

**STATEMENT OF CANDIDACY FOR
THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
BY THE HONORABLE SHIRLEY CHISHOLM**

January 25, 1972

New York, New York

I stand before you today as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency of the United States.

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.

I stand here now – without endorsements from any big name politicians or celebrities or any other kind of prop. I do not intend to offer you the tired and glib cliches which have for too long been an accepted part of our political life. I am the candidate of the people and my presence before you now symbolizes a new era in American political history.

I have always earnestly believed in the great potential of America. Our Constitutional Democracy will soon celebrate its 200th anniversary, effective testimony to the longevity of our cherished Constitution and its unique Bill of Rights, which continues to give to the world an inspirational message of freedom and liberty.

We Americans are a dynamic people because of our rugged individuality and our cherished diversity, because of our belief in human dignity, because of our generosity and goodwill to our fellow men, and most importantly, because of our tradition of moving forward to actively confront those problems which plague us in a world growing more complex each year. Like all human beings, we have made mistakes. Our involvement in Vietnam was – and remains at this very moment – a terrible tragedy. To have intervened in the Civil War in that country, and then 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. To leave our men there, or to increase massive bombing in the process of withdrawing them, is to compound the havoc and misery which we are inflicting on the peoples of Indochina, our own young men who have been killed and mutilated and rendered drug addicts, and ourselves, whose hard-earned money has, during a serious economic recession, made up the billions of dollars spent in Vietnam when we so urgently need these resources at home.

During last year, 1971, more civilians were killed and wounded in Indochina, and many more made refugees, than at any time in history. Vietnam continues to cost us \$1 million a day. This, despite President Nixon's promise four years ago to end this nightmare.

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

Beyond Vietnam and its horrors, which have dominated our newspapers and television for 8 long years, and beyond the economic recession, which has caused severe hardship to so many Americans, is the visible, ongoing destruction of our natural environment and our loss of a sense of personal security in our daily lives. Perhaps, even more fundamental is our 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.

We have looked in vain to the Nixon Administration 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 us our faith in the American dream. Yet, all that we have received in return is just another smooth exercise in political manipulation, deceit and deception, callousness and indifference to our individual problems, and the disgusting playing of divisive politics, pitting young against old, labor against management, north against south, and black against white. The abiding concern of this Administration has been one of political expediency rather than the needs of man's nature.

The President has broken his promises to us, and has therefore lost his claim to our trust and confidence in him. I cannot believe that this Administration would have been elected four years ago if we had known then what we know today. We are entering a new era in which we demand stature and size in our national leadership. Leadership which is fresh, open, and receptive to the problems of all Americans.

I have faith in the American people. I believe that we are smart enough to correct our mistakes. I believe we are intelligent enough to recognize the talent, energy, and dedication which all Americans, including women and minorities, have to offer. I know, from my travels to the cities and small towns of America, that we have a vast potential,

hitherto neglected, which can and must be put to constructive use in getting our great nation together. I know that millions of Americans 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. We must turn away from the control of the prosaic, the privileged, and the old-line, tired politicians to open our society to the energies and abilities of countless new groups of Americans – Women, Blacks, Browns, Indians, Orientals, and Youth – so that they can develop their own full potential, and thereby participate equally and enthusiastically in building a strong and just society, rich in its diversity and noble in its quality of life.

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.

I am convinced that the American people are in a mood to discard the politics and the political personalities of the past.

I believe they will show in 1972, and thereafter, 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. It is, I feel, the duty of responsible leaders in this country to encourage and maximize – not to dismiss or minimize – such judgment.

Americans are demanding a new sensibility, a new philosophy of government from Washington. Instead of sending spies to snoop on participants at earth day, I would welcome the efforts of concerned citizens of all ages to stop the abuse of our environment. Instead of watching a football game on television while young people beg for the attention of their President concerning our actions abroad, I would encourage them to speak out, organize for peaceful change, and to vote in November. Instead of blocking efforts to control the huge amounts of money given political candidates by the rich and powerful, I would provide certain limits on such amounts and encourage all the people to contribute small sums to the candidate of their choice. Instead of calculating the political costs of this or that policy, and of weighing favors of this or that group, depending on whether it voted for me in 1968, I would remind all Americans of the words of Abraham Lincoln, "A House Divided Cannot Stand."

We Americans are all fellow countrymen, one day confronting the judgment of history. We are all God's children, and the will of each of us is as precious as the will of

the most powerful general or corporate millionaire. Our will can create a new America in 1972 – one where there is freedom from violence and war – at home and abroad, where there is freedom from poverty and discrimination, where there exists at least the feeling that we are making progress in ensuring for everyone medical care, employment, and decent housing, where we more decisively clean up our streets, our water, and our air, where we work together to rebuild our neighborhoods and to make our cities quiet, attractive, and efficient; and fundamentally, where we live in the confidence that every man and woman in America has at long last the opportunity to become all that he was created capable of being, such as is his ability

All of you who share this vision – from New York to California, from Wisconsin to Florida are brothers and sisters on the road to national unity and a New America. Those of you who were locked outside of the convention hall in 1968, those of you who can now vote for the first time, those of you who agree with me that the institutions of this country belong to the people who inhabit it, those of you who have been neglected, left out, ignored, forgotten, or shunned aside for whatever reason, give me your help, join me in an effort to reshape our society and regain control of our destiny.

COMPLIMENTS OF
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