

NOT DONE YET

**Shirley
Chisholm's
Fight for
Change**

TAMEKA FRYER BROWN

illustrations by
NINA CREWS



Author's Note

Shirley Chisholm reminds me a lot of my grandmother. While Mrs. Chisholm was a highly educated scholar from the North and my southern grandmother's formal education ended after the eighth grade, both were strong women who weren't afraid to stand up for what they believed was right, even when it meant standing alone. They both had easy smiles, sharp tongues, and a low tolerance for nonsense. They were also close in age, born only eleven months apart. These similarities motivated me to write about Congresswoman Chisholm, and they also shaped the way I chose to tell her story.

She was born Shirley Anita St. Hill in Brooklyn, New York, but still considered herself a "Bajan girl." She lived on her grandmother's farm in Christ Church, Barbados, from the ages of three to nine—years she believed pivotal in shaping her personality. Her West Indian parents, Charles and Ruby St. Hill, had taken Shirley and her sisters to live there so they could work extra jobs and earn enough money to comfortably care for the entire family. Mrs. Chisholm attributed much of her self-esteem and success in life to those years in Barbados; in particular, she felt the farm-life chores, the spiritual foundation, and the high expectations of her family and teachers were crucial to her development. I personally identify with this part of her story because I, too, am a person of strong faith who grew up with family members and teachers who encouraged me to always do and be my best.

Young Shirley acquired her father's passion for current events, politics, and a good intellectual debate. Her mother took her and her sisters to the library every two weeks to check out books, which they discussed at the dinner table. Thanks to her family's focus on education, Shirley graduated from Girls' High School near the top of her class, Brooklyn College with honors, and Columbia University with a master's degree in early childhood education. She also played piano, loved to dance, was great at impressions, and spoke fluent Spanish.

As an activist-politician, Mrs. Chisholm was known as Fighting Shirley Chisholm because she continually challenged those in power to make decisions that were fair and just. She called herself "unbought and unbossed" because she refused to be influenced by money or fear in her fight for equity.



What people remember most about Shirley Chisholm are her “firsts.” But those aren’t what she most wanted to be remembered for. In an interview with documentarian Shola Lynch, Mrs. Chisholm said, “When I die, I want to be remembered as a woman who lived in the twentieth century and who dared to be a catalyst for change. I don’t want to be remembered as the first Black woman who went to Congress. And I don’t even want to be remembered as the first woman who happened to be Black to make a bid for the Presidency. I want to be remembered as a woman who fought for change in the twentieth century. That’s what I want.”

FIGHTING SHIRLEY CHISHOLM. A CATALYST FOR CHANGE. That’s how I’ll remember her. I hope you will too.

ILLUSTRATOR’S NOTE

I feel I have always known of Shirley Chisholm, though I find it impossible to recall when I first heard her name. I grew up in New York City in the 1960s and 1970s, so it makes sense that she was familiar to me. I’ve always thought of her as an icon of feminist strength and Black pride. Illustrating this book has taught me so much more about her. I knew she was brilliant, and I now understand how she used her brilliance strategically to make a difference in Congress. I knew she was bold, and I now see that her certainty came both from deep inside herself and from the love and support of people close to her. I knew she was one of the first women to run for president of the United States. Now I know that she was also a teacher and a big sister.

When I began working on the illustrations, I read Chisholm’s autobiography to better imagine her childhood. I studied videos and photos of her many years in public life. I fell in love with her sense of style and her wigs. I noted the playful look in her eyes and the confidence of her stride. Tameka Fryer Brown’s words capture Chisholm’s energy and drive perfectly. I used bold colors and layered shapes in my illustrations to keep that energy going. I wanted the reader to feel that they were in Chisholm’s world, so I emphasized the patterns of her clothes by repeating those patterns in the backgrounds of the illustrations.

I surrounded her with people, because her deep commitment to people made her the leader that she was. I loved getting to know Shirley Chisholm through working on this book. I hope you enjoy getting to know her too.



TIMELINE

1924 On November 30, Shirley Anita St. Hill is born in Brooklyn, New York, to Charles and Ruby (Seale) St. Hill, West Indian immigrants from British Guiana and Barbados. Shirley is the firstborn of four daughters.

1928–1934 Shirley and her sisters Odessa and Muriel live on their maternal grandmother's farm in Barbados. Early in 1928, Ruby leaves the girls with her mother, Emaline (Emily) Seale, while she and Charles work extra jobs to save up money for a house and their daughters' college educations. In March of 1934, Ruby takes Shirley, Odessa, and Muriel back to Brooklyn. Because of the Great Depression, she and Charles still haven't saved any money, but they miss their girls and want their family back together again. A fourth daughter, Selma, is born while the other girls are still in Barbados.

1942 Shirley graduates from Girls' High School with several college scholarship offers. Her family cannot afford the boarding costs of an out-of-town school, so she decides to attend nearby Brooklyn College.

1946 Shirley graduates cum laude from Brooklyn College, with a bachelor's degree in sociology and a minor in Spanish. While there, she joined the Harriet Tubman Society and the debate team, cofounded a Black women's student society called Ipothia (In Pursuit of the Highest in All), and began her foray into politics by joining the Seventeenth Assembly District (17AD) Democratic Club in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Shirley is hired as a teacher's aide at Mount Calvary Child Care Center in Harlem, New York. She is later promoted to teacher and works there for seven years.

1949 Shirley St. Hill marries Conrad Chisholm, a private investigator originally from Jamaica, in a big West Indian wedding.

1951 Shirley graduates with a master's degree in early childhood education (Curriculum and Teaching) from Columbia University's Teachers College.

1953 Shirley becomes director of the Friend in Need Nursery School in Brooklyn, New York.

1954 Shirley accepts the directorship of the Hamilton-Madison Childcare Center in Manhattan, supervising a staff of twenty-four and responsible for the care of 130 children, aged three to seven.

Shirley is one of the founding organizers of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Political League (BSPL), an "insurgent political club" created to get more Black people elected to public office.

1958 Shirley decides to run for BSPL president against Wesley (Mac) Holder, her mentor who has been president since the club was founded. This causes a long-lasting rift between the two. When Mac is reelected, Shirley leaves the BSPL, the 17AD Democratic Club, and politics altogether.

1959 Shirley becomes a consultant to the New York City Division of Day Care, supervising ten center directors, evaluating programs and curricula, and setting childcare standards for the entire city.

1960 Shirley is one of six cofounders of the Unity Democratic Club, whose goal is to get more Black and Puerto Rican people elected to public office in the Seventeenth District.

1964 Shirley wins her first political race and becomes the first Black woman to represent Brooklyn in the New York State Assembly.

1965–1968 Shirley represents Brooklyn's Seventeenth District in New York's State Assembly. She is very active on behalf of her constituents, introducing fifty bills—eight of which become laws—addressing needs such as unemployment insurance for domestic and agricultural workers, childcare for the working poor, and a program called SEEK that provides academic, financial, and social support to students who might not otherwise be able to attend college.

1966 Shirley becomes a member of the newly founded National Organization for Women (NOW).

1968 Shirley enters the race to become a member of the United States Congress. Her campaign slogan is Fighting Shirley Chisholm: Unbought and Unbossed. With the support of the women in her district (and her former mentor, Mac Holder), Shirley wins!

1969 Shirley arrives in Washington, DC, to represent the Twelfth Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives. She is the first Black woman ever elected to Congress. Right away, she uses her platform to speak out against the Vietnam War and challenges a committee assignment she doesn't believe will help her serve the people of Brooklyn.

Shirley is initiated into the Brooklyn Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

1970 Shirley publishes her autobiography, *Unbought and Unbossed*.

1971 Shirley is a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Shirley is a founding member of the National Women's Political Caucus.

1972 On January 25, Shirley invites voters to join her "on the Chisholm Trail" as she announces her decision to seek the Democratic nomination for president at Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn. She is the first African American and the first woman to make a serious bid for the nomination and office.

Shirley ultimately amasses 152 delegates and finishes in fourth place at the Democratic National Convention. George McGovern becomes the Democratic Party nominee for president of the United States. He is defeated by Richard Nixon in the general election.

1973 Shirley publishes her second book, *The Good Fight*.

1977 Shirley becomes the first Black congresswoman to serve on the powerful House Rules Committee.

Shirley's divorce with Conrad Chisholm becomes final in February. She marries Arthur Hardwick Jr. in November.

1983 Congresswoman Shirley Anita Chisholm retires from the US House of Representatives. During her seven terms in office, she consistently fought for underserved and oppressed communities, especially in the areas of education, health care, environmental protections, women's rights, civil rights, and voting rights.

1983–1987 Shirley is a professor at Mount Holyoke College, teaching courses in sociology, politics, and women's studies.

1984 Shirley is cofounder of the National Congress of Black Women.

1985 Shirley is a visiting scholar at Spelman College.

Shirley is honored with the Distinguished Achievement medal from Columbia University's Teachers College.

1993 Shirley is nominated to be US ambassador to Jamaica by President Bill Clinton, but she declines the nomination due to poor health.

Shirley is inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

2005 On January 1, Shirley Chisholm dies in Ormond Beach, Florida, at the age of eighty.

2006 On June 5, documentarian Shola Lynch accepts a 2005 Peabody Award for *Chisholm '72: Unbought & Unbossed*, a documentary about Shirley's historic presidential campaign.

2015 On November 24, Shirley Chisholm is posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest civilian honor in the United States of America—by President Barack Obama.

2019 On July 2, the 407-acre (165 ha) Shirley Chisholm State Park opens in Brooklyn, New York.

2020 On November 30, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris honors the birthday of Congresswoman Chisholm with the following words: "Unbought and unbossed, Shirley Chisholm paved the way for me and so many others. On her birthday, we celebrate her brilliance and boldness to break down barriers, fight to increase the minimum wage, and speak for those who otherwise wouldn't have a voice in the political process."



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Additional Resources

“I’m Just a Bill”—School House Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZ8psP4S6BQ>

This classic animated clip describes the process of how a bill becomes a law.

“New York Illustrated: The Irrepressible Shirley Chisholm (1969 NBC News Special)”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERGWEG4Lcpl>

This 1969 profile from NBC News highlights the career and accomplishments of Shirley Chisholm, featuring lots of footage of her speaking and working in Washington, DC.

The Shirley Chisholm Project

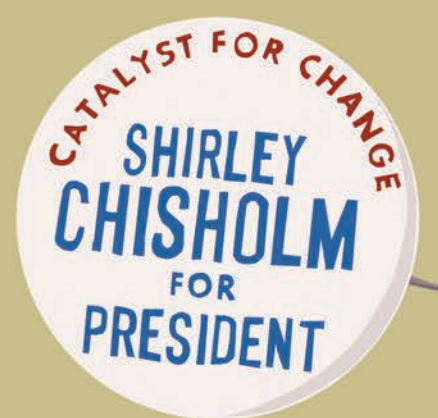
<http://chisholmproject.com>

This website includes a wealth of information about Shirley Chisholm, including materials about Chisholm and other women activists that are part of the Brooklyn College collection.



A Note about Quotations

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 Chisholm said or recounted. The sources for these statements are included in the selected bibliography. Statements on the endsheets and back cover are exact quotes of hers. For more specific source notes, visit my website: www.tamekafryerbrown.com.



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Main body text set in Bailey Sans ITC Std. Typeface provided by International Typeface Corporation.
The illustrations in this book were created in Adobe Photoshop using dozens of layers and both digital and handmade patterns and textures.

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Tameka Fryer Brown

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Baby Lullaby, winner of the 2021 Anna Dewdney Award. She is also a contributor to The Brown Bookshelf, an award-winning website whose mission is to promote awareness of Black children's book creators and their work. *Not Done Yet* is Tameka's first picture book about a real-life figure . . . and she hopes it won't be her last. To learn more about Tameka, visit tamekafryerbrown.com.



Nina Crews's picture books include: *Seeing Into Tomorrow: Haiku by Richard Wright*, *One Hot Summer Day*, *The Neighborhood*

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**“Don’t listen to those
who say you can’t.
Listen to the voice
inside yourself
that says, ‘I can.’”
—Shirley Chisholm**