

**INTERVIEW #4**  
**Early Life and Career, and Building a Political Philosophy**  
**JUNE 16, 1999**

**CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN:** I really like this project. I'm really excited about the work you're doing, and I'm happy that you're doing it. I'm very pleased.

**BETTY KOED:** Great. Well, we're delighted to be doing it. We'll keep it up as long as you have the time and opportunity.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Well, why don't we do your questions first, then we'll do mine.

**KOED:** Sounds good.

Building on the last interview, we talked a lot about your family life. Today, I thought we would start with a discussion of the environment you grew up in—Chicago in the 1950s and '60s—and talk about that in terms of the political and social environment of your childhood, building upon some of the issues we've talked about already. I'm going to head towards asking you some questions about the intersectionality of race and gender, building in that direction. Anytime along the way, if you want to segue into something else, just let me know.

So let's talk about Chicago in the '50s and '60s. What was that community like?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** It's very interesting. I'm delighted that this is the first question you're asking, because it says to me that we are on the same wave length in terms of thinking about this project. One of the pieces of research that it would be great to do has to do with actually getting the demographic numbers—the statistics—on how much of a minority—I point out to people, particularly black people, who have a tendency to see the world from the perspective of the black community, that African Americans are a minority within a minority, and African Americans—particularly middle-class African Americans, are another minority within that. If you really start doing the demographic analysis, I think it would be really interesting to figure out—A

friend of mine once said that it's one thing to have a Horatio Alger story, but to take someone who's black, female, and middle class, the odds have got to be a thousand to one that you would get to the United States Senate.

But we don't know what those odds are, do we? We haven't looked at the demographics. I think it would be important to look at the census numbers, or whatever those numbers are, and allow a mathematician to do the probabilities from those numbers. I think the probabilities are, on the one hand, one part of making sense out of this. I think it's also important to make the point—and I'm getting on the inspiration soap box, if you will—I think it's important to young people to know that those kind of probabilities notwithstanding, it happened!

**KOED:** Right. I think that's very important for people to know.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I think therein is really the core value of this.

**KOED:** I think you're right.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** All of the apocryphal stories notwithstanding, and all of the conversations about "I had this experience or that experience" notwithstanding, if you just start off with the facts, the hard numbers—There was an incident not too long ago—light bulbs going off, right?—somebody pointed out to me, after I made the point that there had been four African Americans in the history of the U.S. Senate, the point was made that "yes, but you're one of two in this century." Given that it's 1999—

**KOED:** The century is almost over.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** It's pretty certain that is going to be the reality, that's not going to change. You know, to be two out of, how many?

**KOED:** One thousand, eight hundred and fifty-one.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** In this century?

**KOED:** No, that's total. In this century, probably about a thousand or so.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** So, I think looking at the numbers would be important. To the extent that you can get the numbers and we can get them to a mathematician—I'm sure there are people available who can do this kind of stuff—regression analysis or whatever the hell they call it. That would be interesting.

Now, moving along with this question about growing up on the south side of Chicago. Chicago, even as recent as the 1970s, has been described as the most segregated city in the North. To be honest, I never had a sense of that as a child, because my birthplace, which was in the heart of the black community, the old black belt, as well as where we lived when I started grammar school, in both those instances there were white people in my family life. I didn't have a real sense of the kind of stark isolation—

**KOED:** You're family was an integrated environment.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. So, I did not have a sense of the kind of stark isolation that the rest of the black community experience. I know that had an impact. I think the impact was both a blessing and a curse. Remind me to get to you a little piece I did for Paul Simon a couple of weeks ago for high school students on "How I got to the Senate." It's about five hundred words or so.

**KOED:** We'd love to have that.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Remind me to get it to you. In it, I said that I have never thought about the fact that being African American, or being female, were limitations, and that is both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing in that I never thought there were external limitations on what I could do or what I could be in this country. We were absolute buyers into the American dream in the sense that this is the land of opportunity and if you work hard, play by the rules, and you're good and lucky that you can be whatever you want to be. That was an article of faith. But in the South and in other places, and probably in more segregated black families, the notion that you were different than white people—Just last month, I had a lady say to me, "Honey"—she was old, one of these older women who writes letters all the time—"Honey, I kept trying to tell you and you wouldn't listen, I kept trying to tell you that you can't do what those white people do." Now, that represents real wisdom within—

**KOED:** Within that environment.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** —within that environment, but it was something that never occurred to me. Is that a good thing? Yes. It's why I was able to even contemplate running for the United States Senate without thinking it would be closed to black people or to women, or whatever. On the other hand, had I been more cognizant of the perceptions and limitations surrounding race and gender, I know I would have handled my politics differently. Again, a blessing and a curse in not appreciating—

**KOED:** The perceptions of different communities is going to shape that issue.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. For me, that is really one of the more intriguing aspects of the whole thing. Although, I'll tell you Betty, we've been talking to each other now since I lost the re-election, and I'm doing so much better.

**KOED:** It takes time.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** It does take time. Frankly, without overcompensating, I really am beginning to have a sense that losing re-election was a good thing, on a personal level. It saved me. I don't think the press treatment would have stopped. I don't think they would have gotten any better.

**KOED:** It certainly showed no signs of letting up.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** No. It wouldn't have stopped. The pressures wouldn't have stopped. The guy who used to drive for me, Gus, also worked in my Senate office. He's now working for Durbin on a short-time basis. He was nice enough to pick him up. Gus said to me, "Senator, you would not believe the difference. The phones don't ring. They don't get the mail. Nobody asks them to do anything." Now, I'm sure people do ask them to do stuff, but the volume is so different. And Troy [Ford] was at the desk answering phones, and he made the point the other day that we had three people at the front desk on the phones and it was still not enough. He said that Durbin's office has one person and they read the paper half the time.

**KOED:** That agrees with what you said in, I think, our first interview that when

you were seeking more help in your office, greater staff assistance because of the special demands placed upon you, but they didn't understand the pressures. This is good evidence that the pressure was real.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** And from two people who were in the office. I had no way—I haven't been in Durbin's office to see, and I certainly haven't been in Fitzgerald's office to see, so this is from people who are on the ground and inside. That's kind of a segue, but I think it's important to make note of it.

**KOED:** I think it is, too. One of the interesting things we'll see, I think, as we review these interviews—it's been a month and a half or so since our last interview, and it's been about four or five months since the first interview—it'll be interesting to see how your own perception of this has developed over time.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes. And it has. Obviously, it's hard to lose an election. It's hard to lose an election so closely, and to be outspent like I was. People tell me that I couldn't have won because the money wasn't there. Frankly, I think there is a good news story in there for ordinary folks, because this guy outspent me 2 to 1, almost 3 to 1, and he still only won by two points. So, little people for whom the money was less relevant—I guess it says to me that the vote still counts more than money does.

**KOED:** And that's an extremely important point, because we have a common perception in our society that you can "buy an office." Unfortunately, to some extent that may be true, but this experience also shows that, despite the money, the outcome was very close. It could have gone the other way, with just a small amount of votes tipping it.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** A small amount of money or a small amount of votes, either way. If I had been a little more competitive on the money side, it might have been different.

**KOED:** Could have meant a few more votes.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. Right. Right. So I don't feel bad about it for that reason. That part of it has been no small amount of solace to me in all of this. The real trauma, of course, has been trying to figure out—as I jokingly say—what I'm going to do

when I grow up. It's the end of a career.

**KOED:** It's the end of one career and the beginning of another.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Well, we hope. Who knows? We don't know the future. But it means that I have to deal with the uncertainty and I have to deal with trying to regroup and get things together again. That's traumatic. I could have dispensed with the trauma. At the same time, I don't see it as the end of the world by any means, and it could be that in a mysterious way I've been saved for whatever other purposes. I think the stress and the pressure would have been so overwhelming.

I don't know how Ed Brooke handled it. I don't know if Ed Brooke got the same kind of demands. I don't know if people looked to him to be—This gets to intersectionality. One of the aspects of this is that people looked to me to be kind of "earth mother" to the country.

**KOED:** There were issues involved in your career that did not affect Ed Brooke. He did not have gender issues to deal with, for instance. It was also a very different time in the history of the black community in America. This hadn't occurred to me before, but I'd like to look to see if any oral histories have been done with Ed Brooke when he left the Senate to see what kind of comments he makes about these types of issues.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I think that is very important. Unfortunately, I've never been able to meet with him. I've called him a couple of times. I've never spent any quality time with him. I would still like to do that. Hopefully, I'll have that opportunity. I just wonder to what extent—He was a Republican. He was from a different state, a different era. For example, he didn't belong to the Black Caucus. I understand a lot of reasons why he wouldn't belong to the Black Caucus, one being that he was Republican and the Black Caucus does tend to be heavily Democratic. Second, as a senator—Quite frankly, one of the issues that the Caucus never came to grips with was that technically I was entitled to 20 votes in the Black Caucus, because there are 20 congressional districts in my state, as opposed to one vote. Instead, in the Caucus—

**KOED:** You got just one vote.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes, just one vote. But he deliberately chose not to be identified with the Black Caucus. I think it was important *for me* to be identified with the Caucus. Things like that—I don't know what the differences or the similarities would be between my tenure and Brooke's, but I think it would be interesting to look at.

**KOED:** It would be interesting to look at this. It might be interesting, too, in that he was not an easy person to categorize politically, in terms of the "Blacks in Politics" scheme of things. People like to pigeon-hole you, and he didn't necessarily fit into the expected hole.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I didn't either.

**KOED:** Right. Neither did you. In that way, we might see some interesting correlations as well.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** But I think it's easier for a man to say, "Judge me based upon my own decision making." See, women still suffer from the notion that we haven't got two brain cells working. The minute that we are not part of the politically correct program—When you talk about authority issues, the question of gender gets more important. For example, among the voters in the state, I did very poorly among union households, particularly in southern Illinois.

**KOED:** You had been criticized by labor over NAFTA and that type of stuff.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right, but they didn't criticize the men in the same way. They didn't criticize Paul [Simon] over NAFTA, balanced budget, or any of that. So the question is, why was the criticism so much more pronounced as to me in those areas? I think that's where the gender issues come in, even more than the black issues.

**KOED:** Let's head in that direction. Let's back up a little bit to do our background work here. You mentioned in an earlier interview that your mother had rented out rooms in your house. I would assume that this exposed you to a broader variety of people. Is that true?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I'm sure it did—Well, no, not really. The people she rented

to were generally people who were in the same wave length. I found out later, getting back to the demographics (when you do the demographic research of this, it gets real fascinating), one of the things I discovered when I was Recorder of Deeds—where did I read it? There's a Chicago history book that is fascinating. It's got maps and pictures about the history of the city in it. I gave a copy of this, I think it was *Chicago: Birth of a Metropolis*.<sup>1</sup> I think, published almost twenty years ago. It showed the growth and development of the community, just like you look at a map of Europe and see how the borders of Poland have changed over time. This book does some of that. One of the things I found out when I was Recorder was that in the days of the pre-*Handsbury vs. Lee*, in the days of restricted covenants, the strategy was to put real pressure on real estate in the black belt. There were few places for blacks to live. The result was that people started carving up those big old houses into what they called "kitchenette apartments." So, you had the double phenomenon of overcrowding and high rents as a result of segregation. That's a phenomenon—looking at the minority within a minority—you wouldn't think of that until you look at the bigger context in which it happens, and the context of housing segregation in Chicago was one of the reasons why when we were on 41st and Indiana they rented out apartments in the house. The house wasn't that big.

**KOED:** Housing was so short—

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Exactly. It also explains some of the experiences—I was in second grade, which would have meant I was about seven or eight, probably seven, when we moved to Park Manor. That was one of those communities in transition. There was a joke about integration at the time, between the arrival of the first black family and the departure of the last white family, that was when integration occurred. That was Park Manor. I think I told you the story about my next-door neighbor. Did I tell you that?

**KOED:** I don't think so.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** The little girl who lived next door—I lived at 7628 Prairie, and there was a little girl who lived next door, which would have been 7626 or 7624—I don't remember her name, because I was so small. As children will do, we struck up a

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<sup>1</sup>Zukowsky, John. *Chicago Architecture, 1872-1922: Birth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2000.)



friendship. Her parents would whip her for playing with me. But, as children will do—

**KOED:** You got around it.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** We did. What we would do is—because I didn't want to see her get whippings for playing with me—I would wait until she came out of her front door, heading for school, then I would come out and walk on the other side of the street. When we got to the corner, after we turned the corner, then we would join up and walk the rest of the way to school. We'd do that coming back home, and break up at the corner. So she'd go home on one side of the street and I'd go home on the other to keep her from getting a whipping for being friends with me.

**KOED:** Now, were you aware of the reason why she was getting the whippings?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes, I found out, but I thought her parents just didn't like me—

**KOED:** Didn't like you. You didn't realize it was because you were black?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. So we just got past it. But that community underwent a pretty rapid integration. Interestingly, Mrs. Taylor—Dr. and Mrs. Euclid Taylor—still live there.

**KOED:** These were the little girl's parents?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** No, these were people across the street. They still live in the neighborhood. The neighborhood is still very much "bungalow belt" with big back yards and things like that. It's almost a time warp, from what I can determine. That neighborhood was a wonderful place to grow up, because, as the change happened, except for that incident and a few bad boys—bad boys, you revert to the language of the time—some boys who would throw bricks and rocks at the schools, and some racial skirmishes in the school yard, but it was still a wonderful place to grow up. There were back yards, and you had neighbors and neighborhood block club parties. You could ride your bike and sit out on the porch at nighttime. All those things that happen in suburban neighborhoods.

**KOED:** It was a safe neighborhood.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Very safe. Safety was not an issue. For us, the worst violence was in the home, because my father was violent. Other than that, we used to put up a tent in the back yard and sleep there.

**KOED:** We used to do that, too. In the summertime, we'd be outside at 10:00 or 11:00 at night, playing in the street. We never had to worry about safety.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** That's right. And that's what we did. As a matter of fact, the only rule was that we weren't supposed to cross the street because that was dangerous. My little sister, Marsha—We were joking about this in another context the other day. My father used to call Marsha "Princess." She's still a princess. [laughter] One time she crossed the street at night, and she got a rap on the butt. She went running in the house, "Mommy, Mommy, Daddy whipped the Princess' royal behind." [laughter]

**KOED:** How old was she?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Little, maybe seven. We still tease her about the "royal behind."

**KOED:** How dare he, eh?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. [laughter] It was idyllic, you know, kind of suburban living with neighbors and friends. Frankly, they were neighbors who I still see now. In fact, I ran into one of them at the art store last week. I'm going to go visit with her this weekend. She was a neighbor. It was that kind of environment growing up. If anything, I think that was part and parcel of not having the understanding of what that lady said to me, "You can't do what those white people do." It just wasn't part of my knowledge base.

**KOED:** Well, it strikes me that there are some very fundamental principles, here, in how you perceive the world. One is that you can perceive it as an obstacle to get past, and another is that you perceive it as an opportunity to embrace. It sounds as though, from an early age, your mind-set was shaped by your family, your environment, teaching

you to embrace—

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Opportunities. Right. That is exactly right. In fact, later in life I was having a conversation with my father who was very much the philosopher and politician. He was very much into those kinds of community issues. I remember saying to him, when I was really kind of angry with him when I had my first run-ins with racism as it related to me as an individual, I was mad at him, thinking, "Why didn't you prepare me for this!" You know, "Why didn't you give me some more ammunition to deal with this stuff!" I just ran head-long into it, and just didn't know what to do. I thought, "Whoa, now what do I do?"

**KOED:** It came as a surprise.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yeah.

**KOED:** Did you run into this mind-set when you were in the Senate, when you would speak to groups. I'm sure you were asked many times to speak to groups of high school students, for example—African American, white, Asian, whatever—and did you find that this fundamental way of looking at life was a problem for people?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Do you mean with regard to me?

**KOED:** I mean with regard to their own opportunities. For instance, the little talk you gave for Senator Simon about "How I got to the Senate," would some of these students look at this as, "There's no way you'll get into the Senate, the odds against it are so huge," or turn that around and say "Look, here are the facts and data you need to know"—

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** You know, that's a hard question to answer. The reason I think it's hard to answer is because young people are all so enthusiastic. If anything, what saddens me sometimes is that they, themselves, limit their aspirations. I don't know if that's from a sense of "I can only do so much, therefore I'll do X," or if it's a generational thing. I ran into one kid one time who said he wanted to grow up and be a motivational speaker. I said, "Honey, why don't you learn how to do something first, then go talk about it." Well, I've subsequently found out that motivational speakers make a lot of money! So

this kid was not too much out of sync with what his generation provides, but it's very different from what my expectations—

**KOED:** If you walk into any bookstore, one of the largest sections will be the "self-help" section, which has a lot of wonderful things in it, but it's largely motivational speakers who have written their words down and published them. There is a lot of money there—

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** A lot of money to be made there. Frankly, an even better example is when my son got ready to go to college. He just graduated from Washington University. When Matt told me he wanted to go into computer science, I tried to encourage him to go into liberal arts. To me, liberal arts makes sense, while computer science was like, "Well, wait a minute, Sweetheart." As it turns out, computer science degrees are the hottest property—

**KOED:** Hottest thing around. Big bonuses are being given.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Huge. Huge. Some of his friends are talking about a guy, twenty years old, turned down a \$50,000 a year job because it didn't have a housing allowance and it didn't have the quality of life he was looking for. I was like, "What?"

**KOED:** Yes, as I was working away to get my Ph.D. in history, I had friends who were in engineering and computer science and on the job market at the same time as me, and they were getting huge bonuses to sign on to a job. That's where it is right now in terms of financial success.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes, and in that regard, talking to some of these kids, I don't know if they were just being more realistic about what they wanted to do and what this present time holds for them, or if it really was a matter of them limiting their aspirations. One of the things I have been happy to find—Again, this is coming from a segregated—How can I put this? One way of looking at it is that you've got a black community that really has nothing to do with white people, and doesn't want anything to do with white people, and you have a white community that feels the same way, but then you've got everybody else in the middle—the integrated community. I think one of the challenges for our time is to build that group in the middle that is integrated. I'm

optimistic about it because, quite frankly, a lot of Matt's generation, Matt's friends, they almost think the whole racial conversation is boring. Which is good!

**KOED:** I think that is good. Partly it's because they've heard this conversation their whole lives. There's nothing new about it for them.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right.

**KOED:** This leads to my next question, so I'll go ahead and ask that. It seems to me that during this time both communities—white and black and those in between—were building a knowledge base from which they built their perceptions of the other, from which they related to the other group. Do you think this is true? How do you think perceptions were formed?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I think it would be different if those two knowledge bases started from the same place, or even wound up in the same place. There, you almost run into the phenomenon that women experience with me. I'm not being sexist in saying this. It's always been said that women know more about men than men know about women, and that's because of our powerlessness. We learn about men, because you have to—

**KOED:** We have to live in their world so to speak.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Exactly. It's the same thing with race. This is a generalization, but what whites know about blacks is a lot less than what blacks know about whites, precisely because as a black person you have to live in that world. One of the things that I've run into in the Senate—a lot of these things came to a head when I got into the Senate—was a variety of perceptions that just proceeded from ignorance, people just not knowing what to expect from a black person. For example, I was joking with somebody about the lavish lifestyle stories. My lifestyle is as straight-forward and simple as anybody else you know. The difference is that people weren't accustomed to seeing black women who wear Chanel suits. I wore Chanel suits before I got to the Senate, this was not new. Many black women wear Chanel suits. Dianne Feinstein wears Chanel suits, but nobody would comment on Dianne Feinstein buying a Chanel suit. But it's a point of commentary about me, because the image that people know—other than Clare Huxtable and Oprah—is of people who are poor. Whites think of the black community as

being poor people.

**KOED:** And when the Cosby show came on TV, I remember that it received a good deal of criticism because Clare and Cliff Huxtable did not represent "the black community."

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Exactly. This also gets to class issues. The idea that I wouldn't be into a "lavish lifestyle," and that I might enjoy gardening and classical music—I was invited to the opening night of the Lyric Opera. First time I showed up there, I can't tell you how many people were surprised, stunned to see me at the opera. Why would you be stunned that I would go to the opera? Because that's just not part of the mind-set. So you've got all these stereotypes that relate to stereotypical images, and this goes back to the matrix I did early on, that come from a lack of information and understanding. Blacks understand more about the whites. But even in the black community there is confusion. Black people lump white people together as one big group—you know, there's "white people" and they're all the same. To make a distinction between Irish, Italian, Scots, English, upper class, middle class, lower class, even between Jewish and Gentile, just doesn't occur to them. Jocelyn Elders got into trouble for a lot of things, but one of the things she got into trouble for was a statement she made about the Catholic Church being a male-dominated hierarchy. When she said that, a number of my Irish Catholic colleagues in the Senate thought she was making a discriminatory comment about Catholics. I remember being in caucus and standing up and making this passionate plea for Jocelyn Elders, saying to these people that she is a church lady, and the black community does not make religious distinctions among whites in the same way. We don't have that point of reference. We don't have the luxury of saying "that's a Catholic white person" and "that's a Jewish white person" and "that's an Episcopalian vs. a Presbyterian." Within the white community, obviously those distinctions mean more to you than if they say—

**KOED:** It's almost a cultural, ethnic identity in itself. That leads me to a quote I have here. We've talked a few times about the work of Kimberle Crenshaw. I've looked at some of her work on intersectionality. One of the things she says in a recent article is, "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite. It frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences."

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right.

**KOED:** We tend to think of the politics of identity as black American, white Americans, Hispanic American—One of the things that we're beginning to learn, and I think this comes through very clearly with these interviews, is that within each of these groups there is a complex array of identities. Let's talk about that a little. I think that has had an effect on your political career and certainly on your Senate career. What do you think?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Well, I think that not only has it had an effect, but if anything—and I'll need to think about this, Betty, to more clearly articulate it—I think it's almost a defining aspect of my politics. My politics have never been the old "identity politics" like coalitions of blacks plus so and so. I've never come at my politics in that way. It's always been, I say multiracial, but it's even more complex than that. It's multiracial, it's across the board in terms of gender and sexual identity issues, it's class-integrated, if you will. So my politics, I think, has always been to try to appeal to those commonalities, the things that bring people together, the things that people share in terms of aspirations, and to say to folks, "Look, this is where this person's interests meets your interests, and therefore it is in all of our interests to resolve this problem, and, hey, I've got an idea of how we might do that." The speech I make about public education, for example, talks about not just making sure those poor black kids in the inner city have a chance for an education, because that's not the point. The point is that our society needs to have an educated population. It is not going to help white kids in the suburbs to have black kids in the inner cities lack education. Why? Because the country's ability to compete and provide for all of them will depend upon the level of literacy of our work force.

**KOED:** We all have an interlinked fate in this nation.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes, and that's how I come at education. On the school construction project I'm doing here with the Department of Education, I've had people say, "Well, you talk about building the inner city schools and we've got to rebuild those schools so our kids can have a chance." It's not about that! It's about providing an environment for learning for an American workforce.

**KOED:** Black, white, or whatever.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Exactly. Because this country is not going to be able to compete globally in an international economic competition unless our entire workforce is educated. How does that relate? That's very different than the—One of my colleagues would say, "Well, we have to be sure to look out for the less fortunate." I'm not talking about looking out for the less fortunate. What I'm talking about is that if you let this group—the less fortunate—be excluded from opportunity, all you're doing is messing up your own situation. The less fortunate in the past in this country had a chance to not only look for opportunity but actually had a shot at it. How many stories are there about kids who Jane Addams scooped out of the alleys who wound up being titans of business and industry. Today, the thing that scares me is that you scoop the kids out of the alley—because they're still there—those kids haven't a snowball's chance in hell in our current environment to get there. That's what bothers me. I think that's where the policy imperative comes in. That was why I got into politics. I thought, okay, I can help to make the case to change this, to fix this. One of the harder parts of losing re-election—Where was I yesterday? I got upset, then I got over it. Oh, I'm a board member at Children's Hospital in Chicago, and they had a doctor talking at the board meeting about the incidences of asthma in children, pediatric asthma. Momentarily, I got upset, because my opportunity to help on a broad scale, to address the issue of children with asthma, is gone. I don't have it anymore.

**KOED:** You don't have that position of power anymore.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. For a moment, I got kind of upset, thinking "Well, here I am, just as concerned about pediatric asthma as I've ever been, but now I don't have the power to try to change it anymore." That was hurtful. But, again, I've done what I could do. I try. That's all you can say in any position.

**KOED:** Do you think that intragroup identities in politics—

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I think that's one of the reasons that people are turned off of politics. I think it's one of the reasons why only half our people vote. I think it's one of the reasons why folks would love—Apparently, some guy started a campaign to put "none of the above" on the ballot. I think it's one of the things—in addition to the



pandering of the demagogues, and making politicians out to be crooks and thieves—you've got all of that ugliness and negativity towards politics—but what is even more scary and ought to be more scary than the folks who just love to hate politicians, I think are the people who have given up on politics as a way of improving the social condition. In a democracy, that ought to frighten people.

**KOED:** What do you say to people like that? How do you turn them around?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** It is very difficult. It is very difficult. That is something that I hope I tried to deal with, and hoped that I could make a difference with. If one more person registered to vote because my name was on the ballot, then I'm happy. But it's a very difficult, very hard thing to do. They look at it and say, "What's the difference? It's going to be the same. It's not going to make a difference. It's the big money that runs the stuff anyway." That's a hard thing to argue with.

**KOED:** Unfortunately, they can find plenty of evidence that can be brought forward to support that view.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** It's not a non-rational conclusion.

**KOED:** That's right.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** But it's one that must be met and countered, I think, at every turn. I try to tell people, "If you just give up, then you are making it more likely than not that big money will make all the decisions. That's your failure, then, to take up your duty to be responsible." So I've always addressed it as a matter of individual and personal responsibility.

**KOED:** And stress the fact that *a vote* can make the difference.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Yes!

**KOED:** This is a little off the subject, but I was thinking about it this morning while I was watching the news. With the 2000 presidential election coming up—which we really shouldn't even have to think about yet—the media is already proclaiming

George W. Bush as "front-runner," etc. They do this every time. And every time it irritates me. There has not been a single vote cast in a primary anywhere, and yet the media is taking upon itself the authority and the power to say, "This person is most likely to be the next president." I think it undermines the fact that people have the power of the vote.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** That's right! It's such a power institution. Frankly, one of the things about modern politics is that you have to be as prepared to deal with, manipulate, and otherwise master the media, just as you have to be prepared to get the money, or have the money, as you have to be prepared to actually go out and in the old fashioned way stump the votes.

**KOED:** Be prepared for a little bit of everything.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** Right. Thinking in the terms of the evolution of modern day politics—Maybe this is part of what Michael MacKuen was talking about thirty years ago, when talking about the media and the message and how it was going to fundamentally change our democracy. It has! So, you went from the days of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, holding forth for three hours at seven different locations in the state of Illinois, to the point of Peter Fitzgerald having a one hour quasi-debate—Remember, I couldn't get him to debate. The guy was a stealth candidate who didn't make public appearances. All of those things. You go from the Lincoln-Douglas model to this model. It's very much a function of our time, in which media and money factor as much as political organization and actual touching voters and asking for their support.

**KOED:** To wrap this up, do you think that your relationship with the media has changed now? Obviously, you're not right smack in the middle of their focus now.

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I hope so.

**KOED:** Do you think they are treating you more fairly?

**MOSELEY BRAUN:** I can't tell. I'm just praying that they don't start pissing all

over my New Zealand appointment [as U.S. ambassador].<sup>2</sup> I'm going to do everything I can—even if I have to go out and spend money with press types—it'll be worth it. I've got to try to at least recover from what those people did.

**KOED:** Good luck.

**[end of interview #4]**

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<sup>2</sup>On October 8, 1999, President William J. Clinton nominated Moseley Braun to be U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. The Senate confirmed the nomination on November 10, 1999, with a 96-2 vote. She served until March 1, 2001.