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Transcript of the Colin Powell-Larry King Interview

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

9/20

Alexis -

—
Transcript of the
Powell / King interview,
as we discussed.

I've highlighted some
parts, but it's compelling
throughout.

Andrew

—

SEP 20 1995

This transcript has not yet been checked against videotape and cannot, for that reason, be guaranteed as to accuracy of speakers and spelling. (ed)

LARRY KING LIVE Transcript #1542

September 18, 1995

Interview with Gen. Colin Powell

LARRY KING: *[voice-over]* He's served his country in war and peace as an army officer, as the top man, Joint-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He's served three presidents, two Republicans one Democrat, Reagan, Bush and Clinton. And now, there is a movement to draft him as a candidate. He is Colin Powell, a kid from Harlem, the son of immigrants. He shares his American journey with us for the full hour, all next on *Larry King Live*.

ANNOUNCER: Now, live, from Washington, here's Larry King.

LARRY KING: If there are moments of mirth during this next hour, it is due to the fact that we have a black American, a Jewish American. One from the Bronx, one from Brooklyn. The heritage is exactly the same, right?

COLIN POWELL: Exactly. Exactly.

LARRY KING: We're coming from the— the same cloth. Now, okay, I grew up with a lot of guys in Brooklyn, not one ever said, "I want to be a General."

COLIN POWELL: They didn't say it in the Bronx either.

LARRY KING: Why you? Why you?

COLIN POWELL: Because, when I entered City College of New York and I entered the public school system of New York, I found something that I liked at CCNY, it was ROTC. And a fraternity called the Pershing Rifles. And I fell in love with the Army during that period, and I never got out.

LARRY KING: Didn't most guys do ROTC so they could— because they had to do it, they had to fulfill a commitment.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah.

LARRY KING: And if they went to service they were a lieutenant.

COLIN POWELL: In those days you expected to be drafted.

LARRY KING: Yeah.

COLIN POWELL: And so many people entered ROTC, and CCNY at that time had one of the largest corps in the entire United States Army and they thought, "If you are going to be drafted, why not go in as a lieutenant?" And that— that also motivated me, but once I started down that road, something else motivated me. I— I loved it.

LARRY KING: Which was?

COLIN POWELL: I liked the discipline and structure of the military. I felt somewhat distinctive wearing a uniform. I hadn't been distinctive in much else in my earlier life at that point.

LARRY KING: Were you an average student?

COLIN POWELL: Very. Very average. To the point of almost being below average.

LARRY KING: So you would not have thought of West Point?

COLIN POWELL: No, it never occurred to me. I never—I never considered West Point. I wasn't that motivated to the military, and I, frankly, didn't think it was an option for me in those days.

LARRY KING: Did you know in City College in ROTC, that you wanted to make it a career, or that you would give it a shot?

COLIN POWELL: No, I would give it a shot. But I also knew it was something that I really, really liked doing. My— my parents kind of said, "Okay, let him go in the army for a few years, and then he can come out and get a real job."

LARRY KING: He's not going to stay there.

COLIN POWELL: He's not going to stay there. Who stays.

LARRY KING: What did the boys—

COLIN POWELL: You come out and you get a real job.

LARRY KING: —in the Bronx think?

COLIN POWELL: The boys in the Bronx were supportive. I mean, they understood. He was the college kid. One of the few kids on the block. And, frankly, I think I was the first kid on my block to— to go to college. Some of my other friends went into the military and they went in as enlisted men, and they went in as enlisted men into the Marines and to the— and into the Navy and into the Army. But I was the first kid who went into college, went into ROTC and was headed toward being an officer.

LARRY KING: There was a tendency among the group that grew up in that era to stay in touch. There is a kind of bond.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah.

LARRY KING: Do you have it?

COLIN POWELL: We still do. We separated for many years after we sort of grew up and left and got married, but then we came back together in recent years and I'm— I'm in touch with a number of the kids that I grew up with.

LARRY KING: What makes a good soldier?

COLIN POWELL: A good soldier is somebody who is dedicated to the business, the profession of soldiering. Who is loyal. Who is willing to serve his nation, willing to sacrifice for his nation. And who believes in his nation. And he is tough mentally, tough physically. Has courage. The courage of his convictions, as well as physical courage.

LARRY KING: General Champes James [sp?] was a black four star general—

COLIN POWELL: The first—

LARRY KING: Three star.

COLIN POWELL: —black four star.

LARRY KING: First black—

COLIN POWELL: Four star.

LARRY KING: —four star.

COLIN POWELL: Mm-hm.

LARRY KING: He was a hell of a man.

COLIN POWELL: He was a wonderful man.

LARRY KING: He died much too young.

LARRY KING: Interviewed him once and said, "Did you like war?" And he said, "No warrior likes war."

COLIN POWELL: Nobody in their right mind, who has seen war, and who has seen death in war, can like war, or want war.

LARRY KING: But isn't a soldier basically unhappy in peace?

COLIN POWELL: No.

LARRY KING: Because he is not doing what he has been trained to do.

COLIN POWELL: But he can train to do war. And you can get satisfaction by training yourself and training your units to the very highest level of readiness. So, that if war comes you can fight it in an effective way and get it over with as quickly as possible. Warriors, as was said by one of our founding fathers, you know, war is a serious business and the greatest challenge of the soldier is to try to preserve the peace.

LARRY KING: So, when we read of the Pattons and that type of— of man, who seem to live off it, they are the exception?

COLIN POWELL: I think they are the exception. Patton was a very driven man, almost messianic. And he was a remarkable and successful warrior. But, most of the soldiers I've served with over the years, know that war means death, war means violence, war means destruction. We should get war over with as quickly as possible.

LARRY KING: Being a black American in the service was not easy was it?

COLIN POWELL: It was not easy throughout all of our nation's history. When I came along, it was a heck of a lot easier than it had been earlier. And it was easier because those who went before me had paved the way.

LARRY KING: And Truman—

COLIN POWELL: And Truman had done the remarkable thing in 1947 by signing the law that ended segregation in the military.

LARRY KING: Where along the line, General, did you say "I am going to be a General"?

COLIN POWELL: I never really said that. Even though people find that strained. At some point in my career I realized I was doing well enough to become a general. But what was sort of put into me, in the early years of my career, by my superiors, was that you do your very, very best at any rank, in any job and let the future take care of itself. I wasn't without ambition and I wanted to get ahead, but a young black kid coming out of the Bronx, Larry, in 1958, wasn't thinking about General, he was thinking about a job and he was thinking about doing the very best he could.

LARRY KING: Is there politics in the Army?

COLIN POWELL: There is politics in almost every field of human endeavor and there is some politics in the Army of course.

LARRY KING: Do you have to play the game?

COLIN POWELL: You have to accomplish the mission, you have to do your job, you have to show loyalty to your superiors, to your subordinates, to those who work alongside of you. But you have to fundamentally do the job.

LARRY KING: We've been together along the speakers trail, which is a wonderful trail to be on.

COLIN POWELL: Yes, it is.

LARRY KING: And we've spoken a lot at parties, and you've always said, "Boy, writing this book is tough."

COLIN POWELL: It was tough.

LARRY KING: "Tougher than I thought."

COLIN POWELL: It was.

LARRY KING: Why?

COLIN POWELL: It was tough because it was, first of all, something that I had never done before. And because it required you to really reach deep into your heart and into your soul to pull up the story that was there. And I was blessed in having a marvelous collaborator in Joseph Persico, who knew this business.

LARRY KING: Great writer.

COLIN POWELL: He's a terrific writer. And he forced me. The first time we sat down together, he said, "You've got to put it all out there. You can always take a little back, but it all has to come out—"

LARRY KING: What—

COLIN POWELL: —so we can have an honest, true, readable, interesting story.

LARRY KING: Was it painful at times?

COLIN POWELL: At times it was painful: talking about my parents, talking about some of the disappointments that did come along the way in my career. It was painful. And it was always the easiest thing in the world to say, "Well, forget about that. Let's not talk about that." But we—we did talk about it. We brought it all out and put together a book that I hope the American people will enjoy reading.

LARRY KING: And apparently are gobbling up?

COLIN POWELL: So far it's doing rather well, the first couple of days. We're very excited about it. I'm excited about it. My family is, Jo is—

LARRY KING: Did Harry Evans edit it?

COLIN POWELL: —and the fellows who published it— Harry Evans is both my editor and my publisher. He did a brilliant job of editing. I hope you are listening, Harry.

LARRY KING: He always is.

COLIN POWELL: He's always listening?

LARRY KING: Yes.

COLIN POWELL: He did it on— he did it on a beach in Jamaica, on a laptop. And, of course, it took us three weeks to straighten out the discs when they— once they came back, but he did a great job of editing.

LARRY KING: Did you pick the title?

COLIN POWELL: The title sort of emerged. It was almost the last thing we did. We kept searching for the— for the essence of the story. "What do we really call this?" And American kept popping out, Journey kept popping out, the American Dream came out and then, eventually, it just emerged, *My American Journey*. And I have to give a large part of the credit for that to Harry Evans, who saw the essence of the story and pushed that title.

LARRY KING: James Baldwin once said, "No black in this country ever forgets his color."

COLIN POWELL: I see it every morning when I look in

the mirror. He's— he's absolutely right. And what he was also saying is that there— there is still, in this country, a degree of racism, and you are not allowed to forget your color. And we have to keep working on that.

LARRY KING: How do you overcome it?

COLIN POWELL: I don't—I don't ever want to forget my color and I don't want anyone ever to forget my color when they are looking at me. I want them to see an American and I also want them to see a black American who is proud of being an American who happens to be black.

LARRY KING: Are you shocked at all this presidential talk?

COLIN POWELL: It's— it's very exciting. Shocked isn't the right word.

LARRY KING: Surprised?

COLIN POWELL: Surprised, really. When I retired two years ago, I really went on sabbatical. I went into seclusion to write this book. And to— to—

LARRY KING: Make speeches.

COLIN POWELL: —and to take— to spend some time with you on the— on the lecture circuit which is great fun.

LARRY KING: Great fun.

COLIN POWELL: And I expected a lot of the attention to die down. But, it did not. It did not.

LARRY KING: We will deal with that now. The book, by the way, the General sets records, he signed books in McLean yesterday and signed over 3,200 books. This is at a rather small community, north of Washington.

We will be right back with General Colin Powell. Tomorrow night, Bette Midler. And Wednesday night, guest host Spike Lee. We will be right back.

[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: Our guest is Colin Powell, the book is *My American Journey*, co-authored with Joseph Persico, from Random House. There you see its cover. It's everywhere in America. I think the first print is close to a million, 750,000?

COLIN POWELL: It's about a million, somewhere around that.

LARRY KING: About a million, first print, which is unheard of.

COLIN POWELL: It's quite exciting.

LARRY KING: Do you like being an author?

COLIN POWELL: Now that it is over and I am an author, yes.

LARRY KING: Do you fear overkill? You know, it's— here you are now, at the beginning of a tour. By the end of this tour, I mean if you are not already the best known American, you will be the best known American.

COLIN POWELL: No, I am not worried about that. I am having a great time visiting with the American people via television or— or through the newspapers.

LARRY KING: Since you seem to like this so much—

COLIN POWELL: I like it.

LARRY KING: - how did you not do it, for two years?

COLIN POWELL: Larry, please.

LARRY KING: How did you not do it?

COLIN POWELL: What are we getting into this fight for,

in front of all of your audience.

LARRY KING: It's not a fight. How could you? For someone who loves attention, the media, how could you stay home.

COLIN POWELL: I apologize, Larry.

LARRY KING: Okay, accepted.

COLIN POWELL: And I will come again, if you—

LARRY KING: You better.

COLIN POWELL: As soon as you invited me.

LARRY KING: I mean didn't you—

COLIN POWELL: I didn't want—

LARRY KING: You got this— let's show them. The braces. Didn't you say to yourself at times, "I'd like to go on." Forget this show, any show, didn't you say, "Boy, I wish I were on there, today."

COLIN POWELL: For the last two years, I really have enjoyed my privacy and seclusion. I have been able to, you know, stay at home with my family and be offstage for awhile. It was very refreshing. And work on the book and make some speeches around the countryside, visit lots of schools, walk through VA hospitals.

I enjoyed that very, very much. And I didn't miss the attention. And I am not worried about overkill, now. I am looking forward to going out and meeting the American people again.

LARRY KING: Terrific book, by the way.

COLIN POWELL: Thank you very much, Larry.

LARRY KING: The concept of being president has got to be heady?

COLIN POWELL: It's very heady. It's— it's a very important— the perhaps most important position in our nation.

LARRY KING: Enormous responsibilities.

COLIN POWELL: Enormous responsibilities. There are many important positions in our nation and it certainly is the top political position in our nation and it is something very heady to think about.

LARRY KING: And what kind of— How do you give it— You said you are going to say something in November. What do— what do— How— What's the— What— Or— Well, let's put it this way: under what circumstances would you say yes?

COLIN POWELL: That's—

LARRY KING: What has to happen.

COLIN POWELL: That's— that's what I am going to have to examine over the next several weeks. You have to remember, Larry, that I have not spent my whole adult life trying to reach the point where I could run for elected political office. My whole life was spent in entirely the different direction, in entirely a different profession and field. Soldiering.

LARRY KING: Like your hero, Eisenhower.

COLIN POWELL: I have other heroes, George Marshall and others. But like my hero, Eisenhower, as a soldier. And so this hasn't been a driving ambition for me to enter public office. And what I— what I have to do over the next several weeks is see what reaction there is to, not only my book, but my being out in public life and taking positions on the various issues that are out there. And then I will

have to see whether or not I really have something to contribute that is unique and different from anyone else and whether I have the passion to pursue that vision. And—

LARRY KING: You don't know that yet?

COLIN POWELL: I don't—I don't really know that yet.

LARRY KING: How did you feel today, being—maybe for the first time—picketed, attacked verbally because of your position on pro-choice.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah. I have been—

LARRY KING: They followed you around today.

COLIN POWELL: —attacked — They followed me around, today, and it was very respectful, and I very much, you know, I—I—I—accepted their views and I listened carefully. These are people who are very committed to their point of view and they have a very moral point of view. And I am not encouraging abortion. I am against abortion. I wish that a woman who becomes pregnant and does not wish to keep the child, would carry the pregnancy to term and then put the child up for adoption, and that we make adoption easier.

But, at the end of the day, I also believe that under the laws of our land that woman is permitted to make that choice and combined with her own—

LARRY KING: But how did you react to—

COLIN POWELL: —with her own conscience and her God.

LARRY KING: How did you react to seeing— have you ever seen critics before?

COLIN POWELL: I listened. Sure, I— Oh, Larry.

LARRY KING: Where?

COLIN POWELL: I have—I have been subject to criticism. I gave a speech at Harvard not too long ago, where I was criticized. I've been publicly criticized. I've been in public life for eight years at a fairly senior level, so I understand criticism. So, you know, in this case, I listened to the people who came through the signing line and wished to say a word to me about this position and I conveyed back my view. And they were thoughtful, thoughtful people who felt strongly about their position.

So, this is not something that is strange to me or something that I can't manage.

LARRY KING: It didn't bother you?

COLIN POWELL: No, this—it didn't bother me today.

LARRY KING: I guess the question is, can—are you thin skinned about things where you see yourself attacked?

COLIN POWELL: I think I'm—I'm a fairly normal human being who does not like to be attacked or criticized. But I also understand that is part of the public dialogue in a democracy, that happens in a democracy and I can manage it.

I—I have operated at a fairly senior level, where criticism was, you know, the—the thing that happened to you every day and I can handle that.

LARRY KING: But if you were running for office it wouldn't force you to change opinions, would it? Or— or would you?

COLIN POWELL: No, what I— what I'm trying to do right now, is to lay out my core beliefs. I am not trying to put positions out to satisfy any particular part of the politi-

cal spectrum. I'm putting out what I believe. I know that politics is also the art of compromise, but I have some core beliefs and I am not going to attack and change every time some criticism comes my way if they are a core belief that I am defending.

LARRY KING: Back with Colin Powell, in just a moment. We will be including your phone calls in a little while. The book is *My American Journey*.

Next week, John F. Kennedy, Jr. Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell, is our guest. The book is *My American Journey* from Random House.

Did you meet with Republican strategists? That has been reported somewhere.

COLIN POWELL: Oh, I meet with lots of people. I wouldn't characterize anybody as a Republican strategist, but I've been meeting with friends of mine who are Republicans and others who are Democrats who wish to give me political advice.

LARRY KING: From the statements published and broadcast, it would appear that you are an independent.

COLIN POWELL: I have always voted as an independent.

LARRY KING: Therefore, you have voted for Republican and you have voted for Democrats?

COLIN POWELL: Correct.

LARRY KING: It would also appear that if you are going to run, you are not going to go primary.

COLIN POWELL: Well—

LARRY KING: Has that—

COLIN POWELL: No, that has not been excluded as an option. I think that all options are open to me at this point.

LARRY KING: You describe yourself as a fiscal conservative.

COLIN POWELL: Mm-hm.

LARRY KING: Meaning?

COLIN POWELL: Meaning that I have the deepest belief in our capitalist, entrepreneurial system. I think that government should do everything possible to free the creative energy that exists in the American industry. Put enough constraints in place so that it is done fairly and that we don't exploit labor, and that is said honestly. But, otherwise, get out of the way of business. Let's create jobs and let's create wealth. Jobs and wealth are good.

LARRY KING: Taxes?

COLIN POWELL: Wealth is what we need. Taxes we should keep as low as possible. I mean nobody wants to see a tax burden any higher than the one we have now, and if it is possible to reduce it, we should reduce it. But we have to do it in a way that shows we are good stewards of our future as well, and not in a way that allows the deficit to increase and we put a tax burden on future generations.

So, I think you would find that my feelings on economic matters, and matters of that nature, are— are quite conservative.

LARRY KING: Would you be so definitive, like George Bush once said, "Read my lips?"

COLIN POWELL: No, I— I don't think that is good stewardship. I don't think it is good stewardship to preclude doing the right thing, if the time comes. So I would not sign pledges of that nature. I think responsible stewardship and leadership means that you— you have to handle the nation's treasure well. And it may be necessary, at times, to raise taxes, but nobody wants to raise taxes and you should avoid it. You should try to cut government spending, bring the government under control, lower the cost of government, get government out of peoples lives and if you can lower taxes, do it.

But, at the same time, lowering taxes, or allowing entitlement spending, or all kinds of other government spending to increase, and supporting that, by putting a tax burden on future generations, is not good stewardship.

LARRY KING: Minimum wage up?

COLIN POWELL: I— I have an open mind on that, because I think that the data is not clear right now as to whether that actually creates more jobs or loses jobs. And so I am still studying on that one.

LARRY KING: Back with General Colin Powell. We will be going to your phone calls in about five minutes. Don't go away.

(Commercial break)

LARRY KING: We're back with General Colin Powell, we are going to go to your calls at the bottom of the hour. An old friend of mine, John Hooker, in Tennessee, told me something today — and he was the one that said maybe Perot might want to run, and you are sitting in the seat where he announced — that in Tennessee this week they are going to put you on the ballot as an independent. They don't need — they don't need a lot of signatures in Tennessee, and they are going to do it this week. A group is forming and going to put you on the ballot, in Tennessee, this week. Comment?

COLIN POWELL: Well, I am flattered that the people in Tennessee, represented by Mr. Hooker, feel so strongly about my potential as a candidate. But this is the first I'm hearing it, and so I— I will have to reflect on that. I, of course, at this point, can't encourage them to do that, or endorse the effort. But I am flattered that they feel that way about me.

LARRY KING: You are also not saying "Don't do it."

COLIN POWELL: Well, I don't think I should give them advice at this point.

LARRY KING: Well said. Well said. Any candidate at all, jump out at you? Democrat or Republican?

COLIN POWELL: I know— I know all of them. I have—

LARRY KING: And like them, don't you?

COLIN POWELL: I like them all. I mean, I know all of these— these gentlemen, they are all dedicated Americans. I think, right now the American people are sort of— they are still examining. We are still 14 months away from— away from the election. Obviously, President Clinton will be the nominee of the— of the Democratic party and, right now, it looks like Senator Bob Dole, who I have worked

with for many, many years, is ahead, way ahead of his competition within the Republican ranks.

LARRY KING: Let's say this is just a let's say — would they be formidable to you? Or do you think you could give it a tussle? The polls say you could.

COLIN POWELL: Well, I don't want to handicap myself yet, until I've decided that I am going to actually be a candidate. I think that Senator Dole, a great American, and distinguished war hero, as well as a very, very successful politician and legislator over the years, and a man who has a vision for America, and has the passion for it, would be the most formidable opponent for any of the other candidates. And I think that he is doing very, very well.

But this is not the time for me to start handicapping myself. I think I have to cross a few bridges before I come to that point.

LARRY KING: President beatable? Would you go— you wouldn't go in the Democratic primary, right?

COLIN POWELL: No, I think that's—

LARRY KING: You already said you wouldn't.

COLIN POWELL: —that's out.

LARRY KING: That's out?

COLIN POWELL: That's out of the question, yeah

LARRY KING: You are not going to challenge a sitting president, that way?

COLIN POWELL: No. No I— I am not interested in seeking any political position with the Democratic party.

LARRY KING: Your book reveals he offered you the vice presidency.

COLIN POWELL: No, the book says that an emissary came and inquired as to whether I might be interested in the vice presidency. President Clinton and I never talked about it.

LARRY KING: Well, how did you react when the emissary said that?

COLIN POWELL: I said that I, I was not interested. I was a soldier, I wanted to finish my term as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I also said that I didn't want to leave soldiering to go into politics. And I— I worked for President Bush, who is a dear friend of mine, who was my Commander in Chief, and who I have the warmest feelings for, and there were no— there were no set of circumstances under which I could have entered politics against President Bush or his administration.

LARRY KING: Do you react well, or badly, when it is said, "Yeah, Colin Powell is very popular. Everybody loves you, I guess, except maybe for Rush Limbaugh, everybody loves you. I mean Jesse Helms loves you. Maybe Pat Robertson is not the greatest fan, but you are a loved person. Do you ever get to think that, when people say, "This is a black American who could win." or, "this is a black American I could vote for." Do you regard that as racist?

COLIN POWELL: I wouldn't want to characterize it as racist. But I hope we reach the point in our national life, in the not too distant future, where people would say first, "This is somebody I could vote for, I could support for this officer or the other. And it's also good that he's black. It shows that we've come a certain way in our country." And not just instantly see me through a black filter

I have never hidden from my blackness, I am proud of it, it is a source of great strength to me, but I hope we've reached that point in American life that it is not the first thing that people see.

LARRY KING: How about turning the whole thing over. How about if you run, run with a woman.

COLIN POWELL: Larry, when—

LARRY KING: Might as well sweep it—

COLIN POWELL: —Larry, when— when the time comes, if the time ever comes, I would certainly seek your advice as to who I might choose to run with.

LARRY KING: Might you include a woman.

COLIN POWELL: Why not.

LARRY KING: We will be back.

COLIN POWELL: I can think of a number of very capable women.

LARRY KING: A lot of impediments there.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah

LARRY KING: We will be back— we will be back with your calls. First time ever, taking phone calls, live. Colin Powell, next. Don't go away.

[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: By the way, we mentioned a million first print, we've just learned from Random House that they have gone into a second printing, printing 200,000 additional copies, today.

COLIN POWELL: Very exciting.

LARRY KING: You are on a roll.

LARRY KING: Columbia, Maryland. Hello?

1st CALLER, [Columbia, Maryland]: Hi, Larry. General Powell, I commend you on your career and the success of your book.

COLIN POWELL: Thank you.

1st CALLER: My question is, the African American community, particularly young black men are under siege by many things. What do you see as part of the solution and what can you add as a possible presidential candidate.

COLIN POWELL: I think the solution ultimately has to be a rebirth, a rejuvenation of the American family and the American black family. American blacks had a strong tradition of family. That's what— that's what set me on my way in life. And I think we have to break the cycle of illegitimacy that is plaguing our communities, our inner city communities. I think we have to fix our education system. I think we have to restore a sense of pride. We've got to teach our young people, once again, self restraint. Separating out right from wrong. I don't think any single government program, or any single politician can fix it. I think what has to happen is all of us as Americans turning back to those of our citizens who are in need, who have not benefited from the American dream, who have not shared in the wealth of this country and start to bring them up.

But African Americans have to start with ourselves and not look outside of our communities, or outside of our own culture for this. We have got to start teaching our children, again, the way we were taught, the way I was taught as a child, to behave and to have a sense of pride.

LARRY KING: The hardest thing is walking in someone

else's skin or shoes. So what was it like— I know what it was like for me, it was a horrible thing— what was it like for you to hear the Mark Fuhrman tapes?

COLIN POWELL: It was shocking. It was shocking. To hear Mark Fuhrman say that about the people that he was sworn to protect. And so when I— when I hear people tell me that "We want to have a color blind society, we want level playing fields," I— I love hearing that and I wish it were true. But when you hear a Mark Fuhrman tape you know it is not yet true. It is not yet true. And we've got to keep working to make it true, in due course, for all Americans.

So, Mark Fuhrman's tapes, shocked me, stunned me but also reminded me that we still have a long way to go and we have all got to work at it.

LARRY KING: So, very painful, then.

COLIN POWELL: Very painful.

LARRY KING: Now this O.J. Simpson matter has crossed racial lines and people are talking about blacks think he didn't do it, whites think he did do it — how do you feel about it?

COLIN POWELL: Well, I think we have a legal system in this country that will determine guilt or innocence so I wouldn't wish to speculate on whether he did it or not, the courts will determine that and that jury will determine that. But, as you see the reaction, within the white community and within the black community, more whites think he is guilty than blacks, by a significant difference. And that is because blacks have concerns about the quality of law and they have concerns about justice for blacks in this country.

LARRY KING: And that is—

COLIN POWELL: And that's probably why—

LARRY KING: —logical, right?

COLIN POWELL: It— there is some logic to it. I mean, there is— there is a problem. One million people are in jail in our country, doing hard time. And over 50 percent of them are black. That is the reality. I am not saying that they are in jail wrongly. We have problems in the black community, but at the same time there is a— a weakness of faith, if I can say it that way, within the black community over the systems of justice that we have in this country and it is reflected in these poll results with respect to O.J. Simpson.

LARRY KING: Were there ever men that you led that you know didn't like you because of color?

COLIN POWELL: I am sure there were. But—

LARRY KING: You were in Vietnam. You had to send—

COLIN POWELL: I was—

LARRY KING: —people into battle?

COLIN POWELL: —in Vietnam and—

LARRY KING: Men have died under you, right?

COLIN POWELL: Men have died under me.

LARRY KING: Men have died?

COLIN POWELL: That's— that's correct. And I am sure there were some who would rather have not been led by or supervised by a black man. But, in the military, at the time I came along, you better keep that quiet. Because we had determined that the only thing that counted in the

military was the green uniform you wore, that was the color that counted. And, as one of my dear friends who was killed in Vietnam once said on a television program, "Same blood, same mud." No room for that kind of thing.

And that is why the military was so successful over the years in putting together an integrated society that took the worth of every individual in the military.

LARRY KING: Barry Goldwater said "There are gays buried at Arlington."

COLIN POWELL: There are.

LARRY KING: "And gays buried at Normandy."

COLIN POWELL: True.

LARRY KING: Why shouldn't they serve?

COLIN POWELL: We have a privacy problem, I believe, in the military. We are a reflection of our society. And I know that there are gays serving in the military now and serving well. We ask them to make an additional sacrifice beyond the other sacrifices that you have to make for military service and that is to keep their sexual orientation a private matter, to themselves.

LARRY KING: Because?

COLIN POWELL: Because we think that it would be very detrimental to good order and discipline to have additional sexual orientations and genders within the confines of barracks life and shipboard life. The fact of the matter is, we tell people who they are going to room with, we tell people who they are going to sleep with. And we have young people in the armed forces of the United States. And it was my judgment and the judgment of my colleagues on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the senior commanders of the armed forces of the United States, that we thought it was prejudicial to good order and discipline to have open homosexual orientation announced within the armed forces.

It's a controversial issue, but that was our best judgment.

LARRY KING: Do you miss the Army?

COLIN POWELL: I love the Army with all my heart, but I had 35 good years and every now and then there is a twinge, but I always try to close doors and move forward and—

LARRY KING: So it's behind you.

COLIN POWELL: —and look to the future. It's behind me. Except when I walk through an airport and see a young soldier, or airman, or marine or sailor in uniform and then the little twinge comes back that I am no longer part of that.

LARRY KING: Brussels, Belgium, hello.

2nd CALLER, [Brussels, Belgium]: Hello. Thank you for taking my call.

LARRY KING: Sure.

2nd CALLER: My question for Mr. Powell is, what does he believe the top priorities for U.S. foreign policy should be?

COLIN POWELL: I think perhaps our top priority right now is to keep the process of democratization and market reform going in the former republics of the Soviet Union, and especially in Russia. Russia remains a superpower because of its size, because of its potential. And I think the

revolution that has occurred over the last several years is still tenuous and I think one of our most important foreign policy objectives, if not our most important one, is to keep that process moving forward in Russia.

LARRY KING: Do you fear a war?

COLIN POWELL: I don't fear a war again. I mean, one of the great achievements of the last few years, which is the end of 50 years worth of struggle was the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. That was a historic change which has— which has fundamentally changed the entire shape of the world.

LARRY KING: Has the president made a major foreign policy mistake?

COLIN POWELL: I don't think that he has made a major foreign policy mistake, because the nation is not at war. We have good, stable relations around the world, but there have been some missteps along the way, but there always are within any administration.

LARRY KING: Is it hard for you, having been a general all of these years, to now say anything that might be critical? Because you are so used to not being critical.

COLIN POWELL: It's the change— it's the change in my life. I mean I was a soldier, and loyal to my Commander in Chief for the time that I served, but now, in order to be candid about the issues, from time to time, I will have to be critical about the issues I see out there and the way those issues are being handled.

LARRY KING: How are we doing in Bosnia?

COLIN POWELL: I hope that we are on the verge of a breakthrough. I think a number of things have come together. Finally, solid leadership from Washington. President Clinton, and Mr. Christopher, and Tony Lake, especially, when he traveled through Europe, to get all of the allies, finally, on the— on the same political wicket. You know my views: you have to have a common political objective. And then the new diplomatic effort this time led by the United States, and not just a group of folks, and led ably by Ambassador Holbrooke, and then, of course, the use of military force. The Croatian successes in the Krajina, as well as the use of air power over the last couple of weeks used in a decisive way, not pin pricks that were really not related to what the problem was.

LARRY KING: It was our obligation, was it not, to be?

COLIN POWELL: I think once, once the president got all of his colleagues in Europe and NATO and the UN all lined up to say to the Serbs, "If you violate these safe areas," after Srebrenica and Zepa were lost, "if you violate anymore of these safe areas, we will respond in an overwhelming and decisive way." Once they crossed that line they had to be responded to in an overwhelming and decisive way. You can't put down threats like that without following through.

LARRY KING: Back with more calls for Colin Powell, after this.

[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: We're back with General Colin Powell. We go to Elosha, Manitoba, hello?

3rd CALLER, [Elosha, Manitoba]: Hello, Larry, how are you?

LARRY KING: Fine.

3rd CALLER: Colin Powell, I am an ex Naval officer, a retired Naval officer may I exchange a quick salute with you, sir. Thank you, very much.

LARRY KING: A first.

3rd CALLER: I was— I was saluting as well. I would like to ask you, I read in *Time* magazine this week, there was some criticism of some of your military decisions in the past. In particular, they mentioned the, your planned invasion of Robin Givens crotch.

LARRY KING: I'm sorry, I didn't— Sick call. See what I mean? There are— there are ill people out there. By the way, are you worried about your, about danger on the road?

COLIN POWELL: No, my— my wife is. But I—

LARRY KING: When you hear a call like that—

COLIN POWELL: But I'm not, no.

LARRY KING: —wouldn't it be logical?

COLIN POWELL: Well, I have been in public life and for the last two years I've gotten quite a bit of mail, and there are some strange people out there and you— you have to have some little slight level of concern, but I don't let it overwhelm me.

LARRY KING: Medicare? The public loves it. Afraid of losing it.

COLIN POWELL: The public should love it. It's— It's a terrific program, it brought comfort to me and my family, when my— when my parents were in the last years of their lives and I don't think anybody is planning to scrap it. But, at the same time, the reality is that Medicare costs growth. It is higher than we— than we can sustain, at the current level of revenue that comes in for the Medicare program.

LARRY KING: So we have to cut?

COLIN POWELL: We have to cut the cost of— the growth cost. We don't want to do anything to eliminate the program. It's the rate of growth that we're talking about cutting.

LARRY KING: So you favor the Republican proposal, then?

COLIN POWELL: So far, from what I have seen over the last week, the Republican proposal seems to be the more responsible proposal, principally because I have not seen a Democratic proposal.

LARRY KING: The president—

COLIN POWELL: And then the thing that— the thing that is disturbing about it, and the reason that there is such a debate, is that the Democrats accuse the Republicans of doing it solely for a tax cut, and the Republicans tend to accuse the Democrats of just continuing the welfare state. And what the American people are seeing is this debate. And the answer is we have to do something to get this cost growth under control. And why don't you guys in Washington, and you ladies in Washington get on with that problem and stop shouting at each other.

LARRY KING: You said—

COLIN POWELL: Shouting is part of the democratic process, but not too much shouting.

LARRY KING: You said you were uncomfortable in either

party, in a sense.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah.

LARRY KING: With either party.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah, I am still finding myself.

LARRY KING: The candidates haven't flipped you. Therefore, this is a strictly what-if, and not to be taken for anything other than that, who would be the core that you would say to come to you if you are no either and we're a two party system.

COLIN POWELL: We may be a two party system, but we're not necessarily a two party nation. And as I have— as I have traveled around the country over the last two years, I have found more and more people, especially within the last year and a half, who are not claiming to be either Republicans or Democrats. They are representing something different. They are disappointed with both of the major parties. And they are—

LARRY KING: A plague on both of your houses?

COLIN POWELL: —looking for something different. It is sort of a plague on both your houses, or I am disappointed with both your houses, and they are looking—

LARRY KING: And do you think Ross Perot touched that?

COLIN POWELL: —for something different. I think Ross Perot really did touch it. He touched a very responsive chord. And since 1992, when he touched it, it has not gone away. I see it everywhere I go.

LARRY KING: And those people would come to you, do you think?

COLIN POWELL: I don't know that they would at the end of the day. At the end of the day, they may go back to their original— their original homes and constituencies. That's— that's one of the tough political questions of our time.

But I can tell you that there— there are a large number of Americans, and they are not just wishy-washy people in the center— there are a large number of Americans who are disappointed in the way the Republicans and the Democrats have been conducting the nation's business.

LARRY KING: Your passion seems to be growing.

COLIN POWELL: How much more time have we got?

LARRY KING: Hey, if you are going to say something, we will keep you.

We will be back with Colin Powell, don't go away
[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: We're back with General Colin Powell. New Orleans, Louisiana, hello?

4th CALLER, [New Orleans, Louisiana]: About what his ideas are about the family cap.

LARRY KING: What family cap.

COLIN POWELL: The welfare—

4th CALLER: The family cap.

COLIN POWELL: Oh, the welfare family cap?

LARRY KING: Oh, the welfare— Yeah. Which the— I think Clinton endorsed today.

COLIN POWELL: Yeah. I— I don't think the evidence is there yet that we know what the effect of a cap will actually be or what the effect on children would be. Changing

the manner in which unwed mothers are compensated. And so, I think we have to be very, very careful, as Senator Patrick Moynihan has been saying, that we really don't have good data upon which to make a judgment on this issue. I, of course, want to remove any incentive that exists in the welfare system that would encourage young women to go out and have additional children that they can't support and they don't have a family structure to take care of. But at the same time, I— I think we have to be careful of doing it in a way that does not hurt, ultimately, the child.

I think there are much more powerful forces at work that cause young girls to become pregnant. And that is they are doing it to bring something of value in their life, they perceive as a child. Because there isn't enough, there aren't enough other things of value in their life. So I think there— there— there are other powerful forces at work.

LARRY KING: Do you agree with the recognition of Vietnam?

COLIN POWELL: I agree with the recognition of Vietnam.

LARRY KING: Should we recognize Cuba?

COLIN POWELL: I think it is premature to change our overall policy to Cuba, but Cuba is becoming an irrelevant leftover of the cold war and I think in due course it will be necessary to start modifying our policy to get ready for the collapse of Castro.

LARRY KING: Do you— if you decided not to run, and Dole comes to you, or whoever gets the Republican nomination, comes to you and says, "You are an American, Colin Powell. You owe it to your country. Run with me."

COLIN POWELL: I— I owe my country some form of service. And my options in life right now are not to either run for political office or— or go hide in the basement somewhere. There are a range of options available to me and if I decide not to seek the highest office in the land, or enter elected politics, I will look at that entire range. I am not—

LARRY KING: Would that have an—

COLIN POWELL: The moment to consider alternatives—

LARRY KING: Would that have an emotional appeal to you as I just stated it?

COLIN POWELL: I— it sure would. I mean I would have to consider that very, very seriously, but right now it is not something that I find is an attractive option.

LARRY KING: Back with our remaining moments with General Colin Powell. The book went into its second printing today, that's at 1,200,000. The book is titled *My American Journey*.

Tomorrow night, Bette Midler. We will be right back.
[Commercial break]

LARRY KING: By the way, we apologize for that phone call. It happens. It also shows us what is out there, so maybe it's good to see that all is not well in Mudville.

Is your wife totally opposed to your going in?

COLIN POWELL: Alma would prefer that we remain a private couple and not in elected public life.

LARRY KING: And she's a wonderful woman?

COLIN POWELL: She's a wonderful woman.

LARRY KING: My dinner partner at a state dinner once.

COLIN POWELL: Yes.

LARRY KING: What is her import in this. In other words, does she carry—

COLIN POWELL: We—we have been a team for 33 years. We are a very close family and it is a decision that we would have to arrive at together. It is not anything I would ask her to do, that she really, really didn't want to do. But she's been a wonderful Army wife for those 33 years. She has served her nation as well as I have tried to serve my nation. And it is a decision we will reach as a family and as a team.

LARRY KING: You told me once that your opinion of Jimmy Carter went way up in Haiti.

COLIN POWELL: Yes.

LARRY KING: You saw a strong man.

COLIN POWELL: Oh, I saw a very strong man.

LARRY KING: Does that still stand?

COLIN POWELL: Yes.

LARRY KING: He pulled that off, didn't he?

COLIN POWELL: He pulled it off. He—he pulled it off, and as, in my book, I credit three presidents: President Clinton for having the courage to take that one last chance for peace; President Carter for the manner in which he led that delegation and then somebody we don't hear about anymore, President Jonassaint, who was the de facto, if not recognized president of Haiti, who realized it was time to tell his military to give up the ghost.

LARRY KING: Do you still feel a great personal tie to Ronald Reagan?

COLIN POWELL: I do indeed.

LARRY KING: He made you, in a sense, didn't he?

COLIN POWELL: I would allow that to stand. I mean, I think—

LARRY KING: He certainly made you a national name.

COLIN POWELL: He made me a national figure. And I think the absolute world of President Reagan. I've tried to be very warm toward him in my book. I think he was a remarkable man, a remarkable president. I think he gave this country a sense of vision, a sense of purpose, he—he made us proud of who we are. May not have commanded every detail and there were some areas I wish he had done more in, but I have the highest admiration for him. And I also want to say that to Mrs. Reagan as well. She was part of that team. And you had those two people together who served America very, very well.

LARRY KING: Have you been to the new Korean Memorial?

COLIN POWELL: Yes, it's beautiful.

LARRY KING: And the Vietnam, of course, you have.

COLIN POWELL: Of course.

LARRY KING: Thanks, Colin.

COLIN POWELL: Thanks very much, Larry.

LARRY KING: Good luck on the book trail.

COLIN POWELL: Thanks very much.

LARRY KING: Colin Powell, Chairman, Joint Chiefs, former Chairman Joint Chiefs, and the author of *My American Journey*.

Thanks for joining us. Tomorrow night in New York, with Bette Midler and don't forget, we will be back in LA for the close of the Simpson trial.

Thanks for joining us and good night.

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FURTHER INFORMATION:

My American Journey, Colin Powell, with Joseph Persico, Random House

The preceding text has been professionally transcribed. However, although the text has been checked against an audio track, in order to meet rigid distribution and transmission deadlines, it has not yet been proofread against videotape.