

# Kamala Harris



Kamala Devi Harris is a politician and an **attorney** who could make history in 2021 by becoming the first woman, the first Black person and the first South Asian-American person to be the vice-president of the United States of America.

## Childhood

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1964, Kamala was born in Oakland, California. Her mother, Shyamala Gopalan, had moved to the USA from India so that she could continue to study biology at university. Her father, Donald Harris, moved to the USA from Jamaica and he is a university **economics** professor. Shyamala and Donald divorced when Kamala was seven years old; from this point, Kamala and her younger sister Maya would spend weekdays with their mother and weekends with their father.

## Education

As Shyamala accepted a research and teaching position at the Jewish General Hospital in Quebec, Kamala and Maya moved with her to Canada when Kamala was 12 years old. This meant that Kamala and Maya attended a French-speaking primary school (Notre-Dame-des-Neiges) and then the English-speaking Westmount High School.

After graduating from Westmount High School in 1981, Kamala returned to the USA, attending Howard University in Washington DC to study political science and economics. While studying at Howard University, Kamala volunteered to sort the mail at the office of a Californian **senator**. She also ran the meetings of the university's economics society and led the debate team.

After graduating in 1986, Kamala returned to California to attend law school at the University of California. While studying, she served as the president of the university's Black Law Students Association group. In 1989, Kamala was awarded her Juris Doctor – a professional degree that is needed if someone wants to practise law.

Career

After graduating, Kamala was hired as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County, California, meaning that she became responsible for ensuring that the law was applied fairly if someone had committed a crime. Kamala was passionate about making sure that young people who were accused of crimes were treated fairly and she began a programme that gave offenders opportunities to achieve qualifications and find a job.

In 2010, Kamala was elected as the first woman, the first Black person and the first South Asian person to serve as California's Attorney General. This meant that she was the main person in charge of making sure that the laws of California were upheld. As part of this role, Kamala endeavoured to make sure that all people in California were protected: she defended California's climate change law, she protected affordable healthcare for residents and she helped to secure marriage equality for all Californians.

After this, Kamala was elected as a member of the US Senate (there are only 100 senators at any one time and Kamala was elected to represent California in 2016). In this role, Kamala worked hard to promote equality for all people – she introduced laws to raise the minimum wage and she defended the legal rights of refugees and immigrants.

Becoming Vice-President

In 2019, Kamala announced the intention to become the president of the United States of America and many people supported her, including former president Barack Obama. However, Kamala and her team did not have the funds to see the campaign through to the end. Instead, Kamala supported Joe Biden in his campaign and became his 'running mate'. This means that, if Joe becomes president of the USA, Kamala will be the vice-president. Joe Biden is currently the projected winner of the presidential election. Any vote count disputes should be resolved by 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020. The US Congress will count the electoral votes on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and the president-elect and vice-president-elect will be sworn into office on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## Glossary

<b>attorney:</b>	A lawyer who works in court to help people who are on trial.
<b>economics:</b>	The study of how people choose to spend their money on goods and services.
<b>senator:</b>	A person who is a member of the US Senate and passes laws for their country or state.

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# Questions

1. Who are Kamala's parents? Tick **two**.

- Maya
- Donald
- Joe
- Shyamala

2. Draw **four** lines and match each year to what happened in that year.

1981	She attained her Juris Doctor.
1989	She was elected as a member of the US Senate.
2010	She graduated from Westmount High School.
2016	She was elected as California's Attorney General.

3. Find and copy one word which shows that Kamala was not paid for sorting the mail.

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4. Which significant event in Kamala's life happened when she was 12 years old?

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5. ... to study political science and economics.

What is **economics**?

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6. Comment on how Kamala's life might change in 2021.

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7. Summarise Kamala's impact while she was a member of the US Senate in 20 words or fewer.

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8. 'Kamala cares for other people.'

Explain how the information in the **Career** section of the text proves that this is true.

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9. What additional information would you have liked to see in this text?

Give a suitable sub-heading that it could have been found under.

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