

IN THE NEWS

Chisholm: Does Opportunity And Hope Apply To Blacks?

Those words of opportunity and hope, inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, did not apply to immigrants of color, said former New York Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm in a recent talk at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington.

Immigrants of color came to the United States with the same will and ability to succeed as white immigrants, Chisholm told an overflow audience that crowded into Whitman's Maxey Auditorium. But because of racial and ethnic prejudices, they did not have the same opportunities to rise as Europeans.

Chisholm, a Democrat who in 1972 became the first woman and first Black to seriously campaign for the United States presidency, visited Whitman January 28 to help its Black Student Union kick-off its celebration of Black History Month.

Chisholm, whose topic was "Unity Through Diversity," said the United States is diverse by historical fact "What other nation in this world has had such a collection of continents?" she asked. "One would think that the fact of immigration in and of itself would have resulted in diversity, but it hasn't. We must accept the fact that America is a multi-faceted, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society."

"Until we understand the history, the fact remains that ignorance is bliss," she added.

Successive waves of immigrants from different continents came to

this country, said Chisholm, but laws later restricted many ethnic groups from entering the country, and there was lawful discrimination against Native Americans, African Americans and Asians. "These have impeded the equitable growth of people of color," she said. There was, she conceded, discrimination against some Europeans, especially Jews and Italians. But these groups were able to overcome this bias partially because they did not have the "high visibility" marker of skin color.

A white skin is like "a passport into American society," she said, although noting that America is changing. White males, formerly the accepted norm and majority, are becoming a minority. In the next 12 years, Department of Labor statistics show that white males will decline from almost 50 percent of the work force to 40 percent.

And until unity through diversity is accepted, and persons of color have the same opportunities for education and jobs, the U.S. will remain ill-equipped to deal with its challenging future, Chisholm said. "Ethnic prejudice saps our strength. It diverts our attention and our energy and our resources away from working on important common goals."

But too many people feel threatened by changes in the status quo, Chisholm said. "You've got to understand, in this United States of America, that African Americans aren't trying to turn anyone out.

They are trying to become acceptable in every level. We're all part of this Earth ship...There's no place else to go, so let's get it together...Unity through diversity must become a basic tenet in our lives."

Change must come through education, Chisholm said. "We must begin to dilute the effects of stereotypes and racism with facts." And that education must happen in and out of the classroom, and include a close examination of ethics. "What good is an education that fails to open up your hearts and

your minds? If one promotes hatred or intolerance, it does not matter if one has studied Aristotle!"

Nearly 400 students, faculty and community members packed the seats and aisles of the auditorium and rose to their feet the moment Chisholm finished her speech.

In 1968 Chisholm became the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress in 1968, where she served continuously until 1982. She is co-founder of the National Congress of Black women and served as its chairperson from its founding in 1984 until June 1992. Though

called a "troublemaking maverick" in some quarters, she has earned high praise for her efforts on behalf of Black colleges, compensatory education, minimum wage for domestics, American Indians, the Haitian refugees, migrant farm workers, and the poor.

Though she no longer serves in politics, she hopes that by writing, teaching, lecturing, and traveling around the nation, she will help create a new national state of mind that demands peace, prosperity and equality for all Americans.

Black History Program Honors Heroes

A group of African American longshoremen and port workers for the Port of Tacoma will host their 2nd annual Black History Month Program, "Honoring Our Heroes - Past and Present" beginning Monday, February 22 and concluding Friday, February 26, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the atrium of the Port of Tacoma office building, One Siticum, in Tacoma.

Some of the guest speakers throughout the week will include: Charles Rolland, Democratic party chairman for Washington state; Ray Leary of Self Enhancement, Portland, Oregon; and Leon Harris, secretary treasurer for the International Longshoremen's Warehouse Union, San Francisco, California.

Awards will be given to six individuals for their outstanding service to the community.

•Charles Rolland, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award of Merit;

•Judge Jack Tanner, Social Justice Award;

•Ray Leary, Arthur Ashe Humanitarian Award;

•Leon Harris, A. Phillip Randolph Award;

•Eddie Rye, Jr., Reginald F. Lewis Entrepreneur Award; and

•Senator Rosa Franklin, Thurgood Marshall Award.

The event's program committee chairperson is William Adams. For more information, call 383-5841.

Unemployed Workers Could Get Training, Support Services

Unemployed workers would get a special helping hand from state government under a plan considered by a House of Representatives committee.

House Bill 1223, sponsored by state Representative Tim Sheldon,

would give thousands of unemployed workers the job-training courses and support services they need to reenter the work force.

Cutbacks at Boeing and the continued lay-offs in the timber industry have fueled the need for a comprehensive plan to train workers for new, family-wage jobs, said Sheldon, (D-Pollatch).

"With both the state and federal budgets in crisis, we can't afford to be giving handouts to the unemployed," Sheldon said. "But we can give them a hand up to get them back on their feet. We need to change from a system of worker placement to one of worker preparation to fill new jobs in the nineties."

House Bill 1223 would create openings for about 2,000 unemployed people in vocational-training programs at the state's community and technical colleges. The bill was considered during a public hearing before the Trade, Economic Development & Housing Committee.

The bill would also fund day-care and transportation costs of these students — a vital element in the plan, according to Sheldon.

"Community and technical colleges already have waiting lists for child care services, so it won't do us any good to create more slots for students if we don't include child-care services to help them get there," he said.

The bill also contains provisions to help the Employment Security Administration beef up its career-counseling and job-referral programs.

The plan contained in HB 1223 would be paid for with \$40 million that would otherwise flow into the unemployment insurance trust fund.

Although the \$40 million would come from a new tax on employers, Sheldon said, it would be offset by an equal reduction in their unemployment insurance taxes.

"As our economy deteriorates with the announcement of more lay-offs in the aerospace sector, we need to create more opportunities for dislocated workers," Sheldon said.

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