

AMBASSADOR Carol Moseley Braun

Born with a drive inherited from a legacy of service, fueled with a passion to make a difference in the lives of those around her, rising to the ministerial rank of Ambassador, Carol Moseley Braun is the embodiment of the American success story.

The uniqueness of the American experience brought together a family with a musical history on her father's side and generations of farmers on her mother's side; all to create a family story of creativity and hard work, passion and diligence, curiosity and determination. Born into working-class roots, Ambassador Braun learned the value of selfless dedication to a higher cause from her maternal grandfather Thomas Davie, a WWI veteran. He instilled in her a passion for the democratic values she would come to cherish on her path of service for the people of Chicago and Cook County as the Recorder of Deeds and a member of the General Assembly, the residents of Illinois as their United States Senator, and the citizens of the United States as *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary* to New Zealand and Samoa.



The precursor to her life of public service would begin with her father's engagement with the unions that would form the backbone of the pending Civil Rights movement. While her mother was decidedly apolitical, it would be her father's example of the passion for the value of good government that would lead an 18-year-old young woman to witness history with her own eyes. In 1966 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. marched through Gage Park in the City of Chicago; Ambassador Braun was there. She was pulled to be there that day by the enduring call to stand on the side of morality and justice. As the rings of marches formed around Dr. King, she was in the "youth ring," only a few feet away—so close that she could have touched him with her own hands.

What happened next made a lasting impact on how she would handle things for the rest of her life.

A rock hurled by an assailant struck Dr. King in the head. The man at the center of attention of what could have been a violent afternoon was and calm and collected. Undaunted by the attack, he responded with peace and said: "...we feel we have to do it this way, to bring the evil out into the open." Watching how Dr. King handled this moment, right in front of her, was a pivotal moment in Ambassador Braun's young life. Led by the example of Dr. King and so many others, unknowingly, she was already on her way to a life of civic duty while pursuing the call to public action.

The testament to the value and dignity of civic engagement continues to be the life-story and driving motivator for her today, seeing Ambassador Braun serve as a Northwestern University Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Weinberg School. Education has always been at the core

of the Ambassador's values. Raised with the belief that success is earned through hard work and study, she graduated from the Chicago Public School system and went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Illinois. Captivated by the nuances of the law, she then earned her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Chicago. Determined to bolster her academic record, Ambassador Braun pushed herself even further, serving as a Harvard Kennedy School fellow. She holds 11 additional honorary degrees.

Following her academic achievements, the Ambassador sought out a career of civic duty and public service where she could do the most good. Joining as a young Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, Ambassador Braun brought her education, embrace of hard work, and love of the law to a new life: A new passion for public service. She was recognized with the United States Attorney General's Special Achievement award for her efforts. In the four years she was there, Ambassador Braun saw the impact that the law can have on creating an opportunity for those who need the help of the government. Inspired by her first-hand experience enforcing the law, she sought out the challenge of helping people by writing the law.



It would be her passion for environmental issues that lead her to run an election to serve in the Illinois General Assembly. In Ambassador Braun's neighborhood, the Chicago Park District was going to put a golf range in Jackson Park and destroy the habitat of the bobolinks—a small bird once described as a "boundless fantasia of song." She added unmitigated strength in the efforts to save the bobolinks, and months later a neighbor approached her and said, "Our state representative just retired, and we were thinking you would be a good candidate. Would you be interested in running?"

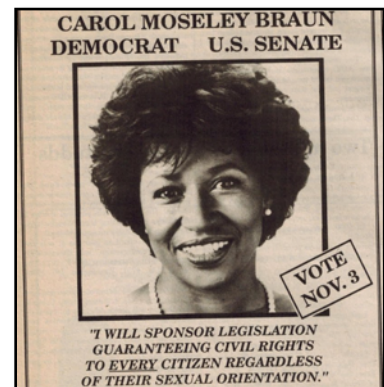
Ambassador Braun would become the voice of those often neglected by those in power. She brought her commanding presence to the floor advocating for those most in need. That advocacy would lead to the truest demonstration of political courage, taking on one's own political party. Then Chicago Mayor Harold Washington named Ambassador Braun his spokesperson in Springfield and thus her voice carried a big stick. Horrified by the realization that her own party was intentionally marginalizing minority voters into the least number of districts possible, Ambassador Braun filed a lawsuit against the reapportionment that would have codified racial segregation into the core of the democratic process. It would be a hard-fought court battle, in which she would triumph, protecting the voices and representative rights of minorities in the state of Illinois. She won the legal battle, she was named as the floor leader, elevating her to the Assistant Minority Leader position in the House.

Since farming was part of her family history, that base made it easy for Ambassador Braun to develop meaningful friendships with a large number of legislators from central and southern Illinois—areas mostly known for agriculture. Unlike traditional politicians from Chicago, Ambassador Braun understood her colleagues need for support across the state and, when

asked, would travel to all ends to lend her support to fellow legislators. Those relationships would help her forge coalitions to secure justice for the maligned and would be recognized in a victorious house resolution naming Ambassador Braun as the “conscious of the House.” She also helped steer through the House a moratorium on the death penalty and a prohibition on investment in Apartheid South Africa. The indelible mark the value of education had left on her character was reflected not just in words, but deeds as she sponsored every single Chicago school funding bill. Still, for all the good Ambassador Braun was doing, there was still more work to be done.

After serving 10 years in the House, Ambassador Braun was elected in 1988 as the Recorder of Deeds for Cook County. This office would allow her to more directly serve the people of Cook County, with a focus on those in financial hardship. The office, critical to helping people achieve the American dream of homeownership, was rife with corruption when she arrived. Starting with the creation of a Blue-Ribbon Panel, Ambassador Braun would spend the next four years removing corrupt officials, creating a fairer, union-endorsed workplace, and end discriminatory policies. Her unceasing efforts saw the first real modernization of an arcane operating system in the office, helping people process property and loan requests at a much faster pace.

Ambassador Braun’s demonstrable record of civic duty, her state-wide exposure and support from the days in the legislature, and the genuineness of her desire to help would be recognized when in 1992 the people of Illinois made history by electing the first woman and the first black Democrat ever elected by the voters, to be their next United States Senator.



Arriving in the United States Senate in 1993, she was the only African-American person in the august body. Ambassador Braun was also the first woman from Illinois and the first African-American Democrat. That alone would have been a history-making achievement, but it was not enough. Buoyed by her nearly 20-years of public service, Ambassador Braun saw her mission to deliver for the State of Illinois. Never one to shy away



from hard work she would serve as a member of many of the Senate’s most powerful committees including the Finance and Judiciary committees. Her experience in the U.S. Attorney’s office, the state legislature, and as the Recorder of Deeds meant that she was able to bring real-world knowledge to stately affairs. A working understanding of the impact of the work the Senate was doing, coupled with her prevailing sense of social justice meant that the moral and economic interests of the state of Illinois would be well served in a number of areas including the

much-needed expansion of O'Hare International Airport. That would have been enough for most people; Ambassador Braun threw herself into the work of the Senate, serving as a member on eight more committees focusing on banking, trade, and international relations – all to benefit the people of Illinois.

After such an illustrious career, it would have been easy to join a corporate board and lead a life of retirement. Once again public service called, this time in the form of a Presidential Appointment to serve as the United States Ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa. Devoid of any military or security crisis this Ambassadorial role could have been seen as a slice of heaven in one of the most beautiful locations on the planet. However, that would not have been in keeping with a life history of hard work and dedication to those most needing help. Making history as the first woman and first African-American appointed to the role, Ambassador Braun worked to strengthen U.S. relations with the Prime Minister of New Zealand. At the same time, she worked to ingratiate herself with the people of the area, building personal relationships and hiring the first indigenous Māori to serve in the Embassy. The real connections she created would see her once again make history by becoming the first U.S. Ambassador to be named an honorary Māori as a member of the Te Atiawa tribe.

Serving as the U.S. Ambassador was the capstone to a long career of public service. The time she spent representing the people of the United States was emblematic of her entire public career; work hard, build relationships, create opportunities for the underrepresented, and remain wholly optimistic about the possibilities of the future.

Since her time in public service came to end, Ambassador Braun remains tirelessly devoted to the principle of honest work. She remains a practicing attorney and served as the CEO of Good Food Organics a premium organic food and beverage distributor. She has been a visiting professor at Morris Brown College, DePaul University, and remains a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Northwestern University's Weinberg School.



Ambassador Braun's journey has now come full circle. Her origins of public service started with the call to civic action and see her now reclaiming that mantle once again. Our American Voice is an educational nonprofit, dedicated to bringing civics education to the next generation of students throughout Illinois. Our American Voice named Ambassador Braun as their new Advisory Chairwoman; a role that will enable her to bring an unparalleled level of experience and commitment to civic engagement to the next generation of Americans.

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