

Women of Valor

I am the 1st black woman to serve as National Security Advisor and U.S. Secretary of State.

Condoleezza Rice

Meet Condoleezza Rice

Condoleezza Rice grew up the only child of highly educated, devoted parents who strongly encouraged her to achieve success despite facing obstacles such as **segregation** and **racism**.

Since many people at the time were prejudiced against blacks, Condoleezza (often shortened to “Condi”), worked diligently to be twice as smart and twice as talented as her white peers. She excelled academically, skipping two grades and starting college part-time at age 15, while still in high school. Condi’s first love was playing the piano, but she also found time to become a competitive figure skater, practice ballet, and study French.

Eventually, Condi’s driven nature led her to earn a doctorate in international studies, rise to leadership at Stanford University, and accept high-ranking positions in the White House.

As Secretary of State, Condoleezza promoted freedom in her “Transformational Diplomacy” initiative. She believed that if the U.S. created diplomatic partnerships with other nations, they might adopt American values, form democratic governments, and secure greater freedom for their citizens.



At-a-Glance

- ★ Born Condoleezza Rice on November 14, 1954 in Birmingham, Alabama
- ★ Condoleezza’s mother created her unique name by combining Italian musical terms *con dolce* and *con dolcezza*, meaning “with sweetness”
- ★ Served as **provost** of Stanford University for six years
- ★ First black woman to serve as both National Security Advisor (2001–05) and Secretary of State (2005–09) to U.S. President George W. Bush
- ★ Known for being firm, decisive, and self-confident, even during tough negotiations

Young Condoleezza

John and Angelena Rice, Condi's parents, shielded their daughter as much as possible from the racial turmoil around her and taught her that she could do and be whatever she wanted.

They were very involved in their community. John was a Presbyterian minister and guidance counselor, and Angelena taught high school students science, speech, and music. They believed that education, hard work, and properly spoken English would protect Condoleezza – even against the racism in Birmingham and across America.

Over the years, Condoleezza's parents made many financial sacrifices to afford piano, ballet and skating lessons, and private high school. They wanted to provide Condoleezza with the best opportunities for success. Indeed, her family on both sides highly valued education and the arts. Condoleezza's paternal grandfather had earned a scholarship to become a Presbyterian minister. He founded many

churches and schools, and visited poor neighborhoods nearby urging parents to send their kids to college. Even though they never met, Condoleezza credits him as a "guiding presence" in her life, having given her the "gift of transformation through education."

The Rice family was incredibly close. They discussed political issues and made decisions together as a family. Condoleezza often engaged in **theological** debates with her father, who encouraged her to use reason and intellect to explore her faith.

Although Condoleezza grew up in the segregated South, she became convinced that racism was "their" problem, not hers. She always felt supported by her parents, extended family, teachers, and her church community. Looking back, she says that the message in her small community was clear: *We love you and will give you everything we can to help you succeed. But there are no excuses and there is no place for victims.*



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"Differences can be a strength rather than a handicap."

Condoleezza Rice

7-year-old Condoleezza Rice's school picture, 1961



Instability in Birmingham

*Racial tensions intensified in Condi's hometown as people began to protest against the racist **Jim Crow** laws that kept blacks and whites separate in public areas. Activists marched in demonstrations and boycotted businesses that supported segregation. Birmingham transformed into a dangerous place of hatred, prejudice, and violence against blacks.*

*White mobs called "night riders" terrorized black families in their communities, setting off bombs to intimidate blacks who were pushing back against Jim Crow laws. Violence reached a peak when the **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)** detonated a bomb at a neighborhood church, killing four young girls on their way to Sunday School, one of whom was Condoleezza's friend. The bombing captured the nation's attention and ultimately led to the **Civil Rights Act** of 1964, ending legal segregation.*

A New Life Out West

Although life slowly improved in Birmingham with segregation's end, the Rice family moved west when Angelena's father was offered positions at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, and later at the University of Denver.

In Denver, Condi discovered a passion for figure skating. She skated competitively, placing third in one competition. She admits that she wasn't great, but that the sport taught her discipline and **perseverance**. Condoleezza also won statewide and regional piano competitions and played Mozart with the Denver Symphony. She continued to excel in school and entered the University of Denver part-time during her senior year of high school, when she was just 15.

Condoleezza seemed destined to become a concert pianist, but after exposure to more advanced musicians, she realized that while she was talented, she would never be a great **virtuoso**. So, she left the music program and sought a field where she would shine.

Condoleezza took a class in international politics with Josef Korbel, a former Czech diplomat who founded the Graduate School of International Studies. She credits him with "opening an entirely new world" to her. He encouraged her to follow her interest in international politics and become a Soviet specialist. She learned Russian and studied the Soviet military. At 19, Condi graduated *cum laude*. A year later, she earned her master's degree from the University of Notre Dame and returned to Denver to earn her doctorate in international studies in 1981. She helped pay her tuition by teaching piano.

Early Career

Dr. Condoleezza Rice joined the staff of Stanford University, where she became a popular lecturer on civil-military relations, Soviet Policy in the Third World, and Elite Politics. A few years later, she won the Walter J. Gores Award for Excellence in Teaching, became a fellow at the Hoover Institution, and wrote many articles and two books on Soviet and East European foreign and defense policy. Dr. Rice credits much of her early success in getting to know key leaders at Stanford who served as mentors.

In 1985, she was awarded a fellowship at the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations and offered a yearlong position with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. She worked for the Nuclear and Chemical Division, analyzing situations in which the United States might use its nuclear forces. One of her highlights was the doing a presentation in “the Tank,”

the place where all-important military decisions are made.

Condoleezza witnessed and helped shape many of the great historic events unfolding in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Her in-depth studies had made her an expert on the Soviet Union. ABC News invited Dr. Rice to provide on-air commentary about U.S.-Soviet relations, launching her into the national spotlight.

When President George Herbert Walker Bush was elected in 1989, he invited Condoleezza to join the National Security Council. She accompanied President Bush to a meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. He introduced her by saying, “This is Condoleezza Rice. She tells me everything I know about the Soviet Union.”



The Cold War

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a long political standoff known as the Cold War, a troubling period for Americans who feared nuclear war and the growing threat of communism. Because both nations possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), they were capable of destroying one another. To address the threat, the U.S. offered aid and bolstered its influence in western Europe, while the Soviets established communist regimes in eastern Europe. Ultimately, they avoided direct military confrontation, engaging only in operations to prevent their allies from defecting.

During the 1980s, President Reagan successfully challenged Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Through Reagan's efforts, freedom was restored to communist East Germany when the Berlin Wall fell. By 1991, the Soviet Union had dissolved and the Cold War had come to an end.

Road to the White House

Dr. Rice returned to Stanford to become the university's youngest provost at age 38. In her role, she was responsible for 1,400 professors, 14,000 students, and a budget of \$1.5 billion. She also involved herself locally, founding the Center for a New Generation, an after-school enrichment program for kids in East Palo Alto, CA. Like her grandfather and father, Condoleezza wanted to help kids and families appreciate the value of education.

Dr. Rice was on track to become Stanford's next president, but decided to step down so that she could help Texas governor George W. Bush prepare for his presidential campaign. After Bush won, he appointed her as National Security Advisor. In her new role, Condoleezza counseled him on world events, attended Cabinet meetings, and met with foreign diplomats.



September 11th

On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four planes and attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. President Bush and Dr. Rice decided to respond with military action against the Taliban, the ruling party in Afghanistan who had harbored the terrorists. After defeating Afghanistan's government, the Bush administration shifted its focus to Iraq, believing that the regime helped terrorists and may have WMDs. Condoleezza became a staunch defender of the controversial war against Iraq as a means to stop Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from developing and using WMDs.

Secretary of State and Beyond

When President Bush was reelected, he named Dr. Rice to serve as the 66th Secretary of State. She advanced a doctrine of "Transformational Diplomacy," traveling widely to expand and strengthen U.S. diplomatic relations. In her confirmation hearing she stated, "We must use American diplomacy to help create a balance of power in the world that favors freedom."

She advised the president on foreign affairs and worked with other nations on issues such as trade and nuclear weapons. She also worked tirelessly to negotiate peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

When Bush's second term ended, Condoleezza returned to Stanford University, and has since received several honorary degrees from various American universities. Today, she serves as director of the school's Hoover Institution, a public-policy **think tank**.



"There cannot be an absence of moral content in American foreign policy. Europeans giggle at this and say we are naive, but we are not European, we are American and we have different principles."

Condoleezza Rice

Fascinating Facts about Condoleezza

- Condoleezza's great-grandmother Julia Head was a freed slave who learned how to read.
- Condi's parents tried to enroll her in first grade when she was only three years old.
- Condoleezza remembers her father holding a shotgun as he stood watch nightly on her childhood front porch. He didn't believe that he could rely on the police to protect his family from night riders. To this day, Condi is a fierce defender of the **Second Amendment**.
- Condi and her family took a trip to Washington, D.C. when she was ten years old. Staring at the White House, she remarked, "One day, I'll be in that house."
- Condoleezza has played the piano at diplomatic events at embassies, including a performance for Queen Elizabeth II.

GETTY IMAGES



Fill-in-the-Blank

1. In 1954, Condoleezza Rice born in _____, the only child of John and Angelena Rice.
2. Condoleezza excelled in school and entered college at _____ when she was only 16.
3. Condoleezza was an accomplished _____ and looked forward to a career in music.
4. One of Condi's early mentors was _____, a Czech diplomat who introduced her to the field of _____.
5. Condoleezza had a strong feeling she'd be in the White House someday. She served in two high-ranking positions in President George W. Bush's administration: _____ and _____.
6. Condoleezza championed a diplomacy initiative referred to as _____.

Word Scramble

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Answer key on page 10

Noteworthy Considerations Writing Exercise

Throughout her busy career as a diplomat, Condoleezza continued to play the piano to help ground her in challenging times. Enjoy a taste of Condoleezza's masterful playing, and consider the following questions:

1. When have you worked really hard to achieve a goal?
2. What keeps you calm and focused when you're under pressure?
3. Condoleezza learned how to read music before she learned how to read books. American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "Music is the universal language of mankind." Do you agree with his assertion? Why or why not?



Condoleezza Rice and cellist Yo-Yo Ma perform during the National Endowment for the Arts National Medal of Arts Awards ceremony, April 22, 2002 in Washington, DC.

Glossary

- **The Civil Rights Act of 1964:** A bill signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson that ended discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin.
- **Jim Crow:** State and local laws in the U.S. South, in effect from the late 19th century until the 1960s, that discriminated against black people, treating them as second-class citizens
- **Ku Klux Klan (KKK):** A violent secret society organized in the South after the Civil War to uphold white power.
- **Perseverance:** Consistent effort in a course of action despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.
- **Provost:** A university administrator of high rank.
- **Racism:** The belief that race determines differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others.
- **Second Amendment:** An amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted in 1791 as part of the Bill of Rights, guaranteeing citizens the right to keep and bear arms.
- **Segregation:** The institutional separation of people of different races, classes, or ethnic groups, especially as a form of discrimination.
- **Theological:** Relating to the study of God and religious truth, practice, and experience.
- **Think Tank:** An institution organized to study and advocate for certain government policies in various fields, such as the military, economics, or education.
- **Virtuoso:** A person with exceptional skill, technique, or talent in the arts, such as music.

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FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY: 1. BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, 2. UNIVERSITY OF DENVER, 3. PIANIST, 4. JOSEF KORBEL, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, 5. NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR, SECRETARY OF STATE, 6. TRANSFORMATIONAL DIPLOMACY, 7. DIPLOMACY, 8. WHITE HOUSE, 9. FOREIGN POLICY, 10. PROVOST.

WORD SCRAMBLE KEY: 1. CONDOLEEZZA, 2. BIRMINGHAM, 3. CIVIL RIGHTS, 4. PIANO, 5. EDUCATION, 6. SOVIET UNION, 7. DIPLOMACY.