

**Report of the
CWA National Women's Committee
to the
72nd Annual Convention**



**Communications Workers of America
July 26-28, 2010
Washington, D.C.**

Introduction

The National Women's Committee is deviating from our usual reporting format this year to celebrate and acknowledge two historic anniversaries in the women's suffrage movement.

First, this year marks the 90th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women full voting rights.

The committee members are wearing gold, white and purple sashes like the ones worn by the suffragettes in parades and demonstrations. The color gold signifies coming out of darkness into light, white stands for purity and purple is a royal color which represents victory.

The committee members will now introduce you to six courageous women who fought to obtain equal rights and one which continues that fight today.

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm



November 30, 1924 – January 1, 2005

Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm was born November 30, 1924, in Brooklyn, New York, to Barbadian parents. Chisholm was raised in an atmosphere that was both political and religious. Chisholm received much of her primary education in her parents' homeland, Barbados, under the strict eye of her maternal grandmother. Chisholm, who returned to New York when she was ten years old, credits her educational successes to the well-rounded early training she received in Barbados.

She attended Girls' High School in Bedford-Stuyvesant, a section of the city with a growing poor black and immigrant population. She won tuition scholarships to both Oberlin and Vassar, but at the urging of her parents decided to live at home and attend Brooklyn College. While training to become a teacher she became active in

several campus and community groups where she developed a keen interest in politics.

After graduating cum laude from Brooklyn College in 1946, Chisholm began to work as a nursery school teacher and later as a director of schools for early childhood education. In 1949 she married Conrad Chisholm, a Jamaican who worked as a private investigator. She continued to teach but her political interest never waned. After a successful career as a teacher, Chisholm decided to run for the New York State Assembly in 1964 and won the election.

Chisholm served in the Assembly until 1968 and then decided to run for the U.S. House of Representatives. Her opponent was the noted civil rights leader James Farmer. Possibly because Chisholm

was a well-known resident of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Farmer was not, she won easily. Thus began her tenure as the first black woman to serve in the United States Congress. Always considering herself a political maverick, Chisholm attempted to focus as much of her attention as possible on the needs of her constituents.

Chisholm protested the amount of money budgeted for defense while social programs suffered. She would not agree that money should be spent for war while Americans were hungry, ill-housed, and poorly educated.

Early in her career as a Congresswoman, she supported legislation legalizing abortions. Chisholm worked to expand the career choices for women beyond the traditional female professionals of secretaries, teachers, and librarians. She argued that women were capable of entering many other professions and they should be encouraged to do so. Black women, too, she felt, had been shunted into stereotypical maid and nanny roles from which they needed to escape both by legislation and by self-effort. Her antiwar and women's liberation views made her a popular figure among college students, and she was besieged with invitations to speak at college campuses.

She served as the representative for the 12th District of New York from 1969 until 1982. In 1972, she became the first black woman to actively run for the presidency of the United States. George McGovern won the presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention, but Chisholm captured ten percent of the delegates' votes. As a result of her candidacy, Chisholm was voted one of the ten most admired women in the world.

After her unsuccessful presidential campaign, Chisholm continued to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives for another decade. As a member of the Congressional Black Caucus she was able

to watch black representation in the Congress grow and to welcome other black female Congresswomen. In 1982, she announced her retirement from the Congress.

From 1983 to 1987, Chisholm served as Purington Professor at Massachusetts' Mt. Holyoke College, where she taught politics and women's studies. In 1985, she was the visiting scholar at Spelman College. In 1987, she retired from teaching altogether.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton nominated Chisholm as Ambassador to Jamaica, but due to declining health, she withdrew her name from consideration.

Chisholm says she didn't want to be remembered only for being the first black Congresswoman, or the first woman and black to seek a major party's presidential nomination, but as a black woman who lived in the 20th century and dared to be herself. She said, "I want to be remembered as a catalyst for change in America."

Chisholm died after suffering a series of strokes on January 1, 2005, in Ormond Beach, Florida. She was 80.

Before Hillary and Barack in 2008, there was Shirley in 1972. Let no one ever forget the path that Shirley blazed.

ACTION: Trailblazers and the progress and change they bring about remind us that we must not let the rights we fought for yesterday go unnoticed. We still need change and must continue to speak out on issues everyday to help support our women and working families. Our struggle continues, we must mobilize and utilize our political resources to let our voices be heard.

Dorothy Height



March 24, 1912 – April 20, 2010

A powerful voice in American culture, who had the ear of Presidents, Dorothy Height was a freedom fighter for all of us. As the “God Mother of Civil Rights,” she sat through tense Whitehouse meetings and witnessed every significant victory in the struggle for racial equality. Yet, she was the sole woman among powerful, charismatic men, and was someone whose personal ambition was always secondary to her passion for her cause.

Dorothy Irene Height was born in Richmond, Virginia, on March 24, 1912, to Fannie Burroughs and James Height. At an early age, she moved with her family to Rankin, Pennsylvania, where she attended integrated schools. Although she taught bible stories to white children, she was told that she could not play with them be-

cause she was black. As a high school student, Height made a speech about slavery amendments to the U.S. Constitution that won her a scholarship to the college of her choice. Height was admitted to Barnard College in New York City. Upon arrival at Barnard, she was denied entrance because the school had an unwritten policy of admitting only two black students, and the college had met that quota. Height then enrolled at New York University, where she earned a Bachelor’s degree in social sciences and a Master’s degree in education psychology.

Following Heights graduation, she became a welfare caseworker for the New York Welfare Department. At the age of 25, she began a career as a civil rights activist when she joined the National Council of Negro Women; where she

became President and held that position for 40 years. She also served as National President of Delta Sigma Theta sorority from 1946 to 1957.

Height remained active throughout her life. She fought for civil rights for both African American women and women in general. By the 1960's, she was in the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1965, Height founded the YWCA Center for Racial Justice and directed it for 12 years.

Following major civil rights victories in the 1960's, Dorothy Height served on many commissions and boards connected to women and civil rights. Most recent was the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the largest civil rights organization in the USA.

In 1993, Height was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Her accomplishments include receiving more than 20 honorary degrees. She once told people, "I want to be remembered as someone who used herself and anything she could touch, to work for justice and freedom. I want to be remembered as one who tried."

ACTION: The work for justice and freedom takes many paths. Many potential leaders and unsung heroes are in our midst. CWA is an organization that can continue to lift up the voices of women and minorities and promote their leadership at every level of the union.

Rose Schneiderman



April 6, 1882 – August 11, 1972

Rose Schneiderman was a Polish immigrant in New York's Lower East Side whose enormous passion and organizing talents changed the lives of American workers.

At a young age, she took a job in the garment industry as a cap maker making \$5 a week. Distressed by the lack of pay and working conditions, Rose organized the first female local of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union and emerged as a promising organizer and labor leader.

She joined the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), an organization dedicated to unionizing women and lobbying for protective legislation, which she later referred to as "the most important influence in my life." She had a long career in the WTUL and the International Ladies' Garment

Workers Union (ILGWU), holding a variety of leadership positions in both.

Rose was instrumental in the "Uprising of Twenty Thousand," a general strike of garment workers from 500 sweatshops in New York. Women demanded dignity, living wages, shorter work hours, and union recognition. Strikers protested at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory months before the horrific fire broke out killing 146 workers, who were mostly women. There was no longer any question about what the strikers had meant when they talked about safety and sanitary reform, and about social and economic justice.

In a speech, Rose expressed her anger that the lives of working people were not valued and that those responsible for the poor conditions of

workers' lives were not held accountable. Responses to the fire ultimately spurred the creation of more effective fire and safety regulations for the workplace and raised awareness within Rose that nothing and no one would help working women but a strong union.

She continued to organize women workers in New York City and devoted energy to matters concerning protective legislation for women, particularly eight-hour and minimum-wage laws. Rose also lent her voice to suffrage, which she saw as a fight for economic rights.

When a state legislator warned in 1912 that "Get women into the arena of politics.... and you emasculate women," she replied:

"....Surely these women won't lose any more of their beauty and charm by putting a ballot in a ballot box once a year than they are likely to lose standing in foundries or laundries all year round...."

Rose became a nationally-known figure and was a personal friend and political influence to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, serving as the only woman on the National Labor Advisory Board. She was regularly consulted on labor and women's issues, helping to shape much of the New Deal legislation. She later served six years as Secretary of Labor for the State of New York, enacting and enforcing further protections for workers.

Rose Schneiderman sought to improve the lives of working-class women through education, the vote, and legislative protection such as the eight-hour day and minimum-wage laws. She left a lasting legacy of legislation that protects workers and clearly articulated ideals such as comparable worth laws.

ACTION: The CWA National Women's Committee strongly recommends that delegates commit individually and collectively to continue the work of Rose Schneiderman by ensuring their local women's committees focus on improving the lives of women through education and legislative protections such as the Paycheck Fairness Act S.182/H.R.12. We further recommend delegates contact their respective Senators to ensure their support with this important legislation.

Alice Paul



January 11, 1885 – July 9, 1977

Alice Paul spent the majority of her life fighting for women's rights. Born to Quaker parents in New Jersey, her mother was a member of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and brought Alice to association meetings and held gatherings in their home. Her parents made Alice's education a priority. She attended Swarthmore College from 1901-1905, and after earning her Masters Degree in 1907, traveled to England to work on her PhD.

While overseas, Alice met Lucy Burns and together were jailed several times in England and Scotland while fighting for women's rights. After returning to the United States in 1910, Alice immediately became active in the fight to obtain Women's Right to Vote.

In 1912, Alice was appointed by NAWSA to chair

the Congressional Committee in Washington, which was to work for the passage of the amendment that Susan B. Anthony helped draw up. Alice and Lucy were instrumental in mobilizing an estimated 10,000 women in support of suffrage, from all over the country, to march from the Capitol to Constitution Hall in 1913, one day prior to President Wilson's inauguration. It was the largest action of its kind, and though discussed at the 1912 suffrage convention, most believed it could not be done. The women traveled great distances at their own expense, and were able to organize the event through U.S. mail and word of mouth. A subsequent march was held the same year in New York.

Alice and Lucy severed their ties with NAWSA altogether in 1916 and formed the Women's National Party (NWP). NAWSA believed the vote

for women should be won state by state, while NWP moved forward more vigorously with their work on a Federal Amendment.

After being jailed in Virginia on bogus charges for picketing the President, Alice began a hunger strike for better conditions and food for herself and the other suffragists in jail. Alice and others were force fed, which was leaked to the public; this drew much needed attention, sympathy and support for the 19th Amendment. Soon thereafter, President Wilson called for the release of the women, and began to speak in favor of giving women the vote, stating that women's suffrage was urgently needed as a "war measure." The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed on August 26, 1920.

It took 72 years from the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention to the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. In 1923, Alice authored the "Lucretia Mott Amendment" calling for absolute equality stating "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to it's jurisdiction." The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was introduced in every session of Congress from 1923 until it passed in 1972 and went to the states for ratification.

Alice worked tirelessly for the ERA in the United States & internationally. She led a coalition that was successful in adding a sexual discrimination clause to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Though the ERA only passed in 35 of the 38 states needed for ratification by 1982, it is still not a Federal Law today; Alice Paul never stopped working toward truly equal rights for women until she died in 1977, only a few miles from where she was born.

Ms. Alice Paul is just one of many women that helped get us where we are today. We still use many of her basic organizing, mobilizing & lobbying/political action skills today in our

work in CWA, in fact those are two of the three founding principles that our CWA triangle is built on.

Since the passage of the 19th Amendment, the percentage of women voters has continued to increase with every Presidential election. According to the census bureau, 52 percent of US Citizens over age 18 eligible to vote in the 2008 elections were women; 72.8 percent of those women are registered to vote (compared to 69.1 percent of men); 90.19 percent of those women registered exercised their right to vote (compared to 88.99 percent of men); 53.69 percent of all votes in 2008 were cast by women.

CWA Historical Note: Though many unions feared the ratification of the ERA would jeopardize contract language, CWA strongly supported ERA by passing several motions during Executive Board meetings and Conventions including: February 1978 – Moved that CWA Conventions be held in states that ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, and that the President of CWA give due consideration to the ratification situation as other meetings of CWA are planned. (meaning to boycott states where ERA was not ratified) and again January 1979 – Moved that CWA Conventions be held in states that ratified the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, and that the President of CWA give due consideration to the ratification situation as other meetings of CWA are planned. CWA continued to lobby in attempts to move at least 3 additional states from June of 1972 until 1982.

ACTION: CWA National & Local Women's Committees must continue to ensure our members are registered to vote and participate in campaigns to make sure all Union members vote in Federal, State & Local elections.

We must also recognize the individual talents and interests of each of our members and actively encourage them to participate in mobilizing, organizing, & political action like lobbying for workers' rights and contributing to COPE.

Doris Stevens



October, 26 1892 – March 22, 1963

Doris Stevens was an American suffragist and the author of “Jailed for Freedom.”

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, Doris Stevens graduated from Oberlin College in 1911. She worked as a teacher and social worker in Ohio and Michigan before she became a regional organizer with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Doris Stevens joined with Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Mabel Vernon, Olympia Brown, Mary Ritter Beard, Belle LaFollette, Helen Keller, Maria Montessori, Dorothy Day, and Crystal Eastman to form the Congressional Union for Women Suffrage (CUWS) in 1913.

In 1914, Stevens became a full-time organizer,

as well as executive secretary, for the CUWS in Washington, D.C. After working on the East Coast, including Newport, Rhode Island, in 1913-14, she moved west to Colorado (1914), and then to California (1915). In 1916, the CUWS became the National Woman’s Party (NWP). She organized the first convention of women voters at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915 and the NWP election campaign in California in 1916.

Over the years, Stevens held several important NWP leadership positions, including membership on the executive committee. She served as vice chair of NWP’s New York branch, spearheaded the NWP Women for Congress campaign in 1924, and worked in states where female candidates were contenders for office. She also

served as Alva Belmont's personal assistant.

Stevens, arrested for picketing at the White House in the summer of 1917, served three days of her 60-day sentence at Occoquan Workhouse before receiving a pardon. She was arrested again in the NWP demonstration at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in March 1919. Stevens published the quintessential insider account of imprisonment of NWP activists, "Jailed for Freedom," in 1920.

Stevens continued to be a member of the NWP for the next thirty years and served the party in various capacities: as a vice president, as chair of the Committee on International Action, and as a member of the National Council. From the mid-1920s until her death, Stevens's main residence was in Croton, New York, a bohemian colony of artists and activists. From 1928 to 1939, Stevens served as chair of the Inter-American Commission of Women, an advisory group created by the Pan American Union (later the Organization of American States).

Stevens's personal life, richly documented in her papers, shows extensive correspondence with a lover and her two husbands, illustrating changing social mores of heterosexual relationships in the first decades of the twentieth century.

ACTION: Encourage all CWA members to educate their membership about how hard women fought to obtain the right to vote. Educate women about the importance of organizing and mobilizing within their locals on issues that affect women and their families. Support all women's committee activities that embrace registration of voters involvement in legislative action, participation in COPE, GOTV, phone banking and walking precincts.

Amelia Earhart



July 24, 1897 – January 5, 1939

Amelia Earhart Remembered For Her Strength

Amelia Earhart was a strong, successful woman and a real pioneer.

As most everyone knows, Amelia is known for her dedication to flying and her final flight. The last flight she ever took was attempting to fly around the world. She knew that no one had ever successfully done it, and she wanted to be the first. She disappeared during her trip never to be heard from again, but that single attempt made her a role model for young girls for years to come.

In 1932, she was the first woman to ever fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, she was the first female ever to receive the Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross. Only a few women preced-

ing her had been able to receive the same honor.

Amelia is easy to identify with her cropped hair, which was almost unheard of at the time, her tomboy appearance, and usually always pictured around an airplane or a runway. She also always had on a leather flight jacket which would keep her warm during flights in her small aircraft.

Airstrips, also know as runways, were not the only thing she was known for during that time period. Amelia was in the news for more than her flights. She appeared in fashion spreads, was pals with Eleanor Roosevelt, and even hawked her own line of clothing and, unlike today's celebs with fashion labels, actually made it on her own sewing machine.

Her clothing line was a complete failure, and she began selling personal items that she had used, or at least claimed to have used, to her fans. People could not get enough of her memorabilia, even before her incredible attempt at flying around the world.

She was very aware of the “power of publicity” and understood that flying alone wasn’t going to keep her in the public eye. Clearly Amelia Earhart’s legend is not just in her mysterious disappearance, but in her stylish appearance, too. Before World War II, most flying was done in three-quarter length jackets. The World War II fighter planes had smaller cockpits, so jackets became cropped. Long coats would bunch up and prevent pilots from flying the planes correctly.

Amelia Earhart made it three-quarters of the way around the world by herself. She set the stage for women to follow their dreams; not only in the aviation field, but in all fields. She made women realize that if they are determined and confident, they need not listen to all the “NO’s,” but only to their own personal determination to say “YES.”

ACTION: Support and encourage those with huge dreams. Only through seeing possibilities will we develop the agents of change who will build up the union’s future; it takes mavericks to chart a brave new course for modern day social change. We must embrace new ideas that may guide workers in the struggle for justice and equality.

Sonia Sotomayor



Born June 25, 1954

Sonia Maria Sotomayor is the first Latina Supreme Court Justice and only the third female Justice. Her parents were immigrants and her first language is Spanish. She was born and raised in Bronx, New York, and was diagnosed with type-one diabetes at the age of eight. She became fluent in English and read Nancy Drew books and watched Perry Mason. She knew by the time she was ten that she wanted to be a lawyer.

Sonia was the Valedictorian of Cardinal Spellman High School. This won her a full scholarship to Princeton University. There were very few women and fewer Latinos at Princeton. She became the co-chair of the “Accion Puertorriquena” organization, which looked for more opportunities for Puerto Rican students. She

focused on the hiring of Latino faculty and Latino curriculum, wrote a letter to the President of Princeton University, and filed a formal complaint alleging the school was discriminating in hiring and admission practices. Soon afterwards, the University began to hire Latino faculty and began to teach Latino seminars.

She began Yale Law School in 1976 where there were very few Latino students. She was the co-chair of a group of Latin, Asian, and Native American students and advocated for the hiring of more Hispanics to the law school faculty.

Sonia began her career as an Assistant District Attorney in New York. She soon went to work in private practice and began to get involved in public service roles. She was appointed to many

positions from both Democrats and Republicans and is labeled an Independent.

Sonia was nominated to be a Federal Judge by President George H. W. Bush in 1991, and became the first Hispanic Judge in New York State. She was nominated by President Bill Clinton to the Court of Appeals in 1997.

Sonia has been involved with some interesting cases:

She upheld the Bush Administration's right to have the United States no longer contribute to separate nongovernmental organizations which perform and actively promote abortion as a method of family planning in other nations.

She dissented in a free speech case where a desk employee of the police department sent racist materials through the mail on their personal time. She argued that no matter how offensive the material was, it was protected by the first amendment.

Sonia allowed an employer to search an employee's computer.

She was involved in the 1995 Baseball dispute and her decision ended the strike. She issued a preliminary injunction against Major League Baseball, preventing it from unilaterally implementing a new collective bargaining agreement and using replacement players.

She was also involved in a high profile discrimination case involving promotion tests that were overturned by the Supreme Court right before she became a member.

During her time as a judge, she has given almost two hundred speeches. She attributes some of her

success to affirmative action. Her most controversial quote is "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life." She clarified this during the confirmation by stating "while life experience shapes who one is 'ultimately and completely,' a judge follows the law regardless of personal background."

ACTION: CWA Local and National Women's Committee's will encourage the confirmation of women to Supreme Court positions as well as all women to positions that make and impact our laws.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Hernandez, Chair
Executive Vice President
CWA Local 1031

Claudia Cole, Vice President
CWA Local 2336

Kim Ball, Vice President
CWA Local 3204

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