

Dr Susan Rice, AFROAMERICA NETWORK WOMAN OF YEAR 2011.

She is known to be the one woman in the world dictators, especially African dictators fear the most; from the late General Mobutu Sese Seko Wa Zebanga, to the old generation Zimbabwean Robert Mugabe to the new breed of African dictators, like General Paul Kagame of Rwanda or Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Black woman, born into a Black elite family, on November 17, 1964, in the US Capital, Washington, DC, she may have been destined to reach great heights in life.



Her father, a black man born in the segregated South, was the renown Cornell University Economics Professor Emmett J. Rice who was also a governor of the Federal Reserve System and served with the famous Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. Her mother, Lois Dickson Fitt, an education policy scholar and advisor consults at the Brookings Institution. Her brother, John Rice, a Harvard Business School graduate, founded the Management Leadership for Tomorrow, which has the goal to develop top minority talent for leadership roles in the business and non-profit sector.

But despite her privileged pedigree, Dr. Susan Elizabeth Rice has made a name herself since her young age, always trying to achieve great things by herself. She played point guard in basketball despite unlikely basketball height, graduated valedictorian, attended Stanford and got a Rhodes Scholarship to attend Oxford University where she obtained a PhD.

The title of her thesis was, not surprisingly, about Africa. Like her father who was expert in the monetary systems of developing countries, she had a passion for developing countries, especially Africa. Hence, her dissertation titled “Commonwealth Initiative in Zimbabwe 1979-1980: Implication for International Peacekeeping”, received honors and marked her road to the events of 2011.

She was pretty much involved in, and perhaps one the most active actors of, the events that marked the Great Lakes of Africa from 1990s to date. She was serving at the US National Security Council from 1993 to 1997, as Director for International Organizations and Peacekeeping from 1993 to 1995, and as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for African Affairs from 1995 to 1997, when the 1990 - 1994 Ugandan troops that included Rwandan Tutsi refugees invaded Rwanda. The invasion of Rwanda by Ugandan forces and Rwandan Tutsi refugees and the assassination of the then Rwandan President General Major Juvénal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart allegedly by the current Rwandan



president General Paul Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Army led to the Rwandan 1994 tragedy. The tragedy in which hundreds of Rwandans were savagely massacred marked Dr. Susan Rice. Subsequently, she made a solemn commitment: *“I swore to myself that if I ever faced such a crisis again, I would come down on the side of dramatic action, going down in flames if that was required.”*

He hence supported the invasion of Zaire by Rwanda’s Paul Kagame’s forces to overthrow the Zairian dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko. Meanwhile, she pressed the Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe to open up and allow democratic institutions. Robert Mugabe did not appreciate the initiative. Instead, he unleashed harsh personal attacks against her.

On December 1, 2008, President Barack Obama nominated Dr. Rice for the position of United States Ambassador at the United Nations and a cabinet minister. She immediately set out to shift the US policy from a reactive to active support for democratic changes around the world.

When the Libyan democratic uprising erupted in February 2011, Ambassador Rice gave a statement, just after a highly publicized White House meeting with President Obama and U.N. Secretary General in which she said that the United States and the international community had the one choice for Gaddafi and his aides: stepping down from power or face significant consequences, and said that she saw the Libyan Muammar Gaddafi as “frankly, delusional,” which “only underscores how unfit he is to lead, and how disconnected he is from reality.” With Susan Rice’s words, it was a matter of months before Gaddafi’s fate was sealed: on October 20, 2011, Gaddafi’s fleeing convoy was attacked by a US drone and destroyed, which allowed the Libyan rebel forces to seize Gaddafi and assassinate him.

Recently, Susan Rice went on offensive against other African dictators, especially the Rwandan dictator Paul Kagame. In a speech by Dr. Susan Rice at the Kigali Institute of Technology (KIST) on November 23, 2011, she pointed to the lack of democracy and respect of human rights in Rwanda as one of the major challenges facing Rwanda and Rwandans. Perhaps referring to her role in 1990-1997 events in the great lakes region of Africa, she told the Rwandan leadership that she “believe[s] as well that friends should speak to friends,” that “the political culture in Rwanda remains comparatively closed,” while “yet, the world is moving rapidly in a different direction.” Rwandans, especially those in the opposition were overjoyed. However, General Paul Kagame was not amused.

In a public speech on Saturday November 26, 2011, General Paul Kagame made the following comments in Kinyarwanda, while referring to the statement made by Ambassador Susan Rice (the translation is based on General Paul Kagame’s speech and the original sentences in Kinyarwanda are added in bold):

- *How can anyone start a speech by praising the economic progress and conclude by saying there is no freedom of speech (“**Hanyuma warangiza kubirondora byose ukavuga, uti: ‘Abanyarwanda ntibafite aho bavugira’**).*

- *I will not accept anyone who comes to tell me that close to a hundred or hundred and fifty people out of more than 10 millions Rwandans have no freedom of speech, because they have nothing to say or make divisive statements or are nothing, useless (“**Ariko ntabwo nakwemera ngo urambwira ngo abakwiye kuba bavuga kandi**”).*

batanasubizwa ni abantu bagera nko ku ijana cyangwa ijana na mirongo itanu mu bantu bagera kuri miliyoni 10 n'izindi. Abo se ni iki?").

• *Those who want to speak freely, we destroy them and we do not apologize for it, at all. The only apology is that we do not destroy them enough. ("Igihe turimo twubaka u Rwanda ukaza kuvuga ibirusenya turagusenya. Nta n'umwe twabisabira imbabazi, at all, ahubwo ntitubikora bihagije."*)

• *Whoever says there is no democracy in Rwanda must have mental problems ("numbwira ngo ibyo ntabwo ari demokarasi, numbwira ngo ibyo ntabwo byubahirije uburenganzira bw'ikiremwa muntu ugomba kuba urwaye mu mutwe, ").*

But based on Dr Susan Rice's past achievements and political and diplomatic stamina, and her dealings with African dictators, she may not have been amused either by the Rwandan dictator's speech. The future will give clues on how she perceived General Paul Kagame's blatant personal attacks on one of the US leaders most feared by dictators.

Dr. Susan Rice is a recipient of numerous awards, citations, seats of leadership and her record is so impressive that a few pages will not suffice to make her justice. We expect that the record of her achievements is likely to grow and fill books. After all, Dr. Susan Rice is the first African American woman United States Representative to the United Nations. Legend has it that when she was young, she dreamed of becoming the first US Senator of the District of Columbia. Maybe she can.

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