Lesson 2
Day Two: Women and Democracy in the US: Shirley Chisholm

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Unit Title: Women’s History

Subject/Grade Level: 6-8, 9-12 History

Lesson Title: Shirley Chisholm

Objective: Through learning about Shirley Chisholm’s historic run for president in 1972, students will learn about the cultural implications of a woman running for office at that time, and discuss the impact of Chisholm’s campaign on political opportunities for women today.

ODE Curriculum Standards
• Understand how citizens can make their voices heard in the political process.
• Understand the changes in society and culture in the early 20th century.

Time Needed: 50 minutes

Teacher Preparation:
Print out “The Ticket That Might Have Been” article (attached here), set up the 6 minute video component of the Shirley Chisholm story (http://www.imow.org/wpp/stories/viewStory?storyId=111)

Procedures:
A. Brief Introduction: Shirley Chisholm ran for President of the US in 1972 as the first major African-American woman candidate. In 1964, Chisholm ran for and was elected to the New York State Legislature. In 1968, she ran as the Democratic candidate for New York’s 12th District congressional seat and was elected to the House of Representatives. Defeating Republican candidate James Farmer, Chisholm became the first black woman elected to Congress. All those Chisholm hired for her office were women, half of them black. Chisholm said that during her New York legislative career, she had faced much more discrimination because she was a woman than because she was black. In the 1972 U.S. presidential election, she made a bid for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination. She survived three assassination attempts during the campaign.
B. Show 6 minute video from the International Museum of Women website (http://www.imow.org/wpp/stories/viewStory?storyId=111). Ask students what surprised them in the video?
C. Distribute Chisholm’s quotes to the class (attached at the end of packet.) Have students take turns reading each one out loud. As the quotes are being read, students should identify and write down some common themes and keywords (for example, “first,” “woman,” “equality,” “free,” “black,” “political”).
D. Students will read the article “The Ticket that Could Have Been”, by Gloria Steinem. Each person identifies someone at home or in their community that they view as a leader.
DI. Discuss in small groups: Share your leader with the group and discuss the following two questions:
1. What makes a leader?
2. Who are some other leaders in your community? (Do you think your elected officials, police officers, teachers and parents are leaders?)
E. Students should report their findings and the teacher should write them on the board as a visual reference and kick-off for the following discussion. Ask class to break into small groups and discuss the following questions:
1. Why did Chisholm run a campaign knowing that her efforts would not result in a presidential win?
2. How did Chisholm represent herself? How did people perceive her?
3. What impact (according to the personal testimonies) did Chisholm’s candidacy have on her constituents?
4. What qualities did Chisholm display throughout her campaign?
5. What kind of impact did her campaign approach have on the way people viewed her? Did her personal style benefit her cause or take away from it?
6. Would you have voted for Chisholm?
7. Would President Obama have won in 2008 if he were an African American woman? Why or why not?

Adaptation for high school: Write an individual essay on the following topic: Has the perception of female politicians and leaders changed since Chisholm’s campaign in 1972?

**Closure:**
What impact did Chisholm’s campaign have on political opportunities for women?
(answer: Chisholm’s campaign opened up opportunities for women to see themselves as potential presidents, and encouraged women and girls to see themselves as valuable in politics, policy, and their community)
Closure questions: How does Chisholm define racism? Is it still an issue in Oregon today?)
Shirley Chisholm’s Quotes

“I was the first American citizen to be elected to Congress in spite of the double drawbacks of being female and having skin darkened by melanin. When you put it that way, it sounds like a foolish reason for fame. In a just and free society it would be foolish. That I am a national figure because I was the first person in 192 years to be at once a congressman, black and a woman proves, I think, that our society is not yet either just or free.”

“I want history to remember me not just as the first black woman to be elected to Congress, not as the first black woman to have made a bid for the presidency of the United States, but as a black woman who lived in the 20th century and dared to be herself.”

“Of my two ‘handicaps’ being female put more obstacles in my path than being black.”

“I’ve always met more discrimination being a woman than being black.”

“My God, what do we want? What does any human being want? Take away an accident of pigmentation of a thin layer of our outer skin and there is no difference between me and anyone else. All we want is for that trivial difference to make no difference.”

“Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal.”

“We Americans have a chance to become someday a nation in which all racial stocks and classes can exist in their own selfhoods, but meet on a basis of respect and equality and live together, socially, economically, and politically.”

“In the end, anti-black, anti-female and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing—anti-humanism.”

“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.”

“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.”

“At present, our country needs women’s idealism and determination, perhaps more in politics than anywhere else.”

“I am, was, and always will be a catalyst for change.”
“There is little place in the political scheme of things for an independent, creative personality, for a fighter. Anyone who takes that role must pay a price.”

“One distressing thing is the way men react to women who assert their equality: their ultimate weapon is to call them unfeminine. They think she is anti-male; they even whisper that she’s probably a lesbian.”

“... rhetoric never won a revolution yet.”

“Prejudice against blacks is becoming unacceptable although it will take years to eliminate it. But it is doomed because, slowly, white America is beginning to admit that it exists. Prejudice against women is still acceptable. There is very little understanding yet of the immorality involved in double pay scales and the classification of most of the better jobs as ‘for men only.’”

“Tremendous amounts of talent are being lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt.”

“Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.” (Quote also attributed to Marian Wright Edelman.)

“I am not anti-white because I understand that white people, like black ones, are victims of a racist society. They are products of their time and place.”