Black Support Hard for Her to Win, Rep. Chisholm Says

BY DOROTHY TOWNSEND

Mrs. Shirley Chisholm admitted in Los Angeles Friday that a black presidential candidate has a hard time winning wholehearted support in the black community.

"Among my own people," said the Democratic congresswoman from New York, "it is very hard to take seriously a black person running for President.

"Not many black people can really believe that a black person, who also happens to be a woman, can become President of this country."

Consequently, she said, she does not view Mrs. Martin Luther King's endorsement Thursday of Sen. George McGovern's candidacy as a serious blow to her own bid for votes in the June 5 California primary.

She made an intensive campaign swing through the blackest belt of Los Angeles County Friday, a rigorous round of public appearances in which she found herself explaining why she voted against President Nixon's welfare program and why she does not wear her hair "natural."

Explains Decline

In her fast, rambunctious style of public speaking, she said, she voted against the President's welfare reform package which "in essence is welfare appeasement."

"But if Mrs. Chisholm goes against a bill for $2,000 (which would be guaranteed to every American family), people in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia say Mrs. Chisholm is voting against welfare.

"To the people there it is a lot of money," she said. "But what are you going to do with $2,000 in Los Angeles or Spanish Harlem or Detroit?"

"Brothers and sisters, don't be so hard on Sister Chisholm."

In a question-and-answer session during her visit to the South-Central Multi-Purpose Health Center in Watts she said, "Ask me anything. I'm not shy."

When a questioner asked why she did not wear a "natural," Afro hairstyle, she said: "I don't think it is a fashion (Afro hairstyle) or a nature (that determines a person's commitment) to his people.

"Don't ever get to the point in the world where people are going to dictate what you are going to wear, look like or eat," she said.

Outside the center, she told a

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group of young blacks that she realizes "the path is rough" because, contrary to some reports, "Shirley Chisholm didn't come from a middle-class family."

"My father was an unskilled laborer and my mother was a domestic," she said, "and on public assistance for many years."

At the Watts Labor Community Action Committee Youth Center she said that the "American dream was not for us."

"We came to this country for a destined role—to provide the back-breaking slave labor." But she called on her audience to display pride in their forefathers for the role they played in American history.

Mrs. Chisholm began her round of appearances Friday at 8:00 a.m. with a sidewalk visit with unemployed men, predominantly black, who gather at the corner of Pico Blvd. and La Brea Ave., each morning in a labor pool for hire for the day. The area is called the "slave block."

"This is the corner where you find the disillusioned, the left-out people," she told a reporter. "This is where they come to find something for the day."

When she departed, in a motorcade of Secret Service agents assigned to her by President Nixon after Monday's assassination attempt on presidential candidate George C. Wallace, a man she had talked to in the street yelled after her, "Good luck, Shirley."

An unusual sight in the heavily guarded entourage was the presence of a female Secret Service agent, costless and carrying a bulky purse, who stayed close to Mrs. Chisholm at all times. She is Laurie Anderson, assigned out of Washington to the only woman presidential candidate for the duration of the campaign."

On a visit to the South-Central Community Child Care Center. Mrs. Chisholm, a former day care center director in New York, sat on the floor and played a game with the children, then impressed on the 2- to 5-year-olds: "Go home and tell your mothers and your fathers that you played a game with Shirley Chisholm today."