

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, my name is Kathie Stromile Golden. I am Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs at Mississippi Valley State University, and I am the executive director for the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little bit about your personal background, specifically where you're from, what your home or family life was like when you were growing up?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, I'm from a small place in north Louisiana, and the name of the village is Plain Dealing. So, I grew up in a family rural area. My parents, mother and father, were at the at one point did not have high school education. My father completed seventh grade, but he's very bright. My mother finished high school when I was in junior high school. We were actually at the same school, so I had a pretty I think interesting, uh, life growing up. I grew up, as I said, in rural Louisiana. Segregation was alive and well. I experienced the burning of crosses for... by the Ku Klux Klan on our property, my... our family lived in a little circle, my grandparents, aunts and uncles, and stuff. Uh, my mother and father were very, I would say, activist oriented. My father, I... and I think this had a great impact on me. My father refused to work for White people, and he said because they were not very nice. And I also remember my father used to drink, but not a lot. But he would take on the local sheriff in the village who was feared by all Black folk. But my father did not fear him, and they would fight almost every year. So, uh, and then my... my great my maternal great-grandmother, uh, was a sharecropper, but she did not take any stuff. So, I... I come from a background of activist people who believed in themselves and very... very strong women, uh, my... my grand my grandmother my great-grandmother even my mother. So, I think that's where I get some of my feistiness from.

Interviewer: Well, thank you. I was going to follow up and ask you what do you think you inherited from your forbearers, your mother, your father? And you just said your feistiness, was there anything else?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Yeah, uh, my... my mother always stressed the importance of education. Even going for us... might have four siblings, uh, attending university was not an option. Uh, you had to... so, uh, you either did that or you got a job. And it was more than getting a job, you could not live in that house, you had to have your own place. So, for me personally, I did not have a job. I had not planned to go to university and, uh, probably two weeks before the start of school I was out of options, so I had to go to school. So, I... I went to enrolled in Southern University in Baton Rouge. My sister and brother were already there and, fortunately for me, which I never knew this, I took a placement exam and from that exam they decided I should be in the honors college. I never considered myself, being, you know, bright or just extra smart, so.

Interviewer: Thank you. How were you introduced to the field of political science?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: I said... I would say, informally by my mother, but formerly, um, someone you know, Elsie Scott. When she was an undergrad, uh, student at Southern University, she worked for the southern voter rights project, and she comes from a very activist family. She was assigned to our village and so... she was a political science major. She lived with one of our neighbors, my oldest sister was working with her, and I eventually would keep the office open. So, that's kind of how in part. And then, the other person is actually from my village, Shelby Lewis, was in political science and our families were very connected. So, that's the form of... kind of formal introduction.

Interviewer: Thank you. So, you mentioned that you attended Southern University. Can you tell us a little bit more about your undergrad experience and then also tell us where you attended graduate school?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, at Southern University, once I declared political science as a major, of course, we had some great professors. Uh, Jewel Prestage was chair of the political science department and, of course, she knew something about my family because my brother was in political science and, uh, and Shelby, and so, she knew something about me. I was probably her most difficult student to control. But so, that... that environment... and Shelby eventually was there teaching before I completed my undergrad. And at that time, they, um, Rhodesian chrome was coming into a port in Burnside, Louisiana and so we as students and faculty members, we used to go down and protest at the port because of the Rhodesian chrome and, you know, about roses and stuff. And so, we had that... that kind of activism, but also when the student the student protests in the 70's where the two students were killed, I was in a... a part of that, as was Ricky Hill.

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: I was a representative for my dorm and so, I was one of the people who was in the president's office when they tear gassed the place and sent the National Guard. And my mother suspected that I would be there, she told my brother, "Go find her." And so, as I was exiting the building, my brother and I had an uncle who's the same age, and they were grabbing me by my shoulders. But yeah. So, I grew up, you know, even on the campus we... we did, uh, we were very active yeah, so...

Interviewer: So, tell me a little bit more about how you felt about that experience being there during the tear gassing and what led you to be an activist on campus?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Well, I think a part of it was just a natural extension of my experiences at home and high school. Also in high school, my high school class was when they really fully... fully integrated the schools in my village. It was my high school, my high school class was a part of that. And so, the powers that be had decided that they would have two campuses and the smart campus is the top campus, or that's how I view it. And so, I and my youngest sister who is deceased were... were among the students that were selected to go to the smart campus and my mother said, "Absolutely not." And we were kept out of school for almost a year, uh, the, and most of the Black students because our parents were protesting the way that they were creating the system and so, there you go. So, it's... it's, you know, it's a part of my socialization like Mike.

Interviewer: Thank you. And where did you attend graduate school?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Well I... I did my master's at Southern University. So, I went to Southern as an undergrad in 1971 and by 1975, I had my master's and wrote a thesis. So, uh, and then after that, I actually taught at Southern at the Baton Rouge campus for a year, and then I taught at the Southern University Shreveport for probably about five years. And at that time, the University of Kentucky was really recruiting heavily, uh, in Louisiana and I think there was a Southern University connection because I had a choice the University of Kentucky or Purdue. I decided on Kentucky, and I didn't know at the time. but many of the people I had gone to undergrad school with or who were working at Southern was all... were also at Kentucky. And so, I left Southern in Shreveport, uh, and went to Kentucky, but it's at Southern and Shreveport I was actually, uh, teaching sociology, which is what I had done my master's thesis work. It was more in sociology than, uh, political science because I had Jewel Prestige, I had a National Science Foundation, um, a fellowship that she had applied for... for me and just called me one day and said, "Oh, you have this fellowship." And so, it was more, uh, balancing the... the requirements at that time, so, I ended up doing most of my coursework in sociology.

Interviewer: Wow, I didn't know that, but you did eventually go on to get your PhD in political science at the University of Kentucky?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: And, uh, so in... in... at Kentucky my areas were international comparative and political socialization.

Interviewer: Thank you. You spoke a little bit already about the socio-political climate while you were in school and as you were growing up. Um, are there any other things that you'd like to

mention about your social or political activism as a student either as an undergrad or a grad yeah?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, we had to... at Kentucky as was discussed this morning, the place was really not very welcoming, the political science department. In fact, I think I'm the first African American to get a PhD in political science from the University of Kentucky. And when I went there, all graduate students were assigned a space, you know, you had a cubicle, you had access to the copy room. What I had... they didn't assign me any of that. I took me a space and so, after that first semester, the administrative assistant said, "Uh, I don't think you're going anywhere. So, I'm going to give you a key as every other graduate student had." There was only one person at that time willing to work with me, and that was, um, Daniel Nelson, whose area was, like Zoe, in Eastern European politics and stuff. And so, because there were people who... who were saying on the faculty, "She has a master's, but it's from an HBCU, so she probably needs to do some additional work." I ended up doing additional work, but he was the only person initially who embraced me and who would work with me. So, it was, yeah, it was a challenge, but I... I eventually said to them, because many of the professors were my age or younger, and I just said, "You know, I'm not going anywhere until I'm ready to go. So, get ready, you got to look at me." So, yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, continuing along that line of discussion, can you tell us a little bit about your research area, your research trajectory? What was your dissertation topic and what is your current or main area of research focus?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Yes, so for my dissertation, I did Soviet and Eastern European media coverage of crisis in the 1960's and 70's. And so, uh, it took me about to collect all the data because I had to do a lot of transcribing and, um, you know content analysis. After that, I did, uh, some work on ethnic conflict in in post-communist systems looking at, uh, things in... in the Eastern European countries, as well as inside of Russia, as well as you know some of the outlying areas. So, that's what I initially, uh... so, now because for most of my career, I've been in administration, but I have managed to do some things. So, right now, I'm looking at doing some work on sex trafficking, especially in this, uh, this delta quarter where lots of human trafficking comes through that area and people think it's under radar because we're isolated and stuff. So, that's and... and then I do dabble a little bit in doing some research on international education at, uh, historically Black colleges and universities. And I have a book chapter coming out soon on study abroad at HBCU's at a rule and look at using my campus as an example of how you can make this work wonderful.

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, and can you tell us again what your title is as an administrator at your university?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, provost, which is supposed to be second to the president, uh, and then the chief academic officer. So, it's senior vice president for academic affairs, so, I have several, uh, assistant VPs under me. So, uh, institutional research falls upon the... my shop, the library sponsor programs, um, the radio station, the TV station, university college, which is where we do first-year experiences. We deal with developmental education, academic support services, the trio programs all fall under my... my shop and of course all the academic programs, so...

Interviewer: Wow, that's amazing, um, and thank you for all that work that you do. So, we're going to shift gears just a bit, but you've already spoken about this earlier, what does it mean to you to be a Black political scientist?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: For me, in part, it's a role model for other African Americans, in particularly, women who are in the field. Or thinking about the field, it's also for me a way to demonstrate the wide range of diversity of interest in within our community. For example, uh, I may know maybe three African Americans who... who focused on studying Soviet Union politics kind of, Lisa Rice being one of them, and so that was a challenge for me initially because I would go to these international conferences and these old White men would be saying, you know, "Why are you here? What do you know?" And... and so for me... and it's also important for me in terms of showing or... or being an example for people in other parts of the world. To say that, you know, what you see about African Americans on TV is not the extent of who we are and what we do. Yeah, so I... I think that... that and being a political scientist has really enabled me to get that message across in all the countries I've worked in. So, I've worked in about 70, 75 countries and so... and usually, uh, people are always asking to have some... some want to have some discussion around American politics and, uh, popular culture and things. And so, having the background in political science really, uh, has prepared me in a way that I can speak to them in a way that they understand the nature of politics in the... in this country, so, and from a different perspective.

Interviewer: So, you mentioned that you've worked in over 70 countries. Can you expand on that a little bit and maybe share with us one highlight of your career?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Oh, it's... it's amazing most of the work I've done. It interestingly has not been in political science, per se, but it has been in STEM fields, uh, doing projects around agriculture, um, biology, chemistry, environmental science, those kinds of things, but it's an opportunity. Because, for me, I tell people, it doesn't matter your discipline. There's some politics in all of it, even if you just consider the policies that guide those... those areas. So, I've

done that. I did one of the... I guess one project that was more political science was training young Kazakh lawyers around civil rights issues. So, that one was, I would say, probably closest to what we do as political scientists. But also, I was a part of a certain Rural Black Women's Network, which is, uh, brings together African American women from distressed communities and the Black belt of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. And we did some work with elite women in, um, in India around, um, access to health care and education and women's rights and those kinds of issues. So, that... those are kind of my more political society like projects.

Interviewer: Wonderful, thank you. Um, you have alluded to this earlier, but is there anything else you'd like to say about any particular challenges you may have faced throughout your career, either possibly due to your race or your gender or your chosen field of study?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, I think probably the challenges were more in... on the, um, international side. Let me talk about the, um... uh, International Studies Association here in the U.S. and when I was going, it was heavily dominated by males who did not look like the males that I grew up with. And so, they were always, you know, it was like you were never really fully accepted as a serious scholar. So that was... that was one thing, uh, and then with APSA, I... it's amazing the women's caucus, uh, in my younger days. I... and that was really close to after I've done my postdoc at the University of Illinois in that a conference and so, we were having this meeting and some of the things that came in. I was like, "What you're talking about, you need to talk to my mother." Or, you know, and I just went off and you never know when people are paying attention. So, after that, some years later, I was in Taiwan, and I came across the lady. She said, "I remember you from the women caucus at APSA." So, I think that was a challenge. I... I think for me sometimes in those gatherings, uh, the... our White sisters really could not connect to our reality, and trying to get them to see that, you know, your reality is a little different from mine, maybe a bit... a lot different from mine, and we have to find some middle ground. So, that and then, within say at the administrative kind of level now, uh, you know, African American men can be very sexist. And so, even I... I find myself even in our meetings, uh, at the university, as well as some of the chief academic officers from the state institutions, I have to always call attention to we have some females in the room. Where are the females? You're doing this program, where are the females? So, that... that sexism is alive and well and, uh, and... and I think it... it transcends, you know, all kinds of institutions. So, that... that's been more my challenge at the administrative level, the... the sexism.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Uh, in addition to existing diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, what is your advice to associations, like your association, NCOBPS or like APSA, on how best to support Black scholars in the profession as they approach milestones in their careers?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: I think there are a number of ways and... and what I think about most often is home. Often, when Black scholars are at PWIs, they are able to stay until that point of tenure and... and then it becomes really... but in... in prior to that the institutions are... are you know putting hardships, additional hardships on them, right? You should... there's this expectation, even if it's not said, that you're gonna, you know, support the African American students who are there. You're going to be on this committee and that committee, but... and then, you know, teach as well and encounter some of the, uh, problematic, uh, aspects of teaching, and especially are students who are socialized in a way that cause them to think that you couldn't possibly teach me anything because you were Black or Brown or whatever. So, it's... I think the universities have not done a good job of that balancing and perhaps, this is where NCOBPS, and APSA, and some other professional organizations can just be more supportive and... and, uh, provide those scholars some information about how to do that in a way that's healthy for them. You can't mentor every Black student on the campus. Not all those Black students would relate to you anyway, you know. So, those... so you shouldn't feel guilty about that. And I... I think that's the kind of kind of support... It's one kind of support that a place of an organization like NCOBPS, APSA, can really be... makes be impactful, I think.

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. And then, in your view, what steps are necessary in order to further diversify the discipline and to make it more equitable and welcoming for scholars of color?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: I think one of the main things is to recognize the scholarship that is produced is credible and it's... it contributes to the discipline and... and sometimes can even in paradigm shifts. What has bothered me a lot in in terms of political science in Black and Brown people is that other people can study us, and write about us, and their scholarship is accepted and promoted, but our scholarship about ourselves is not... does not receive the same kind of, uh, audience. And... and it's not evaluated in the same way and... and so, that really bothers me, and I think that's one thing we have to work on. Is that, you know, we... I believe the experience, but I'm doing this scientific research that except, you know, I'm following all the research protocols, but still my... my work is not valued in the same way.

Interviewer: And so, shifting gears a little bit, and we're almost near the end of the interview, um, you have held a number of important leadership positions in the profession including as a former APSA council member, as a former president of NCOBPS, and currently as the executive director of NCOBPS. What in your view makes a good leader?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, for me, and even in my job now, for me, good leadership means you're willing to give people an opportunity to succeed or fail. If they... if they don't succeed, then I think a good leader would be one to say, "Look, this is not really good for you or, you

know, maybe this is not your... your cup of tea. Let's see if we can think about some other ways and some other things that you can do that, uh, is more suited for your skill set and your personality." Good leaders don't micromanage. Good leaders surround themselves with people, uh, who make them look good and they are not insecure in that. And I always say, I have an isolated... my Associate VP because of the skills that she has, and I trust her. We don't agree on everything, but we make a good team because I trust her to do which I know she can do, and I lean on her, and she leans on me. So that's... that's my idea. If you're a leader, and you have to direct and tell people everything to do. You don't either... you know, that serves no purpose and you're stressing yourself out some more. So, I... for me, leadership means recognizing your strengths and weaknesses, and surrounding yourself with people who compliment, and who have those skills that you need to you know to be successful, and to be secure enough in yourself to embrace those people. That... that's... that's very important.

Interviewer: Excellent, thank you. Uh, and do you have any advice for junior scholars coming up in the profession who may be seeking leadership positions or maybe wanting to advance their careers?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: So, I... I think for... for me the, uh, one key piece of advice would be, know your skill set. Know which positions you're suited for and then, if you... even if you have aspirations of being, say a department chair, god forbid a dean or whatever, make sure you have relationships, good relationships with people who have been in those positions, or in those positions and then seeking as many opportunities as possible to engage in different types of leadership training and development. Uh, I just flew by the seat of my pants, but I wouldn't advise that for everyone.

Interviewer: Well, it looks like it worked out quite well for you. So, the last question is just a question... an opportunity for you, do you have anything else that you'd like to share with us?

Dr. Kathie Stromile Golden: Now I... I think the... my... I guess my little nugget would be, uh, for especially... for junior faculty members and graduate school students, believe in yourself and do what you need to do to be successful.