

**Interview with
Secretary Mike Espy
December 11, 2000**

Q: Today is December 11th of the year 2000, I'm Larry Quinn with the Office of Communications at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington and we're visiting with the 25th Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy by audio teleconference call today. Good afternoon Mr. Secretary.

A: Good afternoon (inaud.) how are you?

Q: I'm just fine sir. I would like us to begin our discussion about your background and the experience that you had that led your selection as Secretary of Agriculture.

A: Well let me say first of all that I was never a farmer. My father graduated from Tuskegee Institute with a degree in Agriculture Sciences so that's about as close to agricultural academia that I ever came. But I was a lawyer, served as a lawyer from the State of Mississippi and I was elected to the Congress in 1986 and once I got to Washington in my first term, I was fortunate in that I was appointed to serve on the Agriculture Committee as well as the Budget Committee.

And on the Budget Committee I had a specialty if you will or I was focused rather on areas of agricultural finance, budgetary issues involving rural issues and commodity issues. So both on the policy side, the regulation side and fiscal I tried to develop as much expertise as I could. But I really had no intentions of serving as secretary. I only wanted to develop my expertise as the best Congressperson that I could. But as you know, life is never prescribed so after I was, after I had served three terms and had been elected to my fourth term, I finished my service on the Budget Committee and had to look for another committee, I had

a desire to serve on the Appropriations Committee in the Congress.

But I was prevented from doing so, in other words I did not and I wasn't successful in seeking a seat on that Appropriations Committee, so I looked around and I said well perhaps the Lord's trying to tell me something you know because here I am in my fourth term and I have less power in my fourth term than I had in my first term. So at that point President Clinton had just been elected as President-elect, this would be 1992. He was a friend of mine, I had served on his campaign, I guess I could have been called one of his advisors. And I thought maybe this would be the opportunity where I could approach him and ask for consideration for a Cabinet position as Secretary of Agriculture.

November of 1992 I recall there was a dinner at the train station in Washington, DC sponsored by the Democratic leadership counsel.

At that point Mr..., President-elect Clinton was the out-going president of the DLC and I was one of three vice-chairmen of the DLC. So I took the opportunity at that dinner to write him a note, on the back, at that time of an envelope, outlining the reasons why I thought he should and could consider me for that position. And the reasons were more policy related, you know things I thought I could do, changes I thought I could bring to the Department.

And once he arrived at the train station before he made his speech I had the opportunity to speak to him for a couple of minutes and he asked Warren Christopher who at that time was Chairman of the Transition Team to hand him the note that I had given to Warren. And he read it and before he got off to make a speech and gave me a thumbs up sign. And at that point you know my heart sort of

froze. I say well it can't be this easy and of course it was not that easy. But at least I knew that affirmative justifications (ph.) that he gave would at least give me the entry into the entire transition process. So that was it. Between November and Christmas Eve when I was actually nominated for this position, I had to undergo what I thought was rigorous process of travel to Little Rock to meet with the transition officials, you know scrutiny of my personal background by the FBI, visiting certain persons. And you know it was just a very difficult but very exciting process for me.

So I was fortunate in that I survived it and December 24th, Christmas Eve, he asked me to come to Little Rock where I would be announced as his choice for Secretary of Agriculture and I was very proud to do that.

Q: And then you became then, during the first week of the President's term the youngest Secretary of Agriculture ever to be named, at age 39 and the first African-American to be in that position.

A: Yes, that's true and I'm proud of that particular distinction but you know I don't try to let age and race define me as such. I'm very proud that I was the first of both but I wanted to do my best to be a very, very effective and capable Secretary. After I was appointed I then had to go through the Senate confirmation exercises and again I tried my best to study very hard, to bone up on the issues, to make the visits that one should make, all the courtesy calls that one should make in order to be personally interviewed by the Senators and I did that.

And then I had to answer questions from the panel of Senators and again I survived that and I was confirmed soon thereafter by the US Senate.

Q: And one of the first all employee meetings that you held here at the Department of Agriculture had kind of a surprise conclusion, would you talk about that?

A: Yes, you're mentioning the first meeting that I had in the patio of the USDA administration building where I actually had an opportunity to address the employees as Secretary of Agriculture and I just asked a question of them and there were many of them, standing room only at that point as I remember. And I asked them how many of you have ever been to the Cage which is the fleet of offices of the Secretary and his senior staff. I asked them how many of them, most of them who had been working there five, ten, fifteen, twenty years even, how many of them had ever had a chance to walk up that spiral staircase and tour the Cage. And I was astonished that as I recall the overwhelming majority of them had never had the opportunity to visit the Secretarial suite.

And so I told them just follow me. And I walked up the steps something which would be akin to the Pied Piper, you know exercising in the fictional stories and led them through. And of course we had no carpets on the floor, no paintings on the wall and we were still getting set there, but I was very humbled and again very surprised that some of them hadn't done it. And I did that for a reason, I wanted to bring a culture of openness to the USDA which is actually one of the ten reasons that I had given to the then President-elect Clinton as to why I should as Secretary.

You know I mean I had been on the Agriculture Committee and I had visited many times over at the Department of Agriculture and it was my sense that that environment there was not very accessible, not very open. I had some personal occasions where I thought that the treatment was rather rude and that was even of a Congressperson.

So I thought that at least you know while we were getting things straight you know I could demonstrate right off the bat that I would be a bit different in my openness, I would try to change the culture of the USDA, the change of culture, the bureaucracy, just to show that we would be able to invite everyone in, listen to all points of view and make decisions.

Q: You had very little warm up time. Just after you began as Secretary there was a national crisis in the Northwest, that drew your immediate attention.

A: Yes two days after we were sworn in at the White House, the President invited all of the Cabinet Secretaries to Camp David for a retreat and I recall that I was at that retreat and received news from the Food, Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA of an outbreak of a viral, virulent disease rather called e-coli 015787 in the Pacific Northwest. Evidently there had been a very popular fast food franchise chain which had undercooked a number of hamburgers and had served these hamburgers to small children. And the horrible news was that these small children, many of them had died or had gotten very, very ill. And that was brought to my attention while I was at Camp David.

So had a chance to speak to directly to the President about it and ask him to elevate this episode to the status of a Presidential inquiry which allowed us to get off the mark maybe a little bit faster than would have normalized... normally been the case. And I went out, I wanted to take special time to personally conduct the investigation because I didn't know much about food safety issues and this was an excellent opportunity to learn and again to demonstrate to everyone that we took health matters very seriously and that I just wouldn't delegate it to a staffer.

So I did have the opportunity along with senior staff at FSIS to go out to the Pacific Northwest to talk to the parents of the deceased and ill children, to testify before the state legislature, to be briefed by our senior people and to formulate opinions as to what we could do to improve the quality of food safety in America.

Q: And going on from that, that became a jump off point for some major policy changes in the food safety area, didn't it?

A: Yes it did, I mean there were a number of policy changes. I'm not sure how specific you want me to get into any of this, but the first one was the entire area of zero tolerance. You know zero tolerance is really what it means, that in the food safety exercise particularly that exercise which takes place in the inspection houses around the country where the USDA is on hand to inspect the beef and pork and poultry and other commodities before we put a USDA inspected stamp on those commodities we must be absolutely sure that they're free of contamination and that was, and that's called zero tolerance. We will not tolerate any germs or you know any identifiable bacteria. It was my impression that that standard had been relaxed under the previous administration and I wanted to do all that I could do to make sure that it, in practice it mean just as it mean, as much as it meant in theory.

So there were a host of changes that I tried to effect while I was there as Secretary related to the improvement in the quality of inspections in beef and pork and poultry and everything else that we inspected. And this ran the gamut from making sure that no identifiable feces, chips which had been allowed to pass would any longer pass. It included the attachment of safe handling labels to all raw meat and poultry. It included new standards for micro-

biological contamination and you know I issued a call far and wide as best as I could to make sure that we had the best scientists in the country making the best test in the country to come to give us the best regimen that we could have.

Q: One of the areas that you emphasized when you were in Congress was to do with trade and opening new markets and you began immediately becoming rather involved in the negotiations on the general agreement, on tariffs and trade.

A: Well again maybe I was just there at the right time. Other, you know it's my opinion and the opinion of just about every Secretary that trade in agriculture products is extremely important. It helps our balance of payments, it helps our trade deficits and the United States is incredibly productive and we just grow more than we can consume domestically and so the only way to keep the supplies reduced and to improve prices and to make our mark against our competitors is to basically trade and sell what we grow. And this is just... that's the position of virtually every Secretary of Agriculture.

It just so happened that during my tenure, once I began there we were able to come upon a situation where the administration had pronounced its favor for NAFTA and GATT, NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement where we were about to draw a tariff free zone between Mexico, United States and Canada. Very good agriculture trading partners and to extend that trade regime of that idea to all across the world through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. And so the USDA was in a position where it had to negotiate bi-lateral treaties in anticipation of GATT and NAFTA with our partners all across the world.

I had a great interest... I had had a great interest in that while

I was in Congress, having traveled to Geneva, having traveled to Brussels as Special Emissarial Committee on Agriculture. So I just sort of brought that interest and whatever talent I had to my position as Secretary. Again I wanted to demonstrate that this was an administration which just would not delegate these matters to qualified staff, that we would actually become involved. And again I did what I could do to personally conduct negotiations in Canada and Mexico, Brussels, Geneva and Marrakech and to go to China to try open up that country for US agriculture products and to do everything I could do to demonstrate our quality and our tenacity as American agriculturists to promote that idea of free trade.

Q: Let's go back to another emergency that certainly preoccupied you in that first year or so as Secretary, and that was the flood in the Midwest.

A: Well again we had a lot of emergencies and floods have been witnessed just beginning of time. But this was one of Biblical proportions. In 1993 there was a flood which inundated hundreds of thousands of acres within seven states in the Midwest and the lower Mississippi Delta of the United States. About, I believe about seven million acres with covered with water or affected by the floods. And there was an outcry from farmers and producers and citizens who lived in rural parts of those states whose homes were under water, whose crops were under water and who had no way due to factors beyond their control, to sustain their livelihoods.

And President Clinton wanted the hallmark of this administration to be remembered as one which again would get very quick off the mark when it came to natural disasters. And so again as his Secretary of Agriculture I wanted to demonstrate that USDA would be first among agencies in its quick, efficient and sympathetic

service to farmers, rural citizens and to all those who had a stake in the calamity. In June, July, August, September, October 1993 I believe I made, gosh maybe 20, 25, 30 personal visits to flood, the affected flood regions. I met with everyone who wanted to meet with me, farmers, politicians, everyone to try to come up with some quick solutions.

Again the USDA applied great staff and great minds to this entire process and I think that we got good marks on just how quick we were to finding solutions.

Q: Turning to water of a different water, whereas you had too much water there, many rural districts including one you had represented in Congress didn't have running water in their homes and that became a major initiative for you.

A: Well deprivation and poverty and those who the Bible calls the least of these have always commanded my attention. In my former Congressional district I represented a district which was and unfortunately still is one of the poorest parts of our country, you know where people make very little money, there continue to be high rates of unemployment, insufficient levels of education, housing stock and within that housing stock we have far too many people still without running water, even now in the year 2000. And that just had always commanded my attention and sympathy. And so this was not a new issue for me.

In Congress I tried to do what I could do to bring to bear resources of USDA to address this problem. And once I became Secretary I could address more attention, I could bring more attention to the issue. And so out of this cause we developed something called Water 2000 and the theory was we said by the year 2000 between the Congress and the USDA we would hook up if you

will, all necessary water resources to communities and homes without such. And we were able to do that to a great degree. I don't think now it's 2000 as we speak now and I think, I'm not sure that the goal has been met. But I think that much progress has been made to equipping all rural homes without running water to that.

I'm very proud of that and hopefully that can be considered as a legacy item.

Q: Your most lasting accomplishment is something that several Secretaries before you attempted to accomplish, and that was reorganizing the massive agency known as the Department of Agriculture.

A: I think of all the issues I tackled, or tried to tackle while I was there, this one was the toughest. I only served there for two years but every day within that two year period I made incremental progress toward the reorganizing the massive USDA, something that was in my opinion, very, very necessary. Necessary because I didn't think the USDA had moved with the times. We in my opinion at that point had far too many local offices. Many, many of them existed without the benefit of serving or having to serve any farmers. I mean that 4,200 I believe is the number that I recall, that we still have that many offices around the country when in fact the farm population had dwindled to about two percent of the entire citizenry.

So we had more offices than we had farmers, more offices than we had farm constituents. So we had to close some of them which in and of itself is a very thorny political exercise. So in order to demonstrate parity and equity, I thought it best first to demonstrate to the country that Washington first would reform

itself in that we would cull down and whittle and reshape the Washington operation to reflect our new sense of efficiency and effectiveness and one-stop, the theory of one-stop shopping. And so just as an administrative matter, I submitted a proposal to the White House to change the top tier at the USDA and that was done, I wish it had been done a little bit sooner because that proposal was very much ready.

But it did, we had to interface with the Vice President's exercise on re-inventing government. But we did and finally that was allowed to go through. And then once that happened we were able to make certain recommendations to the Congress to consolidate offices, to close down offices, to do again what we could do to satisfy certain members of Congress, Senators and House members who were insistent that we didn't close down their local community USDA resource shop that we would displace unnecessarily. So that took a long time to do that, it took a lot of personal intervention, just took a lot of negotiation and on the day I resigned, there at USDA was the day that the Congress passed our plan to reorganize the USDA.

And again that's something I'm very proud of that that did happen.

It was not easy to negotiate but I thought it was very, very necessary and so now as I travel around the country I see new buildings, you know they're called by different names perhaps, but these are co-located USDA shops all across the United States and hopefully they're working well.

Q: You worked very hard on the culture of both the organization within trying to focus on one USDA, but also about how USDA was working with minority farmers. Talk about that.

A: Again this is a long held issue which emanated from my service as

a Congressperson. Again I was from an area which was very poor and had a very high number of African-American farmers who had written their Congressman time and time again about discrimination within the USDA. You know I recall as a Congressperson having made speeches and had written letters to the USDA about this problem, providing evidence of overt racial discrimination. Many of them had written that their loans were being delayed and unnecessarily deferred you know when their white counterpart farmers would get their loans and it had to be more than just about cash flow.

Some of them had a history of efficient product but still couldn't get the loans on time. And some just didn't get them at all and so after having done some investigation as a Congressman to try to see whether these issues were realistic, I came to the conclusion that they were and at that time did what a you know single member could do through the exercise of his office, through the alliance of certain caucuses (ph.) to try to change the situation. I was the author, when I was in the Congress, of what is known as the Minority Farmers Right Act, where we tried to get a certain amount of money appropriated to the USDA to allocate to universities, colleges and committees with a demonstrated capacity to help farmers in their technical assistance matters. In other words, beyond just discrimination, we felt that most farmers needed technical help in writing their homing farm plans, in making sure that they qualified for the USDA loans, and they just weren't getting help from the USDA.

The USDA was supposed to have been a service oriented entity and I mean the complaint was that they were not getting help from the USDA. So we thought it would be a simple matter to find resources

elsewhere to dedicate to this problem. And so the Congress did pass the law which I authored to give up to \$10 million to qualified entities to help these farmers to qualify for USDA programs. Unfortunately the program was never funded at all to any degree until I assumed the post of Secretary of Agriculture and even then the Congress would not adhere to our request to fully fund it. I think we started out at \$1 million which was very meager to try to address the problem. So once I became Secretary I knew that that was a problem there and you know a problem both in service delivery but also within the employee workforce at USDA. And through various mechanisms inside and outside the USDA we tried to address the problem and do what we could do to remedy it even going so far as to sign orders to give redress to farmers and give them damages from the USDA checkbooks.

That was a big issue because that was an internal decision within the General Counsel's office which basically said that we did not have the authority to award, to pay monetary damages. I thought that was incorrect. So we asked for an opinion from the US Attorney General who after a good bit, amount of resourc..., research found in favor of our position and under the equal credit opportunity act I believe, we were, it was found that, it was decided rather than USDA could award monetary money damages for aggrieved farmers. And so a lot of people feel that is the precursor to the current action whereby the USDA has admitted it had discriminated against African-American farmers in years past and is now out to do a series of exercises paying those farmers and classing the farmers for the damages that it admitted that it had done to them.

Q: You also tried to effect the powerful county committees by encouraging greater diversification and ask for some help from

Congress, what was their answer?

A: Well the answer was no. You know the advisor... the committees in the counties are elected and there are very few African-American farmers who find themselves in position where they can be elected in some of these local counties and states. And so you know these committees are very powerful because they make you know life and death decisions if you will and I thought at least that in those counties where the African-American population was substantial that the Secretary of Agriculture would have the opportunity or the authority rather to appoint qualified you know African-American men and women to those committees.

And that of course was not something that could be done by regulatory exercise or something that the Secretary could do without the approval of Congress. And so I did submit a request and a bill to Congress to allow the Secretary to appoint a voting member to these committees and they did not approve that legislation.

Q: But you did put a moratorium on farm loan for closures which did help some of the farmers in an interim way didn't it?

A: Well I believe this is one of the first things that we did once I became Secretary you know and this was not just to remedy a racial problem. I mean all across the country because of confusing laws, you know ineffective service delivery, you know just problems all across the board we saw a rash of farm foreclosures, some of them merited and some of them without merit. And I thought the at least we could do was to give the benefit of the doubt to the farmers to impose a moratorium on all foreclosures until such time as we could clean up our situation. You know such time as we could really investigate all these foreclosures to see if we had done everything we could do to keep them solvent. You know if it

was their fault of course, if they just couldn't make a crop and just couldn't repay the loan, then that's one thing. But if it's, if it was our problem in the way we delivered our services or the way we explained the laws or the way we you know if we certainly, if we contradicted or violated our own policies, then it was our fault and we should not have caused them any more harm than we had already caused.

So we imposed that moratorium and kept it on for a while and then relaxed it.

Q: You took a look at some concerns for discrimination that were expressed by USDA employees as well so you didn't just look outside, but looked inside the Department.

A: Well as I was saying I mean this had to be a holistic exercise. I mean discrimination exist in government as well as it does outside of government and we had received complaints, many, many complaints from certain USDA groups about discriminatory hiring, discriminatory promotion. There was a problem in the selection system for bonuses and I mean in an agency where you have 110,000 people you know we know that it, the human resources functions don't always move smoothly. But it seemed that we just had an inordinate amount of complaints there and many, many, many lawsuits against the Department. So I tried to address that by appointing committees to research the issue, to formulate certain recommendations to improve it and that again was a continuing exercise even until today.

Q: I want to go back to the note that you sent to then President-elect Clinton with the ten reasons why you wanted to become Secretary of Agriculture. Did you get to work on most of those ten reasons?

A: Larry I'm having trouble remembering what they all were now but my

sense is that we accomplished or made substantial headway in the most of them probably 75 percent of them and those reasons as I recall them and I did not keep a copy of that you know wrote it on the back of an envelope while we were waiting the President's arrival and I just excused myself from the head table, went behind a curtain and wrote it. And so I should have kept a copy but don't, but didn't, don't have one today. But I remember they all emanated out of my concern as a member of Congress about the USDA and its deficiencies and how I thought appointed me as head of the USDA I could begin to address these perceived deficiencies.

And they certainly related to high on the list as I recall was this entire matter of reorganization and addressing the culture of discrimination, doing what we could do to advance our trade agenda and you know welfare reform issues were prominent at that point as well. So they were more policy related than anything and I'm satisfied even after two years of service that we made substantial headway on all of them and even completed some of them.

Q: Were you disappointed with the interruption that caused you to leave this job early, a job that you really sought and planned for?

A: Yes, yes I was not happy to have to leave my service. I thought that I was doing an adequate job there. And yes, so the circumstances were such that at that point I had no choice. But I'm satisfied that even now it doesn't matter how long one serves, it only matters how well one serves and I leave it to history to decide how well I served, but I thought that we were doing a good job. But when you're at a Presidential appointee, you know, you serve at the will and pleasure of the chief executive and it's up to you to protect him or her, it's up to you to do whatever it takes within the law to achieve the benefit of good work for his

administration. And when called upon to step down for whatever reason legitimate or illegitimate, merited or without merit, you have to do that. So I did that.

Q: A time after you had left you got a special gift on your 45th birthday.

A: My 45th birthday, oh gosh, well this was, this brings up an extremely difficult period within my life. Again I survived it. And I think I'm a lot stronger because of it frankly, but I was accused of providing favors to companies regulated by the USDA and also accused by the independent counsel, Donald Smaltson (ph.) of having accepted certain gratuities, funded or given to me by entities or companies regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture. And once I heard all those rumors back in '94 you know I should have paid more attention to them, I knew that they weren't true or could be explained.

And so I sort of waited but they just stayed, they developed and I'd wished that I'd paid more attention at the beginning to seek out those who would make decisions about my future and explain to them the reasoning and the rationale before my career became jeopardized that way. But I thought they were silly on their face and I didn't give them much credence and that's my mistake. I should have done more there earlier. But at any rate the Attorney General, Janet Reno thought that these were serious enough so that this case would have to have been investigated by special counsel and one was appointed in my case.

And again I thought that these were simple matters which would find their end in a short period of time but again that's not the case. They took about four years and some \$21 million I believe and all types of harassing episodes against me and my family and

friends to bring this to a successful end which I did on my 45th birthday, having been indicted and brought to trial by the independent counsel Donald Smaltson, having been accused of criminal wrongdoing, we were able to prove to a jury of my peers and the US District Court for Washington, DC that basically none of this was true. And so out of what had originated as a 39 count indictment the judge threw out several of those counts after hearing the testimony over a seven week trial where the prosecution generated 70 witnesses and I generated none. We just cross-examined all of their witnesses to a clear demonstration to the jury proved that none of it had merit. So after declaring that we would not put on a case and that in our opinion the prosecution had not met their burden of proof we just simply rose if you will and put it in the hands of the jury.

And they found me not guilty on each and every count, each and every count before them, I was found not guilty on and exonerated completely and set free on the day of my 45th birthday.

Q: And shortly thereafter you came back to a very warm welcome at the Department of Agriculture, talk about that day.

A: Well it's the custom that at the end one's service, every Secretary receives a portrait which is presented by the government and placed on the wall at the USDA patio. In my particular case that portrait had been completed within a year of my sitting for it, back in 1994. So by the end of 1995 that portrait was, had been completed and I was asked to come to a ceremony at that time where that portrait would be unveiled and placed on the walls of the USDA. But at that point in my life I mean I was in the midst of the most difficult trial that I'd ever had and I just couldn't see my picture hanging with a cloud over it. I mean that cloud, that issue was going to have to be resolved before I would allow any

such ceremony to take place. And so I prevailed and just asked that that portrait be placed in a closet somewhere with the door shut and locked until such time as my legal situation had been resolved.

And thankfully they agreed with me and placed this picture out of view until it was resolved. So the day after the verdict was announced I called Secretary Dan Glickman and asked frankly if he could find that picture and the ceremony that they had been wanting to have I would agree to having it at that point and it was a good day that day. First time that I had set foot back into the USDA I believe that was day and President Clinton gave a speech, I gave comments, but I remember it more for the jubilation and the sense of joy from among all my friends and employees and I'm very humbled that that you know, that my official, was resolved to my, in my favor and that portrait is now hanging there without such a cloud.

Q: Finally if you could make short list of the proudest accomplishments that you had at USDA, what would it be?

A: Wow, that's a good question. That the unveiling of the portrait has to rank number one. And it just has to rank number one because I realized that there are a lot of innocent people in prison in the United States and I just did not want to be one of them. So the fact that that picture's hanging there without any legal taint on it at all is something that I just cherish and I really appreciate that, so stand there and having been acquitted and redeemed if you will has got to count as probably the best day.

The day that the crop insurance and reorganization bill was passed by the Congress was also a very, very good day. You know

ironically that was the same day that I resigned but I remember that for a day which showed everyone that we had gotten some things done, some major things done while having the opportunity to serve at USDA. So that I don't know if I could rank them order of priority, but that's got to rank high as well.

Sitting in a third has to be, sitting in Japan with my colleague Prime Minister Hata (ph.) who was the Minister of Agriculture and one-on-one without the benefit of any aids negotiating the first entry of United States rice into Japan. That had to be a rush, I believe that was 36,000 tons back in '94. I think that we negotiated and that was just the proverbial foot in the door.

And being the first Clinton appointee to China where I had the opportunity to sit and talk to Peoples Republic of China officials about agriculture was also important time. And then of course being able to develop the running water and rural development programs was also important. So there are very, very many of them. Lastly I've got to say the saddest time was to have to sit and listen to the sorrowful expressions of parents whose children had died from the ingestion of tainted hamburger meat you know which prompted me to pledge to try to clean it up. I also remember that was a very poignant time for me, so. Very, very busy, very busy time in my life but I'm proud that again we survived a lot of the assaults and onslaughts and am surviving today.

Q: Thank you very much 25th Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy for talking with us today about your tenure as Secretary of Agriculture. I'm Larry Quinn with the Office of Communications at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington.

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