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# EVERYBODY'S

## NEW YORK

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**SHADOW**  
PHENOMENAL WORK



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Illumines  
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**Citizens and Idiots**  
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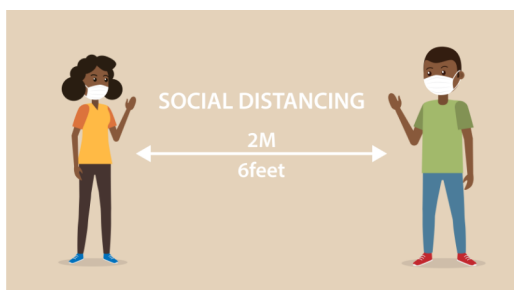
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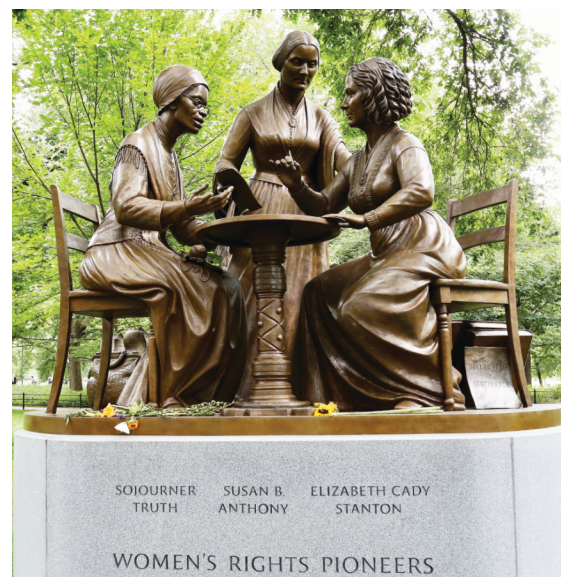


# CONTENTS

Vol. 43 No 6 SEP/OCT 2020 - [www.everybodysmag.com](http://www.everybodysmag.com)

## FEATURES

- 6 Monumental Women In Central Park  
By Wendy Gomez
- 8 Scheena Robyn Tannis Of St. Vincent & The Grenadines At DNC  
By Wendy Gomez
- 9 Calypsonian Shadow: Tearing Away The Veils Of Familiarity  
By Winthrop R. Holder
- 12 On The PBA Endorsing Donald Trump  
By Roger Toussaint
- 16 Tropicalfete Provides Cultural Programs
- 18 Kamala Harris In The Club Of Hamilton, Chisholm, Motley And Powell  
By Herman Hall
- 24 Kamala Harris: An Antidote To Trump  
By Martin P. Felix
- 26 A Peek At Kamala Harris  
By Jeff Hercules
- 28 Complete Senator Harris Acceptance Speech At Dnc  
Historic Speech By Senator Kamala Harris



## DEPARTMENTS

- 5 Readers Time

### CREDITS

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## READERSTIME

### BLACK LIVES MATTER

I appreciate an excellent photo-essay; therefore, I praise Leonard McKenzie for his action shots at Black Lives Matter rallies.

*John Richardson  
Hartford, Ct.*

The saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words" was very applicable in your August issue. McKenzie's varied and mindboggling photos captured at BLM demonstrations are very compelling.

*s...@opt...  
Bronx, NY*

wonderful contributions to the community. Keep it going!

I'll appreciate if you can inform your readers of the campaign to recognize the black Caribbean man who founded Chicago. Here are links for anyone to get information about our efforts. Our campaign hopes to convince the authorities to give this Black Founding Father of Chicago a monument and to name a street and holiday in his name.

Petition <http://chnng.it/DLhPnQDfny>  
Visit [www.blackheroesmatter.org](http://www.blackheroesmatter.org).

*Ephraim Martin  
Martins International  
Chicago, IL*

### BOSS OF BLACK BROOKLYN

Thank you for your review of Boss of Black Brooklyn: The Life and Times of Bertram L. Baker by Ron Howell. He is one example of how Caribbean immigrants of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Marcus Garvey, attempted to change the U.S. for the better.

*M...@....  
Queens Village, NY*

### FOUNDER OF CHICAGO

Congrats to EVERYBODY'S magazine for the years of

### Publisher's Response

*Mr. Martin, glad to learn there's a Caribbean effort to recognize Jean Baptiste Point du Sable. Many people from the Caribbean contributed to early America. Back in 1976, to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the USA, I wrote a booklet about them, "200 Years of West Indian-American Contributions" and I included him. It is believed Jean Baptiste Point du Sable was born in Haiti during the days of slavery.*

*Letters to the editor are always appreciated whether critical or praiseworthy. No phone calls please. We regret that owing to limited space we cannot publish every letter. We edit letters for clarity. We do not publish what is posted on the magazine's social media pages. Email preferred: [editor@everybodysmag.com](mailto:editor@everybodysmag.com).*



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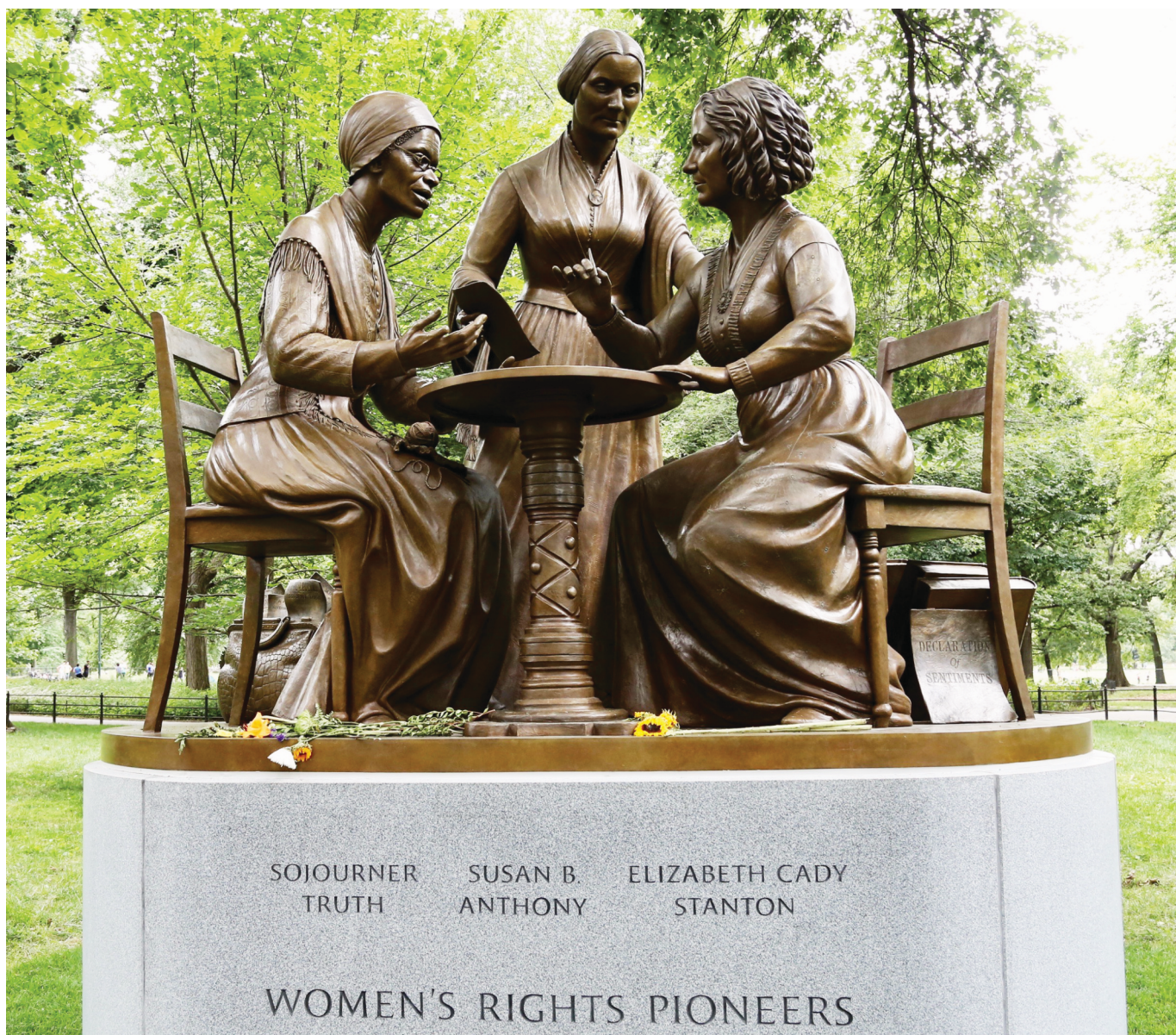
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# WOMEN'S RIGHTS PIONEERS STATUE UNVEILED IN CENTRAL PARK



To celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women in the U.S. winning the right to vote, Monumental Women, an organization dedicated to unsilencing and recognizing the female presence in the nation's history, in late August, unveiled a 14-foot tall Women's Rights Pioneers Monument in Central Park honoring three women, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth.

It was the first statue honoring historical heroines in the park's 167-year history where cricket was once played as the American pastime. Perhaps, Calypsonian Sir Lancelot was first to capture romance in the park, celebrating it in his 1940s hit, "Making Love in Central Park."

Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) was a social reformer and women's rights activist who played a pivotal role in the women's suffrage movement. In making her case for women's right to vote, she said, "There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) was a suffragist, social activist, abolitionist, and active in the early women's rights movement. In 1848, at the Seneca Falls Convention, she drafted the first organized demand for women's suffrage in the United States. "Come, come, my conservative friend, wipe the dew off your spectacles, and see that the world is moving."

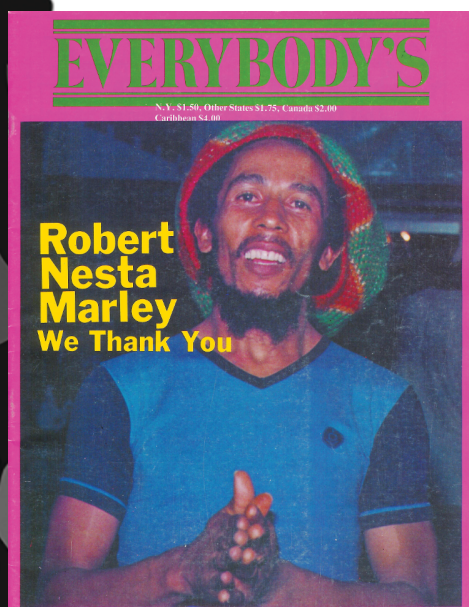
Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was born into slavery. The name she inherited from her slave masters was Isabella "Belle" Baumfree. After escaping slavery, she named herself Sojourner Truth. History records her as an American abolitionist and women's rights activist. "Ain't I a woman" which was delivered extemporaneously is regarded as one of the most stirring speeches of its time and still sings through history. Although a black woman, she addressed the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851 during slavery. Indeed, Monumental Women is an organization whose mission warrants support.



When Bob Marley passed on in 1981,  
**EVERYBODY'S** and Rolling Stone were the only two  
 magazines to dedicate an entire edition to Bob.

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## Scheena Robyn Tannis Gives St. Vincent and the Grenadines A Million-Dollar Publicity



*L to R: York New Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, Siboney Tannis and RN Scheena Robyn Tannis during roll call at the Democratic National Convention.*

Registered Nurse Scheena Iyandé Robyn Tannis proudly informed Americans and people around the world watching the Democratic National Convention that St. Vincent and the Grenadines was in the house.

One wonders if the St. Vincent tourism authorities appreciated the million-dollar worth of promotion, Tannis gave the land of her birth.

"As an immigrant from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and an 1199 SEIU (Service Employees International Union,) Registered Nurse, I'm proud to be part of America's fight against COVID-19," Ms. Tannis told a national and international television audience during the delegate roll call for New York State nominating former Vice President Joe Biden as the Democratic Party candidate for the presidency of the U.S.

Nurse Tannis is employed at Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center in Brooklyn. Attempts have been made over the years to close Brookdale Hospital which serves an immigrant community. Standing in the convention center, she announced to the world, "Many health care workers do not get paid sick leave, or have enough protective equipment." She continued, "I have two children with asthma and a mother who's high-risk. I worry every day about bringing this virus home to them."

Affirming that "Joe Biden's plan will help us take better care of your loved ones, as well as our own," Tannis continued, "along with Lt. Gov. (Kathy) Hochul, I cast New York's votes: 44 votes for Bernie Sanders, and 277 for our next president, Joe Biden." Asserting New York's Democrats position to a boisterous/spirited convention, she concluded, "It's Joe's time!"

The night before the roll call, her union, in a memo to its members, informed them, "Scheena is a dedicated RN at Brooklyn's Brookdale Hospital, and we are proud to have her representing 1199 on the national stage."

"Being asked to represent New York State at this year's Democratic National Convention to nominate Joe Biden for President came as a shock to me," Tannis,

the Assistant Head Nurse in the Coronary Care Unit, said. "I could never have imagined being given such an honor."

Tannis explains, "When I was approached, I was told that I caught their attention after they saw two interviews, I did during the height of the pandemic in New York and that the DNC wanted to highlight everyday heroes." She adds, "I do not believe that I am a health-care hero. I am a person who truly believes in using one's talents to benefit the community. I want people to know that COVID-19 is very serious." Tannis continues, "I have lost colleagues, friends and patients to this dangerous virus. We must continue to be vigilant in the fight against it."

Tannis was born near Kingstown, St. Vincent, in 1979 and attended the Kingstown Preparatory School before immigrating to the US in 1989. And after graduating from Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn and enrolling at Hunter College-Bellevue School of Nursing, City University of New York, Tannis earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing after which Tannis went on to obtain her Master's degree as a Family Nurse Practitioner from Lehman College, in the Bronx. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Nursing Practice at American Sentinel University.

Ms. Tannis is a member of the Brooklyn-based St. Vincent and the Grenadines Diaspora Committee of New York, Inc. and sits on the Parent Committee of CASYM Steel Orchestra, Inc. in Brooklyn. Tannis said her children — daughter Siboney, 17, who accompanied her to the DNC, and son Ajani, 8 — are very proud of their mom.

In an interview she relates, "I had no other choice than to use that platform to highlight my country of birth. I am proud to be a native of St. Vincent and the Grenadines." She continued, "I hope that I made my fellow Vincy (Vincentian) people proud on the national stage in the United States."

Ms. Tannis you made many immigrants, Caricom nationals in particular, proud.



# CALYPSONIAN SOCA-ARTIST



Shadow wearing a red shirt to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Trinidad & Tobago independence at event held on August 31, 2012 at Tropical Paradise ballroom, Brooklyn, produced by EVERYBODY'S Magazine. Photo Sharon Bennett

# SHADOW

## WINSTON BAILEY

### *Tearing Away the Veil of Familiarity?* (Part II)

By Winthrop R. Holder

In this issue we continue with Winthrop R. Holder's discussion of Winston Shadow Bailey's phenomenal work which samples many philosophical currents. Part I, "The Allegory of the Dungeon: Not Black Socrates, But Winston (Shadow) Bailey Under and Oak Tree", was published in EBM, May, 2019.

*Shadow leaves one wondering how close he was  
to echoing Animal Farm: "Four legs good, two legs bad."*

"[F]olk poets are the spokesmen whose whole concern is to express the experiences of the people rather than the experiences of the elite." Roots, Kamau Brathwaite.

"I am a citizen in a big prison/Mr. Society would not accept me," Shadow, "Tell Them," 1981.

Rather than displaying a hopeless view--as some unenlightened analysts assert--I would like to suggest that to get a clearer understanding of Shadow's phenomenal work we must view any individual song not as a simple entity but as part of a system. For each track outlines piece of the puzzle in Shadow's attempt to come to terms with this conundrum called life and our being and consciousness.

Thus, Shadow, like Naipaul, engages in what Kenneth Ramchand characterizes as fashioning "the right amount of distortion to create an effect... defamiliarization, whose end is insight-restructuring." One of the hallmarks of Shadow's work, then, not unlike Naipaul's, is not just challenging conventions but embracing a freedom practice--which George Orwell posited as--"the right to tell people what they don't want to hear." Such a disposition is not merely to confirm what we think we know, but to shock and unsettle thus pushing us towards an unclouded vision.

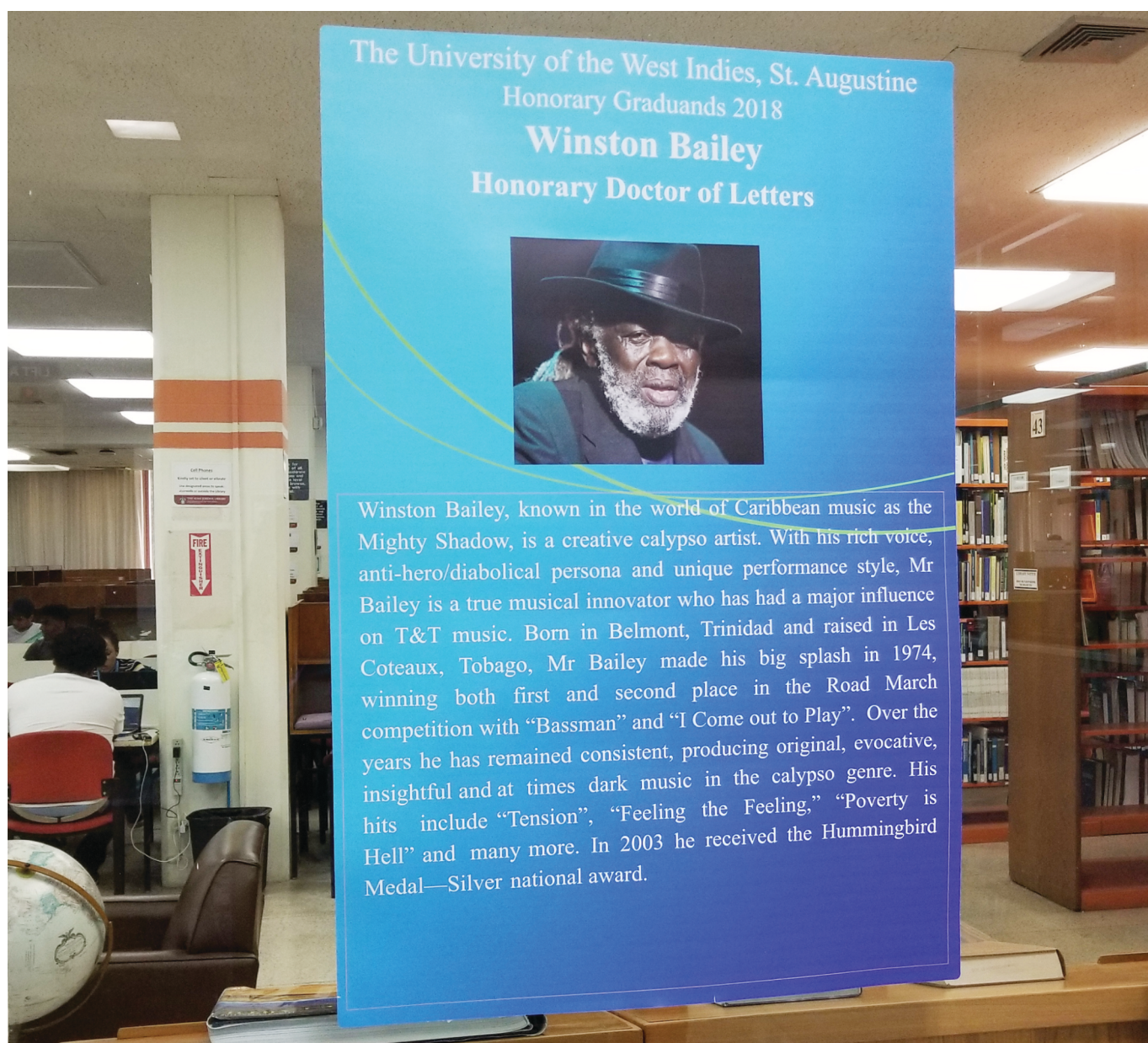
Let's listen in on "Jumbies,"

*I was alone, away from home  
Quite in Toco, making Calypso  
And in the middle of the night  
Jumbies came out in the bright  
They heard the melody*

*So they come to jump with me  
We want Calypso, sing more Calypso  
We love Calypso, sing more Calypso  
Ah try to run, they tell me don't run  
Ah try to beg, dey tie up meh leg  
We want Calypso, sing more Calypso  
We having fun, 'til morning come  
And if you stop dat jam  
We'll make you a jumbie man.*

*And when Farrell start to jam  
Place warm like tiger balm  
I want to join them in the dance  
But ah trembling in me pants...  
And if you stop dat jam  
We'll take you to jumbie land...*

In this calypso is Shadow indulging in mere fantasy or is he (taming) humanizing formerly malevolent entities by investing them with the quintessential human characteristics; carnival-like passion--a love of calypso and fet-ing/dancing. As such, isn't this puzzle unsettling of our



A billboard in the library of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, announcing the bestowing of Shadow with the Honorary Doctor of Letter. A week before the ceremony, October, 2018, Shadow passed due to recurring heart issues.

ways of seeing, being, and engaging with the world as Shadow demystifies and jettisons accepted dogma while normalizing and embracing the formerly taboo? One wonders if after Shadow's intervention anyone is still 'afraid' of jumbies. Shouldn't one come away from this Shadowesque encounter with a clearer vision of the nature of Jumbies as being no different from devotees at "Holy Mass" or David Rudder's "High Mas" with its invocation: "everybody come and celebrate."

Further, can it said that Shadow was upending the Mighty Cypher's reality-based classic, "If the Priest Could Play" positing instead, "If Jumbies could dance to calypso, who is me?" Little wonder, then, that with inhibitions relaxed/expunged "Jumbies" is well situated in the realm of Calypso Classics!

Indeed, Shadow foregrounded "Jumbies"--not his 'enigma of arrival'--with the ironic "My Vibes are Heavy", in which he offered:

*If you think I'm super  
Praise Mother Nature....  
They wondering where I get my topics  
and my jumbie, jumbie, jumbie music  
To produce this dynamic vibration  
They love it so  
want to know if I am a hermit  
from a musical planet  
They call me a weirdi and a cosmic baby  
But all I know of me is that I am me...*



No distortions here. Neither is he merely embracing Sugar Aloes', "I Love Being Me," with its clarion call, "I'm just being me". Is Shadow's verse more in line with Peter Tosh's "I am that I am" and its defiant, "you can... come with ism/you can't move I at all"? As such, "Vibes" is also a declamation--devoid of bravado--against dogma. Grounding his craft in celebrating nature in all of her glory, the artist privileges Obeah by summoning his "dynamic vibration[s]" to open uncritical mind.

Let's now look at "Animal Kingdom", another instance when Shadow, like Orwell's Animal Farm, tears away the veil of familiarity:

*I was kidnapped by strong imagination/  
I took a raft and went into deep meditation.  
I saw a world where animals are the rulers  
I had to bawl to see man living like losers.*

In these dramatic and sharply drawn images Shadow inverts reality thus engaging in counterfactual thinking by taking listeners on a journey of recovery and (re)discovery as a conduit to deeper insights. Shadow continues...

*Here on earth man eating animals  
Up there isn't so,  
Up there, men are eaten by animals  
I want you to know.*

Chorus

*Don't call this lie/I wouldn't lie so dry,  
It's really a lie/But it's not a real lie.  
I never saw no animals/ But I really saw those animals,  
Not walking like man/I saw them through imagination.*

Is this an instance of defamiliarization of which Ramchand speaks; upending 'reality', if only momentarily, in order to foster deeper insight? By bending the angle and problematizing social relations is our Sage urging a re-consideration of hierarchy as is the case in "Cook, Curry and Crow" in which Shadow hears and then makes us hear a "cock shouting out loud in protest, cook curry okro!", and a hen "talking English then"?

Are his distortions just for 'kicks' or is his manner of compelling counter-thought and reflection aimed at a general re-consideration of historical norms which elevate humans over all others? Indeed, though non-othering is a central tenet in Shadow's philosophy, the contrivance of human language does not always allow for a more precise capturing of his thoughts, hence his reliance on scatting at certain junctures in his discourse.

By infusing/investing so many non-traditional, non-human forms/entities with language--that Shadow understands, translates, and even transcribes--is he, by extension, challenging the status quo and the social order by imagining a world where there's equity; not just social, but ecological, justice for all entities and life forms?

Perhaps one more thought experiment--embracing Chal-dust's spirit which compels us to "write [our hidden tran-

scripts and suppressed histories] down in history" and in which he pleads "I want to read in my own history, letters of John Craig that we never see"--may underscores Shadow's trajectory in (re)capturing the spirit of bygone times.

In "Donkey Days", Shadow offers:

*Back in the days of the pitch oil lamp  
When gals was darling and boys was scamps  
Stealing mangos in the dark  
The black cock crow and the bulldog bark  
Those were the days of the donkey cart/  
The donkey's story breaks my heart  
Donkey working all day long  
A Donkey's work was never done  
You think it's easy for a poor donkey  
To be transport for a family...  
He got to tote the green wood  
Then the big belly man wants to jump on his back...*

*Donkey had no rest time--no, no/till after sunset time  
As soon as he wake up/he had no time for make up  
Because fat boomsee man boy want to go for a ride...*

*The poor little donkey/Ah sorry for the donkey...  
Those were the days of the La Diabliesse  
The girl with the long, long dress...  
She would watch you in your eyes  
She would have you hypnotized...*

*Those were the days of the jumbie man  
They used to come back from down jumbie land  
Face to face with your cousin Joe...  
You run so fast you fall in the grass  
More work for the poor jackass...*

In this offering Shadow not only helps us remember aspects of our folkloric traditions but uses his lyrics to paint a picture of the country before 'modernity'--industrialization, not by invitation but, under duress--intruded and arrested our organic development.

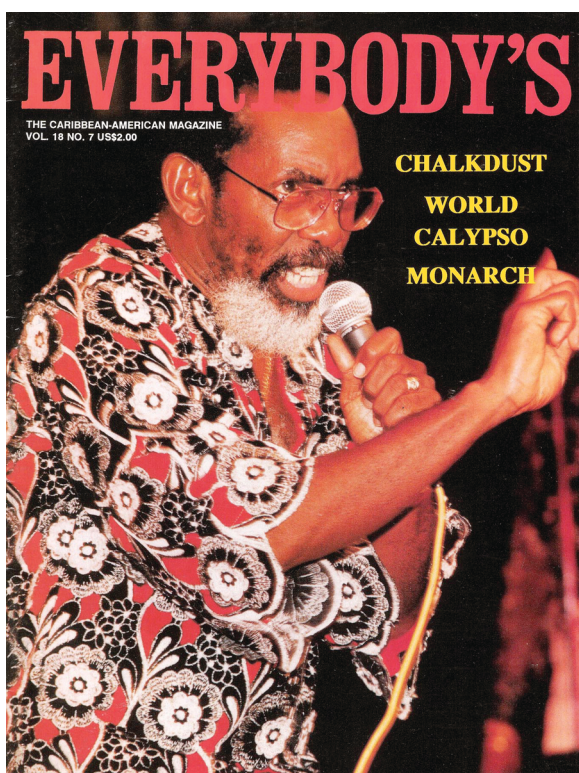
By collapsing so much into a song one gets the sense that Shadow isn't merely asking us to listen/read his lyrics but to engage them to (re)construct and (re)imagine images of our social past not just, as Richard 'Nappy' Mayers intones, to "Bring Back the Ole' Time Days" but to question the rate and pace that we may be moving away from our authentic self. In "Donkey Days," then, by emoting deep empathy for the plight of the donkey, our sage questions societal practices and conventions which look askance at animal abuse. As such, in the song Shadow leaves one wondering how close he was to echoing Animal Farm: "Four legs good, two legs bad."

*Next: Part III: Parables as Subversive Speech in Shadow's Work*  
.\*This section, Part II, draws heavily on an unpublished paper, "Shadow as Organic Philosopher", presented at the Trinidad and Tobago Folk Arts Institute's 'Symposium on Shadow' at Medgar Evers College, City University of New York, March 27, 2009.

# The After-Election Crowd

## *Citizens, Tribesmen and Idiots*

By Dr. Hollis Liverpool  
(Chalkdust)



Dr. Liverpool as Chalkdust, the calypsonian, has won the National Calypso Monarch of Trinidad & Tobago numerous times and the Calypso King of St. Thomas. He also won the World Calypso Monarch competition held in New York City in 1994 and 1996.

The Tuesday, after the August 10<sup>th</sup> general election in Trinidad & Tobago, my good friend, David Boothman, sent me an interesting video-clip about how "True-Democrats" in a democracy should behave after an election. The clip testified that in "Greece, the founder of democracy," people were expected to behave in a manner that showed respect for their elected representatives. The clip from Boothman was very apt, given the fact that many persons in Trinidad and Tobago seemed, by their many letters to the press, to be angry with our leaders' behavioural actions and sayings, reactions that demonstrated their loss or their winning of the national elections on August 10<sup>th</sup>. Based on what is happening in the U.S., many will say that a similar episode will occur after the presidential election on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The clip, however, made me think anew about Greece and its democratic postulations.

Democracy is generally associated with the Greeks and Romans in earlier times and with Europeans in the

Medieval Period. Truly, Greeks in the Golden Age (500-300 BCE) had many city-states: some aristocratic, some ruled by monarchs, and others by tyrants. Despite their differences, Athenians in Greece were able to fashion out of the different, interrelated entities a democratic order, whereby the authoritative power of the state was vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly, through a system of representation that involved elections periodically. History shows that under Cleisthenes in Athens around 508 BCE, the government was reformed and placed on a democratic footing with a Council and a Jury and these institutions were further fortified by the works of Pericles (461-429 BCE), Socrates (469-399) and his pupil Plato, as well as the outstanding philosopher of the era, Aristotle (384-322 BCE).

What all students and academics should know, however, is that Greece developed its institutions long after the civilizations of Africa, in particular, Ethiopia and Egypt, and the Near East, including the Sumerians in Mesopotamia between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Moreover, India with its early republics such as the Sanghas of Buddha and the Ganas (attendants of Shiva) practised democracy as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Some historians even consider the Buddhist Sangha as the world's oldest democracy. In fact, Diodorus, the Greek historian, two hundred years after Alexander the so-called Great invaded India, wrote that India possessed systems of democracy in like manner to Greece, then. Accordingly, when I heard Boothman's video clip, I told myself that Africans and Indians in Trinidad and Tobago should indeed be politically proud of their management process of holding elections here, since their forefathers were practitioners of democracy long before Europeans wrote history.

History shows that the Greeks in Athens, based on the philosophy and legal codes of the Egyptians, developed a "three-way Athenian Democratic Code" by which they were able to assess and describe the behaviour of all eligible electors within the state of Athens and even within the city-state of Sparta in Greece.

In terms of the "three-way" grouping, first, there were those persons who, like many in Trinidad and Tobago, refused to vote for representatives to the Council in Athens (The National Assembly); Greek society called them "Idiots." An idiot was thus a private person who kept to himself/herself and refused to be part of the Government. As time progressed, based on the Latin word "Idiota," Europeans placed a derogatory twist to the word and caused it to mean an "uneducated or ignorant" person.

The second group of persons in the Athenian Code consisted of those who, like many in Trinidad and Tobago



and in other multiracial nations, selected their representatives narrowly, on the basis of their tribe. Such persons in Athens cared not for what was being discussed in the Council nor the thought-provoking musings in the marketplace and were thus termed "Tribesmen." Athens was filled with them at the time. One could easily espy, then, Spartans, Persians, Corinthians, Macedonians, Helots, Minoans, and Phoenicians not only by their dress but by their colour of face. For elections to the Council, tribesmen voted for their own.

The third group in the Code was referred to as "Citizens." Citizens were educated persons who debated issues; who voted for representatives based on their knowledge of philosophy; who studied and practised agriculture; who respected God and family life; and who, in the long run, put Athens first in everything that they did. Of course, citizens were considered by the Council to be the most principled and highest echelons of the state, and all persons in the society, with encouragement from the state, aimed to join that educated group.

But Athens also had a secret fourth group in its Code. These were persons who the government felt were worse than the idiots, in that they undermined the society by trying to destroy its institutions. The leaders of Athens therefore "ostracized" them. To be "ostracized," according to the Greeks, was to be banned from society. Indeed, Themistocles, who, it was said, tried to disrupt the smooth

flow of the Council in Athens was "ostracized;" he was imprisoned for a period of five to ten years. What was his crime? He was found guilty of giving money to people in Athens for reasons not approved by the Council.

Thus, in Athens, there were three groups of persons and a secret one that few historians speak about: the ostracized. On the contrary, how well do I remember my friends in Barbados, historian Trevor Marshall and public servant Vincent "Buff" Burnett, telling me that Barbados has a name for the ostracized persons. "In Barbados," according to Trevor and Buff, "we name and ostracize them openly for their ignorance, lack of education, racism, fraud, greed, their undercover moves to undermine the society, and their idolising of money. In Barbados, we call them Half o' Idiots." Indeed, "go long you half o' idiot" is a favourite, demeaning curse word of Barbadians.

Trinidadians and Tobagonians, therefore, have a splendid, historical template whereby we the people can study the pitfalls and challenges of a society that aims to bring into focus the democracy of our ancestors. When, then, Henry Ford said: "History is more or less bunk," indeed, he can certainly be classified as a "Half o' idiot."

*Dr. Hollis Liverpool who resides in Trinidad & Tobago is a historian, author and lecturer. He earned his Ph.D. in history and ethnomusicology from the University of Michigan. He is also regarded as one of the greatest calypsonians of all times. He is known in the calypso business as "Chalkdust."*





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## OPINION

# On the PBA Endorsing Donald Trump

By Roger Toussaint

What was the rush behind Pat Lynch and the Police Benevolent Association's recent endorsement of Donald Trump?

Fact is that "defunding the police," as inartful and inelegant a slogan as it might be, is decidedly not the policy of the Biden/Harris ticket. In fact, they have both denounced that slogan. So, what's the excuse and why the rush?

Moreover, every New Yorker knows that Donald Trump is a con man, racist, misogynist, sexual abuser draft- and serial law-enforcement evader who is farthest from "law and order."

Clearly, in rushing to endorse Trump's candidacy, *the evidence was not scrutinized with the prying eye of a cop*. So what really lies behind the false narrative and urgency to which the PBA pretends?

It seems that the PBA's priorities are upside down. Defending the policing system championed by MAGA (Make America Great Again) even at its worst, is more important than police officers' wages, benefits and pensions? Important enough to endorse Trump and risk splitting your organization down the middle? Ignoring even the deadly impact of the Trump Administration's flawed response to the coronavirus pandemic on the sacrificed lives of so many of your own members? Not to mention insultingly ignoring the very New York communities that fund the NYPD and whom the NYPD is supposed to "serve and protect."

Apparently Pat Lynch, in his adoration of Donald Trump, did not get that memo.

Pat Lynch and the old guard of the PBA consider it more important to stand behind MAGA, which at its core argues that, unless cops are allowed to use chokeholds and knees on the necks of black and brown people of all ages and genders, or shoot down unarmed ones, chaos, mayhem and lawlessness will prevail. Even if they have to give mayhem a nudge or a big

The evidence was not scrutinized  
with the prying eye of a cop...

It seems that the PBA's priorities  
are upside down.

lift by, for instance, refusing to stop crime when they can, via police "strikes"—fraudulently invoking union activism for the benefit of old-guard racists who, understandably, support "White Power" Donald Trump and want to see that status quo preserved.

This is not about the individual Trump; it is about the system and behavior that Pat Lynch and the PBA leadership seem determined to defend.

This is a challenge to all NYPD officers of conscience and, of course also to its now-majority non-white officers. If there is any self-respect or sense of dignity there, the leadership of the PBA must be overthrown or the PBA must be replaced. Hitching his wagon to Donald Trump, Pat Lynch should go with him.

Finally, it must be said that as inelegantly as it might ring, "Defund the Police" captures the frustration of the massive failures of "police reform" over decades, and the decades of black and brown people of every age and gender crying out, "I can't breathe!" as life is taken from their bodies, with absolute impunity.

Roger Toussaint is a former president of Transport Workers Union Local 100. He led the last New York City Transit strike beginning on December 20, 2005.

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*Tropicalfete Voices. - Photo Sandy Gosine - InstaGlam Photography*

## In Spite Covid-19

# Tropicalfete Provides Cultural Programs



*Tropicalfete teaches the art of limbo dancing. - Photo Sandy Gosine - InstaGlam Photography*

The Covid-19 pandemic has not slowed down Tropicalfete, an organization dedicated to promoting Caribbean culture in New York City. Tropicalfete dubs itself “the official home for Caribbean Culture.” Throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many Caribbean organizations focused on helping others back home. Early organizations such as the British Jamaican Benevolent Association, Sons and Daughters of Barbados, the Grenada Mutual Association existed in Harlem. They focused on helping educational and charitable projects in their respective islands - the colonies. Today’s Caribbean organizations in the dias-





*Dancing on stilts is a colorful component of Caribbean-style carnivals. - Photo Sandy Gosine - InstaGlam Photography*

pora – such as in London, Toronto and Boston - focus on instilling cultural awareness in children especially of Caribbean background. Tropicalfete leads the way in this endeavor.

The task of spreading the joys of various facets of Caribbean culture is a challenging venture. In Brooklyn, NY, the untiring efforts of Tropicalfete's professional teaching artists who are masters of their craft are providing an excellent service. Tools Tropicalfete use to execute its programs include Google Classroom, Zoom, Classroom Dojo, Google Duo, music app, Google Meets, EZ-Texting and social media. Alton Aimable, Tropicalfete, president says, "We have always used technology to give us an edge but with the advent of the pandemic we are using those programs more intensely."

Young people are taught steel pan music, stilts, voices, piano, pottery, design, limbo, dance and theater. Tropicalfete has programs for adults and se-



*Tropicalfete Steel Pan Ensemble. - Photo Sandy Gosine - InstaGlam Photography*

nior citizens too. The programs are offered virtually due to Covid-19. They are educational, cultural and recreational. Tropicalfete is exploring fusing science, technology, engineering, and athletics (stem) and culture.

At a time when reading is on the decline due to videos, audios,

social media and 10-second soundbites, Tropicalfete encourages reading. It partners annually with Barnes and Noble to produce a reading program featuring Caribbean authors.

For additional information: <https://tropicalfete.com/programs>.



# KAMALA HARRIS

*In the Club of  
Alexander Hamilton  
Colin Powell  
Shirley Chisholm and  
Constance Baker-Motley*

By Herman Hall

*Senator Kamala Harris must be applauded for recognizing Shirley Chisholm, Constance Baker-Motley and other black women during her acceptance speech.*

As news spread like wildfire that Kamala Harris has become the first black woman to be on a U.S. presidential ticket, I said to myself, "she is now on a Caribbean-American or West Indian-American list consisting of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, General Colin Powell, the late Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and Judge Constance Baker Mottley."

For friends who were calling me on that history making afternoon of Tuesday, August 11, to get my reaction to the Biden selection, I did not tell them my deep feeling. I also did not tell them that in November 2019 when Trump still had a chance of being reelected; before Kamala Harris dropped out of the Democratic primary and before Biden committed to a woman as his running mate, I wrote that the most formidable presidential candidate in 2024 will be Kamala Harris. But Covid-19 accelerated. As a result, the content of the pending EVERYBODY'S editorial changed and the draft of the article was deleted.

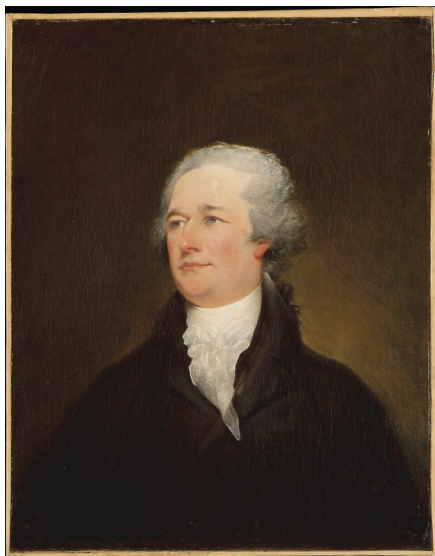
In other words, Biden choosing Harris was not shocking but still the formal announcement made me reflect on Hamilton, Chisholm, Baker-Motley and Powell. Hamilton co-created the constitution and Baker-Motley interpreted it; Chisholm and Powell were trailblazers.

Alexander Hamilton was a prime catalyst responsible for transforming the thirteen colonies into the United States of America. The contributions of Chisholm, Baker-Motley and Powell are helpful to Americans of today. If the Biden-Harris presidential ticket is successful, the policies of



Photo-Leonard McKenzie





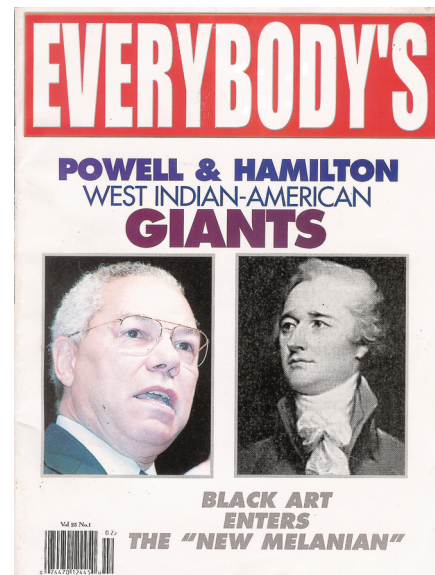
Nevis born Alexander Hamilton, a Founding Father of the USA and coauthor of the Federalist Papers, resting place is the Trinity Church yard in Lower Manhattan. Some of Hamilton's children were baptized at the Episcopal Church, 78 Broadway.

- Photo Metropolitan Museum of Art



On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, November 27, 1982, a relaxed Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm posed for this informal photograph. She placed a duster over her pajamas, did a slight makeup and Photographer Lloyd Patterson captured this image.

- Photo Lloyd Patterson



Retired General Colin Powell served as President George W. Bush Secretary of State. He became the first African American to hold this office.

their administration will help America of the future and a Biden-Harris administration will derail the suicidal path the Trump administration is bent on leading America down.

Alexander Hamilton lived in a different world when the African slave trade and slavery in the West Indies were providing the foundation for France, Spain, Holland, England, Portugal and Scotland becoming industrial powers and thus being able to finance their wars. Slavery was developing in colonial America too. Yes, Alexander Hamilton--a cofounder of the U.S., fought in the American War of Independence, became the first secretary of the treasury whose portrait graces the U.S. \$10 note, established the New York Post and Bank of New York--existed in a white world. Some may say that there is no connection between Hamilton and Caribbean-American leaders of today--the descendants of the enslaved--and that they lived in different centuries and in different societal settings.

That may be true, but the fact Hamilton was not born in the thirteen colonies and he was not born in Europe frequently overshadowed his image. Although Hamilton was white his political opponents including Thomas Jefferson were not embarrassed to hint to the citizenry of the newly minted U.S. that Hamilton was black. "Black Sam," his opponents described him. They never failed to remind the public that Hamilton's father had his wife, Hamilton's mother, arrested because he claimed she was a whore. Those were the days when women had no rights. She fled Nevis for St. Croix with her two boys after being abused by her drunken husband. But since she was still married

to him, he had her arrested for living with another man and in the eyes of 18<sup>th</sup> century laws she was a whore.

Think American politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is awful! Think again. It began with the birth of the U.S. The seeds of hatred, racism, propaganda and misinformation were not buried with the navel string.

During the bicentennial of the U.S. in 1976, American journalists focused on the background of the Founding Fathers. The revered Walter Cronkite, king of the nightly news, commented on Hamilton's "rich Scottish heritage." No national media of 1976 mentioned that the birthplace of Hamilton is Nevis.

Americans and most Caribbean people know of Hamilton as a founding father -- Hamilton, the Broadway musical -- but what is not known is, he also drafted a constitution for an independent Saint Domingue (Haiti). Although Hamilton's draft was not implemented, unlike some founding fathers, he was not against the formation of the new nation founded by formerly enslaved Haitians.

Kamala Harris is no longer a footnote in American history. If she becomes vice president of the U.S., she will be in the same conversation with others who held the highest offices in the nation and whose decisions shaped America and determined its future such as Judge Constance Baker Motley.

In her autobiography Judge Constance Baker Motley wrote, "Our house was like a halfway house for people coming from Nevis ... where my parents and Alexander Hamilton were born."

Since Judge Constance Baker Motley was not an elected politician for long--perhaps the reason she is not a



L to R: Mrs. Coretta Scott King, Rev. Martin Luther King and Judge Constance Baker Motley. She first met Martin Luther King, Jr., in July 1962, after successfully arguing that protesters had the right to demonstrate in Albany, Georgia. She also represented MLK when he was imprisoned.

- Photo credit: Library of Congress.

household name in America--she helped shape and reshaped the American landscape. As I reflected on Judge Constance Baker Motley when Biden selected Harris, I was not surprised when Senator Harris mentioned Judge Constance Baker Motley while accepting the nomination of vice-president of the U.S. (Page 28)

The 1954 United States Supreme Court landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declared unconstitutional state laws that created "separate but equal" public schools for white and black students. It was civil rights attorney Constance Baker Motley who drafted the brief for the NAACP legal counsel Thurgood Marshall to argue in the Supreme Court.

Attorney Constance Baker Motley was the first black woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. She won nine of her 10 cases before the court, with the tenth finally overturned in her favor. Her victories, which effectively changed the American landscape forever, included representing James Meredith when he desegregated the University of Mississippi and defending Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and his right to march in Albany, Georgia.

She reflected, "I was a part of a civil rights movement, involved in spectacular legal victories ... The Supreme Court decisions of 1954 through 1964 are exceptional in terms of their constitutional significance. In one case after the other, segregation was stricken as unconstitutional."

Although Constance Baker was born in Connecticut, she grew up West Indian and remained abreast of Saint Kitts-Nevis and Caribbean affairs. And this is perhaps a reason why Judge Constance Baker Motley was an early reader of this magazine. While this magazine has no contact with Senator Harris and she may not be aware of this publication, she follows the same thread as Constance Baker Motley and Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm by recognizing her Caribbean heritage.



The caption of this July 1988 photo in EVERYBODY'S read, "Giving the President all the facts. Will Lt. General Powell go back to the military after January 20, 1989 or will he, too, write a book on The Reagan White House?"

Photo - The White House

Wherever Shirley Chisholm is she may have looked down on August 11 and 19, 2020 and said with pride and joy, "I told you so."

At the 1972 Democratic National Convention, thirteen candidates were nominated for the presidency of the U.S., Shirley Chisholm placed 4<sup>th</sup> to Senator George McGovern. She got 152 votes; a remarkable achievement. No woman, and no black person, ever got that many votes in the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. Chisholm's appearance on stage with the other Democratic presidential candidates remains symbolic.

Shirley Chisholm was amazed by the enthusiasm of white women to her candidacy. This black woman who was born in the U.S. and raised in Barbados would motivate generations of women and blacks, including Rev. Jesse Jackson and later Barack Obama--who was still in elementary school when she contested--through her serious bid for the presidency.

As I witnessed President-elect Barack Hussein Obama take the Oath of Office on that historic day of January 21, 2008, I reminisced about the late Shirley Chisholm who did not live to see her symbolic run in 1972 fulfilled but she always said it was not in vain, that one day it will bear fruit.

On May 15, 1972, Governor George Wallace of Alabama was shot several times while campaigning in Laurel, Maryland. Not too many blacks shed tears considering Governor Wallace's slogan was "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" And, he was the same person who personally blocked the entrance of the University of Alabama to prevent the integration of the university. It was George Wallace too who, in March, 1965, ordered that the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery must not cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge which contributed to a young John Lewis almost being killed.





A few months after Lt. General Colin Powell became National Security Advisor, he granted Doreen Brown on behalf of EVERYBODY'S Magazine a lengthy interview.



L to R: Harry Van Arsdale Jr., president of New York City Central Labor Council AFL-CIO, honoree Peter Ottley, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and Dr. Lamuel Stanislaus at EVERYBODY'S Magazine Awards Dinner, Sheraton Hotel, 1982. Chisholm attended all the magazine dinner events during the 1980s.

— Photo Lloyd Patterson

Seven years later, the woman who had retained her Barbadian-West Indian accent shocked her community, blacks, her nation and the world. She visited a paralyzed George Wallace who was fighting for his life in a hospital.

About the encounter, Chisholm told this magazine, "Mr. Wallace was stunned when I walked into the hospital room and he looked at me and he said, 'Miss Shirley, what your people gonna say?'"

I said, 'Why shouldn't I visit you? Am I not a presidential candidate like the rest of the presidential candidates that have visited you?' And I'd never forget – and this is what caused him to breakdown and hold my hand for such a longtime. I said, 'you know, I don't want what happened to you ever happen to anybody. That has nothing to do with politics, Mr. Wallace; it has to do with my philosophy of life, my religious training and my beliefs. But I believe God put you on your back for a reason; I hope while you are recuperating you begin to really think, very seriously, about what you've been doing to other human beings who just do not have the same amount of melanin in their skin as you did.' I'll never forget the tears, the way that man cried in shame."

Senator Kamala Harris must be applauded for recognizing Shirley Chisholm, Judge Constance Baker Motley and other and other black women during her acceptance speech.

Like Senator Kamala Harris, General Colin Powell is proud of his Jamaican heritage. Powell, a Republican, while endorsing the Democrat ticket of Biden and Harris spoke of his immigrant parents and so did Kamala Harris. It is by a twist of fate Kamala became the offspring of a woman from India and a man from Jamaica. Her parents were destined to meet if one takes Caribbean history into consideration.

After slavery was abolished in the then British West Indies on August 1, 1834, the British brought Indians from

India to fill the labor shortage especially on its colonies of Trinidad (Trinidad & Tobago), British Guiana (Guyana) and Jamaica. Most indentured servants as the British called the Indians did not return to India. They interbred with the African population. Today many nationals in the English-speaking Caribbean have a mixture of African and Indian blood. Kamala Harris parents, Donald and Shyamala, could as well have met in Jamaica rather than in California.

The first African American or Caribbean-American to become national security advisor to a president of the U.S., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State was General Colin Powell. Although he declined to seek elective office including seeing the presidency of the U.S., Powell's contributions are helping shape today's America.

Senator Harris' father, Professor Donald Harris, was not amused when Harris made a witty statement about her Jamaican heritage and the tradition of pot smoking in Jamaica, "half my family is from Jamaica. Are you kidding me?"

Underscoring a generational divide her father responded, "My dear departed grandmothers (whose extraordinary legacy I described in a recent essay), as well as my deceased parents, must be turning in their grave right now to see their family's name, reputation and proud Jamaican identity being connected, in any way, jokingly or not with the fraudulent stereotype of a pot-smoking joy seeker and in the pursuit of identity politics."

General Powell when talking about his Caribbean heritage tells everyone that calypso is his favorite music and the Mighty Sparrow his favorite calypsonian and curried goat and rice is one of his beloved dishes. It is not surprising that Powell has attended Brooklyn's West Indian Carnival on Labor Day.



Judge Constant Baker Motley, the first African American woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court, the first to serve as a federal judge and first woman to serve as borough president in New York City, was proud of her Nevisian and Caribbean heritage. Her last private note to EVERYBODY'S Magazine was June, 1997.

Speaking of his parents and aunts, the National Security Advisor to President Ronald Reagan in an exclusive interview for this magazine conducted by Doreen Brown said "Jamaica was always referred to as home. It was never referred to as Jamaica. It was called "home" even though they were as loyal a group of Americans as you could have ... so I was raised to be a Jamaican, as well as an American."

The point is, Hamilton, Powell, Chisholm and Baker-Motley although they became powerful figures who shaped the U.S. were never reluctant to tell of their Caribbean heritage. Perhaps, beginning on January 20, 2021, people may say U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris is boastful of her Indian and West Indian heritage.

Based on the hierarchy of office, Harris will be head of the club of Alexander Hamilton, Colin Powell, Shirley Chisholm and Constance Baker-Motley.

Childhood memories alternate with scenes of revolution and defeat in this complex work from a promising new voice. - 5.0 out of 5 stars Great read!! - Kirkus Review

It will certainly appeal to anyone with a lively interest in Julien Fédon's revolution, wider Caribbean history or the realities of plantation life in the pre-independence era. Stephen Park, Soca News, London, UK.

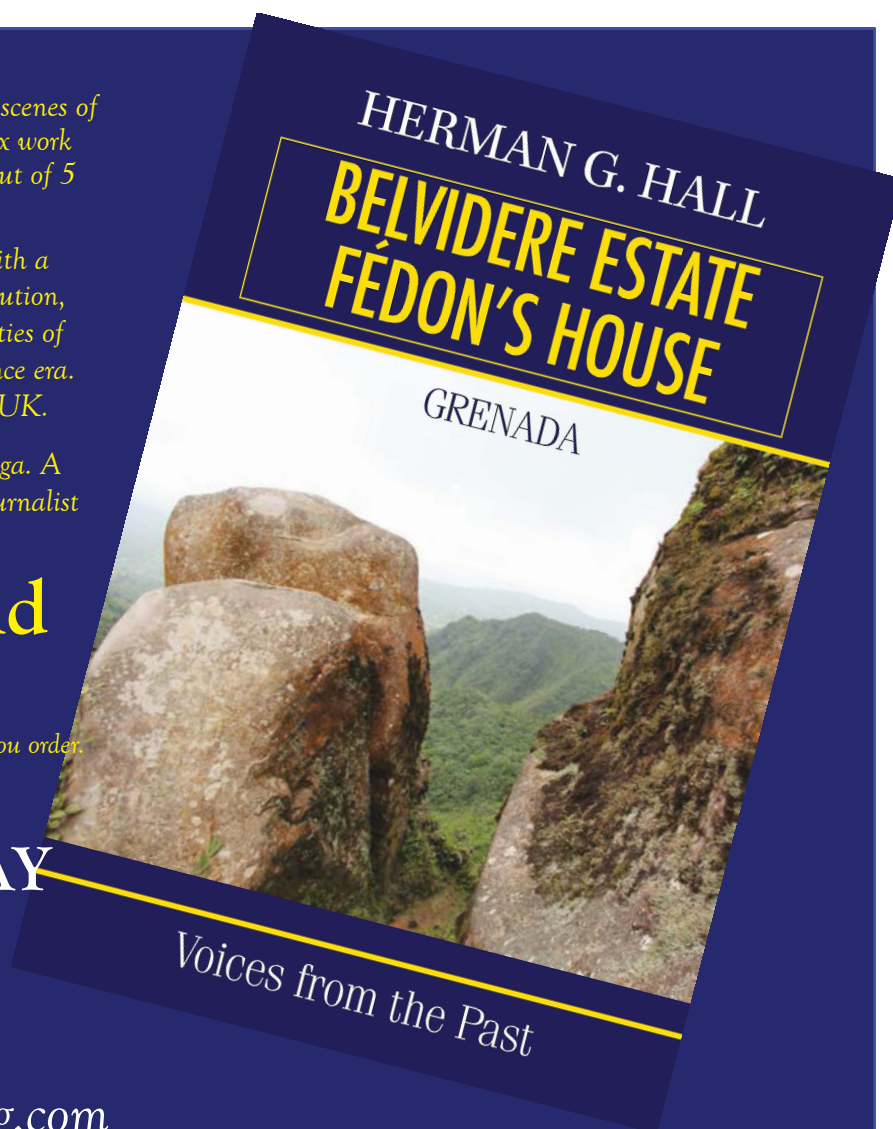
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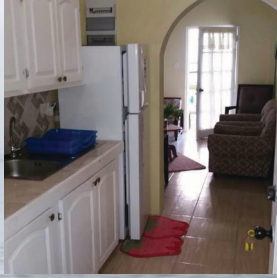
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## COMMENTARY

# KAMALA HARRIS

## An Antidote to Trump

By Martin P. Felix

In an interview leading up to her historic nomination at the 2020 Democratic National Convention to become the first Black woman and the first Asian American on a major-party ticket in the United States, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) made use of a powerful metaphor in hailing her father's home country. She said, Jamaica is "... a big country on a small island." Hers can be seen as a remixed version of the Jamaicanism "Wi likkle but wi tallawah", a common expression meaning that the people of this small Caribbean nation state are strong-willed, self-determined and ones who refuse to be restrained by the boundaries of smallness, the island's physical space.

And in her best-selling political memoir, *The Truths we Hold: An American Journey*, Kamala credits her Indian-born mother, Shyamala Gopalan (1938–2009), as a force of nature and the greatest source of inspiration in her life. She shares that an attribute gained from her mother, when seeking help with life's difficulties, was "[a]nd, what are you going to do about it?"

Whatever Kamala Harris turns out to be in her federal executive capacity, if elected in November, it is undoubtable that she is made of the finest cricketing stuff.

Biden's choice of Kamala Harris can be regarded as an inspired one. She is the perfect antidote to Donald J. Trump. The 45th President placed a lot of stake in riding an undercurrent of anti-immigration prejudice, the kind that tends to become fertile if harvested carefully and callously in times of economic crises.

In contrast, by all indications, Senator Harris' black and brown civil rights activist parents are sterling examples of immigrant successes, embodying the energizing power of the immigrant drive, which has historically fueled the American nation.

Immigrants from places the 45 President collectively and derisively dismissed with obscenities represent a shift in US demographics. It represents the rise to political prominence of a new wave of children of such immigrants, first and second-generation Americans, as an emerging political and cultural force. This reflects a mindset shift compared to their parents who were largely concerned with professional success and positioning their children to take advantage of their own perceptions of the American dream.

The growing prominence of immigrants of color as well as the increasing overall black and brown share of



*The then Democratic Party primary candidate, Kamala Harris, searching for support in Harlem, NY in 2019 with Rev. Al Sharpton. The event, held at the famous Sylvia's Restaurant, was covered by EVERYBODY'S photographer Leonard McKenzie.*

the US population have led to demographic projections that are sufficient to stroke dread in some nativistic Americans as well as the kind of xenophobic impulses that propelled Donald J. Trump's wall-surfing ascendancy to the White House in 2016.

What started off in his official campaign launch as awkward Mexico-phobic hooks, is culminating with hideous and uncultured references to the deadly COVID-19 pandemic as 'the Chinese virus'. And stoking the revival of birtherist insults (a la Obama) at a far more accomplished compatriot in Kamala Harris.

The president also consciously created a cloud over the 2020 Census by pushing for inclusion of a citizenship question, although the constitution makes no such provision. On the contrary, the US Census is for the purpose of counting everyone in the United States — citizens, noncitizen legal residents, as well as undocumented residents. Census results are particularly important in determining how many seats each state receives in the House of Representatives, and for population-based federal funding formulas. Creating confusion around the Census is widely seen as another White House-directed attempt at suppression of immigrant representation.

In an Axios interview in October 2019, President Donald Trump promised that he would try to limit birthright citizenship for children of undocumented immigrants and other foreign parents. Some legal scholars argue that he may well get the authority to limit birthright citizenship if elected a second term.

Other constitutionalists however stipulate that such limits would require an act of Congress or an amendment because of constitutional provisions on birthright citizenship. Nonetheless observers suggest the possibility that, if given a second term, through successful efforts of voter suppression or sheer political machination, Trump may be given further sway on the supreme and lower courts to carry out his much-touted anti-immigration 'reforms'. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other programs are likely to be the first casualties, while Trump-inspired anti-immigration legislations could very well be mainstreamed.

When Donald J. Harris immigrated from Jamaica in 1963 (one year after Jamaica's independence), the share of



immigrants in the American population was under 10 percent. Changes in immigration laws (particularly the 1965 Immigration Act, which amended the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952) abolished the quota system that gave preference to Northern European countries. The law allowed for changes in origin of immigrants and the country saw an influx of recipients from Asian, African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.

Subsequent to the law, immigrants from these countries would make up a larger proportion of immigrants than before. Most alarming to many demographic conservatives, recent statistical models indicate that whites will become a minority by 2045.

Some changes are already demographic bellwethers: Brookings Institution data show that 2020 will be the first time in American history that black and brown under 18 youth outnumbers whites. And according to PEW statistics every generation since the 1960s is less white, in terms of share of the overall population.

While there is little indication that immigrants will necessarily vote Biden-Harris primarily because of demographic, ethnic, gender, or racial factors, there is much exhilaration among certain sections of the first and second-generation Caribbean immigrant communities on the prospect of a Biden-Harris 46<sup>th</sup> presidency.

Similar sentiments are being polled as well in black and brown communities tapping expectations that Harris' immigrant, Indo-American, and African American heritage may, at the very least, usher in a new racial tone and civil discourse in the White House. There is also the promise of access to an administration that will supposedly lend an ear to centuries-old grievances (such as reparations, which Harris is on record pledging to at least have a hearing on), and give access to a set of constituencies made almost invisible during this current administration.

With a Caribbean-American population estimated to be well over 2.5 million, much attention is expected to be centered on Florida, a key swing state on the US political battle field, where recent presidential elections were decided by less than one percent.

The growing and varied Caribbean diaspora community in many areas of The Sunshine State, with its fairly large pockets of active and potential voters of African- and Indo-Caribbean ancestry could play a pivotal role in this swing state where presidential elections are often decided by only a few thousand votes, are expected to be heavily canvassed. And according to Politico [August 15, 2020], in Broward County, the International Cricket Council has sanctioned a new Fort Lauderdale stadium, attesting to the strength of the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent communities there.

Jamaican-born Dale Holness was recently elected mayor of Broward, the state's second-most populous municipality. Little wonder that the independent, Biden-backing super PACs such as Unite the Country strategizing in such constituencies to target the Black Caribbean voters. Even the GOP's huge war chest are likely to canvas in this area, making the Caribbean and other brown communities strategic players in the upcoming election.

Harris' background as an alumnae of a Historically Black College as well as her membership in Alpha Kappa

*Most politicians, including Senator Kamala Harris, dine at Sylvia's when seeking public office. — Photo Leonard McKenzie*



Alpha Sorority Inc., the historically Black female sorority, cements her deeply within the African American professional women's tradition and culture.

Potential black women voters may indicate yet another Harris draw. The organizational track record of black women is well-established. And many political observers and strategists alike are hoping that this women-led energy can be translated into voter mobilization for the Biden-Harris presidential candidacy.

Such expectations are emboldened by the credible claims that Black women have been at the forefront in initiating and organizing the Black Lives Movement (BLM) and the social flowering of social movements that have hit the streets in greater force since the George Floyd police killing. There is also the decades-long tradition of black women leading many single households impacted by the prison industrial complex and other social and racial violence, chronicled by scholars such as Angela Davis (who critically endorses Biden Harris).

Beyond the scope of identity politics, there is a lot at stake in the upcoming presidential elections. To pick perhaps the most salient examples, more than a quarter of the country's 37 million African Americans still live in poverty. As the recent deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, and most recently in Wisconsin, the police shooting of Jacob Blake (an unarmed Black man shot in the back multiple times as he entered his vehicle as his children watched from inside), police killings of unarmed African American remain a seemingly intractable problem around the country. In addition, there is the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis, hitting the African American, Native American, and immigrant communities hardest. Underlying constellation of health problems that have historically plagued black and brown communities for decades are well recognized to be a causal factor in these high COVID rates.

Will the Biden-Harris presidency be able to deliver on the promises of salvation to black, brown and immigrant communities? Are the forces around the Biden-Harris ticket sufficient to stop the Trump-led proto-fascist movement from further consolidating its power in and around the White House? Will the immigrant communities around the country show their hidden potential as a 'force of nature' in November? A constellation of rights, including immigrant's rights, are threatened by the possible re-election of Donald J. Trump in November. To paraphrase Kamala Harris' civil rights activist mom, 'what can we do about it?' Indeed, as Jimmy Cliff counsels us, only "Time Will Tell [how we measure up to this defining moment in US history]".

*Martin P. Felix is an educator and artist. He is co-editor of Big Drum Nation, an on-line Caribbean Journal of arts and letters. Felix lives with his family in Brooklyn, New York.*



## COMMENTARY

# A Peek at Kamala Harris

by Jeff Hercules

In her book, *The Truths We Hold*, published last year, one of the things Kamala Harris has readers do before starting the journey into her life is to pronounce her first name correctly. She provides directions.

I thought I had it nailed and needed no instructions.

From anybody.

However, an Internet search on it returned hits. I was curious and tried one. It didn't sound like the pronunciation I had been using. But once through the process the word "directions" seemed overkill.

I will go where Kamala does not and suggest the simplicity of her instructions is a metaphor of sorts on her life.

But only once you are exploring it and you pause to take stock of the various strands. You then have to then ask; how did or does she pull it all together.

Might I would point out she is doing it in a country that all but demands a pigeon-hole for anyone who calls this land home. Regardless of if they were born or migrated here.

I hope I can point out a few places where that ease of hers comes into play.

Those directions?

Comma-la.

She elaborates: think "Comma" and add "la".

If that's too simple go ahead and obsess on which syllable gets the accent. Or, listen to Kamala say Kamala.

And remember, do not make the hard 'C' into a harder 'K'. It's Comma-la not Kamla.

Joe Biden named his former debate opponent, (whose name means "lotus flower" in Sanskrit), as his running mate, the highlight of the debates had been when she confronted him on race.

With the country's inability or unwillingness to deal with this issue, (latest evidence being the George Floyd aftermath), continued confrontations are guaranteed.

In Kamala's case it worked. She prefaced what the New York Times called, "her attack on him" by first letting him know she didn't think he was a racist but that his positions of years gone by still perturbed her. She personalized her comments when she highlighted to him that she was one of the little girls bused to integrate her school.

Interest in her shot up but, by the end of the year she had dropped out of the race.

In fairness, the description I attributed to the NY



*The 2020 Democratic Party presidential ticket. L to R: Former Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Presidential nominee Joe Biden, Senator Kamala Harris and her beau Douglass Emhoff*

Times while verbatim, could have been the words of Biden's family which apparently did not like Kamala's approach.

Now that she's on the ticket, the spotlight is on this west coast politician who, although a Senator, may not be widely known despite moments in the Senate where she excelled.

The process of identifying who she is is well underway with the mandatory first pieces already in place. The finished product will be party-specific.

Born in 1964, Kamala Devi Harris is the American daughter of two immigrants. Her father, Donald Harris, is from Jamaica. He is black. Her mother, Shyamala Gopalan was from the other side of the world, India.

Being from a Caribbean island does not automatically mean "black". Look at their ethnic make-up. Don't see it? It's there. Check those that promote their multi-ethnicity. But that is a mere technicality as this is the USA.

This makes Kamala and her sister Indian-Americans according to those who decide such things. (sorry Donald).

Wait.

"Indian-American" refers to their heritage. Her parents would have addressed that at home when their daughters asked why they were different. Visits to India and Jamaica could have muddled the answer. So, what about ethnicity? The girls were African Americans. It was up to their mother to raise them as such.

In the Caribbean, the combination of a black parent and an Indian parent produces a dougla. But "dougla-American"? Too generic for a pigeon-hole.



*If that's too simple go ahead and obsess on which syllable gets the accent. Or, listen to Kamala say Kamala.*

*And remember, do not make the hard 'C' into a harder 'K'. It's Comma-la not Kamla*

I have to ask this even if it takes pigeon-holing to another level: What if Shyamala had been born in Jamaica? The country births its own Indians.

Even as she was raising her dougla girls to be proud black women, Shyamala was instilling in them something profound in its simplicity. Kamala shares it when she says she knows who she is and tells it to those struggling to define her. She is an American. Once she has told them it's up to them to wrap their heads around the concept.

Let's face it though.

Kamala and Maya are Americans first. Born and bred. I am sure their loyalties are not split with any other country. As lagniappe, add their political astuteness. The mixture is an inherent ability to use their pigeon hole to their advantage.

As an immigrant. I keep hoping for new options when I am asked to pigeon-hole myself on documents.

One of Kamala's benefits in having immigrant parents—this applies to all first-generation Americans raised by such parents—is she and her sister had access to the best of both worlds. Actually, three worlds for them given the cultural divide between their parents' homelands. It's the type of marriage that can produce something special — new Americans with old values.

But her parents married young. According to her, their involvement in civil rights crusades is what linked them. The marriage that followed did not last. First came a separation then divorce. A custody battle was part of the mix but I couldn't determine if it was the chicken or the egg in relation to the divorce. Donald does not make it clear for those who are slow to determine things.

He and Shyamala reached a low to where they could not stand each other. That's my interpretation when Kamala said they no longer spoke. He stayed in his daughters' lives though.

Shyamala, daughters in tow, relocated to Montreal for a research job she had accepted. On trips home the girls could stay at their father's. All three returned to the USA after Kamala graduated high school in 1981. She enrolled in Howard University.

Whether tensions eased between her divorced parents is unclear but Donald does pose in family pictures. In one he is with Kamala and Maya's daughter. Another shows him enjoying his infant great grand-daughter. To help establish a time-line, Shyamala died in 2009.

Kamala's father was born in Jamaica.

That's all it took for the Jamaican diaspora to erupt into fits of euphoria. And that's fine. But to say it's the Caribbean diaspora is pushing political correctness. If Biden had selected Susan Rice the roar would have been as deafening. Susan's Jamaican roots stop at her grandparents making her a second generation American. Kamala is first in both senses of the word. That said, the adulation of Jamaicans for Kamala is not unanimous. One theme of dissenters revolves around her work as California's Attorney General.

Detractors in and beyond Jamaica point to what they see as her incarcerating too many minorities. Kamala talks about that work and her prior stint as San Francisco's District Attorney. She is unapologetic.

In fact, she argues a prosecutor carries enormous power and responsibility to impact people's lives, especially given the inequities in the judicial system when minorities are involved.

In her book, she describes an incident when she was an intern. A woman had been caught up in a police sweep. All the evidence pointed to her being in the wrong place. Kamala was determined to get the woman released so she would not spend the weekend in jail. It was Friday and she feared the time away from home and family, if she had one, could ruin the woman's life. As an intern, Kamala's only power was persuasion. She successfully pleaded for help and the woman was released. For Kamala it was a watershed moment in her career.

The experience stayed with her but went back to principles infused into her by her parents: do the right thing for others. Self-enrichment is not an option.

Complexity simplified.

But I want to pause and ask; is the maxim fair in an increasingly complex and convoluted world? Is it even realistic?

While polls suggest the majority of voters do not make presidential choices based on running mates, one cannot ignore the current world. Truth and facts are old school. What you can get people to believe is a symbol of power.

Do you believe Kamala Harris is ineligible to run for vice president since her parents were not Americans?

Do you believe she called Joe Biden a racist when she confronted him in that memorable debate?

Is he weak for letting her get away with that and therefore he is ineligible to be president?

Simple enough questions.

Voters' answers will determine if they have read Kamala's book. Will they have truth in their hands.

*Jeff Hercules is still plugging away at his writing although the plugs have slowed, but he continues undaunted. His website is still [www.jeffhercules.com](http://www.jeffhercules.com) and can be reached at: [herculej@yahoo.com](mailto:herculej@yahoo.com)*

# Senator Kamala Harris

## *Acceptance Speech Democratic Vice-Presidential Nomination*



Senator Kamala Harris, former California attorney general, accepting the vice-presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Wednesday, August 19, 2020. Photo Chicago Sun-Times

### ***Greetings America.***

*It is truly an honor to be speaking with you.*

*That I am here tonight is a testament to the dedication of generations before me. Women and men who believed so fiercely in the promise of equality, liberty, and justice for all.*

*This week marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment. And we celebrate the women who fought for that right.*

*Yet so many of the Black women who helped secure that victory were still prohibited from voting, long after its ratification.*

*But they were undeterred.*

*Without fanfare or recognition, they organized, testified, rallied, marched, and fought – not just for their vote, but for a*

*seat at the table. These women and the generations that followed worked to make democracy and opportunity real in the lives of all of us who followed.*

*They paved the way for the trailblazing leadership of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.*

*And these women inspired us to pick up the torch, and fight on.*

*Women like Mary Church Terrell and Mary McCleod Bethune. Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash. Constance Baker Motley and Shirley Chisholm.*

*We're not often taught their stories. But as Americans, we all stand on their shoulders.*

*There's another woman, whose name isn't known, whose story isn't shared. Another woman whose shoulders I stand on. And that's my mother – Shyamala Gopalan Harris.*



*She came here from India at age 19 to pursue her dream of curing cancer. At the University of California Berkeley, she met my father, Donald Harris – who had come from Jamaica to study economics.*

*They fell in love in that most American way – while marching together for justice in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.*

*In the streets of Oakland and Berkeley, I got a stroller's-eye view of people getting into what the great John Lewis called "good trouble."*

*I was 5, my parents split and my mother raised us mostly on her own. Like so many mothers, she worked around the clock to make it work – packing lunches before we woke up – and paying bills after we went to bed. Helping us with homework at the kitchen table – and shuttling us to church for choir practice.*

*She made it look easy, though I know it never was.*

*My mother instilled in my sister, Maya, and me the values that would chart the course of our lives.*

*She raised us to be proud, strong Black women. And she raised us to know and be proud of our Indian heritage.*

*She taught us to put family first – the family you're born into and the family you choose.*

*Family, is my husband Doug, who I met on a blind date set up by my best friend. Family is our beautiful children, Cole and Ella, who as you just heard, call me Momala. Family is my sister. Family is my best friend, my nieces and my godchildren. Family is my uncles, my aunts and my chithis. Family is Mrs. Shelton – my second mother who lived two doors down and helped raise me. Family is my beloved Alpha Kappa Alpha ... our Divine 9 ... and my H.B.C.U. brothers and sisters. Family is the friends I turned to when my mother – the most important person in my life – passed away from cancer.*

*And even as she taught us to keep our family at the center of our world, she also pushed us to see a world beyond ourselves.*

*She taught us to be conscious and compassionate about the struggles of all people. To believe public service is a noble cause and the fight for justice is a shared responsibility.*

*That led me to become a lawyer, a district attorney, attorney general and a United States Senator.*

*And at every step of the way, I've been guided by the words I spoke from the first time I stood in a courtroom: Kamala Harris, for the people.*

*I've fought for children, and survivors of sexual assault. I've fought against transnational gangs. I took on the biggest banks, and helped take down one of the biggest for-profit colleges.*

*I know a predator when I see one.*

*My mother taught me that service to others gives life purpose and meaning. And oh, how I wish she were here tonight but I know she's looking down on me from above. I keep think-*

*ing about that 25-year-old Indian woman – all of five feet tall – who gave birth to me at Kaiser Hospital in Oakland, California.*

*On that day, she probably could have never imagined that I would be standing before you now speaking these words: I accept your nomination for vice president of the United States of America.*

*I do so, committed to the values she taught me. To the Word that teaches me to walk by faith, and not by sight. And to a vision passed on through generations of Americans – one that Joe Biden shares. A vision of our nation as a Beloved Community – where all are welcome, no matter what we look like, where we come from, or who we love.*

*A country where we may not agree on every detail, but we are united by the fundamental belief that every human being is of infinite worth, deserving of compassion, dignity and respect.*

*A country where we look out for one another, where we rise and fall as one, where we face our challenges, and celebrate our triumphs – together.*

*Today...that country feels distant.*

*Donald Trump's failure of leadership has cost lives and livelihoods.*

*If you're a parent struggling with your child's remote learning, or you're a teacher struggling on the other side of that screen, you know that what we're doing right now isn't working.*

*And we are a nation that's grieving. Grieving the loss of life, the loss of jobs, the loss of opportunities, the loss of normalcy. And yes, the loss of certainty.*

*And while this virus touches us all, let's be honest, it is not an equal opportunity offender. Black, Latino and Indigenous people are suffering and dying disproportionately.*

*This is not a coincidence. It is the effect of structural racism.*

*Of inequities in education and technology, health care and housing, job security and transportation.*

*The injustice in reproductive and maternal health care. In the excessive use of force by police. And in our broader criminal justice system.*

*This virus has no eyes, and yet it knows exactly how we see each other – and how we treat each other.*

*And let's be clear – there is no vaccine for racism. We've gotta do the work.*

*For George Floyd. For Breonna Taylor. For the lives of too many others to name. For our children. For all of us.*

*We've gotta do the work to fulfill that promise of equal justice under law. Because, none of us are free...until all of us are free...*

*We're at an inflection point.*

*The constant chaos leaves us adrift. The incompetence makes us feel afraid. The callousness makes us feel alone.*

*It's a lot.*

*And here's the thing: We can do better and deserve so much more.*

*We must elect a president who will bring something different, something better, and do the important work. A president who will bring all of us together – Black, White, Latino, Asian, Indigenous – to achieve the future we collectively want.*

*We must elect Joe Biden.*

*I knew Joe as Vice President. I knew Joe on the campaign trail. But I first got to know Joe as the father of my friend.*

*Joe's son, Beau, and I served as Attorneys General of our states, Delaware and California. During the Great Recession, we spoke on the phone nearly every day, working together to win back billions of dollars for homeowners from the big banks that foreclosed on people's homes.*

*And Beau and I would talk about his family.*

*How, as a single father, Joe would spend 4 hours every day riding the train back and forth from Wilmington to Washington. Beau and Hunter got to have breakfast every morning with their dad. They went to sleep every night with the sound of his voice reading bedtime stories. And while they endured an unspeakable loss, these two little boys Always knew that they were deeply, unconditionally loved.*

*And what also moved me about Joe is the work he did, as he went back and forth. This is the leader who wrote the Violence Against Women Act – and enacted the Assault Weapons Ban. Who, as Vice President, implemented The Recovery Act, which brought our country back from The Great Recession. He championed The Affordable Care Act, protecting millions of Americans with pre-existing conditions. Who spent decades promoting American values and interests around the world, standing up with our allies and standing up to our adversaries.*

*Right now, we have a president who turns our tragedies into political weapons.*

*Joe will be a president who turns our challenges into purpose.*

*Joe will bring us together to build an economy that doesn't leave anyone behind. Where a good-paying job is the floor, not the ceiling.*

*Joe will bring us together to end this pandemic and make sure that we are prepared for the next one.*

*Joe will bring us together to squarely face and dismantle racial injustice, furthering the work of generations.*

*Joe and I believe that we can build that Beloved Community, one that is strong and decent, just and kind. One in which we all can see ourselves.*

*That's the vision that our parents and grandparents fought for. The vision that made my own life possible. The vision that makes the American promise – for all its complexities and imperfections – a promise worth fighting for.*

*Make no mistake, the road ahead will not be not easy. We will stumble. We may fall short. But I pledge to you that we will act boldly and deal with our challenges honestly. We will speak truths. And we will act with the same faith in you that we ask you to place in us.*

*We believe that our country – all of us, will stand together for a better future. We already are.*

*We see it in the doctors, the nurses, the home health care workers and the frontline workers who are risking their lives to save people they've never met.*

*We see it in the teachers and truck drivers, the factory workers and farmers, the postal workers and the Poll workers, all putting their own safety on the line to help us get through this pandemic.*

*And we see it in so many of you who are working, not just to get us through our current crises, but to somewhere better.*

*There's something happening, all across the country.*

*It's not about Joe or me.*

*It's about you.*

*It's about us. People of all ages and colors and creeds who are, yes, taking to the streets, and also persuading our family members, rallying our friends, organizing our neighbors, and getting out the vote.*

*And we've shown that, when we vote, we expand access to health care, expand access to the ballot box, and ensure that more working families can make a decent living.*

*I'm so inspired by a new generation of leadership. You are pushing us to realize the ideals of our nation, pushing us to live the values we share: decency and fairness, justice and love.*

*You are the patriots who remind us that to love our country is to fight for the ideals of our country.*

*In this election, we have a chance to change the course of history. We're all in this fight.*

*You, me and Joe – together.*

*What an awesome responsibility. What an awesome privilege.*

*So, let's fight with conviction. Let's fight with hope. Let's fight with confidence in ourselves, and a commitment to each other. To the America we know is possible. The America, we love.*

*Years from now, this moment will have passed. And our children and our grandchildren will look in our eyes and ask us: Where were you when the stakes were so high?*

*They will ask us, what was it like?*

*And we will tell them. We will tell them, not just how we felt.*

*We will tell them what we did.*

*Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.*





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