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# BLACK POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

Introduction by MARILYN AINSWORTH

*The New Negro,  
Hard-muscled, Fascist-hating, Democracy-ensouled  
Strides in seven-league boots  
Along the Highway of Today  
Toward the Promised Land of Tomorrow!*

MELVIN B. TOLSON  
*Dark Symphony*

IN THE INITIAL ISSUE of the BLACK LAW JOURNAL, the Board of Editors advanced the idea of welding a strong community through the consolidation of the street community with that of the Black legal profession. Presenting, in each issue, brief profiles of outstanding Black legal practitioners who have helped empower the Black community was a proposed method for achieving this goal. The initial four issues of the JOURNAL have done just that.

This issue focuses on a group of persons who, heretofore, were almost exclusively attorneys: Black political leaders. Blacks have now abandoned the notion that our leaders must be highly educated to be effective, that legislators must necessarily be lawyers. Of the six political activists presented here, two hold law degrees; the backgrounds of the other four are as diverse as their political points of view. One, Julian Bond, left school to become politically involved and subsequently returned to obtain his degree. The subject of our Feature Story, Fannie Lou Hamer, has consolidated her leadership because her constituency identifies with her limited "formal" education. Ironically, the white power structure has tended to underestimate her effectiveness because of that same lack of formal training. Others presented here have advanced degrees in fields not related to law.

These six persons represent a very minute portion of the many Black public officials and community leaders who have had such a great influence on American politics in recent years. Each of the six is a powerful force recognized by the major political parties as such. Ms. Hamer had a major impact on the Democratic National Convention in 1968. Julian Bond was a vice-presidential nominee at the 1968 Convention. Yvonne Brathwaite has been named vice-chairman of the Democratic National Convention in 1972. Shirley Chisholm is the first serious Black contender for the Presidency in modern American history and is a rallying point for the political aspirations of many Black people. Mervyn Dymally, as California's only Black state senator and Chairman of the Committee on Elections and Reapportionment of the State Senate played a major role in the most important Democratic primary in the nation. United States Senator Brooke, the most prominent Black Republican on the national political scene will be a major factor in deciding the attitude of the Republican party in matters reflecting Black America.

INDEED, IT IS NOT too much to say that 1972 is the year of the Black voter and politician. No matter what the outcome, Blacks are participating at every level of American electoral politics and are earning the attention, respect, and deference of all involved in the political arena.



The Honorable SHIRLEY CHISHOLM, first Black Congresswoman in the United States, has firmly established herself as the "Fighting Shirley Chisholm."

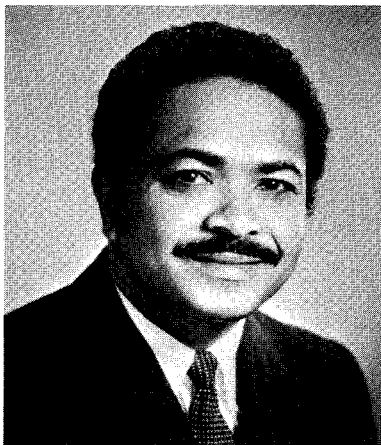
Elected to the 91st Congress, her constituency is the Twelfth Congressional District, whose center, Bedford-Stuyvesant, an area of urban decay, is New York's and perhaps the nation's largest ghetto. Her District also includes parts of Bushwick, Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and the more prosperous Crown Heights. Blacks and Puerto Ricans compose more than 70% of the population. The rest are Jewish, Polish, Ikranian, and Italian. No other congressional district in Brooklyn is so diversified in its constituents.

Ms. Chisholm is a specialist in early childhood education and child welfare who entered politics more or less by public demand in 1964, when she ran successfully for the New York State Assembly on the Democratic ticket. An articulate and straightforward champion of the rights of the downtrodden, she derives her power from "the people" as she has often pointed out, rather than from the regular party organization. Her close identity with her community enabled her to outdistance two candidates in the Democratic primaries in 1968, and to gain an upset victory over the Republican Liberal candidate by nearly a three-to-one margin. She campaigned under the slogan, UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSSED, the title of her recently published autobiography. Now several years later, she is being heard by that slogan across the nation. Her determination and courage, along with intelligent reason, declare her a leader, as evidenced by her meteoric rise from clubhouse worker to Representative in the United States Congress.

A native of her Congressional District, Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm, the oldest of four girls, was born on November 30, 1924. After graduation from Girls High School in Brooklyn, she went on to obtain a B.A., cum laude, from Brooklyn College. She earned both an M.A. in education and a diploma in Administration and Supervision from Columbia University. She writes and speaks Spanish fluently, which has been a tremendous asset in developing the wonderful rapport she enjoys with her Spanish-speaking constituents.

Ms. Chisholm's entrance as a freshman to the 91st Congress made her known as a woman with "true grit" and a mind of her own. She was assigned to the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry and Rural Villages, which she felt had no relation to the needs and problems of her Congressional District in New York City. The Speaker of the House admonished her to "accept and be a good soldier." Right then she decided, "That's why the country is the way it is." She made the unprecedented move of placing an amendment to remove her name from this Committee. She was then assigned to the Veterans Affairs Committee, which had some relevancy to her constituency. When the 92nd Congress convened, Ms. Chisholm was assigned to the House Education and Labor Committee, which is her main field of concentration and interest. She serves on the Select Education, General Education, and Agricultural Labor Subcommittees, and is also Chairperson of the Military Affairs Committee of the Congressional Black Caucus.

During her campaign for the presidency, Ms. Chisholm has continued to speak out on behalf of those she considers to be her main constituents: the young, the poor, the non-white, and the women. From the very beginning she has demanded to be treated the same as every other "serious" candidate. She is well aware of the tremendous odds against her winning, but that has not dulled her determination nor her enthusiasm. Shirley Chisholm does not seek the personal glory of being able to say "I am the President." Her goal, instead, is to assure that the needs of her constituents be recognized and met. She has determined that the winner-take-all nature of national politics must be ended and that the government once again must become representative of all the People.



"I believe that it is the responsibility of government — local, state, and federal — to assist those citizens in need to become productive members of our society." These are the words of MERVYN M. DYMALLY, the most powerful Black politician in the state of California. First elected to the state legislature in 1962, Mr. Dymally began his political career as an Assemblyman and four years later was elected to the state Senate. In 1970 and 1971, Senator Dymally was unanimously chosen by his colleagues as Chairperson of the Senate Democratic Caucus. From this position he has succeeded in building one of the most powerful Black political blocks in the nation. As chairperson of the Senate Committee on Elections and Reapportionment, he not only has blocked

gerrymandering proposals that would have diluted Black voting strength, but also helped to create one new Black Congressional district and one new Mexican-American Senatorial district.

Senator Dymally received a Bachelor of Arts degree in education at California State College in Los Angeles. Later, while serving in the Senate, he continued his educational career and earned his Master of Arts in Government. Armed with both the credentials of a full formal education and the experience of practical politics, he organized one of the most vibrant and dynamic programs in electoral politics. He has authored progressive legislation for the Head Start program, child care centers, educational opportunity, and vocational education. Due to his efforts, California became the first state in the nation to pass legislation requiring its schools to teach minority history. He is a member of the California Advisory Committee to the United States Civil Rights Commission, the founder of the Urban Affairs Institute, and Editor-in-Chief of the quarterly journal *The Black Politician*. He is also the Chairman of the Board of Job Education and Training Center which provides jobs, education and training for the unemployed.

Already a star in state public life, Senator Dymally is rapidly achieving prominence in national and international politics. In 1964 he represented the United States Department of State as a goodwill ambassador on a tour of East and Central Africa. In 1965 he journeyed to the Caribbean and Guyana and two years later was a guest of the Israeli Government. Mervyn M. Dymally is a proud and living example of Black power in state, national and world politics.



The Honorable EDWARD W. BROOKE holds the distinction of being the first Black man to serve in the United States Senate since Reconstruction. As the Junior Senator from Massachusetts he has consistently fought to further the progress of his fellow Black Americans and to recreate for all Americans a confidence in this nation's political system.

The responsibilities of being in public life have never been taken lightly by Senator Brooke. As Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts he waged a one-man war against crime and corruption in both Black and white communities. He brought a massive number of indictments against politicians, private citizens and corporations for charges ranging from conflict of

interest to bribery to perjury. His debut into politics was a natural extension of his concern and commitment to the cause of justice. In the political arena he has continued to fight for these same ideals. A survey of his activities during his term in office reveals the scope of his endeavors. He has served on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, the Committee on Appropriations, the Select Committee on Equal Educa-

tional Opportunity, and the Select Committee on Aging. Following the ghetto riots in the summer of 1967, Senator Brooke was appointed to the President's Commission on Civil Disorders. After intensive investigation, this body warned that the nation was splitting into separate Black and white societies and that immediate action was imperative. The Massachusetts Senator was later very instrumental in securing Senate approval of the 1968 Civil Rights Bill.

Senator Brooke occupies a very unique position within the American political spectrum. As a Republican in the United States Senate he is privy to many activities which heretofore have been exclusively white in nature. Although he has never claimed the title of civil rights activists, his mere presence has served as an asset to the Movement. More than anything else, Senator Brooke is an individualist. While it may be true that he has, at times remained aloof from certain Black causes, it is as equally true that there are no *white* holds on his vote. Speaking on his role within the American governmental process, he explains his position thusly: "Ten years ago, it was a novelty for a Black man to hold public office. Today, there are no fewer than 1,469 Black elected officials in the United States, including state and federal legislators, mayors, school board members and law enforcement officials. These men and women serve whites as well as Blacks; their effectiveness in public service and the high regard of their colleagues is eloquent promise of the opportunities which lie ahead. Their present positions and their backgrounds alike can serve to bring into focus the particular needs and interests of all Black Americans." Senator Brooke has fully committed himself to this task of furthering the interests of all Americans, both Black and white.



On June 6, the voters in California took the first step towards electing that state's first Black Congresswoman. In a hotly contested primary race, YVONNE BRATHWAIT BURKE was chosen as the Democratic candidate for the newly created 37th Congressional District in southwest Los Angeles. Her victory stands as a prime example of the increased political power which Black people now wield as a result of state reapportionment.

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke stands well qualified to serve in the United States Congress. She has been a practicing attorney for the past ten years, during which time she has served as a Deputy Corporation Commissioner, a Hearing Officer for the Police Commission, and a staff attorney for the McCone Commission. She was

elected to the California State Legislature in 1966 and since then has worked tirelessly to represent the interest of the people in her district. She was the Chairperson of the Assembly Committee on Urban Development and also served as a member of the Health Committee, the Finance Committee, the Criminal Justice Committee, and the Insurance Committee.

It was during her activities as a state legislator that Ms. Burke became convinced of the great need for more Black men and women to participate in national politics. She became increasingly aware of the dominant role of the federal government throughout all levels of society and decided that the resources which Congress controlled should be used more extensively to solve some of the problems in this society. "There are two alternative courses of action for Congress. First, it can continue to do nothing but act as a roadblock, preventing needed change. Second, it can assume real leadership in ending the misery and suffering which are so pitifully common in today's America. I intend to work for this second course."

Dynamic and outspoken, Yvonne Burke has consistently championed the causes of the underrepresented. "I believe that positive change is essential to the survival of our society. It goes without saying that our Black citizens have gone too long without adequate representation in Congress. It also goes without saying that women have been denied their rightful place in the halls of government. But these are merely symptoms of a troubled society. How can we be so complacent when children don't have enough to eat, when the heads of our households can't find work, when the average family can't

afford decent medical care, and when our elderly citizens are driven out of their homes." These are not the causes which bring rich rewards and great personal fortune. They are, however, some of the problems which must be resolved if this nation, as we know it, is to survive. Yvonne Burke has accepted this challenge and soon, along with Shirley Chisholm from New York, and Barbara Jordan from Texas, will be storming the halls of Congress. With these three Black women on Capitol Hill the opposition will clearly be outmatched.



JULIAN BOND, poet, author, newspaperman, civil rights worker and legislator, is, at 32, one of the youngest and most accomplished of the state legislators in America. Representative Bond was born in Nashville, Tennessee on January 14, 1940. He attended primary school at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and was graduated from the George School, a co-educational Quaker preparatory school, in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in June, 1957. He entered Morehouse College in Atlanta in September, 1957.

As a Black student in the South during the early sixties, Bond became deeply involved in the struggle for civil rights. He was a founder of the Committee On Appeal for Human Rights (COAHR), the Atlanta University Center student organization that coordinated three years of student anti-segregation protests in Atlanta beginning in 1960. He served for three months as Executive Secretary of the COAHR.

In April, 1960, Bond helped to found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). That summer he joined the staff of a newly formed Atlanta Black weekly newspaper, the *Atlanta Inquirer*, as a reporter and feature writer. He later became the managing editor.

In January, 1961, Bond left Morehouse to become Communications Director of SNCC, a position he held until September, 1966. He directed the organization's photography, printing, and publicity departments. His work with SNCC took him to civil rights drives and voter registration campaigns in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas.

Julian Bond must be one of the few state legislators to run and win in three elections before he was allowed to take his seat in the State House of Representatives. He was first elected to a seat created by reapportionment in the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965, but was prevented from taking office in January, 1966 by members of the legislature who objected to his statements about the war in Vietnam.

After winning a second election in February, 1966 to fill his vacant seat, a special House Committee again voted to bar him from membership in the legislature. Representative Bond won a third election in November, 1966, and in December of that same year the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the Georgia House had erred in refusing him his seat. On January 9, 1967, he took the oath of office and became a member of the Georgia House of Representatives.

Despite his busy schedule Bond found time to return to Morehouse College to receive his degree in June, 1971. In the Georgia House, Mr. Bond serves as a member of the Education, Insurance, and State Institutions and Properties Committees.

Mr. Bond was co-chairman of the Georgia Loyal National Democratic Delegation, an insurgent group to the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The Loyal Democrats were successful in unseating the regular handpicked Georgia delegation. He was later nominated for Vice-President, but withdrew his name from consideration because of his age.

His poems and articles have appeared in *Negro Digest*, *motive*, *Right and Reviews*, *Life*, *Freedomways*, *Ramparts*, *Beyond the Blue*, *the Negro Poets*, *American Negro Poetry*, *the Book of Negro Humor*, et al. His foreword introduces this issue of THE BLACK LAW JOURNAL. Representative Bond is a Black legislator to be reckoned with in the political future of this nation.



*Photo provided courtesy of Robert Docker and Johnson Publications.*