done. In short, President Bush "gets it" and did so from the get-go with a clear vision and understanding of the paradigms and boundary decisions that guided his decisions. If I had a criticism of the book it is this. Although referencing the framework of American security and diplomatic issues in a few sentences and phrases, it wasn't until the Epilogue that Dr. Rice provided a clear statement of what the framework for US security and foreign policy was. If the "Epilogue" had been placed in the Introduction, much of what the book described would have been more understandable. In short, the reader is advised to read the epilogue first and then read the book and end with the epilogue again. It will make everything more understandable. A must read for those interested in the history of the early 21st Century.

Condoleezza Rice eloquently tells her side of the story surrounding various policy-making decisions in the book "No Higher Honor". I am a former active duty navy veteran who plans on rejoining the military via a part-time component between the time period of December 2012-February 2013 (shaped by my intent to permanently live in the D.C. area). This influences me to feel a

responsibility of learning what I can about politics the longer I reside here. Reading about some of the difficult decisions she faced going into the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts gave me further insight on what indirectly happens in all of the military branches (in terms of the aftermath regarding the military surges, manpower goals etc.).The following are some of the vivid points made in her memoir:

Pages 1-12: Dr. Rice describes her first meeting with George W. Bush, and shares why she admires Dean Acheson. A heartwarming moment is illuminated during the discussion of encouragement from her father (John Wesley Rice Jr.). With joyful sentiment, she shares how John Wesley Rice Jr. inspired her achievements. Tragically, he passed away during the Christmas Eve of 2000 (before the beginning of her tenure as George W. Bush's national security advisor).

Page 61: Condoleezza Rice's first meeting with Vladimir Putin is mentioned. On page 85 she candidly tells her discovery that Osama Bin Laden had fought for the Soviet Anti-Resistance. Page 116-117 discloses the essential capture of Abu Zubaydah. It is listed that Abu Zubaydah was the mastermind behind the al Qaeda guide on holding the line against interrogation techniques. Page 118 features information on the capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Mr. Mohammed was said to have bragged about being Daniel Pearl's executioner. For those who might not have heard of the original story, Condoleezza Rice mentions that Daniel Pearl was a Stanford graduate and journalist who was kidnapped in Pakistan and killed in 2002. Dr. Rice also notes the emotional challenge of being chosen as the one who had to break the news to Mariane Pearl (Daniel Pearl's widow).

Page 181: Dr. Rice factually lists that many of Washington D.C. policymakers are former academics. She confesses that this made her feel at home because various colleagues came from Stanford University.

Page 186: Saddam Hussein was initially offered one billion dollars to exit Iraq.

Page 208 (Ouch!): Vice President Dick Cheney had invited some of his close buddies to a party that commemorated the freedom of Iraq. Scooter Libby and Paul Wolfowitz are a couple of the names that were invited. Apparently, Vice President Dick Cheney excluded both Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice from his list of people to invite for the gathering.

Powerful people sometimes experience social trials/tribulations too (page 235): Condoleezza Rice was supposed to have dinner with a congressman that she thought was her friend. Apparently, a few days before their scheduled dinner, the "friend" cancelled on her claiming that they must be impartial. I appreciate that she had the courage to open up about this period in her life. This is because she helped me to see that even the most influential and famous people are not immune to friendships turning out differently than expected.

"Fairytale Birthday (Page 294): Condoleezza Rice openly shares a happy moment around a surprise birthday party that was thrown in her honor (for her 50th birthday). The additional bonus to this was it had happened shortly after she became Secretary of State.

Pages 366-367: Colorful

photos highlighting pivotal moments are featured. The picture that stood out the most to me was where she was on the exploratory committee in March 1999. Pages 454: Condoleezza Rice recalls a heart-wrenching moment of attending a dedication that paid respects to four little girls killed at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in 1963. Condoleezza Rice mentions that one of the four little girls was her kindergarten classmate Denise McNair. Debate of Female Roles (page 548): An incident is documented where Senator Barbara Boxer indirectly implied that Condoleezza Rice was unaware of the sacrifices of those lost in war because she had no children. Naturally, Dr. Rice had a strong case for the question being insulting when she wondered if this would have been asked of a male Secretary of State (in a similar setting). Celebrity Crush (pages 702-703): Qaddafi is quoted to have asked why he had to wait on his "African princess." On page 703, there was mention of how Qaddafi showed Condoleezza Rice a video that featured photos of her with various world leaders (set to the music of "Black Flower In The White House"). Page 717: With respectful sentiment, Dr. Rice shares how it was a smooth process of turning over the Secretary of State to Hillary Clinton. She shares how they got along well then and still do now. Logically enough, Dr. Rice admits that one of the reasons for their connection stems back to her days as Stanford provost (when Chelsea Clinton came there as a freshman). Many more informative details feature in this book. "No Higher Honor" by Condoleezza Rice is best for the open-minded who want to increase their political understanding on what can drive a high level policymaker.

I found this to be a very long and detailed book, sometimes rather tedious, but it is a "must read" for any serious student of the Bush administrations either for or against. Here Condoleezza Rice, first National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State details the entire eight years in almost 800 pages. No one should condemn Bush without reading this enlightening account first. To me this book lacks the personal charm of her first book about growing up in segregated Birmingham, AL, but considering the weighty matters she is dealing with -- 9/11, WMD, Iraqi war, Russian/USA relations, Israel/Palestine relations, the new countries formed from the former Soviet Union, N. Korea, etc.-- it is no wonder that the book is a bit heavy as well. The surprising thing is that a little girl from black, segregated Alabama could rise to this height. She shows amazing toughness and wisdom in carrying out her duties. With a PhD in Russian studies and fluency in the Russian language, Condi was uniquely suited to dealing with Putin and other Russian officials. While showing compassion and gentleness in many relationships, especially when dealing with HIV victims in Africa, Condi showed amazing toughness when the occasion demanded. So, even though tedious at times, I give it 5 stars.

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