Dr. Johnson: Ollie Johnson, Professor and Chair, Department of African American Studies at Wayne State University.

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

Dr. Johnson: I was born and raised in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and so I came of age in the 60's and 70's. My parents got divorced when I was five, I think, in the first grade, and so we moved into the projects, low-income public housing, where she was raised. And so, okay. I lived all my life in the projects through high school, and even though my mom was a single mom raising two kids, my mom and my dad come from large families. And so, my mom's family is from Twiggs County, Georgia, and her mother, my grandmother, is one of 19 kids. And so, my grandmother and most of her siblings migrated north early in the 20th century. My father was born in Richmond, Virginia, and he was the oldest of nine kids who also migrated north to New Jersey. Okay. And so, okay. And so, I grew up with a lot of family, a lot of aunts and uncles, a lot of cousins, a lot of love and affection. So that was a great experience. Really enjoyed growing up in Atlantic City. Atlantic City is a tourist city, and so summers on the beach, the boardwalk, you know, but it was a tourist city that had its cycles. Yeah.

Dr. Johnson: So, the summer was a fun time, and everybody had jobs, but for the rest of the year, times could be hard. And so, just had, I think, overall, a good childhood. I think my, my childhood was a good one. My mom was a hard worker; she was a telephone operator, worked a lot overtime, and so my sister and I often stayed with aunts and cousins, and so that was just, again, a very supportive nurturing environment, even though you know, one of the reasons my mom got divorced was kind of fleeing domestic violence. And so, okay. Yeah. I think that I grew up with all this love and affection and appreciated, like, had a fun childhood, but I knew that not every family was like ours, and even our family was a little more complicated than kind of my romanticized version of it.

Dr. Johnson: And so even at a young age, but, I think I began to observe things, like, I don't think I ever said, "We're poor, but, you know, we didn't have a car, we lived in the projects, and Atlantic City is a very small city, so you could see from our front door, and just walk in a few blocks, houses, you know, nice houses with people with cars, and just a little more material production, prosperity." So that kind of, You could. I think, raised the questions for me, like, why don't we have those material things that seem nice? And Atlantic City is a very segregated city, so our community was all Black, our neighborhood was all Black. But, Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Johnson: We went to high school in Chelsea and Junior High. Went to Chelsea Junior High, went to Indiana Avenue Elementary School, went to Chelsea Junior High, and then went to Atlantic City High School. And, Indiana Avenue, 100% Black. Hope and Apologetic Chelsea and high school were very integrated, because they were kind of citywide schools, and they had White students from other neighborhoods. And [incoherent] was always involved in sports. So, you know, we had games against teams from White communities, White suburbs, but junior high and high school were my times. Really get to know them, make White friends, be in the same class. And so, in high school, I remember thinking, like, what' s going on here?

Dr. Johnson: Because I was a good student, and I was in, I guess, the advanced classes, and even though Lansing was the majority Black city, little over 50%, my first-year English class, there were only, say, two Black students out of 30 students. And that was my experience through high school. Including, you know, advanced placement classes in English and history. And so, I didn't understand it, but I knew that something was wrong. That was a, how can we be majority Black city when all the AP classes or the rich classes or advanced classes had one or two or three Black students? So, I think that kind of peaked my consciousness regarding racial inequality, not unequal representation or something, but again, overall, I think I had a good childhood, a good life at Lansing.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for sharing that. How were you introduced to the field of political science? Where did you attend undergraduate and graduate school?

Dr. Johnson: I went to Brown University, majored in African American Studies, I think called then Afro-American Studies and International Relations. And after I graduated, I went to Brazil for a year, improved by Portuguese, and I came back to Brown, and got a master's in Brazilian Studies. And after that, I decided I wanted to get my PhD, I wanted to be a professor, and so I got my PhD, master's, and PhD in political science from the University of California, Berkeley. And this is all in the 80's and 90's. And so, I got introduced to political science at Brown University and met some very impressive scholars in the Department of Science, like Professor Edward Beiser.

Dr. Johnson: He was my first advisor. He was a lawyer, PhD, but with a specialization in law and politics. And so, he was just a very impressive scholar, teacher, mentor. But I think more importantly, my professors in class as were my peers. I became a student activist shortly after arriving in Brazil. And so, our Black Student Union was called The Organization of the United African People, OUAP, and so I was very active in that organization. I became president in that

organization. I was elected to student government. I was elected to the corporation. And so, I really, really, I guess, came to kind of explicit political consciousness at Brown, just recognizing the inequalities, the unfairness of society, developing vocabulary for understanding it, and then learning about our history.

Dr. Johnson: Like I said, I majored in African American Studies, and I would say my most influential professors came from the program, I don' t believe we had a department at the time. And so, my most influential professors were Adonis Eugenio, who was a Ghanaian political scientist, a Ghanaian scholar, who had studied in the United States, and then lived in the United States. But he was a specialist on African history, politics, and culture, and Latin American, or Afro-Latin American history, politics, and culture. So, he had the most influential professors. And so, I really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, really, influenced on me by far. I took all of his courses, and I was interested in African liberation movements.

Dr. Johnson: He said, well, if you're serious, you've got to learn Portuguese, because Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, you've got to be serious. So, I started studying Portuguese as an undergraduate at Brown, and the way they teach it, you learn about Brazilian culture. And so, I just became very interested in Brazil, and Brazilian race relations, and comparing Brazilian race relations to race relations in the United States. And I did study abroad, sort of after my junior year, and just was really committed to becoming fluent in Portuguese, and more about Brazil. And so, after I graduated, I worked two jobs that summer to make money to go to Brazil. And then I went to Brazil, ended up staying a year, really improved my Portuguese, and just falling in love with the country and the people.

Dr. Johnson: And I was based in Rio de Janeiro, you know, one of the largest cities in Brazil, one of the most famous cities in the world, and a tourist city. You know, I' m from a tourist city, so I just really connected with the city. And it was just, again, a positive experience. But, shortly after arriving and spending time there, I saw some unfortunate similarities to life in the United States. The most important being racial inequality, color stratification. This is just walking around Rio, doing the first study abroad thing, and then after I graduated, it seemed like the rich people and people dressed nicely in business suits were White or light skinned. And then the folks cleaning the streets, you know, my uncle was a garbage man, you know, so I kind of identified with them.

Dr. Johnson: So, the people cleaning the streets, just doing the dirty work, the heavy work, they seem to be much darker, they seem to be Black, or just darker. Like, wait a minute, I've seen this

movie before, I've seen this picture before, what's going on here? And so, I think that just set me off on a trajectory of studying race relations in the Americas with an emphasis on Brazil and the United States. And so, that's where I got a lot of my research. And so, I think that's a positive person, not an optimistic person, but just seeing inequality, injustice, poverty really runs me the wrong way when I feel we have resources and ability to create a more egalitarian society, eliminate poverty, dramatically reduce it.

Dr. Johnson: And so, I felt that in the United States, I felt that in Brazil. You know, Brazil is one of the champions of inequality, social and racial inequality. And so, kind of studying the politics of inequality and Black movement activism and Black participation in politics, those are my key areas of research. I've lived over five years in Brazil over the last 30 years. I got to put in some good time in Latin America, had some good experiences, but it's my life, so I hope I never stop visiting Latin America and other countries in the world, but I've had some good experiences there.

Interviewer: Thank you. Were you a first-generation scholar?

Dr. Johnson: Yes. My parents didn't graduate from high school. They got GEDs, or the equivalent, my father in the military, my mom outside, and so they didn't have advanced degrees or a lot of formal education, but they recognized the importance of education. Especially my mother. So, she encouraged me to do well in school, study, put in time, and so again, I was generally a good student and enjoyed school. I guess an active child. In sports, I was in every, you know, program imaginable in terms of summer programs, after-school programs. And then once I started playing sports, I played football and basketball, and was just, you know, very active and enjoyed that. Unfortunately, I' m not as active as I used to be in terms of sports and athletics and working out, but, yeah, that was a big part of my life, and I didn't have a lot of contact with my dad after that.

Dr. Johnson: My parents got divorced, but again, he was one of nine kids, so I had a lot of contact with my aunts and uncles, one of his brothers, my godfather. So that's one of my most important kinds of memories of childhood: just having a loving, supportive, big family on both sides, who we could go to spend the night or eat or have a good time with. And I would say that in the end, I'm very grateful to God for the things that He has done.

Interviewer: Did you have any mentors along the way that made an impression on you or your career?

Dr. Johnson: Yes, I would say my main mentors were my African American studies professors, especially [incoherent], who was one of Ray's biggies. But I think he did study abroad in high school, so... So, I said that to say he was kind of grounded in Ghanaian and African reality, but he had lived and traveled around the world and spoke, you know, five languages. And I think I was impressed with that. I was impressed with his international vision, his global vision, his facility with languages. I think that just was a positive role model for me. And he was very encouraging of my interests and my activism. And he was a pan-Africanist. Mm-hmm. Scholar, activist in his own right. But sometimes when we would get sad that we wouldn't I have a lot of students to turn out for an event or a protest or something, maybe if you change the name, African, we may not identify with the name because we were an organization of United African People.

Dr. Johnson: To Black or something. But we kept it. So he was, I would say, my main mentor, professor, you mean supporter. But another influential professor was Wilson Moses, historian from Detroit, who became, you know, one of the most proud. Yeah. The scholars of African American history, especially intellectual history, Black political thought. And so, with him, I learned about Du Bois, Booker T, Marcus Garvey, some of the, you know, towering Black intellectuals, scholars. And so that was very important because I felt they spoke to our reality, my reality. And Rhett Jones was another historian in the African American Studies program who set a colonial history out on race in the Americas. And so, I just really liked my professors and respected their work. And scholarship and appreciate their sharing the results of their years of research with us.

Dr. Johnson: And when I went to Brown, initially, I wanted to be a lawyer. That was my plan, to be a lawyer, to defend my people. But I think as I took more classes and learned more about the world and realized that I liked studying, I liked doing research. And kind of took a different path. I left my legal aspirations to pursue my scholarly aspirations. And so, again, Brazil had... Brazil, Brown University had one of the strongest Portuguese and Brazilian studies programs in the country. And so, I got to also study Portuguese and Brazilian literature and Brazilian culture with some of the top scholars. And so, I appreciated that. And, you know, all of my scholars in African American Studies, Portuguese and Brazilian studies were well connected within the United States and abroad.

Dr. Johnson: And so, I think I benefited from that. So now that I'm in Brazil, I can reach out to people, kind of big-name scholars, and have lunch with them, talk with them, get guidance from them as well. And so, I really appreciated that, benefited from that. I think my interest was always interdisciplinary. So, I took courses in science, I took courses in history, I took courses in economics. But I majored in Afro-American Studies and International Relations. And then those are two kinds of interdisciplinary fields, kind of by definition, by nature. And I wonder if I didn't

major in political science because there were no Black political scientists in the department at Brown. No, so I don't think there were any Latino political scientists.

Dr. Johnson: I don't... I think there were any women political scientists or in, not that there's always a direct correlation, but there were no courses on Black politics in the United States in our department, political science department. And since I was interested in Black people and I was interested in politics, I think I got more of that satisfied in Afro-American Studies. And... but when I... and again, I was an activist kind of throughout my time at Brown, and we would always protest for faculty diversity because one of Brown's themes was diversity and excellence. And so, I embraced that diversity and excellence slogan. Yeah. And try to diversify our political science department. I think it took years, if not decades, for them to get Black faculty members, Latino faculty members.

Dr. Johnson: I think they have women's faculty members now and that was also my experience at Berkeley. When I got being a Black faculty member and Latino faculty members, and I was also a student activist at Berkeley. Work in student government, and to me it just didn't seem reasonable that I met you know two very prestigious high-status institutions historic don't... don't lack for resources and you don't have a diverse faculty at a basic level, at a descriptive representation level. That's a problem. And so again, I talked a lot about my professors in those departments and that really wasn't satisfied for their expectations about there being a limited club.

Dr. Johnson: I have resources so and I think you're Brown, you're Berkeley, can you recruit the people you want or training the people you want? And so, I think it took both schools decades and I was doing in the 80's and 90's I think they had Black faculty in chill decades later decades after that one of the rumors I heard Berkeley hadn't made a contract offer to Black political professor since they recruited Ralph Bunche. And so, I was like, that's a problem. That's a problem. And again, I haven't kept up with the department. I'm not as close to folks as I should be now. So, I don't know the current status of diversity and excellence in those departments.

Dr. Johnson: But I did hear that they do have some Black faculty members to add on. It's been a long time coming. And so, while I was there, Charles Henry, African American political scientist, was in the African American studies department. And so, I spent a lot of time with him talking politics and Black politics. And I tried to get our department to get him a joint appointment because it just seemed logical and reasonable. He's a specialist on Black politics. We don't teach Black politics. He's a University of Chicago PhD in political science. We have University of Chicago PhDs, it looks like, already on faculty. So, it just seemed very reasonable. But that kind of went

nowhere. And again, I spoke to my political science professors, including the chair and other faculty members.

Dr. Johnson: And it was just, they weren't enthusiastic about the idea. And I wasn't persuaded by their reasoning because it just seemed doable. It seemed like our department, the political science department, would do it. And there was no benefit for having a specialist in Black politics or a faculty member. This was a joint appointment. Same thing with Latino politics. We had a Berkeley PhD in political science, teaching in Chicano studies. I said, why don't we make it a joint appointment? He's our graduate. He's a specialist in Latino politics. And again, no enthusiasm for that idea. And so. I just... think it's okay. Not everybody shares my passion for diversity and excellence and that's what I concluded. But you don't really get home because those public universities, Berkeley is a public university, supported by tax dollars in a very diverse state. So, the fact that the faculty wasn't as diverse was a problem for me. The student body was very diverse, but over the years the student body has become less diverse, and it's very disappointing to me.

Interviewer: I want to follow up on what you were saying about being an activist throughout your educational years. How would you describe or characterize the political, social environment in the U.S. while you were in college or grad school?

Dr. Johnson: Well, I would say that we have a very problematic political situation and political system in the sense that I think the country has not come to grips with our authoritarian origins. Obviously, slavery is kind of the system that comes to mind because Brown University exists, was founded before the founding of the country, and one part of the Brown family was a slaveholding family. And so I think that's the case with Harvard, Yale, Princeton many of the elite private schools and elite public schools were formed during the colonial period or the early American period, but they were created under conditions under authoritarian conditions in which slavery existed, where White women did not have the right to participate in the system. So, it was a very, very limited set of folks who had full rights to participate in politics, society, education, and we haven't had a full reckoning or full acknowledgement of these authoritarian origins, which I think have compromised and limited our ability to create a more egalitarian, democratic society in politics.

Dr. Johnson: And I felt that when I was a student, and I continue to feel that today, we have elections, we have occupations, have elections, we have occupations, again, we have political parties, we have a lot going on that is democratic in form and substance, but I want us to deal with the question of who created this system, what groups created this system, what groups benefited

from this system. And again, you know, scholars have pointed out rich White men, you know, property White men, property educated, you know, White men were the main founders, creators, beneficiaries of the American political system that we live in today. I would say despite, you know, positive. Changes in the direction of diversity, equity, inclusion, but I study comparative politics, my main three fields in graduate school, my examination fields were comparative politics, Latin American politics and American politics.

Dr. Johnson: And so, I study regime change. Comparing political systems and in many countries in Latin America and around the world, when you have an authoritarian system, civilian or military, at some point, there's often recognition that this, this, this system is problematic. We need to create a new system. So, you have a constitutional convention. You have a constituent assembly. We do it. So. We haven't had that type of conventional assembly since the founding of the country. And again, I think we need that type of new beginning. We need that type of reboot. We need that type of confronting our past. Because the past has limited our present and future. And the founding fathers, the framers, wanted it that way. They wanted to make it difficult to change the Constitution, to amend the Constitution.

Dr. Johnson: And that has been the case. Is it a coincidence that we have had no women as president? That we've only had one African American as president? That all the top leadership positions have been dominated historically and today by wealthy, well-educated White men? That's a problem in our system. And I guess one of my frustrations is there's not full acknowledgement of the depths of our problems and the need for... right... what I would term radical reforms. Democratic reforms. Like I said, I support a new Constitutional Convention in which everybody can participate in the process. We haven't had that at the national level. And to the degree that we've had at state levels, it's been compromised by kind of our national configuration. And so...

Dr. Johnson: Can you explain the deep meaning behind why we have an Electoral College? In a world in which no other country has that type of system because it's not a democratic system; it's an indirect election in which the electors do not have to be responsive to the vote in their states. That's a problem. I think I can explain that. It's not democracy, even though we've come to believe it's democracy. And I always say that Brazil has something called the myth of racial democracy. This idea that Brazil has great harmonious race relations, and that they're better than the United States and other segregated societies. I feel that we have the myth of political democracy here in the United States. In which we think we are the best in the world.

Dr. Johnson: We have the best system in the world. And I would argue we do not. We have a very problematic system, which we celebrate as the most democratic, but really isn't our current reality. With our president's two candidates, it is demonstrating again how undemocratic our system is. And again, it's really a threat to our country. But because we are one of the most powerful countries in the world, it's a threat to the world. And so, I guess that's my frustration as a political scientist. That our political science departments around our country and our most visible scholars tend to accept the proposition that we have a good if not great political system. Where my view is that we have a very problematic democratic political system, and that we could be doing much better; that we should be doing much better. As citizens, as scholars. And so, that' s my kind of take on where we are now.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for sharing that very interesting perspective. You mentioned that you are a comparative scholar. Can you tell us about your 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 to your thinking and your research?

Dr. Johnson: Yes. My dissertation was on post-World War II party politics in Brazil and the coup, the civilian military coup of 1964. And I revised and published that dissertation as a book. Then I came upon the topic because one of my advisors was David Collier, prominent scientist, comparativist and Latin Americanist at Berkeley. And so, he was just a very impressive scholar, teacher, mentor; very generous he is in his support of his graduate students. So, I worked with him my entire graduate career at Berkeley and also worked with his wife, Ruth Collier, who was also a prominent comparativist and Latin Americanist. And both of them were my dissertation committee, for example, and so I learned a lot from them. I was a research assistant for them. I ended up doing my dissertation on a topic that grew out of my research for them and with them. But that wasn't my original topic.

Dr. Johnson: My original topic was kind of a comparative analysis of Black politics in Brazil. In the United States, and like I said, in our department, we didn't have anybody who did Black politics in the United States. And the Colliers, they weren't really that interested in race; they were more interested in regime change, political parties, labor movements. And so, I was interested in those topics too. And so, I just decided to kind of follow that path, maybe the path of least resistance, and so it was only later in my career that I could reduce my interest in Black politics and race relations. And so, I have done some pioneering research on Black politics, Black political participation. In Brazil, Black politics, in Ecuador some comparative research on Black politics. And. Regime change. In. Kind of a. Comparative. Historical. Perspective.

Dr. Johnson: And so, I compared the United States, South Africa, and Switzerland in an article that was published in the NCOBPS publication arguing that we to the concept of pluralist authoritarianism. Seriously, in the sense that they're countries that have the form of democracy in the sense that they have... they're not closed military regimes. They're civilian regimes and they have elections. They have record elections, but not everybody can participate and not everybody can run for office, and not more similarities between United States, South Africa, and Switzerland than we would like to acknowledge. And I argue that you can consider those countries as pluralist authoritarian regimes at different parts in history because Switzerland, you know, did not win the right to vote for decades.

Dr. Johnson: And you know Switzerland and United States are often some of the earliest democracies in the Western world. And I was kind. Of course, that' s a challenging idea! That like is democracy, the best term with the best concept to describe these political systems in which half or more of the population is prevented from participating in the processes that we say define the system by voting, like running for office and having your civil clinical rights guaranteed. And so, I think I may have been ahead of my time because now there's research talking about electoral authoritarianism, you know, the demise of democracy. A third kind of democracy, including research done by. Former students of David Collier, Ruth Collier, and so I think we need more research.

Dr. Johnson: We need to come in grips with the fact that the Black folks and others have been treated could be described as authoritarian, kind of, with denial of rights, with slavery by discrimination for women to be treated. Should we describe that if these target groups have been discriminated and cast... excluded from our lives? If fundamentally... um... see authoritarian ways, should we limit their experiences to say that their treatment is part of this system that. They're in and therefore that compromises the democratic credentials of the system, and that's my view. But I don't think everybody agrees with that. They so would say United States is democracy. Some groups you know haven't been treated right, that's not good, that's not fair, that does that about the consequences are more serious than that.

Dr. Johnson: This discrimination, exclusion, oppression has compromised the system; it continues to copy less and so can I ask political scientists meet you? It means being at home in NCOBPS. It has been an academic professional home to me. I have many friends in the American political things, like I used to. But I try to make NCOBPS regularly, because I think the quality of personal and professional interaction is very high and I benefit from it. And so you again some of the scholars who had most impact on me outside of the ones that study with Brown and Berkeley happened in NCOBPS members and who often bet through post people like Diane Pinderhughes,

David Cohen, K.C. Morrison, Michael Mitchell, these were of the scholars who well appreciated my work and entered me so I just have got a lot of love and support from NCOBPS and NCOBPS leaders. So, I really enjoyed the experience. You know, a number of... I enjoy, you know, the personal and professional interaction you get at meetings. But I definitely... ever since I became department chair, I feel like I don't have the best experiences in terms of meeting colleagues discussing important issues in the field, and in reality, not only at a scholar policy and a graduate slough.

Interviewer: Thank you. And I understand that you are part of a research group that's been working together for two decades or so. You tell us the name of that group and you... I believe you referenced earlier some of the scholars that you are collaborating with.

Dr. Johnson: Yes, the name of our group is Racing Democracy in the Americans, and we've existed kind of as an informal and now formal group within NCOBPS for over 20 years. And I think David Cohen and Casey Parsons were our two lead founders. Doing not only Black politics in United States, but Black politics in Latin America and especially Brazil. A graduate student Afro-Brazilian, graduate student in sociology at the Michigan State University, and in Mexico and in Argentina and the Caribbean and Spanish and developed. And we decided to take it to the next level, and we applied for grants. We ended up getting major funding from the Short Foundation, I believe, behind me, and so we have major international conferences in Salvador, Bahia, Sacramento, California. And we applied for other sources; I believe APSA, they supported one of our meetings, gatherings. And we've had other people at the university, at the universities support us. For example, David Cohen was able to get a lot of support from Sacramento State University.

Dr. Johnson: Mark Sawyer, who was one of our stars, was able to get support from UCLA and we had a conference there. So, we really have had I don't know some a powerful impact in guiding a generation of graduate students in the United States and in Brazil and supporting them in their research. And, and we still exist and we still meet often at NCOBPS, but also outside of NCOBPS. The people I met through NCOBPS became very influential in my life and research. I mentioned Mark Sawyer, one of the leading scholars of Cuban politics, Caribbean politics, wrote a pioneering book on racial politics in [incoherent]. And so, you know, poised to make major contributions for decades to come. He passed away. And so, I mean, we connected with so many scholars in the United States and Brazil, and other countries in Latin America, that was and still is a very rich experience. We connected with Ron Walters, who was professor at Howard University for many years, and then at the University of Maryland College Park. And so, we just were open to kind of all contributions and connections and relationships.

Dr. Johnson: And so, I think we're going to kind of redouble our efforts to apply for some major grants because we realized that we could do it; we could do more with more resources. And that just became so clear to us. So, we hope to be applying for... kind of reorganizing and deciding how we should proceed. Because, again, this was started over 20 years ago. And we had many Brazilians, Afro-Brazilians, who were undergraduates and graduate students who are now professors, who are now major leaders in their, in their country and in their fields. Because even though most of us were political scientists here in the United States, our Brazilian counterparts, they were more diverse along the social side. So, you have political scientists and sociologists, you had anthropologists, you had historians.

Dr. Johnson: But that was in part due to the respect and range of contacts that Louisa Hale had. And so, unfortunately, she never completed her PhD at Michigan State University, even though I believe she was ABD. I think she just had her dissertation left to complete, but life got in the way. She got a job at the United Nations in Brazil, she became a cabinet member. And so, when the Workers' Party, Lula government, and the Dilma government came to power. So, she was just a major figure in politics and scholarly debates in Brazil, and she passed away. And so, we've suffered some blows to our founding membership. But it's just so inspiring that there's a new generation coming up in the United States and Brazil.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for sharing that. And I'm sorry to hear about the losses to your group. But it sounds like it's been a very formative and productive relationship that will continue. So, thank you for sharing that. In your view, what is necessary in order to further diversify the discipline and make it more equitable in welcoming the scholars of color? And then a part two to that would be, what would your advice be to associations like APSA or NCOBPS on how best to support Black scholars in the profession?

Dr. Johnson: I want to encourage political science departments to recognize the diversity ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, educational, gender, et cetera, in the country and in the world. Yep. And so that if you consider your department one that covers the world or that covers the United States thoroughly, politics of the United States thoroughly, have professors and have courses that reflect reality. I think we have a lot of work to do in terms of addressing topics seriously in American politics that need to be addressed. And so, I think for so long we've had a very traditional top-down view in which politics and political scientists are taking perspectives of the elites and the elite. You know, which is to a certain degree a White male elite perspective. And that just has to be a very narrow perspective that leaves out a lot of people, leaves out really a lot of this... different aspects and components of our political system, our political reality. And so, I would encourage folks to have a commitment to diversity and excellence. Have a commitment to diversity, equity,

and inclusion. Have a commitment to intersectionality in personnel, courses, programs, events, activities.

Dr. Johnson: I think, again, I... I think that... I think we can acknowledge... we'll encourage folks to recognize and consider that these big things, such as slavery, Jim Crow segregation, genocide of indigenous populations, denial of the right to vote for women. These are not minor kinds of things; these are, from my perspective, these are major things that were not covered adequately when I was an undergrad decades ago. And I think they are covered better now, but still not adequately covered in our political science department. And so, I think we have some serious work to do, and I would encourage our departments to do it. And that's why I applaud the work that you do, Kim, at APSA, in terms of trying to bring us into the 21st century and recognizing that we really do... we really are a diverse community.

Dr. Johnson: Our students are diverse, our professors are diverse, our country is diverse, and so we need to work together to get better coverage of these topics and recognize that there are different theoretical and methodological approaches that can enlighten our reality, our understanding of reality. And then, kind of a narrow, statistical, quantitative approach on important political topics is not the only approach, and we really do need to embrace... we call it an interdisciplinary approach, I would say, to these important matters. And so that's one of the ideas that my mentor, David Collier, really pushed was kind of qualitative and quantitative methods should complement each other. It shouldn't be seen as, qualitative methods should not be seen as inferior to quantitative, statistical, mathematical.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for that, and for sharing your perspective on that important question. And so finally, you have held a number of leadership positions, both in the profession and in your department. You were a leader in the organized section, race, ethnicity, and politics, I believe.

Dr. Johnson: Yes.

Interviewer: In your department, as chair.

Dr. Johnson: Yes.

Interviewer: What, in your view, makes a good leader? And what did you do? What did you learn, or what have you learned from these leadership experiences?

Dr. Johnson: Well, I've enjoyed my leadership experiences. I feel that a good leader listens. A good leader thinks about the main goals of the organization, or the group, or the department, and doesn't just focus on what is; research, teaching, and other interests. And so, I've tried to do that in all the positions that I've held. You've done well. I feel that I've done well in the sense that I've gotten good feedback and gotten good support and be re-elected as chair or encouraged to stay... stay on at different leadership positions. So, I think listening, paying attention to the membership, recognizing that there usually isn't one way or the highway. There usually are good ideas coming from diverse areas. And I think that's what I've learned. I think that's what I've learned. Again, I've just always embraced this notion of excellence and diversity, that we really can be the best we can be while being inclusive, and that, in fact, being inclusive will help us be the best we can be. And I've felt that way at the department level, at the discipline level, you know, nationally, and internationally, and various groups I've been a part of. And so that's kind of been... I don't know, my experience.

Interviewer: And thank you for that. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us before we close out?

Dr. Johnson: Well, I would just like to thank you again, your team, for doing all you can to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in APSA, in the discipline of political science, and work supporting NCOBPS and encouraging closer ties between APSA and NCOBPS, encouraging more interaction between the two organizations. I believe that NCOBPS has played a very important role in my life and career, and that of other political scientists and that it still has an important role to play. Because, you know, periodically, you know, I've been a political scientist, and I've lost 50,000 years of my life, and I've never done anything I wanted to do. We, uh, have people questioning the importance of racial organizations or ethnic organizations in professional life or in society. And with support and guidance and mentorship that other organizations can't. It doesn't mean that other organizations can't be powerfully positive, but I think NCOBPS and other similar organizations have a positive role to play. Again, I appreciate what you do on that. Thank you.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much, and I appreciate what you do. We're really grateful that you were able to sit for this interview, and we thank you for your service and the research that you've conducted over your years as a political science professor.

Dr. Johnson: Thank you very much.

Interviewer: You're welcome.

Dr. Johnson: Very much, my pleasure.