

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH H. (PETE) SILVER SR.

CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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Interview with Joseph H. (Pete) Silver Sr.
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
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Location: Social Sciences Building, Kennesaw State University

TS: Pete, I know you joined the faculty here in 1977 at the ripe old age of twenty-two. Why don't you talk a little bit about your academic background, your background in general, if you want to, and maybe who were mentors for you even before you came here?

JS: I started my undergraduate career at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, and majored in history and government. I had the distinction of finishing that program in three years and graduating number one in my class. From there, I had been accepted into several law schools around the country, and I thought that that was going to be my path.

TS: You would have been a good lawyer.

JS: During that time my second sister, Esther, was writing and editing for *The Review of Black Political Economy*. She was a former writer for *Time* magazine and *Essence* magazine, assistant editor for *Essence* magazine.

TS: Wow. So she's a lot older than you?

JS: Yes, she's number two child of seven. She was telling me about a contributor to the journal, Mack Henry Jones, and she would send me his articles that he was writing because he seemed to have been developing a paradigm that was not a traditional paradigm for political science. I read his articles and was intrigued with him, and so that led me to give him a call. He was at Atlanta University at that time. I called him and asked him about his research, and I let him know that I read just about everything that he had published and that I was on my way to law school, but if I could come to Atlanta University, and if he would be my major professor, then that's what I would do. I had the luxury of being a Ford Foundation Fellow. So with that, all I had to do was to get accepted to any school, and the Ford Foundation would pay because they wanted to produce African American PhDs. So I ended up going to Atlanta University (Now Clark Atlanta University) for my master's program and my PhD program.

TS: The same professor all the way?

JS: The same professor. Then from there I did some work, what I call post-doctoral work; one was with the American Political Science Association, and that was at Stanford. We did a discussion on civil rights and the law. I studied under Don [E.] Fehrenbacher. You might remember him as the great person who studied and wrote on the Dred Scott decision [*The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1978)]. So I had the opportunity to study with him. I also had the opportunity to be a fellow at the American Judicature Society, and so we were at Kent State for a while. Then I was selected to study international higher education at Oxford

University in England, and that was a great experience. So that's my educational background.

TS: What was it about Mack Jones and his research that was path breaking and that attracted you—and did you continue to be attracted in that same way throughout your master's and doctoral programs?

JS: Yes, I was attracted the same way throughout both programs. And you asked me earlier about my mentors. He was one of the mentors—and Larry Moss and William Boone and Shelby [F.] Lewis—all of those embraced me—and Lucius [J.] Barker, who at that time was a professor at Washington University. He really helped me with the Kennesaw experience because all of the other professors that I told you about had been teaching at predominately black institutions. Lucius was a path breaker in that he was teaching at Washington University [1969-1990], a predominately white institution, and then went on to [Stanford University] as a department chair. After Ralph Bunche, he was the first African American to be over the American Political Science Association [Bunche 1953-1954; Barker 1992-1993].

Mack Jones was really looking at critical race theory, but also looking at political science from a Black paradigm and from an asset model rather than a deficit model. So his writings really challenged the status quo. Part of what he was doing with his students was teaching us not only to be the best that we could be, but also being critical analysts of what was out there, and putting it all in perspective and looking at things from an Afro-centric perspective rather than a Euro-centric perspective.

TS: When you say the asset perspective, you're talking about looking at contributions that Blacks have made with political science and what-have-you and society in general as opposed to just being acted upon by society?

JS: Right. At least when other folks write, they either leave out critical aspects of our contributions or it's slanted in a way that is not positive. One of the things that he challenged us to do was to engage in critical thought processes and writing and publishing to counteract what was out there in the literature. It left an indelible impression on me. But there were two people early on in my undergraduate career. One was Dr. Lois Spear, and that was at St. Augustine's College, (now St. Augustine's University), which was a predominately Black institution. She was a white nun teaching there. The other was Dr. Lawrence Thompson who was at St Augustine's College.

TS: So it's a Catholic school?

JS: It's an Episcopalian school. Lois Spear was really the one, other than my parents and some of my high school teachers, who set me on the path for what I call excellence. Taking classes from her, I recall very distinctly when she called me into her office one day. And when you get called into a professor's office, you started getting a little nervous back then. She asked me three questions and it was the same question over and over again. She asked me, "How are you doing in my class?" I thought that was an interesting question because she was the teacher; she should know how I was doing. I said, "I'm doing fine." She said, "How are you doing in my class?" I thought maybe she

didn't hear my answer. I said, "Well, I'm doing very well; I've aced everything you've put before me; and I'm enjoying the class; I'm doing well." Then she asked me again, "How are you doing in my class?" So then that gave me the indication that I needed to be quiet and listen to what she was trying to convey. After being so assured about doing well in her class, when she asked me the third time I said, "Well, I guess I don't know. I don't know how I'm doing in your class."

TS: That's like Jesus asking Peter three times, "Do you love me?"

JS: That's right. She went on to say that she saw a lot of potential in me. She said, "You're right; you have made A's on all my exams; and you're a leader in the classroom. But that does not make you a scholar." That really made me become real quiet. She said, "Because as a teacher, I'm teaching to the middle. There are people like you in the class who have a command of the subject. There are people who don't have a command, and I'm trying to make sure that we don't lose anybody." She said, "If you want to be a noted scholar in history or government, if I ask you to read an article, you should read two or three. If I ask you to read a chapter in a book, you should read two or three chapters. If I ask you to read a book, you should read two or three books. Then begin to compare and contrast what you thought you learned from that, but then make your own analysis." That left an indelible impression on me because what she was saying is that you are getting by making an A, but it's not mastery of the subject. What she wanted me to begin to think about: If I was going to be a professional, then I had to master the subject, and the only way that you could master the subject is understand what the literature is saying. So I was in undergraduate school when that conversation took place.

TS: Right. It was a pretty small school?

JS: Yes, it was about 1,500 students at the time.

TS: I've heard people be nostalgic about segregated schools in the sense that there was a nurturing atmosphere that they felt sometimes, which was lost in an integrated setting. It sounds to me like something similar was happening there.

JS: I made a conscious choice to go to a HBCU. I don't even think I've shared this with you as long as I've known you that my family was one of the chosen families to integrate the Goldsboro [North Carolina] City schools. My sister and I were among the first six students to go to a predominately white school in my hometown. I think it was supposed to happen the following year, integration.

TS: This was freedom of choice.

JS: Right. It was actually before freedom of choice. It was when the school system indicated they were going to integrate. It must have been around '68. They were supposed to have already been integrated, but they were not. They were still segregated.

TS: What grade were you in?

JS: I was going to the seventh grade.

TS: So I made a false assumption that you came through segregated schools.

JS: I came to the seventh grade, and my eighth grade year would have been the year that the schools were going to be “integrated.” But they wanted test cases. They picked six students to be part of that test case, and I was one of those six. It was one of the most horrific experiences I’ve ever had in my life. It was very tough. We excelled academically and didn’t get much attention about that. I played tennis, which was not a sport in the neighborhood that I grew up in. It was just something I picked up. We didn’t have any tennis courts on the side of town that I lived on. But what I did know when I got to this Goldsboro Junior High School is that they had an annual intramural tennis championship. So I put my name in. No one thought I even had a chance, but I began to see the discrimination first-hand and up close. They were calling a lot of my shots outside that were in. I played the line. They would call it out. So I had to begin to adjust my game to put it in the middle of the court, which means I had to work harder. I got to the finals, and it was one guy who was a town celebrity—the country club circuit. He had won the tournament in previous years, and so it was he and I that ended up in the finals. Of course, everybody and their brothers and sisters knew that he was going to win, which was not the case. Even with all the cheating that went on, I still won. The next day when I was out for physical education I heard someone call my name, Joseph Silver. If you’re walking, and someone calls your name, what is your natural tendency to do?

TS: Turn around.

JS: Turn around. So I turned around, and the only thing I could see was a baseball bat coming at me. When I saw it, I lifted my hands up in this fashion, and so my chest was exposed. I got hit a couple of times with the baseball bat, broke all of my ribs, and ended up in the hospital. Interestingly enough, the school system at the time didn’t want to do anything about it until my mom and dad took a more assertive part and had the issue adjudicated. I’m saying that to say that once I got through Goldsboro Junior High School and went to Goldsboro High School and had an opportunity to go to predominantly white schools and had all these horrific experiences, I decided that I did not want to go to a predominately white school for college and actually ended up at St. Augustine’s College because a cousin of mine was there, and a neighbor of mine was there. It ended up being a great experience at St. Augustine’s College.

TS: Do I remember correctly that your father was a minister?

JS: No, no. My father’s grandfather was a minister. We have a long line of ministers in the family. My father was the head deacon of the church, but my great-grandfather, for whom I’m named, is one of the founders of the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and that’s documented in the church history. Part of what he was doing was going around the South and around the United States forming churches. This past year I had the opportunity to be the commencement speaker at the African University College of Communication and Business in Accra, Ghana. I was going to say that I was the first of my family to travel to Africa and interact with the community and the churches and the educational system. As I was doing my research, I found that my great-grandfather had gone to Africa on many occasions to establish churches.

- TS: What years would that be?
- JS: That was in the early 1920s and right around the turn of the century, actually.
- TS: Was it a Pan-African movement?
- JS: No, it wasn't. It was just truly church. He went on several occasions. At that time they had to travel by ship, and so that gave me a whole different perspective from a spiritual standpoint or an age standpoint why I had this longing to be associated with the continent of Africa and why much of my business now is in various parts of Africa.
- TS: Wow. Okay, why don't you talk a bit about your dissertation?
- JS: Part of what we were taught at Atlanta University was to challenge the existing order of things as it relates to the sociopolitical economic conditions of our society. Looking at disparities, looking at discrimination, not looking at it in terms of, as I said, a deficit model, but how you begin to address things to put them in perspective, to get people to read something differently. So my dissertation was looking at the administration of bail in Fulton County. I look at a ten-year period. It was a follow-up to my master's thesis [on] bail as a tool of oppression, bail, like bail bonding.
- TS: Like not getting bail?
- JS: Yes. Then with my dissertation I began to look at first offenders for things like as simple as larceny and went up to more heinous crimes of rape and murder, but I looked at simple crimes and more complex crimes and then just aggregated first offenders according to race and gender. My hypothesis would be that whether you looked at a petty crime or a serious felony, even first offenders, that you would see a discrepancy in terms of even having availability for bail and the amount of bail that would be charged based on race and gender.
- TS: Are these judges that make these decisions or court administrators?
- JS: Judges. I had access to the Fulton County jail and their records, first primary sources. I spent an entire summer just gathering the data in the jail. I would go there every month for over a six-month period just to gather the data. What we found was that the Black males would be charged a higher amount of bail no matter what the crime was. We're still talking about first offenders now—no records, no trouble with the law. Black women would be second, white males would be third, and white females would be fourth. Our hypothesis was proven true on all accounts. Either the bail was higher or the bail was not granted, even though it was a first offense. So, again, that was part of the whole concept of looking at what transpires in our system that put minorities at a disadvantage. If you're controlling everything except for race, you saw that there was a different administration of bail bonding and the availability of bail, just on those accounts.
- TS: So you're time period would be like the late 1960s to the late 1970s?
- JS: That's correct. It was very interesting, and it led me to a path of my research agenda, which is really looking at the politics of race and the politics of race in higher education.

One of the significant things that we did in that regard was a study that was commissioned by the Southern Education Foundation, called *Redeeming the American Promise*. Also that foundation funded a major study that I did along with two former Kennesaw professors, [W.] Curtis Spikes and Rodney [W.] Dennis.

TS: I remember Rodney. Curtis Spikes?

JS: He was in mathematics and computer science. Yes, he came probably in the mid-eighties. I left in '84, he came in [1986].

TS: And Rodney was in sociology?

JS: Psychology. What we were looking at is the Adams litigation, and the Adams litigation is the *[Kenneth] Adams [et al.] v. [Joseph A.] Califano [1977]*, which was the desegregation of higher education in the southern states. What we were trying to look at is the experiences of white faculty teaching at Black institutions and how they were recruited, how they were retained. We looked at promotion and tenure issues. We looked at nineteen states and all of the public institutions in those states. What we found was that many of the institutions found reasons not to hire African Americans at the time.

TS: These were predominately white schools or predominately black schools?

JS: Predominately white schools. We saw that promotion and tenure was almost non-existent. One of the things we did see though: As long as the federal government was monitoring these schools, you saw a slight increase.

TS: Sure.

JS: So we did a follow up study after the federal government decided to release all of the states from the litigation and monitoring. What we saw was a drastic decrease. In other words, institutions were saying they didn't need oversight to do the right thing. While they were being over-sighted, you saw a slight increase and in some cases, a gigantic increase. But after the oversight was over, it went back to its pre-litigation days. The State of Georgia was involved in that. It was also during the time that Kennesaw's growth in terms of African American faculty saw a spike too. So those are the kinds of research that we've been doing. Here lately, I've been doing research. I just had a chapter published last month in the book, *Priorities of the Professoriate*, which was looking at concepts in Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Revisited*. I was a keen admirer of Ernest Boyer. I think I probably was introduced to him while I was here at Kennesaw, actually.

TS: [President] Betty [L.] Siegel admired him.

JS: That's right. I followed him. When I moved up into administration and then as provost and vice-president, even though I didn't call it that, I followed his concept. In this article that was just written [by Joseph H. Silver Sr., and Lillian B. Poats], we looked at what we call "A View from the Top: Academic Administrators' Reflection on the Scholarship of Integration." When we talk about the scholarship of integration, we're talking about the integration of research, teaching, and service. That has just been published as *Priorities*

of the Professoriate: [Engaging Multiple Forms of Scholarship across Rural and Urban Institutions, edited by Fred A. Bonner II and others (Information Age Publishing 2015)] less than a month ago. So even though I'm out of the business, I'm still trying to do things that are scholarly in nature. I'll make sure I get you a copy of that.

TS: I'd love to see it. We might come back to some of these things as we go along through the interview, but why don't we transition now to why you came to Kennesaw. In 1977, that first year you were here, we would not have been offering upper level classes yet, although we had been approved [by the Board of Regents to develop bachelor's programs].

JS: That's exactly right. When I say this to people, some of them think I'm off my rocker a little bit, but every position that I've had, I think has been via divine intervention. I do believe that. When I explain my career from the beginning of my first public job to my last public job, I still hold true to that thought.

TS: We can just preface this by saying that the Black population of Cobb County in 1977 was a maximum of 4 percent as it was in the 1980 census, and may have been as low as 3 percent in '77. Certainly, the faculty at Kennesaw and the student body was overwhelmingly white as well, and, quite frankly, we didn't have a very good reputation [in African American communities in Cobb County].

JS: In fact, a negative reputation. The reason I say it was divine intervention was because actually the Ford Foundation did not really want me to seek employment. Their job was to produce African American PhDs.

TS: Oh, so they didn't want you to come because you didn't have your doctorate when you got here?

JS: That's correct. But I got a wife in 1976. So you need money to support your wife. Now, they did give me a marital supplement to help that first year. Then, when I finished my master's, I just made the decision I was going to seek employment. But here's why I say the connection took place. I was actually going to an interview at Atlanta Metropolitan College.

TS: Which was just starting up.

JS: That's correct. Going to the interview, I didn't know exactly where the room was. As I was wandering the halls, I ran into a person who was looking for a System meeting. When I say System meeting, I mean University System of Georgia. They had a meeting of social science educators, and they were meeting at Atlanta Metropolitan College. That person was George [H.] Beggs, [chairperson of the Social Sciences Division at Kennesaw College]. He asked me, did I know where the room was. I said, "I'm lost too. I'm here for an interview." And so he asked me what was I interviewing for, and I said a political science position.

TS: Talk about providential.

JKS: That's why I say it was divine intervention. So he said, "Where are you in school?" And I said, "I'm at Atlanta University." He asked me did I know Mack Jones. I said, "Not only do I know Mack Jones. He's my major professor." So he asked me did I have a copy of my resume? I said, "Yes, I do." He said, "I'm at Kennesaw College. I'm an administrator over there. We're looking for political scientists. Hopefully, this will go well for you, but, if not, why don't you consider applying for a position at Kennesaw?"

TS: Was Bobby [L.] Olive down there at that time?

JS: Bobby Olive was at Metropolitan College. He was here at Kennesaw [1971-1974] on the Higher Education Achievement Program [HEAP]. So I went to my interview and began to think about meeting this man. I came back and told my wife what had happened and said, "Maybe this is a sign I need to apply." Anyway, I came back and looked up the information, and, rightfully so, there was a position in political science open at Kennesaw. So I made an application for it and very quickly got a response from Dr. Beggs that they wanted me to come for an interview. The interview was very good up to a point. I think I had impressed the faculty, even though they were leery because at the time I was twenty-two years old and African American, and that was quite different from Kennesaw.

TS: Did we even have faculty committees back then?

JS: No, no, there weren't even faculty committees, just someone that Dr. Beggs introduced me to. But it was really the [division chairman, the dean of the college,] and the president that made those decisions back then.

TS: Right absolutely.

JS: And so I had to meet with the president. It was Horace [W.] Sturgis at the time. I can remember that being a very horrific interview. I asked to end the interview because I had enough, quite frankly. I left the institution, and I came back and told my wife, "I definitely know that I'm not supposed to be at Kennesaw." That evening, Dr. Beggs called me, and he actually apologized for what had transpired and asked me, would I come back for a second interview. Even though it was a negative interview, it was a positive for my experience at Kennesaw because I think through that interview Dr. Beggs and Dr. Sturgis understood that I was a person of principles, and I was not going to be bullied. When I came back for the second interview and then the next, however many years I stayed at Kennesaw, I still think folks saw me as a person who stood on principles, a person who was competent in what he did.

TS: I know George Beggs would appreciate that.

JS: Yes. So I began to have a keen admiration for Dr. Beggs, even though we were polar opposites. But one thing he projected was competence. He was a person that wanted you to wait and let things happen instead of making things happen. But I had a lot of respect for him. The president, interestingly enough, the day he saw me, I didn't have a clean-shaven face. Over the years they had developed products where African Americans can shave without bumps but [not at that time]. Dr. Beggs had already extolled my virtues as a budding political scientist with glowing recommendations. I remember the question

that he [Dr. Sturgis] asked me, which was just like yesterday: “If I give you this job, would you shave your beard and would you shave your mustache?” I said to him, “What does that have to do with the position? You should be much more concerned with what I have in my head than what I have on my face.” I said, “To answer your question, the answer is no. I will not shave my beard, and I will not shave my mustache.” And I said to him, “My wife likes it; my mother likes it; my father likes it; so whether you like it doesn’t make a difference.”

TS: It’s not like you looked like a hippie.

JS: No, no. But the thing was that I was young, twenty-two, had this beard, and I guess they didn’t know what they were getting.

TS: You had a coat and tie on.

JS: I had a coat and tie on. But that didn’t make a difference. So when I saw the way the interview was going, and it had nothing to do with the content of political science or coming to Kennesaw as a scholar teacher, I just asked to be dismissed. I said, “I think this is a waste of all of our time, so I’m going to ask respectfully that we end the interview. I will just consider this my loss and move on.” So evidently he and Dr. Beggs might have had a conversation because Dr. Beggs called me back and asked, “Would you come for a second interview?”

TS: Was Dr. Sturgis part of the interview the second time?

JS: He was.

TS: And he kept his mouth shut?

JS: He even apologized, believe or not. So I did come in 1977. It was a year after the actual [decision by the Board of Regents] to move to a four-year college. And I stayed here from ’77 to ’84, essentially.

TS: Okay, so you came here to teach political science. After three years you had your doctorate, and then Dr. Sturgis retired. Betty Siegel comes in in 1981. Talk a little bit about how you become the Minority Affairs Coordinator.

JS: Okay, I want to say something else, because I read your book [*Kennesaw State University: The First Fifty Years, 1963-2013*]. Even though you gave it to me less than two weeks ago, I went right on through it, and I think it’s a good piece. But I think it’s something that is not a very well known fact. I never shared this with more than four or five people. Dr. Beggs was one of the people that I shared it with. I don’t know if you even know the real story. We talked about [S. Frederick] Fred Roach being the chair of the [presidential search] committee. He was a very respected person here.

TS: What committee?

JS: The search committee for Betty Siegel coming to Kennesaw. I was on that search committee. I labored through those meetings and watched the blatant discrimination that was taking place. One of the things that I saw early on was that there were few African

American candidates being considered. Betty Siegel was a female being considered in the pool. They had actually eliminated all the African American candidates.

TS: I don't remember any that made finalist.

JS: They didn't. None of them made finalist.

TS: We had ten finalists, I think.

JS: And I don't know where this is going in terms of the historical record, but it is absolutely a fact that Betty Siegel was not in that first pool.

TS: Is that right?

JS: That is exactly correct. I wrote [Chancellor] Vernon [D.] Crawford a letter and resigned from the committee. I told him that I had seen the racial discrimination, and now I'm about to see the gender discrimination. I said, "From my vantage point she is the best in the pool." Even though they had not formalized [the decision], they had already made the decision that she couldn't do this or she couldn't do this, and it was all based on gender. It had nothing to do with her record. It had nothing to do with anything else, so I resigned from the committee. The chancellor of the system, Vernon Crawford, made a trip to Kennesaw to my office right over in the [old] Social Sciences Building [University College in 2015] and asked me to reconsider my position in terms of the resignation. I said I pretty much had my mind made up. So he said he would meet with the committee again and recharge them and ask them to focus on qualifications and not race and gender.

Of course, there were no more African Americans in the pool at the time, but there was Betty Siegel in the pool. They were talking about maybe she couldn't do budgets; she couldn't handle people. She came to Kennesaw, and her interview was so dynamic, it was so heads and heels above everybody else, and she just floored them. And budget preparation, she just showed them, I think, a budget for Western Carolina [University]. It just so happened she was working on it when she was coming here. She had done some homework, and she was the best. She was eventually selected as president. I've never even told Dr. Siegel this. I know Vernon Crawford knew this. I've got the letter somewhere in my files where I actually issued my resignation from the committee, but he came and convinced me to get back on the committee, and he recharged the committee.

Now, you can have a conversation with folks on the committee back then. If they told you the truth, that would be the truth. And eventually Dr. Siegel was selected. One of the things she talked about was diversity. When she got here, she was doing a lot of things. I remember it was the View of the Future committee or something like that. The few black people who were here at the time were Johnnie [D.] Myers in Criminal Justice, myself, Terri Thomas [Arnold], who was in the business office, and Diane [W.] Wilkerson [in counseling]. So we began to say, "Okay, we've got this new president. Maybe this is the time that we can begin to address issues of inclusion. We went to her and talked about it, and she said that she was willing to move in that direction. She was a path breaker in many ways, being the first female president of Kennesaw, but also the first female president in the University System of Georgia. We had sense enough to

know that was a burden, and we were putting pressure on her to be more inclusive in terms of things.

TS: She was the first [female] dean at the University of Florida. She had a lot of firsts.

JS: That's right. So what she said to us, which, as I studied leadership theory, was a classic example of a great leader, [was that] her mind and her heart could accommodate our requests, but she could not be out front in something that she didn't know anything about. She said, if it's going to happen, you all are going to have to help us do this. So she put the onus back on us. She said, "I don't mind being out front, but I need to have someone to really help me understand the dynamics of what we're doing." Out of that conversation came the discussion about whether or not I would step up and be the Director of Minority Affairs and the EEOC and [Section] 504 coordinator for Kennesaw. One of the things that we negotiated was yes and no, I wouldn't do it full time because I wanted to get tenured at Kennesaw. I know I'm not going to get tenured if I move out of teaching. She arranged for me to have administrative responsibilities but also teaching enough to continue me along the tenure and promotion ranks. She did something else too; she really broadened the scope of the job. It was not the traditional 504/EEOC coordinator's job. She gave me responsibilities in terms of the campus, the community, and actually as a confidante on several issues and not all dealing with minority affairs. Kennesaw did not have a great reputation in the community, and then the gun law had a lot of folks concerned. You had a law saying that you had to have a gun in this area.

TS: In the City of Kennesaw?

JS: In the City of Kennesaw. We ended up developing a plan of action. I wrote the first affirmative action plan for Kennesaw State University. We followed that plan, and in 1984 I published an article on the experiences of Black faculty teaching at Kennesaw State University that Cameron [L.] Fincher at the University of Georgia published. It chronicled the work that we had done, but part and parcel to that was extending ourselves into the community. Of course, in the Black community the Black church is really an anchor, was back then and still is. One of the biggest churches at the time was Zion Baptist Church. I had been working with the pastor of that church, Reverend [Robert L.] Johnson and the deacon of that church, Mr. George Williams, and the mother of that church, Mother Annie Mae Solomon, and the one of the first librarians in this area, Hattie [Gaines] Wilson. They were all members of that church, but I was working with them in the community because I had joined the NAACP under the leadership of Oscar Freeman at the time.

One of the strategies of the NAACP at the time was since Kennesaw was a state school, we should have access to the campus both as a community and as students. Part of the partnership to get that started was a relationship between Kennesaw State University and Zion Baptist Church. But also Dr. Siegel had the good leadership to create a minority advisory committee of community leaders. I think that was a stroke of genius because she was able to get advice, bounce things off [them] before she made certain kinds of decisions. I told her at the time, which I don't think she grasped until later, "In our community we look at people for their character and what they bring to the table as opposed to what position they hold." That's not universally true in the Black community,

but it was true [at Zion]. You can have a person in the church of high standing, but they may not necessarily have a job in the community that correlates to that standard. And that was the case in Zion Baptist Church because George Williams at that time was the head deacon and very, very respected in the community and the church.

TS: Wonderful musician as well.

JS: Yes. So he ended up applying for a job here, and the job was custodian.

TS: I remember that.

JS: What I was trying to help Dr. Siegel to understand was that if you can get George Williams on this campus, with the character that he has and the connections that he has, and if he has a good experience, you're going to have a pipeline to the Black community. Mr. George Williams was hired here, and he was very instrumental in cementing that relationship between Zion and Kennesaw. I don't know if it still goes on today, but it created an opportunity for Dr. Siegel and myself and other leaders at Kennesaw to go on Zion-Kennesaw day at Zion Baptist Church. It gave people a whole different perspective about Kennesaw and also Dr. Siegel herself.

TS: Right. It's not like it used to be because we all used to go to Zion on those Zion days.

JS: Right.

TS: Nowadays I think it's just a few administrators maybe and that's about it.

JS: Right. Times have changed. What I'm saying is that was the foundation of creating opportunities for people in the Black community to get jobs here at Kennesaw, students to consider Kennesaw. Now look at the campus today and look at the African American student population [19.2 percent non-Hispanic Black in fall 2014 and an additional 4.0 percent multiracial]. It's just mind-boggling. I do think that the faculty population could be a little greater because I looked at some numbers in your book looking at the 1980s and the 2000s. During that time I was telling you we made that major push when we brought in Oral [L.] Moses [joined the faculty in 1984], Harold [L.] Wingfield [1985], Rosa Bobia [1984], Nataline [J.] Mathews [1983] and several other people during that time—Deborah [S.] Wallace [1985] and Art [Arthur N.] Dunning [1983] and [Kenneth P. Gilliam (1984), Kathleen L. Pinkett (1985), and the previously mentioned Rodney Dennis (1983) and Curtis Spikes (1986)]. But looking at the numbers, comparatively speaking, when you look at the number of Black faculty we had in the late 1980s versus maybe what you have now, the percentage might have been greater back then than it is now.

TS: [You are correct. In fall 1987 African Americans made up 10.1 percent of the faculty—21 of 208. In fall 2014 Black and multiracial instructional staff members made up 9.6 percent of the faculty—69 of 721. The student population is certainly way up today.

JS: Way up. It's kind of interesting that it's come full circle because I have people in my church here in Atlanta, even this admission term, who were asking about Kennesaw. Of course, I spoke very highly of the institution. I said it was very different from when I was there but it has a good reputation, so they are sending their children to Kennesaw.

TS: Right. I will say the president's cabinet is very diverse today.

JS: That's great. One of the things that I helped [with] during that time—you may or may not remember this; but I was also chair of the Chautauqua committee.

TS: Right, I do remember that.

JS: I did two things. One, I tried to empower students. I tried to give the students leadership skills to run that particular organization of the campus but also to impress upon them that this was a great opportunity. If we are an educational institution, then we don't need to be just showing people more of the same, but [should] use it as a forum to bring people who are different to the campus and engage in intellectual discourse that will help them and the institution.

TS: Right. And you brought in some great speakers.

JS: Right, right. And I always look back very fondly on that particular piece as a very big contribution to Kennesaw State. Now, when I first came to Kennesaw, again, the first group of classes that I had was very tough because I was a young African American teaching students who were about my age. Even before the term in higher education of "nontraditional student" was used, Kennesaw had a lot of nontraditional students back in the 1970s.

TS: Absolutely.

JS: As long as I've known you, and as much respect as I have for you, I don't know if I even shared this with you. The first day of class when students found out that I was a teacher, they said some very derogatory things to me. One of the things that I would never forget was that I walked into the class, and I did not immediately go to the podium. I learned this from teachers whom I had observed and that I have a lot of respect for.

TS: You were just twenty-two years old.

JS: Yes, twenty-two years old.

TS: You were probably younger than half the class.

JS: That's exactly right. So I sat in the audience and observed the class before I went to the podium and actually announced that I was going to be the professor for the class. I got that from two of the professors that I had coming up. Larry Moss did that and I think maybe one other professor, William Boone. So I adopted it in my teaching style all the way up until the time I left teaching in the classroom. I would get in early, sit in the class, and observe and what-have-you.

TS: But you did have a coat and tie on.

JS: I had my coat and tie on, yes.

TS: So they were probably suspicious.

- JS: And so I walked up to the [front of the] class and announced that I was a professor, and some of the students got up and proceeded to walk out. The thing that I said I never will forget. One of the students said on his way out—and, of course, it's not proper to use this word these days, but I'm going to use it for the sake of the interview—he said, “A nigger can't teach me nothing.”
- TS: Probably couldn't. Probably nobody could teach him anything.
- JS: I knew this was a make or break moment, so I said, “Well, who's the nigger because I want to meet him?” Of course, he was going out saying his derogatory things. I proceeded to ask the class the question, “If there are other students who feel similarly and feel uncomfortable maybe this is the time for you to leave now. For those of you who stay, one of the things I will commit to you is that you will have the best learning experience that you've ever had in your life.” During that first couple of years I had a lot of complaints from students toward me as a teacher, and it had nothing to do with intellect or my teaching; it was all about race. I knew that. Teacher evaluations were not that good, and I can remember going to Dr. Beggs. He and I had the discussion because of the evaluations and what-have-you. I told him, “Well, it doesn't really matter because I'm probably going to leave Kennesaw after this semester anyway.” He convinced me not to do that. It's interesting because over the years, after then, students were going to him for a different reason. It was because the class was closed. They wanted to get into my class, and they had to go to the dean to get an override. So from the beginning of the teaching experience when folks were leaving the class because I was different, because they didn't think that a “nigger” couldn't teach them anything, to the students thinking that I was fair—that was the reputation I had that I was demanding, but I was fair. Kennesaw instituted the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1982, and for a couple of years running I was a finalist. They always had three finalists. I never got it, and I always thought about that, but I was always in the top three that were selected.
- TS: Well, for what it's worth—since I'm doing these interviews I'm probably more aware of this than anybody—we've given the award for thirty-four years, and there's still not an African American who has won the award.
- JS: Yes. I began to think about that because students and everybody was advocating for me, but the committee never selected me. I was always a finalist, but I never got the award. Now you're telling me that thirty-four years later that still has not happened. Dr. Siegel instituted a campus-wide service award, and I think I was one of the first ones to get that. As I look back on that, while I think it was a prestigious award, it probably did not have the same effect as the Distinguished Teaching Award as opposed to being a finalist.
- TS: The Distinguished Teaching Award was the big one back then.
- JS: That's right. So being a finalist versus being the person—and some of those years that I was finalist I knew the colleagues that were selected. I knew that I was just as good or better, but I never let that bother me.
- TS: That's always the case. Whoever made a finalist was as good as those who got it.

JS: That's right. So I had a good experience. Then when I started moving into the administration piece, as the coordinator of minority affairs, Dr. Siegel put a lot more responsibility in that position. I remember writing reports that had to go the Board of Regents. Through those reports one of the things I learned from Dr. Siegel about what a good leader does is understanding that it's not all about you. You have to empower those around you. I'm not saying this in a derogatory way but in a positive way. As flamboyant as she was, she would always stop to give praise to those who helped her do certain things. My name had gotten pretty popular around the Board of Regents' circles, and they started an Administrative Fellows program to increase the number of African Americans in administrative position in the University System of Georgia.

TS: Right, I knew you were a fellow. I was thinking it was maybe ACE [American Council on Education], but this was Board of Regents?

JS: Board of Regents. It's interesting and a little known fact that the year I was selected, I was also applying for a position at the Board of Regents. I actually got the position, which was the assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, with the understanding that I would still go through the program. They were going to count that experience as part of the success because I would have the position. So I went along with that.

TS: Is this in '84?

JS: Yes, '84. So that was my transition out of Kennesaw. There were two interesting things that happened during that time, and one was I became the first African American to become tenured.

TS: Is that right?

JS: I think Micah [Y.] Chan was the first minority, but I was the first African American to be tenured at Kennesaw.

TS: Because we had so many [African American faculty members] that didn't stay in the 1970s.

JS: That's right, they left. That was quite an experience. I can recall during that process, even before I was tenured, I had gone to Dr. Beggs. I had actually gone up for promotion a year earlier, and he counseled me not to do that. His position was that Kennesaw had not been in the habit of promoting people early.

TS: That's for sure as long as he was involved.

JS: That's right, and he didn't want that to be something that would derail me in terms of going up early, if I was not going to get it, and then [having] sour grapes. That was his theory. My theory was different. I knew you hadn't promoted anybody early or tenured anybody early, and I was going up for promotion and tenure because I had the time for tenure, and I was a year or so early for promotion, but what I was doing was sending a signal to the campus that I intended to be promoted. That was my strategy. Now his strategy was to hold the company line. I was not going to be sorely disappointed that I

would be turned down, but it would send a signal that I do expected to be promoted here at Kennesaw.

TS: What year did you get tenure?

JS: It was either '83 or '84. And I say that because it was after I got tenure that I marched into Dr. Siegel's office and told her I was going to resign from the university.

TS: To go to the regents?

JS: No.

TS: No?

JS: No. I didn't have a job.

ST: Why is that?

JS: There are two things that I thought. One was being the first African American tenured, I felt I would be a hindrance to other African Americans. Kennesaw was going to say, "See, we don't discriminate against [African Americans]; we tenured an African American. We've got one." I would have been that one for a long time. Now they've got to start back over because they didn't have the one. That was my strategy. What I told Dr. Siegel was that I thought it was time for me to move on. I did explain to her, which she couldn't understand from her perspective—I said the same thing to you, "Well, I'm the first tenured African American here at Kennesaw, but there have been many that have come along and did not get through the process and left. Kennesaw has done a great job, but it's not where it should be. So I think I would be a barrier if I stayed here." I remember the conversation with her. She asked, "Where are you going to work?" I said, "I have no idea. I don't have a job. But I do know I need to leave Kennesaw." It was during that time that I found out about the Administrative Fellow's program. So I thought that would be a good segue. I would be gone for a year. Then I also heard about the position at the Board of Regents. A gentlemen by the name of Howard Jordan [Jr.], who was the vice chancellor for services at the Board of Regents, was my advocate down there. That's how the transition took place. We'd had some experiences at Kennesaw. You remember the Nigerian student event.

TS: I was going to ask you, since you looked at my book, if I got it right.

JS: You got it right. The students had not committed any crime. They were doing like a lot of other students were doing, which was during the time when you didn't have sophisticated computers, they would enroll in one class, enroll in another class, and show for exams in one and take the other one. These students were doing the same thing. It was a teacher who felt "threatened" by them. She asked for a police escort for her from her classroom to her car. These students hadn't shown any aggression toward her. It was also during the time that you had the Nigerian credit card scandal going on in the Atlanta metropolitan area. So the police chief at the time just made a big leap in the wrong direction to say, "Well, these people are part of this scam." He began to do unlawful searches; he began to harass these students. Finally, it was during exam time, and the

students felt like they did not have a safe place to go without being harassed. They asked if they could study in my office or even take their exam in my office. I agreed to do that. I ended up getting charged with a felony of harboring criminals in my office. Of course, Betty Siegel was off campus during that time. Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg was the person in charge. He got charged with obstruction of a police officer, which was a misdemeanor, but mine was a felony. Then we got caught up in the politics of Cobb County. I think it was [Cobb County Solicitor] Herb Rivers, and he had his own agenda. Finally, the sheriff at the time was a former student of mine.

TS: Bill Hutson.

JS: Bill Hutson. Sheriff Hutson knew my reputation and knew the kind of person I was. He knew the kind of teacher I was. In his mind he just couldn't believe that Dr. Silver did anything that was against the law, and he was right. He also had his sworn duty as a sheriff to carry out the process of booking and fingerprinting and all that. But he made it very comfortable, if I can use that as a term. One of the last acts that the former police chief did was to take out these warrants against us, so the warrants had to be executed by the sheriff. Eventually all those charges were dropped, but we got caught in the politics of it because Kennesaw and the Board of Regents wanted to make sure I wasn't going to come back and sue. They wanted me to sign a waiver that I would not sue, and I would not sign the waiver. It was not that I was going to sue. I had no intentions of suing. I just didn't want them to take away my rights. I thought that was a decision I had to make, not one that the state should make. So that prolonged the case from being dropped, and then the other thing was the election [of Rivers]. I finally got a call from the district attorney at the time.

TS: Was that Tom Charron?

JS: Tom Charron. He said to me, "Be patient. There is no basis for these charges, but we can't address this situation until after the election is over. If we took the position of publicly saying that you, with the status that you have in the community and the Black community, were being exonerated for these charges, Herb Rivers and the other people would say he did this as a political move to get Black votes." He said if I could hold tight until after the election, the charges would be dropped. And just like magic, after the election took place, the charges were dropped. Tom [Thomas J.] Browning was our attorney, and that's the same law firm that Governor [Roy E.] Barnes was in. They had a good reputation and a good relationship with the school. The attorney general's office had recommended them even though the attorney general's office was giving advice and counsel and the chancellor had assured me that they were going to drop these charges—and they did. But that particular piece was symptomatic of not necessarily race in particular, even though race was a factor; it was also the wrong hire for Kennesaw at the police chief level.

TS: Oh, I think everybody understood that. He didn't have any experience doing police work.

JS: No, none. I guess I could characterize him as he was waiting for an accident to happen so he could come in and clean it up. Since Kennesaw was such a sterile campus at the time,

there was no action here. In many ways he created the action. A long story short, the attorney general's office helped get the charges expunged from my record. Technically, when going from Kennesaw to another job, if the question was asked, have you ever been arrested, I would have to say yes. Or if they say, have you ever committed a felony, I would have to say yes.

TS: But no, you didn't commit a felony.

JS: Well, have you ever been charged for a felony, I would have to say yes. But having the record expunged, if anybody ever asked if I had been arrested, I could say no because it didn't exist anymore. "Have you ever been charged with a felony?" The answer is really no because the record was expunged and the State admitted that an agent of the State had made a gross mistake. So none of that really clouded my growth in terms of moving through the community.

TS: But it probably left a sour taste in your mouth towards Cobb County.

JS: It did, it did. But by that time I was very involved in the NAACP. We started, as you recall, the Kathryn Woods committee, and it ended up being the Kathryn and Marion Jerome Woods committee as it is today. He was the first principal of Lemon Street High School, and she was very much involved in integrating a lot of the facilities out in Cobb County. And the YWCA [of Cobb County], she was very much involved there. A group of us—I guess I was the leader of the group—said we need to create something that would perpetuate her legacy.

TS: You were the chair for as long as you were involved in the county.

JS: I was the chair; that is correct. There were a lot of good people on the committee. It was a multiracial committee. I can remember the slogan, "Community People Helping Community People." You had Barbara [J.] Bruegger, [executive director of the YWCA of Cobb County]. You had yourself. You had Pearl Freeman. You had Clara [Garrett] Jenkins. You had the Woods family. It was a good cross-section of Cobb County.

TS: Bill and Lil [Lillian] Corrigan.

JS: Bill and Lil Corrigan, who were staunch supporters, and Barbara Bruegger were white; you were white; and then we had African American groups. It was a committee that functioned as I thought a society should function with mutual respect and hard work. It was not about us. It was about the community. That organization still exists today. My wife and I still support the organization. We go to meetings when we're in town. Every year we give a minimum of \$1,000 just to show our support for that scholarship fund that we created way back when. One of the big things we were able to do was to change the street that the Woods lived on to Woods Drive.

TS: From Shepard to Woods Drive.

JS: From Shepard to Woods, and I thought was very significant. I'm trying to think of the alderman during that time that helped us.

TS: It was probably Hammond.

JS: John [W.] Hammond. I remember meeting with him. At first I didn't know if he was going to support us or not, but he ended up supporting us. We got enough petitions from everybody on the street. We had 100 percent of the street petitioning, saying that they wanted the name change. I thought that was something significant that we did during that time.

TS: Hammond is one of your fellow Catholics; he goes down to [the Basilica of the] Sacred Heart [of Jesus, Atlanta].

JS: That's correct. So we also during that time tried to position Black people in the community in the Fifth Ward. James Dodd—getting him elected [to the Marietta City Council]. I remember having those meetings about how we were going to function with people like Mack Eppinger, Winston Strickland, Oscar Freeman, Deane [Thompson] Bonner and several other folks.

TS: I guess Walter Moon was involved in that.

JS: Walter Moon, yes. So we were meeting in Zion Baptist Church, the Lawrence Street church, or Mack Eppinger's funeral home. We were actually meeting to determine how we could have a voice in Marietta and Cobb County even though our numbers were very, very low. James Dodd ended up being selected and did some good things during that time. I think also it was during the growth of Kennesaw, and more African American students were coming. I think that during the Bobby [L.] Olive days and the federal [HEAP] program there was a Black student [Eddie Jackson] that became [vice-] president of the student government. During my years we actually had another African American student to become president of student government during that time as well.

TS: So you go to the Board of Regents in '84 and how many years did you stay there?

JS: I stayed there twelve years. They were good years. I had responsibility. My portfolio at the Board of Regents was one that I thought gave me a broad understanding of the system and its focus truly on academics. A lot of times during those periods, and even today, when you're moving into systems like that, they want to pigeonhole you into [just] taking care of Black people. I had a supervisor at the time, Ray Cleere. He was a very animated guy, but at the same time I learned a lot from him. I didn't necessarily agree with everything that he did, but I learned a lot from him. He was one of the ones that convinced me to stay in the Georgia system the full thirty years. He said, "You came in at 22, and you can retire in thirty years at 52. So why would you take anything outside of the system? At 52 you can start another career."

He gave me that advice, and I thank him even today for that. But at the Board of Regents, I had responsibility for promotion and tenure, graduate work, and program development. In '84 we were still under the Adams litigation, and so they had what they called a minority advising program, which was in the legal office at the time, and the affirmative action office. I remember going to the chancellor at the time and saying, "I don't think we're aggressive enough with that program. I don't think that the folk who are in charge of it at the system level see it as a real mandate. They see it as a job, and so

I don't think too much is going to get done. I actually asked that that job be put in my portfolio. He obliged me, and for years after that, even though I had all this other stuff I was doing, I had to do that too and saw a wonderful, wonderful process. I was there through several chancellors. The last chancellor that I was under was Stephen [R.] Portch [chancellor, 1994-2001]. I thought he was another innovative, dynamic leader. He, for some reason, began to think that I had something to offer. I remember when he came into the system, he came from [the University of] Wisconsin, a young fellow, and one of the things he was going to do was to change the admissions standards of the University System of Georgia.

TS: To raise them?

JS: To raise the standards. What he was going to do was to raise the admissions standards. I think he was modeling after Wisconsin. He said he was going to do it in a year and a half. I can recall saying, "That won't fly." I went to my supervisor at the time and said, "I think the chancellor is getting ready to make a mistake. I'm not against the higher standards, but if we do it in a year and a half, then almost a third of the students in the Georgia system would not be admissible, and the HBCU [Historically Black Colleges & Universities] was going to be at about 50 percent." My supervisor would not support me, it was very clear at the time. Her thing was, "I agree with you, but the chancellor said he was going to do it. So if you choose to make this an issue, do it on your own and not as part of our unit." So what do you think I did? I went forward with it. I wrote a white paper to talk about what "we needed as a system to move to higher admissions standards, but stated that doing it in a year and a half would be catastrophic. Six years would probably be the better number." I had just come off of this research project that I was telling you about earlier, *Redeeming the American Promise* [1995], that the Southern Education Foundation had funded. So I had all my numbers together.

I gave it to Chancellor Portch, and maybe twenty minutes after he received it, he called a senior staff meeting. Senior staff was assistant vice chancellor and above. He looked around the table. He had it in his hand, and he put the report on the table and asked, "Has anybody seen this report?" Nobody raised their hand even though one other person besides me had seen it. But nobody raised their hand but me. He asked me to explain the report, which I did. He said, "This report probably saved me from making a huge mistake." What I was talking about was moving the admissions standards up, but phasing it in and having a partnership with K-12 at middle school to get them ready for the standards. Out of that, he charged me with the responsibility of thinking through that more. I developed for the State of Georgia the PREP program, the Post-secondary Readiness Enrichment Program, which was a program designed to help students in middle school move to a higher level of understanding of what is required to be successful in college. That program was a six-year program, and I think it ended up being a ten-year program. Out of that, today, in the TRIO programs in the Department of Education, there is a new program. I say "new" now, but it's over ten years old, and it's called the GEAR UP Program. It was during the Clinton administration, and President Clinton used the program that I developed in Georgia as one of the four models to develop the GEAR UP program.

TS: What does GEAR stand for?

JS: GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is really looking at helping students gear up for college. It's sort of like the Student Success programs, the Upward Bound programs, and those TRIO programs. That's what it's part of. As I think back upon my life, if I ever have a legacy, that would be one of the things that I think impacted the State of Georgia in a great way; the development of the PREP program, Post-secondary Readiness Enrichment Program. Then we had to raise the funds because the state wouldn't pay for it—\$36 million is the amount that we had to raise. And, we raised the \$36 million in a span of eighteen months. The lead gift, I never will forget this, and I will always be grateful to him was from the [Robert W.] Woodruff Foundation and [Charles H.] Pete McTier [the president of the foundation]. The chancellor hadn't even been in the system for a month or so yet, and Pete McTier expressed a lot of confidence in me as an individual and the concept. He gave us \$10 million. That ten million dollars really caused other significant foundations to want to be a part of the program. I'm forever grateful to the Woodruff Foundation, and I'm forever grateful to Pete McTier for not only believing in the program but believing in me as he expressed to the chancellor at the time. Then I left the Board of Regents after twelve years and went to Savannah State.

TS: So this would be like '96?

JS: [On July 1, 1997] I went to Savannah State [University] as vice president for academic affairs.

TS: Talk about that if you would. One thing I would like to get on tape is the role of Zell Miller in higher education during those years. Just thinking back on it, it's mind boggling how much control he had in a system where because of Gene Talmadge years earlier supposedly the governor had been removed from the day-to-day operation. Talk about how all that came about.

JS: Yes. Well, for one, Savannah State was having enormous problems. It had lost its footing in the community, the alumni association, and the business community, and the students had taken over the president's office at the time. As I recall, I had gathered a reputation in the state by that time as being a fair-minded person. They said they would only talk to me. So the chancellor asked me to go down and negotiate the end of the take-over of the president's office. After *eighteen straight hours* of negotiation, we would finally get an agreement. In the meantime, the president ended up resigning, and the chancellor was trying to figure out how he was going to address this issue. He indicated he was going to send a turnaround team, which was non-traditional because in higher education you expect a search to occur. The chancellor and the governor did make a decision that the way to save Savannah State was to put in some people who had the administrative experience and clout to move the institution forward. I did not think that was a wise idea, and I guess that's why he was chancellor and I was not. But when he asked me to go down as vice president, at the time I didn't think I wanted to go. It was when I got a call from Zell Miller, and he said, "Pete, you need to help the state. You can help the state by going down to Savannah State and helping them get back on their feet." I talked to my wife about it, and I talked to the chancellor again, and we ended up going there. The interesting thing about it, Tom, is that the president they selected—Carlton

[E.] Brown—and I were the only ones in the state at that time that had a five-year contract.

TS: That's unheard of for presidents and vice presidents.

JS: That's right. Usually it's year to year. Again, I didn't think that was smart, but it ended up being the smartest decision you could make because the chancellor's position was that it was going to take five years to turn around, but if the faculty and the staff knew you had a one-year contract, as most presidents do (year to year, because they usually renew contracts for the presidents in February), then the campus community would spend its time trying to derail you. But if they know you're not going anywhere for five years, they end up having to work with you. It ended up being a great decision. That institution had been on probation when we got there from SACS [Southern Association of Colleges & Schools]. We were able to turn it around. On all indicators, it was at the bottom of the system. The chancellor set us up in a real sense because when he announced our coming, he called us the "Dream Team." That was not something that Dr. Brown and I appreciated because that put the bar so high. And then he said publicly, if we couldn't get it turned around, they would probably merge it or close it.

TS: Oh.

JS: Yes.

TS: There were questions about merging with Armstrong?

JS: Armstrong State [University], that's correct. So we turned it around on all indicators. Retention was low, admissions were down, and sponsored programs were just about negligible. There was no connection with the community, and no connection with the alumni. On all indicators, within four years, we were at the top of the group.

TS: Let me ask you a question. There's no question about it, at least up until the 1960s and up until integration, that the Black colleges in Georgia were woefully underfunded.

JS: And still are, for the record.

TS: I guess that's where I was going with my question. Was there a difference in the way that Black colleges were treated as compared to, say, Kennesaw State?

JS: Oh, without a doubt. W. E. B. Du Bois said that race was the major problem of the twentieth century, and it's still in the twenty-first century a concept that folks have not fully embraced. But it's a matter of record that the state HBCUs have not received the funding that predominately white institutions have received. You looked at even the Savannah situation. Savannah [State] was founded in the 1890s. Armstrong was a private two-year college [founded in 1935] down on the square in Savannah. It became a state school [in 1959], and if you look at their charter, it says on the charter that it's coming into the system because there are no other alternatives for higher education in Savannah.

TS: For whites.

- JS: That's exactly what it meant. So over the years, just think, from a philosophical standpoint, that if the State of Georgia would have funded Savannah State at its rightful level, and the money that it has put into Armstrong, making it from a private college to a public two-year college to a public four-year college [in 1964], and now to a public university—if all that money had gone into Savannah State and forced the citizens of that area to come to that one institution, you might have another Kennesaw State on your hands in that area. But you can look at the decisions that were made at the state level and show how they have negatively impacted each of the four-year colleges [that are] HBCUs. You look at what's going on now in terms of Fort Valley [State University]. It's almost criminal what's going on. You look at Albany State . . .
- TS: What's going on?
- JS: Well, program closures, lack of funding. [Fort Valley] is an [1895] institution, agricultural land grant institution; [Albany State was founded in 1903 and joined the University System of Georgia in 1932 and in 1943 gained four-year status as a teacher training college].
- TS: Is Art [Arthur N.] Dunning still down there [as interim president]?
- JS: He's down there at Albany State.
- TS: Oh, Albany State, that's another story [of funds going to a nearby white school]. I mean, how on earth did they justify Darton State College, Albany Junior, when you already had a four- year school there?
- JS: That's right. And the same thing with Fort Valley; you had Fort Valley and then Macon Junior College. Now Macon Junior is [Middle Georgia State University, with Macon State College having consolidated with Middle Georgia College in 2013 and having gained university status this July]. Many of the programs that Fort Valley used to have are at Macon State. Fort Valley is struggling trying to make enrollment, and [Middle Georgia State University] is flourishing. Folks are putting the issues on Fort Valley, but that was a decision that was made at the state level that caused some of that to occur. But the thing is—as a land grant institution—Fort Valley should have been getting matching funds from the state over the years that it never attained. They receive them now, but not at full funding levels. So all those are political decisions, but the University of Georgia was getting its land grant money and very, very fully funded.
- TS: So in 2015 we've not really made that much progress.
- JS: Not really, not really. One of the things that I want to contribute before I leave this side of the world is that I really want to put into writing a presentation that I made in the early 1980s where we talked about the impact of decisions made at the state level in terms of impacting HBCUs in a negative way. Here's what's going to be interesting now. Over the last five years the University System of Georgia has been engaging in mergers. We're here sitting at Kennesaw today that has just recently consolidated with Southern Tech [Southern Polytechnic State University] to become Kennesaw State. You've got the Medical College of Georgia merging with Augusta State, and you've got Georgia State and Georgia Perimeter merging. All these years they've been talking about

merging Savannah State and Armstrong, Fort Valley and one of the schools in middle Georgia, and Albany State and Darton. One of the things a lot of folks are looking at is whether or not in this mindset of mergers will any of those be in the offing.

Here's my theory. My theory is that it hadn't occurred up to this point because it's been a political hot potato. It makes real sense. Now that you have these schools in the same community, maybe they should be merged. But the predominately Black institutions should be the lead just like Kennesaw State is the lead with Southern Tech. What a lot of people are concerned about is that that probably would not happen. Now, if there are those out there now that are fighting the merger and want Savannah State or Albany State or Fort Valley to be a stand-alone HBCU, sometimes you have to be careful what you ask for because if that does happen that is going to further hurt those institutions' growth potential. One, you're not going to be able to compete with a Kennesaw, and if Armstrong and Georgia Southern merge, that puts Savannah State further isolated, and they (the HBCUs) are not going to get the funding anyway. Now they're isolated, and it's the same in terms of Albany and Fort Valley. I think it is a conversation that needs to happen. Probably if a merger is in the making, those institutions should be the lead institutions with their names preserved. Otherwise there is going to be no way they are going to win in any other situation.

TS: I saw Armstrong Atlantic is just now Armstrong State; they took the Atlantic out.

JS: That's correct. So there are issues in the system that were problematic in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even today.

TS: I'd hate to have to make that decision. Maybe a merger of Savannah State with all the two-year colleges in South Georgia.

JS: But see you've got to understand now that there are no two-year colleges in South Georgia because they all became state institutions. Brunswick now is Coastal Georgia College.

TS: That could be a possible consolidation, couldn't it? Well, I don't know.

JS: I don't know either, but I think that what makes sense if there is going to be a merger is that it should be Armstrong and Savannah State with Savannah State's name preserved as the predominate culture and name, but that's not in my pay grade.

TS: It would be logical. There never was a reason for Albany Junior College anyway, other than race.

JS: Other than race, other than race.

TS: So that would be an easy merger and keep the Albany State name, I would think.

JS: Yes. But I look at leadership again. I look at Dr. Beggs. I look at Betty Siegel. In a real sense they helped me by supporting me. What I mean by that is when I came to Kennesaw I did not have my doctorate. I had just finished up my course work for my PhD, and Dr. Beggs gave me a schedule. I had a full load, but he gave me a schedule that

allowed me to do my research in the afternoons. I taught in the mornings and did my research, and I was able to finish my PhD at twenty-five.

TS: Which is remarkable!

JS: I think he had a lot to do with that in terms of making sure that I was teaching full time, but I had time to research. The other thing they did was they supported me when I became president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and eventually started a newsletter that Kennesaw supported. Then when I left the office of the presidency, Harold Wingfield took over the newsletter, and Kennesaw still supported him. The young lady that we met today was his assistant in terms of what Kennesaw provided for him, which was, “We help publish it. We give you a student worker to help you.” So we got that kind of support. While some people may not look at that as anything significant, I do because I was able to build a national reputation in the political science area. I had the support back at home from Dr. Beggs and Betty Siegel to give me the funds to travel. Then within that organization was Lucius Barker, who we talked about earlier, who became the president of the American Political Science Association. He appointed me to the ethics committee of the American Political Science Association. So my national scope began to emerge. Then we had the makings of the first summit on Blacks in Higher Education in the State of Georgia. [Editor’s note: the records of the Georgia National Conference of Blacks in Higher Education are deposited in the Kennesaw State University Archives].

TS: Right, right. So that happened while you were still here?

JS: It did. The first one I was on my way to the Board of Regents then. Harold Wingfield and others took it on, but the connection that I had with AT&T brought the funding to get it done. Those were good days.

TS: Why did you leave Savannah State?

JS: I left Savannah State because my grand plan had materialized, and that was that I was approaching the age of fifty-two, and I had thirty-one years in the system with my sick leave. I decided that I would retire from the state system. Dr. Brown and the Board of Regents really wanted me to stay, but I was listening to Ray Cleere in the back of my mind saying you get your thirty years and then you start a second career. So I left the Board of Regents on a Friday and went to Savannah State July 1, [1997]. It was like a weekend. I had no time in-between. I left Savannah State over the Labor Day holiday(2006) and reported to this new career that I was going to start after I retired, which was SACS—had one day transition, and I stayed there for three years.

TS: I forgot you went to SACS before you went to Clark Atlanta.

JS: Yes, I became vice president [of the Commission on Colleges] for SACS and worked with Belle [S.] Wheelan. She was the first woman to head SACS. I had worked with SACS as a volunteer. You know how you go on a visiting committee. I served on a visiting committee and helped write some documents in the transition from the *criteria* to the *principles* and probably would have stayed at SACS for a long, long time, but I heard of the need at my alma mater. Clark and Atlanta University had merged. I went to

Atlanta University. It's now called Clark Atlanta University. There was an opportunity there as provost, and several folks had encouraged me to think about it. I had really no reason to leave SACS. It was probably one of the best jobs I ever had. Dr. Wheelan was probably the best supervisor I ever had. She and I talked about that, and reluctantly she kind of acquiesced and said, "If that's what you feel you need to do, then go do it." I was selected as provost of Clark Atlanta. I only went there because it was my alma mater, and the skill set that I had could help them. I told them on the front end that I would only stay three years. It's kind of interesting because most of my career, I stayed at Kennesaw about . . .

TS: Eight years?

JS: It was really about nine years because technically in '84 I was still on Kennesaw's payroll. I stayed at the Board of Regents twelve years. I stayed at Savannah State nine and a half years. But after I retired from the state system, I stayed at SACS three years, and I came in to Clark Atlanta letting the board know and the president know that if I were hired, I would only stay three years. I think they needed a short turn around in terms of a strategic plan. They needed someone to begin to implement the plan and set the framework and the structure, and then probably bring somebody else in to do some things. I saw myself as a change agent. So at the end of three years, I was ready to hand it in, and I got a call saying that I had been nominated as president of Alabama State University, which I thought would be a good fit.

I followed up on the nomination. I was actually nominated for the position, and after a national search, I was selected president of Alabama State University. The interesting thing is that the person who nominated me—after I found out who it was, because I had done my homework, and I knew that the institution was a troubled institution, primarily for political reasons—a great institution otherwise—but when I asked her, why did she nominate me, she said, "One, you have the intellectual capacity and the administrative capacity, but you are squeaky clean." I said, "What do you mean by squeaky clean?" She said, "You are going to find some problems there. Once you begin to address those problems, they're going to come after you." So I went there knowing. I told you earlier that I thought every position was divinely ordained. When I left Kennesaw and went to the Board of Regents, when I left the Board of Regents and went to Savannah State, and then from Savannah State to SACS, and then from SACS to CAU, and now at Alabama State, I think it was still in the divine plan.

When I went there, I told my wife these exact words: "When I accept the position, we will not be here long because I have a feeling that there is major corruption here. As long as I don't know anything about it, then fine, but as soon as I can verify it, I have to do something about it. Then the political forces will act." And that's exactly what happened. So I had a very short tenure at Alabama State. What I found is that there were some contracts that troubled me. I saw a conflict of interests, and I saw that the board was overly involved in the daily operations. As president, you report to the board chair. I thought the board chair had knowledge of this and maybe had some overall responsibility for some of it, which I think has proven true since I left. Their position was that I was making these allegations, and I had only been there a short time. So maybe the best thing for me to do would be to resign.

I indicated to them that I would not resign, but that they could fire me. The governor [Robert J. Bentley] was indicating at the time that he would not support a resignation or a firing, but at the end, once those concerns were out there—and believe it or not, you know higher education just as well as I do, but to have 100 percent of the faculty senate agree with the president is almost unheard of. I had 100 percent of the faculty senate agreeing with me; 100 percent of the staff council; and the student body was solely behind me. The board knew that this thing was going to explode pretty big once folk did the investigation. That’s all I wanted to have happen because I went to the board Chair, and I said, “I’m not making allegations against anybody, but what I think we need to do is have an outside person review the finances of this institution,” and he was not willing to do that. But part of our negotiated settlement in terms of a mutual decision to leave was a forensic audit. The governor agreed to a forensic audit, (and the Board) which from my understanding is still going on, but the preliminary part of the audit showed everything that I thought was happening was in fact happening. So I’ll just leave that part as that.

TS: So nobody’s been indicted yet, but it may still come?

JS: Not yet, not yet. I’ve looked at other institutions that something similar had happened, and it took three or four years before indictments came out. It’s going to be the third year in November of this year. [Editor’s note: The preliminary update to the forensic audit, conducted by Forensic Strategic Solutions, Inc. (FSS), September 20, 2013, noted that the Board of Trustees failed to turn over many of the documents that the auditors requested; nonetheless FSS found evidence of fraud and called for additional investigations. Specifically, FSS cited evidence of conflicts of interest, contracts with no deliverables, financial waste, payments to family and friends of ASU board members, Medicaid fraud, and similar irregularities. As of October 2015, one could still find online the preliminary update and an emailed letter from Governor Bentley to the Alabama State University Board of Trustees, dated October 14, 2013, where the governor cited the disturbing findings of the FSS study and referenced his meeting with Dr. Silver in November 2012 that led to the forensic audit. See also online, Josh Moon, “Another Alabama State University Trustee to Step Down,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, December 10, 2014.]

TS: Alabama is not like Georgia where you’ve got one University System of Georgia for thirty-odd institutions.

JS: Each institution has its own board. That in itself is not bad, but the way the statute is read, board members could come only from Alabama, so you really did not have the broad diversity that [you would have] if you had a national pool to choose from—even if they were affiliated with the institution. Now, I think this past year they passed a statute where at least three people on the board could come from outside of the state, and that’s a move in the right direction.

TS: Is this another product of the days of segregation that Alabama State was treated differently from the University of Alabama?

JS: Absolutely, and the record is very clear on that, but there is a signature case on this called *Knight vs. Alabama* that actually challenged the state’s funding of Alabama State and

Alabama A&M. The case went to litigation, and as a result the state had to put funding into those schools and build facilities and build programs. The campus is a very beautiful campus. It just had too many “political hot potatoes” going on. I think that too was a spillover from the years of segregation where the school was run with an iron hand by white folk, and when it was turned over to be run by Black folk, they still had an iron hand. Somehow the welfare of the students and the welfare of the faculty and staff were lost in that shuffle. We are hopeful that good things are going to come out of our short time and stay there.

TS: Are you going to do any scholarship on that?

JS: I think so, at some point, I want to do that. Now I’m the president of Silver & Associates, which is an international consulting firm on higher education matters and strategic planning and change management. I’m having a great time doing that, but I did make up my mind that I’m still going to try to publish an article a year, and I’ve done that. The most recent one is what I talked about at the beginning of the interview. I have interest now in terms of getting an article published on institutional effectiveness through the lenses of a culture of evidence and a culture of assessment. I’m working on that now. Then I want to take the article that I did on Kennesaw back in the 1980s and really bring that forward in terms of the Kennesaw years, the Board of Regents years, and the Savannah State years, and put something together because there are some common themes and some common threads throughout each of those experiences. My wife calls me a pack rat. I still have some things from years and years and years ago. I tell her I’m going to write, and I am.

One of the things I ran across was my high school yearbook and then my college yearbook. In that college yearbook, when they were asking me about my aspirations, I said, “I will become a college president.” That was way off my mind. I hadn’t even thought about it. Then I read the yearbook and the article in the paper, and it said my aspiration was to become a college president. My life has come full circle that I did become a college president. I tell people all the time that the most significant part of my life, and what I enjoy most, was teaching. I really, really enjoyed teaching. I thought I was good at it, and I think by having a profound respect for teaching and the profession, it really couched my approach to administration. So I always saw my role as an administrator was to facilitate the teaching and learning process and to provide the tools for teachers and learners to be at their best. Part of that was to empower both the learner and the teacher, and that’s been my model in terms of administration since I left Kennesaw.

TS: So what does the future hold?

JS: Well, I’m going to have to wait for this next divine revelation, but I do know that I will continue to do consulting. Many institutions that think they have complex problems call on us, and we solve those problems for them. I do know that more writing is in the future. I like to help institutions. It’s interesting. What I tell young people is that you’ve got to have a purpose in life. You’ve got to have a passion, and my passion is really education. My purpose is to make a difference in higher education, and I established that purpose, believe it or not, when you go back and look at some of the things that I did as I

was plotting my career at twenty-two years old. My purpose is to make a difference in higher education. I haven't really been chasing positions, but now as I look back over my career and look at what I'm doing now, I'm still fulfilling my purpose. I don't know how history will record me here at Kennesaw, but I think I made a difference at Kennesaw. I think I made a difference at the Board of Regents. I know I made a difference at Savannah State. I made a difference at SACS. I made a difference at Clark Atlanta University. I made a huge difference at Alabama State, even though it was the shortest period of time I stayed anywhere. Now in my firm, Silver & Associates, I'm still making a difference in higher education. I'm living my dream, and it's a continuous dream of really making a difference and understanding as Horace Mann Bond once said, that "education is the great equalizer." I always knew from the solid foundation of my mother and father that education was going to be our ticket. The other thing I learned from them is that you've got to be the best at what you're going to do. As I look over this career, it's been great. One thing I didn't mention is that in 2000 I started the Leadership and Mentoring Institute as a part of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education, which I was a chair of for a year or so. After that I raised funds to create this Leadership and Mentoring Institute, and it's still going on today.

TS: Wow. You've done a lot of mentoring over the years.

JS: Yes. It's still going on today, and each year twenty-five people are selected to go through that program. I used to run it myself as director. Then when I got with SACS, I really didn't have time, but one of my protégées is running it right now, and every year I make a commitment to go back and do three presentations.

TS: You talk about going through a program for a year. What do they do?

JS: Well, actually it's a week of intensive study about issues in higher education. Then we link them with a mentor and then keep in touch with them throughout the year to make sure that they're progressing. Part of it had to do with I got sick and tired of hearing in majority institutions that they couldn't find any qualified Black people to do "x,y,z." So we began in 2000 to create this cadre of people, and it's still going on today. The other thing that I'm proud of is, in that same organization, the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education, I also coordinate their international travel. Every other year I take a group of educators to a different country that's either in Africa or the Diaspora. That's been going on now for almost twenty years, and I'm still doing it. Our next trip is in 2016, and we're going to Morocco in northern Africa and looking at the influence of northern Africa on Spain and Portugal. So we'll go to Morocco, Spain, and Portugal. We went to Brazil in 2014, and before then we were in Australia looking at the impact of the aborigines. We were in Cuba during the last Bush administration. We were in South Africa. We went to Senegal, we went to Ghana, we went to Egypt, and we went to Kenya. We have study groups to talk about the linkages between the African continent and the rest of the world.

TS: Who pays for that?

JS: No one. It's part of that contribution that you make. Each person pays his or her own way. We try to keep the cost to a minimum, but I tell people all the time, normally it's

ten to fifteen days, and it's solid study all the time. The way I advertise this is I say, "You have to invest in yourself. This is not a vacation. If you're going to come on this as a vacation, you just might as well give it up on the front end and not come. This is an intense study." We have repeat travelers because they have come to understand the seriousness of what we do and linking educators in the United States with educators in different part of the world. So I want to continue to do that, and I want to continue to be involved in the Leadership and Mentoring Institute. As a matter of fact, they have named the Institute Leadership Award after me now, Joseph H. Silver, Sr. Leadership and Mentoring Institute Leadership Award.

TS: How about that.

JS: I was humbled when they did that. But I do want to spend some time writing and enjoying my grandchildren. I have two grandchildren now, and I simply enjoy being with them and just continuing to be a great husband to Roz [Rosalyn]—after thirty-nine years she's still hanging in there with me—and a great father to Joseph and Crystal. So we've been blessed; we've been blessed. The years in this community helped shape me because when I came to this community I was twenty-two years old. As I tell students and young people when we're talking to them, the marriage between the leadership in the African American community and Cobb County and myself was one that helped them and helped me. They saw something in me that they allowed me to come into their circle because I was an outsider in Cobb County. In the white community it was hard to break into the circle, but it was also hard to break into the circle in the Black community because you could be living in Cobb County for twenty years, but if you weren't born here, then folks had a different opinion of you.

I think that people like R. L. Johnson and Hattie Wilson and Annie Mae Solomon saw something in me. They saw an intellectual that didn't have any history about the county, had no knowledge about the politics. So they groomed me. Another one whom I haven't mentioned who is still very much involved in my life was Clara Jenkins. You know, she was one of the very first Black nurses at Kennestone Hospital. She embraced me, and they kind of used me to be their mouthpiece in certain areas. And I used them to get grounding and permission—and I say permission in a very positive way—to do certain things in the community and do certain things at Kennesaw. I probably wouldn't have felt as empowered at Kennesaw if I didn't know that the Black community was solidly behind what I was saying and what I was doing. When I went to sleep at night, the one thing that I was resting assured of was I had the support of my wife, and I had the support of the Black community, as I was dealing with the issues here at Kennesaw State University.

TS: Well, what do you think of Kennesaw State University now, looking back on it after all these years?

JS: Well, it's interesting. I tell people, one of the things that Betty Siegel did was to develop a concept of where she thought Kennesaw should go. We talked about the expanded role that she gave me. She allowed me to be in on those discussions. I watched how she fought for additional funding for Kennesaw, because Kennesaw was underfunded too for a long, long time.

TS: Absolutely.

JS: But she made the case in terms of the growth. In real estate they say it's location, location, location. Well, Kennesaw is location, location, location. I think that her vision for where it could go and the growth that took place and then the transition from her to Dan [Daniel S.] Papp—I've known Dan Papp for thirty years. We are both political scientists and we used to run around the Georgia Political Science Association together and the Board of Regents together. Dan is a very different type of leader from Betty Siegel, but an effective leader. One of the things that I've watched him do is come and get the support of this community to move this institution further. Kennesaw is very different now. It has gone through its infancy, its adolescence, its young adulthood, and it is maturing into what I consider a great institution. Just coming onto the campus, looking at the [student] housing—and, of course, that was not a part of the initial game plan—the array of buildings and the reputation it is getting as a solid institution, I feel good about that because I think that some of the foundations that we laid contributed in a very small way. So as I look back on my days here at Kennesaw, as I say, they weren't always rosy, but I think they helped shape the educator that I am today.

TS: What have we not talked about today that you think should be in this interview?

JS: Well, the significance of family—we haven't talked about that much. I've interspersed that. I talked about the great role models that I had in my mother and father. I'm one of seven children, and I'm number six of seven. When I look at the impact that my older sisters and brothers had on me just by way of setting the example—a lot of people think that I am “successful,” but all I have to do is look up the family tree in terms of my sisters and brothers to see success. One of the things that we have in common today is that we're a very tight family; we're a very supportive family. I lost my mother in 2012 at the height of the issues at Alabama State. My mother was a “quiet giant” in the family. I started something in 1971 when I went to college. I didn't drift too far from home. I only went to college fifty miles away from my hometown. Part of it was I made up my mind early on that if my mom and dad had to pay for my education, I wasn't going to college because I watched how my father struggled with five kids in college at the same time and how he sacrificed and my mother sacrificed. So I did manage to get a scholarship. But one of the things that I started doing as a freshman that I do until this day is that I write my mother and father once a month. I started that in college, and I have kept it up. My mother died in 2012, and one of the last things that was significant to me was that she had answered one of my last letters. She actually passed before I read it, and it was just so reaffirming. I still write my father once a month. It's not five or six pages. In some cases it might be five pages; in some cases it may be just a paragraph; but since 1971 I have written my mother and father until my mother passed and I still write my father once a month even though we have all the other electronic [devices] for communication. And I called them every day. I still call my dad every day.

TS: And you said your dad will be ninety-five?

JS: My dad will be ninety-five in March. He's by the grace of God in great shape mentally and physically. He has a little bit of arthritis. He never fully grasped all that I have done, but I would always go to him for advice because he didn't have to understand what I was

involved in. When I talked about the big picture, a lot of the counsel and advice that I got in terms of navigating Kennesaw, navigating the Board of Regents, and navigating other aspects, came from my father and my mother. So no, they didn't have the level of education that I was blessed to have, but they were wise beyond the years, and I always bounced things off my father and my mother. And I haven't gone wrong yet so . . .

TS: From hearing people's comments you've spent a lot of time writing letters to people.

JS: I do. To me, that's a lost art. We have e-mail; we have electronics; but I try to keep in touch with a lot of people and still serve as a mentor to a lot of people. I look at how many people we have touched who are now in senior level positions. Several people who have gone through the Leadership and Mentoring Institute are now presidents of institutions, vice presidents of institutions, senior professors, and tenured professors. We have two tracks in the leadership position because not everyone wants to become an administrator. For those who want to go full professor-tenure we have a track for them. For those who want to go into administration we have a track for them. Now looking at the number of people who have gone through that just blows my mind. My alma mater, Clark Atlanta University, has a leadership award named in my honor. That's very humbling that your institution that you graduated from saw something in you, and now they give an award every year called the Joseph H. Silver Sr. Leadership Award. To me that's what it's all about. It's not about the awards. It's about making a difference. If you go to my house, you don't see any awards up, not that I don't appreciate them. You've got to keep doing. It's not about the awards you got last year or the year before. It's still about making a difference. I think, humbly, that I'm still making a difference in higher education. I have connections now around the world, literally, and I'm just blessed to be able to give. I do believe the Biblical perspective that the more you give the more you receive. I've been blessed with a good career; I've been blessed with a good community; I've been blessed with a good family and a lot of good friends, including you. That is indeed a blessing.

TS: Well, thank you. That's a good place to stop. I thank you very much.

JS: I hope I contributed something. I just think that your oral history project is going to be so valuable for future generations and even the present generation.

TS: I'm doing it for the future as much as the present.

JS: That's right. Posterity will benefit from these things.

TS: I hope so. Thanks.

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