

**Thumbnail Image:**



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## **Shirley Temple Black: A True Public Diplomat** <sup>[1]</sup>

Shirley Temple Black, an American cultural icon of the Great Depression Era, and U.S. Ambassador to both Ghana (1974-76) and Czechoslovakia (1989-92), passed away on Monday, February 10th. CPD reached out to a few public diplomacy scholars and practitioners for their take on her global public diplomacy impact.

Shirley Temple Black's shift to diplomacy was completely different from the current wave of free-lance celebrities. She was firmly tied to a state-centric notion of statecraft. If some may have doubted that a child actor could make such a transition she turned out to be a consummate professional, with no sign of any embarrassment or indication that she was in over her head. Although she was widely valued for her 'old school' discipline and tact, recognition that was amplified by her appointment as Chief of Protocol of the United States, she certainly benefited from name recognition as Ambassador to both Ghana (1974-76) and Czechoslovakia (1989-92). Indeed what was innovative in her selection and performance to these key postings was the appreciation that visibility and access through country-specific American public diplomacy mattered. — **Andrew F. Cooper**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo, Canada

Temple served as potent PD symbol in China, along with Micky Mouse and Donald Duck, especially for those who was born during 1965-1975 like myself. She aptly conveyed the American value of independence and individuality (not the "papa's

girl who would follow every word from parent advocated in traditional Chinese culture). CCTV broadcast many of her classics in the early 1980s and got a lot of fans among Chinese viewers. However, those who were born in the 1980s and 90s are not familiar with her, as Disney cartoon figures replaced her. Most Chinese people are not aware of her diplomat role because her target nations were those in East Europe and Africa. Chinese media had a wide coverage of her passing away on entertainment pages for our fond memory of a child film star with slim mention of her diplomatic mission. – **Anbin Shi, Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at Tsinghua University, China**

Shirley Temple Black's career speaks to the inherent power of cultural diplomacy to move people in positive ways. As perhaps the biggest child movie star in history, she made magic with her dance and voice—and her talent echoed around the world as did her powerful films which made America look vibrant and culturally robust. In many ways she made America into the great “fairy tale” it could be—a nation beckoning others with its openness and warmth. – **Tara Sonenshine, Distinguished Fellow, School of Media and Public Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, DC**

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