

**The Shirley Chisholm Project**  
**Brooklyn Women's Activism 1945 to the Present**  
**Archives and Special Collections, Brooklyn College,**  
**City University of New York**  
**Brooklyn, NY**

**JILL (SATYA) FRANKLIN**  
**formally JILL SAFIAN**  
**Interviewed by**  
**BARBARA WINSLOW**

**June 24, 2010**  
**Manhattan, New York**

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The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism 1945 to the Present  
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### **About the Project**

The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism is an archive and repository of women's grassroots social activism in Brooklyn since 1945 and ongoing in the present. Named in the spirit of Chisholm's legacy as a path breaking community and political activist, the archive follows the many paths she pioneered, by including materials representing the wide range of women's grassroots activism throughout the borough of Brooklyn. The full archive consists of oral history interviews (conducted by the staff of the project), as well as documents, newsletters, personal letters and various other materials, from people who knew or worked with Chisholm. All materials collected by the SCPBWA are housed in the Archives and Special Collections of the Brooklyn College library. If you are interested in visiting the Archives and Special Collections, please call (718) 951-5346 or visit their website at <http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/archives> for more information.

### **Notes on the Oral History Interviews**

The oral history collection has two components. The first includes interviews with a variety of individuals who knew and worked with Shirley Chisholm—both her friends, colleagues and political allies, as well adversaries—during her time in the New York State Senate (1964-1968), United States Congress (1969-1983) and her 1972 Presidential campaign. The second phase of the project will begin in 2012 and consist of oral history interviews with Brooklyn women activists, from 1945 to the present.

### **Researchers**

Researchers are encouraged to both read the transcript of the oral history interview and view/listen to the recording of the interview. The transcription of the interview is a near verbatim copy of the interview. The SCPBWA has decided—for the sake of clarity—to edit the transcription for the readers understanding. While the interview still contains false starts, verbal stumbles, misspeaks, and repetition, it *has been edited for readability*. It is for this reason we encourage researchers to read the transcript and view/listen to the interview when citing interviews for one's personal, scholarly or academic work. It is acceptable for researchers to utilize excerpts or quotations from this interview and in doing so we recognize that it maybe necessary to correct grammar or punctuation. It is important to note then, the nicknames and shortened names used by the narrators in reference to colleagues, friends, organizations or neighborhoods were not altered in the transcriptions produced by the SCPBWA. Therefore you may see variations of Shirley Chisholm being referred to as “Mrs. C”, Wesley McDonald Holder as “Wes” or “Mac”, Bedford Stuyvesant as “Bed Stuy.” The variations of which names used are specific to the individual narrators.

**Abstract**

This interview focuses on the experiences of Jill Satya Franklin, (formally Jill Safian) as a speechwriter for Shirley Chisholm during her Presidential campaign. She discusses her background as a writer and how she came to write speeches for Chisholm, as well as her first meeting.

**Interview Context**

The interview took place in the home of Jill (Satya) Franklin's sister, in Manhattan, New York on June 24, 2010 and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Present for the interview was Jill Franklin, the narrator; Barbara Winslow, interviewer; and Marwa Amer, audio/video recording. There maybe some background noise from cars, buses and other vehicles passing by on the street.

**Narrator**

Jill Satya Franklin (formally Jill Safian at the time she wrote speeches for Shirley Chisholm) grew up in Mount Vernon, New York. Educated at Brown University and Sarah Lawrence College, she became a disciple of Bhagwan (Osho) Rajneesh for thirteen years and became the editor of a number of his widely read books including *Meditation: The Art Of Ecstasy* and *The Psychology Of The Esoteric*. She's also authored a number of books about Rajneesh under the pen names Satya Bharti and Satya Bharti Franklin, *The Promise of Paradise: A Woman's Intimate Story of the Perils of Life With Rajneesh*, *Death Comes Dancing* and *Drunk On The Divine: An Account of Life in the Ashram of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh*. Under the name Jill Franklin, she's the author of *Auto Accident Survivor's Guide for British Columbia: Navigating the Medical-Legal-Insurance System*. Her new novel, *High Tea and Tantra*, should be released in 2012. In 1972 Franklin was a speechwriter for Shirley Chisholm during her 1972 Presidential campaign.

**Interviewer**

**Barbara Winslow** is the founder and Project Director of the Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism 1945 to the Present. A historian, Professor Winslow teaches in both the School of Education and the Women's Studies Program at Brooklyn College. She is the author of *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* and coeditor of *Clio in the Classroom: A Guide for Teaching U.S. Women's History* along with Carol Berkin (Editor), Margaret S. Crocco (Editor).

**Restrictions:** None

**Format:** Video recorded, by Marwa Amer on one 40 Minute HD DVCAM tapes.

**Transcript:** Transcribed by Marwa Amer. Edited for clarity by Barbara Winslow. Reviewed and approved by Jill Satya Franklin.

**Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms:** Please include in your citation, a credit to The Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism 1945 to the Present.

**Barbara Winslow:** I am Professor Barbara Winslow of the Brooklyn College School of Education and Women Studies Program and I am recording the memories that New Yorkers and others have about Shirley Chisholm Brooklyn Women's Activism and its long-term significance. If you choose to take part in this project I will ask you a series of open-ended questions about your life and memories. The interview maybe audiotaped videotaped or both. The interview will approximately take one and a half to two hours. There are no anticipated benefits to participation and the risk associated with oral history are likewise not known to be significant. However you can withdraw from the interview at any time without prejudice prior to the execution and delivery of a deed of gift. You will also have the opportunity to make special provisions or restrictions in the deed of gift. During the interview you may request to stop the recording at any time to discuss or clarify how you wish to respond to a question or topic before proceeding. In the event that you choose to withdraw during the interview any tape made of the interview will be either given to you or destroyed. Subject to the provision of the paragraph below, upon completion of the interview the tape and content of the interview belong to Professor Winslow and the information in the interview can be used by Professor Winslow in any manner she will determine, including, but not limited to future use in publication and presentations. Professor Winslow agrees that she will not use or exercise any of her rights to the information in the interview prior to the signing of the deed of gift. The deed of gift will be submitted to you for your signature before the interview or if you choose after the interview. Restrictions on the use of the interview can be placed in the deed of gift by you and will be accepted as amending Professor Winslow's right to the

content of the interview. Upon signing the deed of gift the recordings will be kept in the possession of Professor Winslow in the Brooklyn College Library Archives.

If you have questions about the research project or procedure you may contact Professor Winslow at 2403 James, 2900 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11210, (718) 951-5000 extension 6647, for an explanation at anytime. If you feel you have not been treated accordingly to the description in this form—the description that I have read, or that your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Professor David Balk, Chair, committee on the Rights and Welfare of Human Subjects Brooklyn College, CUNY, 2900 Bedford Avenue Brooklyn NY, 11120, (718) 951- 5601. You are Jill Franklin?

**Jill Franklin:** Yes I am.

**Winslow:** Did you understand what I read?

**Franklin:** I sure did.

**Winslow:** We would like to begin this interview with you telling us a little bit about yourself, what you're doing now, and what brought you to Shirley Chisholm, and what was your relationship with Shirley Chisholm?

**Franklin:** Open-ended question, indeed. Well, I'm a writer, and I've been writing and publishing books for many, many years. I was initially writing poetry, when I was asked to be Shirley Chisholm's speechwriter. And at this point, Shirley had declared her candidacy, but she didn't have a very large campaign, and they had requested contact with somebody who could write speeches for her. So I was asked to do that by Byron Lewis, who had been an editor of a magazine newspaper supplement oriented towards an African-American readership in Chicago and was the editor of a literary magazine. He

was aware of my work and my writing and he thought I would be a good person to do this. I have to admit I had some... I was surprised that he asked me rather than an African-American woman, but he felt that there wasn't any issue in doing that, and that I could write from an African-American woman's perspective. So I probably—I can't really remember to tell you the truth—but I imagine I listened to some of Shirley's speeches, and I tried to write in the vernacular that she spoke in. Subsequent to this, I have to say, I became disillusioned with conventional politics after this campaign, and I subsequently moved to India, and I stayed out of the country for many, many years. I repatriated in 1997, but throughout this period, I was writing books.

[00:04:45:] BW: Who was—could you tell us more about how you and Byron Lewis were able to connect so that he would recommend you? Did he know you, aside from just reading your works?

**Franklin:** Well we were quite good friends on a personal level, but he was aware of my work. I had actually met him originally when I was doing what would have been my first book if I hadn't gone to India and had done the sociological and statistical analysis that Basic Books wanted me to do on the material. I met him at when I was interviewing people in Mount Vernon, New York for a book that at the time was being called *A City Looks At Itself*, and was a series of in-depth interviews with people in the city of Mount Vernon. I had divided the community up—it's the community I grew up in and the community that Byron Lewis lived in at the time—I divided the community into socio-economic...with each major community in Mount Vernon (Italians, Jews, and African-Americans), I divided them according to their socio-economic levels, and interviewed people in various categories. I did not have the wonderful equipment you have today to

do this interview, and consequently, what I did was listen to people and take notes, and then I could produce, verbatim, pretty much what they said. I always gave them what I had written to get their approval on it. That's how we actually got to be friends-when I gave Byron his [materials from], what I had drawn up from our talks together, he kinda laughed and he said, "You know, every single thing in here, I know I said, but you've managed to skewer it so you're making me into the typical well-off-successful-African-American." Probably he didn't use [the word African American], he [Byron Lewis] probably said black at that time. "And so there's nothing I can fault you for," Byron said, "but you've really, you know..." he wasn't so sure it [Jill Franklin's methods] was such an honest way of doing this, I have to say. But anyway, he was impressed with my writing and he continued to keep in touch with my writing.

**Winslow:** Tell us about the first time you met Shirley Chisholm. I mean, did you have to be interviewed by her to become her speechwriter? How did that take place?

**Franklin:** Well after I was asked to be her speechwriter, I was asked to go to a meeting of her campaign people; it was probably more people funding the campaign than working on it. And we met in some wonderful Upper West Side apartment. It seems to me that the only male I can remember was her campaign manager. It was a group of people, I would say, at least those I remember meeting, we were all one side of a black-and-white relationship. And....the campaign manager, I remember, had an African American wife. Harry Belafonte's wife was there, she was a Jewish woman. There were a lot of Jewish women with black partners and it seemed to me that I don't even remember there being African-American people there. There probably were, but it seemed to me it was a lot of white people, who had black partners. And they talked to me. I was definitely there as the

hired help in a sense, even though I wasn't being paid. I felt like they were a...sort of an echelon above me in a social scale, most of the people. I guess these were people Shirley was trying to get funding from and they basically talked to me and interviewed me, and after that I started writing speeches for her. So that's as formal as it got.

**Winslow:** So, Chisholm did not interview you?

**Franklin:** She did not. Her campaign manager would call me, and tell me, we need a speech for Shirley, for such and such a thing.

**Winslow:** Do you remember the name?

**Franklin:** Of this man?

**Winslow:** Wesley Mac Holder?

**Franklin:** I don't know.

**Winslow:** Bill Howard?

**Franklin:** You know I honestly I don't know. I can picture him in my mind and I don't know. So this would have been probably in early spring of 1972. And these speeches that I wrote for Shirley were her Women's Day Speech and her speech against the Vietnam War that she presented before the United Nations. And it was interesting because her Women's Day speech was televised a lot. And so it was very exciting for me to see all the news clips, and it would be Shirley giving my speech. I handed the speech to her campaign manager and then she delivered the speech and I still had not had personal contact with her. My personal contact with her, Shirley, was when she was delivering her speech before the United Nations, that we met—and this is the story I was going to tell—is that we met right outside the lady's room at the United Nations. And she said, "I'm taking your speech in, come with me." And she went into a cubicle in the lady's room,

and she practiced the speech in there, and she came out and she said, “You’ve said exactly what I want to say in exactly the way I want to say it. Thank you very much! This is great, and I like you writing speeches for me because I can basically just deliver them. You know, I don’t have to translate what the speechwriter says into my own vernacular, you’ve done that.” And so we basically met in the ladies’ room at the United Nations. [00:10:19]

**Winslow:** That was your first real meeting? (Laughter)

**Franklin:** That was my first real meeting with Shirley.

**Winslow:** Did you have subsequent meetings and discussions?

**Franklin:** No, not really, not really. You know what happened was that, as more people got involved in her campaign, and her campaign became better known, I did not continue. Once they had money, the whole milieu changed somewhat and I was no longer really a part of that. I also was involved in other things. As I think I told you before, I was a single mother with three young children and I was also going to school and publishing poetry in literary magazines, so I had a pretty full plate. And my own social life as a newly divorced woman and so I had a lot of things I was up to. And actually by the time the primary came around I was very involved in Eastern religions.

**Winslow:** In New York?

**Franklin:** Well I’m actually thinking of the July primary. Anyway I was very involved in Eastern spiritual things and I felt that it was a stretch for me to be involved in Shirley’s campaign because I was much more radical than Shirley was. And I felt like the only way that I could write speeches for her is if I had the freedom to put words into her mouth, really what I felt I wished someone would say. And I think we were probably

much more closely aligned intellectually and emotionally and politically than I really knew at the time. So I was in fact thinking that I was pushing her to be more, more of a radical and more forceful, whereas in fact she was already there and I didn't know that.

**Winslow:** Who else did you speak with in the campaign to sort of help formulate, I mean usually speechwriters are told, "Get out the speech on the war." So just-who did you get to know?

**Franklin:** It was... you know I tell you, very, very little...there was very, almost no, direction. I would say virtually no direction. And that also is part of what soured me on electoral politics in America because I assumed if I was writing major speeches for Shirley, and had so little direction, and was given so much freedom to write what I felt I wanted someone to say, that that was probably true for other people writing speeches for other candidates. So, I know obviously President Obama has a very important role in putting his speeches together. Did George Bush have any role in preparing his speeches? Probably not. I think that Shirley was able to use my speeches, and use them effectively, because she and I really did see eye to eye on many things, even though I thought...I thought I was more of a Black Panther. That's much more where I was coming from. And in fact actually, in a recent conversation with Byron Lewis, he was saying, he felt that part-that I was going off much more into a radical tangent, and that's where he had a very big question about the direction my writing was going in.

**Winslow:** And did you have discussions with Byron or Chisholm about the high points of the black, the militant-black-nationalist, black-freedom struggle, and so-forth? Also this was the time when the radical groups like The (Black) Panthers are being decimated.

Was there a discussion in the campaign? At one point in the California primary, she got the endorsement of the Black Panthers. Were you aware of that? Was that a discussion?

**Franklin:** Yeah, I felt like I was not actually given any direction, I have to say. And when things like that happened, I felt, “Ah, I’ve helped to push Shirley and make her more radical.” Now it had nothing to do with me and I understand that, but I did think that because I knew really so little about her gutsiness, and who she really is. I think I felt that I had probably a bigger influence on pushing her in that direction than she really needed. She didn’t need that from me.

**Winslow:** Do you remember when the Black Panther Party endorsed her candidacy?

**Franklin:** I do, but I don’t...you know, I don’t even know. I couldn’t even place it in terms of a timeframe. You know, by the middle of July-I went to Europe in the summer of 1972 and

at that point I really wasn’t involved anymore. [00:15:05]

**Winslow:** Lets go back to the idea of being a white woman in the context of this period of the sixties, writing words for an African-American woman, did you think about that at the time?

**Franklin:** Well you know, I wondered why I was being asked to do this, when certainly Byron Lewis with his contacts in the black community, and the literary black community, had other people he could ask. And I did question that, and he felt fully confident, as apparently did the campaign in having me do that. I felt like, perhaps it was a little presumptuous —now I think it was very presumptuous—but in fact, at the time, there was a need to do this and if I can do it, fine. You know, I didn’t really think beyond that. I did feel I had enormous confidence in myself as a writer. I was getting a lot of positive

response to my writing, and I felt like if I'm asked.... I was studying playwriting. If I'm asked to do a speech for a black woman, I can do a speech for a black woman. I didn't really question that. And I have to also say that despite being a white-Jewish-middle-class-woman, I had always identified all my life much more with the black community than I did with the white community, and that was always true for me. And it was true for me before the civil rights movement came along. It was true for my sister as well. So I felt like it was a kind of like an appropriate thing to do. I certainly knew that black women didn't always like me being around.

**Winslow:** How did you know that?

**Franklin:** Well I was aware of that from my high school days when in 1958 I would... I had a black boyfriend, and none of the black girls at school would talk to me. So I was pretty aware of that.

**Winslow:** And in the campaign?

**Franklin:** And in the campaign, well you know in all honesty all the meetings I went to were meetings primarily of white women probably mostly Jewish women I would guess, but I don't really know, you know? I just had that feeling. And it was kind of the Upper West Side-liberal-Jewish-women, and they were supporting this campaign.

**Winslow:** Tell us about the speech, her Women's Right Speech, or her Women's Speech which you wrote. How did you come about doing that ...

**Franklin:** Well you know the campaign manager, whose name I don't remember, would call me and say "We need a speech for this, can you do it?" And basically I did it. And I, you know, I don't really remember doing an enormous amount of research on this to see where Shirley... and now, knowing Shirley's speech to Congress in 1968, I can only

assume I must have read that, but I don't remember in all honesty. That, her saying, "I've been discriminated against more as a woman than as a black person." I always have believed, until yesterday when I read her speech again, in her 1969 speech before Congress, I realized that she had said that before, but I always thought that I had written that line for her because it was something that was in the speech and was an important part of the speech. I can imagine I must have done some research on it, but mostly again, I wanted Shirley to be the spokesperson for what I felt that she should be saying and feeling, and in fact she did. She did feel it. So I wasn't wrong in doing that, but that's where I was coming from. It was like I was coming at this from the point of view more of an artist in some sense, than a politician. If I'm creating this character, this woman, who's running for President, who do I want her to be? And who would I like her to be? And who would inspire me? Because I was somebody who was very political in many ways, but I was not buying into the political system at all. I was definitely not a Republican and definitely not a Democrat either. I was much more radical, and I wanted there to be a voice, a middle of the road voice, that could get the attention of a wide variety of people in the United States, and Shirley did represent that possibility.

**Winslow:** Did most of the meetings of you go to take place in Manhattan? Did you ever go to Brooklyn?

**Franklin:** No. I only went in Manhattan.

**Winslow:** You would get a phone call and asked to write a speech on international relations or foreign policies or was it specific to Vietnam?

**Franklin:** It was specific to Vietnam in this case. I mean there was a big anti-war movement going on, and Shirley was bringing up before the United Nations, America's

role in the War in Vietnam. So it was very significant in that sense. It was an American who was standing before the United Nations saying, "This war is wrong." And I think that was a very important thing and I do wish that had happened during the eight years of the Bush administration, I must say. But...[00:20:25]

**Winslow:** And she actually spoke at the U.N. on this.

**Franklin:** She spoke in the United Nations, yes.

**Winslow:** And what did you write? Do you remember? Or the outline?

**Franklin:** Probably that it was an immoral war. I don't really know. I was peripherally involved with the anti-war movement. I remember that while I was at Sarah Lawrence, there were some women from Sarah Lawrence who were in the continuing-ED (Education) program that I was in, which was actually at the time one of the first in the country. Some of those women were involved in an anti-war rally, a very large rally at Yale University, and I felt like I did not get involved in the preparations for the rally because I felt my heart was much more into the Black Power movement than it was into the anti-war movement. And there was very much a feeling of, the white kids come along, and they're interested in what's going to save their butts as it were. And that was not really my interest. And so-but I did go to anti-war rallies, and I certainly picked up on things. I think those things would make their way into my speech, again I was not given direction.

**Winslow:** Were you a registered voter in New York?

**Franklin:** I was, yes.

**Winslow:** Did you vote in the primary? Do you remember because she was in the New York primary?

**Franklin:** I was actually in Westchester County. I don't remember voting in the primary. I did vote in the election. I've always voted in elections even when I've lived in India or Canada.

**Winslow:** Did you work with people from New York in the New York primary when she...

**Franklin:** No I did not.

**Winslow:** So you've never even thought of running as a delegate?

**Franklin:** No I did not.

**Winslow:** That was not your interest?

**Franklin:** No. No. Certainly, after Shirley's Women's Day speech got an enormous amount of attention, and while that was gratifying to me, what it also meant was she started meeting and operating in areas where there were people who were much more experienced and much more knowledgeable about the media process than I was. I was essentially a poet who was really just finishing up at Sarah Lawrence, and a single mother with three kids.

So I was much more, kind of on the outside of things. And I think I was personally intimidated by some of the people Shirley was in contact with. People who I felt were much more media aware and media conscious and adept than I was.

**Winslow:** Did you work in any women's group at that time?

**Franklin:** No, I did not. I've never been a joiner, I have to say. I'm a writer and I sit at home to this day. I sit, now, in front of my computer. I always used to use a number 2 pencil and a spiral notebook to write, but I still work alone.

**Winslow:** When you stopped, did you have any goodbye to Chisholm, or was it just the way it was in the sixties that you just went on to the next thing?

**Franklin:** Just went on to the next thing. I mean I did feel disillusioned. As I say, partly because I was disillusioned with what happened. I think that I believed that Shirley had enough popular backing, that she would have a greater effect on the Democratic convention than she did, and that was very, very disillusioning for me. It was as though this woman had worked really hard, and a lot of people, mostly volunteers, put their hearts and energies into pushing her candidacy, not because any of us ever thought she was going to become President of the United States, but we felt that her candidacy would present to the American people possibilities for change that were not being presented by anybody else. And the fact that she had very, very little impact.... I was not aware of all the infighting, the black caucus not supporting her; those were things that, reading history now, I can be aware of those, but I wasn't aware at time. I was essentially, disillusioned. And you know, in that sense, and I think I was also, there was also another level; the fact that I wrote important speeches for Shirley without being giving direction was also disillusioning for me because I also assumed that that's, and I.... To this day, I have to say, when I hear a speech - not from Obama because I know he's a wonderful writer, and he plays an important role in writing his speeches. But when I would hear [other] people's speeches, I always think, well who's the speechwriter, and how much leeway are they being given in writing their speeches? Because as I say I was given a lot of leeway. [00:25:13]

**Winslow:** Did you know the other 'speechwriters'?

**Franklin:** Nope. Basically, as I said, the order of command as it were, to filter through to me, was that the campaign manager would give me a call and say, “Jill we need a speech on this, can you do it?” Now, did they have other people writing speeches for her on these same topics and they weren’t used? I would imagine so. I would imagine so. The speeches I presented to her were used, but maybe everybody’s weren’t, and maybe a lot of people were preparing speeches. I don’t really know about that.

**Winslow:** You said that you had a reason to contact Mrs. Chisholm, Shirley Chisholm in the ninety’s.

**Franklin:** Yes I did. I was hit by a car in 1990 and almost killed. And this was in British Columbia where there’s a no fault system, but nonetheless there are court cases. The insurance companies doesn’t want to pay anybody for anything, other than their immediate hospital care. So my court case went to trial, and one of the people who was testifying at the trial was Francis Fitzgerald, who had written about me in an article in the New Yorker and in the subsequent book that came out of these articles. And she had mentioned that I had been Shirley Chisholm’s speechwriter. And so consequently when she testified, this came up in the trial. The insurance company lawyer said to her, “Well how do you know Mrs. Franklin was Shirley Chisholm’s speech writer?” And she spoke about this, but I was infuriated and my husband was livid, and my daughter, who’d lived through the experience of her father declaring that my involvement with Shirley was something only an insane person like me would do...she was incensed about this. And so my daughter and husband contacted Shirley Chisholm and they asked Shirley if she could come to testify at this personal injury trial and support the fact that I was in fact her speechwriter. And she was wonderful and very, very gracious about it. And she said the

problem is that she's not really well. I believe she could have even been in a wheel chair then at that point, but I'm not sure. I think she had lots of vision problems. She wasn't doing well. And she said, "I'm quite happy to have the lawyers come down here and take deposition from me down here." And we then presented that to the insurance company lawyers, and they decided not to do that. But she was very gracious about it. Also in thinking about what I could offer, and what I could present to you today in talking, I was thinking that part of my hesitation about not pursuing further connection with Shirley, was a feeling very much that while I was an emancipated woman in one sense: I was a single mother, and I went back to school and I... there was another sense in which I was still very much a pre-Betty-Friedan-housewife, and very much intimidated by the Gloria Steinems and in terms of, you know, there were other areas in which I was writing where there were also people that, because they had a name for themselves, and I felt I didn't, I was very intimidated. So I wasn't... and I wasn't involved in women's movements, so I didn't have that kind of support of women helping other women. And I think I was intimidated in some sense. I had no objection to writing Shirley's speeches, but I didn't see myself as hob-knobbing with the people who were surrounding her campaign, such as Harry Belafonte's wife. I mean I could go to a meeting with her, but I didn't see myself socializing or feeling confident in myself. I was young, I was very young. In '72 I was thirty years old, and I had been married since I was 18 and a mother since I was 19. So I was very unworldly. And I think that that... I was unworldly and I was shy. And I felt, I mean as a poet, I was used to writing alone in my room. I wasn't really used to mingling, and I didn't push myself at all. And I think if I had, I probably could have continued writing speeches for Shirley, and probably could have parleyed this in some sense into

speechwriting for someone else. Although again, it wasn't particularly the area of writing that I chose to do. In fact, I subsequently became a-not only writing my own books, but I became a ghostwriter for somebody in India, and I wrote his major books. So that idea of taking somebody else's ideas, and then writing as though I was them, was something I did with Shirley, and subsequently went on to do for other very popular books that came out. [00:29:58]

**Winslow:** So for the next generation of scholars and activists and people who are going to be looking at this, here we have someone who is a white, as you've described, middle class Jewish woman, who could capture, according to Chisholm's, words and who she was. I wonder how that would resonate among Women's Studies, African-American; you know those kinds of studies today, in terms of how this upcoming generation looks at things. Could you comment on that?

**Franklin:** Well I would imagine, if I was a woman of color, I would be offended by the fact that some Jewish chick, you know, a thirty year old Jewish chick who looked like I was about twelve at the time, thought that she could write, write speeches for a black woman you know, a successful black woman, and could presume upon doing that. Now I did it because I fell into a gap where there was nobody else doing it. I was asked to do it because no one else wanted to do it.

**Winslow:** And you have no idea why no one else could or did do it?

**Franklin:** Well I was just told you know, in fact, by Byron Lewis, that I was willing to work for nothing, and I could do this, and they were, the women that he knew, the black women writers that he knew, were not willing to work for nothing on a campaign that wasn't going anywhere. And I could do it. So I filled in that gap. I didn't, I didn't stop to

think about how presumptuous it was other than, I-I mean I did question it. How come you don't you know-surely there are more appropriate people than me to do this?

**Winslow:** Do you know what other black women writers might have done it or were around that...and Mr. Lewis was thinking of?

**Franklin:** Well I know the person that he mentioned was June Jordan. And he said that, he said that June, now whether June eventually became involved with the campaign, I don't know. But at this point, when I was writing speeches for Shirley, the campaign did not have a lot of momentum. As it got more momentum it attracted more people, and as it attracted more people there were other options. I don't really know who the other speechwriters subsequently were because I wasn't involved. But there was also, although I'm saying that I wasn't involved and didn't push myself partly because of a reticence and shyness and insecurity on my part, the other part was that I always felt that it was slightly inappropriate to say the least for me to be doing this in the first place. So...

**Winslow:** And looking back do you still...

**Franklin:** And I, yes, I do! I do! But I also feel like there was a gap there, and something, somebody had to fill that gap, so I was there, and I filled that gap. I didn't try to take it into a career move for myself. I didn't try to become, to parley this into a future career for myself in any way, shape, or form. It's sometimes... people will ask like... someone like Francis Fitzgerald may interview me and asked me about this. But unless someone asks me about it, I don't' really offer it.

**Winslow:** Looking back, any last thoughts for the next generation in terms of what you did?

**Franklin:** You know, one of the things that's very exciting now is that the younger generation is having-finding an interest in Shirley. And I do think that, Shola Lynch's speech, rather her documentary, was absolutely fabulous. And it certainly showed a very, very strong Shirley. I was very impressed by it. It showed a depth in Shirley that I, frankly, was really not so aware of, even being around in those times. And I think, seeing the interest in Shirley, and seeing these young women such as Shola, having an interest in doing something like this is very inspiring for, basically for women, and also inspiring for Americans. It's not, you know, it's not a question of black and white, and it's not a question of male and female, to engage young people in the political structure, and to see about making a difference, is fabulously exciting! And what Shirley did, and I wish we would see this in politics today, is she was a strong figure who spoke her mind. And I would like to see that happening much more right now. And I think that as young people look into the history of Shirley Chisholm's campaign for presidency, as well as her career in Congress, we're going to see people who are inspired to be more outspoken and have the courage of their convictions, which we need. I don't think we're seeing that in politics the way we should be right now.

**Winslow:** Thank you very much.

**Franklin:** Thank you. [00:34:40]