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POV: Sisterhood for the Win

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POV: Sisterhood for the Win

BU LAW scholar knows racist and sexist attacks await Kamala Harris, but vows, “she will not struggle alone”

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By [Erika George](#)

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When Vice President Kamala Harris accepted President Joe Biden’s endorsement on Sunday to replace him on the Democratic ticket and to run for the party’s nomination, she emphasized her intention to “earn and win” support for her candidacy. Historically, earning widespread support has proved to be a challenge for women candidates seeking the highest political offices in a country—with a [2023 Pew study](#) finding that women served as government heads in just 13 of the 193 member states of the United Nations, and that fewer than one-third of UN countries have ever had a woman leader.

And, yet, witnessing a multiracial daughter of immigrants withstand the intense scrutiny of a 24-7 news cycle—with the support of a multicultural, multiracial, intergenerational coalition of people who are choosing to come together—inspires me to believe that we can overcome our country’s difficult past and

prepare for a different, more inclusive future.

It won't be easy.

Women are underrepresented at all levels of political decision-making worldwide and reaching gender equality in the highest positions of power will take over 100 years, according to [UN Women](#). Yet, as I watched how rapidly endorsements and donations to support the vice president's candidacy poured in from across the country, I found myself feeling grateful that she decided to take on the challenge—and increasingly optimistic about her chances to make history.

I met Vice President Harris for the first time at a small event in Utah in June, along with members of our sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha. Service and sisterhood have been central commitments of our sorority since it was founded by Black women at Howard University in 1908. She warmly welcomed us as her sisters, just as she did a few weeks later at our national meeting in Texas, when she said in her [opening remarks](#), “Oh, my heart is full.”

Her continued commitment to public service was also clear. The words to our sorority's song speak of moving through years of struggle to capture a vision of fairness. When I cast my first ballot as a young voter while living in Chicago, I knew my right to do so was won because others before me struggled to secure my voting rights. In 1908, against improbable odds, founding members of our sisterhood envisioned women winning greater laurels and taking on greater tasks in the world. Now, one of us stands poised to win the honor of serving our country in its highest elected office.

I am encouraged by her courage. I know she will not struggle alone. Within hours of her announcement, I received multiple invitations from different sorority sisters inviting me to join a

Zoom call with a coalition of Black women leaders from across the country who show up and support one another. The call exceeded 45,000 participants.

Women everywhere continue to face obstacles in their efforts to earn respect for their accomplishments. Despite their qualifications, women—and especially women of color—too often are deemed unqualified or presumed incompetent. Black women do not enjoy the benefit of the doubt, and instead are held to an even higher, maybe impossible, standard. Their talents are doubted, and their achievements diminished.

Vice President Harris has convinced me, along with the many people who have endorsed her and donated to her campaign, that she is ready. It could be that she is on her way to earn the widespread support that has been so elusive, yet so deserving, for women candidates historically.

To be sure, I expect her candidacy will be met with racist, sexist, and nativist rhetoric. When personal attacks replace policy analysis, we all lose. A study of the impacts of sexualized disinformation campaigns against women in public life during the 2020 election cycle found online abuse to be intersectional, combining sexist and racist tropes, compounding risks for women of color. It will hurt me to see a member of my sisterhood, and someone so many people may identify with, subjected to hateful speech and harmful stereotypes.



I believe we can—and we must—become a country that is ready for women to occupy the highest levels of political leadership.

Erika George



I believe we can—and we must—become a country that is ready for women to occupy the highest levels of political leadership. It is important to continue to question our biases and challenge ourselves to do better. The Harris campaign will mean that more women—and, specifically, women of color, who have historically been underrepresented in high political offices—will envision aspiring to higher levels of leadership and participation in public affairs and a range of different areas.

There is growing evidence that the role played by women’s leadership in political decision-making processes is positive, can improve outcomes, and is more likely to increase collaboration across party affiliations, even in contested political contexts, by promoting issues of gender equality. The candidacy of Vice President Harris will invite more people to imagine that a different world is achievable—one with more possibilities for more people from more diverse backgrounds. Our country’s greatness lies in its diversity. This moment presents us with a powerful opportunity to embrace it.

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