



## The Identification of the Black Middle Class in Condoleezza Rice's *Extraordinary, Ordinary People*

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### ABSTRACT

Drawing on theories by W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Gilroy, and Bernard Bell, the article analyzes the nuanced identification process of the black middle class in contemporary American society through the close reading of Condoleezza Rice's *Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family*. The article argues that the contemporary black American elite possess an ambiguous relationship with the dominant white group and the major subordinate black Americans, and their identification with either group is largely driven by the interests of their own. Moreover, in the post 9/11 era, race, gender, and class differences are appropriated by these black elite to secure their own interests in the power struggle in American society.

### KEYWORDS

black middle class, USA, Condoleezza Rice, *Extraordinary, Ordinary People*.

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### Introduction

The recent decades have witnessed the rise of powerful black women around the world: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the President in Liberia, Nonkululeko Nyembezi-Heita, the Chairperson at Standard Bank of South Africa, Ursula Burns, the CEO in Xerox, Oprah Winfrey, the U.S. media celebrity, and Condoleezza Rice, the 20<sup>th</sup> U.S. National Security Advisor (2001-2005) and the 66<sup>th</sup> U.S. Secretary of State (2005-2009). The achievements of these black women owe debt to Women's Liberation Movements as well as Racial and Ethnic Minority Rights Movements which have challenged the existent power structure. At the same time, these women's success also poses several important questions for women's studies, race and ethnicity studies, as well as postcolonial studies: how do these prominent black women view their own identities? Which factors influence their identification process? Which group or groups do they represent in an era of global capitalism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism?

Drawing on theories by W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Gilroy, and Bernard Bell, the article analyzes the nuanced identification process of the black middle class in contemporary American society through the close reading of Condoleezza Rice's *Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family*. The article argues that the contemporary black American elite possess an ambiguous relationship with the dominant white group and the major subordinate black Americans, and their identification with either group is largely driven by the interests of their own. Moreover, in the post 9/11 era, race, gender, and class differences are appropriated by these black elite to secure their own interests in the power struggle in American society.

### The Racial Discourses in Contemporary American Society

In 1897, W. E. B. Du Bois coined the famous terms "double-consciousness" which described the ambivalent sociopsychological condition of black Americans as a sense of "looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Bell 12). Du Boisian double-consciousness highlights the influence of white racist stereotypes on the life and thoughts of black Americans, and foregrounds the constant inner conflict of the person who is simultaneously black and American.

But the racial discourses in the U.S. from late twentieth century to early twenty-first century have undergone great transformation due to two historical events: the civil rights movement from 1950s to 1970s and the 9/11 attacks in 2001. The former has greatly transformed the racial relationships in the U.S.: the social statues of racial minorities have been greatly improved, and the direct control of racial minorities has been changed to implicit discipline. The 9/11 event again transforms the racial paradigms in the U.S. and creates the division among elite members in the racial minority groups.

In the post 9/11 era, a large number of black politicians, entrepreneurs, artists, and

popular stars have emerged in USA during this period. In the post 9/11 era, there are mainly two types of identification for the elite: the first type of elite identify themselves with the ordinary disadvantageous racial minorities and participate in various activities to improve the life of the members in the racial group. The identification of second type of elite is more complex. An apt example is the contemporary elite black American—— Condoleezza Rice.

Among the powerful black women, Condoleezza Rice is the only one who has been an influential figure in education, politics, and commerce since the 1980s. Rice was the assistant professor of political science (1981-1987), the associate professor of political science (1987-1993), the professor of political science (1993-1999) at the Stanford University. She also served as the 10<sup>th</sup> Provost (1993-1999) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Director of the Hoover Institution (2020- ) at the Stanford University. Since 1986, Rice has been actively engaged in the nuclear strategy in the US government due to her expertise in political science. From 2001 to 2005, she served as the 19<sup>th</sup> US Security Advisor, and from 2005 to 2009, she took office as the 66<sup>th</sup> US Secretary of State. Apart from actively participated in education and politics, Rice has closely engaged in the field of commerce. She has served on the board of directors for many famous companies, such as the Carnegie Corporation, the Chevron Corporation, Hewlett-Packard, and the Rand Corporation.

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Interestingly, Rice has received polarized evaluations from American public. Some have praised her highly for her many charming features. For instance, the former Stanford University President Gerhard Casper was “greatly impressed by her academic values, her intellectual range, her eloquence” as well as “her judgment and persuasiveness” (Shepard, para. 7) the first time he met Rice as the president candidate when Rice served on Stanford’s presidential search committee in 1992. After he became Stanford University President, Casper selected Rice to serve as the university’s provost, the chief academic and budget officer. Rice’s predecessor Gerald Lieberman also believed that Rice “will make a great provost” because “[s]he has tremendous ability and intelligence, and the maturity of someone far beyond her age” (Shepard, para. 3).

Outside Stanford, Rice is also highly regarded in other universities. For instance, Rice is warmly received during her visit to Chapman University. Professor Lori Cox Han, the director of the presidential studies program at Chapman remarks that, “Dr. Rice is a consequential American policymaker, not only for the time she served in the White House but for breaking important barriers as a woman of color...” (Dumoski, para. 3). Meanwhile, Professor Luke Nichter, the James H. Cavanaugh Endowed Chair in Presidential Studies at Chapman states that, “Secretary Rice is an extraordinary American ” (Dumoski, para. 8). Besides the verbal praise of Rice, Chapman University President Daniele Struppa and the trustee Mark Chapin Johnson invited Rice to unveil a bust in her honor to join the Chapman University Collection of Historical

Figures after Rice's discussion with the students, the faculty, and the board members of the university (Dumoski, para. 7).

Diverging from those who highly regarded Rice's talents, some have criticized Rice's ethical standards and betrayal of the interests of black Americans. For instance, Chuck Lewis, the head of the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity criticizes Rice's close ties with Chevron when the company named a tanker after Rice (Marinucci, para. 6) and meanwhile engaged in the violation of human rights in Nigeria (Marinucci, para. 9). In the article "'Con-dification': Black Women, Leadership, and Political Power," Carole Boyce Davies analyzes Condoleezza Rice's role in the Bush administration's post 9/11 domestic and international policies. Davies charges Rice of being the spokesperson for U.S. imperialism and neglecting the interests of black community. She incisively remarks that the relationship between Rice and the Bush family reflects Zora Neale Hurston's formulation of the "pet negro system" which describes "a certain mutual benefit to dominating white society as to the co-opted black intellectual or creative figure" (Davies 397). Furthermore, Davies coins the term "condification" to criticize the black elite such as Condoleezza Rice who works publicly "against the larger interests of the groups to which s/he belongs" (Davies 395).

— 6 — Davies is right in pointing out Rice's complicity in U.S. imperialism overseas and the Bush administration's disappointing response in Hurricane Katrina but her analysis of Rice's identification is simplified. The problem of Davies's analysis is that it assumes that a member from a subordinate group will always identify with that group, which neglects the distinction between collective identity and individual identity as well as the complex interaction between the two.

In *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*, Paul Gilroy distinguishes collective identity from individual identity. He states that the former is closely related to "primordial feelings and mythic varieties of kinship" whereas the latter is "increasingly shaped in the marketplace, modified by the cultural industries, and managed and orchestrated in localized institutions and settings like schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces" (Gilroy 106). Moreover, he points out that the identification process is a procedure during which one is constantly negotiated between chosen connections and given particularities. In the case of Condoleezza Rice, her individual identity is not only influenced by her collective identity as the black American but also by other factors such as her communal, professional, and political affiliations.

Apart from Davies and Gilroy, Bernard Bell's analysis of Afro-American novels also shed light on contemporary American racial discourses. In *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*, Bernard Bell conducts a comprehensive sociocultural study of Afro-American novels.

Through the investigation of the major thematic, stylistic, and structural characteristics of Afro-American novels, Bell argues that the Afro-American novel is “a hybrid narrative whose distinctive tradition and vitality are derived basically from the sedimented indigenous roots of black American folklore and literary genres of the Western world” (intro. xii). Moreover, the sociopsychological roots of the Afro-American novel are double-consciousness (the biracial and bicultural identities of Afro-Americans), socialized ambivalence (the shifting identification between the values of the dominant white and the subordinate black cultural systems) and double vision (the ambiguous laughing-to-keep-from-crying perspective towards life) (intro. xvi).

Though Bell’s research mainly covers Afro-American novels from 1853 to 1983, his argument is helpful for the study of the contemporary African American writings, such as Condoleezza Rice’s *Extraordinary, Ordinary People*. The identification of the contemporary black elite both resembles and challenges Bell’s notion of socialized ambivalence and the Du Boisian double-consciousness. On the one hand, these black elite identify themselves with the dominant white group to secure their own privileged social status, and on the other hand, they do not totally break from the black community: they view themselves as the role model for other blacks and will help improve the living conditions of the black on the condition that such actions will not harm their own interests. Furthermore, their privileged social status allows them to participate in the policy making in the existent power structure, thus their identity accords with and contests the Du Boisian double-consciousness.

The contemporary black American elite may still view himself/herself as both black and American, but differs from the black American in Du Bois’s time, the contemporary black American elite does not need to feel that “black” and “American” are two contradictory entities because the black can represent the American citizen and the U.S. nation-state in the post 9/11 era, which is almost impossible in Du Bois’s time. The nuanced identification processes of the black middle class in Rice’s *Extraordinary, Ordinary People* well demonstrate this point.

### **The Complex Identification Processes of the Black Middle Class in Rice’s *Extraordinary, Ordinary People***

*Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir of Family* was a memoir written by Condoleezza Rice in 2010. The book begins with a brief introduction to the stories of Rice’s parents John and Angelena Rice, grandparents Mattie and Albert Ray, and John and Theresa Rice, especially on how the Rices and the Rays made great efforts to make the best of their limited resources to become the respectable middle black class in the segregated American South. And the book ends with the death of Rice’s father about one week before Rice took office as the new national security advisor in 2001.

Interestingly, the book received many negative criticism from the critics. For instance, McWhorter writes that “Rice’s public self-presentation is distinctly impersonal. Unethnic, for one, but shading into outright ineffability” (McWhorter, para. 3). Drogin criticizes Rice because she “never displayed any doubt or admitted any errors in the White House decisions that led to war in Iraq” (Drogin, para. 1). And Drogin calls the memoir “disappointing” because “Rice seems similarly immune to introspection or self-criticism” (Drogin, para. 3). The two critics correctly point out that Rice does not show self-criticism about her involvement in America’s invasion of Iraq but Rice’s public self-presentation is not “impersonal”. Instead, Rice knows clearly how to make best use of her race, gender, and class characteristics in American society in her public presentation of herself as well as her family members, as is exemplified in the memoir.

In *Extraordinary, Ordinary People*, the members in the Rice family demonstrate complex identification in American society during different periods. Classism finds its best representative in Condoleezza Rice’s mother Angelena Ray Rice. Born as the daughter into a black landowner family, Angelena Ray learns about her own privileged social status since her childhood. She is a fierce defender of her personal possessions and shows little concern for the need of other black members in the community. After she marries John Wesley Rice Jr., the couple lives at the back of the church which John Rice Jr. works. She tries to end the Sunday gathering of the church members in the living room. When her attempt fails, she covers her sofa in plastic so that the church members cannot sit on it. On the account of the event, Condoleezza Rice remarks that “[i]n retrospect, I’m glad that she was so protective of her possessions because I am now fortunate enough to own those beautifully maintained pieces” (Rice 27). Ironically, the apartment in which the couple lives is the collective property of all church members and the donators. The church members have little interest in Angelena’s nice sofa and all they want is the Sunday gathering which they used to have before the couple’s occupation of the living room. Thus, it is the mother who violates the collective property of the church members, not the vice versa. But unfortunately, neither the mother nor the daughter realizes the mistake, and instead they defend themselves in the name of protecting personal possessions. As a middle class black, Angelena endeavors to maintain her privileged social status in many ways. Inspired by the Italian word “con dolcezza”, meaning “with sweetness”, she names her daughter Condoleezza to honor her family’s European heritage. She infuses Condoleezza with knowledge of Western classical music, opera and piano. Moreover, she teaches Condoleezza about the class division at an early age. She often takes her daughter to the fancy stores to buy expensive clothes and shoes, and forbids her daughter to visit her classmates from poor black communities. For Angelena, she is proud of her privileged social status and endeavors to maintain the boundary between her family members and the major working class black.

Condoleezza's father John Wesley Rice Jr. is a more complex middle class black figure than her mother Angelena. As a black who has experienced the Civil Rights movement, John Rice Jr. is a representative of those middle class black who hold different views from black activists such as Martin Luther King on racial relationship and power struggle in the U.S. in Civil Rights movement era. John Rice Jr. is a devoted Presbyterian minister who believes in education evangelism and helps black youth especially the poor black to get education opportunities. When he works in the University of Denver as the assistant director for admissions and assistant dean of arts and sciences, John Rice Jr. makes efforts to diversify the student body. He increases the number of black students in the university, establishes a seminar named "The Black Experience in America" and invites various celebrities to provide their perspectives on the state of the black America. The seminar is well received in the university, and it provides a great opportunity for both students and faculty to familiarize with experiences and state of black Americans.

According to Condoleezza's account, many of her father's students change their fates and become successful. Apart from devoting himself to education and church work, John Rice Jr. is a kind loving supportive father and husband, and a strong-willed diligent man who earns college degrees with his own efforts. In a word, John Rice Jr. is portrayed as a black hero throughout the book. But how does this black hero view his own status in the society? Does he consider himself a member of the black majority in the U.S.?

A close examination of the book will uncover this black hero's ambiguous identification. There are two telling examples in the book. The first is John Rice Jr.'s response to the Civil Rights activities in Birmingham in 1963. The Rice family supports the black's boycott in 1962 whereas they refuse to march with Martin Luther King and Fred Shuttlesworth. As Bob Drogin incisively points out in *Los Angeles Times*, "Rice's parents, by her account, largely watched from the sidelines as 'Bombingham' exploded in violence, marches and mass arrests. Nearly all their energies, it appears, were focused on their only child" (Drogin, paras. 6-7). Though the comment understates John Rice Jr.'s involvement in the Civil Rights activities (he visits the arrested protesting students), Drogin's remark reflects the position of some middle class black as the bystander, such as the Rice family in the Civil Rights activities.

Condoleezza Rice offers two excuses for his father's response. First, she criticizes Martin Luther King's strategy of "the Children's Crusade". The use of children in the protest is highly controversial. Facing the suppression and the wane of the movement, the black activists used the risky strategy of "the Children's Crusade" to arrest the media attention nationwide and thus to boost the Civil Rights Movement. While it is hard to give an unbiased evaluation of such a strategy, it is clear that Condoleezza Rice tries to use this controversy as a pretense for her father's refusal to participate in the protest. His father can dispute this strategy but he can also

contribute to the movement in an active positive way. Second, Condoleezza Rice states that it is impossible for the black to escape the violence or hide during the turbulence in Birmingham in 1963, and her father does not believe in being nonviolent in face of violence. Facing the white racist extremist's threat, John Rice Jr. and other communal middle class black men form a watch to defend their family and community. Interestingly, at the same time John Rice Jr. teaches his students that "they should fight racism with their minds not their bodies" (Rice 95) when the students want to join the protest on the street. The contradiction between John Rice Jr.'s words and deeds reveal the black middle class's ambivalent position in the Civil Rights Movements.

Though racism and segregation exert negative influence on their life, the black middle class do not suffer as much as the majority poor black due to their class privilege. Thus, when Civil Rights Movements arise, the black middle class fall into divided groups. Some, such as Martin Luther King, actively participate in the movements to challenge the existent power structure whereas others, such as the Rice family, only take actions and join the movement when their own interests are harmed. Seen from this perspective, it is easy to understand the discrepancy between John Rice Jr.'s words and deeds. Teaching the students to fight racism with their minds instead of their bodies, he tries to persuade the students to obey the prohibition on participation in the protest, which will avoid troubles for himself and the students. But when the life and property of his family are threatened by the white racist's violence, he has to use violence to defend himself and his family. In this sense, his fighting against white racism is quite passive.

The complicated identification of the black middle class is further demonstrated in Condoleezza Rice's account of her father's remarks of slavery and American nationhood. She writes,

Daddy would sometimes ridicule those who suggested that blacks find succor and support in a closer association with Africa. "America is our home," he'd say. "Africa does not belong to us or us to it." And he'd sometimes say to my horror that the tragedy of slavery had given us the chance to live in the freest and most prosperous country on earth. He loved the United States of America and was vocal in his appreciation for the good fortune of being American. Yet he clearly admired the willingness of radicals to confront America's racism with strength and pride rather than with humbleness and supplication. Daddy was remarkably adept at navigating and charting a course for success in the white man's world. But there was, I know, a deep reservoir of anger in him regarding the circumstances of being a black man in America. (Rice 137)

The paragraph uncovers John Rice Jr.'s complex feelings as a middle class black man in



the U.S.. Though he actively engages in education evangelism and makes great effort to draw public attention (mainly the white's attention) to the state of black America, in the depth of his heart, John Rice Jr. has little interest in Africa and denies his connection to it. He identifies himself only with the U.S., and he is proud to be the citizen of the United States, "the freest and most prosperous country on earth". More compellingly, he even thinks that it is worthwhile to pay for such freedom and prosperity at the price of the legitimization of the inhumane slavery. Obviously, his knowledge of transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and racism in America does not create a bond between himself, a middle class black man and the majority poor black who suffer from racial discrimination and exploitation and cannot enjoy freedom and prosperity.

For John Rice Jr., his blackness is a heavy burden, and thus he possesses "a deep reservoir of anger" which cannot be articulated directly. As a middle class black, a renowned Presbyterian minister and a successful educator, John Rice Jr. enjoys superiority to the majority of the working class black but at the same time, he feels his inferiority compared with his white counterpart. Since he cannot change his race, the best thing for him to do is to make good use of his racial difference in American society which is eager to prove its "integration" and "equal opportunity" in the post-Civil Rights era. Even before the integration, he uses his personal network to cross the racial line and brings his wife to see white doctors. The family members enjoy the same reception as the white. In a similar way, he sends his daughter Condoleezza to the famous expensive private high school St. Mary's Academy, most of whose students are white. Using his racial difference, John Rice Jr. is "remarkably adept at navigating and charting a course for success in the white man's world". His network and resources bring great convenience for his family and pave the way to success for his daughter Condoleezza Rice.

Unlike John Rice Jr. who is still confined by his blackness and struggles for recognition in the white man's world, Condoleezza Rice utilizes her blackness and middle class privilege to rise to the key position in American empire. Having benefited from her parents' social network and investment, Condoleezza Rice receives good education since her childhood. She familiarizes herself with European culture and American middle class culture. Moreover, she builds on and extends her parents' social network in her college years. Making use of her post-doctorate fellowship at Stanford, she successfully gets the job offer from the university, which becomes the stepping stone for her access to the leadership position in the White House in the subsequent years. It is important to note that the job offer for Condoleezza Rice has much to do with the university's effort to increase the diversity of the faculty. In other words, Condoleezza Rice's blackness and her gender as a woman are valuable assets on her road to success.

More compellingly, Rice's racial and sexual identities are used by her to consolidate the existent hierarchical racial and sexual systems. Two telling examples in the book can

demonstrate this point: Condoleezza Rice's views on slavery and racism in the U.S. and her attitude towards affirmative action when she serves as the provost of Stanford. Rice's views on slavery and racism in America resemble those of her father. While John Rice Jr. remarks that "the tragedy of slavery had given us [the black] the chance to live in the freest and most prosperous country on earth" (Rice 137), Condoleezza Rice states that slavery and racism are America's birth defects: one cannot overcome them but one can learn to live with them. Such statement downplays the cruelty of slavery and malignancy of racism, and eulogizes the dominant group's racist policies. It also reflects the stance of some of the middle class black who come of age in Post-Civil Rights era. As the beneficiary of the Civil Rights Movement, these black elite neither participate in the struggle nor identify themselves with the majority working class black. In most cases, they cross the color line and form class alliance with the dominant white upper class. Thus, the black elite such as Condoleezza Rice co-opt with the dominant white group and become supporters of the suppressive system.

Condoleezza Rice's identification with the dominant white group is more effectively demonstrated by her attitudes towards affirmative action during her service in Stanford as the provost. During the budget crisis in Stanford, Condoleezza Rice makes the cut and the ethnic centers are the most offended. Rice meets the angry students in a town-hall-style meeting. Hearing the students' feelings about their marginalization in the university, Rice thinks that "marginalization [is] a peculiar term for students who'd been given the chance at Stanford" (Rice 295). When a young Native American woman accuses Rice of not caring about minorities, Rice responds that "you don't have the standing to question my commitment to minorities. I've been black all of my life, and that is far longer than you are" (Rice 295). It might be true that the minority students at Stanford are more advantageous than other members in their groups but they are still situated in a disadvantageous position compared with their white peers. Rice replies to students that she will also cut the budget of the Physics department but such an action eludes the great discrepancy between the Physics department and the ethnic center. The former is the fundamental traditional discipline in nature sciences and enjoys abundant resources in the university whereas the latter is a new discipline that has been newly founded as the product of Civil Rights Movement and has limited resources. Thus, the cut will exert great different impact on the two disciplines.

Moreover, Rice's response to the young Native American woman is compelling. Rather than try to help the ethnic minorities or admit the budget cut's significant detrimental effects on them, Rice defends her decision, and furthermore, she uses her own blackness to muzzle the criticism from minorities. Later, the Chicano students set up a tent city in front of her office and four young women start a hunger strike to protest Rice's decision to remove a senior Latino

administrator Cecilia Burciaga who has contributed greatly to the university and involved in Rice's recruitment. When several faculty members sympathize with the students and ask Rice whether she feels bad that the students sleep on the quad and do not eat, Rice replies coldly "I am sleeping and eating just fine...They can stay out there until hell freezes over. My decisions stand" (Rice 296). Reading this, one cannot help but feel that Rice acts in a ruthless manner just like she deals with America's enemy Soviet Union during the Cold War era. The sufferance and sacrifice of the minority students cannot touch Rice since she sides herself firmly with the university authority, in this case, the white elite.

Facing the criticism of her negative attitudes on affirmative action, Condoleezza Rice tries to defend herself. She admits that "years of racial prejudice produced underrepresentation of minorities and women in all aspects of American life" but she emphasizes that "how to remedy that situation is a delicate one" (Rice 300). She believes that there are plenty of qualified minorities but the existent process of selection, pools, and networks are insular and often deny these qualified minorities the access to success. Thus, she remarks that "[t]he answer lies in looking outside established networks and patterns of hiring" (Rice 300). This statement avoids any criticism of the existent system that puts the minorities at a disadvantageous position. It is also vague about how to look outside "established networks and patterns of hiring". Obviously, not every member of the minorities groups has the opportunity and ability to find alternative way for upward social mobility. If the existent power structure cannot be changed, the minority groups will remain in the subordinate position.

Being asked about her opinion on the meager number of minorities in the student body and faculty in the university, Condoleezza Rice replies that she cannot "create assistant professors out of whole cloth" (Rice 301) and the minority students should consider go to graduate schools to gain the opportunity to become professors. She also does not understand why minorities continue to score lower on standardized tests such as the SAT, LSAT, or GRE. Rice's words reflect her logic of blaming the victim for their own disadvantage. The scarcity of minority faculty and students is first and foremost the direct result of the unbalanced relationship between the white and other racial minorities. Historically, most minorities are deprived of the opportunity and resources of education and representation, and they are not granted full citizenship until the Civil Rights Movement. Although they have the right to receive education, they are still put in an unfavorable position culturally and economically. In order to go to the famous private university such as Stanford, these minority students need to be competent in the standardized tests such as SAT, LSAT, or GRE. But it is worthy of note that the logic of these "standardized" tests is not universal but Euro-American-centric. For those who are unfamiliar with the dominant white culture, they will not only do poor in the tests but also find themselves

marginalized in the university.

Moreover, these students also need to have the financial ability to enroll in the expensive private university such as Stanford. In this sense, one's favorable financial status or class status is always closely associated with one's proximity with the dominant white culture in America. Such is the case of the Rice family. John Rice Sr., the paternal grandfather of Condoleezza Rice, makes a deal with the white culture to change his fate: he earns his college education on the condition of becoming a Presbyterian minister. Making full use of his education, intelligence, diligence and the religious resources, John Rice Sr. builds wide social network and becomes a successful black minister and educator. His descendants, especially John Rice Jr. and Condoleezza Rice benefit from and extend the family's social network, increase their proximity with the dominant white culture, and enhance their privileged middle class status. Condoleezza Rice's maternal grandparents are also self-made middle class black.

Grown up in this environment, Condoleezza Rice has little contact with the majority working class. Endowed with class privilege, intelligence, and broad social network, Condoleezza Rice enjoys more access to various sources compared with the major working class black. In her adulthood, her service in the White House further reinforces her identification with the dominant white culture. Seen from this light, Condoleezza Rice's action during the budget cut issue in Stanford is easy to understand. Identifying with the dominant white culture, Condoleezza Rice acts as the spokesperson for the authority and uses her identity as a model minority woman to muzzle the opponents' criticism on the university's biased budget policies.

Such identification is further illustrated in her investment in American imperialism and neo-colonialism. As the U.S. National Security Advisor (2001-2005) and the U.S. Secretary of State (2005-2009) for the Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice is largely responsible for U.S.'s military policies in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the public's views on the war in Afghanistan diversify, it is widely believed that the war on Iraq is an invasion, but Rice never shows any regret for the decision to invade Iraq. In an interview, Henry Louis Gates Jr. asks Rice why the Americans should send their children to be sacrificed in the war, and Rice endeavors to legitimize U.S. imperialist war as the liberation of the local people from the "barbaric" government (Gates 11). The answer avoids a serious consideration of the devastating effects on the two countries as well as on the life of ordinary Americans, especially the soldiers and their family members.

When Gates asks about President George W. Bush's policies on race and his reaction during Hurricane Katrina, Rice makes efforts to find pretenses for Bush. She explains that the President is misunderstood by the black community and this is largely derived from the stereotype about Republican's policy on race. She also uses the War on Terror as an excuse for

Bush's disappointing domestic racial policies. But when she is asked about the relationship between the leader and the people, Rice responds that a leader should always keep distance from the people s/he leads, and it is better for a leader to be respected than to be loved since love requires understanding and close relationship ([Gates 6](#)). These responses show that Rice is a faithful supporter of the existent power structure in American society and an ardent advocate of U.S. imperialism.

### Conclusion

As a woman of color, Condoleezza Rice appropriates her racial and gender identities to play the role of a model minority and prove the truth of "equal opportunity" for the minority groups, and as the representative and spokesperson of the Bush administration, she actively alleviates the internal tension and rigorously advances U.S. imperialism and neo-colonialism worldwide.

As what have been argued earlier, there always exists discrepancy between a person's individual identity and collective identity, and one's identification process is influenced by various factors such as race, gender, community, religion, and political affiliation. The example of John Rice Jr. reflects the divide among the black middle class on Civil Rights Movement and the case of Condoleezza Rice highlights the contemporary black elite's complicity in the suppression of the internal social problems and the expansion of U.S. imperialism worldwide. It also suggests that in the post 9/11 era, racial difference can be used in a more subtle way to consolidate the existent power structure when a successful member from a minority group is willing to play the role of model minority and prove the possibility to cross boundaries to all other disadvantageous members.

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