

A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

# UNBOSSSED & UNBOWED

*Time you meet this 20<sup>th</sup> century politician who Shook UP America*



Unbossed & Unbowed is an immersive and interactive solo show about the 1st African-American woman to run for the Presidency of the U.S. In the 1960s and '70s, this Brooklyn-born daughter of Caribbean parents was on a mission. They called her the black Joan of Arc. She called herself Fighting Shirley as she faced off against the political machine in the name of justice.

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Unbossed & Unbowed is a solo show written by Ingrid Griffith, a performer, playwright and teaching artist of Guyanese heritage, who moved to the U.S. at age twelve.

Unbossed and Unbowed is the largely unheard story of Shirley Chisholm, a Brooklyn-born politician of immigrant parents, who in the 20th century, was the first African-American woman to win a seat in the U.S. Congress and to run for the Presidency of the United States.

Using humor, history and a call for present day activism, Shirley Chisholm is back with a forthright crispness and clarity that were distinctly her, inviting audiences to consider and redefine personal success and to understand the power of social commitment.

Unbossed & Unbowed journeys back to Shirley Chisholm's childhood to show how race and gender determined how far she would go in life, why she chose to fight for the disenfranchised and what it took for her to rise. Her parents arrived to the U.S. in the early 1920s. By the end of the decade came The Depression, and in order to make ends meet, they decided to send 3-year old Shirley and her younger siblings to live with their maternal grandmother in Barbados. Shirley's years in Barbados reinforced her Caribbean heritage which manifested itself in her bearing and speech pattern.

The show covers the period from when segregation in the U.S. was the law to the time it was outlawed, when Black soldiers were sent to fight for their country in WW II and Vietnam and were still treated as 2nd-class citizens upon their return. It was an era when great numbers of Black people were migrating from the South to the North only to find similar inequities in the North. West Indians (Caribbeans), like Shirley Chisholm's parents, also migrated to the U.S. in droves and they too felt the racial barriers and attitudes of racist America. Unbossed & Unbowed dramatizes the Civil Rights era, the unrest of the 1960s, the patriarchal system and the all-boys network Shirley Chisholm was up against, many themes we still see in the politics of today.

Unbossed & Unbowed hopes to inspire the disenfranchised and to connect to those who benefit from the status quo, helping them to examine the flaws in our system and reconsider what's best for humankind.

There are some visuals and music to establish the tenor of the times and create mental images of the economic, political and social upheavals in America from the 1930s to the early 1970s. The characters in Unbossed & Unbowed all have strong voices and valid points-of-view. But it's Shirley Chisholm's narrative that delivers the story's message.

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### Ingrid Griffith Solo Show Artist / Writer / Actor

Ingrid Griffith (SAG/AFTRA, Dramatist Guild)

Ingrid is the writer and performer of Unbossed & Unbowed, a story inspired by the life and times of the icon/trailblazer Shirley Anita (St. Hill) Chisholm. “I’ve been moved to write and share Shirley Chisholm’s story in the hope that more people will become aware of her contributions and appreciate how her voice resonates today.”

“I’m drawn to tell stories about the immigrant experience, about being an outsider and daring to be one’s self. I’m interested in social norms and cultural barriers that keep girls and women down, and in stories that promote and celebrate girls and women’s empowerment.”

Griffith has been in off-Broadway theatrical productions in and around New York City. Some of her favorite roles are: Lady Reveller in the 18th century play, The Basset Table by Susanna Centlivre, Mrs. Muller in John Patrick Shanley’s “Doubt”, Hedda Gabler in Henrik Ibsen’s “Hedda Gabler”; various characters in Eve Ensler’s “Vagina Monologues”; and Elaine Mays in Anna Deavere Smith’s “Twilight: Los Angeles”. Ingrid has been performing her award-winning solo show, Demerara Gold, about a Caribbean girl’s immigrant experience, for the past five years throughout the U.S. and abroad.



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### Previous Performances and Venues

Hear Her Call Caribbean-American Women's Theater Festival	March 2020	The Milton G. Bassin Performing Arts Center, Queens, NY
Southampton Arts Center	August 2021	Southampton, NY
Triad Theater	October 2021	New York, NY
Aurora Theatre	February 2022	Lawrenceville, GA
Elmont Memorial Library Theater	March 2022	Elmont, NY
Theatre Guild Playhouse	April 2022	Georgetown, Guyana
African American Museum of Nassau County	May 2022	Hempstead, NY



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### Previous Performances and Venues

Daphne Joseph-Hackett Theatre	June 2022	Bridgetown, Barbados
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South Oxford Space	October 2022	Brooklyn, NY
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African American Cultural Society	January 2023	Palm Coast, FL
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Bay Street Theater	February 2023	Sag Harbor, NY
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Renaissance Church of Christ	February 2023	Atlanta, GA
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Out of Hand Theater	March - April 2023	Atlanta, GA
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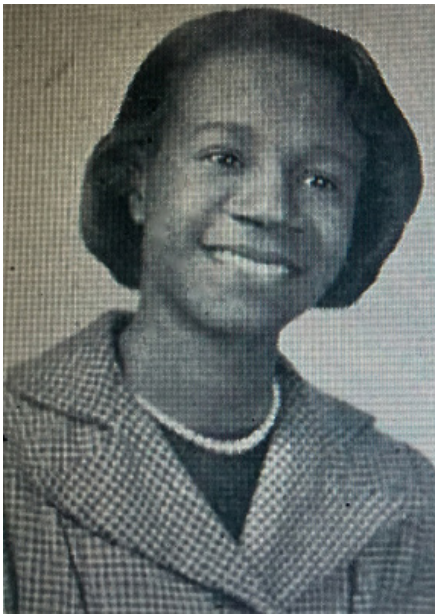




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**Alma Mater:** Graduate School of  
Columbia University

Brooklyn College

**Major:** Sociology

### **Club Memberships:**

Pan-American

Social Services

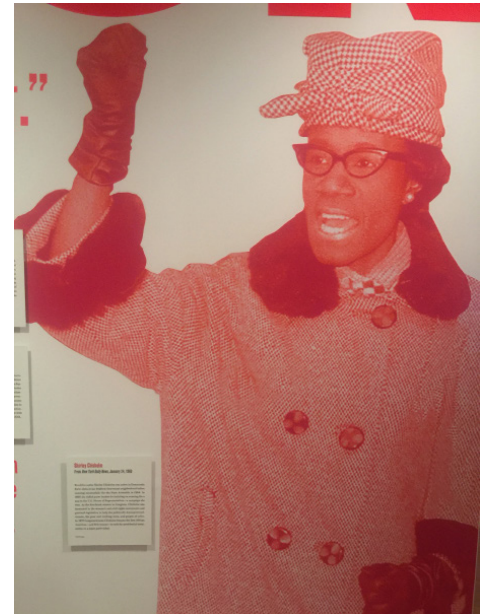
Harriet Tubman Society

**IPOTHIA:** In Pursuit Of The  
Highest In All



“Service is the rent that you pay for  
room on this earth.”

~ Shirley Chisholm



“Women in this country must become  
revolutionaries. We must refuse to  
accept the old, the traditional roles  
and stereotypes...We must replace  
the old negative thoughts about our  
femininity with positive thoughts and  
positive action affirming it, and more.

But we must also remember that we  
will be breaking with tradition, and  
so we must prepare ourselves  
educationally, economically and  
psychologically in order that we will  
be able to accept and bear with the  
sanctions that society will  
immediately impose upon us.”

~ Shirley Chisholm

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### Chisholm's 'Unbossed & Unbowed' spirit lives on in show at NJCU's West Side Theatre Thursday

Updated Sep 11, 2:01 PM; Posted Sep 11, 8:54 AM



Ingrid Griffith's solo show, "Unbossed & Unbowed," in which she portrays Shirley Chisholm, the first black person to run for U.S. president through a major party and first woman to run for the Democratic nomination, opens NJCU's first theater festival Thursday, Sept. 12, 8 p.m. at the West Side Theatre in Jersey City.

By David Menzies | The Jersey Journal

Before Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley and AOC, there was Shirley Chisholm, whose path to becoming the first black woman elected to Congress in 1968 was informed by the lack of help and resources she got from local politicians in Brooklyn, according to playwright Ingrid Griffith.

In full costume, Griffith is portraying Chisholm in "Unbossed & Unbowed," a solo show opening New Jersey City University's first theater festival Thursday, Sept. 12, 8 p.m. at the West Side Theatre in Jersey City.

"(Chisholm) started to realize (the lack of help) was happening because of where they were living and who they were as black people. In Bushwick, (change) doesn't happen," Griffith said in an interview last year with The Jersey Journal.

Chisholm, whose slogan was "Unbought and Unbossed," went on to become the first black person to run for U.S. president through a major party and first woman to run for the Democratic nomination.

Griffith's show, directed by Olga Levina of the Jersey City Theatre Center, takes place one block up from the red line that is Kennedy Boulevard in Jersey City's Greenville neighborhood — an area with a demographic, and in a condition, still very similar to the Brooklyn neighborhoods Chisholm knew with large disenfranchised populations.

In an interview this week, Griffith said "it's important for all segments of society to hear Shirley Chisholm's story.

"It is vitally important for people on the affluent side of the red line you mention to see it, because even though they might believe that the system is working for them, Chisholm's story shows that when exploitation and marginalization is rampant, we all lose," Griffith said. "We lose our efficiency as a society, because we miss the contributions of the excluded and we lose our humanity because our so-called success comes at the price of the degradation of others.

"Chisholm makes this perfectly clear. She believes in coalitions and coalitions do not form unless we all know how this system works and how it can be defeated for the good of all."

Griffith has spent almost three years researching and writing "Unbossed & Unbowed." It was time well spent, she said. "I, of course, decided that the Shirley Chisholm story was long overdue, certainly appropriate for the times and well worth the effort."

As she wrote the show, she went beyond Chisholm's political achievements and the, despite her hard work and dedication, lack thereof. "In this part of the process, I changed the story to include much more personal material," Griffith said. "The audience will not care about the political unless they care about the personal."

One of the ways "Unbossed & Unbowed" will resonate is simply in Chisholm's continued forging ahead despite setbacks often not in her control.

"But personal disappointment in Chisholm's eyes pales beside the experience of those who are systematically cast aside by society. Chisholm rose above the many disappointments, as we all must."

See the show, presented by Jersey City Theatre Center, 8 p.m. Thursday at NJCU's West Side Theatre, 285 West Side Ave. Tickets are \$25 and can be bought in advance, or part of a group offering for the other plays that take place the following nights in First Annual Festival of Independent Theatre Companies, at <http://bit.ly/UUSeptShow>. Learn more about "Unbossed & Unbowed" at <https://unbossedunbowed.com>.

"Disappointment is a major theme in 'Unbossed & Unbowed,'" Griffith said. "Chisholm factored in disappointment and forged on. Over the course of the show, she is disappointed by people, even some family members after her father passes, by her partner and by her political allies.

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### Unbossed & Unbowed: Ingrid Griffith's Play Brings Shirley Back

Q&A with Playwright/Actor Ingrid Griffith & Maitefa Angaza for Our Time Press



Playwright/Actor Ingrid Griffith

Shirley Chisholm returns to tell her story in outspoken terms in playwright Ingrid Griffith's new work, *Unbossed & Unbowed*, on Friday, November 29th. Griffith herself plays the intrepid Caribbean-born politician in a one-woman, audience - engaged production at Bailey's Café. She tells Our Time Press readers what to expect and why she's so inspired by Shirley. Showtime is 5:30 and tickets are \$15 online & \$25 at the door. For further information, search for *Unbossed & Unbowed* on Eventbrite.

**Our Time Press:** Has this play been staged elsewhere before coming to Brooklyn?

**Ingrid Griffith:** Yes, various forms of the work-in-progress have been at venues in Brooklyn, New York City and in New Jersey.

**OTP:** Is it appropriate for all ages?

**Ingrid Griffith:** It's appropriate for ages 14 and up. A younger audience may have difficulty staying engaged or grasping the historical references and nuances.

**OTP:** Are audiences likely to learn much that they didn't know about Shirley as a person, apart from the politician?

**Ingrid Griffith:** Yes, besides the story being about Shirley's political career and activism, it's about her family. The story shows her parents' circumstances, the political atmosphere in Bedford-Stuyvesant, where they lived and why, I believe, Shirley decided to become a social activist and politician. The story begins when Shirley is 10 years old and ends when she is in her 50s.

**OTP:** Can you give us an idea, without giving too much away, of what you mean by "immersive and interactive?"

**Ingrid Griffith:** The full-staged production will have visuals and audio highlighting events that influenced Shirley and the other characters. The multimedia aspect of the show will allow the audience to become immersed in the story.

It is interactive in the sense that because of the solo-show genre, audience members will feel more like participants. When Shirley is the narrator, she speaks directly to the audience and that inclusion encourages audience members to be more reactive and responsive than they would be if they were watching a traditional play.

**OTP:** How does *Unbossed and Unbowed* further your trajectory in using history to raise awareness of current-day issues?

**Ingrid Griffith:** Presenting my story in *Demerara Gold* allowed me to see how impactful and far-reaching the telling of our stories can be and how important it is to share what we've been through. I'd like to continue creating stories about people we know or should know to present what we're dealing with now. It helps us understand our history, the social implications and the common threads that empower us and hinder us. For instance, why is it difficult for people of color in America to have a healthy nuclear family unit, afford a home, get the careers they want, achieve more? I want to present stories that will not only entertain but will inform, empower, push us to think and change.

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**OTP:** Were there any mistakes or missteps that Shirley used to grow as she progressed as a politician?

**Ingrid Griffith:** I think Shirley would say that they were. She was a very private person so there were no profound personal revelations in my research. But I sense that the campaign staff she had when she was running for the Presidency of the U.S. could have been better managed; that monies she received to help fund her campaign could have been better managed as well, and that some choices she made in her personal life she may have regretted.

**OTP:** What has your work as an actor brought to your work as a playwright?

**Ingrid Griffith:** A better understanding of what's needed for the characters I write to be multidimensional. And to have the patience and courage to stick with the writing process.

**OTP:** Before you staged your own work, what was one of your most impactful experiences in theater?

**Ingrid Griffith:** I was playing Ruth in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin' in the Sun*. During a rehearsal, it hit me that this African-American family's story was so similar to mine. Stories from a truthful place are timeless and will have a message that someone right now needs to hear.

**OTP:** How has your work, such as *Demerara Gold*, been received by Caribbean audiences in the U.S.?

**Ingrid Griffith:** The immigrant story has been told in many genres. I've been touring *Demerara Gold* for the past five years and have seen that the solo-show presentation has had a particularly sharp resonance with Caribbean audiences. The key is the combination of the story with the inspirational effect of having a single performer on a bare stage control the narrative of her life. Caribbean audiences throughout the U.S. have been turning out to see *Demerara Gold* and have been recommending it. It's been an exciting ride.

**OTP:** Why do you think there is not more Caribbean theater known to the general public?

**Ingrid Griffith:** That might have to do with interest, income and time. Caribbeans are not as eager to go see a play, especially if it's not comedy, as they are to go dancing or go on a picnic or a bus ride. Also, community theater is costly to sustain, even when there's some outside funding and financial supporters. I think there are a good number of Caribbean playwrights and actors who want more opportunities to share their voices/our stories, but it would be difficult to keep a Caribbean theater running if there's not enough of an interested audience.

**OTP:** Who has been supportive/instrumental in helping bring this work to the stage?

**Ingrid Griffith:** "Unbossed & Unbowed" began with a few scenes that I shared in a solo-show workshop a few years ago. Since then, colleagues, fellow artists and a voice within have been keeping me going.

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## AWARDS

Conch Shell Productions is proud to announce the Hear Her Call Caribbean-American Women's Theater Festival's Outstanding Playwriting that Inspires Social Change Award winner - Ingrid Griffith.



Recipient of the Danny Glover Power of DreamAward for Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed



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### Celebrating Chisholm



Article by  
Barbados Today

By Shamar Blunt

Published on  
June 25, 2022

Shirley Chisholm, the late outspoken and awe-inspiring American politician of Barbadian descent who broke many social and political barriers during her lifetime, will soon have her life celebrated in the form of a play that local audiences will have the chance to enjoy.

Guyanese-born actor and playwright, Ingrid Griffith will deliver her award-winning, one-woman show, entitled Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed at the Daphne Joseph- Hackett Theatre this weekend.

Speaking to Barbados TODAY on Thursday during her final set of rehearsals, Griffith, whose play is being supported by the Guyanese Association of Barbados, Inc.

(GABI) in cooperation with the National Cultural Foundation (NCF), said Chisholm's life has always fascinated her.

"I was just in awe and surprised that I did not know about all that she was. She was a first at a lot of things besides being a Congresswoman, and I was wondering why it has not been in history books, why I never heard about it in high school or college. So, it was about seven years ago I decided to research her and play her in a show.

"I always felt that I could play her, and for a while, I was saying maybe a script will come out about her and I will audition and I will

get the part and I will not have to write the show, but that did not happen. I kept researching and the more I got into her story, the more I wanted to share it," she explained.

Griffith said that despite Chisholm's many accomplishments, from being the first African-American woman in Congress and the first African-American to make a bid for a major party's nomination for President, to her sterling efforts towards passing several pieces of legislation supporting women and workers' rights, her legacy has been underrated.

When asked what connected her with Chisholm's character, Griffith said the late politician's passion for everything she did, in particular going against set customs in society at the time, made a serious impression on her.

"I think her personal life was very interesting to me; I saw how she had to give up certain things in her personal life to have the public life and serve the community.

There is always that trade-off. As a woman, I have gone through that as well – things that I have to choose not to do because I want to be travelling, sharing these stories like this.

"I think just understanding the dynamic of wanting all, and then having to make sacrifices, but also having people in your corner that are with you," the playwright added.

Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed will begin on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. A gala for the show will begin at the same time on Sunday. Tickets can be purchased at [ticketnation.bb](http://ticketnation.bb), and there will be limited tickets at the door. [shamarblunt@barbadostoday.bb](mailto:shamarblunt@barbadostoday.bb)



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### Ingrid Griffith portrays Shirley Chisholm in 'Unbossed & Unbowed'

By Tangerine Clarke



Guyanese born actress Ingrid Griffith, a Caribbean Life Impact Award recipient, pays tribute to late Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm in “Unbossed & Unbowed,” a solo show streaming On-Demand through Feb. 28, at [www.tinyurl.com/unbossedunbowed](http://www.tinyurl.com/unbossedunbowed) in celebration of Black History Month.

The presentation will include Griffith’s various characters during a general access viewing for a donation of \$15, and VIP Access including a Q&A segment, for a \$25.00 donation. Tickets are available at [www.stellartickets.com](http://www.stellartickets.com).

Griffith’s one-woman satirical drama “Demerara Gold” about growing up in Guyana and the United States, which made her a phenomenal success, is still being raved about as the multi-talented performer, playwright, and instructor continues her streak of sold-out shows across the United States and Guyana.

Audiences will be educated about Shirley Chisholm’s life and legacy. She played an instrumental role in the struggle to make MLK Day a national holiday, an element of her political contribution Griffith will depict.

Shirley Anita Chisholm was an American politician, educator, and author. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress, representing New York’s 12th congressional district for seven terms from 1969 to 1983. In the 1972 United States presidential election, she became the first African-American candidate for a major party’s nomination for President of the United States, and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination.

For 15 years after King’s assassination, racists in the House & Senate obstructed the legislation, however, Chisholm helped keep the legislation alive until it was finally signed into law in 1983.

Chisholm, who was born to a factory laborer from Guyana, and a seamstress from Barbados, accepted a 1970 petition to Congress to designate Martin Luther King Day a holiday, and maintained a tradition of commemorating King’s legacy every year on college campuses throughout the nation, will be brought to life in this moving tribute.

Griffith, who teaches Public Speaking and Civic Engagement in the Communication and Theatre Arts Department, received her Bachelor’s Degree in English in 2005 and a Master’s Degree in Creative Writing in 2009 from The City University of New York.

She is a freelance health and fitness writer and has written for magazines including Essence, Pro Sports, Source and Ofnote magazine. Ms. Griffith has taught Acting Technique and Voice and Diction in the Communications Studies Department at the University of Guyana. She has studied and worked as an actor and is a member of AEA, SAG and AFTRA.

For more information, click on: [www.tinyurl.com/unbossedunbowed](http://www.tinyurl.com/unbossedunbowed)

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### This Guyanese Immigrant Becomes Shirley Chisholm This Sunday

By newsamericas -October 22, 2021

News Americas, NEW YORK, NY, Fri. Oct. 22, 2021: This Sunday, as she has done ever since March 2020, Guyanese immigrant playwright and actress Ingrid Griffith will become Shirley Chisholm – again.

Written and performed by Griffith, the one-woman show, “Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed and Unbowed,” is set for The Triad Theater in Manhattan, at 158 W. 72nd Street, New York, NY 10023 on Sunday, October 24th at 3 p.m.

Directed by Kate Mueth, the play tells the story of former Caribbean American congresswoman and Presidential hopeful, Shirley Chisholm, the daughter of Guyanese and Barbadian parents.

This special performance is supported by a City Artist Corps grant, an award created to activate and energize New York City’s artists and engage the public with arts activities this fall.

Griffith plays Shirley Chisholm and a slew of other characters in the 70-minute show that tells the story of an important historical figure and icon – not just to women, but to numerous marginalized communities. While this performance dramatizes the Civil Rights era, it’s also relevant to what we still see in politics today.

“It’s been over 50 years since Shirley Chisholm fought for civil rights, women’s rights and justice for the disenfranchised,” said Griffith. “We are in a moment in history when we must continue the fight she waged so bravely. It’s time we all know Shirley Chisholm’s story. Our country is at a tipping point, suspended between great peril and great possibilities. Shirley Chisholm is not with us but we can gain strength from her spirit, vision and strategies.”

The story journeys back to 10-year-old Chisholm returning to the United States after being separated from her parents during The Great Depression. The viewer is able to see how the years living with her grandmother in Barbados manifested and reinforced her Caribbean heritage in her bearing, speech pattern and expectations of herself. Chisholm’s childhood also shows how race and gender were intended to determine how far she would go in life, why as a young woman she chose to fight for the disenfranchised, and what it took for her to rise.

Unbossed & Unbowed dramatizes the Civil Rights era, the unrest of the 1960s, the patriarchal system and the all-boys network Chisholm was up against, many themes we still see in the politics of today, says Griffith. Visuals and music establish the tenor of the times and create mental images of the economic, political and social upheavals in America from the 1930s to the early 1970s.

The characters in this performance all have strong voices and valid points-of-view, but it’s Chisholm’s narrative that delivers the story’s message.

Griffith has been researching, writing and workshopping Shirley Chisholm’s story for the past five years. In March 2020, the full staged production was performed for the first time at Hear Her Call Festival in Queens, NY, where Unbossed & Unbowed won best script.

Soon after, the pandemic brought live theatre to a halt. The second live performance was August 2021 at Southampton Arts Center, Southampton, NY.

The “Shirley Chisholm’s story needs to be heard by one and all,” says Griffith. “I’m appreciative for this grant and hope that audiences will come witness this theatrical performance for themselves.”



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### Ingrid Griffith Plays Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed

By MyCaribbeanScoop

There is a new one-woman show by writer and performer Ingrid Griffith about Shirley Chisholm, the first Black Congresswoman in U.S. history and the first person of color and woman to run for the Presidency of the U.S.

"Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed", is about the public and personal life of the teacher turned social activist turned politician, the sacrifices she made personally, and the contributions she made politically and socially for Black people, women, and the oppressed.

You may recognize Ingrid Griffith from a few years back when she toured *Demerara Gold*, a solo show she'd written about a Guyanese girl's immigrant experience that was wildly heralded in the U.S., U.K. Canada, and the Caribbean.

"Unbossed & Unbowed" is about politics, critical points in history and a courageous and influential woman. It is also the story of migration, diaspora, hopes, disappointments,

and relentless perseverance.

Shirley Chisholm's parents, Charles, and Ruby St. Hill, came to the U.S. in the early 1920s with much the same dreams as Caribbean people who emigrated to England, the U.S., Canada and elsewhere over the last half a century.

They expected and believed in the American dream; that they could, by hard work as it says so aptly in *Unbossed & Unbowed*, have a piece of the 'Apple Pie'. But they found themselves blocked at almost every opportunity by the inequities of the system.

An interesting aspect of the story is the multiple streams of Black migration and differences between Caribbean immigrants who arrived in Brooklyn, NY, and the relocation of African Americans from the South to the North, and the need for groups with similar obstacles to work together.

"Unbossed & Unbowed" is an entertaining, enlightening, and empowering story that comes full circle... it's fair to say that because of Shirley Chisholm, Kamala Harris became the first woman of color to become Vice President of the U.S. in 2020. We watch the trials and triumphs of Shirley as she begins her fight to achieve social change in "Unbossed & Unbowed" and we cannot but think of where we are today.

Ingrid plays multiple characters in Shirley Chisholm's world. With a tilt of the head, a change of posture, a shift in vocal cadence... and with sly humor, she transforms into the protagonist's parents, Charles, and Ruby St. Hill (they were from Guyana and Barbados) who set a young Shirley on a path of what her father called, "the tip of the spear", recognizable male political leaders, the white feminist, Gloria Steinem, tv news anchors, Shirley's Jamaican-born husband, Conrad Chisholm, and a few others.

Each character is distinct and specific like the many Ingrid portrayed in *Demerara Gold*. Ingrid Griffith is a consummate actress as well as a writer. Her performance in "Unbowed & Unbossed" is memorable and the story is one that no one should miss.

The show's website is: [www.unbossedunbowed.com](http://www.unbossedunbowed.com)

A filmed performance of Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed, a Solo Show, is streaming on demand thru February 28th. For tickets and more information visit: [www.tinyurl.com.unbossedunbowed](http://www.tinyurl.com.unbossedunbowed)

Synopsis:

Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed & Unbowed, a Solo Show, written and performed by Ingrid Griffith is the gripping story of a Black woman politician, who in the 1960s and '70s shook up America. What Shirley Chisholm accomplished over fifty years ago remains an inspiration for the many women of color who since 2018, have been the largest number to hold seats in the U.S. Congress. Shirley Chisholm spoke truth to power, fought for social change and dared to be herself.

"Shirley Chisholm's story is a powerful testament to the legacy of men and women who fought for justice and equality... and to women who dare!"  
~Ingrid Griffith, solo show artist, actor, writer

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# A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

## UNBOSSSED & UNBOWED

*Time you meet this 20<sup>th</sup> century politician who Shook UP America*

### ‘Unbossed & Unbowed’ Recalls Shirley Chisholm’s Legacy As A Trailblazing Woman

The month of March is Women’s History Month and it’s an opportune time to consider the role of trailblazing women in this country, especially those who may not necessarily be household names today, but who nonetheless had a huge impact on the generations who followed them.

Women like Shirley Chisholm.

In 1972, Brooklyn-born Chisholm made history as the first African American candidate to run for president of the United States. She was also the first woman to run for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination, and in June of that year, became the first female to appear in a United States presidential debate.

But Chisholm, who was also the first Black woman elected to U.S. Congress in 1968, never really gained the traction needed to succeed in her presidential bid. The Democratic political establishment largely ignored her while her Black male colleagues did little to support her, feeling, as many did, that she was trying to jump the line ahead of them on the road to higher office. Even the feminists who should have been united behind her were divided on Chisholm’s candidacy and in the end, Chisholm garnered only 152 delegate votes at the Democratic National Convention in 1972 and George McGovern became the party’s nominee.

But still, she was a political powerhouse.

As a founding member of both the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Women’s Caucus, she paved the way for those who did succeed in reaching higher office in the decades that followed, including President Barack Obama and Vice President Kamala Harris.

On Saturday, March 28, in conjunction with the East Hampton Library, New York City-based performer, playwright and teaching artist Ingrid Griffith will present a filmed performance of “Unbossed & Unbowed,” a new one-woman show about Chisholm, which she also wrote. Griffith, who has been living at her East Hampton home since the pandemic began last spring, will take part in a live Zoom discussion about the piece afterwards.

The name of Griffith’s play is taken from Chisholm’s slogan in Congress — “Unbought and Unbossed” — and she finds Chisholm to be an inspiration, not only because of her political ambitions, but also because of the fact that Chisholm’s background mirrors Griffith’s own.

Both Chisholm and Griffith were raised in New York, but they both spent large portions of their childhood in the Caribbean. For Chisholm, it was Barbados where she and her siblings were sent to live with their maternal grandmother as young children so their parents could spend more time working in New York. When Chisholm returned to Brooklyn at the age of 10, she spoke with a West Indian accent that would remain with her the rest of her life.

For Griffith, life began in Guyana, the country of her birth. She came to New York with her parents at the age of 12, and the family settled in Wyandanch, where she struggled to fit into a new society. Griffith’s experience as a child coming to this country from the Caribbean is the basis for “Demerara Gold,” her award-winning solo show about a Guyanese girl’s immigrant experience, which she has been performing for the past several years.

“I’m drawn to tell stories about the immigrant experience, about being an outsider and daring to be one’s self,” said Griffith. “I’m interested in social norms and cultural barriers that keep girls and women down, and in stories that promote and celebrate girls’ and women’s empowerment.”

Because of her experiences as a newly arrived immigrant (and an adolescent) in the U.S., Griffith says she understands what it must have been like for Chisholm to return to Brooklyn after having spent so many years living in a strong female-led Caribbean household.



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# A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

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### **'Unbossed & Unbowed' Recalls Shirley Chisholm's Legacy As A Trailblazing Woman Cont'd**

"I remember not blending in and she didn't either. Her dad was from Guyana, my homeland. I know that Caribbean culture, the whole family dynamic — you're in, but you're out," said Griffith. "I saw this woman and I felt I was in awe of her. There was so much about her that reminded me of my great aunt in Guyana."

Griffith also feels that it was Chisholm's strong connection to her Caribbean heritage that may have given her the confidence in her abilities to pursue the nation's highest office at a time when there were few role models of color, let alone women, leading the way.

"I think that's part of living in Barbados or Guyana," said Griffith. "People of color are the prime minister, an aunt is a doctor, a mom is a teacher. You know people who are doing things. You don't think, 'Because I'm dark skinned, I can't do that.' That whole idea that I'm not enough, or that's not for me — that was never a thought growing up."

"Where I'm from in Guyana, there were woman leaders in government before there were any in America," she added. "There's so much that gets into the psyche of who we see as authoritative figures. When it's people that look like us, that gives us confidence right away."

Conversely, Griffith recalls that by the time she became a teenager and young adult living in New York, she had begun to doubt her own abilities and grew fearful of what she might be able to accomplish.

"I got shaky as a person and my sense of self-worth crashed," she said. "Should I be applying to college? People like me felt they were behind and going backwards. I'm in my 40s and the issues we're still dealing with — women's positions, disenfranchisement — were the same things we were dealing with 50 years ago."

Griffith readily admits that when she set out to write "Unbossed & Unbowed," she didn't know much about Chisholm, who looked and sounded like someone from the Caribbean, and she was intrigued to learn more.

"I knew she was congresswoman, I didn't know she ran for president," said Griffith. "I saw a documentary in 2005 by Shola Lynch about the campaign. After I saw it, I thought, 'I want to play this woman. I can do this part.'"

But when it came to finding a theatrical piece about Shirley Chisholm, she soon realized there was no part to play.

"If there's a story you think should be told, you need to write it," said Griffith, who set out to do just that and began her research at the Brooklyn Public Library where Chisholm's papers are kept. She also spent time at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

"I would go there every week, four or five hours every Friday, and listen to tapes of her, and radio interviews and take notes," Griffith said. "I wanted to know about her personal life. I wanted to weave the personal into the public and understand what she gave up to have a career in social activism."

"I learned she was in Barbados for seven years and was the oldest of four girls," said Griffith. "I didn't know she was married. I thought she was a spinster, and I knew she was a teacher as well. I learned everything through the research process."

Chisholm, in fact, had begun her career in early childhood education, and when she was in Congress, became a strong advocate for social initiatives like Head Start and nutrition programs for the poor. Griffith came to understand in her research just how skilled Chisholm was when it came to building support and organizing around a cause.

# A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

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### THE EAST HAMPTON STAR SHINE FOR ALL

Villages Police & Courts Government Business Opinion Food Sports Letters Arts Education Class

#### Shirley Chisholm, Center Stage



Ingrid Griffith, right, who brought her one-woman show "Unbossed and Unbowed," about the life of Shirley Chisholm, left, to Southampton in 2021, is returning Sunday to perform it at Bay Street.  
Courtesy of Ingrid Griffith

By Jennifer Landes

February 14, 2023

After a series of firsts -- first Black congresswoman, first Black woman candidate for president -- Shirley Chisholm, who was born in 1926, said of her legacy, "I want to be remembered as a woman . . . who dared to be a catalyst of change."

Ingrid Griffith, who shares a Guyanese heritage with the Black and feminist icon, was inspired to write a play about her, not to treat her as a rarefied saint in an ivory tower, but as an approachable Everywoman who can still inspire the ordinary to greatness. "Unbossed and Unbowed," the result of this treatment, will be onstage at Bay Street Theater in Sag Harbor on Sunday afternoon after some performances for school groups.

As a Guyanese immigrant, Ms. Griffith had not heard of Chisholm, who died in 2005, until she enrolled in college. "She looked familiar. I knew she ran for Congress, but that's as much as I knew. I was very curious to know more." The more she learned, the more she became "in awe of all the things she accomplished and what she dedicated her life to fighting for -- equality and women's rights and the disenfranchised."

Ms. Griffith has designed the play as a solo show, harnessing humor and history to craft the story, which is also intended to inspire audience members to activism.

She said by phone last week that she wants more people to know and remember Chisholm, especially younger audiences who may know nothing about her but are the key to maintaining the struggle for dignity, equality, and a position in society that can only be

improved by continued struggle.

When Ms. Griffith was a teen, she said, "I had no clue and I didn't want to. I didn't know what I didn't know." She said it wasn't until later that it dawned on her that equality wasn't a passive thing, and that those in power today have Chisholm and those who came before to thank for it. "Because just as she stood on the shoulders of women from the 1920s, like Ida B. Wells, a founder of the N.A.A.C.P. . . . the continued community continuity is important."

Through the show she hopes to get across "the passion and courage it took and that we have to find that courage today to make change happen or it will be reverted. Even as we are speaking, things are being reverted."

Just as we must sacrifice for change, the play shows what Chisholm "gave up for the bigger good. And that's important because we have to make certain decisions, and that's the only way things get done."

She hopes the play will help viewers understand what the tradeoff is. "How passionate are you and how important is this cause: our equality and our dignity, fairness and leadership, and getting the opportunities to attain the American Dream." She said it's possible that the dream and democracy are myths, but if they aren't "and if we really want to make change, then we are the ones to do it from here on."

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While the idea of “wokeness” is being assaulted in some quarters, Ms. Griffith said it is essential to stay “woke” as efforts are underway to make teaching Black history an uncomfortable and even illegal act. “We know that Black history is important,” she said, but why are people like Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida saying it’s not? “That’s what we have to figure out. That’s what we have to understand.”

This is essential to the fight “because the less we know, the more we feel we’re supposed to be in this place” where women are still not occupying leadership positions, white supremacists have new agency, and the patriarchal system remains in charge. “And there we go. We’re reverting all the way back. So these things are important.”

The play begins at 2 p.m. Tickets, which start at \$35, are available through the box office or the theater’s website.

# A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

## UNBOSSSED & UNBOWED

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### *Unbossed, Unbowed & Underappreciated:* Shirley Chisholm's Story Hits Bay Street for BHM

BY DAVID TAYLOR

Bay Street Theater is following up their fascinating exploration of the infamous Ruth Bader Ginsburg with a deep dive into the life of another boundary-breaking woman of politics: the woefully unfamous Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968, as well as the first Black woman to run for president. Coming to Bay Street for a public performance on Sunday, February 19 at 2 p.m. is *Unbossed & Unbowed*, a one-woman play written and performed by Ingrid Griffith.

"I didn't know anything about her until about 2015," Griffith admits. "I saw a documentary about her run for president of the United States in 1972, and that got me thinking, 'How did she get there in the first place? What were her circumstances like?' ... Feeling like an outsider as a teenager when I came to the U.S., I was always curious to hear how other people like myself and African Americans get far, because I wasn't seeing that on television or seeing people in leadership roles."

Griffith goes on to explain that growing up in Guyana, many of her Black neighbors held prestigious roles as doctors, principals, heads of the ministry and relatives of the president of Guyana. However, when her family moved to the United States when she was 12, to Wyandanch on Long Island, she was surrounded by people like her, including her parents, working two jobs just to make ends meet.

Griffith's story mirrors that of Chisholm's (St. Hill at the time). At age 10, Chisholm returned to the U.S. after spending seven years with her grandmother in Barbados while her parents weathered the Great Depression in Brooklyn. Expecting to see the fruits of her parents' labor, she found them just as she left them — working two jobs to afford living in a less-than-ideal neighborhood.

"For me, it felt very much like my experience," Griffith says of Chisholm's adolescent arrival in the U.S., which influenced her decision to begin *Unbossed & Unbowed* at this point in the Congresswoman's story. After producing a successful one-woman-play about her personal immigrant story, *Demerara Gold*, Griffith knew she was ready to tackle Chisholm's story with the same grassroots fervor, but it would take years of research.

"I'm doing this on a very grassroots level, and I think that's what solo genres help us do as artists — to tell our stories and make it feasible for ourselves and also for the communities we're trying to reach," she says.

When Griffith began the process in 2015, her friends and family questioned why she was writing about a historical figure who was barely known, which was discouraging. Then in 2018, Griffith noticed a wave of Black congresswomen crediting Chisholm as an inspiration, and she felt her passion renewed. She finished the script in



ACTRESS AND PLAYWRIGHT INGRID GRIFFITH



VOTE CHISHOLM 1972 POSTER

2020 and began to tour the show across the country, building connections in many states and communities she'd never visited before.

"This is like my purpose to be telling this particular story out of any story — a story about social justice, making positive change and us being the ones to do it, inspiring youngsters," she says, adding that through the countless connections she's made via this show, "I don't feel like an outsider anymore. ... There's something about

that that's inspiring and empowering me to own me; I'm becoming more of who I think I should've been all along."

In *Unbossed & Unbowed*, Griffith tells of a young Chisholm inspired by her father who, overworked as he was, became an advocate and spokesman for their community. When the decision was made for her to stay in Brooklyn for college, because her parents couldn't afford the tuition prices offered by Vassar College and Oberlin College, she switched her primary goal from becoming a teacher to becoming a community leader like her father. She would go on to graduate from Brooklyn College, marry private investigator Conrad Chisholm, earn her master's degree at Columbia University and join the League of Women Voters, the Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Chisholm's career in politics began in 1964, when she became the second African American to join the New York State Legislature. She then won a seat in Congress — putting motherhood on hold to introduce legislation aimed at supporting gender and racial minorities and the poor, commuting to Washington, D.C. from Brooklyn — and later co-founded the National Women's Political Caucus. "We see the things she had to give up in her personal life to fight for the bigger picture, the larger community," Griffith says. "She was going after the status quo, whether it was Black men, the white patriarchal system or women — she was fighting the status quo on all levels because she knew that things had to change, and she couldn't wait."

While her political career was impressive, it wouldn't help her much in her ill-fated presidential campaign. Hit with racism and sexism from all sides, she wasn't even allowed to participate in Democratic primary debates until she sued for the right to do so. Of course, Griffith has more to say regarding that eye-opening story.

Throughout the fast-paced show, Griffith plays 18 characters and weaves in humor with the history. "It's not just a history lesson, I have to say. It's very entertaining, funny at times, and the music is great, very uplifting," she says.

Before the public performance on Sunday, February 19, Bay Street Theater will present a performance exclusive to schools so that students can get an immersive lesson on an underappreciated trailblazer of Black history. "It's good to engage people of all ages, but the younger generation in particular is what I want to connect to because they're the ones that are going to have to make a difference and need to know now rather than later, like I did," Griffith says. "It's America's history, and we need to know the full story. And that's how we move forward."

Tickets are \$35 and are available through the Bay Street Box Office by calling 631-725-9500 and online at [baystreet.org](http://baystreet.org).

# A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

## UNBOSSSED & UNBOWED

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### In “Unbossed & Unbowed,” writer and actor Ingrid Griffith brings Shirley Chisholm to life

by [AMY ZAVATTO](#) on FEBRUARY 14th, 2023



The spark, strength and tenacity of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to the United States Congress, is a piece of American history that deserves far more attention than perhaps it's been given. And that's part and parcel to what inspired writer and actor, Ingrid Griffith, to create her one-woman show, “Unbossed & Unbowed: The Shirley Chisholm Story.” Griffith's one-performance stop at the Bay Street Theater Sunday, February 19th, part of her national tour, is not to be missed, as much to learn about the incredible Chisholm as to catch Griffith's impassioned performance.

“She was what I wanted to be... she's got courage, vision, persistence, I mean wow,” says Griffith. “I wanted to give Shirley Chisholm her due, to inform and empower audiences especially in celebration of Black History and Black History Month.”

The show begins as a young 10-year-old Chisholm, who'd spent several years of her childhood in Barbados, rejoining her parents in the United States. The story then travels through time, following her rise in politics and activism. The powerful close of the show lands at the 1972 Democratic National Convention, where Shirley gave her concession speech after running for President of the United States—the first Black woman to do so.

“The play follows her development as a woman, educator, activist and politician,” says Griffith, “weaving together the personal, political, public and historical events of her life.”

An excellent Sunday afternoon option for the entire family, “Unbossed & Unbowed” became a calling for Griffith. We caught up with her on her way to perform in New York to hear more details about creating the show, over two years in the making, and what inspired her about Chisholm's incredible life. No surprise: Griffith is pretty inspiring herself.

Southforker: What about Shirley Chisholm inspired you to create your play?

Ingrid Griffith: I was curious to know more about this trailblazer [who] I had not read about in textbooks. Part of what drew me to Shirley Chisholm initially were the similarities between her and me. She is of Caribbean background, like I am. And as trivial as it might seem, she is lean and spare physically, and so am I. I felt a kinship with Shirley Chisholm immediately.

SF: How did you go about researching Chisholm's life?

IG: I started my research at the Schomburg Center in Harlem and at Brooklyn College in Flatbush, Shirley Chisholm's alma mater. I read every book by and about Shirley Chisholm and poured through as many audio, videotapes and articles I could find over a period of two and a half years. The interesting thing is even after the show was [first] staged, I continue to meet folks that knew her. The things I learn from them also inform my performance.

SF: Chisholm was born in the United States, but spent several years living in Barbados, where her parents were from and was very proud of her heritage. At a time in the United States when we're seeing a notable backlash against immigrants and growing xenophobia, what are you hoping people will draw from this aspect of Shirley's story?

IG: Shirley Chisholm was an outsider as a woman and person of color. She spoke with a Caribbean accent. She paid a price for that outsider status. But there was also an advantage to her position. She saw the system for what it was and unfortunately still is.

SF: Chisholm won seven terms in Congress after starting her political career in the Assembly in 1964—no small feat at any time in history, but it was incredible for a Black woman in the mid-60s. What did she go through?

IG: Shirley Chisholm's political battle was unrelentingly difficult. But she was up to the challenge and then some. Time after time, she gave her opponents more than they bargained for. What a warrior. Shirley faced not only political headwinds but betrayal and somehow she managed to keep her dignity, stayed focused on her agenda and made change happen.

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### In “Unbossed & Unbowed,” writer and actor Ingrid Griffith brings Shirley Chisholm to life cont’d...

SF: Tell us about your own career as a writer and performing artist.

IG: I moved from Wyandanch, Long Island where I grew up to New York City right after I graduated from a two-year community college. I was working during the day, started studying acting in the evenings, and then began auditioning. I knew there was more to my existence than the traditional path. I wanted to act. ... I didn't find immediate success on the stage so I went back to college and got a master's degree in Creative Writing. I realized that one way to express myself would be to write about my own experience.

SF: What was the first play you wrote?

IG: I started writing a one-woman show about my immigrant experience. “Demerara Gold,” my first solo show, was a breakthrough for me in many ways. The story deals with a girl finding the courage to break the silence about the domestic violence she witnesses when she reunites with her parents in America. People of all ages and backgrounds resonate with the story, especially young girls and women.

SF: As a performer and a writer, what drives you?

IG: My goal is to write and perform both my own work and the works of others in the services of a healthy and vibrant society. I want to get involved with projects that make me jump out of bed every morning. I want to play characters and tell stories that have a positive impact on my community's psyche... stories I didn't often see on tv and in the movies when I was growing up.

SF: What's Chisholm's legacy?

IG: Her legacy is wide and deep. Voting rights, women's rights, equal opportunity. The SEEK Program is a bill she helped pass that helps CUNY students from disadvantaged communities who are unprepared for college. Shirley Chisholm had the guts to speak up for women, recruiting them to become leaders. She helped the working class and improved the educational system. Another important part of Shirley Chisholm's legacy is that she stressed the importance of forming alliances and coalitions. And, she personified the courage it takes to fight against the injustices of our world.

The performance of “Unbossed and Unbowed: The Shirley Chisholm Story” will be at 2 p.m., Sunday, February 19th at the Bay Street Theater. Tickets are \$35, and can be purchased [here](#).

A One-Woman Show by Ingrid Griffith

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## **Political pioneer Shirley Chisholm honored in interactive one-woman show 'Unbossed and Unbowed'**



In 1968 Shirley Chisholm was the first black woman elected to Congress. Four years later, she was the first woman and African-American to seek the U.S. presidential nomination, paving the way for other rising black political stars over the years. Chisholm's motto, and the title of her autobiography, was "Unbought and unbossed."

Now, Out-Of-Hand theater and the Partnership for Southern Equity are presenting an immersive one-woman-show about Shirley Chisholm. "Unbossed and Unbowed" tells the story of this historic figure. The play will run in living rooms across Atlanta through April 30. Ingrid Griffith wrote the show and performs the role of Shirley Chisholm, among others, in the play. In this interview, Artistic Director Ariel Fristoe and actor Ingrid Griffith speak with "City Lights" host Lois Reitzes about the show.

"Shirley Chisholm: Unbossed and Unbowed" runs through April 30 in living rooms across Atlanta. More information is available [here](http://www.UnbossedUnbowed.com).

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