

Women of the Senate Oral History Project

BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator from California, 1993–2017

Oral History Interview
April 23, 2018

Senate Historical Office
Washington, D.C.

**AGREEMENT AND RELEASE
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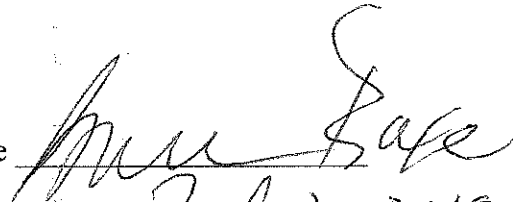
I, Senator Barbara Boxer, agree to participate in the Women of the Senate Oral History Project and understand that the physical audio recordings and transcripts of my interviews are and will remain the property of the United States Senate.

In entering into this agreement, I understand that all or portions of my oral history may be made available to the public in an online feature on the Senate website, may be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, or broadcast in any other medium (consisting of all forms of print or electronic media, including the Internet or other emerging, future technologies that may be developed) that the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate. I also approve the deposit of the recordings and transcripts at the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and any other institution that the Senate Historical Office may deem appropriate.

In consideration for my inclusion in this project, I understand I am entitled to receive a copy of the transcripts of my interviews. While I hereby relinquish any intellectual property rights or interests I may hold in the content of my interviews, I acknowledge that the Senate has the discretion to decide whether or not to make all or any part of my oral history available to the public.

The Honorable

Dated:


Feb 20, 2019

I, Betty K. Koed, accept the interview of the Honorable Barbara Boxer for inclusion into the Oral History Project of the U.S. Senate Historical Office.


Betty K. Koed, U.S. Senate Historian

Dated:

2/20/2019

Introduction

Barbara Boxer served in the United States Senate from 1993 to 2017 as a Democrat representing the State of California. Her opposition to the Vietnam War drew her to politics, and in 1976 she won her first election to public office, serving on the Marin County Board of Supervisors. She later served five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1983–1993), and in 1992 she won a vacant Senate seat, joining Dianne Feinstein as the first women elected to the Senate from the State of California. In the Senate, Boxer championed world peace, equal rights and equal pay for women, and was a proponent for wildlife protections and conservation. From 2007 to 2015, Boxer chaired two Senate committees, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and the Select Committee on Ethics—the first woman to lead each of those committees. She authored clean water legislation, was a vocal proponent for legislation to address climate change, and shepherded bipartisan infrastructure bills through the Senate. In this interview, she describes how the Senate’s design encourages bipartisanship, the value of having diverse viewpoints in the Senate, and the benefits of having a thick skin while serving as a member of Congress.

About the interviewer: Katherine (Kate) Scott is a historian in the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the University of Washington, she holds a M.A. in history from the University of New Mexico and a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. Scott is the author of *Reining in the State: Civil Society and Congress in the Vietnam and Watergate Eras* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013) and various book chapters, including “A Safety Valve: The Truman Committee’s Oversight during World War II,” in Colton Campbell and David Auerswald, eds., *Congress and Civil-Military Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015).

Women of the Senate Oral History Project
Senator Barbara Boxer
California (1993–2017)

April 23, 2018

KATE SCOTT: Today is April 23, 2018. I am sitting in Senator Barbara Boxer's home in Rancho Mirage, California. Thank you so much for inviting me into your home.

SENATOR BARBARA BOXER: I'm thrilled to invite you into my home.

SCOTT: As you know, we are doing this Women in the Senate oral history project in anticipation of some upcoming centennials: the 100th anniversary of the women's suffrage amendment and the appointment of the first female senator in 1922. This interview will be featured in that collection.

I think it would be nice to start off with a general question about your childhood and what kind of female role models you had when you were a child.

BOXER: I had very few female role models, in terms of politics. There were none, zero, zip. The female that was the most amazing, loving person in my life was my mother. What's so interesting, when I wrote my memoirs, I always thought that my dad was the one who taught me everything because he was the youngest of nine children, the only one born in America. He went to college at night. He went to law school at night when he was 40. Education, education, education. My mother supported him. Now, when she was a kid she lost her father at a very young age. As soon as she turned 16 she had to quit school and work to support her mom. She never even graduated from high school, but as I went through the lessons I learned—how did I become tough? How did I become willing to take a chance to be rejected? That, to me, is the major quality that you have to have when you run for office because [there is a] 50/50 chance you may not make it and it's very tough.

I realized it was my mother who had taught me all these lessons. I lay it out in my memoir, funny stories when I was a kid. How not ever to be violent. How not to be angry. Don't act out of anger. Her favorite expression that she always shared with me was, "Honey, when you are really mad at someone, you can tell them to go to hell. But, you can do it in such a nice way that they'll say 'thank you.'" I thought, all my life I've been doing that! The gentleman from, you know, Indiana, I really love him. He's great, but he's so wrong on this.

I realized that lessons in life that I learned, how to be strong and tough and not be afraid to stand out if you don't agree, all that came from Mom. But in terms of a senator or House member, a mayor or city councilman, forget about it. I was born in 1940, it was the happy days of the 50s. In the 40s, a lot of women took over men's jobs in the industrialized sector. But when

the men came back after World War II, society “decided” there wasn’t room for the women, so they basically told women they were nuts if they wanted to work. It was a horrible thing. They gave them valium and all these kind of things to keep them home. So, I had not one role model. On the other hand, because my parents said you can be whatever you want to be, I wanted to be a stockbroker. I wanted to be a major in economics, and I just did it! There were two girls in the class at Brooklyn College who were majoring in economics. I was one of the two. Then I went to Wall Street and faced tremendous discrimination. There were hardly any women there. And then by that time, Margaret Chase Smith was in the Senate, and my mother said to me one day, “Can you imagine what a special woman she is to do that job? Wow!” That’s all I remember about that.

So, it was kind of making my own road.

SCOTT: Did your mother work?

BOXER: My mother did not work. She worked during all the years that she was 16 until she was 21 and married my dad. In those years, most women did not work. She wanted to fully support him, so she didn’t work when she was married. My dad was a CPA. Again, he got his education at night. I don’t know how they made it through, but they did. I had everything I wanted. We were super modest, lower middle class, but I didn’t want for anything. I was the luckiest kid in my mind. But no, my mother was a dedicated housewife. She did it the best. She was there for the kids and she did a splendid job. (laughs) You know how we all rebel against our parents? My big rebellion was, my mother remembered everybody’s birthday, anniversary, and she wrote it down on a calendar. She had a huge family and every other second she was getting gifts, sending gifts, calling people, sending cards. And I thought, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t, it’s too much for me! (laughs) So I never do that. I just give people gifts when I want to. That was my rebellion.

The second rebellion was, she had the neatest closets you have ever seen. She spent hours and these beautiful towels. She bought butterflies and decorated them. You know me? I’m the opposite. You want a towel? Go get it! That was the extent of my rebellion.

SCOTT: You said your parents encouraged you to be whatever you wanted to be. Did they envision that you would have a career?

BOXER: I think that nothing I did ever surprised them. I think I was always a kid who didn’t mind the spotlight. My mother would teach me to dance and teach me to sing. She would say, “Okay, Babs, sing for the family.” We had huge families. My mother was one of six, the youngest. My father was one of nine, the youngest. So, all the cousins and hundreds of this and that. So, when we got together, I was always the youngest one. They would have me entertain everybody. So ever since I’m a little kid and my mother had this beautiful voice, and we used to stand around a piano. My father played and we would sing as a family. I loved singing, and I always, to this day as you may know, I write funny lyrics to songs. We’ve put together groups in

the Senate and the House. It all stems from those years. So when it was time to get into the House gym, I wrote the lyrics to “5 foot 2, Eyes of Blue” (singing):

Exercise, glamourize

Where to go will you advise

Can’t everybody use your gym?

Equal rights, we’ll wear tights

Let’s avoid those macho fights

Can’t everybody use your gym?

And it went on. And we got into the gym! But all that goes back to my childhood.

So, I was always willing to step out. Because of the love I had, the unconditional love, I was never afraid to say what I thought and that is what I still do. And people either love me for it, or can’t stand me for it, you know? I always wore the criticism as a badge of honor when I got into politics because I had people against me from the very far right who would call me every name in the book. Rush Limbaugh called me a femi-nazi, to this guy Max Schlap who said I was the Frau Mengele of the Senate. I mean, seriously, I have had things said about me. Ann Coulter had one of the best ones, I think. She said, “Barbara Boxer is the perfect Democrat.” What did she say? She said something [like], “learning disabled”; she had a whole slew of things, including “learning disabled.” Really unbelievable. But I always took those and I publicized them. When I wrote my memoirs, I started out by repeating all these awful things because, again, what I learned as a kid, you are known by your friends, you are known by your enemies. And so, if there are hateful people out there and they don’t like me, I must be doing something right! (laughs) It never got to me. My whole family was: “Mom, did you see what they said about you?!” I don’t care.

SCOTT: That probably has served you well over the years in public life.

BOXER: It has to. It is one of the most important things that I tell young people, that you cannot take criticism personally because it means that you are making a difference. In my book, *The Art of Tough*, what I say is, people want to shut you down and they will always try to.¹ I don’t care whether you are at work and doing something completely different—a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, a construction worker—it’s just the nature of society that there are people who want to have power and by doing that they try to make you less powerful by making you think that you don’t matter, or you are stupid. To this day, I get trolled on Twitter. It cracks me up.

¹ Barbara Boxer, *The Art of Tough: Fearlessly Facing Politics and Life* (New York: Hachette Books, 2016).

And the trolls say the worse things you can ever imagine. I think to myself, and now I've said out loud, it makes me happy because I'm still relevant at my age, and after retiring from the Senate. (laughs)

SCOTT: You were saying that having thick skin is useful.

BOXER: You have to, when you go into politics, male or female, believe in yourself and know that, a) you could lose; and, b) you can get terribly hurt feelings if you don't recognize that you should not take it personally. It's about issues. You may be ahead of your time. Somebody's trying to stop you because you are effective. That's key. I call it the "art of tough." It's very important.

SCOTT: Your first race for public office was in 1972.

BOXER: Correct.

SCOTT: That is the only race in which you ran in which you did not prevail.

BOXER: Exactly.

SCOTT: What lessons did you learn from that race?

BOXER: Huge lessons.

First of all, it's devastating to lose. I'm not going to say anything else. You feel awful because let's face it, more people voted against you than voted for you. Nobody likes that. You have to be prepared for it. Also, be able to rationalize in your mind, you know, "Yes I could have done some things better, but maybe I'm a little ahead of my time." You don't go into a depression about it, which of course I did not do.

My favorite story from that race was, I had little kids. They were at that time seven and five. Now they take care of me, it's great. (laughs) I was so nervous that they would get laughed at and kids would taunt them, "Your mother's a loser!" and all of this. My little girl, she was too young, kids wouldn't know. But the seven-year-old, Doug, I said, "Doug, I want to tell you something. Mommy ran for this office and I lost. He said, "Yeah, I know. I understand." I said, you know, kids could be really mean. I go into this song and dance because I didn't want to make him suffer for it, or have to go to a shrink later. And so, I do this whole thing. He listens intently. Then he stops and I said, "What do you think?" He said, "Can you make me a peanut butter and jelly [sandwich] for lunch?" He could care less. The point was, the kids just bring you back to earth. Life goes on, is what he was saying in his way. He didn't want to get into it. It's over. And what a wonderful lesson I learned from my kid.

I was very discouraged, but I did two things that were smart. One, I decided that I had so much knowledge about county government because I ran for a county board of supervisors, I went to a local paper that covered the county issues, and I said, "I'd love to write for you because

I know all this stuff and now I don't have anything to do with it except think about it." Steve, the owner of the paper, Steve McNamara, said, "That's really interesting. Have you ever written before?" I said, "I love to write and I love to speak but I haven't." He taught me—he said, "The lesson I want to teach you about writing is, don't freeze up about it." In those years, it was typewriters, but whether it's a typewriter or a computer, he said, "A lot of people sit at a typewriter and they get so nervous that they have to be so eloquent and structure their sentences in a certain way." He said, "What I want you to do is stick that paper in the typewriter and speak to it. Just be yourself." He said, "If you do that, you'll be fine." So I left it. I worked and I covered the county and it was the greatest thing because I covered the guy who defeated me. (laughs) Even if I didn't agree with him, I was able to talk about it. But I really loved it.

The second thing that I did that was good was I read an article from *Ms.* magazine that said women take losing too personally and they should not do that. Men don't. Abraham Lincoln ran four times and Richard Nixon ran multiple times. Not that you should be a perennial candidate, but don't be discouraged if you lose. So, two years later, I decided to try again—no, four years later I decided to try again, in '76. And I did it, I won. It was great. The guy who I had lost to, he didn't want the fight so he retired. It was an open seat. I became the second woman in history to be on that board of supervisors since 1850, and the first woman from that supervisorial district. I became the first woman to become president of the board and it was quite an experience. It was very early to be in office.

What I love about it looking back is, it's kind of like what is happening now with the "Me Too" movement and so many people running. When people saw you could do it, you could win, other women stepped up to the plate and before you knew it, we went from having like 11 women out of the hundreds of seats in the county to 55. Now, I don't even know, it's probably more women than men.

I think the thing that I learned from that experience is, you have a lot on your shoulders when you are a woman or a minority breaking ground in some field because everyone watches and if you mess up, they'll say, "Oh, women can't do it." You have to really carry a lot. When I got to the House in the '80s with Barbara Mikulski, and Geraldine Ferraro, and Olympia Snowe, and Barbara Connelly, and all those great women—I loved working with them—we all carried, there were only like 25, 28 of us in the House at that time. So every woman's issue was ours. We didn't have a choice. We had to do what we had to do for our district, plus we all carried on our back all the issues that would matter to women in the whole country because there were two women in the Senate, maybe one or two, and hardly any of us in the House. It was really something, so when it came to women's health, we had to take the lead. When it came to fair employment, we had to take the lead. It was an honor and a lot of work.

I remember once Bella Abzug came up to me and said, "You need to take on women in the world. They are being treated so badly and you need to take on the status of women in the world." I was a new member of the House (laughs), I can barely keep it together. My kids were

still—they were 17 and 15, and they were back in California with my husband. I had this new job and all the issues revolving around my district, and the women’s issues at home. And now she wants me to take on the women’s issues around the world. I did have to say, “Bella, I’m very honored. I can’t do it because I can’t do it right. I’m not going to travel all over the world. I have to do this right.” She was not happy (laughs), she was so disappointed in me! I felt bad but—

SCOTT: I imagine that you must have received a lot of advice when you first started running for public office. Can you give us a sample of some of the good advice and some of the less valuable advice that you heard along the way?

BOXER: Sure, sure. Well, most of my mentors were men because there were no women ahead of me, literally. You know, they just taught me the basics, that you had to raise money and they were very good to me. When I ran for the House, George Miller, Vic Fazio, John Burton, all my friends that had very successful careers, took a lot of time to help me. Barbara Mikulski calls them—that type of man—a Sir Galahad because we just needed those men to help us. We cannot do this alone. To this day, I always warn women audiences that you cannot get equality by yourself because not all women see life the way we do and we need men who see life the way we do with us. I think those men were very helpful. They taught me the basics, how to raise the funds, they took me to unions, which for a Democrat you had to have union support. My husband knew a lot of those guys and they were very helpful. So, I would have to credit a lot of men with helping me because honest to God, until I ran for the Senate, when Barbara Mikulski became a mentor, you didn’t have anybody to turn to, you know? The money that I needed desperately, women weren’t used to it. So, we really broke new ground.

I remember holding—one of my male supporters said, “We need to make some money for you. Let’s see if the women will come out.” I said okay. We started what became a tradition—“Women making history” luncheons. I’ve done it for 30—must be 35 years already. When I started it, we said, “Well, how can we price this?” He said, “Price it at \$100 a ticket.” (gasps) One hundred dollars a ticket? No women will come! I was freaking out about it. He said, “Barbara, if they won’t do it, you can’t win. You have to ask for that money.” Which was a lesson, because I hated doing it. Sure enough, it became the biggest women’s event, by a woman, for women, with women. We raised \$60,000 at that event in San Francisco and that was huge in those days. Everyone was abuzz about it.

So, I have to say that my mentors in terms of how to run a campaign were mostly men and a few women on the cutting edge of NOW [National Organization for Women], NWPC [National Women’s Political Caucus], there was no Emily’s List when I started. They came into existence when I ran in the Senate, not the House. So it’s pretty much, “Make it up as you go along.” It wasn’t easy.

SCOTT: Let’s talk about your decision to run for this Senate seat.

BOXER: Yes.

SCOTT: You had been a member of the House for five terms. You served 10 years in the House of Representatives. I hope that you have the opportunity to speak with the House historians about that part of your career. It's important to document it, but I'm going to skip ahead to the Senate.

BOXER: Of course.

SCOTT: I want to talk about what process you went through to plan that race. Alan Cranston had held that seat since the 1960s.

BOXER: Here's what happened: Alan got in some trouble with the savings and loan scandal. He didn't really want to leave the Senate but it became clear that it was going to be a very tough race. That was an awful scandal, you know, I don't have to go through it all. It was not good.

(Phone rings) Hold on a second, let me just see who that is.

So Alan was in difficulty and was thinking of not running. In the meantime, I had served in the House going on 10 years, and I loved it, but things began to change. It started to get very ugly over there. I will be honest, Newt Gingrich brought to the House, at that time, the politics of personal destruction. I saw it in front of me. I saw it happen to Jim Wright. He did it to Tony Coelho. It was as ugly as it could be. [Tom] Foley. I mean, it was just awful. I honestly thought that I didn't want to be in a place like that. I wanted to go to the Senate if I could. I knew it was an extremely long shot. So, Stu and I discussed it and I said, "I'm willing to lose. I just think I should consider it."

In the meantime, all of sudden comes Anita Hill and comes that whole situation. She says that a nominee for Supreme Court justice harassed her. I believed her from minute one. I just knew by looking at her and listening to her. A) You couldn't make that stuff up. B) She was a law professor. I just believed her. My desire to run became even stronger and I started to pick up a lot of key supporters because when the Anita Hill hearings were happening, they saw there were hardly any women in the United States Senate, not one on the Judiciary Committee and only two in the whole Senate with 98 men.

Now, I will say it was a very long shot that I was going to make this. I had a setback because they had this House check scandal, which, to make it simple for history, really was about this: If you bank with the House bank, which wasn't really a bank at all, it was really kind of a check cashing service, you would have your check deposited at the beginning of the month and the middle of the month. I, who never really spent that much time on my checkbook, would start writing all my expenses. I was taking care of my mother, I was taking care of rent, I was doing this and that. I wasn't good with my checkbook. I could care less, truly. The House bank gave you automatic overdraft protection. They never told you about it. What they did was, you

thought you got paid on the first, but you didn't get paid until the sixth. So I wrote all my checks on the first, so for four days they gave me automatic overdraft. So this was the "scandal."

Now, there were two or three people who did take advantage of the thing. They had all these floats. I don't even understand what they did. But, for me, I was so embarrassed when it came out. I can't even tell you. I remember, one day, I was raising money for my Senate race in an office at the Capitol, a campaign office, and the FBI comes to see me. (laughs) They said, "We're just checking out this thing." They said—because when you have a special counsel, as we now know, they look at everything—they said, "We've been looking at your checkbook and we noticed that you've got \$1000 for giving a speech." In those years, you could get honoraria. You were allowed to get \$10,000. "You got \$1000 and we didn't see it on your disclosure. So, we need to see your tax returns." I said, "Okay." Of course, I had declared it on my tax returns. So, they said, "Okay, you are free, no problem." Oh my God! And all I could think of, don't they have better things to do?

Be that as it may, that was on my back during this whole thing. They started to do ads against me, bouncing all over the screen. It was so humiliating. I handled it with a sense of humor. A lot of people lost their seats over it. But I decided, you know what? "I have to admit," I said, "I am terrible with my checkbook and I'm not good with my closets. I just am not! But I am really good with legislation. So, forgive me. I'm embarrassed. I don't know what else to say." Another one of my lines was, "Get a yellow pad and put a line down the middle of it." This was the days before computers were that—you know. "Say good things about Barbara Boxer: she fights for kids. She fights for the environment. She fights for this and does that. And, bad things: she is lousy with her checkbook." I just approached it that way. How I even managed to win, I don't know because, again, it was embarrassing.

I almost dropped out of that race, and I document that in my book. It was so humiliating, you know. As I said, the art of tough is, don't let anything get to you. But that's so private and embarrassing. So, I was almost going to drop out. I actually did drop out for five minutes until my children said, "Mom," and by then one was working and one was in college, or, I don't remember. They sat me down and they read me—this is the corniest, corniest thing, and my kids hate when I tell it because they say no one will believe it—but they read me Dr. Seuss' book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*. "Sometimes you'll be up and sometimes you'll be down." I started to tear up and I said, "I can't believe you are reading this." They said, "Mom, you can't quit. You always told us, you don't quit." I said, "Okay, but you know I'm not going to win this Senate seat. This is too much to bear. They are going to kill me." They said, "Just do your best. We just don't want you to quit." So, I didn't. My husband set the whole thing up. That's a whole story, he never admits it to this day. He called them because they didn't live with us then. They were working and in school. (laughs) I always thought he would be thrilled if I gave it up because he would always say, "I wish she would come home."

So, anyway, I have my fun stories. Very warm, you know, the crazy things that happened in the course of it. But I loved the work. I got out of the House where I saw it was getting to be bad. I joined the Senate which was much more affable and bipartisan.

SCOTT: One thing I wanted to ask you about that '92 campaign is how much of a role did gender play on the campaign trail? The Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings were the backdrop for that long 1992 campaign. You and Senator Dianne Feinstein—now Senator Dianne Feinstein—were both running. It was a historic moment. If you both prevailed it would be two women for the first time representing one state. Can you make those connections? What were you hearing on the campaign trail that year?

BOXER: There is no question that being a woman and being part of an all-woman ticket, which is so rare that the two seats are up at the same time, was, I think, the difference. I am very honest about it. I credit Anita Hill with my winning. I credit Dianne with my winning. She had a much easier race, and she was way better known. She had run for governor twice. She had been the mayor of San Fran. I had this little House seat, and this little supervisor thing. It was a galvanizing moment for the state. I also credit Bill Clinton because he was on the ballot and he and Al Gore were so historic in their own way, being younger. I think all that background made it possible for me to win. I'm very honest about it.

In just an ordinary year, if I had just signed up to run, I think I would have been—I don't think I would have made it. But there was definitely excitement. People were very aware of the history. I mean, I said it. On every speech—you could go back to some of those speeches—I said, "I'm going to throw open the doors of the Senate to people who have not been in there before." I said, "If you are a woman, you are going to be in there. If you are gay, you are going to be in there." And I went through all the people who were left out.

I had a very hard race. The state was purple, for sure. I had a very articulate conservative running against me. He made a couple of terrible mistakes. I was fortunate. The fact that I had led the charge up the Senate steps on the Anita Hill case, that was indelible in people's minds. That was very obvious. So, I do think without all of those things that helped me, because I had baggage, I had that baggage, I don't think I would have made it.

Also, we are two Jewish women from northern California. Here's what's intriguing. Most of the senators before us, if not all, I'm not sure about that, but in recent times, came from LA. We were from the San Francisco Bay Area, so that was a strike against us because most of the population was in southern California. It's a huge state. San Francisco Bay Area has a very small population compared to LA and the surrounding counties. So, that was supposed to be against us. The fact that we were two women, two Jewish women.

We used to make fun. We used a sense of humor, which is also the art of tough. So, she would say, "2 percent may be good for the fat content of milk, but it's not enough in the U.S. Senate, and all we have are 2 percent women." And I would say, "If ever the Senate needed

chicken soup, it's now." We took all these things. I would say, "People are questioning how two Jewish women can win. Did they ever question how two Protestant men can win? What does it matter?" By a miracle, we did it. We made history together.

What is so interesting, also, is Dianne and I came from different parts of the party and were thrown together just by history. Then the next thing was, women are going to start to fight and hate each other and of course, it never happened. We didn't agree on a couple of issues, but 90 percent of the time we agreed. If we didn't agree, they made a big point of it. So what? No two people are joined at the hip. But it was a wonderful run. Four times elected. And we were always a team at every election. I'm helping her now.

SCOTT: This remarkable moment in 1992 when a record number of women run for office across the board: state, national, and specifically the largest number of women ever running for U.S. Senate seats, and winning, tripling the number of women in the U.S. Senate from two to six. And then in 1993, you are soon joined by Kay Bailey Hutchison, making it seven.

BOXER: Exactly. And it just kept getting bigger.

SCOTT: And it just kept rolling from there.

BOXER: We did a book called *Nine and Counting*, Kay and Barbara Mikulski organized it.² And now we are 23, it's great. I want to see 50 before I die. That's my goal. I hope it happens. It could happen, it really could happen.

SCOTT: Tell me what the Senate was like coming in in 1993. What was the institution like?

BOXER: The men were kind of perplexed at how this all happened. They had Dianne and me, they had Patty Murray, Carol Moseley Braun. It was shocking—adding to the two that were there [Barbara Mikulski and Nancy Kassebaum]. Every time that the women would talk together, they would come over and say, "What are you conspiring about?" I said, "You guys are always talking. We never go over to you and ask. Why do you think we are conspiring? We are talking about issues." But again, some of the men would just go out of their way to be fair, to be kind.

Joe Biden was great. I remember that he helped get me on the Environment Committee. That's where I made my name in the House and I wanted to continue, Environment and Public Works. The chairman at that time—oh no, that was the Commerce Committee. Let's put it this way—Joe helped me and every chairman would go, "Oh my god, won't she just be trouble?"

² Barbara Mikulski, *Nine and Counting: the Women of the Senate* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2000).

She's going to be trouble." (laughs) He would say, "She's not trouble! She's a hard worker and she cares. You'll love her." He was so good to me in that sense.

SCOTT: He was a mentor, would you call him that?

BOXER: He definitely helped me enormously in the Senate. Joe was great.

Barbara [Mikulski] was the number one mentor. I had a lot of friends, male friends, who were just tremendous to me. I would say Joe was great. Danny Inouye was super helpful. Carl Levin, just really very, very, very helpful. Harry Reid, Tom Daschle. You know, Tom put me in leadership where I stayed for many years. Harry, unbelievable. Harry is a brother to me, still to this day. Just sensational. We came into the House together, we bonded. The Californians took him into our delegation in the House because he was the only Democrat from Nevada. So we gave him a seat at the table and he always paid us back. He was just lovely.

SCOTT: What did you learn about the Senate? What difference did you notice in the Senate versus the House?

BOXER: Well, it's Venus/Mars in terms of everything. The only thing you bring from the House is your knowledge of the issues. But in terms of the way things get done, it couldn't be more different. In the House, it's more like a parliamentary system, basically. The leaders decide what's coming, how they are going to frame the questions, and the members don't have too much say in it. In the House, it's a great job because you have the bully pulpit. You have a small district. You can really get to know all the people and it's wonderful. But in terms of having power, you'd have to be in the leadership or a committee chair, to a lesser extent, a subcommittee chair. Otherwise, there is really not much that you can do other than just offer an amendment. [brief interruption]

This newspaper is the *Desert Sun*, that's the local paper. They are doing a profile on my post-Senate. It's hysterical. So, I made today my Senate day. What am I doing? Looking back and looking forward. She wants to know what I'm doing now with the podcast and with the PAC and other stuff.

Where were we? I was saying the difference between [the House and Senate]. I would say that being a senator with no other consideration, just a senator, you are as powerful as you are as a committee chair over in the House. That's something to say. Because there are so few of us and because you are needed. Now, since they changed the filibuster rules a little bit, you need a little less, but still, it's pretty clear that a United States senator has a tremendous amount of power that can stop everything, can shut it down.

In the House, the way I got to be known a little more was I had good ideas and I would offer good amendments that were interesting. For example, I offered the amendment to say you could use federal funds for abortion if you were the victim of rape. That was mine. I worked with

this House member, Les AuCoin. Rape or incest, that was a breakthrough thing. But I worked with a man on that, Les AuCoin.

I also got the dolphin safe tuna label on all the tuna cans, which was really hard to do, but we did it. So there were ways—which it still is, dolphin safe tuna, to this day. That’s the only way in the House. You have to be able to get some interesting things that nobody else has. I also did military spare parts. I found out that they cost, you know, hundreds or thousands of dollars for a screw or something (laughs) and I managed to bring that. So in the House you have to be diligent. You have to have a unique ability to capture the attention. It’s hard to get known as a House member.

In the Senate, just by virtue of being a senator, you have so much more power. That was amazing and interesting, and important. You learn that pretty quickly, but it takes a little while to figure out how to get things done in the Senate because it’s arcane. You really have to work both sides of the aisle. Not in the House, you don’t. Whichever party is in control in the House, you work with them. But in the Senate, it’s got to be bipartisan, because if one person is annoyed at you, they’ll stop the whole thing and never let it happen. So, what a lesson! And it makes you a more congenial person. You can’t carry around a grudge against anybody because you could hate them one day because they didn’t treat you right, but boy, you better make up because the next day you need them. So, the Senate sort of forces you to get over your anger if you want to ever get anything done.

It’s a huge difference. It’s not even close to one another. There is nothing like it. The two institutions are so different that the only thing that binds us together are the issues themselves. But how you get it done, forget it. You need a whole new lesson. That’s why, when women came, when we came in ’92, Barbara Mikulski had workshops, how to get on the committees you want, how to get something done. It was so great of her. And Bob Byrd—may he rest in peace—he also did things for the women. He got us together. He taught us, don’t read the newspaper when you are presiding over the Senate. Don’t do this, and don’t do that. All these lessons, he felt he was being so gentlemanly, and he was. He was really helpful to the women.

SCOTT: Was that a bipartisan group?

BOXER: Oh yes, he would invite us all up to teach us.

SCOTT: Tell me about getting your committee assignments. How did you do it? What was that process like?

BOXER: As I said, Joe Biden helped a lot. When we came in, he wanted to get a woman on the Judiciary Committee because he knew how bad it looked. He asked me if I wanted to go. I said, “No, that wouldn’t be what I want. I want the Environment, I want Budget,” and I think I said I want Commerce. I knew what I wanted. I guess that Dianne got Appropriations. We knew one of us wanted Appropriations. She got that. He helped me tremendously get on my

committees, he and Barbara. He kind of talked to the leadership. I was very happy with what I got. I was just very pleased.

I really wanted to get on Foreign Relations. Oh, I know what. They put me on one that I didn't want to go on, Banking. Well, if you are going to get Environment, and you are going to get Budget, you gotta go on one that you don't want. What's that? Banking. I didn't want to go on that committee because I felt it was too dominated by special interests. I didn't feel like I wanted to be visited every week by my banks, which is what they did. I had to do it, but when an opening occurred on Foreign Relations, by that time I had a good reputation as being a good member. So, I easily got on Foreign Relations where I spent a long time. I was the most senior Democrat on Foreign Relations. John Kerry was so nice to me. He let me create a subcommittee on women's global issues, and chair it. So I was the first woman and the first person to chair that particular committee. Human rights, including women's rights, worldwide.

SCOTT: I was going to ask you why you wanted Foreign Relations.

BOXER: That was the driving force, but I also, the reason I got into politics in the first place when I was a young mother was the Vietnam War. I saw how it could tear apart a country, and to me it was getting involved in a civil war. So, I was always very interested and intrigued by foreign relations. I also cared a lot about Israel and the peace process in the Middle East. I was worried about the Cold War and all of these things. How are we going to get rid of nukes. So, I always was interested. I had my eye on Foreign Relations and was thrilled when that opened. I served many years on that committee.

SCOTT: Shortly after you joined the Senate, Senator Barbara Mikulski began holding bipartisan dinners for women senators. Tell me about that and tell me what that group meant to you.

BOXER: She and Kay Bailey worked together on it. I loved it. We all loved it because, you know, a lot of people who are in different fields, like cops, they always say, no one understands what it is like to be a cop except for other cops. No one understands what it is, you know? No one understands what it is to be an emergency room nurse than another emergency room nurse. It's really the same way as women senators. No one understood what it was like to get in there and have people, the older men, be a bit condescending, and a bit confused about how to handle you, how to respect you. All of that. Maybe even down deep, opposed to this changing of the roles, of the guard. So getting together across the party lines was a great idea. It really became a kind of inoculation against the cynicism between the parties. I really hope that that continues. What was nice about it is, we didn't talk issues, really we didn't. Because look, we had differences. But we just talked about our families and things that we didn't think might be fair.

For example, we had this tiny little bathroom off the floor which we didn't even have—when I came to the Senate there was no women's room. You had to go downstairs to go to the

bathroom. I couldn't believe it, so we got this—Harry—got us this little tiny bathroom. And then we got more and more and more and more women there and this tiny little bathroom. So, I went to Harry and said, "You have a room that backs up against the women's bathroom. Do you really use it?" He said, "I'll give it up." He was so great. They built us a decent powder room and it sounds like a small point. It's not a small point when you are in the middle of voting to leave the floor, you could even miss a vote, and drag yourself down to the first floor. It's crazy.

So little things like that, we would talk about, little silly things. Working out in the gym, how to do it. Blah, blah, blah. We had a women's gym in the Senate, which we also got done. Chris Dodd was really great about that and got us a women's gym. But women wanted to use the pool. I don't swim that much, or, let's say, I swim badly! But some of the women were serious swimmers and they went to the men and said, "Look, we don't want to use your gym but we'd like to be able to use the pool." One senator, who shall remain nameless said, "I swim naked and I'm not changing for anything." I think he did change. We said, you better. But silly, crazy things like that. Once in a while a women's issue would come up that we really cared about. Equal pay for equal work, that went across party lines and we were able to work together on it. Fairness, social security, how social security treats women, all of these things. Barbara and Kay did a great job of that. I was delighted to go to as many of those as I could.

SCOTT: How often did you go?

BOXER: Well, there wasn't anything set thing. Sometimes she'd do it every three weeks, every five weeks, every six weeks, every month. It just was when the spirit moved and we felt we needed to get together. It was nice. I was pulled because I had my daughter, her husband, and my grandson, I was living with them on the Hill. So, I was always like, "I'll pop in," but I got to go have dinner with them. Just popping in was fun. It was good.

SCOTT: A lot of the articles that I read after the '92 election, a lot of the male journalists in particular, suggested that the women who were going to be sworn in to the Senate were going to have to learn how to play by the rules in the "Old Boys Club." That *you* were going to have to change in order to operate efficiently and effectively in this "Old Boys" institution. What do you think about that statement? Do you feel that that's what you all did?

BOXER: No, I honestly don't. I think what we did is we brought our sensibilities and our point of view to the Senate and we made sure it was known.

Look, everybody sees life through their own set of experiences. Women are not better than men in any way shape or form. We are equal to men. We bring a different set of eyes to life. Minorities are equal. They bring their sensibilities. If you are going to represent the country, you don't go in and change who you are, you bring who you are with you. I think what happened was, we brought a lot of issues with us. We continue to bring a lot of issues with us, in terms of the healthcare system, how it works for women, employment, how it works for women. Now we

are seeing more concern about racial profiling, issues like that. We are not seeing enough progress on any front in my opinion, but that's another story.

Everyone brings a different perspective and is not afraid to talk about it. One time in the caucus Cory Booker spoke up about what it was like for him to be a Rhodes Scholar, Stanford graduate student, and to be pulled over by the police for no reason, thrown up against the wall. He talked about it on the Senate floor. He has written about it. He thought it was the end of his life. At the end of his standing there, not moving, they said, "You can go." He said, "What did I do? What happened?" Mistaken identity. Never an apology. Senator [Tim] Scott talked about how the sergeant at arms in the Capitol kept saying, "I see your pin, but I don't believe it." Something like that. Horrible stuff! Good for them, yay for them, fantastic to bring forth their life experiences. This is going to make us a better institution. I think we just need so many more women and so many more minorities, just to reflect the reality of America, in order for this institution to become more representative is very important.

One of the things about the founders, they were so imperfect, they were so genius. They said, "We have to become a more perfect union." They admitted they weren't perfect. They certainly were not perfect. The only people who could vote initially were white men with property. In the census, slaves didn't count as people. They were [three-fifths] of a person. These horrible things in the past, we have to become more perfect. The only way to do it is to have people there who can attest to the fact that there are still problems.

But no, women did not, in my opinion, change in any way shape or form. They just brought their sensibilities, laid it out on the table, and then took their licks and took their victory laps, depending.

SCOTT: People often ask what difference does it make to have more women, for example, or minorities, in an institution? How do you answer that question?

BOXER: Just what I said. You cannot have a relevant institution of government if it doesn't represent the people. We are not a country of white men. We are a country of more women than men. We are a country—we have many states like Texas and California [where] there is no majority. We are a very diverse country. It is our strength. It has proven to be the great experiment. If we want it to last, this experiment, and to be really relevant and successful, we need people in the Senate and the House who represent the diversity: gays, straight, black, white, brown, yellow, you name it. Women, men. Old, young. Frankly, it's all important. Because this isn't a board of directors of a company that is selling a product to teenagers or selling a product to old people. No, we are governing a country that is so diverse and so interesting, that you have to have people who can bring the perspective.

I can tell you, whenever I would go down and debate one of the men on a woman's right to choose, I found it remarkable that they would say, they would talk about childbirth. That's fine. They never gave birth. But I'm interested, I'm sure they helped and everything else. My

husband did. But they don't know. I would always go down there and say, "I hear you talking about the joys of childbirth and that's wonderful. It is a joy. It's also scary. It's also dangerous. It also doesn't always turn out well. Let's talk about it realistically and why we need to have every option for a woman to save her life, to protect her health." I mean, if you don't have women, and I will tell you right now, in every choice debate whatever side people are on, that's their own business. I respect them any way they come out on it. But to have a debate on a woman's right to choose without women speaking about it? That's ridiculous. That's like talking about prostate cancer without men. You would never do that. That's why it's important. If we are going to remain a successful democracy, that's why it's important.

SCOTT: In the 1992 election there were allegations made public about Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon. The Senate in 1993, the Senate Ethics Committee, decided to pursue an investigation of those allegations. Were you on the Ethics Committee?

BOXER: No, Barbara [Mikulski] was on it. She was the top Democrat. She was on it and she had been—no, Dick Bryan had been the chairman and then they took over in 1994. But in 1993, the Democrats were in charge. Let me just tell you—I won in November. The day after I win there was a story in the *Washington Post*. I win because of Anita Hill and sexual harassment. Now I can't wait to get there to fight for my state. Boom! Bob Packwood, 21 women accuse him of sexual harassment and worse, assault and all the rest. So, yes, I come in a brand-new senator and the Ethics Committee takes it up. Dick Bryan is in charge and I breathe a sigh of relief. They are going to handle it, it will all be fine. To make a long story short, all of a sudden, it's two years later and nothing has happened. And now the Republicans are in charge and Mitch McConnell is the chairman of the Ethics Committee and Barbara is on it. The Ethics Committee can't tell anyone what they are doing. But I keep seeing more and more women and I keep talking about it. We need a public hearing; we have to see what is going on. Justice isn't being done and I'm starting to speak out. Then, I find out that the Ethics Committee decided not to hold public hearings, it was 3-3. You didn't know—you knew they decided not to do public hearings, but you didn't know what the vote was because they are not allowed to talk about it. Barbara couldn't tell me because she was not allowed to talk about it. So I went up to her and I said, "I know you can't talk about it, but I am disgusted and I'm going to pursue this on the floor unless you tell me not to." She never said a word, looked in my eyes, and I knew I had to pursue it. She never opened her mouth. I started to take on the whole issue.

Well, needless to say, here I am, only in the Senate for a couple years and now I'm—and they, Bob Dole has called me the most partisan person in the history of the Senate. Mitch McConnell took me on. I've just seen all the clips—my daughter is doing some documentary film about this—and they are dumping on me. Now I'm on TV and I'm saying why it's important. We had a vote to overturn the committee and have public hearings. And we lost it, 54-46, or 48-52, I can't remember. It was very close. The fact that so many members voted for public hearings was a real signal. And then there were diaries that became public. To make a long story short, they were ready to move on him and he resigned. I was in the middle of that. I

remember Bob Dole said, “Who is that Barbara Boxer? She just got here and all she is doing is talking about this. Does she want to become the chairman of the Ethics Committee?” Ha! And, of course, then I did, years later! (laughs) That was the best revenge!

SCOTT: That’s right, you were chairman!

BOXER: I was chairman or vice chairman for something like eight years. Harry gave me that. But it was so funny. He was so mad at me. He said, “She thinks she wants to be the chair of the Ethics Committee.” I was like, okay.

SCOTT: Why were the public hearings important for you?

BOXER: It was the only way to really get him out of the Senate. Because he was denying everything and they were sweeping it under the rug in the committee. It was just going to go away. It was politics because, look, I understand what it was about. They were afraid if he resigned, there would be a Democrat. It turned out we did get Ron Wyden at that point. They were trying to protect their own. When it comes to Ethics, you can’t do it. Neither party can do it. But it was a very ugly period for me because I was taking on the Old Boys Club, big time. There were other people, but nobody did it like I did. Why? Because I ran because of Anita Hill. Anita Hill was the one who made it possible for me to win and I had promised. So it was not good for me personally in the Senate, in terms of my relationships and all, I can tell you.

SCOTT: Did you feel that you had to repair some relationships after that?

BOXER: No! No, I didn’t repair them. Mitch and I didn’t talk for 20 years. I’m not kidding. Mitch and I were, “Hi,” [and] “Bye,” “How are you?” That was it. After 20 years we worked together on a highway bill and we did a great job. It became law before I left and it’s still law right now. It’s a five-year bill. He and I really got to know each other and really worked well together. But, honestly, the feelings cut deep because I am the type of person when someone really cuts you up and has you for dinner, bye-bye. I won’t do anything except count me out. I can’t be part of it. And it was pretty bad because (laughs) Mitch was pretty cruel to me on the floor of the Senate. And Dole was pretty cruel to me on the floor of the Senate. Funny, when I wrote about this in my memoir, he wrote his version of it and it’s two different versions. He takes full credit for Bob Packwood leaving. But the fact is, he is the one who stopped the public hearing, and if it wasn’t for the vote and for the diaries, it would have been swept under the rug. You know, we laugh about it. He says, “Well, I have my own version.” He puts himself as like a hero in that one.

Then I had another one with John Ensign. That was the other that came later. I felt so bad because I really worked well with John and I had written my after school bill with him and I liked him a lot and it was a very sad thing. But I was then chairman of the Ethics Committee and the committee was 6-0 on that whole thing. And he left.

SCOTT: That is the role of the Ethics Committee in the Senate.

BOXER: That's right, but if you didn't have women in the Senate, you wouldn't have gotten rid of Packwood. I can tell you right now. Mikulski was the one who gave me the evil eye and I knew I had to do my job. In terms of Ensign, the women said we are not going to take this. Now, they have to really change the way they handle sexual harassment in the Senate. That's a whole other story that is happening as we speak.

SCOTT: I wondered what your thoughts were about it, knowing that you are not in the Senate.

BOXER: Why doesn't Mitch bring it up? I don't get it. What's going on over there? They will. The women will fight for it, women on both sides of the aisle will get it. But he should bring it up. Mitch, Mitch who takes credit for getting rid of Packwood—wrongly—should bring this up.

I had a very funny interview with Chelsea Handler on her show. It wasn't her, it was Samantha Bee. Samantha Bee said, "I just read your memoir and I read that you didn't talk to Mitch McConnell for 20 years." I said it's true. She said, "Weren't those the best 20 years of your life?" I said, "Oh come on!" I was laughing so hard. I remember after Mitch and I did that bill together, we couldn't believe how well we worked together. I bought him a tie which had bridges all over it, for the construction of bridges. And he got me a Louisville slugger bat, saying that I hit it out of the park, or whatever. We really had a lovely experience. But it's unfortunate that that Packwood case cut so deep in my heart. I don't think I was treated right. All I was trying to do was get rid of a predator.

SCOTT: Are there barriers in the Senate to dealing with the issue of sexual harassment?

BOXER: Sure, that's why they want to do the reform. As we speak, there is a really good bill that passed the House on how to deal with it. Because right now, if you are an employee and you are experiencing this, there is this huge cooling off period and you are kind of put on the spot. It's not a good system. I'm sorry to say that I voted for that system just thinking it was a reform and not really paying enough attention. I admit that, and I apologize. But now there is a good way to fix it and the Senate doesn't seem to take it up. Hopefully, they will take it up. The question is, will the president, who is known for saying how he likes to grab women, will he sign it? That's a whole other thing.

SCOTT: The #MeToo movement has certainly changed the way that we are talking about this issue. If Anita Hill launched the first #MeToo, this is maybe #MeToo number two.

BOXER: Absolutely. And it seems to be broader.

SCOTT: It is widespread, it is touching multiple industries, worldwide at this point.

BOXER: It's really—I'm not a psychologist or a psychiatrist and I don't know why this happens so frequently, but my analysis, which is not unique, is, it's really all about power. Men who are threatened by a woman who may be powerful or potentially powerful, or men who are reacting against women who are powerful, will attack weaker women who are on the way up. It's just awful. No one should have a right to do that to anybody. Some women do it to men. There are a few cases, 10 percent of the cases. It's really about abuse of power more than anything else. And rape is about power more than it's about sex.

SCOTT: Do you have personal experience with sexual harassment? Did you experience it as a stock broker, for example?

BOXER: Every day of the week. That was employment discrimination. I just couldn't get the jobs I wanted. I had to be a secretary and do a little—I had my little business on the side. It was ridiculous. I didn't complain about it. It was horrible for me.

These big firms, they call the stock brokers "customers' men." That's what they called them. I wanted to be a customers' man. I wanted to have customers and I wanted to sell stock. They wouldn't allow it. "We don't allow women." If that happened today, there would be a lawsuit in a minute, but that was in the '60s. So I did it my own way. I studied privately for my test, I passed it. I went to the boss. He said, "Well, if you want to have it on the side, you can." The first boss said, "No, you're out. You can't." The second place I went they said, "You can be a secretary to the vice president, and if you want, you can have your business on the side." Never complained about it. It was horrible, viciously horrible. It wasn't sexual, it was just prejudice against women and keeping out the competition. That was awful.

In college, I had an absolute predator as a professor who pushed me up against the wall and put his tongue down my—you know. I write about it. And I didn't say anything about it until after Anita Hill. Stu knew about it, my husband, because I was married at the time. I was married, I was still in college. He was actually waiting for me downstairs. The professor, I had complained about a grade that he had given me. I had all As and he gave me a C, and I was just devastated. He lured me up to his office, threw me up against the wall. I got away and Stu was waiting downstairs and he said, "Let's just go report it." And he and I said, "Let's think about this. He'll stop your graduation. No one will believe you. The guy has five kids. He is beloved." Classic case. So he and I kept it to ourselves until I wrote about it years later. That's what Anita Hill's experience, and that's what the #MeToo movement is doing. That powerful men and in some unique cases, women, abuse their power in these ways. It's sick. It's literally sick. It should not be tolerated.

Yes, the Senate does not have a good system. It's better than it was pre-Packwood, but it's still not good. I'm waiting with bated breath. I think they will eventually get it done.

SCOTT: The issue has come to the Senate recently. We've had a resignation in part because of allegations against Senator Al Franken, who I think was someone you worked with from time to time.

BOXER: Very well. I loved working with Al, but Al did the right thing.

SCOTT: You think so?

BOXER: I definitely think so because what would have happened is, I believe more women would have come forward with their stories and clearly there is differences in what he did and what Packwood did. But, you don't touch people, period. You've no right. It would have been, he would have been in front of the Ethics Committee. It would have been a mess. It would have distracted from all the other issues. So, I think Al did the right thing. But it's disappointing and sad. But there can't be—unwanted touching is not something any United States senator should do. It's not your territory, buddy. (laughs) That's just how it is.

SCOTT: What do you think of as your 24-year legacy in the U.S. Senate? How do you want to be remembered?

BOXER: I want to be remembered as a real fighter for the things I believed in on behalf of my people. A fighter for the environment who took no guff from the oil companies or the polluters. A fighter against any type of prejudice, whether it was racial prejudice, or prejudice against LGBT, or women. A fighter for equality and for a foreign policy that led to a peaceful world. In a nutshell, that will be it. Who wasn't afraid of anything or anyone, couldn't be shut up (laughs) because that's why you are there!

Fearless. The reason that I feel that way is because I want other people coming after me to have that same sense of being unafraid. Unafraid is the most important word in the language for me because there is every reason to be afraid every day if you are in politics. If you say something that is a little ahead of the curve, "Katy bar the door." If you take someone on directly, "Katy bar the door." But you only serve for a brief period in your lifetime. Even if you stay there forever more, you are still going to be gone at some point. So, make the most of it.

One of the most discouraging things that I see today are so many people that don't agree with this president who roll their eyes about it, on both sides of the aisle. Roll their eyes, instead of saying how they feel. I think that enables people and I think it's bad.

SCOTT: What advice do you give to women today who you meet and are thinking about entering public service in some form?

BOXER: I give a lot of speeches. I have not left politics. I have an agent and I speak all over the country. A lot of it is empowerment. I've got several speeches coming up, a lot of them are based on my book.

Basically, I say if you want to go into politics, don't say, "I want to be a senator." Say, "I want to do something about homelessness," or health care, or prejudice, or whatever the issue is. Don't want to *be* something, want to *do* something. Otherwise, don't bother because it isn't worth your time. You have to have a passion for the issue. It could be one issue, it could be six issues. It could be three issues. For me, it's several issues. I'm passionate. Why am I passionate? I don't know, I was born that way. I grew up in a family that taught me about the evil of the Holocaust and so when I see anything that resembles any kind of prejudice and bigotry and hatred, I will speak up and speak out, take my lumps or whatever.

I try to tell women and men who would ask me, don't do it unless you are passionate about some issue and you want to get something done. Before you run, prove it to people that you can. You don't just wake up and run for the Senate. I don't believe in that. I'm old fashioned in that. I think you need to pay a few dues. Look around at your local community. Maybe it's the school board. Maybe it's the city council. Maybe it's running a nonprofit. But prove that you can in fact be effective.

Every time I moved up from one office to the next, it's all the same in terms of what you are trying to do. You have an idea. You want to win it. You want to change things. You've got to persuade people. So you have to prove it to the voters, in my opinion, that you can do it. There is no particular path, but I think that is key.

And, always, always be true to yourself because in the end you look at yourself in the mirror and if you don't feel good about yourself, you are weak. You are not going to be able to do your work. I had one colleague say to me once, because I was fighting for an environmental bill and I was fighting hard against what had been put forward as a bipartisan bill, which I thought was terrible, and this woman said to me, "You are the most unpopular person right now in the caucus." And I looked at her and I said, "This is not high school. I don't care." And that kind of sums it up! At the end of the day, people will respect you and they'll get over what they are mad about because the next day they will need you on something else. Don't do it because you want to be the most popular in the caucus, or you want to be the most loved, [et cetera]. Just bring a spirit of congeniality but also a spirit of determination on the issue you are fighting for and you will be successful. You've got to cross the aisle, you've got to, or you can't be successful. Those are the things that I tell them.

Right now, we have a very tough situation in the country. It's a very strong divide. What upsets me is, I always thought there were basic values in America. I embrace those values: the value of a free press, the value of everyone treated equally, the value of no discrimination, the value of clean air and clean water. Those to me I always thought of as values. People are taking a wrecking ball to some of this and we need to reverse course. It's a very important thing. Whatever party you are in doesn't matter to me. What matters to me is, do you embrace these values and will you fight for these values even when it's hard to do. We are seeing some brave

people do that. It isn't easy, but at the end of the day they are the ones who are going to be the happy ones.

SCOTT: Change is often slow, particularly in the Senate. How did the Senate as an institution change; what kind of changes did you see in the institution in your 24 years?

BOXER: I definitely think respect for women has come. The men who are exposed to these strong women really do respect us, for the most part. That doesn't speak for everyone, but I think that as an institution, it now understands, the institution recognizes that there is going to be diversity. I'm not saying everyone likes it. I'm not saying that. But there is no choice because people are going to vote for interesting folks who are going to question the status quo. I think they have come to the realization that they have to become more respectful of diversity and more respectful of women. That's a big, big thing.

I do think that the parties have grown further apart and that isn't good. I don't like it. I think what's happened is the special interests have gotten ahold of the conservative movement—this is my opinion—and have moved over so far on social issues and on tax issues, it's very, very tough to find the middle ground now. The only way that can change is with the electorate. We'll see. The electorate.

I think the institution has also changed because it is 24/7 news. I mean it. It's like 25/7. It's crazy! It's crazy! And there is constant pressure on elected officials now. Everything that you do is really monitored and there is no private time. Everything you do—there are trackers. There are a lot of bad stuff with campaigns. That's not a good thing. The campaign money is horrible. That's because of some Supreme Court decisions. So, it has become worse. It's become better in terms of respect and diversity. It's become worse in terms of having to spend all this time raising money.

I had to raise \$40 million for my last race, and that was a long time ago. That was 2010. Now it's \$80 million. Think about it. It's horrible! Unless you are super wealthy. And even if you are super wealthy, what does that say? That's another Supreme Court case, *Buckley v. Valeo*, money is speech. I hate that thought.

I've seen good things happen in terms of diversity. I've seen bad things happen in terms of money in politics. And bad things happen in terms of the parties moving further apart. But I do have hope that if people vote in big numbers, really everybody, Republicans, Democrats, "decline to state," in big numbers, we will come to some other place where we can have some kind of mainstream view of where we are headed.

It's very important because I'm worried. I don't like these attacks on the press. I also don't love attacks on our privacy. There are lots of issues that we have to deal with in this day of high tech. But I always take comfort in the old-fashioned view that if good people run, with good intention, and they win, we are going to be okay. That goes from the lowest office, all the way up

to the highest. There is always going to be a proportion of people who do not run with the best of intentions, who do not have personal integrity. But at the end of the day, my hope is that most of them will be good and we'll be okay. We will survive. It's a tough time right now.

SCOTT: You sound optimistic, though.

BOXER: I am because I believe in this country and I believe in our Constitution. I really think at the end of the day we will be okay. We are being tested.

I think we should end this with one of my favorite quotes of Ben Franklin. After the Constitution was written and somebody said, "Have you given us a monarchy, or a republic?" He paused and said, "A republic," and then he added, "if you can keep it." I tell you, in every one of my speeches today, I talk about that.

I do want to say, after leaving the Senate, I don't love my country less. I love it even more. I get teary when I talk about it. (pause) I have stayed involved, helping people, through my political action committee, who I think have those qualities that I talked about. I have a podcast with my daughter, which I love. It gives me the chance to speak out about issues because people say, "I miss your voice, I miss your voice!" I say, "Well, don't miss it. It's out there." I have this podcast out there and people are starting to listen to it. What I love is, doing it with my daughter is so great because she is a different generation. Sometimes we don't see eye to eye, but that's good. What we do is we try to do commentary on what is happening and then we each interview somebody really good. I have interviewed Senator Feinstein and Senator Murphy. I've interviewed historians, comedians, all about current issues. It has kept me out there. And my PAC, helping people that I believe in, that's kept me out there. My daughter and I are also working on a—which we hope will happen, and I will let you know because it would be a good coda to this interview—a TV series, not a fictional one, about a woman in politics. So, I will let you know if that happens.

That's pretty much the story, morning glory.

SCOTT: Thank you so much.

BOXER: You're welcome!

SCOTT: We have some great material here.

BOXER: Oh, good. I'm so glad. Now, talk to me about the project.

[End of Interview]

Index

- Abortion, 11, 15–16
- Abzug, Bella, 5–6
- Appropriations Committee, Senate, 12
- AuCoin, Les, 12
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, Senate, 13
- Bee, Samantha, 18
- Biden, Joseph (D-DE), 10–11, 12–13
- Bipartisanship, 12, 21
 - Women Senator Luncheons, 13–14
- Booker, Cory (D-NJ), 15
- Boxer, Nicole (daughter), 23
- Brooklyn College, 2
- Bryan, Richard (D-NV), 16
- Buckley v. Valeo*, 22
- Budget Committee, Senate, 12–13
- Burton, John, 6
- Byrd, Robert C. (D-WV), 12
- Campaign
 - Marin County Board of Supervisors (1972, 1976), 4–5
 - Senate (1992), 7–10
- Childhood, 1–3
- Clinton, William Jefferson "Bill", 9
- Coelho, Tony, 7
- Commerce Committee, Senate, 12
- Connelly, Barbara, 5
- Coulter, Ann, 3
- Cranston, Alan (D-CA), 7
- Daschle, Tom (D-SD), 11
- Diversity, 14–15, 22
- Dodd, Christopher (D-CT), 14
- Dole, Robert J. "Bob" (R-KS), 16–17
- Election
 - Marin County Board of Supervisors (1972, 1976), 4–5
 - Senate (1992), 7–10
- Emily's List, 6
- Ensign, John (R-NV), 17–18
- Environment and Public Works Committee, Senate, 10–11, 12–13
- Ethics Committee, Senate, 16–20
- Fazio, Vic, 6
- Feinstein, Dianne (D-CA), 9–10, 12, 23
- Ferraro, Geraldine, 5
- Foley, Thomas, 7
- Foreign Relations Committee, Senate, 13
 - Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues, 13
- Franken, Al (D-MN), 20
- Fundraising, 6, 22
- Gingrich, Newt, 7
- Gore, Jr., Albert "Al" (D-TN), 9
- Hill, Anita, 7, 9, 16–19
- Honoraria, 8
- House of Representatives
 - Gym, 3
 - House Banking Scandal, 7–8
 - service in, 5–8, 11–12
- Hutchison, Kay Bailey (R-TX), 10, 13, 14
- Inouye, Daniel (D-HI), 11
- Judaism, 9–10
- Judiciary Committee, Senate, 12
- Kassebaum, Nancy (R-KS), 10
- Kerry, John (D-MA), 13
- Levin, Carl (D-MI), 11
- Levy, Ira, 1–2
- Levy, Sophie S., 1–2
- Limbaugh, Rush, 3
- Lincoln, Abraham, 5
- Marin County Board of Supervisors, election to, 4–5
- McConnell, Mitch (R-KY), 16–18
- McNamara, Steve, 5
- "Me Too" Movement, 5, 18–19
- Mikulski, Barbara (D-MD), 5, 6, 10, 11–13, 14, 16, 18
- Miller, George, 6
- Moseley Braun, Carol (D-IL), 10
- Ms.*, 5
- Murphy, Christopher (D-CT), 23
- Murray, Patty (D-WA), 10
- National Organization for Women (NOW), 6
- National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), 6

Nixon, Richard (R-CA), 5
 "Old Boys' Club," 14, 17
 Packwood, Robert (R-OR), 16–20
 Polarization, Political, 22–23
 Racial profiling, 14–15
 Reid, Harry (D-NV), 11, 14, 17
 Scott, Tim (R-SC), 15
 Senate
 Bipartisan Women's Luncheons, 13–14
 Campaign for (1992), 7–10
 Committees. *See* Individual committees
 Gym, 14
 Sexual harassment in, 16–18
 Swimming Pool, 14
 Women's restroom in Capitol, 13–14
 Sex Discrimination, 19
 Sexual Assault, 19
 Sexual Harassment, 16–20
 Smith, Margaret Chase (R-ME), 2
 Snowe, Olympia (R-ME), 5
 Thomas, Clarence, 9
 Trump, Donald J., 18, 20
 Twitter, 3
 Vietnam War, 13
 Wall Street, 2
Washington Post, 16
 World War II, 2
 Wright, Jim, 7
 Wyden, Ron (D-OR), 17