



NOT DONE YET: Shirley Chisholm's Fight for Change Source Notes for Paraphrased Statements

Shirley Chisholm was a powerful, eloquent speaker. In writing her story as a narrative free verse poem, I made the decision to paraphrase her statements, and those of others, to maintain poetic form and ensure the text would be accessible to young readers. Statements in the main text are all based on things Mrs. Chisholm said or recounted. While the sources for these statements are included in the book's selected bibliography section, some specific source notes for each statement can be found below:

Study. Make something of yourselves, Papa said. (NDY, page 8)

Papa harped on the theme, "You must make something of yourselves. You've got to go to school, and I'm not sending you to play either. Study and make something of yourselves. Remember, only the strong people survive in this world. God gave you a brain; use it."

*(Shirley Chisholm, **Unbought and Unbossed**, 33)*

I'll help lift others by becoming a teacher. (NDY, page 9)

From that point on, Shirley loved school, loved learning, and made up her mind to spend her life in the service of public education.

*(Barbara Winslow, **Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change**, 17)*

As a teacher, perhaps I could use the talents people were telling me about and which I felt were there to do something that would be of service to society—especially to children.

*(Chisholm, **Unbought and Unbossed**, 42-43)*

This isn't fair, Shirley said to the club. We raised it. We should get to use it, too!

Shirley is right! The women backed her up. (NDY, page 10)

“Why should we put up with it?” I asked them. “We bring in the money. Why shouldn’t they give us five hundred dollars or a thousand, some definite sum, to do it with? I was angry, and as we talked, some of the women got angry themselves. They brought it up at a club meeting.

...

The chairman rapped the gavel. “This meeting is out of order.” A woman in the back said, “It will stay out of order until you start to pay attention to us.” So at last, they gave us \$700. The party, as it always did, brought in more than \$8,000.”

(Chisholm, [Unbought and Unbossed](#), 50)

Chisholm’s first political success was working with the women in the club. In 1944, while still in college, Chisholm had experienced gender exclusion and found herself promoting women’s aspirations for political office. But once out of college and out in the world of work and politics, she became even more acutely aware of gender discrimination. She noticed that club leaders were men; the women, mainly wives of club members, were expected to fulfill traditional gender roles—to organize socials, raffles, and other fund-raising events. She was put in charge of collecting money for raffle tickets and was so successful that she immediately became a leader of the women’s group. What she realized, and pointed out to the other women, was how the men were exploiting their labor by not giving them a proper budget for their work. Unlike the men who had money to carry out their political tasks and responsibilities, the women were expected to beg and borrow money to buy prizes and to pay for the cost of printing raffle books. Finally, the women spoke up at a political meeting, demanding recognition as well as money for their work. Chisholm had earned support from the club’s women. This forced the men to treat Chisholm with greater respect.

(Winslow, [Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change](#), 30)

When neighbors told her women should not run for office, she made them all a promise: **Fighting Shirley Chisholm will always fight for you.** (NDY, page 12-13)

I told them calmly that I had been serving the community for a number of years and now I would appreciate an opportunity to serve it on a higher level, in elected office. Many persons, both men and women, I said, felt that I was the person to protect their interests and I would like a chance to run and try to win.

(Chisholm, [Unbought and Unbossed](#), 70-71)

“I have guts,” she would state proudly, and affirmed that she was determined “to belong to no one but the people.”

Chisholm's tenure in the legislature convinced her that she had the talent, the ability, and the passion to represent her constituents. Although she was not the first black woman to serve in Albany, she believed she was the first to make a meaningful contribution. The men in Bedford-Stuyvesant who had earlier told her to go back to the kitchen had come to respect her. The women of her district were steadfast supporters. Her constituents knew that Chisholm would be their fiercest defender.

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 54-55)

The men in the assembly didn't like her style. *Little lady—you should be more quiet.* (NDY, page 15)

Much of the initial hostility she faced was a reaction to her being such an outspoken black woman—something the clubmen did not appreciate. Steingut, for example, had worked with Chisholm in Brooklyn politics for more than a decade. He observed that although he thought Chisholm was “nice” and “bright,” she did not play by his rules. But she had not come to Albany to go along with “the rules of the political game,” which she observed were “designed to make it possible for men in power to control the actions of their supporters and stay there.” Having spent twenty years in the trenches of Brooklyn club politics, she wanted to shake things up. “If I wasn't a maverick in the political power brokers' books before the Travia-Steingut face-off, I was from then on.” This initial confrontation with the party machine seemed to work for her. She established her reputation for being her own person and for having the courage of her independent convictions. The confidence she gained from this first struggle would continue throughout her political career.

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 48)

Not all the men in the Unity Club shared her family's enthusiasm for her candidacy, and for the first time Chisholm experienced serious opposition from her male political comrades. She had to face down men in her own political club who “had a taste of how I operated,” wrote Chisholm. To them she was “a little woman who didn't know how to play the game or when to shut up.”

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 43)

If anybody would ask me, “Well what was the greatest thing that stood in your way of trying to really move up politically”, I would have to say...men. White men, Black men, Puerto Rican...*men*. They gave me a hard time because they said, “One thing about Shirley Chisholm: She's too darned outspoken. And she's always raising questions. She never keeps quiet.”

(National Visionary Leadership Project—YouTube video, “Men in My Political Career”)

A little schoolteacher can't lead us, they said. What we need is a big, strong man. (NDY, page 17)

Farmer's aggressive, masculinist campaign emphasized the gender differences. His literature argued for a "strong man's image." Chisholm might be a nice woman, he would say, but the Twelfth District needs "a man's voice" in Washington.

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 67)

Television and print media ignored her altogether, another galling aspect of the sexism she endured. An NBC weekend special, *The Campaign and the Candidates*, reported only on Farmer, without even mentioning Chisholm. Even the liberal alternative weekly *Village Voice* ignored her campaign. In frustration, she called the local radio and television stations, only to be told that Farmer had a national reputation, he was newsworthy, and his campaign was more colorful. The manager of one station sneered, "Who are you? A little school teacher who happened to go to the Assembly."

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 68)

This made women furious. **Show them with your vote**, Shirley said. They did...and she won! (NDY, page 17)

Despite what seemed like insurmountable obstacles, Mac Holder and Chisholm were confident of victory. Above all, she planned to mobilize the women in the district and turn Farmer's male chauvinist campaign strategy against him. His hyper-Black Nationalist rhetoric offended many women in the community, especially since Farmer had a white wife. "Men always underestimate women," Chisholm wrote. "They underestimated me and they underestimated the women like me." She went into the projects, attended community meetings, and organized her car caravans, which stopped on busy streets, using her gender as her campaign weapon. "I am a woman and you are a woman, and let's show Farmer that woman-power can beat him."

(Winslow, Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change, 69)

But Mac's important contribution to the campaign was not in organization alone. It came when I found that Farmer and his people were using my sex against me. To the black men—even some of those supposedly supporting me—sensitive about female domination, they were running me down as a bossy female, a would-be matriarch...But that was exactly what wise and wily Mac realized I had going for me. He had studied the voter rolls and found that for each man registered in the district there were 2.5 women...Women are always organizing for something...They run the PTA, they are the backbone of the social

groups and civic clubs...So the organization was already there. All I had to do was get its help. I went to the presidents and leaders and asked, "Can you help me?" ...It was not my original strategy to organize woman power to elect me; it was forced on me by the time, place, and circumstances. I never meant and never mean to start a war between women and men. It is true that women are second-class citizens just as black people are...I want the time to come when we can be as blind to sex as we are to color. But that time is not here, and when someone tries to use my sex against me, I delight in being able to turn the tables on him, as I did in my congressional campaign...Farmer and I had several public debates. I'm sure that he expected the contrast between his muscular, male assurance and poise and his opponent's little schoolteacher appearance would do him a lot of good. It turned out the other way...I beat him in the November election 2.5 to 1.

(Chisholm, [Unbought and Unbossed](#), 91-94)

[Shirley championed bold ideas to better the country she loved.](#)

[But how could she get more people to listen?](#)

[I know...I'll run for president.](#) (NDY, pages 21-22)

She told these one thousand women, most of them African American, that she "dared" to seek the presidency because "we are tired of tokenism and look-how-far-we've-come" and that it was imperative for black women "to turn this country around."

(Winslow, [Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change](#), 100)

Chisholm's presidential campaign was the high point of her political career. Her intention was to shake up the political system, and she hoped to engage African Americans, women, young people, lesbians and gay men, veterans, the poor, the elderly, Native Americans, Chicanos—the very people who had been marginalized by the political system—in the struggle for a more just society.

...

Her campaign did more than, as she put it, "crack a little more of the ice which in recent years has congealed to nearly immobilize our political system": she dared to pry open the door of privileged white-male-only US presidency. As she wrote in *The Good Fight*, "I ran because somebody had to do it first"—and she was the best person to do it.

(Winslow, [Shirley Chisholm: Catalyst for Change](#), 106-107)

[Let us move beyond hate so America works for the neglected, the forgotten, for everyone.](#) (NDY, page 24)

Chisholm's Presidential Announcement Speech, including:

"I do not believe that in 1972 the great majority of Americans will continue to harbor such narrow and petty prejudices. I am convinced that the American people are in a mood to discard the politics and the political personalities of the past. I believe that they will show, in 1972 and thereafter, that they intend to make independent judgments on the merits of a particular candidate based on that candidate's intelligence, character, physical ability, competence, integrity, and honesty."

...

"It is -- It is, I feel, the duty of responsible leaders of this country to encourage and maximize -- not to dismiss or minimize -- such judgment. Americans all over are demanding a new sensibility, a new philosophy of government from Washington."

...

"In conclusion, all of you who share this vision, from New York to California, from Wisconsin to Florida, are brothers and sisters on the road to national unity and a new America. Those of you -- Those of you who were locked outside of the convention hall in 1968, those of you who can now vote for the first time, those of you who agree with me that the institutions of this country belong to all of the people who inhabit it, those of you who have been neglected, left out, ignored, forgotten, or shunned aside for whatever reason: Give me your help at this hour! Join me in an effort to reshape our society and regain control of our destiny as we go down the Chisholm Trail for 1972."

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/shirleychisholmpresidentialcandidacyannouncement.htm>