

Muriel Morisey

Senior Legislative Assistant, Representative Shirley Chisholm of New York

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

“She Empowered Her Staff Enormously”

Muriel Morisey recalls the relationship between Representative Shirley Chisholm and her staff.

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I, I think we were aware that we were unusual, but we were working for Shirley Chisholm. We were the Chisholm staff, and that carried so much meaning, because of who she was, and also that she empowered her staff enormously. So we, we moved through our work—and even our social lives—carrying the mantle of being one of Chisholm’s staffers. And people knew that meant we really were very powerful by virtue of the confidence and the reliance that she had, and the trust that she—you know, the way she relied on us, the trust she exhibited. And so for me, it’s hard to separate any of the experience from the fact that working for Shirley Chisholm, having a position of trust with her, her senior staff, that was a really big deal. And that’s what I remember. I don’t remember a feeling around—most of the staffs had few women. I knew it, but I think at the time I was always feeling most people on the Hill don’t enjoy the confidence and the trust and the, and the capacity to make a difference that her staff, that her staff did.