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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – Representative Marcia Fudge, the newly-elected chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, says politically-inspired charges that United Nations Ambassador Susan E. Rice is "not very bright" and is "unqualified" to be named Secretary of State by President Barack Obama are racist and sexist in addition to being untrue.

"All of the things they [Republicans] have disliked about things that have gone on in the administration, they have never called a male unqualified, not bright, not trustworthy," Fudge [D-Ohio] said last week at a news conference called by a dozen women members of the House of Representatives to defend Rice. "There is a clear sexism and racism that goes with these comments being made by unfortunately Senator [John] McCain and others."

McCain attacked Rice, who is under consideration to succeed Hillary Rodham Clinton as Secretary of State, for saying in September that the deaths of four Americans at the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya was the outgrowth of spontaneous demonstrations protesting the release of an anti-Muslim film made in the U.S. rather than a planned attack by al-Qaeda, which turned out to be the case.

"Susan Rice should have known better and if she didn't know better, she is not qualified," McCain said Nov. 14 on "Fox and Friends." He continued, "I will do everything in my power to block her from being the United States Secretary of State."

McCain and other Republican senators, including Lindsey O. Graham of South Carolina, have

been extremely critical of Rice's initial comments.

In a round of Sunday morning television interviews four days after the attack in Libya, Rice presented the administration's official position on the tragedy. In each interview, she emphasized that the views she was expressing was based on information that the administration had at the time and that an FBI investigation would ultimately determine the facts.

Appearing on ABC News' "This Week," she told guest host Jake Tapper: "Well, Jake, first of all, it's important to know that there's an FBI investigation that has begun and will take some time to be completed. That will tell us with certainty what transpired. But our current best assessment, based on what we have at present, is that, in fact, what this began as, it was a spontaneous – not a premeditated – response to what had transpired in Cairo. In Cairo, as you know, a few hours earlier, there was a violent protest that was undertaken in reaction to this very offensive video that was disseminated."

Rice used almost identical nuanced language in interviews that same Sunday with "Face the Nation" and "Meet the Press."

It was later disclosed that Rice was using talking points about the situation that had been supplied and approved by the CIA.

McCain described Rice as " not very bright ." Rice graduated from Stanford University with honors and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and earned a master's degree and Ph.D. at Oxford University.

McCain, who had the bright idea of selecting Sarah Palin as his running mate in 2008, finished fifth from last in his graduating class at the U.S. Naval Academy – 894 of 899. According to the book, *The Nightingale's Song* by Robert Timberg, the senior senator from Arizona was a "below par" Navy pilot who lost five military aircrafts before later being captured as a prisoner of war.

Lindsey Graham [R-S.C.] said he does not trust Rice.

"I think she was a political choice, telling a political narrative, and either she didn't know the truth about Benghazi – so she shouldn't have been on T.V. – or she was spinning it," Graham said. He added, "I don't think that's a good resume to be secretary of State."

Rice's resume speaks for itself. Her late father, Emmett, was an economics professor at Cornell University and a former governor of the Federal Reserve System. Her mother, Lois Dickson Fitt, is a policy scholar at the Brookings Institute.

Rice also worked at the Brookings Institute as a Senior Fellow, was Senior Director for African Affairs at the National Security Council and served as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during President Bill Clinton's second term. The Senate confirmed Rice as U.N. Ambassador by unanimous consent on Jan. 22, 2009.

At his news conference , President Obama said last week that he hasn't made a decision on who will become Secretary of State in his second term. But he made clear that if he decides to select Rice, he will not back down from a fight with Senate Republicans over the nomination.

"...Let me say specifically about Susan Rice, she has done exemplary work. She has represented the United States and our interests in the United Nations with skill and professionalism and toughness and grace.

"As I've said before, she made an appearance at the request of the White House in which she gave her best understanding of the intelligence that had been provided to her. If Senator McCain and Senator Graham and others want to go after somebody, they should go after me. And I'm happy to have that discussion with them. But for them to go after the U.N. Ambassador, who had nothing to do with Benghazi, and was simply making a presentation based on intelligence that she had received, and to besmirch her reputation is outrageous."

In closed door congressional hearings last week, former CIA Director David Petraeus confirmed
that Rice's talking points had been approved by the CIA.

At the news conference called by congresswomen last week, Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Wis.) said, "The baseless ad hominem attacks on Ambassador Rice by several members of the Senate – most notably Senator John McCain – calling into question her very character, basic level of intelligence, trustworthiness, and qualifications is not only disingenuous but at odds with the actions and stances they have taken in the past, with other potential nominees."

Moore isn't the only member of Congress who views McCain and Graham as hypocrites .

In commentary posted on the Huffingtonpost, Senator Barbara Boxer [D-Calif.], recalled: "In September 2002, then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice appeared on a talk show and claimed that Iraq was importing high quality aluminum tubes that 'are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs.'

"But in 2004, shortly before she was nominated by President George W. Bush to be Secretary of State, Rice admitted 'there was some debate' at the time about the intelligence behind the aluminum tubes – information she had chosen to ignore during her 2002 appearance. In fact, both the State Department and the Department of Energy believed that the tubes were intended for conventional weapons – not nuclear weapons."

Boxer added, "Tragically, the false assertions made by Rice and other top officials in the Bush administration helped propel our country into a devastating and costly war in Iraq that claimed more than 4,400 American lives. But somehow, Rice's role in these profound intelligence failures did not prevent Senators McCain and Graham from championing her nomination to be Secretary of State."

In remarks that could be easily flipped today, McCain said on the Senate floor in 2005 that the upper chamber had enough votes to confirm [Condoleezza] Rice to the job.

"So I wonder why we are starting this new Congress with a protracted debate about a foregone conclusion," McCain said at the time. "I can only conclude that we are doing this for no other reason than because of lingering bitterness over the outcome of the election."