

Remembering Shirley Chisholm: a life of service

Anna Eisen
Charger Staff

Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to be elected to the House of Representatives and the first woman to seek presidential nomination from a major American political party, died Saturday, Jan. 1, 2005, at the age of eighty. Fortright and hard-working, she overcame the challenges of being a black woman in politics in the 1960s.

Born Nov. 20, 1924, Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm lived in Brooklyn, New York, with her parents until the age of three. Because of her parents' poverty, she and her two younger sisters were sent to live with their grandmother in Barbados. Chisholm credited the Barbados' British-modeled school system for providing the foundation for her education.

Having spent much of her early life in an insulated black community in Barbados, Chisholm was not prepared for the racial issues she would face in the U.S. when she returned seven years later. Her parents eased the transition. Although her father had only the equivalent of a fifth-grade education, he read constantly, and he greatly influenced her interest in civil rights. Her mother enforced the good study habits that helped Chisholm achieve a high grade point average and attract interest from colleges such as Vassar and Oberlin.

Because of financial constraints, she enrolled in Brooklyn College. Believing that the only way a young black woman could improve society was by helping children, she studied to become a teacher. "Service to

others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth," she wrote later.

When her white political science



BACK IN THE DAY -- Shirley Chisholm circa

professor, Louis Warsoff, suggested she consider a political career, she replied, "You forget two things. I'm black---and I'm a woman." (Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed*).

After graduation, she worked in child welfare and attended night classes at Columbia University to earn her master's degree in Early Childhood Education.

Her volunteer work for the Bedford-Stuyvesant Political League and the League of Women Voters paved the way for her career in politics.

Elected to the House of Representatives in 1968, Chisholm was an active legislator. She successfully sponsored legislation helping disadvantaged students attend college and creating unemployment insurance for domestic and personal employees.

Despite being poorly funded, her 1972 campaign for presidency was ground-breaking. She worked dili-

gently to bring together a coalition of minority and women's support.

In her autobiography, *The Good Fight*, she wrote, "The United States was said not to be ready to elect a Catholic to the Presidency when Al Smith ran in the 1920's. But Smith's nomination may have helped pave the way for the successful campaign John F. Kennedy waged in 1960. Who can tell?"

"What I hope most is that now there will be others who will feel themselves as capable of running for high political office as any wealthy, good-looking white male."

Popcorn and Politics...

Erin McMillan
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Now that the election year crazies are settling down, it would be expected that the world could take a breather. Too bad this is not the case. With the international tsunami crisis in the news, 2005 is shaping up to be a hectic year.

On Dec. 26, a massive underwater earthquake struck in the Indian Ocean and triggered giant waves to strike the nations surrounding the ocean. India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia were the hardest hit areas with up to seventy percent of some coastal villages wiped out.

The immediate death toll of all affected nations, roughly 6,000 dead, was in itself devastating, but since then the number has climbed to 150,000. Yet this number is expected to increase.

All of these nations heavily depend on the tourism industry to

Disaster strikes Southeast Asia

survive. With this resource wiped out, they are financially destitute. Many are left without any possessions to their name in the wake of the weather and have no way to satisfy their most basic needs. Because their lives are in shambles, malnutrition and disease are running rampant. With that said, it is safe to assume the most important thing that the rest of the world can do is empty their pockets and keep the aid flowing.

Since the tsunami, a plethora of charities have made plans to give. Red Cross is striving to provide both long and short term care to those left homeless and is rushing medical supplies, blankets, hygiene kits and the like to the affected areas. So far they have collected about 6.5 million dollars. UNICEF has already supplied water to over 10,000 victims and is shipping out vaccinations to ensure more people do not die at the hands of disease.

The Christian Children's Fund is busy arranging sponsorship for newly orphaned children to guarantee they have their necessities, as is Compassion International.

Even locally people are eager to give. CHS's own Tennessee Tomorrow club organized a money drive to help, and across the state churches and other organizations are doing all that they can to help.

Three out of every ten Americans have already donated to the funds, and, unfortunately, that is all that can be done.

All charities are still waiting for more money to help the victims of this disaster, and a simple trip to any of their websites can have you \$10 poorer and on the way to being a better person.

When international disaster strikes, it is no time to be stingy, and it is the perfect opportunity to help someone put their life back together.

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