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## Shirley Chisholm Had Guts

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# Shirley Chisholm Had Guts

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We note the passing of Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005), a 1993 inductee to the National Women's Hall of Fame. Born in New York, she was the oldest of four daughters. Her father was from British Guiana and her mother was from Barbados. In 1927, she was sent to Barbados to live with her maternal grandmother. She was educated in the British school system until she returned to New York in 1934. She attended Girls High School in Brooklyn, graduated cum laude from Brooklyn College in 1946, and received a masters degree in elementary education from Columbia University.

She worked at Mt. Calvary Childcare Center in Harlem, was the director of the Hamilton Madison Child Care Center (1953-1959), and was an educational consultant for the Division of Day Care (1959-1964).

She served in the New York General Assembly from 1964-1968. "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. In her 1968 campaign, her slogan was "Fighting Shirley Chisholm—Unbought and Unbossed." She won the election and became the first African American woman elected to Congress (PageWise, 2002).

"During her first term in Congress, Chisholm hired an all-female staff and spoke out for civil rights, women's rights, the poor and against the Vietnam War." A cofounder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), she said, "women in this country must become revolutionaries. We must refuse to accept the old, the traditional roles and stereotypes." (PageWise, 2002)

She ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972. She said in her book *The Good Fight*, "I ran for the Presidency, despite hopeless odds, to demonstrate the sheer will and refusal to accept the status quo" (Chisholm, 1973).

She was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. She said, "My greatest political asset, which professional politicians fear, is my mouth, out of which come all kinds of things one shouldn't always discuss for reasons of political expediency" (*CNN.com*, 2005).

Chisholm was described as a passionate and effective advocate for the needs of minorities, women and children who changed the nation's perception about the capabilities of women and African-Americans. In 1970

she published her first book, *Unbossed and Unbought* (Chisholm, 1970). In 1973 she published her second book, *The Good Fight* (Chisholm, 1973).

Robert E. Williams, president of the Flager County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People said, "She was our Moses that opened the Red Sea for us." Shola Lynch, director of "Chisholm '72: Unbought and Unbossed," said, "Whether you agree with her politics or not, she had a moral compass." "She's an average American woman who evolved into a strong and courageous politician." Conrad Chisholm said, "She was a mouthpiece for the underdog, the poor, underprivileged people, the people who did not have much of a chance."

Shirley Chisholm said, "I'd like them to say that Shirley Chisholm had guts. That's how I'd like to be remembered." . . . as she should be!

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Proposals for presentations at the *19th Annual Women in Educational Leadership Conference* are being accepted! The conference will be October 9-10, 2005, in Lincoln, Nebraska. For information about the conference or proposal guidelines contact Marilyn Grady at [mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)