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## Interview With Juan Williams of National Public Radio

### Secretary Condoleezza Rice

En Route Palo Alto, California

May 26, 2005

**QUESTION:** First of all, thank you for giving us this time, Secretary.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Glad to be with you.

**QUESTION:** You've been in office now more than a hundred days as head of the State Department. You've traveled to 28 countries. How do you go about changing hostile attitudes towards the United States and its foreign policy?

**SECRETARY RICE:** First, the thing is to recognize that the United States has had to do some difficult things in the last three and a half years after September 11<sup>th</sup> and we've had to design a strategy for the war on terrorism and to fight two wars. But after that period of time, we now have great opportunities to build on the collapse of two really terrible regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq and to build a foundation for a different kind of Middle East and to promote democracy throughout the world.

And I found that in the first trips that I've made that (inaudible) that people (inaudible) they recognized that when you say to people, well, how can it be that you do not believe in a democracy agenda or how can you condemn people in any corner of the earth to live in conditions of tyranny, given that we free people enjoy the benefits of liberty, you do bring people on board. And so part of my job has been to go out to traditional allies and new allies and to talk not about the relationship between us, between the allies, but rather to talk about using our alliances that are based on common values to achieve great goals for others. I often use the line that those of us who are fortunate enough to be on the right side of freedom's divide have an obligation so people who are on the wrong side of freedom's divide do not simply (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.) So I saw a new report by the Council on Foreign Relations which indicated that in three Muslim countries -- Egypt, Indonesia and Morocco -- it found that the people believed that the United States was domineering and hostile. How do you go about repairing those (inaudible) especially when it comes to public opinion in

the Arab world?

**SECRETARY RICE:** You have to stand for something, Juan, and the United States stands for freedom and liberty and believes that there's no culture on earth, there's no people on earth that don't desire to be free. And I think we have to continue to remind people that the United States has often acted on behalf of Muslims around the world who were oppressed. In fact, the last several time the United States used military force it's been to liberate Muslims, whether it was Kuwait or in the Balkans, where Muslim populations were being oppressed by other populations, or in Afghanistan, where one of the worst regimes, particularly for women but for everyone, was overrun by the United States, or in Iraq, where in the center of the Middle East you had a monster regime of Saddam Hussein that was oppressing and torturing people. We just have to remind people that that has been what America has done.

I also do think that there are – there's a lot to be gained from making this conversation (inaudible) getting out and talking to people about their perceptions of the United States, many misperceptions of the United States. I think, you know, all of the issues about how we treat Islam and the Koran – I can't speak to the specific circumstances though they're being investigated and I don't think anything has been found yet. But I can say that there is no country in the world that more values religious freedom and religious differences than the United States. And that is reflected, for instance, in the way that we have dealt with the access of detainees to religious practices at Guantanamo, everything from prayer mats to arrows pointing to Mecca so that people can pray appropriately to instructions on how to treat the Koran sensitively. There's a reason that Muslims worship freely in the United States and, while they are Muslims, consider themselves Americans. This is a country that was founded on religious freedom.

So I think we need to undo some of the misconceptions. We need to talk to people and we need to listen to them as to why some of these perceptions (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Let's talk a second about the misperceptions that you have heard from other world leaders. When they look at America, when they look at American foreign policy, what are these misperceptions, as you encountered them in your first round of trips around the world?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Very often in talking to other leaders, they will speak first about, from their point of view, the greatness of America. Many of these are leaders who remember what the United States did in Europe. When I was just recently in The Netherlands and we were in a cemetery in The Netherlands, just as we were in a cemetery at Normandy, you remembered that these countries of Europe would not be free but for hundreds of thousands of young Americans who, at 18 and 19 years old, came across the Atlantic and gave their lives despite the fact that it was not an attack on the mainland of the United States; they gave their lives because they wanted to liberate and free other people. (Inaudible) these same leaders were children during that time and remember fondly what the United States did. And I very often have connected for them, or tried to connect for them, what the United States did at that time with what the United States is trying to do now for the people of the Middle East, which is to provide again an opportunity where people can be free. And I don't think (inaudible) people, they'll disagree with (inaudible) what we did in Iraq and how we did it, but there are very few people believe that the world would have been better off with Saddam Hussein in power.

And so again, as the memories of the (inaudible) of the Iraqi (inaudible), I've (inaudible) to make common cause with our traditional allies around the world and new allies about the importance of the spread of democracy, about the importance of peace in the Middle East based on a democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel. I've (inaudible) to make common cause about the rights of women, about rooting out corruption, governing wisely. These

are common values and I (inaudible) people who are very much attracted to that (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** We've been hearing (inaudible) most Americans at this point think that the cost of the war, both in terms of treasure, in terms of human lives, is not worth it, and so I'm wondering if when you're overseas and you're dealing with foreign leaders, yet you continue to encounter resistance to foreign policy with regard to Iraq.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Overseas we are encountering more and more support for the Iraqi people who faced down terrorism to vote on January 30<sup>th</sup> and continue every day to face down terrorism to try and build a democratic state that is tolerant of all Iraqis (inaudible) all Iraqis. Part of the problem is that, with all due respect to the media, you have to have a long view and not a short view of what it is in the short term what it is you're trying to achieve. The work of building democracy is the work of generations but we know one thing. We know that when democracy is on the march that America is safer, and when democracy is in retreat Americans are more vulnerable. We've learned that time and time again. We know that because of the hard work that we did in Europe over generations that nobody can imagine war now between Europeans. That wasn't the case when France and Germany emerged out of World War II. But we stayed the course. We built NATO. We helped create a democratic Germany. And as a result, Europe is a peaceful and prosperous continent.

There was a time when you could not imagine (inaudible) relations between Japan and her neighbors, but we stayed the course and we helped build a democratic Japan and now Japan is second largest contributor to the United Nations, a major contributor to (inaudible) development assistance around the world, a stabilizing force in international politics.

And we know what has happened in a Middle East in which there's a freedom deficit: A malignancy grew up which is an extremism, a form of al-Qaida and (inaudible) which came home to haunt us on September 11<sup>th</sup> when the ideologies of hatred became great enough for people to drive airplanes into buildings.

So the link between democracy and security and peace, and the absence of democracy and insecurity and conflict, is very clear. Sometimes you have to keep in mind that greater goal in order to get through what are obviously very difficult, turbulent times right now.

**QUESTION:** Karen Hughes is supposed to come aboard as one of your assistants to help with the notion of improving America's reputation (inaudible) Americans in the eyes of the world, but she hasn't come yet. So is that whole effort stalled?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, absolutely it is not stalled. I mean, we have to remember, first of all, we have a very able person in Patricia Harrison and (inaudible) Dina Powell, who will be the new Deputy to Karen, and they've (inaudible) their senate hearing today on the Hill. We've been – we are requesting additional resources in the budget for Educational and Cultural Affairs, for Public Diplomacy. I know that within the limits that are permitted prior to confirmation, Karen has been doing lots of reading and getting briefings and talking to people about we might move this effort forward.

And I consider what Bob Zoellick and I have been doing, in going out and talking and being in different countries as part of our public diplomacy effort. So this is an extremely important effort for us. But I want to define public diplomacy. This is not a matter of going out and propagandizing about American policy. This is, first of all, again, to explain better what it is we are trying to do, to ask people, "How can you not be for an agenda that promotes democracy (inaudible) building democracy in the world?"

Secondly, to have a conversation with people. Not a monologue. A conversation where we do talk about the many years of mistrust that have grown up between the Middle East and not just the United States but much of the (inaudible) world because people in the Middle East rightly understand (inaudible) years the United States and many others tried to trade stability for democracy and we got neither stability nor democracy. And now people in the Middle East are demanding their rights and they have in the United States somebody who supports that just demand. But for 60 years we didn't do that. It's not surprising to me that there are resentments about that period of time.

And finally, to try and make ourselves as open as possible to people from other cultures. We're working on the question of how can (inaudible) openness after September 11<sup>th</sup> while maintaining our security issues like visas, which we hear about every place that we go. But also, Americans need to speak the languages of (inaudible) cultures and (inaudible) cultures. When I was going to school (inaudible) study Russian language (inaudible) making their (inaudible). Obviously, people who study languages or study cultures (inaudible). Public diplomacy isn't just something for the American government. It's (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** In a recent interview, Russian President Putin, when he was asked about America as a beacon of democracy to the world, said, well, why are they pushing democracy on me? Look at what happened in the 2000 election and got into a whole rip about the recount in this country. Do you ever encounter anything like that when you're talking to foreign leaders?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I've encountered it with the Russians, yes. First of all, the Russians don't quite understand the Electoral College and I think they actually believe that the Electoral College is somehow separated from the voters and so (inaudible) try and explain it like a college. But frankly, the Electoral College is hard enough to explain to almost anybody who didn't grow up with it. I've stopped trying that one.

The United States (inaudible) democracy and it is the case that you will have events like we had in 2000 in a (inaudible) democracy. But what we have is a system that is able to absorb and move through it. And yes, it went to the Supreme Court, but we have a Supreme Court and the Supreme Court is an independent branch of government from either the Executive or the Legislative. It's not directly elected like the Legislature and like the Executive.

And so part of what I've said to the Russians is that it is not that you won't get events like that, but you have to have institutions that can absorb them. And one reason that we believe in an independent judiciary and believe in co-equal but separate branches of government is that you have checks and balances that way. The problem with Russia right now is that there is enormous power in the presidency, there is essentially not a very strong legislature and people have questions about the independence of the judiciary. And so their task has to be for the further march of democracy to have checks and balances (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Well, that's a delicate balance for you as a diplomat though because, on the one hand, you'd like to have the Russians as allies, as friends, to have influence there. On the other hand, you don't want to allow injustice or something of a – well, we don't want him to become – we don't want Putin to become an iron-fisted leader (inaudible).

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, we can talk to the Russians about anything, which is (inaudible) of our relationship. And we do have a good and constructive relationship with Russia on almost every front, whether it is the war on terrorism or many proliferation issues. We've been in very close discussions with the Russians about the situation with the Iranian nuclear program and of course the Russians are party to the six-part talks on North Korea. They are (inaudible) become

part of the Proliferation Security Initiative which holds up suspicious cargo. We have a good economic relationship where sometimes we have problems like over poultry, but (inaudible).

And I want to just make clear we are concerned that the course of democracy continue to be forward in Russia and that there are questions about (inaudible). But Russia is not the Soviet Union. There are people who speak out against the government. There are even those in the press who speak out against the government. But what the problem is that there is not an independent (inaudible) on the electronic (inaudible) and the Russians don't have very developed political parties. That's one thing that I think will happen over time. And you have to worry about arbitrary rules and the rule of law when the rules (inaudible) be changing for investment in business and taxation (inaudible).

So it's 15 years, not quite 15 years, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and a lot has happened in that society and we need also (inaudible) the degree to which it is going backwards or going forwards.

**QUESTION:** Let's talk a little bit about how you see the country that you represent to the world, the United States. Religion is playing a larger and larger role in American life and in American politics. How is that seen overseas? Is it seen as threatening to divide the American people and is seen as possibly leading to some of the division that we see overseas on religion that can play a central role in public life?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I don't quite know what (inaudible) religion playing an extensive role in public life. I think religious people are playing a role in public life and that has always been the case in our country. But the great thing about America (inaudible) many occasions that (inaudible) exactly right, that the greatness of America is that you can worship as you please or you can choose not to worship at all – and you're equally American. And people of faith who wish to talk about their faith and how it impacts their lives, whether they're in business or in teaching or in sports or in government should do that. But it doesn't mean somehow that religion is infringing on American government. I find that the United States is probably the most careful to being certain that all religious traditions are respected of really almost any other country that I visit. There's a reason that people come here from so many different cultures, from so many different religious backgrounds, from so many different ethnic groups. It's because you can come here and be American because American is an ideal and a state of mind, not a religious affiliation, not an ethnic designation, not a drop of blood. It is an ideal. And it's why people come here from around the world.

**QUESTION:** Well, that's true, but I think of the argument over the judges that's taking place right now, I think of the argument over stem cell research, I think of the Terri Schiavo case. And in all these cases you see religion coming to the forefront of American life in a way that I think people think about (inaudible).

**SECRETARY RICE:** Is it religion or is it (inaudible) the morality? I think it's a discussion of what people think (inaudible). There's nothing wrong with that. And I think (inaudible) extremely difficult (inaudible) issues and not only religious people are concerned about (inaudible) issues. We're as a country going through a dramatic scientific revolution in health, in medicine, in just about every aspect of our lives. And then people stop and ask questions about the ethics, what constitutes life, how to think about life, I don't find that only religious people care about these issues.

**QUESTION:** First Lady Laura Bush was recently in the Middle East and even encountered some people who were heckling her, and she said, well, this is what happens when you see religions clash and you get these conflicts. So do you worry about that potential here in the United States as religion plays a larger role?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think if you go into any neighborhood in America and find people of different religious traditions who respect each other and go to school together and (inaudible) together and I don't think America is a place where religions are clashing. I just (inaudible). In fact, I see an America where religious traditions are – different religious traditions are respected. And I just want to repeat, Juan, that I think that's why people keep coming to this country from every corner of the world, from every religious tradition, from every ethnic background. The United States is a magnet for people because difference is not a license to kill in the United States and difference is valued in the United States. And that's a force (inaudible) over time in the United States (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** A major – possibly the major export of the United States is pop culture. I remember when 9/11 happened and Usama bin Laden made statements about (inaudible). He didn't talk about conflict in the Middle East. He talked about our culture being pornographic, our young people being out of control, our women having so much power. What do you see when you're overseas about American pop culture and that export? Do you have any wishes to change (inaudible)?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, except for the part about women being more powerful. (Laughter.) I don't like everything I see in pop culture either, but I do know that it's enormously influential around the world. It's very attractive around the world. But I would hope that people would see not just some of the rougher sides of American pop culture but would also see a lot of the young people – you know I'm a university professor at heart – and see these young people as – you know the fastest growing activity on college campuses is public service, kids who go to soup kitchens and help out or tutor in the barrios or start programs in poor neighborhoods or mentor kids or deliver food for the elderly. At many universities now you can actually take classes in which you get credit for doing public service. And so I would hope that that part of America's youth would also be seen abroad because America is one of the great philanthropic societies on the face of the earth, and I mean everything from the high end of philanthropy where people who are wealthy give to universities and give and build foundations and do all kinds of good, to the fact that in churches and synagogues and mosques people give alms to the poor. Or you look at the response of Americans to the tsunami. It was in every community and in every neighborhood and in every church, mosque or synagogue that people were raising funds for the tsunami.

So yes, American pop culture is quite powerful but (inaudible) to see a little bit more of the heart of America. It's not just our pop culture.

**QUESTION:** So you wouldn't say that the culture is crass (inaudible) that it leads to the distortion in the way that people perceive (inaudible) American people, our ideals?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm sure there is some of (inaudible) because some of the culture is extremely crude and I would certainly not want it to be thought to be representative of what America is. But that's why not just the government but others have to do a better job of talking about (inaudible) American (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** You know, recently at Stillman and other historically black colleges there have been criticism of the hip-hop as being misogynistic. What's your take on that?

**SECRETARY RICE:** About hip-hop? (Laughter.) I'm too old. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Well, I don't think so. You were classically trained and I saw that you're on the Board of Governors. We're on the Board of Governors of the San Francisco Symphony. Do you think we're doing enough in this country to fund the arts?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm a major believer in the value and importance of the arts and I think that the NEA and the National Endowment for Humanity and others do a really fine job. But culture is also funded philanthropically by a lot of individuals and I've met very, very good models and people who believe in the arts and want to give back because we have a lot of competition for American tax dollars and I think it's a very good thing that Americans give because they care about the arts.

The one (inaudible) is that I really hope we pay more attention to is the ability of children, particularly children who are not privileged, to study the arts. I started a program with some friends out in (inaudible) which is part of (inaudible) which is not very well off, a highly minority district, very high dropout rates (inaudible). And the (inaudible) from high school and (inaudible) and we wanted to do hands-on math, science, we wanted to do English and literature so that the kids did better in school. But we also wanted them to have other experiences in, for instance, particularly in performance and so we started a band. There was a (inaudible) band and there were so many kids who were playing a musical instrument but what really got them is a place that they would study in school because it captured their attention and that was more interesting to them than sitting and doing a science class. I mean, some people (inaudible) the arts (inaudible) the first things that are cut out of school budgets and I believe very strongly that the arts are wonderful things for children. And so if there's one area that I could – would want to encourage people in school districts (inaudible) keep funding the arts. I know that when I was growing up, particularly in the African American community, we had great bands. You know, the high school had great bands, the colleges had great bands. And I asked myself, when are these kids going to learn to play instruments that might get them diplomas, that might give them (inaudible). So that's something I spend a lot of time on (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** One more question on culture. The New York Times and some of the larger think tanks have been increasingly focused on the idea that there is an emerging class divide that's becoming more permanent in American society and that it leads people, especially those overseas, to look at us not as an egalitarian society but one where there's rich and poor, one where people in our jails are people of color, and it hurts America's image overseas. Do you see (inaudible)?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would put America side by side with almost any country in the world in terms of potential for upward mobility in a society. This is a society in which it really gives – it really can be true that it doesn't matter where you came from, it matters where you're going. But the key is educating (inaudible). If you can get an education, you can make it in this society. And if you look at the number of kids at a place like Stanford who are first generation in college. I used to love to stand in front of a Stanford class because standing – sitting right next to fourth generation Stanford legacy was an itinerant farm worker's kid who was the first person to go to college in (inaudible). And if we can keep that as the essence of what it means to be American, that you really can make it in America, you really can make it (inaudible) by being educated, we'll be fine.

One reason that I do worry about the education of our children, particularly minority children, is why one of the things that has really attracted me to the President was his focus on education, his focused on leaving no child behind, his focus on – he had a phrase that really (inaudible) me when he said that we shouldn't give in to the soft bigotry of low expectations. Because there are too many children who are just being pushed through the system without reading skills or math skills and they are going to be left behind. But if they are educated, then they are going to find an American (inaudible) really does (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up on that point. You don't believe these studies that indicate there's a decline in social mobility for Americans?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm a little – statistics I don't know. I'd have to look at the studies myself and I tend to want to see the assumptions and the statistics (inaudible). But I do know that there are more and more people going to college and community colleges are bursting at the seams and that that (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Let's talk about your reception by foreign leaders for a second. When they see you as a black woman, do they ever think, well, she's black, she's a woman, she's a friend of the President but that she really isn't competent in her job? Has your reception ever been one in which people questioned your abilities?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Not that I know. No, I don't think so. I mean, I've been around this job for a while now. Most of the people knew me as National Security Advisor. I do think they know my relationship with the President. And you know a remarkable thing about America? If I finish a four-year term there would have been three secretaries of state over 12 years and not a white male among us. Think about that. Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell and now me.

I would hope that what that says to foreign leaders is that America is a place that not only is overcoming its past but that really showed what can happen when you really do overcome that past. You can't think of another country in the world (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** So it's never the case that you have to strategically think about your race as you enter into talks, negotiations (inaudible)?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I have always said I'm a package. You know, I'm black, female, 5'8". I can't go back and start separating out the pieces and think, well, if I had been white how would it have been. So I don't think about it.

One thing that's – an interesting thing is Brazil because Brazil is, frankly, the ethnic composition is more like the United States than any place in the world. It has (inaudible) an African population (inaudible), it has a population of mixed race and it has a Portuguese or Latin population. And I found that I did have interesting conversations with (inaudible) about their efforts now to diversify their foreign service, for instance, which has not had very many African Brazilians in it.

So there are places in the world where, you know, essentially they have (inaudible) about race (inaudible) but I don't myself think much about it when I'm (inaudible) Secretary of State.

**QUESTION:** John Bolton's nomination, the ambassador to the UN, is being decided even as we're flying out here. One of the more powerful statements came from Senator Voinovich, near tears. He said that he thought that Bolton, because of his charges that he was a bully, that he distorted intelligence information, was the wrong man for the job. Did you see what Senator Voinovich said and what Senator Rockefeller said about distorting intelligence? Did it have any impact on you?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I just respectfully disagree. I think John Bolton is someone who (inaudible) and who is a tough diplomat. But he also has an awful lot of people who have worked for him who would (inaudible) for him. He inspires a lot of people. And John Bolton (inaudible) cares about the (inaudible). How many people actually on their own

(inaudible) would spend time working for Jim Baker on the (inaudible) on a UN mission? How many people would spend hours and days and months, and I think years, working to repeat the Zionism as Racism resolution in the UN because he thought it was a stain on the UN? Yes, he cared about the institution. And you could send somebody to the UN who will say just nice things about the UN and not care very much about the reforms that need to be taken (inaudible) and the UN does not get stronger. But we care about the UN so we want to send someone there who also cares.

**QUESTION:** And the damage done to his reputation in the course of the hearings will not limit or diminish his ability if he is confirmed as UN ambassador?

**SECRETARY RICE:** John Bolton has emerged as somebody about who people have strong feelings, but I think that (inaudible) and I think he's going to be a very fine ambassador to the UN.

**QUESTION:** Now, you've been to, I understand, every continent except Australia, Antarctica and Africa. Do you have any plans to go to Africa?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I would really like to get to Africa very soon. I can't say exactly when, but I would hope within the next few months. I would like very much to get to Africa. Australia is a long way away. I hope to get there as well. And Antarctica, I'd love to go to Antarctica but I don't know about diplomatic relations there.

**QUESTION:** One last thing on Israel and the notion of the pullout from Gaza. Where do you stand now in terms of being able to persuade the Israelis of the virtue of that position?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, the Israelis have taken the (inaudible) to withdraw from the Gaza and, of course, the four settlements in the West Bank. The Palestinians, I think, see it as an opportunity. We had discussions with President Abbas this morning about that and he clearly sees it as an opportunity. So we have a really one of the best opportunities we've had in a long time for some resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and we're going to be very focused on the Gaza withdrawal and on the success of the Gaza withdrawal (inaudible) that the Israelis will be able to (inaudible) but it's going to be a very large-scale operation (inaudible) nearly 8,500 people out from Gaza with all of their (inaudible) belongings and families and all of that, but also leave behind transparent, democratic, functioning Palestinian institutions that can administer the Gaza, that can rebuild the Gaza economically and that have security forces that can deal with terrorism (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** So you think it'll happen?

**SECRETARY RICE:** It will – I'm quite certain that it will happen. And it's something we're planning for, the Israelis are planning for. We have Jim Wolfensohn out there helping to coordinate and General Ward out there helping to coordinate on the (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Are you going to play out with the football team tomorrow?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm going to work out in the varsity facility. Don't you think it's inspiring to work out with 19-year-old world-class athletes? (Laughter.) See what you could have been?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, really, I could have done it. (Laughter.) Thanks so much. Thank you very much, Secretary Rice.

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