

Loretta Chin
March 2012
Brooklyn College
Shirley Chisholm Activist Award

My application for the Shirley Chisholm Activist Award is prompted by the urging of three separate women who sent me the application and suggested that I apply for it. I can think of no greater reward for work that I have done over my life than to be acknowledged by others in this way. Although I have not been compensated in monetary terms for most of what I have accomplished, I have been rewarded in ways that are priceless and significant for my personal satisfaction in knowing that I made a difference and as in the spirit of this award, to know that I am a catalyst for change.

I am an American born Asian American woman, whose father was an immigrant, but whose family has been in America for five generations. I was raised in the traditional customs of my culture and that of a fully assimilated experience in the United States. Culturally, this meant that women played a subservient role to men and children obeyed their parents. As such, my parents did not place a priority on my education because I was a girl and advised me to marry young and raise a family, which I did out of filial respect. Although this has put me at a disadvantage educationally and economically, it also gave me life skills and work experiences that place me at a distinct advantage at this point in my life.

As I raised my three daughters, two of whom are Brooklyn College graduates and the third in her senior year in high school, I worked for many years at BC on a part and full-time basis to help supplement my husband's income. I also attended BC, taking one class a semester as a part of my union benefits. I noticed that our college had numerous ethnic studies departments, programs, and centers such as Africana Studies, Puerto Rican and Latino Studies, Judaic Studies, a Caribbean Studies Program, a Center for Italian American Studies, Women's Studies, Children's Studies, and more; most have been well established and in existence for thirty to forty years. I also noticed a similar trend in The City University of New York (CUNY). At the time that I began at BC, there was no Asian Studies program and the few that were sprinkled throughout CUNY were weakly supported due to a lack of awareness and community involvement, and little incentive for movement on the part of administration.

I began an Asian Outreach Project while working in the Division of Student Life at BC and became the convener of the Asian Studies Task Force. The work of the task force led to the establishment of an Asian Studies minor at Brooklyn College in the Spring of 2006. At around the same time, I was a part of a small group of individuals CUNY-wide who were interested in promoting Asian Studies. As such, I became a founding and current board member of the CUNY Asian American/Asian Research Institute (website: <http://aaari.info/aboutus.htm> and <http://aaari.info/03-03-07Bush.htm>) In addition, I shared materials from Medgar Evers about their Study Abroad in China program with a professor at BC to inquire if we could have such a program here. He is now the coordinator of the Brooklyn College Study Abroad in China Program.

I was finally able to return to Brooklyn College full-time in Spring 2011 as Journalism major with double minors in Children's Studies and TV/Radio. I am still working part-time in the Children's Studies Center at BC. I chose Journalism as my major as a way to become an even greater catalyst for change through the power to inform and educate the largest audience through print and multimedia

platforms. Journalism can be seen as a potent force for education that leads to activism and public service. It sheds light in dark places, illuminates the mind, and inspires action.

My enthusiasm for my studies is evident in my acceptance to and good standing in the Scholars Program within the BC Honors Academy. It is no secret among those who know me that I have a passion for social justice and multicultural issues, coupled with an acute awareness of the important work that must be done. I wrote six articles in the student newspaper last semester that covered a range of diversity and social justice related topics. The same concerns are reflected in my work as the editor of the *Children First Club Newsletter*:

(http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/pub/departments/childrensstudies/documents/childrens_documents/CFC_Newsletter.pdf)

I have just accepted the position of News Editor at the *Excelsior Student Newspaper*. Once I graduate, I plan to pursue higher aspirations for my career to pursue journalism as a form of activism through the power of the written word and to be a representative voice for those seeking justice and redress in their communities in the spirit of carrying out the Chisholm legacy to become a catalyst for change.