

MADAME PRESIDENT?: Our Shirley first Black woman to run

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MADAME PRESIDENT?

Our Shirley first Black woman to run

By WILLIE L. HAMILTON



The American people are in for a real dialogue this election year as was evidenced in Brooklyn Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm's announcement of her candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.

At a press conference at Concord Baptist Church, Marcy and Putnam Avenues, Brooklyn on Tuesday, Rep. Chisholm said, "I am not the candidate of Black America, although I am Black and proud. I am not the candidate of the Women's Movement of this country, although I am a woman, and I am equally proud of that. I am not the candidate of any political bosses or special interests."

So far she has collected \$44,000 from the "American people" and has definitely decided to run in primaries in Florida and North Carolina. In a few weeks, she said, "I will make a decision" about primaries

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in New York and California. In Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey and Massachusetts she is running a slate of delegates.

Asked whether her candidacy would hurt New York Mayor John V. Lindsay, Mrs. Chisholm said, that it may not only hurt him "but others of his political philosophy as well." This is true even though she and Lindsay may influence the same kinds of voters, Mrs. Chisholm added.

Condemned Viet war

Interrupted by applause several times during her speech, Mrs. Chisholm told about 700 persons, "Our involvement in Vietnam was—and remains at this moment—a terrible tragedy. To have intervened in the Civil War in that country, and later to have intervened in still two more countries, Laos and Cambodia, was an ill-conceived blunder whose consequences all of us have had to suffer."

Speaking about the economy, Mrs. Chisholm said, "Our unique economic system has made America the wealthiest nation in history. Yet we have undergone still another economic recession in which millions of American have lost their jobs and are unable to find work, the highest number in 10 years." At the same time, she continued, "prices have soared on even the essentials of life—food, clothing, and medical care."

Turning to the country in general, Mrs. Chisholm said there has been a "fundamental" loss of the feeling of community, "shock at the continuing injustices and inequities in the land we love, our suspicions or pervasive constitutional incompetence and corruption, our feeling that there is an absence of respectable authority in the nation, and our loss of our confidence in ourselves, with apathy or despair arising from the conviction that we are powerless to make ourselves heard or felt in remedying our ills."

In a direct attack on the Nixon administration, Mrs. Chisholm said, "We have looked in vain . . . for the courage, the spirit, the character, and the words to lift us, to bring out the best in us, to rekindle in each of use our faith in the American dream."

Looking exactly as one would have a person look who is seeking the highest office in the land, Mrs. Chisholm continued her attack on the present incumbent. "The President has broken promises to us," she said, "and has therefore lost his claim to our trust and confidence in him."

During her travels around the country, Mrs. Chisholm said, "I know millions of American from all walks of life agree with me that leadership does not mean putting the ear to the ground to follow public opinion, but to have the vision of what is necessary and the courage to make it possible—not by force, violence, or intimidation, but by persuasion example, and law."

In a somewhat obvious reference to her color, Mrs. Chisholm said, "I stand before you today to repudiate the ridiculous notion that the American people will not vote for a qualified candidate simply because he is not white or because she is not a male. I do not believe that, in 1972, the great majority of Americans harbor such narrow and petty prejudices."

Continuing in a slap at Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine, another candidate who said at one time that he would not accept a Black as his Vice Presidential running mate because he couldn't get elected, Mrs. Chisholm said she believes voters will show "that in 1972 and hereafter, that they intend to make independent judgments on the merits of a particular candidate, based on that candidate's intelligence, character, physical ability, competence, integrity, and honesty."

So with these remarks Mrs. Chisholm may have become the first woman, certainly the first Black woman to run seriously for President of the United States. She may also be the first Black since Reconstruction to run for that office.