Shirley Chisholm

(February 2020)

Shirley Chisholm was an early childhood educator turned New York politician. She made incredible strides in the political sphere by becoming the first black woman to be elected to the United States Congress.

Shirley (St. Hill) Chisholm was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1924 to Charles and Ruby St. Hill, American immigrants from Barbados. With two working parents, it was difficult to maintain a normal family life. In 1929, Shirley and two of her sisters were sent to live with their grandmother in Barbados. While there, they received a valuable early education that Shirley would later credit as a foundation to her success.

After returning to the United States in 1934, Shirley continued her educational enrichment and attended a well-respected, all-girls high school in Brooklyn. She went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts from Brooklyn College in 1946, cum laude, and a master's degree in elementary education from Columbia University in 1951.

While pursuing her master's degree, Shirley began working as a teacher at a nursery school. She quickly moved up the ranks and was regarded as an expert in the field of early childhood education. It was at this time that Shirley first pursued politics, due in part to the educational deficits she was

fighting in regions with heavy minority and low-income populations.

Shirley's political career began with volunteering, but she became a member of the New York State Assembly in 1965. While serving as a member, she helped push through legislative changes to education and benefits to low-income families. Most of her service was dedicated to the support and uplifting of disadvantaged students and struggling low-income and minority families.

In 1968, Shirley reached a new milestone for the country, becoming the first black woman elected to Congress. While serving, she introduced several pieces of legislation geared towards equality, peace, and accessibility. In 1972, Shirley also put her hat in for presidency, becoming the first black female candidate to run for president in a major political party. Sadly, her campaign was met with discrimination, and she was unable to garner enough support for success. Shirley served seven terms as a representative of New York before she retired from Congress in 1983 to return to the field of education.

Over the course of her career, Shirley received numerous awards for her efforts in the field of education, her push for equality, and her political success, despite discrimination. She was even awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom posthumously in 2015. Shirley passed away in 2005, leaving behind an incredible legacy of growth through peaceful action.

Teacher Resources – Vocabulary

Potential Words for Further Study: These words not only help with comprehension of the passage, they also appear more frequently in a wide spectrum of reading, especially in academic text. Therefore, further study of the meaning of these words may be beneficial. The words in this list can be incorporated into subsequent lessons.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: AB

Congress (n) the legislature of the U.S., consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives

discrimination (n) partiality, or bias, in the treatment of a person or group, which is unfair, illegal, etc.

legislation (n) the act or process of making a law or laws

Words for Quick Discussion: Consider discussing these words as they are encountered to help students comprehend the passage. A quick discussion in student-friendly language while reading the text is best.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: B

legacy (n) anything handed down from, or as from, an ancestor

milestone (n) a significant or important event in history, in the career of a person, etc.

posthumously (adv) arising or continuing after one's death

Definition Source: _Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from_
https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english

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4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.

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