

**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**

**Nadine B. Hack
Interviewed by BARBARA WINSLOW**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2008
870 United Nations Plaza
beCause Global Consulting, Inc.**

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 ones 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 Nadine Hack as a student volunteer on Shirley Chisholm's 1964 New York State Senate Campaign and her 1968 Congressional campaign. She also discusses her student activism at Erasmus Hall High School.

Interview Context: The interview took place at 870 United Nations Plaza in Manhattan, New York. There is some background noise because the interview occurred during business hours.

Narrator

Nadine B. Hack is the President and CEO of beCause Global Consulting and the Executive in Residence at IMD, the International Institute for Management Development. At IMD she focuses on responsible leadership, good governance, transparency, diversity, sustainability, corporate and social responsibility, through her teaching and writings in the executive education programs there. Additionally Ms. Hack has extensive experience working with the United Nations, where she served as New York City Commissioner for the United Nations, Consular Corps and International Business, the city's senior official liaison with the world's largest international diplomatic and business communities. She has served on for- and not-for-profit boards, including the World Policy Institute, Xechem International Inc., Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation (Chair through 2005), Africa-America Institute (Vice Chair through 2009), Synergos Institute (Executive Committee through 2009), Amnesty International USA, and United Nations Association of New York. While a student at Erasmus Hall high school Nadine Hack became involved with Women's Strike for Peace, where she met Congresswoman Bella Abzug. It was through Congresswoman Abzug, Hack met Shirley Chisholm and worked on her State Senate and Congressional campaign in Brooklyn, New York.

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

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Transcript: Transcribed by Marwa Amer. Edited for clarity by Joyce LeeAnn Joseph and Barbara Winslow. Approved by Nadine B. Hack.

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Barbara Winslow: Today is Tuesday, March 11, 2008 and I am Barbara Winslow here with Ms. Nadine B. Hack at?

Nadine Hack: 870 U.N. Plaza.

Winslow: 870 U.N. Plaza, in Manhattan, New York City. Before we begin I would like to remind you that you are in control of this interview you have the right to refuse to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. If you choose to end the interview, the tape will be destroyed or given to you and it will be as if you never participated in this project. Do you understand that?

Hack: Totally.

Winslow: How did you know Shirley Chisholm?

Hack: Okay, I am also a very proud daughter of Brooklyn, a product of the New York City public school system, P.S. 139.

Winslow: Where did you live? What part?

Hack: Flatbush, Erasmus Hall high school. And I first became involved in the early 1960s in Women's Strike for Peace with Bella Abzug and it was through Bella that I met Shirley. And I was a teenager at the time and Bella called me kid, and Bella called me kid right up until her last days. And she at the time-Shirley was actually running for the State Senate, so I worked with Bella and a lot of other women on Shirley's Senate campaign. Now I have to be really clear about this, when I say I worked, remember I was a teenager. So I worked meant I sat in rooms stuffing and sealing envelopes. I went through apartment complexes canvassing voters and getting signatures. I was not a senior campaign official or anything. I was a teenage volunteer. But in meeting these two extraordinary women at about the same time it was a really formative part of my whole,

kind of philosophic grounding for everything that I have done since. And then shortly after—well actually after meeting Bella and during the time I was working on Shirley's '64 senate campaign—Dr. King gave his famous 1963 “I Have a Dream Speech,” which really was the final, the complete turning the key in the lock of really cementing my commitment to social justice and social justice activism. And the thing that I really loved about Shirley and Bella—although they had completely different temperaments—were that they both really got in a way that almost nobody else did, that sexism and racism were inextricably, interconnected, issues and therefore working for civil rights and working for women's rights had to be done in tandem. And the reason this was so unique then and sadly as we can see what is happening in the 2008 election is still unique, sadly these many decades later. Is that a lot of the people who were involved in the civil rights movement, which I was involved in, where a lot of the women, the black women were being told by the brothers who pretty much ran the civil rights campaign, “Hold off on women's issues because first lets get our rights and then you can deal with women's issues.” And at the same time on the other side of the fence there were the women, pretty much largely a white women's movement—the women's movement—not really thinking about or conducting any outreach to our black sisters. And it was a very non-inclusive kind of “This is about women's rights and we are the women who are involved and concerned.” And Bella and Shirley always, always, stood and then Gloria Steinem is the third person in that triumvera and you can add Flo Kennedy too. Who really got that you could not separate these issues and really always showed up for both sets of issues and whatever they were talking about they made sure to bring the other set of issues in. And

to me it was like, as a young woman it was such a profound modeling of what would ultimately be my life's work.

Winslow: I want to get back to you as a teenager. There were not a lot of teenagers around Women's Strike for Peace so was your mother involved in Women's Strike for Peace?

Hack: No, no. My parents were both incredibly civically involved. My mom taught Poly Sci (Political Science) at Brooklyn College, so I have Brooklyn College roots. My dad and my mom were both very, very involved with the state of Israel and Jewish philanthropy. My family were immigrants-my grandparents came as immigrants escaping the Russian pogroms. And my older uncles were born in Russia; my dad I think was the first one born in America, maybe had one brother born before him, I am not sure. And my-what we called my rich uncle Max and the reason we called him my rich uncle Max, it was my bubby, my grandmother's older brother who was the first one who had come over from Russia and bought what you would call a tenement apartment building in Brooklyn. And then it's like the entire shtetl moved into this building. So I lived in a building not just with my parents, but with my bubby, and my Zetti and my aunt Molly, and my aunt Yeta, and my uncle Harry, and my uncle Max, and all of my father's brothers and their wives and my cousins. Now in the mid-fifties all of my other cousins moved to the suburbs, but we stayed in Brooklyn. And my parents were-my mother was a city planner, her specialty was urban renewal. And so in our little apartment in Brooklyn, my mother would have people she was working with, in addition to being a professor at Brooklyn College she worked for the Regional Planning Association. So she would have mayors and governors and state assembly people over in

the living room talking about city planning issues. So between them, between their activism and my *bubby* [Grandmother in Yiddish] taught me when you go to the bakery to buy bread because this is before—I never bought packaged bread in my life until many decades later and it was never white bread. But what my *bubby* would teach me when you go to the bakery, find out what today's rye bread costs and find out what yesterdays rye bread. Buy yesterday's rye bread and whatever pennies you save bring them home and put them in the *psihky* jar on the top of the refrigerator, which was the *sadaku*, the charity. And we really didn't have financial resources, but we had a tradition of giving. So I think my whole family background very much gave me a sense of the importance of civic involvement. I think the radicalism with which I took my civic involvement was probably not exactly what my parents would have chosen.

Winslow: So you worked for her campaign first going to Albany?

Hack: Yes.

Winslow: Did you ever go to Albany with her?

Hack: I didn't, I didn't. I really was a kid. You know I was not the person who got to do those kinds of things. I really was like in the campaign headquarters.

Winslow: What was that like? Who would be there?

Hack: Oh, all women.

Winslow: It was all women?

Hack: And this is before you just told me Shirley's district was 70% women. I had no idea of that, but it was all women. I literally cannot picture in my mind a man, I'm sure there probably were men in the room, but I can't visualize them.

Winslow: Intergenerational, multi-racial?

Hack: Intergenerational, multi-racial, amazingly spectacular like the audience at a Sweet Honey and the Rock concert. Every time I am at a Sweet Honey and the Rock concert and I look around the audience and I go this is how I want my Congress to be, this is what I want my country to look like and be represented by.

Winslow: And when you campaigned in her district, this is sort of when she's involved in the process of transforming that local democratic club and again you were campaigning in what was then a very multi-racial district wasn't it?

Hack: Yes, yes.

Winslow: Now she goes to Albany in '64 and then you worked on her '68 campaign?

Hack: I worked on her '68 campaign.

Winslow: Where did you go to College, may I ask?

Hack: I had a very unusual, non-linear trajectory. I actually dropped out of high school to become a full time political organizer and I later got my degree, but I dropped out of high school, I became a full time political organizer.

Winslow: For whom and what? Or do you not want to say?

Hack: For every social justice issue and as I told you by 1969 I was a member of a political street theatre troop traveling the country doing benefit performances for the Black Panthers, for the Chicago Seven. We created what I believe was the first women's liberation play, street-play, where we ended the play, all of us, with our arms up in fists. I was living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan when Robin Morgan and a group of women took over what was called the *Village Rat* and it was the *Women's Rat*. I volunteered in the offices there, I wrote articles. In fact I just recently was talking to Robin (Morgan) about finding the archives of that because I would like to see what I

wrote when I was that age. This led very naturally into me becoming involved in the anti-war movement, it led very naturally for me to become involved in the anti-apartheid movement, at a very early stage. So that I began to become involved in civil rights, human rights, peace, social justice, human rights issues domestically and globally and whatever cause came my way, I was there.

Winslow: I want to go back now to '68.

Hack: Sure.

Winslow: Did you have any sense of what a historic election this would be? Did anybody, if you remember?

Hack: To be honest I don't think at the time we were thinking history, I think we were very present to the moment. And the moment was very much about claiming our rights. And when I say our rights, as I say I had a foot in each camp of the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement. And it was the start of black power and women's power and Shirley and Bella, later when she ran for Congress and in all her incarnations, so epitomized stepping up and saying we deserve to be here. Let me change that, not we deserve to be here. We must be here. We being here are going to transform the world. We being here, we bringing women's voices, we bringing the voices of the marginalized right into the main stream, this is where we belong. I don't think at the time, maybe the older women were thinking of it in terms of what this would mean for decades forward and now that I am an older women and I think about my young granddaughters.

Everything I do, I think of in terms of history and in terms of what they will inherit. But I have to be honest at the time; I was very much caught up in the moment of the now and not in a historical context.

Winslow: Did the campaigning in '68 seem different than the campaigning in '64? Just because it's to the Congress?

Hack: Well I think it was really exciting; I mean there was just such an exciting edge that we were going to elect a black woman to Congress. I mean it was just so thrilling; it was so there-was like a palpable sense of energy and hopefulness. It said to each us, this is not only possible what we are going to start doing; this is just the beginning. And of course at that time we believed it was all going to happen really fast. And it is still sad to see how few members there are of women in Congress and blacks in Congress and you the numbers are far greater than they have been, but they are still pathetically under represented.

Winslow: What was she like? I mean did you get to meet her, work with her, anything in either of the campaigns?

Hack: I got to meet her, but again I really want to emphasize because I don't want to misrepresent that I was like a buddy because that would be not a fair representation. I was a very young girl working on this campaign, so I was not a senior adviser in the closed-door room strategic planning meetings or any of that. But I did get to be around her and what I felt about her and I can almost not talk about Shirley with out talking about Bella. And I can never talk about Bella without talking about Shirley because they were both so incredibly supportive of each other and so much a part of my life at the time. And while Gloria was a leader for me, I didn't get to personally meet Gloria until I was a much older women, I met Gloria really-maybe in the early eighties so it was a different stage of my life when I met Gloria. And immediately Gloria also became, for me, a model of who I want to be always in the world. But being around Shirley, first let

me speak about Bella because that will give the counterpoint for Shirley's uniqueness. Bella was like the Mac truck that was just going to break through every wall and over the years I cannot tell you how many times, and this statement usually comes from men, occasionally from women, but most often men have said to me, "You know, I really like your kind of feminist, kind of more gentle and more... the Bella type of feminism was you know, so crass." And every time I like even hear the start of that I say, "Stop!" If I would not be here, standing here, I could not be the kind of "gentle feminist" you refer to had it not been for Bella butting her head against the wall and breaking through walls. And even I-lets fast-forward to 1988, when I was the New York Finance Chair for the euphemistically named Democratic Presidential Victory Fund. I was the Finance Chair; my Vice-Chairs included Robert Ruben, Arthur Lovett, Steve Ross, I was the senior person. But every single time I walked into a room, with another group of big donors, sadly still mostly men. Initially when I walked in the door, I would be treated like the person who was there to pour the coffee. And every single time I had to like muster up to say "No, I am the one in charge." And I had to have a little bit of that Bella push, so I always said, we needed Bella, we needed Bella's strength. Had there not been a Bella there would not be a Nadine. So the reason I just described Bella is that now I want to describe Shirley. Shirley had every bit as much of the absolute steely strength of Bella, like not one ounce less passion, commitment and determination to break through the walls. But I think because of her upbringing in the islands, she was raised in a way that placed a high premium on politeness, decorum, properness. She was also part of that generation of—and still sadly many black people feel this way—where unless you are cleaner, better dressed, more perfectly spoken than the most perfectly spoken white

person, in the most perfectly spoken and put together way, then you would not be taken seriously. Shirley's external was very quiet and much softer than Bella's. I never saw Shirley yell at anybody. Bella yelled at lots of people, I've been yelled at by Bella. Being yelled at by Bella can be a really overwhelming experience because when Bella yelled at you she didn't just yell at you she just flattened you. I never once saw Shirley do anything like that, now please I am not putting Bella down. She just was what she was and then once she yelled at you, it was back to like "hey kid" and the friendship was right there. But Shirley had a way of looking at you with a stern glance and saying, "I need this done now" and it had the exact same strength and power as Bella yelling. It just was packaged, you know she was really the epitome of what's that saying, "A steel fist in a velvet glove," she was the epitome of that.

Winslow: How did she dress?

Hack: Just really simply. She dressed...

Winslow: Do you remember?

Hack: Yes, I do I am kind of picturing her; I am trying to close my eyes and picture her. Always a skirt, I cannot picture her ever wearing pants, always a skirt, a little jacket, always a blouse kind of buttoned right up to the top most button. Very demure, but very simple and yet you know, as I said really put together, not put together as in Chanel suit put together. Just-I can kind of picture a simple a-line skirt, a little very petite kind of jacket; I just picture her very petite and this very prim kind of blouses. And you know, you have to remember this is the time when a lot of women have like afros out to here, when I've got wild hair down to there. When you know, people are wearing peasant

blouses and embroidered and hippie bell-bottoms, she just always looked very straight, you know, like she could be working in an office somewhere.

Winslow: Did you work on her '72 campaign?

Hack: I didn't because at that point I was in the political street theatre troop traveling around the country.

Winslow: But you stayed friendly with Abzug and Shirley afterwards?

Hack: I stayed friendly with, my friendship with Bella remained right through Bella's death.

Winslow: Because the two of them had a falling out.

Hack: Yeah, a lot of people in the women's movement had a falling out, you know this is one of the heart breaking things for me is that within movements people didn't always walk the walk, of the talk the talk. Which is why I hold Gloria Steinem in such high regard because I have never seen one moment in private or in public where Gloria has not walked the walk, right up until present day, 2008. So there are lots of falling outs within the women's movement, a lot of factionalism, I mean Bella and Betty Freidan had a falling out over the inclusions of lesbians in the women's movement. Which Betty was adamantly against and there were lots of different falling-outs. And also at the same time there were lots of falling outs between civil rights activists and women rights activists. And many, many years later you know to get back to your questions on my college years, which are non-existent. In the 1980s I put together a portfolio of what I had done from the 1960s through the 1980s and I went to the New School and I presented the portfolio and said I would liked to be admitted into your Masters program. There's no way I am going to do a B.A. and they had no precedence for that, but they accepted me. And now

it's become more of a common thing, adults who have had professional careers get accepted. But my second masters degree I got at Harvard and I wrote a paper, one of my papers was about the first back with the suffragettes and the abolitions, how when they worked together how strong there movement was and when they had the falling out. You know when Alice Paul's said to Ida B. Wells, "No you've got march in the back of the parade," both movements suffered by the separation. And then I feel the exact same thing happened in the 1960s, that both the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement lost some of their strength by not staying more closely in collaboration with each other. Which is why again I always admired Bella, Shirley and then later in life Gloria because they really understood the importance of keeping the two connected.

Winslow: What was interesting what we found is you really get a sense when you look at Chisholm's political life after '72 the way the election went was a huge disappointment for her in part, not only because Steinem and Abzug and Freidan wouldn't support her, although what's interesting is Steinem was a Chisholm delegate in states where McGovern wasn't, so she was always very careful and then of course Dellums didn't, support her, the Congressional Black Caucus didn't support her.

Hack: The CBC, I know, it was heart breaking.

Winslow: But we came across some interviews and papers where, when Bella was running for office Chisolm wouldn't support her. We saw this one article where Chisholm goes "Why should I, she didn't support me?" and I just wonder if you ever heard Bella speak about that?

Hack: I didn't actually. I am aware of it, but I didn't and the reason I was able to maintain more of a relationship with Bella through the years, than with Shirley is that

Shirley did become so disheartened by the lack of support that she became a little bit more reclusive. And there are friends of mine like, Donna Brazile who did stay connected to her and visited her at her home and if you don't have her on your list of people to interview you should.

Winslow: I will not be able to interview her until next year.

Hack: That's correct, although you never know; maybe you could do a phone interview, I don't know.

Winslow: I wouldn't even bother, she's so busy.

Hack: Well I'll email her and let her know your doing this because she loves Shirley. I mean Shirley really is like her absolute role model and she visited Shirley at Shirley's home right until Shirley's death.

Winslow: Oh really!

Hack: So she has the kind of relationship with Shirley that I had with Bella right up till her death. So I think you know...I was just going to say when you mentioned about how Gloria was a delegate for Shirley in the states where she wasn't a delegate for McGovern. When I was in that '88 campaign you may remember that Pat (Patricia) Schroeder was also running for President.

Winslow: That's right.

Hack: So I asked Mike Dukakis (Michael Dukakis), who was the candidate, I said I want to send out a fundraising letter to all the same people who I am fundraising for your campaign on behalf of Pat and say in the first paragraph, "While you know I am the finance chair for the Dukakis campaign, I believe that it is so important that Pat's running. I am giving her money and encourage you to give her money and please support

her race.” And I asked Dukakis, “Is it okay can I do that?” and he okayed it. And I asked Pat, “Is it okay that, that’s the way I am wording this?” and she okayed it. And so I raised money for Pat Schroeder, while I was the finance chair for Mike Dukakis campaign because I really just felt that once again it was just important to support a woman. I was not involved in the ‘72 race because I had become so disillusioned by the 1968 campaign where my existential dilemma was do I support Gene McCarthy or do I support Eldridge Cleaver on the Peace and Freedom Party.

Winslow: And my husband was his Vice Presidential running mate.

Hack: Oh my god. You see I am telling its 1/6th of a degree not six degrees. And the way I resolved it was working for Gene and having my t-shirts covered with peace and freedom buttons, saying this is what I believe in because I thought Jean could get elected. And where I was coming from when McGovern was the candidate that was like such a complete disappointment for me that, not McGovern, Humphrey, that the Humphrey-Nixon campaign that’s when I joined the political street theatre troop and started traveling, that’s when I dropped out politics...

Winslow: Well you did it differently?

Hack: I did it differently, I was an outside agitator, I wasn’t trying to work within the Democratic Party. I didn’t come back until like the ‘76 race, so I missed that that ‘72 cycle.

Winslow: So you don’t remember?

Hack: I just wasn’t involved in it at all, either for Shirley or for McGovern. I was doing other...

Winslow: Did you ever hear her speak, like at a political rally?

Hack: Not during her Presidential Campaign.

Winslow: Or during 68' or '64'?

Hack: Oh, '68 yeah, '64 yes.

Winslow: How would you describe her as a speaker?

Hack: Again that steely strength, she just, I got goose bumps right now, I am getting goose bumps just remembering. The title of her book and then the movie that was made, *Unbought and Unbossed* just completely represented who she was. She was not afraid to say anything, she was the first person in my life who I got to see really speak truth to power. You know that term is thrown around now so much, but very few people do it really. You know there are human rights activists in parts of the world where they risk their life and I believe those people speak truth to power, but in America even today there are not a lot of people who really speak truth to power and Shirley just totally, totally spoke truth to power, she just was like so out there. She never said a word that disappointed me, it was like she never, I mean again I wasn't part of the strategic planning sessions, so I wasn't in the rooms where like someone was trying to convince her to tone down this and she said "No, I'm going to do that," or she said "Okay, I'll tweak it this way." So I don't know what was happening behind the scenes, but I can tell you that when she spoke, it was like, from my perspective no one was censoring her, no one could censor her, she couldn't censor herself. She just said it as she saw it and for me that was so inspiring

Winslow: Did she speak to large crowds; we want to get a sense of what it was like to being in Brooklyn in '68? You know churches...

Hack: You know campaigning then was so different than campaigning now. You know there was no TV ad buys, there were no media consultants. It was really like street corner type stuff, I mean I am talking soapbox on the street corner and you would gather crowds. And I'm picturing in my mind crowds of like 40 people 50 people, I'm not seeing huge gatherings, but I am seeing lots of those street corners. I mean from one street corner to another street corner it was really like, me as the young teenager would be the one standing on the other street corner handing people little pieces of paper saying, "Come across the street and hear this speech" it was really very of the moment.

Winslow: And would people say, "why are you supporting Shirley Chisholm?" What were your discussions like?

Hack: I don't remember that, I can't remember that. Also during those years, I mean in the sixties I supported a lot of the, what were called the reformed democrats, so Mel Duban was running for Congress in Brooklyn. And then I supported people like Al Lowenstein who was running from another district and I even supported people like Julian Bond who was running in the south, but he would come up. I have such a vivid image of standing outside of Macys on Flatbush Avenue with Julian Bond and you know gathering people to hear him speak. You know depending upon which neighborhood you were in it was either a black crowd or a white crowd. Again I don't see other than the campaign headquarters, the campaign headquarters were very integrated, but when you did the campaigning in the streets the neighborhoods were still very separated. I mean even though in my school, my public schools there were kids of every race, even in the school yard people tended to separate by their race.

Winslow: Would your mother have been-you know Shirley Chisholm majored in Sociology, but she wanted to join a political group and she couldn't because it was segregated so she formed the Harriet Tubman Society. [Chisholm did not found the Harriet Tubman Society] Was your mother a professor when she was in school?

Hack: When was Shirley in school?

Winslow: She graduated in '46.

Hack: My mother was a professor from like '48 or '49, so probably not.

Winslow: Just missed her.

Hack: Just missed her.

Winslow: That's great, this is wonderful.

Hack: In my last year at Erasmus Hall high school I was the head of something called the Radical Student Union, which was like the white support group for the Black Student Union. And it was the year that the-teachers strike and I was on the side of the black community leaders and I was part of the organizing committee for the protest rally where we marched from Boys High to Erasmus High, it was my first arrest. I was arrested, there was only one other white person arrested. It was a very radicalizing experience for me because all of the black kids who got arrested ended up doing time. I was brought into the judge's chamber with my father and my lawyer and they had me in a little pink suit and they had my hair in a little bun. And I kid you not the judge said to me across the table, "What's a nice Jewish girl like you doing with all these niggers?" My father grabbed one hand; my lawyer grabbed the other hand to hold me back because they knew I was going to lunge across his desk and strangle him. And I remember that moment as being such a horrifyingly transformative moment for me of realizing the privilege that

just because I happen to have white skin that I was being given, and I got even though I had three felony counts and two misdemeanor's against me, they planted pot on me, so that was one of the felony counts. Like as an organizer I would be stupid enough to bring pot to a demonstration, they planted pot on me and that was one of my felony counts. My other was felonious assault against an officer, which I was the one knocked down with a billy club from an officer on a horse. And the third felony count was inciting to riot, which they were the ones who created the riot we were marching very peacefully. But the fact that I was given juvenile, there is some status I am forgetting the legal term, but it means that your record gets expunged because you are charged as a juvenile, there is a certain term I am forgetting what it is called. But I was the only one, I was the only one, me and the other white girl were the only two people that got that status.

Winslow: Do you remember the name of the other girl?

Hack: Erica. Erica I can't remember her last name.

Winslow: And in this Radical Student Union group where there lots of young women in it?

Hack: Yeah that was very mixed. It was I'd say there were probably more men-men, kids we were all kids. But I was an active leader; I was the editor of the newspaper for this radical student union that we called *The Surrealistic Review of the Times*, which we printed up on mimeograph machines.

Winslow: Does it exist anywhere?

Hack: I have no idea, if you find that tell me about it. I have no idea.

Winslow: *Surrealistic...*

Hack: *Surrealistic Review of the Times: Radical Student Union*, which was the white support network for the Black Student Union. And the black student union was kind of housed at Boys High and the Radical Student Union was housed at Erasmus Hall High School.

Winslow: I wonder what high schools do with their student newspapers?

Hack: Oh, this was not a sanctioned school newspaper. This was confiscated, I was in the dean's office more often, I was expelled. I dropped out at the time of my arrest. For that whole year for all intensive purposes, I had done all my AP (Advanced Placement) courses in my junior year; I was basically in high school for gym. And I was completely disinterested in school. I had already moved out of my home, I was living on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; I was taking the train to come in to show up at Erasmus, but not go to classes and just organize students. I pretended to be a college student and joined the W. E. B. Dubois club. I mean I was just...

Winslow: Where was that club?

Hack: Based out of Brooklyn College.

Winslow: That's a CP (Communist Party) club?

Hack: Yeah.

Winslow: Were there other radical groups at Brooklyn College that you went to?

Hack: Not that ...that was the one that I joined, the W.E.B. Dubois Club, I don't know whether there were others. I am sure there were others.

Winslow: This is wonderful. Okay anything I didn't ask you that I should have dealing with Chisholm or Brooklyn women's activism?

Hack: No I just think that, well there is something unique about Shirley. There is also something so unique about Brooklyn.

Winslow: What do you think that is?

Hack: You know I don't really know, except that I know that whenever I'm in like an audience and people say, "Who's here from? Who's here?" and whenever they say "Brooklyn," the crowd goes wild. And the fact that, I mean obviously I started this interview saying that I am a proud daughter of Brooklyn too because you know that's what Shirley was. But wherever I speak publicly—you know I was given the New York Women's Agenda Star Award in 2002 and it was in the Hilton Ballroom with 3,500 people. And I opened up by saying I am proud product of the New York public school system-Brooklyn, New York-P.S. 139-Erasmus hall high school. There's something about Brooklyn that has a kind of fighter spirit to it. That the only way I can describe it is that you know the Dodgers left Brooklyn when I was very fairly young. And Ebbets field was turned into a housing project when I was fairly young, but to this day when I hear people say the Los Angeles Dodgers, like I go, my body does a little-what do you mean the Los Angeles Dodgers? It's the Brooklyn Dodgers. So I think there is some confluence, you know I remember someone and I can't remember whether this was Taylor Branch in his book *Parting the Waters* or Steven Ambrose in his earlier book about King, which I can remember what the title of the book was, but it was magnificent. I think it was in Steven Ambrose's book, where he talked about the confluence of time and space and person. And that yes Martin Luther King Jr. was an extraordinary man, but it also was an extraordinary time and where he was in Atlanta and Montgomery was an extraordinary place. So I think there was like a confluence-Shirley-Brooklyn-what

was happening in the sixties, that its some combination of the alchemy of all those factors that were influencing each other that I think is significant.

Winslow: I think also, I think the fact that she spent a lot of her early years in the Caribbean, in Barbados. Because I think being in a place where people from the African Diaspora are in the majority...

Hack: Yes, yes a confidence, that's what I say, that strength.

Winslow: So the old fashioned word used to be race person.

Hack: Yes.

Winslow: Total confidence in the way Marcus Garvey did, all the Caribbean and her neighborhood was becoming more and more Caribbean. And so I think part of the reason...

Hack: And it's so much more true of Diaspora Caribbean than African America lineage of slave.

Winslow: Absolutely.

Hack: It's like there is an inner core and when I said that not that we deserve to be here, we are here. You know just a confidence that was so powerful.

Winslow: And that's I think part of the reason she would not take any stuff from the men in the Congressional Black Caucus and why they just couldn't stand her.

Hack: And why in later years they all like were so repent full. I think Ron (Ronald Dellums) is interviewed in the Unbought and Unbossed, whether he really was truly repent full he at least says so in the film. I have to tell you other than those years between the '68 election and by the '76 elections I was back in. But in that early '70s, I was just so much more radicalized, I just didn't believe in the American electorate

system, I've come back into it, but in all the years I have been in the American electorate system to this day, I have met no one who exhibited her bravery, her confidence, her stature. She was a unique human being, she'd be a unique human being in 2008 for her to be what she was in 1964 and 1968 and 1972 when she ran for President, its just beyond imagination. I know, I know. I get so angry when I hear people say the first women running for president or the first black running for president, I get so infuriated. That's why I am so glad you are doing this project, people need to know, there was Shirley Chisholm. It was not a symbolic candidacy.