



Struggle-La-Lucha.org

Charlene Mitchell presente!

written by Lallan Schoenstein

January 3, 2023



Charlene Mitchell in 1968, when she became the first Black woman to run for U.S. president.

Charlene Mitchell, an extraordinary African American leader, died on Dec. 14 in New York City. She was 92 years old. The story of her life's achievements evokes profound respect.

The daughter of a trade unionist, Mitchell joined the Communist Party USA in 1946 when she was only 16 years old. She quickly rose to leadership while the party was under attack by the McCarthy witch hunt, becoming the youngest member of the party's national committee in 1958.

In the 1960s, she founded the all-Black chapter of the Che-Lumumba Club in Los Angeles. They chose the names of Che Guevara and Patrice Lumumba to show their internationalist view. She was among the first in the U.S. to initiate a movement against apartheid and to fight for the freedom of Nelson Mandela.

Charlene Mitchell became the first Black woman to run for president of the U.S. when she was 38. She was nominated at a Communist Party convention in 1968 under a banner that read: "Black and White Unite to Fight Racism - Poverty - War!"

When Angela Davis was arrested in 1970, Mitchell led her defense committee with the demand, "Free Angela Davis and All Political Prisoners."

Mitchell went on to create the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR). She said, "Lead our people not in their frustration, but lead them out of it."

In a tribute, Frank Chapman — the current executive director of NAARPR — wrote in Fight Back News: "Every time we organize the fight to free a political prisoner; every time we organize a fight against police crimes and police brutality and murder; every time we work with families who have lost loved ones; with families

who still have loved ones that are languishing in prison; every time we do this here and now, we pay tribute to Charlene Mitchell, who started this fight for us almost five decades ago."

Charlene, her parents, and her seven siblings were part of the great migration of Black southerners who moved north in the first part of the 20th century. When she was 9 years old, they moved to Chicago, where her father, a labor activist, worked as a Pullman porter and a hod carrier.

