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Condoleeza Rice: History as Herstory

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Abstract: The author discusses the content and context of a classified briefing on Al Qaeda received by President Bush on August 6, 2001, and whether that briefing sufficed as a warning of the subsequent September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Public discourse on a classified briefing received by President Bush on August 6, 2001 is focusing on whether the briefing's contents were merely an historical update on the Al Qaeda threat or warning about future Al Qaeda attacks. This either-or focus—nurtured by the testimony before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States of the President's National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice—is neither necessary nor sufficient as a substantive attribution.

Any warning is based on information that has already occurred, because it defies common models of logic to suggest that the warning comes from that which has not yet occurred. Thus, all warnings are historically based. As well, any historical description has at least the potential for the implications of warning. To advocate that any interpretive something can only be a nothing from a warning perspective belies any adaptive potential of language and its derivatives. Thus, one can make the case that history constitutes not only our past but our present and future besides.

Back to the Advisor's testimony before the commission. Her testimony is, indeed, her story. It is also part of her own life—her herstory, if you will. Both her story and her herstory attribute history to the August 6, 2001 briefing—itsself history leading up the 9/11 attacks. These last few sentences may be but semantic irrelevancies and/or entertainments, but no more than the attempt to hide warning behind an attribution of history. (Doosje, B., & Branscombe, N. R. (2003). Attributions for the negative historical actions of a group. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, 235-248; Lichtblau, E., & Sanger, D.E. (April 10, 2004). August'01 brief is said to warn of attack plans. *The New York Times*, A1, A9; Teo, T., & Febraro, A. R. (2002). Attribution errors in the postmodern landscape. *American Psychologist*, 57, 458-460; White, P.A. (2000). Causal attribution and Mill's Methods of Experimental Inquiry: Past, present, and prospect. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 39, 429-447.) (Keywords: Al Qaeda, Condoleeza Rice, Herstory, Testimony, Warnings.)