

Paul: [00:00](#) Ladies and gentlemen, angry Americans around the country and around the world, uh, esteemed guests here at the Classic Car Club in New York, welcome to a very special recording of an Angry Americans episode with the great and powerful ambassador Susan Rice.

Susan Rice: [00:14](#) Thank you Paul, thank you guys.

Paul: [00:19](#) Um, welcome ma'am.

Susan Rice: [00:21](#) Thanks.

Paul: [00:21](#) It's awesome to have you here.

Susan Rice: [00:22](#) What a great place.

Paul: [00:24](#) I'm glad you like it. It's a, it's tough to get people here. It's-

Susan Rice: [00:27](#) Well, it's hard to find a little bit.

Paul: [00:27](#) It is.

Susan Rice: [00:27](#) But it's great to be here when you get here.

Paul: [00:32](#) I'm glad, we're really glad you could be here. And I think it's kind of a secure site and- and uh, you are probably used to much more secure sites, but you've been on such an, I think important run over the last couple months we were talking on the way up. Um, you've really been, I think spreading an incredibly positive and powerful message over the last couple of months. Um, how does it feel to have uh, the restrictions off? I feel like you're so candid now. You're on Twitter, you're throwing punches, you've always been taking punches, but as someone who has admired your leadership and is grateful for your leadership, I gotta ask you this, how does it feel right now to be in this new phase where it feels like you can really fully speak your mind and engage on the issues and topics that you care about spanning anything?

Susan Rice: [01:18](#) It feels great. That's the short answer. I mean, I've been free since I left the administration and when I say free, I mean free to say what I wanna say in my own voice, but also free to do whatever I wanna do and not do what I don't wanna do. So most days I walk around in yoga pants and a fleece and I get kinda upset when I have to get dressed up. In fact, I took off my

fleece to come over here and I'm glad I did 'cause I didn't know we were gonna be videotaped.

Audience: [01:47](#) (laughs).

Susan Rice: [01:47](#) But anyway, so it's been wonderful to have that freedom. But now having written my new book, Tough Love, my memoir, I've been able to put in my own words, my own story, where I came from, what my upbringing was, my family history, the influences that shaped me as a child growing up in Washington DC in the '60s, '70s and early '80s. My early career and how I got into foreign policy and national security, my early jobs, particularly in the Clinton administration and what I learned from those experiences and where I screwed up and how those lessons have helped me to be uh, a bit wiser in my later incarnations. And then my experience in the Clinton administration, I mean the Obama administration of course.

Susan Rice: [02:33](#) But it's also a very personal story about being a mother, about being a daughter of aging and- and ultimately dying parents is about how you manage marriage and you know, relationships with a two career family, uh, and sometimes with real separation. So, uh, it's all of those things. And at the end, it's also my hope for what this country can be and become despite our very significant domestic divisions. And I talk about how in my own household we experience those domestic divisions because my husband and I have two kids, one of whom our eldest is very conservative, like very conservative.

Paul: [03:19](#) The- the president of the conservative group.

Susan Rice: [03:21](#) President, former president until recently of Stanford College Republicans. Uh, and he built the organization from basically nothing, uh, into something quite significant. And our younger child, our daughter is very progressive, uh, even probably more so than my husband and myself. So we've got, you know, the spectrum represented at our dinner table, uh, with all of the complexity that that entails. But being able to speak in my own voice now that my story is out there and I realized, you know, if I wanna say unkind things about people that I think is justified, but I wouldn't have said otherwise, then I can say that I don't set out to do that. But when provoked, I- I now realize I can push back in a way that I wouldn't have and- and couldn't have when I was speaking on behalf of our country and on behalf of our president. Uh, and that was an extraordinary privilege. But you know, you in accepting that responsibility, you recognize that you're not there to speak for yourself. So it's liberating.

Paul: [04:30](#) Part of the excitement that I have around watching this new chapter for you is how it's transcending politics. It's going beyond politics into culture. And I think that's part of the power of the Obama administration and- and president Obama in particular is how he opened up politics and policy in government for so many people that were on the fringes. In this new role, you're now involved in the private sector, you're on the advisory board at- at Netflix, right?

Susan Rice: [04:54](#) On the board of directors, yes.

Paul: [04:55](#) Board of directors, thank you. And you're shaping culture. So did you, did you watch the Grammy's last night?

Susan Rice: [05:02](#) I did actually.

Paul: [05:02](#) You did. A- and what and what did, what did you think it was a lot of positivity. I thought about it because in- in preparation for this interview, your book is positive and you have an optimistic message. And I think there was a recognition of obviously some serious events going on in the world. And- and I'd like to ask you about Kobe Bryant too, if you, if you, if you would. But starting with the Grammys itself, this intersection of culture, and now I think a rise of activism among entertainers in particular, and you and president Obama and others are expanding into those worlds. What, what do you think of the Grammys?

Susan Rice: [05:31](#) Well, first of all, I don't wanna overstate my influence on culture. I- I have zero (laughs).

Paul: [05:36](#) It's not zero ma'am, with all due respect it's not zero.

Susan Rice: [05:38](#) It's zero. Uh, unless we're talking about high school basketball in the Washington DC area, which other than that, um, but I- I- I do enjoy being on the board of Netflix and I do enjoy, um, you know, having now the time and the freedom to be able to watch something like the Grammy's, uh, with my daughter who was home with us, who gave me and my husband a pop culture quiz before the Grammys, which we both failed miserably. But I just wonderful to see Alicia keys and- and so many different, uh, voices and- and- and uh, forms and Lizzo and just, it was just a wonderful, the tribute, uh, by usher to Prince. I mean, it was just a great, great, uh, performance or set of performances.

Susan Rice: [06:25](#) And yet it was, I think duly reverential too. And- and, you know, tempered by the loss of Kobe Bryant and his beautiful young daughter. I- I like so many others, I'm just, it's like a gut punch.

And I only met him once very briefly as he was passing through the, uh, the West wing lobby in the White House. But he was not just an extraordinary player, he was doing so much for so many beyond his immediate circle and his love for his daughters and his belief in their ability to be champions, just like he was just is so powerful to me. I'm a big believer in women's sports.

Susan Rice: [07:21](#) I grew up playing basketball and tennis and I know how much that shaped me. I've got a daughter who's a real athlete. I've got a niece uh, who's one of the basketball players I follow closely in Washington, DC who's a top, top prospect, uh, in the country, in her age group. Uh, and you know, I just know how powerfully important it is for women to be able to believe that they can compete at any level. Uh, and so of the many, many contributions that Kobe Bryant made, that, you know, that belief in the importance of women's athletics, getting the full lift that it deserves, just makes his passing so much more tragic. And of course, massively compounded by the loss of his daughter and the others on that helicopter flight.

Paul: [08:12](#) And ma'am, what I thought about was- was just the impact that our culture has on the world and the positive impact it can have, somebody like Lizzo, right? Who is almost a- a total polar opposite to Donald Trump, right?

Susan Rice: [08:25](#) (laughs).

Paul: [08:25](#) I- if we're, if we're thinking about, right? In so many different ways, but- but-

Susan Rice: [08:28](#) Yes.

Paul: [08:28](#) ... but if we're thinking about what America exports as someone who has been a lead diplomat, a lead advocate, a lead evangelist for America at a time when we've got a- a government that many of us are so um, conflicted about and- and at times outraged by leaders who don't represent America well. I just, I wonder, uh, how much you think about the power of our culture to do maybe what our bombs and soldiers and even diplomats can't do if we're trying to permeate the Iranian youth or if we're trying to get to folks inside North Korea, is pop music and the NBA maybe a more effective way to do it or, you know, do you think about that on the global s- stage as an asset for American diplomacy?

Susan Rice: [09:11](#) I think yes broadly, it is an asset. It's falls under the rubric of what's been now called soft power. Our ways of influencing that

go beyond the traditional tools, particularly of the military, but also beyond intelligence and even traditional diplomacy and development. And the soft power, uh, concept underscores not only our ability to, uh, to be a leader in terms of culture and that culture is not just movie, movies and music, it's literature, it's sports, it's so many other things. Uh, but it also underscores the importance of our values and leading on the basis of our, both our founding values, which of course we have adhered to imperfectly, but still I hope continue to hold dear.

Susan Rice: [10:02](#) Uh, and to universal values, a belief that we all are inherently of worth and of equal value as human beings. And when America steps back from being faithful to our values and trying to, uh, espouse them and act on that basis, I think we lose ground. Uh, and then when we, uh, allow our democracy and our press freedoms and our institutions to be undermined and our separations of, separation of powers fails, that too affects how we're viewed internationally in a very real way. And so we need to be firing on all cylinders using all the components of our power, hard and soft, and- and in between. And I'm concerned that we are allowing many of those tools to atrophy.

Paul: [10:52](#) In the book you write powerfully, and you've talked powerfully about the role of your parents and how they helped shape those values. And I think when I look to someone uh, who can represent the integrity of the United States, I think you've been a pillar for us over the last couple of years. But you've talked powerfully about the role of your parents and your father was a Tuskegee Airmen. So can you talk about what that part of his experience in particular, a lot of our audience made up of veterans first responders, folks who are personally connected, some who may be serving overseas right now, but a- as a young person growing up, can you talk about how that experience of his in particular shaped your values and your worldview?

Susan Rice: [11:30](#) Yeah. Well, I wen- I was extremely blessed to have two incredible parents who came from equally, uh, unusual and- and powerful families. My mother was the daughter of immigrants who came from Jamaica to Portland, Maine in 1912. And they had no education and, uh, and just menial skills. My grandfather was a janitor. My grandmother was a maid and they worked and saved and sent all five of their kids to college and they all became successful professionals. My dad's family were the descendants of slaves from South Carolina. Uh, and my great grandfather uh, who was a slave himself, uh, fought in the Union Army during the Civil War and then got a, uh, an education. Remarkably, it's a long story, which I tell in the book

about how he ended up getting, in fact a college degree, having been a slave and how he started a school in New Jersey called the Bordentown school, that educated generations of African Americans from the late 1880s until the 1950s.

Susan Rice: [12:39](#)

And then, you know, two generations later, along comes my dad. He was born in 1920 or thereabouts in South Carolina and that was in the heart of segregation and Jim Crow and when lynching was at its peak in the deep South. And he, uh, he lost his father at a very early age. He was sort of in some ways rudderless. Um, he ended up getting to go to college himself at an early age in New York city here at City College of New York, uh, where he got his, um, his BA and his MBA. And then he was drafted into world war II and he was initially sent to train at this fancy new program at Harvard, uh, to teach statistical control. And uh, and then he was sent eventually to Tuskegee where he was the, um, the Lieutenant in- in charge and eventually the captain in charge of that office of statistical control that had been newly created to give commanders the- the data of the, of such as it was back then to be more effective in the war effort.

Susan Rice: [13:51](#)

And so he was part of the- the crew of- of Tuskegee Airmen. And as much as he was proud to serve and believed till he died extremely deeply in America, he was also very, um, resentful of that experience in a number of ways. Because here he was an African American man in a segregated military when he went off base to try to get something to eat, he couldn't be served in the restaurants, but he saw German POWs getting served. And when, you know, we now look back on the Tuskegee Airmen and celebrate their success as a great demonstration of African American fighting and flying prowess. My dad's view was African Americans shouldn't have to prove to anybody that we're as capable as the next person that should be obvious. And so he really resented this duality of fighting for the freedom of everybody but his own people.

Susan Rice: [14:56](#)

After the war, uh, he went on to get his PhD in economics at Berkeley. And after having real difficulty as an African American man in the 1950s getting a job and as a professor of economics or in the private sector, he finally got a job, his first job, which launched his career at Cornell as an assistant professor of economics, but only because they didn't know until he got there that he was black and they didn't put him out when he showed up. But my dad really, really wrestled all through his life with this- this question of how do you be a black man in America in those times with great intellect and great ambition. And yet everywhere he turned, he was told he didn't belong or he

couldn't, or that the doors were closed. And as time went on and the doors began to open just a little bit, how do you deal with the psychological baggage of segregation?

Susan Rice: [15:55](#) And what he realized at some point in his sort of early to mid career was that he couldn't carry that freight of the outside world's prejudice and function to his capacity. He realized that prejudice, bigotry was really, to a large extent, the function of the bigots own insecurity. And the own, if he couldn't control the barriers that he would come across, he could control how he thought about himself and he could either let the bigots definition of himself become his own or to reject that and realize that, yes, I- I know I'm good.

Susan Rice: [16:38](#) I know I have worth. I've gotta believe in myself. And he finally came to the view that which he often repeated. If my being black is going to be a problem, it's gonna be a problem for somebody else, not for me. And that was the mindset that he had to train himself. It's almost like, you know, muscle, you know, weight lifting to build your muscles, except this is a mental muscle, a psychological muscle. Um, and that's what he taught me and my younger brother, that we had to believe in ourselves, that we couldn't let other people define us for us.

Susan Rice: [17:13](#) And there's many people who would tell us that we can't or we shouldn't or we don't belong, we couldn't let that become our own self perception. And it was an incredibly powerful, uh, set of lessons he taught us. And there were many more, a number of which are in the book that it's only some of which have to do with race, many just on how to live and what to prioritize. But my dad was a wise man.

Paul: [17:39](#) You can feel that wisdom throughout the book and your mother's wisdom as well. And, but I- I wanna jump around a bit in the book and in all of your recent, um, appearances, you know, you've- you've warn powerfully about the threat to our country, uh, presented by our own division, right? And how the Russians win every time we rip each other apart, right?

Susan Rice: [18:01](#) Absolutely.

Paul: [18:01](#) This is the hashtag or enemies are celebrating and every time they see us ripping ourselves apart specifically around racial lines, they're celebrating. But given that context and given the history, if you know, what is your prescription, what should we do? The military obviously presents an option for people to come together from all backgrounds. You know, my grandfather

served in the same military that your father did and he had immigrated here from Europe and they were forced to be together-

Susan Rice: [18:30](#) After the war.

Paul: [18:30](#) A- after the war, right? And there was a, there was a sense of unity, at least in- in recent generations that the military can be a place, maybe the only place where we are kind of forced to get along. But what is your view on what we should do? How do we tackle that if it's the number one strategic threat, how do we devise a plan to tackle it?

Susan Rice: [18:48](#) Well, I do say, and I- I mean it very seriously, that our domestic political divisions are, in my judgment, our greatest national security vulnerability. Not only do they keep us from getting essential things done, like basic stuff like building infrastructure and in competing, therefore effectively with the Chinese or whoever our, um, our 20th, 21st century, uh, competitors. But as you also said, it enables our adversaries, particularly the Russians, uh, to work both sides of every divisive issue as they're doing every day on social media. Not just interfering in our elections every two years, but actually every day of the week pitting us against each other, whether on race or guns uh, or immigration or gay rights or you name it, they pick all the issues and they play on both sides. And their simple aim is to make us distrust and hate each other. And if they do that, if we failed to believe in, you know, the varsity of our institutions or the integrity of them, or the- the f- or we can't agree on what's fact, then we will gradually defeat ourselves-

PART 1 OF 3 ENDS [00:20:04]

Susan Rice: [20:02](#) Gradually defeat ourselves from within. And the Russians will be able to accomplish their goals against us without ever firing a bullet. So we've gotta seize this moment and recognize how urgent it is. And when it comes to prescriptions, I talk about a number of steps that we can take, uh, in the last chapter of the book. And they range from how we educate our children ...

Susan Rice: [20:27](#) First of all, we don't even teach civics education anymore. So most kids don't know what it means to have a separation of powers, or what the responsibility of the various branches, uh, are. Or, you know, what the first amendment actually says and doesn't say. It doesn't say that you can say anything unless you offend me. Right? And- and yet, whether in elementary school or on college campuses, there's a real confusion and distortion



about how we speak to each other, what's allowed, what's acceptable, how we engage, and how we can learn from each other. And I also think there are many, many issues with our electoral system, and I talk about things we can do, you know, from ranked choice voting to taking out the- reducing the roll of money, et cetera.

Susan Rice: [21:16](#) But I think on the grand scale, and it draws very directly on the experience of the military, I think that we need to consider very seriously mandatory national civilian service. If everybody 18-22, whether you're, you know, a citizen or a resident, spent six to twelve months living together, working together, cooperating on projects that serve the common good ... I don't care whether we're talking about r- rehabilitating inner city schools, or reforestation, or laying broadband. The fact of people from vastly different backgrounds, and different, you know, zip codes, and religious experiences, and races, and socioeconomic status having to live and work together would mean that we have to know each other. And it's not optional. You don't get to opt out if you're a rich kid.

Susan Rice: [22:17](#) And the purpose of that is very simple. I think it's really hard to hate each other if we actually know one another. And uh, I realize that that's a radical idea, that is costly and would undoubtedly be challenged in court, but I do think it's the kind of thing we have to really seriously contemplate if we're going to reform the bonds that are necessary to hold us together.

Susan Rice: [22:50](#) And by the way, I write also in the book that before everybody gives up and is completely despairing, we've been through so much worse than this before as a nation, in terms of our divisions. You know, we've been through a civil war. We've been through reconstruction, and the aftermath, the backlash to reconstruction. We've been through two world wars and McCarthyism. Vietnam and the Civil Rights era, where people were being shot on campuses, and cities were burning down, and people who look like me had dogs and hoses turned on them. We've been through Watergate. And came out of all of those very difficult periods, much more difficult periods, sometimes violent periods, arguably stronger and certainly whole. So we can do this. We just have to have the will and recognize that this is one of those moments that's calling us to do some extraordinary things to maintain the integrity of our- of our democracy, and the unity of our nation.

Paul: [23:52](#) I- I don't- I don't think the mandatory service idea is as radical as it used to be. I feel like, man, and in the last couple of years

especially, there's a groundswell of people who are recognizing the need for something, right, to bring us together and create some level of- of cohesion. And- and I think even within the veterans community, it's been interesting to see the- the tide start to shift in part because the military has burdened so much of that load disproportionately. So most folks are-

Susan Rice: [24:21](#)

Absolutely.

Paul: [24:21](#)

... watching the Grammy's, and a lot of folks are in Afghanistan for the tenth time.

Susan Rice: [24:25](#)

Right.

Paul: [24:26](#)

So that- I- I- I think ... I want- I just want to say that it's something that I've supported, especially when we think about the escalation of conflict with places like Iran. If there was some kind of at least threat of a social backstop, some kind of connectivity, it would change the landscape across the country immediately and forever. So it was interesting to see when the Iran stuff was in the news, what seems like ancient history, two weeks ago, right?

Susan Rice: [24:49](#)

(Laughs). Yes.

Paul: [24:49](#)

And World War III was trending on twitter, because young people were freaking out. The selective service website crashes because so many 18 year olds are wondering if they can get drafted. But there's an environment where I- I just ... I want to make sure that it's said at least on my behalf, I don't think it's so radical anymore. I think it's more and more necessary, and- and your voice is critical in helping shape that up.

Paul: [25:11](#)

When I thought about joining the military, I really thought, marine corp or peace corp. Like, it wasn't that different for me on a value set, and I think that that is- is rising within this country. But I want to go back to when you grew up, because you- you were in a- a number of different environments, sports being one of them, where you came together with people from different backgrounds. Your leadership was significant and- and constant throughout that. But you- you come from DC. Um, I'm sure that ... At one point I- I read that you had, uh, aspirations of becoming the senator from DC.

Susan Rice: [25:43](#)

Well, y- I had aspirations for becoming a senator when I was- when I was ... beginning at the age of ten. But I realized even

back then that unless and until DC had voting representation and congress, which of course it still doesn't have.

Paul: [25:58](#) Which you- which you would support?

Susan Rice: [25:59](#) Oh, totally. To- I'm a passionate supporter-

Paul: [26:04](#) There's a round of applause coming from DC right now. (Laughs).

Susan Rice: [26:07](#) ... of- passionate supporter of DC voting representation, uh, and even statehood. But we could get there short of statehood if we had full voting representation in the House and the Senate. But anyway, that's not happened, and it's unlikely to happen in the rest of my lifetime. And uh, and beyond that, I got older and realized that on lots of levels in terms of my temperament and uh, where I was in my life, that as much as I wanted to be involved in policy, I didn't really want to get into electoral politics. And that was then. I haven't ruled it out in the future. But that's now an older-

Paul: [26:51](#) I'm glad you got to that, because I was- I was- I was- I was-

Susan Rice: [26:51](#) ... grayer version of me.

Paul: [26:51](#) ... I was gonna ask, and I'll come back to it. But let me ask you a question, ma'am, that we ask of all our guests. When you were growing up in DC, um, and I don't think this was in the book, ambassador Susan Rice, what was your first car?

Susan Rice: [27:02](#) (Laughs). Well first of all, I didn't get my first car while I was growing up. I got it later. Uh, but it was a Honda Accord hatchback, circa 1985, navy blue. And I got it actually when I was out in California, in my final year of college. And it was so liberating to finally have my own car. I grew up with a series of, you know, ugly cars that my parents bought. Mostly Bonneville, uh, Pontiac Bonneville. We had the biggest, ugliest, puke yellow station wagon that we used to- my parents used to drive, you know, us up to Maine every summer, from Washington DC, up and down the New Jersey turnpike in this big ass ugly car.

Paul: [27:54](#) (Laughs).

Susan Rice: [27:56](#) And then my dad had a Pont- Pontiac Bonneville sedan that was the car I learned to drive on. Uh, and he also had ... This, I do write about in the book. My dad um ... This is sort of a diversion, but since we're talking about cars, uh, my dad and my mom,

when they were early in their marriage, they later ... Uh, when I was about ten, they finally divorced, but before I was born, they were living and working in Nigeria. And that's actually where I was conceived. This is 1963, '64, when I was born.

Susan Rice: [28:32](#) And as they were making their way back to the United States from Nigeria, my mom pregnant with me and a twin brother, who actually died at- at birth, or in the womb right before birth. Um, they stop in Germany, and my dad fulfills a lifelong dream: he buys from the factory a Mercedes Benz, uh, 190 sedan. And this thing ... I don't know if you've ever seen these things. You know, they've got the fins on the back, beautiful ivory steering wheel, red leather, you know, seats. This was-

Paul: [29:15](#) That's an upgrade- that's a nice upgrade from the Bonneville. (Laughs).

Susan Rice: [29:15](#) ... this was the car. Well this preceded the Bonneville, because this was sort of like a special car that you only got to drive on special occasions. And my dad- those ... So he bought it the year I was born, and we had it until a piece of ice took it out in- that fell off of our roof onto the car, in like college for me. So that was a long time we had this car. But it was ... To this day I associate that leather smell that only got more intense over time, with my dad.

Paul: [29:44](#) Thank you for sharing that. That- that- that-

Susan Rice: [29:45](#) You asked about cars.

Paul: [29:46](#) ... I did, the car question-

Susan Rice: [29:47](#) No, you ask what I have now!

Paul: [29:49](#) The- f-

Susan Rice: [29:49](#) Because that's more interesting.

Paul: [29:50](#) Please. What- what- what do you have now?

Susan Rice: [29:52](#) So ... (laughs).

Paul: [29:53](#) I'm not gonna let that one go. By all means.

Susan Rice: [29:54](#) Actually, now that you mention it, cars are sort of playing an out-sized role. When I was at the state department during the

Clinton administration, as assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. This is Clinton's second term, and I'm like, 32 when I take this job. Way- way younger than most of my colleagues, and I just had a baby, and I'm, you know, I have a premature mid-life crisis. And I bought a red Honda S2000 convertible. Which I still drive.

- Paul: [30:27](#) Excellent. I love it. And you're wearing red today, and-
- Susan Rice: [30:31](#) That's a coincidence.
- Paul: [30:32](#) ... we- the other question we skipped over that we ask of all our guests, and folks that are fans of the show know this, is we usually start the question with a- with a question of, what is your favorite beverage, cocktail, adult beverage? And uh, your- your team informed me that like many, you were trying to have a dry January, which I think is a great pivot point, because no one's answered that yet. I'm answering the question for you on some levels, but uh, I have been failing miserably. I really didn't even try. I've got, uh ... So- but I am sympathetic, and I wanted to ask you, so what is your- your cocktail or adult beverage of choice? When it's not- when it's not dry-
- Susan Rice: [31:08](#) I- I love- I'm a wine drinker. I love wine.
- Paul: [31:10](#) Please.
- Susan Rice: [31:10](#) Uh, particularly a cabernet sauvignon, or a full bodied oaky chardonnay from California. Those are my favorites. But I'll, you know, I- I'll drink most anything.
- Paul: [31:23](#) (Laughs).
- Susan Rice: [31:24](#) And that's sort of part of the problem. (Laughs). It was why-
- Paul: [31:28](#) Is that an advantage of your job in diplomacy?
- Susan Rice: [31:29](#) I like champagne, too. I like beer. A good single malt. Uh, no, here's the problem. Like-
- Paul: [31:36](#) When you- when you're a diplomat and you're traveling the world, do- do- you're often introduced to the- the great elixirs of the world, the great- the great drinks of the world?
- Susan Rice: [31:43](#) Yes. Absolutely.

Paul: [31:44](#) When a country welcomes you, and they start off-

Susan Rice: [31:46](#) That's, you know, that's- that's part of your duty. Yeah. Madeleine Albright, when she was UN ambassador, used to say that her job was to eat and drink for her country.

Paul: [31:55](#) (Laughs).

Susan Rice: [31:55](#) And that is true. When I- that's- that's where I first ... When I was at the UN, when I first had to sort of dial it back and recognize that if I did my job to the fullest, I would be twice my size when it was done. And so this, you know, attempt at dry January, which has been substantially, but not completely, successful, is a function of, you know, the holidays and everything else. But also, I was on my book tour from throughout the whole fall, and you kinda ... You go- you do these evening events, and you come back to your hotel, and what are you supposed to do? Eat and drink, right? And you do that every night. And you're eating late, and you're drinking a lot, and it's bad for your butt.

Paul: [32:38](#) (Laughs).

Susan Rice: [32:40](#) So that's part of what I'm try- I'm trying to get a new year's grip on my booty.

Paul: [32:46](#) (Laughs). I- it's been a tough January for the whole world to stop drinking, though, ma'am, right? So it's like you-

Susan Rice: [32:56](#) It's not the right January for it.

Paul: [32:57](#) ... There- there's a lot of folks who- who- who are- who are sympathetic. But um, I'm glad we're um, kind of going to issues that- that we don't get to hear you open up about. Because I am uh, I am really inspired by your personal story, and by your leadership, and by your discipline. Just understanding tactical things on some levels, like how to run a meeting. Like I- I've heard you talk thoughtfully about you know, kind of commanding a meeting, and- and- and running a meeting. Um, but from a leadership standpoint, you- you- you bring this positive energy, and a positive attitude, but I want to ask you the question that I do ask of- of all our guests. Ambassador Susan Rice, what makes you angry?

Susan Rice: [33:34](#) Dishonesty, more than anything. So, it's been a really frustrating month. (Laughs).

- Paul: [33:42](#) But you're not holding back, either. And- and I think that that's-like, for folks that, like me, that really are looking for guardians of our democracy, you're throwing punches and you're calling bullshit, and you're calling people liars. Which, I think some people in the public policy political world, are reluctant to do.
- Susan Rice: [33:58](#) Yeah. Well I'm- I'm trying to do it sparingly. When- but not, you know, when I think it's justified, I am trying to call BS. Uh, and you know, I- I figured that ... It- it occurred to me at some point that whether I shut up or say whatever I think, I'm gonna get attacked relentlessly, so I might as well say what I think. It's not like it, you know, gets any less otherwise.
- Susan Rice: [34:24](#) And I don't- you know, I learned in the process of serving, and you know, having a- my share of bullets fired at me, that you really can't be deterred by those who come at you. You have to believe in what you believe in, and have the courage of your convictions stand up. And if people don't like it, it's kind of like my dad said, if- if my being black is- ... Or, in his terms, is a problem, it's gonna be a problem for somebody else. If my being outspoken is gonna be a problem, or my, you know, having my own views and not being shy about sharing them, that's gonna be somebody else's problem.
- Paul: [34:59](#) On the issue of honesty, when we look at the landscape of candidates, one of the issues that I think gets my radar up and my back up, is how often I hear from candidates that they're gonna end the war in Iraq, or end the war in Afghanistan. When you look at the landscape, especially for those of us that have served over there, and often feel like casualties happened this weekend, lost from the headlines. A young soldier killed in Kenya, most Americans don't realize we even have forces in Kenya.
- Susan Rice: [35:27](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [35:27](#) Please.
- Susan Rice: [35:28](#) Yeah, I was gonna say, that to me, that- that- that really upset me. If somebody who uh, has seen how exercised, uh, Washington can get when we lose Americans overseas, as rightly we should, that thing flew right under the radar screen. I mean, between Pensacola and Kenya, we've lost Americans in attacks that in both instances ought to have been preventable.
- Paul: [36:03](#) Can I ask you about the issue of honesty slash transparency related to that though? In the last two weeks, the President said

there were no casualties after the Iranian attack on Americans in Iraq. Then we find out there were allegedly 11. He said they had headaches, and downplayed traumatic injury. Now we find out there may be dozens-

Susan Rice: [36:22](#) 34.

Paul: [36:22](#) 34, right? So um, I've been opinionated about this, but I really want a chance- to give you a chance to expand on it. The chairman of the joint chiefs is invisible. The secretary of the army, uh, has been, in my view, um, inappropriately silent on many of the issues where we depend on the chairman of the joint chiefs, we depend on the secretary of defense, we depend on the secretary of the army to have our backs when we're in uniform. And-

Susan Rice: [36:48](#) You depend on the commander in chief to have your back.

Paul: [36:50](#) Right. So can you talk about just the sacred compact that we have, and that you held, about being candid about the lives lost, specifically, and the people wounded, and what this moment means when we can't trust the President, we can't trust the secretary of defense, we can't trust the Pentagon, and it's barely even doing press conferences. Can you talk about the impact that that has not just on our men and women, but on- but on the fabric of our country?

Susan Rice: [37:18](#) Well, leaders, commanders in chiefs in the past, we- and the- the teams around them, myself included, we've all made mistakes. And we've all fallen short. And you can't, in my judgment, make policy in a dangerous and changing world and bat a thousand. But you've got to be willing to acknowledge where those failures are, and to own them. And frankly that's part of what I try to do in my book, tough love. It's not to try to sugar coat everything and pretend we got everything right in either administration that I served in.

Susan Rice: [37:56](#) But it troubles me enormously when so many of our leaders are simultaneously asleep at the switch. And it's beyond the President, as you said. It's Congress, to a large extent. Uh, certainly within the President's party, why are they not losing their minds? Why- can you imagine ... Let me just ... If Pensacola, Kenya, 34 injuries that were downplayed if not hidden for a period of time, that are serious injuries, if we have learned nothing from Afghanistan and Iraq, it's how serious traumatic brain injury can be, and how it can be completely debilitating and lead to suicide and so many other things. And



to- to cast that off as minor or headaches, or not worthy of counting? I don't even understand that.

Paul: [38:54](#) Are- are the chairman of the joint chiefs ... I- is the chairman of the joint chiefs and the secretary of defense, um, derelict in their duties right now? Is what- I look back to the time when you served. You had secretary Gates, and you had admiral Mullen. And they would all simultaneously, with you all, roll out policy. We could count on admiral Mullen to interpret what was gonna happen, right?

Susan Rice: [39:13](#) We had Marty Dempsey, Joe Dunford.

Paul: [39:15](#) Marty Dempsey, right? Exactly.

Susan Rice: [39:16](#) Good men.

Paul: [39:17](#) But now they are notably silent. And for those of us that haven't been flag grade officers but have served in uniform, you know, we hope that Mattis would be the one. We keep hoping that there will be a one that kind of breaks the seal. Um, can you talk about what ... Are they derelict in- in- in their duty? Is the President derelict in his duty in the way that they have Pompeo as the lead on military affairs to the American people, and the chairman of the joint chiefs is nowhere to be seen on the Sunday talk shows.

Susan Rice: [39:45](#) Well, I don't need to see the chairman on the Sunday talk shows. But I do need to have confidence that whether ... if not in public, then certainly in private, he's telling the President what he needs to hear. And you know, I know Mark Milley. He's not a shy man. So I hope ...

PART 2 OF 3 ENDS [00:40:04]

Susan Rice: [40:03](#) So, I hope behind closed doors he's saying what he needs to say, but it's hard to see the evidence of that and I don't know Mark Esper but he does not come across, at least in public as somebody who's taken tough stands. And Pompeo is a disgrace. Uh, and I think the president, as commander in chief, in discounting the cost of his decisions. It's not just in a ra-

Susan Rice: [40:39](#) Remember that first raid in Yemen? When he blamed the failure on the, on the uniform military? And wouldn't take responsibility? I mean, it's outrageous. He goes around saying, "No Benghazi on my watch." But then I don't know what you call Pensacola and Kenya or even, you know, even Baghdad

where we had injuries yesterday. And that, I don't like that terminology. I don't think that's the way to measure the worth of a, a commander in chief where the value of the policy stuff goes wrong and we have to own it. But you can't have it both ways and that's what this president is trying to do.

Paul: [41:18](#) So the crop of folks that are looking to replace him is thinning. They're all, I imagine, reaching out to you for your wisdom and probably-

Susan Rice: [41:27](#) Many, not all. Thankfully.

Paul: [41:30](#) Will, will you tell us which ones haven't?

Susan Rice: [41:32](#) No.

Paul: [41:32](#) No, okay, well they're-

Susan Rice: [41:35](#) But you can guess.

Paul: [41:36](#) I, I can, but I guess what I want to know too, ma'am is, is when you look at the landscape, um, you are a democrat, right?

Susan Rice: [41:44](#) Yes.

Paul: [41:44](#) As an independent, many of us are independents, we look over there and we see the democrats eating their own, it seems like. A lot of friendly fire.

Susan Rice: [41:50](#) Eh.

Paul: [41:51](#) And, my view, right-

Susan Rice: [41:53](#) Yeah.

Paul: [41:53](#) Is I've seen, I'm waiting for John Snow or Jane Snow to emerge from Game of Thrones and take on the white walkers, but they continue to take shots at each other and in my view, waste resources that could be better spent on the common enemy that is Donald Trump and he's just sitting there kind of amassing his, his war chest.

Paul: [42:10](#) Is, is there a point where you will pick a candidate before the primary and, and what's your view on-

Susan Rice: [42:17](#) You mean this week? (laughs)

Paul: [42:19](#) Maybe now? You want to make an endorsement now? Rea- really-

Susan Rice: [42:22](#) Well look-

Paul: [42:23](#) When you look at the landscape, are you gonna make a... your, your, your wa- your influence has tremendous weight. President Obama's obviously waiting on the sidelines, others are as well, but you're one of the most influential voices now for the democrats. How are you gonna hand this-

Susan Rice: [42:36](#) First of all, I think that's a little bit of an exaggeration.

Paul: [42:39](#) I don't think so.

Susan Rice: [42:39](#) Maybe a lot of an exaggeration.

Paul: [42:39](#) I don't think-

Susan Rice: [42:41](#) I don't think, you know, I don't have journalist staked out in front of my house waiting for me to come out and make an endorsement. I, I don't, I don't think-

Paul: [42:49](#) The, the smart ones are burning up your cell phones behind the scene.

Susan Rice: [42:52](#) Everybody will be fine whether or not I make an endorsement. Um, but let me say this, I think eh- the field is narrowing, um, I think we have some strong candidates in the field, several of whom I would be very, very enthusiastic about supporting, and I will support our nominee no matter what, uh, but I think that, you know, it's too early to panic about democrats taking shots at each other. This is patty cake compared to some primaries that I've been through. I mean I write in the book about 2007-2008, between Obama and Clinton. Now that was ugly. And everybody seems to forget that, you know, because we were able to come back together and it was not easy. It was not easy, but Senator Clinton ultimately endorsed Senator Obama, she campaigned for him, her, many of her supporters, some grudgingly. Uh, some exci- with excitement came on board. We were a unified party in 2008.

Susan Rice: [43:56](#) And even in 2016, which had it's ah- many, uh, unique and, and problematic circumstances, you know, Bernie Sanders not only endorsed Clinton, but campaigned aggressively for her. So I'm not... what I see now does not get my blood pressure up yet. This is not-

Paul: [44:18](#) So as, as a strategist you do feel confident that it will come, it will come-

Susan Rice: [44:21](#) I'm not a political strategist, but as a-

Paul: [44:23](#) But you-

Susan Rice: [44:23](#) But as an observer

Paul: [44:23](#) I wouldn't separate the two.

Susan Rice: [44:23](#) As an experienced observer-

Paul: [44:25](#) Yeah.

Susan Rice: [44:26](#) And, uh, somebody who's worked on campaigns in policy roles-

Paul: [44:30](#) Yeah.

Susan Rice: [44:30](#) I am not stressing about this yet. Not, and when I say this, I mean the, the shots that are-

Paul: [44:36](#) Yeah.

Susan Rice: [44:36](#) Fired. These are, these are small caliber, uh, bullets.

Paul: [44:42](#) But in a much, but in a much higher stakes environment.

Susan Rice: [44:46](#) In a hi-

Paul: [44:46](#) By your own admission-

Susan Rice: [44:46](#) Yes in, yes indeed.

Paul: [44:46](#) The most important election of our time.

Susan Rice: [44:48](#) A higher stakes environment.

Paul: [44:49](#) And you've got, you know, Tulsi Gabbard over here and you've got Mike Bloomberg out here and Andrew Yang out here and all these different desperate tribes. Is there... I go back to leadership because your book is so much about leadership and about tough love, who's gonna give tough love to democrats?

Susan Rice: [45:04](#) Well all of us. I mean, we need... all of us who are part of this party. I mean, like, look, uh, I have not made an endorsement,

I'm not gonna do it here, I don't expect to do it before the first of the primaries. I don't feel compelled to make an endorsement. I, I know that I'll be behind who the nominee is and I, I want to see how this unfolds. But I will say this, I want candidates who have integrity, who have, uh, the temperament and the intellect to govern effectively. I want people who are not just going to play to a narrow segment of the democratic base, but that have broad appeal and that can, uh, you know, not only unify the party, but reach out to independents and, and disaffected republicans.

Susan Rice: [45:52](#) Um, so, that gives you some clues, and, uh, I think that this is the most consequential election, certainly in my life time and, uh, we don't have the luxury of screwing this one up. So to me, the way to screw it up is to find ourselves in a narrow cast context, where the en- the, there's this false dichotomy between the concept that you gotta excite the, the base in order to win verses a broad appeal. I think we can do both and, uh, and we've demonstrated that in the past and we've got to do it again and all of us... the, the democrats fatal sin in my judgment is to always make the perfect the enemy of the good and we just have to grow up and get over that.

Paul: [46:47](#) You're asked all the time about running for senate potentially in Maine against Susan Collins. Eh- eh- can you talk about what, uh, after being in an executive role, after, after having a landscape that you can control and guide and set the priorities for, would senate on some levels be, be a tough shift?

Susan Rice: [47:08](#) Well you notice I haven't declared a, an intention to run (laughs) for the senate.

Paul: [47:12](#) Yes, but I, but I wonder if the job is... you know the job, right?

Susan Rice: [47:14](#) I do.

Paul: [47:15](#) And that's part of it is when you look at the landscape, you've got to, uh, I imagine that you've got to look at where can you be most effective? Your life has been about service. Is it, is it, is it tough to be effective in the senate and a situation where you could probably be more effective elsewhere?

Susan Rice: [47:28](#) I think that's a very real question and it's one I've wrestled with, uh, and you know, it depends on the character and the, the nature of the senate at any one point. Right now the senate is arguably even more dysfunctional than the house, which is saying something. And, uh, you know, the, many of the, the

most committed and intelligent senators I know are writing books or running for president or tried to. So it's not a place where, uh, many people seem to find gratification, particularly at this point and in the minority. But that, I, I do believe that the institution has great importance and, uh, and, and great influence when it's functioning optimally, when it is the body where there is the potential for compromise and bipartisanship and frankly, you know, that's going to take new leadership and, uh, a return to a belief in the, the utility of the institution to play it's constitutional role. And obviously the same is true for the house.

Susan Rice: [48:34](#) I mean, the house is, you know, uh, I think it's good that we have at least divided government at the moment, for all the obvious reasons, but the fact that it's still, you know, unable in many instances to come together to find common ground is a huge problem. And all the incentives are aligned against that. Um, and that's one of the things I think we have to change and that's among the political reforms that... the reason for the political reforms that I, uh, suggest in Tough Love.

Susan Rice: [49:05](#) I haven't ruled out running for office. It may not be the senate. It may be the senate. I still, you know, I still live in Washington D.C., home, which has no voting rights. Uh, and so when you live in Washington, it's, you know, it's mayor or president. There's really nothing in between.

Paul: [49:23](#) I think you'd have a lot of support for either. Um, Tough Love is kind of... baked into Tough Love is the integrity and the tenacity but also hope and optimism. You remain hopeful about the future. So a question we also ask of, of all of our guests, and like all of them, you are shaping what this country's been, what it is now and, and what it will be, but Ambassador Susan Rice, what makes you happy?

Susan Rice: [49:49](#) Oh, a lot of things make me happy, but the most important thing that makes me happy is frankly my family and friends. I... the subtitle of the book is My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For. And, uh, I rarely get asked about what that means, um, but first and foremost it means, fa- you know, what I believe is worth fighting for is family, and education and equality. Uh, and then now more than every the viability and, or our democracy and our national unity. But friends and family make me happy. Laughing my ass off makes me happy.

Susan Rice: [50:27](#) Uh, dancing with abandon makes me happy. Uh, particularly to good R and B and soul and funk.

Paul: [50:35](#) What are, what are you listening to lately?

Susan Rice: [50:38](#) Ah, don't-

Paul: [50:38](#) What's got you dancing.

Susan Rice: [50:39](#) My kids are going to be embarrassed, but don't, don't-

Paul: [50:40](#) No-

Susan Rice: [50:41](#) Make me go here.

Paul: [50:42](#) Please.

Susan Rice: [50:42](#) I'm old school. I am like, you know, give me the... give me the Motown, give me the, uh, Parliament, give me Prince, uh, you know, I'm just give me the Go Go from DC. That's what makes me want to get up and move.

Paul: [51:06](#) Your story and your example I think makes people want to get up and move and, and be involved and to continue to fight and I am so incredibly grateful for your wisdom, for the candor, uh, when our country needs it. Our country needs some tough love right now and you're the right person to bring it, but also the example you're setting for our children, uh, as a parent, as a patriot at a time when we badly need examples that we can point to on television to say to our kids, "Be like that person." So I am grateful for you. I know that, uh, this community is grateful for you, um, and I have to conclude our discussion with the giving of the gifts, as a presentation of that gratitude. Um, so-

Susan Rice: [51:54](#) I'm so bummed that I'm not drinking here, but-

Paul: [51:55](#) It's okay, there's-

Susan Rice: [51:56](#) It's okay.

Paul: [51:57](#) You can come back any time. So there's three phases to this, and I can hold your mic-

Susan Rice: [52:00](#) Wow.

Paul: [52:01](#) If it makes it easier. Okay, so we've got... you can start with the liquor, go ahead.

Susan Rice: [52:05](#) Can I go with the bottle?

Paul: [52:05](#) Yeah. If you listen to the show, so each time we pick a American made spirit, and I asked the guy to make it easy, but... hold on now, there we go. And so when you decide to break out-

Susan Rice: [52:23](#) Whooo. Kentucky Ale. Kentucky straight rye whiskey, aged 11 years. That's awesome.

Paul: [52:27](#) So I try to, I go to a liquor store, I try to pick something that speaks to me. The, the reason it spoke to me is because the owl-

Susan Rice: [52:32](#) The owl, yes. (laughs)

Paul: [52:33](#) The owl has the wisdom and it also has the talons and is, is, is something we need more of right now. I also did not miss the fact that it says on, on the front of it-

Susan Rice: [52:46](#) Wise man's rye.

Paul: [52:47](#) Wise man's rye, and I almost crossed it out.

Susan Rice: [52:49](#) Na, that's all right.

Paul: [52:49](#) I was going to put wise woman's rye, but, uh, I thought it was a, a fitting, um, gift for you-

Susan Rice: [52:56](#) Thank you so much.

Paul: [52:56](#) And, and thanks.

Susan Rice: [52:56](#) This is awesome. I can't wait.

Paul: [52:58](#) All right, and then we've also go-

Susan Rice: [53:00](#) How many days to February? (laughs)

Paul: [53:03](#) Not too many, not too many. And then we've got some merchandise from the veterans at Oscar Mike, American made, when you're feeling particularly angry you can wear that-

Susan Rice: [53:11](#) Oh.

Paul: [53:11](#) Or, um, if you do a Netflix special... did they pitch you on doing a Netflix special on your family? Because like this dinner table



conversation seems like any political show that Netflix could possibly imagine.

- Susan Rice: [53:24](#) This, I'm not, you know, ne- I, I gotta be independent from myself in my own interests from Netflix-
- Paul: [53:32](#) I hope they're, I hope they're picking your brain for creative ideas though because there's a lot of creativity. So that's from the veterans at Oscar Mike.
- Susan Rice: [53:40](#) Excellent.
- Paul: [53:40](#) And then-
- Susan Rice: [53:41](#) Is it the right size?
- Paul: [53:42](#) If not we can adjust fire and then there's another one just in case you head back to the middle east that's in, you know, the, the, the-
- Susan Rice: [53:49](#) Camouflage?
- Paul: [53:49](#) Camouflage drab, yup. And then lastly, as is also tradition in our show, the gift, uh, the final gift is also a question. We've got three colors of peeps. The show started... you guys love this part, come on. Um, three colors of peeps and the show started around Easter so we've just been sticking with it every single episode and there are three colors, blue, yellow and pink. Ambassador Susan Rice, which color would you pi- pick and why?
- Susan Rice: [54:14](#) There's no... well, definitely not pink. I don't do pink. At least, you know, not often. Uh, blue. Blue. And, secondly yellow.
- Paul: [54:28](#) Why blue, ma'am?
- Susan Rice: [54:29](#) Uh, it's a pretty blue. It's a turquoise, it's nice. And the yellow's nice, too. It's a little kind of in your face, but look at this.
- Paul: [54:40](#) Yeah, yeah.
- Susan Rice: [54:41](#) That's a lot of yellow.
- Paul: [54:42](#) (laughs)

This transcript was exported on Jan 30, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

Susan Rice: [54:42](#) And I, you know, what, the, the food coloring in all of these is like really scary.

Paul: [54:47](#) It's scary. Scarier than most of the adversaries we face out there. But, um, in, in, in all our sincerity, I want to thank you for joining us on Angry Americans, for being, uh, a patriot that we can all look up to, and a voice during these trying times. Um, we are grateful for your leadership and your example and thank you so much.

Susan Rice: [55:06](#) Thank you so much, Paul and thank you all for being here. Thanks for having me.

Paul: [55:10](#) Round of applause, please for the great Ambassador Susan Rice.

Susan Rice: [55:18](#) Oh, thanks so much.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:59:06]