

The nation's first black woman to serve as secretary of state spoke of the importance of that role to members of [the Economic Club of New York](#) last night. [Condoleezza Rice](#) made her remarks to members of the 107-year old non-partisan public affairs forum as their guest of honor during their Centennial Celebration Dinner.

[The Washington Post reports](#) that she was chosen by the group because she represented major changes in the last century, namely the women's movement and the civil rights movement in the United States. She chose to use Birmingham while illustrating her points.

The Birmingham, Alabama native used her hometown's past to talk about the ability for people from all backgrounds to succeed here in the United States while overcoming obstacles. She also spoke of her disbelief regarding this country's being eclipsed by China as we begin the 21st century.