

**The Honorable Yvonne Brathwaite Burke**  
**U.S. Representative of California (1973–1979)**

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**Race and Gender**

Representative Burke discusses the challenges she faced as an African–American woman.  
*Interview recorded July 22, 2015*

Well, I never felt that my biggest obstacle was as a woman, but I was a little different than Shirley. I was a lawyer. I had practiced law, and I had been involved in—I was a hearing officer for the police commission, so I didn't get the impression that I got a lot of problems, even though when I graduated from law school, I was not even interviewed by a law firm—but for two reasons. Because I was a woman and because I was African American. But the women weren't interviewed, and the African Americans weren't interviewed. So, it's true, I—in, in growing up in a profession, I did have those two big strikes. But generally I felt that I had more problems as an African American. I had been denied an apartment. I had gone to like, a dance studio with other college girls, and they put us in an office. I had been through a lot of issues as an African American—even in the West, in California—that I don't necessarily think as a woman. So, my experience in California was probably different than a person in New York. So, I had to say that my biggest obstacles, and the experiences that I had that were most discriminatory, were as an African American.