

Interviewer: Please state your name, title, and affiliation.

Dr. Silver: I'm Joseph H. Silver Sr. Most of the colleagues in political science call me Pete. I'm president of Silver & Associates.

Interviewer: And can you please tell us a bit about your personal background, specifically where you are from and what was your home or family life like growing up?

Dr. Silver: I was born in Goldsboro, North Carolina, a small town. Of about 25,000, I suppose, at the time. I grew up in a family of seven kids, and I was number six of seven. My mother and father were blue-collar workers and absolutely awesome people who instilled in us the value of education. Our family was pretty well known in the community for advocating for the rights of our community. We were also known in the school system as a family of scholars, if you will. My sister, Gloria, had graduated at the top of her class and was the first group of African Americans that went to Emory University. My sister, Esther, left and went to North Carolina Central and then on to Columbia University for her master's. My sister, Linda, was at Bennett, went on to the University of Michigan and Harvard for her master's, and later to the University of Cincinnati for her PhD. My brother, Joel, was a Morehouse man, as he called himself, graduated from Morehouse, and went on to the University of Detroit. Got two master's, one in finance and one in economics. My sister, Patricia, went to North Carolina Central, focused in higher education, and my brother and I went to St. Augustine's University.

Dr. Silver: I graduated from undergraduate school in 1975 with a double major in history and political science, and had the distinction of graduating number one in my class. Growing up in Goldsboro, which is a typical southern town, our parents volunteered us, my sister and I, to integrate the schools there. That was in 1966, and that was 12 years after the Brown versus Board of Education decision. Probably the worst years of my life, period. But we still excelled in that environment, but each day was a struggle. And it was during those times that I think I really, really understood the struggle firsthand of our people, and made a decision that I would spend my life trying to address those concerns. And my intent was to go to law school after graduating from St. Augustine's University.

Dr. Silver: But that changed somewhere down the line, and I'm sure that question may come up later on. But the childhood was one of, I think, significant grounding in terms of who I am. And my father and mother were absolute geniuses in my mind in terms of how they were able to

manipulate and care for us, and instill in us the value of education and the value of us as individuals. In other words, you may be poor, you may be an African American, but nobody is better than you because they are something different, and you're not any better than anybody else. So my childhood really grounded me, and my family life grounded me in terms of, I think, who I am today. I don't think you can separate me from my foundational family, or separate me from my family now in any kind of way.

Interviewer: And how were you introduced to the field of political science?

Dr. Silver: That's a very interesting question because I'll be talking about that this afternoon at one of the panels. My intent, as I indicated earlier, was to go to law school, and I got accepted into several of the big name law schools, and that was my trajectory. My sister Esther, who I mentioned earlier, was a reviewer for the Black Political Economy, and eventually became the first editor of Essence magazine, but during the time she was a reviewer for the Black Political Economy, she would send me articles of this outstanding political scientist. I had no idea who he was. His name was Mack Henry Jones, and he was at Atlanta University. And she would send me articles that he was writing and different things that he had been publishing, and I just got enamored with him. And so the beginning of my senior year, I reached out to him cold, just got on the phone and called him. He had no idea who I was, and I only knew him through his writings. And I asked him about the process of getting into Atlanta University, and he told me how competitive it was, and that the money was short.

Dr. Silver: They wanted graduate students to come in with funding, but he couldn't guarantee anything, and that he would have to look at my credentials to determine if I was even eligible to be admitted to the school. So I assured him that that wouldn't be a problem. At the time, I had a 4.0 average and two majors, and I also, that year, had been selected as a Ford Foundation fellow. And so with that, the Ford Foundation gave me money to go to graduate school, and the money followed wherever you were accepted. So if, in fact, I did go to Atlanta University at the time, the money would follow me. And so I explained that to Mack Jones, that I probably would bring my own money, and that I would be honored to be under his tutelage. And of course, over the phone, he couldn't promise me anything, but he said, "Send any application. We'll review it, and we'll go from there." So I sent my application in. It was accepted, and probably the best decision that I've made in terms of my career was making the decision to switch from law school. And I had been accepted to UNC, Marquette, Emory, some of the other schools.

Dr. Silver: But the decision to go to Atlanta University at the time, not Clark Atlanta University, probably grounded me in the discipline of political science. And it's kind of interesting that it was my sister who actually introduced me to him, and the rest is history.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little bit more about your graduate experience then at Atlanta?

Dr. Silver: It was intimidating. I had Professor William Boone and Professor Larry Moss, Mack Jones and Bob Holmes, and Shelby Lewis as my major professors during that time. And each of them was absolute cornerstones in the field of political science. I have the distinction, as I tell folks, of being one of the students who quit the program earlier, and the distinction of being the student who graduated from the program the earliest. And I'll tell you about that. That's kind of funny because Larry Moss was my initial professor, and I remember walking into his classroom, and then walking into Mack Jones classroom, and I, like everybody else, was given a syllabus. When I saw the syllabus being naive, I thought it was for all the four classes that I was going to take for the semester, only to figure out that it was the syllabus for that one class.

Dr. Silver: And I was just like, "Oh my God, what have I gotten myself into?" And so I literally talked to a friend of mine, and I said, "You know what? I think I'm not cut out for this." So I packed my bags and went back home. And that was on Friday, on a Sunday, I got a call from one of my classmates, who was an upperclassman. His name was Dr. Ron Slaughter. At that time, it was Ron Slaughter, but he's Dr. Slaughter now. And he asked me, he said, "I heard you going." I said, "Yeah, I'm going to do something different. I think I'm going on to law school." And he convinced me that he said, "I was on your review team to accept you into this institution. You're going to be fine. Come on back." So Monday I came back as if nothing had happened and made up my mind that I could do this. And I finished my Ph.D. at 25.

Dr. Silver: And it was because of the support that I got from those individuals that intimidated me when I saw their credentials, when I saw their work. But then when I interacted with them, I saw that not only were they commensurate professionals and known in the field, but they were individuals who were genuinely concerned about my well-being. So they took an interest in making sure that I was successful and integrated me into the department, integrated me into the community. And for that, I am forever grateful to all of them.

Dr. Silver: It was kind of interesting because my goal was to finish my Ph.D. at 30. When you're making goals as a young person, I finished at 25. And became, I think, one of the individuals that

the department was very proud of. There were a lot of scholars that came through the program that I thought were a lot more intellectual, maybe, more connected. But I don't think anybody could have been more focused than I was. And that focus and that level of support that I got from the Atlanta University professors was just unheard of. And they followed me throughout my entire career. And it's nothing for me to get an email or a text from one of them when I have made a significant accomplishment. You just don't get that from other programs. I mean, it's been 1978, 1980, and they are still contacting me about something they read about me and my family. Clark Atlanta now, as it's called, was the foundation, but Atlanta University, during the time, was the foundation. And everything that I've done since then, however big or small, I attribute to the fact that I went to Atlanta University because I made a personal statement that if I could finish this program in good stead, there's nothing in the world I can't do.

Interviewer: And how would you characterize the political and social environment in the U.S. while you were in graduate school? And were you involved in any social or political activism during that time?

Dr. Silver: Well, my activism actually started in junior high school, as I indicated to you, where it was not on my own volition. It was my parents making the decision that my sister and I would answer the call of the NAACP to integrate the schools in my hometown. The decision, I think it was in 1967, that they were going to integrate the schools, but they wanted a test case in 1966 to kind of understand what the playing field would be like. And so our family had been known in the community as a family of scholars, and they wanted someone that would go and so-called represent the race. And so my sister and I were selected, and as I indicated, probably some of the worst years of my life, but we each went through the process, stayed in a scholarly mode, national honor society, all that kind of stuff. But each day was a battle.

Dr. Silver: So when I left high school and went on to college, I think it had an impact on my decision of where I went to college, because I was the darling of my counselors. In other words, they wanted me to go to North Carolina, University of North Carolina. They wanted me to go to Duke. They wanted me to go to Wake Forest to continue that legacy that I had started at Goldsboro Junior High School and later Goldsboro High School. But personally, I knew I couldn't deal with that again. So I made a decision to go to a predominantly Black school, where I did not have to worry about proving myself as a human being, and that I would be accepted on the basis of who I was and what I did and the merits of my work rather than the color of my skin. So in graduate school, we were in a very activist department. We were in the forefront of the struggle of Black people. And if you look at the byline of the department, it was established for the liberation of Black people. And so we were involved in a lot of things.

Dr. Silver: Professor Larry Moss, Professor William Boone, Professor Mack Jones allowed us to participate in protests. I remember the sanitation strike in Atlanta, and our classmates and our friends of the department were very much involved in that protest. We were trying to make sure that sanitation workers could get a decent wage. We were involved in the voter registration processes there and projects there. We were expected as students to be involved in things that would better our community. And a lot of us end up doing research on those things. But it was interesting enough, part of what we're seeing today, as we're being forced by the current person in the White House taking things backwards. And it's almost a *deja vu* experience for us as we thought that our forefathers had fought during the 50s and 60s to address these issues. We were the beneficiaries of it in the 70s and 80s and 90s, and now here we are being asked to gear up for another fight to think about and to fight for what we thought we already had.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your current research trajectory? What was your dissertation topic? What is your current main area of focus? And were there any particular scholars whose work was influential on your thinking and research?

Dr. Silver: It's kind of interesting, that question, because I have not been in the classroom in quite a while. My dissertation topic was bail as a tool of oppression. B-A-I-L, bail as a tool of oppression. And I was looking at first offender cases in hard-core crimes as well as small crimes and looking at how bail influenced outcomes of the courts. And so those who were granted bail and came into the courtroom in their suits and their dresses versus those who were not granted bail who came in in jumpsuits. And what perception did that give to juries and what have you? And of course the end result was what we already thought in terms of a hypothesis that Black males would be discriminated more than Black women and then White women and then at last White males. So my research interests stayed around criminal justice and the confluence and intersect of political science and criminal justice.

Dr. Silver: During the 70s and 80s I did a lot of work on the Adams litigation, Adams versus Richardson, looking at the Department of Education's suit against the southern states for discriminating against Black people in higher education. And so during the 70s, 80s and 90s that's what I was really known for and my trajectory changed as my positions changed. I ended up leaving the classroom to go into administration at Kennesaw State College. I was the first African-American to be hired at Kennesaw State in 1977 and that in itself was a whole other story. But the bottom line is, Mack Jones influenced me to go because when I told him about the opportunity I said it's very different, a predominantly White school. I don't know if they would be appreciative of my research, my teaching and he said you're the very best person to go there

because of your scholarship but also your temperament. And you would also have a value added for them that would open doors for other folks and he was prophetic. He was prophetic.

Dr. Silver: I went there, I spent nine years there. I was the first African-American to be tenured there and I left Kennesaw and took a position, I had risen through the ranks, early promoted by two years to the associate professor ranks and then tenured. Interesting enough, I did something that nobody would do. The day that I got tenured I walked into the president's office and resigned and she was floored. Dr. Betty Siegel who eventually became one of my mentors and she just couldn't understand why would you resign immediately after the Board of Regents and the University approved you for tenure. And she asked me what was I going to do. I said I have no idea of what I'm going to do. And when I came home and told my wife I had resigned, she said I knew you were crazy but now you're certified.

Dr. Silver: But it's kind of interesting because I was making a statement. I looked at some of the non-Black people who were minorities who were denied tenure and I was the first African-American there to go up for tenure. And so I had this picture in my mind that I was going to be the poster child for Black folk getting tenure to Kennesaw but nobody else was going to be tenured. And so I said I'll be the sacrificial lamb. I'll resign and now they got to do it all over again. They got to find somebody who's going to be worthy of that. Of course Dr. Siegel could not put her arms around that at first but as she and I talked she understood what I was trying to do. I was trying to make a statement that there are others who are just as worthy and now you're going to have to do it again because you can't hold me up as the poster child. And so by that time I was in the administration at Kennesaw I maintained my faculty rank but I was in the President's office as an assistant to the President. That propelled me into state level higher education. I became the assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs at 32 years old.

Dr. Silver: And that's kind of unheard of because normally you get to that position you're in your 50s or your 60s but the state took a gamble on what they saw in me and I became the assistant vice chancellor for the Georgia system. So we were responsible for 34 colleges and universities and my portfolio was in the academic side of the house. And I stayed there for 12 years and then became provost at Kennesaw, excuse me, provost at Savannah State University. And that's where I retired from the state system. Having gone into teaching in the state system at 22 when I took my first job at Kennesaw I was 22 years old and finishing up my PhD.

Dr. Silver: And so 22 and 30 in a way you look at it is 52 so I had my time in and one of my mentors said don't hang around, take your retirement and do something different. Look at your

long term economic future, make a contribution in your community. So that's what I did. I ended up retiring from the state system and I took on a position as the vice president for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. That was an accreditation agency. And stayed there for a few years, three, I started doing three years at places. And my alma mater called me back, Clark Atlanta. They had a need for a strategic thinker. They had a need for a pure academic to really take over the academic side of the house. And so there were no guarantees but I put my name in and I was selected. I told I only stay three years and that was to address the issue that you have, fix it and then hand it over to someone else. So I stayed there three years as provost and then became president of Alabama State University. And that was a tumultuous kind of period. Again the activism that I had ingrained in me, I had to put on full display at Alabama State because when I was nominated for the presidency there, they told me the extent of the problems they had, the graph that was going on and the sexual kind of relationships between the board and some of the folks that were doing things. And my job I thought was to go there and fix it and as soon as I fixed it, it was time to go. And that's what I did. And then I opened up my business, Silver & Associates, which is a small boutique international consulting firm on higher education issues. We focus in several areas.

Dr. Silver: One is accreditation, change management, strategic planning, board training and development. And so we've been doing that since 2012, full time. And it's kind of interesting because we don't advertise, we don't solicit business, but we're busy 24-7. I have ten people working for me. And we have business all over the United States, in Africa, in South America and in China. And I think it all started from those days at Atlanta University where we were taught to make a difference in our community. And so one of the things I tell my mentees is to understand your purpose and your passion.

Dr. Silver: Everything else will fall into place. So my purpose has always been to make a difference in higher education. My passion has been making sure that Black students can get that education they need to move to the next level. So in every position that I've had, I've been able to maintain my passion and my purpose. I never chased jobs. In fact, I've never been looking for a job. Jobs came looking for me. But I was able to fulfill my passion and my purpose. And even in my business, we still have that same passion and purpose. Very recently, I have clients in Florida, I have clients in Texas and North Carolina. And so sometimes God would test you when you say that you're made of this kind of steel. And then you see what's going on in Florida right now and you see what's going on in North Carolina and you see what's going on in Texas. And so I pulled my team together and said we'll no longer do business in Florida, Texas and North Carolina. It was a huge hit to the bottom line. But the bottom line was not what we're involved in. Our bottom line for us is making a difference. And so I couldn't see helping these institutions show their excellence. At the same time, they were eliminating DEI. They were eliminating

books about our history. They were firing people of color for no other reason than the fact that they were people of color. And I couldn't see my business and we look at the core values of Silver and associates. They were not aligned with what was going on in Florida. It was not aligned with what's going on in North Carolina and Texas. And so we did keep as clients the HBCUs that we had in that area. So the Florida A&M's of the world, Bethune Cookman, that kind of thing. But majority of White schools we had to let them go.

Dr. Silver: And it was a big issue with some of the presidents. They wanted to know why couldn't we stay and help them. Because nobody in Florida is stepping up. DeSantis is running a mark and nobody is challenging them. Nobody is pushing them back. And people who look like me are getting hurt. And so I don't see myself spending time trying to make you shine when you're trying to put out the light of people who look like me. So the research that I started doing, I'm doing it now in terms of a practical application. The theoretical concepts now become the practice that I do in my firm on a day to day basis. And while people call and ask us to work for them as they're interviewing us, we're interviewing them. And if their core value is on the line with the civil and associates core value, we won't accept the contract. And so a lot of our competitors think that, "How do you get away with that? How do you do that?" And I say, "You've got to stick to who you are and whose you are and your core values." And so my passion has been to make a difference in higher education. My purpose has been to make a difference in higher education. The passion is to bring folk who look like me along the way. So nothing has changed. I think that when you ask people around NCOBPS or around my environment, they will say that I've been consistent as a professor, as a senior administrator, and now as a business owner. I'm still consistent in terms of understanding what my role is and what limited time I have on this earth. And so that limited time, I have to be very strategic and intentional and true to who I am.

Interviewer: And shifting gears a little bit now, what does being a Black political scientist mean to you?

Dr. Silver: It's kind of interesting that you ask that question because at this conference of NCOBPS, that question is going to be explored by several of the folk who came through the Atlanta University's department. And luckily, we had a blueprint. You've heard me mention the name Mack Henry Jones, Dr. Mack Henry Jones, several times in this interview. He wrote a piece on the role of Black political scientists in the Black community. And in that piece, he gave the roadmap for what our expectations are. And so as a political scientist, and now as a business owner, I clearly understand that the charge that he gave us way back when is still relevant today. In other words, if we're getting an education or a degree in political science for selfish reasons,

then we might as well not have it. Our job is to begin to look at the community and look at the distribution of resources and make sure that they are applied equitably across gender and racial lines. And when I'm talking about resources, I'm talking about financial resources, human resources, all kinds of resources.

Dr. Silver: And so what we have to do is begin to study how those resources are being deployed in the community. And if we see something that is not quite right, then we should say something and do something. And so nothing has changed in that regard. A lot of people used to ask me, "Are you sacrificing or do you think your business would be sacrificed because of positions that you're taking?" And I'm saying that doesn't even cross my mind because it's more important to be that spark in the community, to address the wrongs in the community, and to have folk be accountable for decisions that they're making. And so whether it meant that I would lose a job or not have a job, that never crossed my mind, even though it has happened. My thing is I have to be true to the community, true to myself, and true to my family. So my measuring stick is not how much you gain individually, but how many people did you bring along.

Dr. Silver: So if I have a legacy, it would be the number of young people that we've helped in this space. In 2002, we started, in the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education, a leadership institute. I was the one that developed the leadership institute. And now, 22 years later, it's still going on. And we took mid-level African Americans and moved them and trained them and mentored them. And many of them now are provosts, presidents, deans, and doing absolutely great things. To me, that's making a difference. That was the passion I talked about. I don't know how much longer I have on this earth, but I do know that there will be those who we mentored who will carry on the work.

Interviewer: What challenges, if any, have you faced through your career, either due to race or your chosen field of study?

Dr. Silver: I think that's an obvious question and an obvious answer, but I'll respond. I think that, unfortunately, when I walk into a room, you acknowledge, you have knowledge that I am a Black male. That reality has followed me all my life. And my father, as we talked about this as a family when I was a youngster, and one of the things he drilled in me is that in my lifetime, meaning his, racism is still going to exist. Sexism is still going to exist. In your lifetime, it's still going to exist. So we can't spend time talking about the fact that it occurs. Our job is to figure out how to go around it, under it, over it, or through it. And so that's been my focus. At Kennesaw, I experienced racism firsthand.

Dr. Silver: One, at the time I went to Kennesaw, it was a non-traditional campus. So you're talking about students being 22 and above for the most part. I'm coming in as a professor at 22 years old. So I'm in that peer group, but I'm their professor and I'm Black. And the first day I was in that class, came in the classroom, students walked out. And they said an N word can't teach me nothing. And so I'm 22, I'm impressionable, and that was a moment. And so what I did was invited the rest of the class to leave too, but they wanted to. I said, but those of you who stay will get the education of a lifetime. And so it's kind of interesting to have that on the very first day. Fast forward to two years later, students petitioning the dean and the chair to get into my class because the classes were closed. And they wanted to be in the classroom with me, so they would go to the dean to see if he could override the classes to get them in my class. And three years later, being at a predominantly White school and selected professor of the year, several years running. But that was a defining moment. I could have crashed and burned on the very first day. But being clear about who I was and never wavering in terms of what I taught and how I taught in the classroom because I taught truth and it wasn't always from a Eurocentric view.

Dr. Silver: I thought that I was probably more valuable than some of the other professors because I knew the Eurocentric view, but I also knew the Afrocentric view and the African-centric view. And so that impacted me a lot. I think that during my days as the assistant vice chancellor, I had to travel the state of Georgia. And I can tell you some nightmares as I traveled in rural southern Georgia, stopping just for gas and being challenged. Here I am, a senior level administrator in the university system of Georgia, but to that person in that small town, I was just another Black person and was treated as such. I never let discrimination stop me. It still exists. It's existing today and it exists tomorrow. But my job as I see it is to make sure that I am a catalyst for change in whatever environment that I'm in. I was taught that as a kid in my family. I was taught at St. Augustine's University. I was taught there at Atlanta University and so it's ingrained into who I am as an individual. I'm just appalled at the cultural silence that's going on in this country today as we see the rights of women, the rights of minorities, and the rights of marginalized groups being pushed backwards.

Dr. Silver: And nobody is saying anything about it. We position ourselves as co-equal branches of government. And so now we're in a country where the Congress has an acquiesce to the executive branch. The judiciary has an acquiesce to the executive branch. And there is no control or check over the executive branch. So it used to be that fourth wheel out there called the press that would put everybody in check. But now the press is co-opted by the oligarchs and the individuals of means. So they brought up all the major newspapers and the local newspapers don't exist anymore. And they are now pushing the agenda of the person who's in the White House. So there is no check and balance. So the question becomes, at what point will this

cultural silence end? And at what point will the judiciary stand up and carry out its responsibility? And at what point will Congress stand up and take care of its responsibility? Otherwise, we're going to see even more discrimination and hatred and all of this. No one would have thought that we would be in this position today. But it's the cultural silence that is driving the process. And a lot of people are trying to say, well, why can this man do these things in 2024 and 2025?

Dr. Silver: The answer is very clear. There's a large majority of the people who are, when I say people, I mean the United States, who know him for what he is, but they know that he's a White supremacist. And that's what they gravitate toward because the demographic shift in this country is scaring them to death. And they're thinking that we would do the same thing to them that they did to us. And that's not going to happen. We're not that kind of people. But the numbers speak for themselves. They understand the demography and the demographics. And so what they're trying to do is put things in place now to assure that they would still have minority control. And it seemed to be something that, unfortunately, this country is accepting.

Dr. Silver: And the cultural silence is saying, we're okay with that. But many of us are not okay with that. So I think the real challenge for not Black political scientists, but White political scientists, the APSA, for an example, the American Political Science Association, which I served in, I served under Lucius Barker. I was on the ethics committee for APSA. I was president of NCOBPS twice. But what I would say is not our burden as Black political scientists to address this issue only. White political scientists have to be in this space and in this field because they know, they know that there should be three co-equal branches of government. They know that what's going on in this country right now is not right. So for the American Political Science Association to be silent on this issue, then they are culpable too.

Interviewer: Thank you for that. And you touched a little bit on this already, but in your view, what is necessary in order to further diversify the discipline and make it more equitable and welcoming to scholars of color?

Dr. Silver: The first thing we have to do is see diversity as an asset, okay, and not as a deficit model. And right now, everything that is equated to diversity is being put as something less than. How horrible was it when the plane crashed in D.C. And the guy in the White House came and said, "It's because of DEI." And I haven't prayed as much as I prayed in a long time to say, "Please, please, please, Lord, when they put the pictures of those folk who were involved in this, don't let it be looking like anybody like me." And it wasn't. But that's part of the fuel put on the

fire to get people riled up. But I do think that White folk and White political scientists in particular, as I just said, are going to have to speak up.

Dr. Silver: Well-meaning people who are in Congress, they have to begin to think about why were they elected in the first place. And it's really to do the business of the people, not for individuals. But the person in the White House right now has usurped the party in such a way that folk know that they're doing things wrong but are afraid to speak out. And so what I'm asking for, what I think would bring about change is courage. Courage. Having the courage enough to say, "This is not right. This is not right." And so when we see what's going on in the federal government right now, say for an example, this so-called purge of fraud and waste, ruining the lives of a lot of people, and not one example of waste and fraud has been presented in any kind of credible way. So what I think needs to happen is that first of all, folk need to understand that if it happened to someone else, it could happen to them. Many of the folk who voted for the guy in the White House did it for another reason, but they too are suffering. They too are suffering. And when I think about how my great-grandfather, my grandfather, my father, and mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers just fought so hard for the basic rights, the basic human rights. And to think that my grandchildren are going to have to relive that and re-fight that same fight is something that I'm not really comfortable with. And so I think it's time for America to stand up.

Dr. Silver: And in a panel just the other day, I heard one of the young people ask the question, "Is it normal for what we experience? Is this abnormal for what we're experiencing today?" And I think most of us in the room sided on the position that this is not abnormal. This is very normal. When you look at the gains of Black people after slavery during Reconstruction, during the Jim Crow era, during the 60s, now in the 90s, in 2000, every time there's a significant push in terms of for equality for Black people and other marginalized people, we see the pushback by this status quo. A lot of people don't really realize what happened in the early 1900s in the Jim Crow era with the burning of many Black cities, Wilmington, for an example, down in Mississippi, Alabama, New York, where communities were thriving and White folk felt that we were rising too fast. So what they did is come in and destroyed whole communities. And they talk about hatred and they talk about violence, but these same people need to look inward to see where all this started.

Dr. Silver: We as a people are not violent. As a matter of fact, we're too compassionate. We're too forgiving. And now we see ourselves in the same position in many ways as we were in the 1950s and 60s with what's going on today. So to me, White folk are going to have to step up and say, "This is not right." White political scientists are going to have to write about this and say,

"It's not right." And we have to begin to see that diversity is an asset. The problem is when we write about this, it doesn't get published. Now we don't think we want to do this. But then White political scientists can write about our experience and they become the guru on all things Black. And to me, there's a fundamental problem in the discipline. It's a fundamental problem in terms of the gatekeepers. And I do see the journals as a gatekeeper. And so much of the research that is being done by people who look like me never surface. They will identify five, six, or seven safe Black folk and publish them. But then those who are doing the critical analysis of where we are as a country, where we are as a discipline, sometimes they never see the light of day. And there's some good work that is being done. So I think we have to change our orientation. We have to change who is on the gatekeeping committees. We have to change our appreciation for the work. And we have to change our perception that White folk do the work is going to be something that we all need to read about. But when Black folk write about the same thing, it never reaches the surface of day. So I think if we're going to change, the change has to start with us as individuals, no matter what our hue is, no matter what our gender is, what our sexual preferences are. We have to be the change that we want to see as we already know the great person who said that, Mother Teresa.

Interviewer: And in addition to the existing diversity, equity, inclusion programming, what is your advice to associations like APSA or NCOBPS on how to best support Black scholars in the profession as they reach different milestones in their career?

Dr. Silver: It's to be intentional. To be intentional. Just simply be intentional. What we've seen in organizations, what we've seen in colleges and universities and businesses, they have jumped the gun, so to speak. When the affirmative action case came out against Harvard and University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, it was a very narrow decision dealing with admissions. And folk took that decision and ran with it and began to eliminate programs across the board, across the country. And now we see that the federal government has come in and said anything DEI is wrong, so eliminate it. So we see states, almost 30 states now have anti-DEI programs. And individuals who had been long-serving to the institutions, doing great work in the community for the institution, come in one day and their whole department is wiped out because of what has been going on in DC. And folk want to align themselves with what's going on there in order to stay financial viable, I suppose. But when you sell your soul, nothing is viable. And what I'm seeing is that individual institutions, individual businesses are selling their souls. Look at the commitment that Target made to the Black community after the killing of George Floyd. Now that Trump has said DEI is bad, they have abandoned that. And they're paying a big price for it. And what I'm hoping is that marginalized people can come together and hit them where they feel it, which is in the economic realm.

Dr. Silver: What's going on with Musk and Tesla is a good example of that. What's going on with Target is a good example of that. What's going on with Walmart is a good example of that. But we have to sustain the course. We have to be of the mindset that we'll take a personal sacrifice for the greater good. And what I mean by that is there are a lot of places where there are food deserts. There are a lot of places where Walmart is the only game in town. But we're going to have to drive past that and drive to the next place where the mom and pop store, and I'm doing that myself. I live in two cities. I live in Atlanta and I live in Savannah. And grocery stores are right in walking distance from my house. But they are ones that have eliminated any DEI program. So I'll drive four miles, five miles in order to make a statement. And I think that's what we're going to have to do. We have to be consistent in terms of pushing back. This is not the time to be silent. I'm just appalled that the American people who say that they embrace democracy is allowing this tragedy to occur right before our eyes. But we have to see diversity as an asset. So I guess what I'm trying to understand, where is the sense in trying to destroy anything related to DEI? Because the numbers going to next 10, 20, 30, 40 years suggest that there's a browning of America. And so where are businesses going to get their consumers from? Where is government going to get their supporters from? And there, as the old farm boy that I am, there's a term we use called seed corn. So seed corn is you save a little bit back from the harvest to make sure you can plant for the next year. And I see them destroying their seed corn. And my charge, even in this project that you all are doing,

Dr. Silver: I want to see the American Political Science Association step up and make a statement about what's going on. I want to see them do the research to show how damning it is and how the destruction of the major branches of government echoing around, "I want to be keen. Why aren't they saying more about this?" It can't be because of their jobs. I mean, but a lot of people are saying that I have a family to support. I have a family to support. But I'm being just as vocal on any platform that I have because, again, it's about the values that you have as an individual. And it's more than about me. And so we can't continue to be in this culture of silence. We have to write about it as scholars. We have to be about it as people. And if we don't, then the America that we think we have will no longer be, period.

Interviewer: And shifting gears once again, you have held a number of leadership positions in the profession, including, as you mentioned, former president of NCOBPS. And what, in your view, makes a good leader?

Dr. Silver: Integrity. Valuing others, empowering others, and never forgetting how you got there and who you really represent. I think what made me a great, and I'm not saying that myself, I'm saying other people said I was a pretty decent administrator, a great administrator. But I think

what made me great in the positions that I had was I never forgot the real reason for being there. And it was about the students. So I always saw my role as I moved up to vice president, president, provost, all those positions. I saw my role never changing. It was to facilitate learning and to facilitate getting the professors the tools to enable students to learn. And to be an example for those students that learning is something that is ongoing.

Dr. Silver: And so if you understand, as the French would say, your *raison d'etre*, your reason for being, then it's never about you as an individual, but it's about the organization. How do you move the organization? I was the first president of NCOBPS that was elected for two terms. Now it's commonplace. They realize you really can't do the job in one year. And so most now they're a president selected for two years. But back in the day, it was a one year term, but I was the first president of NCOBPS to be elected for a second term. And I was not in the classroom at that time. I was an administrator with the Georgia Board of Regents. But I think that was the important piece because what did I bring to the position? I had a platform, and I remember just like it was yesterday, that we're going to bring structure.

Dr. Silver: We're going to bring new members to the committee. We're going to have an international linkage and we're going to have a K through 12 linkage. And for two years I did that religiously with the help of the other political scientists. But that brought structure around NCOBPS, making sure that our bylaws, making sure that our meetings were codified. And that structure, I think, was what we were looking for during the time. Each person brought something to the table in their administration. I think that's what I brought. And I thought that the international linkage was important because if we are isolated as individuals, as a person of color or people of color in the United States, then we are a vast minority. But if we begin to look at Black and brown across the world, then we are a vast majority. And we have to begin to think in those terms. And so that's what I was trying to put my theory into practice. The same thing with K through 12. If we endear or we think so much about this discipline, then we need to begin to train people at a young age to like the discipline like we like it. And so I wanted to make sure that we had that in the association. I tapped one of my colleagues, Dr. Marvin Herr, to run that initiative for me. And he did an outstanding job. The same thing with the membership. We wanted to make sure that we increased our membership to be a viable organization.

Dr. Silver: And so the thing that I think a good leader understands is making sure that you have the vision. And then you can sell the vision for other folk to help you implement it. If you have a vision and it's only yours, then it's not going to get done. My claim to fame is empowerment. And so I always want to make sure that I give the people the tools that they need and then get out of their way. I think a good leader can identify good talent. And I always wanted people at the

table who was just as smart as I was and hopefully more smart than I was because it wasn't about me, it's about the institution. And so I think in every setting that I've had, I've had very brilliant people and I allowed them to do their job and I celebrated them and I empowered them.

Dr. Silver: And it's kind of interesting because I can go back to any of the employees who were my direct reports today and say I'm doing a project with Silver and associates. I need you. I need you to help me with this. They will put down what they're doing and come and join me. Why? Because I always empowered them. I always made sure that if we had any accomplishments, I very publicly gave it to them. If we had any failures, I very publicly gave it to myself. And so I never could identify with leaders who throw their subordinates under the bus. When you sit in a hot seat, then you're responsible. So anything that bad happens on your watch, you got to own it. Anything that good happens on your watch, you got to make sure that they know that somebody else facilitated that. And so I think the integrity piece is good. You got to have good vision, but you also got to be a strategic thinker. What I'm seeing in organizations, both discipline organizations, institutions and business, we have a lot of transactional leaders. And what we really need is transformational leaders. So it goes beyond the presence of doing the day-to-day work. But the real operative question is, where do you want this organization to be in 45 years? What will we need to get there? And who are the best people to help us get there? And the transformational leaders then invest in people, transactional people, leaders invest in processes. And so one of the things I hope people will say about me is that I have been a man of integrity and that I've been a transformational leader.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share with us before our interview concludes today?

Dr. Silver: I just want to say thank you. One of the things that my grandmother always told me to say is thank you to people. And I'm thanking you for the project because our voices need to be heard. But also, I'm hoping that this would open some doors for Black political scientists in the infrastructure of APSA. I had the fortunate experience of being on the coattail of Lucius Barker, who was a phenomenal political scientist and one of my mentors.

Dr. Silver: I had the great experience on the coattails of Larry Moss and William Boone and Mack Jones, who nurtured me as an undergraduate student to get immersed into NCOBPS. And they said back then that we want to see you leading this organization sometime. That was their vision. That was not my vision. But then to see their vision become my vision and to actually see it realized, then that's what we have to be about. Making sure that we can look down the bench,

so to speak, using a sports metaphor and see that there are future political scientists that can be leaders of NCOBPS, that can be leaders of APSA. And so what I'm hoping is that APSA will not only use this project for their own greater good, but also to open some doors for some young Black political scientists to permeate the infrastructure of APSA all the way up to the leaderships and the various committees that are being a part of APSA. Our voice needs to be heard and our voice should be valued and it shouldn't be marginalized. So I'm hoping that that would be one of the outcomes of this project.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your participation.

Dr. Silver: Thank you.