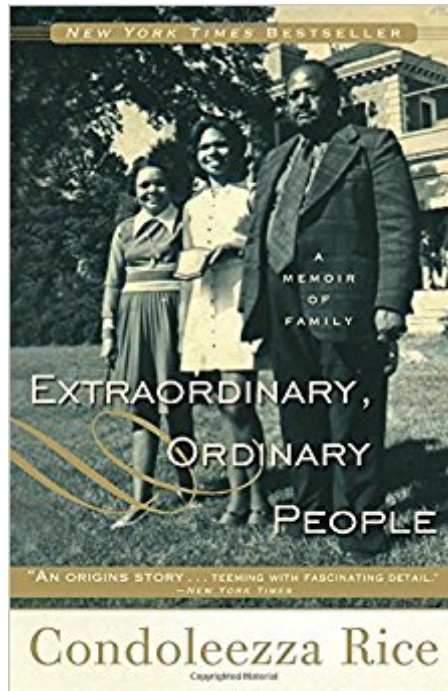




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Extraordinary, Ordinary People: A Memoir Of Family



Synopsis

This is the story of Condoleezza Rice that has never been told, not that of an ultra-accomplished world leader, but of a little girl--and a young woman--trying to find her place in a sometimes hostile world, of two exceptional parents, and an extended family and community that made all the difference. Condoleezza Rice has excelled as a diplomat, political scientist, and concert pianist. Her achievements run the gamut from helping to oversee the collapse of communism in Europe and the decline of the Soviet Union, to working to protect the country in the aftermath of 9-11, to becoming only the second woman--and the first black woman ever--to serve as Secretary of State. But until she was 25 she never learned to swim, because when she was a little girl in Birmingham, Alabama, Commissioner of Public Safety Bull Connor decided he'd rather shut down the city's pools than give black citizens access. Throughout the 1950's, Birmingham's black middle class largely succeeded in insulating their children from the most corrosive effects of racism, providing multiple support systems to ensure the next generation would live better than the last. But by 1963, Birmingham had become an environment where blacks were expected to keep their head down and do what they were told--or face violent consequences. That spring two bombs exploded in Rice's neighborhood amid a series of chilling Klu Klux Klan attacks. Months later, four young girls lost their lives in a particularly vicious bombing. So how was Rice able to achieve what she ultimately did? Her father, John, a minister and educator, instilled a love of sports and politics. Her mother, a teacher, developed Condoleezza's passion for piano and exposed her to the fine arts. From both, Rice learned the value of faith in the face of hardship and the importance of giving back to the community. Her parents' fierce unwillingness to set limits propelled her to the venerable halls of Stanford University, where she quickly rose through the ranks to become the university's second-in-command. An expert in Soviet and Eastern European Affairs, she played a leading role in U.S. policy as the Iron Curtain fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated. Less than a decade later, at the apex of the hotly contested 2000 presidential election, she received the exciting news--just shortly before her father's death--that she would go on to the White House as the first female National Security Advisor. As comfortable describing lighthearted family moments as she is recalling the poignancy of her mother's cancer battle and the heady challenge of going toe-to-toe with Soviet leaders, Rice holds nothing back in this remarkably candid telling.

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Customer Reviews

Having served under two Bush presidencies as national security advisor and secretary of state, Rice is well known for her icy demeanor and steely disposition. This memoir presents a young woman deeply attached to her devoted parents, who encouraged her at every step of her life to overcome racism, sexism, and her own personal doubts. Her roots are deep in the South, with a family that pridefully skirted racism, never using the "colored" facilities or riding in the back of the bus. Her mother, Angelena, was a cultured teacher who taught her piano, while her father, John, was a Presbyterian minister and later a college administrator who, despite his Republican politics, strongly admired black radicals, developing a friendship with Stokely Carmichael. He declined to march with Martin Luther King in nonviolent protests and was more inclined to sit on the front porch with a loaded shotgun to ward off white night riders. The Rice family personally knew the young girls who were killed in the church bombing, one of the more violent episodes the family endured before they eventually left the South. Rice presents a frank, poignant, and loving portrait of a family that maintained its closeness through cancer, death, career ups and downs, and turbulent changes in American society. --Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"[Features] prose so spare it lays bare a child's pain, full of raw vignettes, episodes that should jolt our post-racial sensibilities. [The book shows that] the key to Rice's composure in office, which was a mix of womanly grace and analytical rigor, lies in the manner in which she was raised. In this, America owes a debt to John and Angelena

Rice, parents extraordinarily pushy, parents extraordinarily brave." •Wall Street Journal "Surprisingly engrossing|One senses a romantic softness at the core of the steely woman Americans met during her years of public service. Rice's reverence of her parents is touching, as is her abiding love for the Titusville of her youth. •Daily Beast "Pays tribute to the people who truly shaped her [and] sets the record straight on aspects of her life that often flirt with myth. •USA Today "An origins story teeming with fascinating detail. •New York Times "A thrilling, inspiring life of achievement. •Publishers Weekly "A frank, poignant and loving portrait of a family that maintained its closeness through cancer, death, career ups and downs, and turbulent change in American society. •Booklist "Vivid and heartfelt writing|Rice's graceful memoir is a personal, multigenerational look into her own, and our country's, past|Highly recommended. •Library Journal "In this remarkably clear-eyed and candid autobiography, Rice focuses instead on her fascinating coming-of-age during the stormy civil rights years in Birmingham, Alabama." •Bookpage From the Hardcover edition.

I have read a few autobiographies of well-known leaders. Many of them are good for the first little bit, but then before long they get into discussions of their political career and advocate for their future political goals. In many ways, this book is similar in that regard. It traces the life of Condoleezza Rice from birth all the way through the Bush campaign for the presidency. What is unique about this book is both its humility, and the way Rice tells her story as a story of family love and family triumph. Telling her story through the lens of a black family in the throws of the civil rights movement, and in the context of a family propelled forward through initiative, education, and a few lucky breaks, she gives her reader a glimpse into how she was formed as a person, and why she grew up to be the person she became. A fun read, and inspirational in that it reminds us what opportunities are available to those of us here in America.

I loved this book cover to cover! I will love Condoleezza Rice for the rest of my life! She has been interested in everything. I knew she would excel in everything. She was always an outstanding friend. What confounds me is that she was always a Republican and I have always been a Democrat but she crossed the aisle when she thought it was the right thing to do! Her parents were great too and all three of them were great Americans.

I loved the audio version on CDs, unabridged and read by the author. It was a joy to drive around and listen to her tell about the lives of her and her parents as they lived and made decisions in turbulent times. Her parents made incredible sacrifices for her, an only child. And she lived up to it by growing up to be a great human being and a wonderful daughter. There are many parallels to the Laura Ingalls stories of growing up on the frontier after the Civil War. Laura's books can be read as the story of her parents trying to make a life outside of civilization, and then surviving the brutal North Dakota winters as civilization creeps toward them and over them. Condoleezza's book can be read on one level as the story of her parents in Birmingham, Denver and Palo Alto after the Civil Rights Act changed their world. In Laura's book it is heartbreaking when Pa gives his "little half pint" in marriage, knowing he will seldom see her again. In Condoleezza's book it is sad when her mother died -- but I blubbered like a baby when "Daddy" died, possibly releasing his then-tenuous grip on life to make it more convenient for her to move to DC to become National Security Advisor. Her writing is disarmingly conversational. Listening to the book feels like you have the three members of the Rice family as house guests, and you can't wait to get back home after work, to hang out with them some more. Count me charmed. It's pretty clear that this is intended solely as a book about her early life and her wonderful parents. Just enough details of her political life are included to allow us to see her career through their proud eyes. She talks about being single and her feelings about elective office. But she clearly reserves to another day a book about her professional life as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. Condoleezza Rice is a very special person and this is a wonderful book, whatever your race or political persuasion.

This was a wonderful read that I highly recommend. It's written wonderfully as she gives you insight to her childhood and her family dynamic. I learned so much about Condoleezza's childhood and how she was brought up to be who she is today and how she got to where she is today as well as learning about the kind of person her father was and her mother. Both of whom were wonderful people with wonderful morals and good family values. Highly recommend!

This true story is gripping from the beginning to end. Miss Rice is very transparent and her honesty rings forth in the good and not so good retelling of her own actions and feelings. Except for the high profile people she was always interacting with, this could be the story of any highly educated black female in America today as far as how while people chose to engage her or not at all. It is lonely for black female, high achievers except, for a supportive family which she had in spades! This is a very enjoyable read!

With an understated humility, Condoleezza Rice tells her amazing life's story. Growing up in segregated Alabama to becoming Secretary of State, her's is truly an incredible American success story. Her story is not just about her own talents and drive, but that of her family and community that provided her the structure and support and guidance to succeed in a world that was rigged against her. Her life had been a bit Forrest Gump-ian as she has encountered amazing people and participated in incredible events, though not through blind luck, but through hard work and activism.

Didn't realize how much I would enjoy reading about Miss. Rice life. This book is educational and insightful. Details her life from Alabama to Denver then to D.C. and California. I enjoyed very much reading about her life and family. Highly recommended

I enjoyed this well written book. . It is a story about a wonderful woman and the love of family. It is also a story of finding your passion and following your dreams! Pick it up and read it then give it to your teens to read.

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