

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

VOLUNTEERING

WITH COLIN POWELL

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE

Washington, D.C.

Thursday, June 14, 2006

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon, everybody. I am Strobe Talbott. I am going to err on the side of brevity, which I think not only will you forgive me but Secretary Powell will forgive me. He has very little time, and you want to spend it with him, and he wants to spend it with you. He has done his homework. He has read the policy brief. He has a good brief from Lex and Dick on the conversation so far.

I want to say, Dick, how delighted I am that you, as the guy who inspired us to move in this direction, could be here for Secretary's Powell's appearance here this afternoon.

We put a lot of importance here at Brookings on empirical evidence, and there is empirical evidence in the form of a lot of polling over the years that this gentleman has been, for long stretches of his career, the most admired citizen of this Country and rightly so. He has done a lot of volunteering in all stages of his extraordinary career as a Soldier, as a Statesman, as a Citizen, and as a Civic Leader. He has advocated and advanced the cause of empowering

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

people to change societies and change the world.

Secretary Powell, thanks so much for being with us.

(Applause)

SEC. POWELL: Thank you. Thank you very much, Strobe, and it is good to be here at Brookings. Strobe and I go back a few years together, and we've shared a few adventures over the years. Dick, I thank you for your support of this.

I am especially pleased to be here with a very, very dear friend and colleague, Harris Wofford. Harris and I have worked together on a number of issues for the past eight years on America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth. He was one of the guiding spirits of America's Promise, and he spent all afternoon at a board meeting with my wife, Alma, who is now the Chair of America's Promise.

When we were putting America's Promise together, we said to ourselves: What do young people need? What do we want to see young people empowered to do? After a great deal of thought and after we had

the summit in Philadelphia at the request of President Clinton and all the living Presidents, we sat down. It is great to have a summit, but on Monday morning, there I was sitting alone with Harris and a few others, saying: Now, what do we do? What is it that young people want and what do they need to be successful in life?

We identified four things we wanted to give young people:

Make sure that they had an adult presence in their life, if not from their parents, then from others who would volunteer to come into their lives, through the Boys and Girls Clubs or the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Programs or other kinds of mentoring initiatives, and we have had a great deal of success. I was in Florida recently and congratulated Governor Bush on creating 200,000 mentoring relationships since we started his program some six years ago.

The second thing we thought they needed was safe places. Young people needed safe places in which

the learn and to grow -- more Boys and Girls Clubs, more Salvation Army programs, you name it, after school programs, most of which are volunteer-driven and volunteer-funded and volunteer-run.

The third thing they needed was a healthy start in life, and that is a subject in and of itself.

The fourth thing they needed were the skills that were essential for them to be successful in this 21st Century economy.

Then the fifth thing we settled on was not something we were going to give the young people but something we wanted them to give us, and that was service to others. We wanted to make sure that young people understood early in life that a good part of being a citizen, a good part of being a human being is to share whatever you have -- your time, your talent, your treasure with others, to volunteer, to serve your fellow man, your fellow woman, to give back to others. That was an essential part of America's Promise and remains so to this day.

As I then left America's Promise and went

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

into the State Department and as I traveled the world both as a soldier and now as a diplomat, I saw this American virtue of service to others, this belief that we have that is really part of our national culture, can play such a valuable role in taking our foreign policy objectives, and our value system overseas and showing it to the rest of the world. Not as, "You will do it this way," but, "hey, here is what worked for us," a nation of nations, a nation that is touched by every nation, a nation which has been touched by every nation. This is how we conduct our business. This is how we have made ourselves a better place, and we would like to help you through our volunteer programs.

I have done everything I can in my public life to encourage this kind of volunteerism. I am so pleased that you have come together to follow-up on this Brookings Institution initiative to see how we can scale these programs up even more, to scale up government programs, which I support. We did a lot during the last five years and four years that I was Secretary, increasing the size of the Peace Corps and

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

putting more money into Fulbright Scholarships and those kinds of things that not only send volunteers across the seas but encourage young people here to encourage not-so-young people to come here. One of the most exciting things is to be Secretary of State and to go somewhere and to have a foreign leader say to you, "I had a chance to come to your country, and I learned so much."

Every speech I have given since I stepped down has talked about the need for us to make sure we give visas to people, that we fix the visa system. We must have foreign students come here to our country. We have to make it easier for our young people to go overseas and our not so young people to go overseas because it is through this rich exchange of cultures, of education, of experiences, that will cause all nations to understand one another better and hopefully for all nations to start to rise together up this economic ladder of the 21st Century.

I have been lecturing recently that I grew up on battlefields -- the Cold War battlefield, the

Vietnam battlefield, the Korean War battlefield. But now we are running on a playing field, and the games being played now are economic games between the rising Asian economic power driven by China and India and Japan, what the European Union is doing, and what we are doing here in our own hemisphere. The other game being played to fuel that economic rise is an energy game that is being played, and finally, an education game that is being played. It is often said that in order to play these games, we need to do more with these kinds of volunteer and exchange programs.

We were talking earlier about soft power and the comparison of soft power and hard power, and I cautioned your leadership here not to overplay that. In my days in the Pentagon, whenever I heard someone say, "We gotta go get money from hard power and give it to soft power," out came the garlic, the cross, and whatever else to keep other away from our money. So be careful about that because they are not competitive; they are complementary. A nation needs both, but we certainly ought to invest more in what is

called soft power, these kinds of visitors programs, not to take it away from hard programs which are essential but because we can afford it. We are a rich nation, and we can afford to invest far more in these kinds of programs than we have been in the past.

I am pleased that over the four years that I was Secretary, we were able to double development assistance. We were able to scale it up. We were able to create the Millennium Challenge Account. We were able to do other soft power things like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief or the Global Health Fund, working with the United Nations. So we have a pretty good record over the last four years.

But, as well noted in your report, it is still a small amount of money compared to our Federal budget. Of the 2,500 billion dollars -- 2,500 billion dollars in the Federal budget -- how much do we get in the accounts that are of interest to you? Roughly 20 to 25 billion dollars, it is less than that one percent that you talk about all the time. We can do a

lot more, and you shouldn't be hesitant to press Congress, the State Department, AID, and other government agencies to do more.

The real economy, the real money, the real wealth really is in the private sector, and the real talents of people who can go overseas and do things is in the private sector as well. I have been so pleased to go around the world and see companies that are doing business in other countries and realize that they have an obligation to use that place of business to reach out to the community, to mentor members of the community, to start youth programs, to use their American employees as well as their overseas employees to carry forward that American virtue and value of giving to others. I have been privileged to give out awards from the State Department to companies who have done this over the years.

What you are doing is right. What you are doing should be supported. What you have to do, though, is make sure that as you figure out what processes to use and what organizational arrangements

you need to have, make sure that you are doing it not just as a one-on thing. Good, we will send a few volunteers over; they had a great time; they come back; and that is the end of it.

We need something that sticks to the wall, something that is capacity-building. I was mentioning one program I am familiar with run by a wonderful friend of mine named Charles Wang who is a very successful gentleman in the computer business, and he was raised in New York like me, but his parents came from China and mine came from Jamaica. What Charles has done is, with his wealth, he has invested in The Smile Train Program where volunteer doctors and all the surgical facilities needed, go to places overseas, but especially in China where there is a really serious problem of cleft palates. There is a straight-forward surgical procedure to fix it. He has volunteered his time, treasure, and resources to send the doctors over, to go around China, and to correct cleft palates but more importantly, to teach Chinese doctors and nurses and medical personnel how they can

do it.

As you structure these programs and as companies create partnerships, make sure you do it in a way that leaves something that is sustaining and that there is a stay-behind which remains with the country, so that they can gain from it and the experience becomes a permanent thing and not just a one-on thing.

I can assure you that there is support for this kind of activity within the Administration, certainly, and there is support in the Congress. But with the Congress, you have that age-old problem of: Everybody has a great idea. Why should I fund yours?

I can tell you that a good part of my four years as Secretary of State was spent up before hearing after hearing, defending all of the things that we felt we needed. We were successful in getting significant increases, but the battle never ends. There is always somebody who is coming after the budget. There is always somebody who wants to bang it against the anvil of the deficit or some other

competing program.

And so, it will take hard work on the part of members of this group, not just the Brookings Institution and one or two others but all the business leaders who are represented here. You must communicate this need through your legislative delegations, so that they will support this kind of effort.

The reason I am in a hurry this evening is I am going over to another group, the Initiative for Global Development, where we are all working to see if we can get the private sector more deeply involved, not just in voluntary efforts but in all forms of global development with a specific emphasis on going after the abject poverty that exists throughout the world.

I think what I am going to be doing later this evening and what you are doing here this afternoon are very complementary. Strobe and Dick, as we go forward, I hope we will find ways that we can work together and cooperate. There are lots of

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

initiatives like this around, and there are a couple more that I am going to be speaking to later in the month. I think it is important for us to know what each other is doing and to glue all of this together, so that we can move forward in a comprehensive and coordinated way.

As you saw in the papers today, the Pew Institute reports show that there still is a great deal of anti-American feeling out in the world and it has been growing. I have been overseas quite a bit. I was in Europe two weeks ago on travel to three different countries, and I can see it, but I spend enough time over there, and I see enough to also know that there is still respect. There is still admiration for America, for what America has accomplished with our diversity. There are still people lined up at our embassies, wanting visas to come here. There are still people who risk their lives to get here without a visa, without authority, without permission.

Walk through any one of our major cities or

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

not so major cities, and you will see the world that has come to our doorstep. They didn't come here because we are the big, bad, ugly American; they came here because we are still the land of home and opportunity. We are still the land that in the last year I had responsibility for, we took in 50,000 refugees, not immigrants but refugees. They had no homes anywhere. They were refugees, living in camps. We took them in. No other nation in the world comes close to that number, and no other nation in the world has that kind of demand placed upon itself, with refugees wanting to come here and not go elsewhere. We are also still the place where immigrants find their dreams and hopes realized.

There are policies that are causing us a great deal of difficulty right now, and Iraq is the number one of those policies, and our inability and the world's inability to do something about the Middle East which has vexed my successor and all my predecessors for the last 60 years. There are personality problems that we have that we have to get

over that cause us to create some offense in parts of the world. These are problems with which I think can be dealt with, with change of tone and with success in some policies or change in policies. That is for others to worry about.

Don't ignore the fact that America still has a reservoir of respect that exists in the world. Whenever I have any doubts about this, I go to my hometown, New York. While I am waiting to appear somewhere or give a speech, I will walk up one of the avenues, particularly if it is a beautiful spring day. I love walking up Third or Madison or Fifth or Seventh or Eighth. I used to do it when I was Secretary. It is a lot more fun now without New York City Police following me in cars and diplomatic security running all over the place with earphones.

I do now what I did then. I will always look at the beautiful shops on Fifth and Madison, but what I really want to do is stop on one of the street corners and go to the hot dog vendor and have one of those great dirty water dogs that only New Yorkers

love. The reason I want a dirty water dog is because it comes with those red onions that you can only get on a corner in New York City.

Invariably, I will walk up to the dirty water dog stand, and the guy will look at me. There will be a brief glimpse of recognition, but not quite sure. The vendor gets the dirty water dog out and puts it on the bun and asks me if I want mustard and red onions. He fixes it all up and gives me one of those thin napkins, so the juice immediately starts coming through.

Then he recognizes me, and he will say, "You are -- you are -- are you General Powell?" Invariably, he is from somewhere far away.

I will say to him, "Well, thank you very much. How are you doing?"

"I'm doing fine," in his accent, and I will hand him a dollar.

Then he will say "No, you can't pay for this. You can't pay for this. I can't tell you how happy I am to be here from Somalia," from Nigeria,

from Honduras, from somewhere else. "I am so happy to be here. You can't pay me."

I insist anyway because I make a little more money than a dirty water dog stand owner. They are so happy and proud to be here.

So, don't sell us short. One way not to sell us short is to take that which we still have as a valuable commodity, who we are and what we are, and send it overseas. Send it overseas in the form of volunteers. Our soldiers are volunteers, and they carry those values over. Our diplomats and foreign service officers are volunteers. Our AID personnel send a lot of volunteers over there. We haven't begun to reach into the full capacity that we have to send more volunteers over.

Also, make sure that as you talk about volunteer issues, you vastly increase or think about suggesting in your work that you vastly increase the number of visitors programs. It is just amazing to go somewhere and have a Head of State come up to you, and the first thing they say is: "I graduated from

Georgetown." Or "I went to Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia. What year were you there?" Or "I am a graduate of the Command and General Staff College." They remember vividly those days.

Prince Turki, the new Saudi Ambassador, gave a big party for the diplomatic corps and all the rest of us and his foreign minister to welcome himself. It is good to be a Prince. To welcome himself to Washington, he threw a party for all of us. He got up at this party, this big A-List party with about 300 people there, and he said that he is happy to be back in America, not his first time, and he likes America. "You all are direct and to the point and you don't hide your words. You always know where you stand."

He said, "I'll never forget my time in Georgetown, but I will also never forget when I was here in prep school."

He said, "To this day, I will never forget the young American boy who greeted me on my first day and walked up to me and said, 'Hey, how ya doin', man?' What is your name?'

"I said, 'Turki al-Faisal.'

"He said, 'Turkey, like a Thanksgiving Turkey?'

"And I said to him, 'What is Thanksgiving?'

"He said, 'We better talk.'"

And from that, a memory was created, a bond was established that was never broken between those two people and Turki carried in his heart for the rest of his life to this day.

Then, there were the Brazilian kids who came to see me in early 2004. A few months later, I was in Brazil and I asked to see them again. They told me about their dreams and ambitions. They were 17 and 18-year-old kids. They were only here for two weeks. We had these two-week exchange programs. I said, "Well, I am glad you are going to be Presidents and CEOs and all that. Did anything happen in America that made you happy, unhappy, surprised or disappointed you?"

They kind of looked at each other, and finally a young girl said, "We were in Chicago, and we

went out to dinner one night, and the sponsors weren't with us. We went to a nearby restaurant. We had our meal and we discovered we had added up wrong or got the exchange rate wrong and couldn't pay for it. There we were -- 12 Brazilian teenagers in a restaurant in Chicago, and we can't pay for our meal.

"The waitress came along, and we told her what was wrong. She looked at us suspiciously, and she went away. She came back a moment later, and she said, 'Don't worry about it.'

"'Will you have to pay for it out of your salary?'

"She smiled and said, 'No. The manager said don't worry about it. He is so happy you are here in America. He is so happy you are in Chicago, his hometown. He is so happy you came to his restaurant. So accept this meal as a gift, and he hopes you enjoy the rest of your time in America.'"

Those kids went home. They had met me and lots of other important people. It was that instant, that moment that registers in their hearts and minds

forever.

That is the kind of thing you want to create with visitors programs or sending people overseas, who will take what we really are -- generous, considerate, open, kind people -- to the rest of the world. It is volunteer programs of the type you are talking about that can make that happen, and it is those kinds of programs that bring people here.

I tried, but I never finished this while I was still in office, to get all the ethnic groups in the United States to create an exchange program to bring kids here, to volunteer to create a program to bring their kids from those countries here, just to give them a couple weeks experience with restaurant owners in Chicago.

This is power, whether you call it soft or hard. This really is enormously important and enormously influential for us in the 21st Century as we exist in this globalized, flattening world.

It is so much more important than it has ever been before for us to realize that and reach out

Anderson Court Reporting
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

to the rest of the world through the kinds of programs
you have been discussing here today.

Thank you for letting me share a few moments
with you, and I wish you all the best of luck as you
continue your work. Thank you.

(Applause)

* * * * *