

**Carol Moseley-Braun:** Hello?

**Marianne Schnall:** Hi. Is this Carol?

**CMB:** Yes.

**MS:** It's Marianne Schnall. How are you doing?

**CMB:** I'm fine, thank you, Marianne. I'm fine.

**MS:** And thank you, again, so much for agreeing to this interview. And it is a real great pleasure and honor to talk to you. As you know we're hoping to capture the voices of this small, but very esteemed group of women and share their first-hand experience for running for president. And we're hoping both to address the importance of a female president as well as explore some of the potential challenges that maybe be faced by female candidates in the 2016 race. And who better to talk to than the women who have chartered this course before.

So just to begin there, do you think that the political climate has changed for women and women candidates since you first ran for president?

**CMB:** Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think that the—I mean for all of the back and forth and the noise, I think the country has opened itself to the idea that people of different genders and races and situations in life have something to contribute and can actually make a constructive and positive difference in the lives of everyday, of all Americans. And so I think that the atmosphere that would allow someone to run for president as an unabashed socialist, for example, or that we have an African-American president at this point—that having a woman candidate for president is not as remarkable or marginalized as a context as it might have been even a decade ago—I think is proof of the change in the atmosphere in the country that you speak about.

**MS:** And, you know, we now have Hilary Clinton. We have Carly Fiorina. Last week I spoke to Jill Stein. Do you also consider it a measure of progress to have three women currently running for president?

**CMB:** Three women? Five women? I mean how many males are running, 20? So we have a pretty crowded field of candidates for president right now. And I think it is close to 20 actually. And no one comments at this stage, this early stage on the presence of 20 men candidates. And I think it is probably a good thing that really the fact that there are three, I think

there may be four, women candidates that is not as remarkable as it might have otherwise been, again, a decade ago.

**MS:** And looking back for you, I mean so much of this is about getting more women feeling inspired to run for office. For you, what event in your life inspired you to get involved in politics?

**CMB:** You know, as an African-American it was hard not to be involved in the, if you will, the movement for political liberation for black people as I came of age. I mean that was my time. That was the time in which I came into my own maturity. And politics, while it was not originally part of the Civil Rights Movement, electoral politics that is, what happened was the electoral politics began to converge with Civil Rights activism.

And for me, having been engaged on the Civil Rights side of things, and it really wasn't just Civil Rights for blacks. It was Civil Rights for women. Which, you know, I get to be a two-fer in that regard, Civil Rights for women, you know, liberation of really human spirit more than anything else. And I think Dr. King was very clear that that's what it was for. It wasn't just an African-American thing. It was about liberating the human spirit and perfecting our democracy.

And so therefore, since it did relate to our democracy and how our government worked, it was just a natural for me to move into electoral politics from that perspective.

**MS:** And how would you describe your own, personal leadership style?

**CMB:** You know what? I've never been ask that question before, believe it or not. I don't have an answer for that. I mean I try to encourage people to work collaboratively. Collaboration as a leadership style is sometimes more difficult for women and more difficult for, particular for women of color because we don't enjoy what called natural authority. So a collaborative model really does tend more often than not to invite, what's the word I'm looking for, competition. It's invites competition. It invites challenge and it can be a lot more cumbersome as a leadership model.

And so I think somewhere between the collaboration that is a natural for women to use as a leadership model as well as, frankly, resorting to some of the more traditional, hierarchical kinds of responses—I think a combination, somewhere in there would be the model that you could say defines my own, personal leadership style.

**MS:** And more generally, do you think—are there unique qualities that you think women bring to politics or other positions of leadership?

**CMB:** Yes. Of course. And here's the thing, the whole idea of democracy is that the people govern. And that by bringing the voices of people to policymaking you come out with a better result because it is more inclusive. It is more reflective of the experience of the entire community. And that sounds kind of abstract. But on a very specific level what it means then is that women are able to bring to bear experiences of over half the population in policymaking. Whether they are conservative women or socialist women the fact is they have a different life experience because of gender. And that life experience makes them better able to articulate the concerns and the interests of swaths of the population that otherwise can only be, would only be articulately remotely if you will.

So, for example, whether the issue is—I used to always get wired up about the issue of abortion, for example, because my view was how could someone who can't even be pregnant talk about the circumstances around abortion. And you can be theoretical about it. And, again, whether you come out saying it is always wrong and should never be permitted or it's always right and no one should interfere with that right—however you come out on the issue, you have a better take on it if you can experience the condition.

The same thing with poverty. How can you really [00:10:07] apply to the poor if you don't even know anybody who is poor. Women—education. If you're not concerned—if somebody else is attending to the education of your children, you will have a different take on those issues than the person who is doing the attending to the education of those children.

So there are any number of issues, income inequality. You know, the difference in the amount of money that women get paid and men get paid. I mean that particular income inequality, as a friend of mine once said, "You know, I only get paid 70 cents on the dollar but that doesn't mean I can buy a loaf of bread for 70 cents instead of a dollar.

So these issues all translate as real-life experiences that women, I believe, are uniquely situated to address because they have walked that walk. They have been in those roles. They can communicate and reflect the interests of a larger proportion of the population, of the demos if you will or the polity if you will. They can articulate—so that makes our democracy better and helps to improve and perfect our democracy. And so it's a positive and good thing for every American, male or female.

**MS:** I completely agree with you. And well said! Do you think, are there specific challenges that you think women candidates face, based on your own experience and certainly, you know, what you witness when we have other women running?

**CMB:** Well, of course there—I mean, yes, there are many challenges of women, from the mundane to the silly to the profound. I mean the fact is that we still haven't gotten beyond, you know, hair, hemlines and husbands. And women get challenged or examined on a set of parameters the men, rarely if ever, are. You know, what you look like, what your hair style looks, what your husband is doing. I was in a situation where I ran for office, actually, while I was yet in the Senate.

Everybody wanted to know about my personal life and who I was dating. Nobody even mentioned the fact that one of the leaders in the Senate at the time was dating his secretary. Okay. So they subsequently got married but it's like, wait a minute. I'm a single woman and you've got this situation over here. Why is my situation so much more a topic of conversation and debate than his and so much of a challenge to handle and manage as an issue?

So it's always that way. Gerry Ferraro ran into it with regard to what was her husband's business involvement. How deep did we get into the business involvements of Cindy McCain? Not really. I mean I'm not saying anything against Cindy McCain. She's a nice lady. I like her, you know. But still, it's just those differences are horrible expressed, frankly, when a woman steps out on the public stage precisely because it is still counterintuitive to the role that women have been traditionally assigned in this society.

And I think it's unfortunate because quite frankly, if we could get past that it would allow for, you know—it would free the women candidates up to stand on equal footing in debating the policy issues affecting the whole country with their male colleagues or competitors. But instead we wind up—in the 2008 election, and I'm not going to—well, I will mention names. There was a women's, and men do this too, by the way—there was a women's magazine, which I have sense refused to, a famous women's magazine that excoriated Hilary Clinton on that grounds that she, quote, "had no sense of style," and endorsed the male, the current President against her on that ground. It's like, what? Since when has a man been called on to have a sense of style to have to be endorsed for office?

So I just think that those kinds of things do make a big difference and really, frankly, are distractions for female candidates in ways that they are not for male candidates.

**MS:** Absolutely. And also, the fact that you have that kind of environment can really discourage women from even wanting to run. And obviously even just looking at Washington right now, politics can seem like a pretty dysfunctional system from the outside. What words of motivation or encouragement would you offer about pursuing a career in public service?

**CMB:** That every person makes a difference and that every person, particularly in a democratic system—and I say this not just to women but to voters, because a lot of voters have just turned off on the process because politics just seems like one, big argument and it doesn't have anything to do with them personally or is not really relevant to them. And my message to everybody is that in a democracy it is consumer choice, to use a word from the business world. It is what the voters want. So if people will vote in the first instance and vote for candidates that they think will do the job for them, hold those candidates accountable and then, you know, kick them out if they are not doing the job, and support them if they are — that's how the process should work.

For women to say that the argument—you know, you deal with as much in your family life. So the fact that it's a big, nasty argument and the fact that it takes a lot of money and the fact that it takes a lot of work and it's hard should not deter you from engaging to the best extent that you can in making your country, the country you want to be proud of and pass on to your children.

**MS:** And I know that running for president is even more of a challenging situation to put yourself in, looking back why did you originally decide to run for the presidency?

**CMB:** Well, you know, at the time I had come back from New Zealand. I had been ambassador. The guys were not speaking to the issues, not entirely speaking to the issues that I thought needed to be articulated. Certainly I had the credentials and the qualifications to do it. I didn't have the money. And to be honest, I mean it seems [?] to [?] me my stars have made me a pioneer. And so I just decided to just step out there on faith to see what came of it. As it was, I wasn't able to raise the money. And as Eleanor Clift once told me, you can always tell a pioneer by the arrows in her back.

But it was a wonderful experience and I have no regrets about it, if for no other reason than the number of people, in many instances men, who would bring their daughters to the debates and to rallies and things that we had. And the guys would come up and say, "You know, I wanted my 12-year old daughter to see that a woman can be president. I wanted my daughter to see you running for president." And those things made it make sense to me.

And then, of course, there is the story, which is absolutely true about my little niece, who was 12 at the time. And she was doing her social studies homework. And I went in to check on her. And she was studying. And the middle of her social studies book had pictures of all the US presidents. And she looked to me and she looked at the pictures and she said, "But Auntie Carol all the presidents are boys." And I said, "Well, sweetie, girls can be president, too." And I walked out of the room and my brother—it must have shown on my face. My brother said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I just lied to Claire since I told her girls can be president, too."

Well, if I wasn't prepared with my credentials and my experience and my interests in government and in the policy [00:18:45], if I wasn't prepared to sacrifice a little bit of me to make the point that girls can be president, too, then shame on me. So I decided that it made sense to step out and do it.

**MS:** And did you have a difficult time finding a campaign staff that understood the unique challenges of running and supporting a woman?

**CMB:** Absolutely. Yes. And that is part of the institution. Campaign staff actually comes under the same heading of having, of being able to raise the money to do it. I was fortunate because Patricia Ireland who was the former president of the National Organization for Women stepped forward to manage the campaign. And she did a phenomenal job with little or no resourced. And Patricia, after she stepped forward then we obviously had to put together the team. And it was difficult to do because we couldn't offer the big salaries and didn't have the institution.

And the crowd didn't think that it was even possible. And so they were not prepared to put their own careers at risk, if you will, by supporting my candidacy. And so we, with a group of people who were basically volunteers, who were willing to step up and to make the point, not just about gender and the appropriateness of having a woman candidate but also about the policy positions that I took at the time. And there were

people who not only agreed but were willing to, again, five of themselves to make it happen. And they did and I'm forever grateful to them.

**MS:** And is there any specific moment of your campaign that's the most vivid for you?

**CMB:** Actually, the guy coming up with his daughter in Iowa. This was in Iowa. The guy came up with his little girl after a debate and said, "I wanted her to see that girls can be president, too. And the thing about it was, this was in an environment—I mean there were precious few black people in Iowa. And so here I was a black female. And this very Anglo-looking guy, with his little daughter saying, "This is what a president can look like." To me that single kind of world changing attitude, shift in attitudes that subsequently gave rise to the first African-American and will eventually give rise, hopefully soon, to the first female president.

**MS:** Yeah. And that was one of my questions. Is America ready for a female president? And what do you think it would mean for women, politics, and our culture?

**CMB:** Well, again, I think, yes I think, (a) the country is ready and (b) a shift in priorities in terms of beginning to protect some of the gains that previous generations of Americans have achieved—and beginning to cope with how you repair the social fabric. How do you restore families? How do you give families the ability to function? How do you provide for children? How do you provide for the elderly? How do you take care of what FDR called the four freedoms?

I think that focusing in on the freedom from want, the freedom to a country that is at peace with itself and the world—I think a woman can do that and I'm looking forward to the day when it happens.

**MS:** And I know part of what I'm hearing a lot in the interviews that I've done is the importance of that you can't do this alone. Did you personally have any mentors or supporters that helped guide you or shaped your outlook or were a real help along the way and during your campaign?

**CMB:** Well, again, I mentioned Patricia. She was terrific. There's a woman who is currently the mayor of Evanston. She was very helpful. There were supporters who helped. But it was one thing; you had to get through the political class first. And that becomes defining. And, unfortunately, my campaign—had I—one of my sisters-in-law said that I should have just to Iowa, that Iowa could have been the breakthrough for

us that it was for Obama eight years later. I don't know if that was—that's speculation. Who knows?

But it was very difficult to do. We ran out of money. It was not sustainable. And because it was not sustainable, because the political class did not buy into the proposition or the campaign, the effort, we didn't have the resources and the wherewithal to sustain the campaign. And so before Iowa, before the vote in Iowa I dropped out. Perhaps I shouldn't have but then I never look back with regrets on anything. I keep going forward. And that's how it is that I move on to my next career.

**MS:** And based on your experience, what words of wisdom or advice would you have for women considering running today, for president or any elected office I guess?

**CMB:** You know, it's like that ad that says, "Just do it." You can't know if you will succeed or fail if you don't even try. And if you've got the courage to have, to feel strongly about something, women are very strong. And if you believe in something and you care about your country, then you ought to have the courage to step out and do it. And it will take some personal sacrifice possibly but then possibly not. You know, you might get out and discover a whole, new world open to you that you never knew existed.

On the other hand you may get out there and wind up battered and beat up. But, you know, you shake it off and keep on moving. I don't know that that is any different than the rest of life, to be honest. So I just say to people, particularly, don't be intimidated by the fact that you're the first in your neighborhood to do whatever that is, to run for whatever office that is. Don't be intimidated by that. Somebody has to be first and it might as well be you.

**MS:** And, you know, looking at why more women aren't running and even in the interviews I did for my book I often heard stories about people's theories that a lot of this may even start in girlhood, about the messages that we give to girls about leadership and power. What do you think as a society and culture we can do to encourage more women to run for office or leadership positions in general?

**CMB:** Well, again, that very much—and you hit the nail on the head. And it is very cultural. And quite frankly that is one of the reasons why women are not more supportive of other women. Because there are traditional roles for women, which leaves us in support positions only, which says



that it's inappropriate for women to be heard in the public arena. These are positions of longstanding. And frankly, there are women who are themselves challenged by a woman who does not adhere to that traditional position.

And so women, we are in a period of transitions, if not transformation, in which personhood is less relevant than what someone has to offer. And I think that is a very, very positive development for the society as a whole. And the women who are coming along now will frankly benefit and will be able to take advantage of the sacrifices of a lot of women who went before, to open those doors and to change the perceptions that say women can only be servants to the men in their lives.

**MS:** Well, thank you so much. You're so wise and inspiring and I really appreciate the time that you have taken to talk to me today. And thank you for all of the great work that you have done and continue to do. You're a very important role model. And, as I said, I'm really grateful for you sharing your perspective.

**CMB:** Well, I'm very happy to do it. It's very important that this conversation that you have engaged takes place. And it's important for the girls who are out there now, young women, as well as for the girls who will come later.

**MS:** Well, thank you so much. And, again, best wishes to all of your work. And I will keep you posted on when this interview is posted and I'm very, very grateful.

**CMB:** Well, it's my pleasure.

**MS:** Have a wonderful day.

**CMB:** Thank you.

**MS:** Ok, take care.

**CMB:** Same to you. Bye.

END OF INTERVIEW