

PROFILES

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM



Today, Shirley Chisholm's name is recognized around the country. She did not achieve this notoriety overnight. For years, Ms. Chisholm has fought many tough battles inside and outside of the political arena. She has committed herself to these numerous struggles while teaching young children, and serving as a politician at the state and federal levels. Now, she has returned to the academic world to teach as a college professor.

Ms. Chisholm was born in Brooklyn, New York. Brooklyn is the area where she would eventually devote many years of her life educating and politically representing the populace. She also spent several years growing up in the West Indies.

Shirley Chisholm's education in New York City included: Girls High School in Brooklyn; a Bachelor of Arts from Brooklyn College with a major in sociology; and a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Columbia University. She also received a teacher certification, and completed a professional diploma program in Supervision and Administration in Education at Columbia University.

Though trained as an educator, Ms. Chisholm admits that early on, she had a strong interest in law and the legal profession. While a career in this field never actually developed, she found herself thrust into the public eye in 1964, when she was elected to the New York State Legislature to represent the Fifty-Fifth Assembly District as a Democrat. She feels that this position, and the accompanying activities, brought her closest to working within the field of law.

Ms. Chisholm's noted political career moved from the state arena to the United States House of Representatives in 1969. From that time until 1982, she was a multiterm congresswoman representing a district in Brooklyn where over eighty-five percent of the constituency was either black or Puerto Rican. Her fluency in Spanish proved to be an enormous asset as she represented this congressional district.

While in Congress, Ms. Chisholm served in numerous capacities. She served as a member of the House Agricultural Subcommittee on Forestry and Rural Villages. She also served as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, the powerful House Rules Committee, and the Congressional Black Caucus.

There are two landmark achievements from which Shirley Chisholm derives her greatest sense of satisfaction. Her first achievement was to be the first black woman to serve in Congress. Her second achievement, which came during her congressional tenure, was to be the first woman to ever run for President of the United States. She took on this challenge in 1972, and though

she did not ultimately prevail, she was surprisingly successful in establishing her name and presenting her causes to the nation.

Presently, Ms. Chisholm feels that time is the limiting factor that prevents her from pursuing a legal career. As a result of her time constraints, she foresees no entry into the legal profession at this stage in her life. When one looks at her tremendously busy schedule, the reasons for this realistic sense of her own limitations become apparent.

Ms. Chisholm is currently the two-year holder of the esteemed Rivington Chair at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. She teaches courses in sociology, urban sociology, and political science. She has eagerly accepted a recent offer by the college to remain on the faculty. Ms. Chisholm describes her teaching experience as an "exciting" and "challenging experience."

Her selfless allegiance to the causes of equality and fair representation were perhaps most recently demonstrated by her monumental effort to aid the Reverend Jesse Jackson's 1984 campaign for the Democratic nomination for president. Political ideology aside, Ms. Chisholm served as one of Reverend Jackson's chief spokespeople on the campaign trail. Despite a hectic personal and professional schedule of her own, she campaigned for Reverend Jackson with the dedication and drive with which she has always approached her tasks.

Long recognized for her valuable contributions, particularly toward the causes of the less privileged, Ms. Chisholm has been acknowledged across the country. She has received more than twenty-two honorary degrees. She has also received many honorary citizenships, and similar awards.

When Ms. Chisholm is not teaching, campaigning, or receiving deserved awards, she has time to contemplate about present day America. With her unique insight, she views the position of black women in this environment as one of double jeopardy. The doors of law and politics remain closed to them in large part, because they are women, and because they are black. Ms. Chisholm believes that the future for minorities in professional schools, especially law and medicine, is grim. An unprecedented reduction in not only funding and support, but also in government concern, has created a situation from which all groups will necessarily suffer.

Ms. Chisholm also takes time out of her demanding schedule to spend precious moments with her husband, Arthur Hardwick, and to work on her third book, *The Illusion of Inclusion*. She presently has no future plans to pursue a political career. But, as always, she confidently chooses not to worry about what lies ahead. She firmly believes in living a single day at a time. Considering all of her accomplishments, it is readily apparent that Shirley Chisholm's success is hard earned, and well deserved.

TIM TAYLOR