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## **The End of Normal: Rice's Reality – Don't Fix What You can Pretend Isn't Broken**

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*This is the third in the [series](#) of life after the meltdown.*

I have been following the Condoleezza Rice reputation tour - part of the George Bush rationalization tour - with fascination.

Actually, the fascination was there from the beginning: the brains, the story, the style. As a player on the global scene, perhaps even president some day, she looked like the total package.

As her final days in this administration play out in a sad litany of revision and denial, it appears obvious now that the package was empty.

She is the administration poster girl for all that went wrong: style over substance, image over reality, politics over progress and most damaging of all - the unwavering refusal of accountability.

As we dig out from the smoking wreckage of a ruined economy, absence of accountability is a problem. It is harder to recover from mistakes- whether war, diplomacy or economic stupidity - when those mistakes have no owners or, even worse, are simply denied.

Rice is one more element in the leitmotif of Bush administration leadership: it's not failure if you don't admit it.

The practiced ability to create an alternate universe is why their choreographed apologies on the interview circuit are not for making the ruinous decision to invade Iraq. It's for believing somebody else's faulty intelligence. Never mind that the intelligence was generated by people on their payroll, or that anything or anyone at odds with administration certainties were ignored or ridiculed.

It is why Rice could recently say that "The United States does not permit, tolerate, or condone torture under any circumstances," while conveniently omitting that the U.S. has its own definition of torture at odds with international agreements.

It is why seeing our president assaulted by flying footwear over the weekend was not the most bizarre thing about his self-congratulatory visit to Iraq. It was his statement that "I don't know what this guy's cause was."

It may have something to do with the 151,000 Iraqis that the World Health Organization says have died violently since Rice and others knowingly misled us into the invasion in 2003. It's a cause that appears to be shared throughout the Arab world, where the shoe chucker has become an instant hero.

For those who have followed Rice's career, these final days continue a theme. She is the embodiment of the term "upward failure."

She earned the Secretary of State job with a Harriet Miers-like fealty to her boss, and by allowing National Security Council to be slapped and punched into compliance by the playground bullies, Cheney and Rumsfeld.

As Secretary of State, her palm prints are all over the administration's ham-handed squandering of international good will and failures of policy from Iraq and Iran to Palestine and Lebanon.

She has shown her ability to match her boss delusion for delusion. In the same way he praised "Brownie" in New Orleans as people were drowning in their attics, she said Israel's disastrous defeat in the U.S. sanctioned attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon was "the birth pangs of a new Middle East."

As she and her employer take their respective victory-less victory laps we can say this about Condoleezza Rice: of all the Secretaries of State, she is the first one to make *Vanity Fair's* International Best Dressed list and the only one to play Brahms for the Queen. She is also certainly among the most loyally in sync with her employer - a man who has failed so often, ruined so much and accepts accountability for none of it.

Just as failure isn't failure if you don't admit it, problems can't be solved if they don't exist. Eight years of incompetence and denial have left us with a massive clean-up job.