

In Memoriam: Nichelle Nichols, Uhura in Original 'Star Trek'

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SILVER CITY, N.M.— No more can Uhura communicate. The ground breaking actor who originated the role of Nyota Uhura, the Communications Officer on The Original Series (TOS) "Star Trek," passed away on July 30th at her home in New Mexico. Nichelle Nichols was 89. Photographer Joe Arce of HollywoodChicago.com took this Exclusive Portrait in Chicago in 2018.

Nichelle Nichols was born Grace Dell Nichols in Robbins, Illinois. Her family was living in Chicago when she began her career, where she appeared in "Kicks and Co.," a musical that never got out of the Windy City ... but it did get the attention of Hugh Hefner, who booked Nichols in his Chicago Playboy Club. She also appeared on TV in Gene Roddenberry's "The Lieutenant" (1964), and the eventual producer of "Star Trek" remembered the actress when he cast her as Nyota Uhura (the first name came later in the canon) in 1966. She played the role until the series went off the air in 1969, and then in the subsequent 1970s/80s movies series.



Live Long and Prosper: Nichelle Nichols in Chicago in 2018

Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

After the first season of "Star Trek," she wanted to leave the original show, but no less than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. convinced her to stay, saying that she "was making history." She also shared television's first interracial kiss, with William Shatner as Captain Kirk, nearly 54 years ago in November of 1968.

Her post Trek years lived up to the legacy of Uhura, as she briefly worked for NASA recruiting women astronauts. She did a couple of notable films in the 1960s, "Mr. Buddwig" and "Doctor, You've Got to Be Kidding," and even did a "blaxploitation" film in 1974, "Truck Turner." Her popularity as Uhura got her roles on TV's "Heroes," "Futurama" and the film "Are We There Yet" (2005).

Nichelle Nichols was quite aware of her contribution to the legend of Star Trek ... "Star Trek represented, and still does represent, the future we can have, a future that is beyond the petty squabbles we are dealing with here on Earth, now as much as ever, and we are able to devote ourselves to the betterment of all human kind by doing what we do so well: explore. This kind of a future isn't impossible - and we need to all rethink our priorities to really bring that vision to life."

Source for this article from Wikipedia. Nichelle Nichols, 1932-2022



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