

MOURNING THE LOSS OF SHIRLEY
CHISHOLM

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to mourn the passing of my predecessor and mentor, former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.

As the first African-American woman elected to Congress and the first African-American to seriously run for the office of the Presidency, Shirley was a trailblazer who opened the doors of opportunity for generations of women and minority politicians.

Her advocacy for the education of the disadvantaged, Title IX, and early childhood education established her as one of the foremost education policymakers during her seven terms in Congress. But her legacy did not end there. Unmatched as a voice for social justice, Shirley fought for the interests of groups like veterans, Haitian refugees and day workers.

A gifted orator, Shirley's "unbought and unbossed" political style allowed her to make friends and political alliances on both sides of the aisle. She was truly one in a million and I am honored to have been part of her Brooklyn political circle and to have worked along side her throughout her political career. Anyone who came in contact with Shirley Chisholm was forever changed for the better; she is one soul on this earth who is truly irreplaceable and she will be sorely missed by all of those who knew and loved her.

REMEMBERING SHIRLEY
CHISHOLM

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, today I'm filled with great sadness that on the eve of the 109th Congress we mourn the passing of my longtime friend and colleague, Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to Congress and the first of her race to seek a major party nomination for the Presidency. She died at her Ormond Beach, FL home on New Year's Day at the age of 80.

I commend to my colleagues the following article describing a time in the life of Shirley Chisholm written by Wil Haygood in the Washington Post on January 4, 2005.

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 4, 2005]

A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM TOOK A BACK SEAT TO NO ONE

(By Wil Haygood)

There was something so plain and yet so defiant about her. Studious and yet a little jazzy, especially in front of those Brooklyn church ladies.

Shirley Chisholm, the former congresswoman who died New Year's Day in Florida at age 80, came along at a moment in the 1960s when there was a bubbling symmetry between the women's liberation movement and the civil rights movement. She was holding two candles in the wind.

At church podiums in Brooklyn, she'd talk about babies eating paint they had peeled

from the walls, and she'd talk about malnourished schoolchildren, and she'd raise her fist, and her big mound of cloudlike hair would bob, and she would start to crying, tears rolling from beneath those beatnik-era glasses. She would turn her back to the audience—as if she couldn't stand her own tears—and then turn around to face the folk in the pews, and they'd be stomping.

"I used to say to her, 'You should go into drama,' " recalls Edolphus Towns, a Democratic congressman from Brooklyn. "She could drop tears at any time."

Chisholm began her working life in 1950s Brooklyn. She was the director of a day-care center and worked as an educational consultant for the city. The tots had parents and she befriended them and got herself elected to the New York State Assembly in 1964. She was headed to Albany, the same place that launched the national political careers of Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Dewey, Franklin D. Roosevelt and many others.

In the '60s, the talk in New York of black political figures focused on names such as Basil Patterson, Percy Sutton, Charlie Rangel. They were young lions who belonged to Harlem political clubs. (There was also Adam Clayton Powell, the once-powerful congressman who had crawled back to Congress in 1969 after an expulsion and scandalous headlines. But his day was now gone.)

But Patterson and Sutton and Rangel suddenly had to yank their heads and look across the bridge, to Brooklyn.

Shirley who?

"Shirley came out of Brooklyn, and that was one of the roughest political arenas you can come out of—even today," says Rep. Rangel (D), who knew Chisholm for decades. "For her to succeed, she had to be a little strange—and certainly extraordinary."

In addition to being a woman and from Brooklyn, Chisholm was also—unlike Powell, Sutton, Rangel and Patterson—dark-skinned. Given the history of skin color, she had an extra ladder to climb, and did so with relish, carrying herself with the insouciance of the world's most attractive woman.

So there she'd be, needing a ride to Albany and getting herself over to Harlem so that Sutton, who was also in the assembly, could pick her up.

"Shirley would meet us on the corner of 125th and Seventh—now Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard—and ride with us to Albany," says Sutton. "We did that for two years."

Sutton noted something about Chisholm on those rides. She was hungry for debate: "Even if she agreed with you, she'd want to debate you!"

With the '60s drawing to a close, Chisholm was swimming in the waters of history. "She had the imagination," says Rangel, "of being first—and tenacious."

So she announced in 1968 that she was running for Congress. There were howls of laughter, though not from the church ladies, who saw themselves in the reflection of her beatnik eyeglasses.

In 1968, she became the first black woman elected to Congress. She grinned and gave the peace sign. It wasn't black power. It was Shirley power. She wound up serving seven terms.

She pushed for antipoverty legislation and became a star. Ebony magazine wanted her, and so did Ms. magazine. She appeared with Reps. Barbara Jordan and Bella Abzug. She was known as honest and honorable. "Chisholm would not set up any kind of a side deal for her mother, brother, or cousin," says William Howard, who served as her financial adviser.

When Chisholm announced a run for the presidency in 1972, it seemed a little strange. She was the first black to conduct a large-scale presidential campaign within one of

the major parties. The Congressional Black Caucus hardly had the numbers then that it has now, but she rolled her eyes when its members asked why she hadn't discussed her presidential plans with them. "Shirley had a lot of self-confidence," says Rangel.

"I Am Woman" by Helen Reddy was humming on the jukebox that year.

"Black people needed somebody," says Sutton. "We had lost Martin and Malcolm." He raised the first \$25,000 for her presidential campaign.

At the Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach, she was smiling from the podium—those glasses, that hair, the dark skin. Simply getting there was a huge victory.

"The next time a woman runs," she wrote in her 1973 autobiography, "The Good Fight," "or a black, a Jew or anyone from a group that the country is 'not ready' to elect to its highest office, I believe he or she will be taken seriously from the start. The door is not open yet, but it is ajar."

And, in time, they came: Geraldine Ferraro, Jesse Jackson, Joseph Lieberman.

The last time William Howard saw Chisholm was a year and a half ago in Manhattan. She had wanted to go dancing. She was peering at him, through those beatnik glasses, out on the dance floor, imploring him to tell the band to play something jazzy.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF
FORMER REPRESENTATIVE
SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to honor the memory of former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, who was a national role model.

I followed in the footsteps of Rep. Chisholm in several respects, having served both in the New York State Assembly and in the House of Representatives. To my knowledge, we are the only two Democratic women from New York State to have that distinction.

Shirley Chisholm was a tireless advocate for social justice, and for that legacy our country will be eternally grateful.

As the first black woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress and to run for president of the United States, Shirley Chisholm threw open the doors to greater opportunities for women and minorities.

Along with Congresswoman Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan—also great women's rights leaders—Shirley Chisholm founded the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971. She also helped found the Congressional Black Caucus. Both of these organizations have served an important role in increasing representation of women and minorities in Congress.

I think it is important to note her life-long passion for improving educational opportunities for our Nation's youth, carrying on this tradition after her years in Congress by serving as the Purington Professor at Mount Holyoke College.

She also promoted increased assistance for urban areas, land rights for Native Americans, fair treatment of Haitian refugees, and more help for working-class families trying to make ends meet.

I join together with our Nation in honoring her life's work. Along with my colleagues, I co-sponsored a Congressional resolution today

that would honor her life. This resolution will help ensure that her legacy and the positive momentum that she initiated through her work would continue, and I urge the House to bring this resolution up for a vote without delay.

HONORING REPRESENTATIVE
SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

HON. ELIOT L. ENGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 4, 2005

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay honor to Representative Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to Congress and a candidate for the presidency in 1972, and who passed away on Saturday in Florida at the age of 80. Representative Chisholm was elected to Congress in 1968 and served until 1982. During her seven terms, she was an outspoken advocate for women and minorities and a riveting speaker who often called on Congress to be more responsive to the public.

During her first term in Congress, Representative Chisholm hired an all-female staff

and spoke out for civil rights, women's rights, the poor, and against the Vietnam War. Throughout her tenure, she was a sought-after public speaker. Representative Chisholm was a cofounder of the National Organization for Women, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the National Women's Political Caucus. She was also the first black person to conduct a large-scale campaign for the presidency within the two-party system. As a candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1972, Representative Chisholm won 152 delegates before withdrawing from the race. When her ideological opposite, George Wallace, was shot, she surprised many by visiting him in the hospital.

Representative Chisholm was born Shirley Hill in New York on November 20, 1924, the oldest of four daughters of a Guyanese father and a Barbadian mother, who scrimped to educate their children. Representative Chisholm lived on her maternal grandmother's farm in Barbados from age 3 to age 11, where she attended a British grammar school and picked up the clipped Caribbean accent that marked her speech. She went on to graduate cum laude from Brooklyn College and earn a master's degree from Columbia University. She began her career as the director of a day

care center, then moved on to be an educational consultant for the New York City Bureau of Child Welfare. A long-time political activist, she became involved in Democratic politics and was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1964. During her tenure in the legislature, she proposed a bill to provide State aid to day-care centers and voted to increase funding for schools on a per-pupil basis.

After leaving Congress, Representative Chisholm was named to the Purington Chair at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts and also served as a visiting scholar at Spelman College. She received many honorary degrees, and her awards include Alumna of the Year, Brooklyn College; Key Woman of the Year; Outstanding Work in the Field of Child Welfare; and Woman of Achievement. She is the author of two autobiographical works, *Unbought and Unbossed* (1970) and *The Good Fight* (1973). Representative Chisholm was a pioneer in her time and her life should serve as an example of what can be accomplished if we have the courage and the strength to stand and fight for what we believe in. Her wit, wisdom, and leadership will be sorely missed.