

# Kamala Harris: The Democratic Nominee [B2]

Questa californiana di origini indiane e giamaicane aspira a diventare la prima donna presidente degli Stati Uniti. Approfondiamo la carriera e la personalità dell'ex procuratrice.

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Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for president of the United States, represents America's cultural [melting pot](#) in a way that no previous candidate has. Vice-president to Joe Biden since 2021, Harris' moment came following his announcement that he would not [be seeking](#) a second term. In that first [whirlwind](#) week, just four months from election day, Harris achieved an all-time record of \$81million of [funding](#) in any 24-hour period. Biden's [endorsement](#) of Harris was quickly followed by that of Hillary and Bill Clinton and Barack and Michelle Obama, dramatically [reshaping](#) an election in which many US voters were worried about the options. With Biden approaching eighty-two, and Trump seventy-eight, it seemed time for a new generation [to step in](#) and bring unity

## LOTUS FOR POTUS

Born on 20 October 1964 in Oakland, California, Kamala and her younger sister Maya were raised by their single mother, Shyamala Gopalan, an Indian immigrant. Her father is Jamaican-American. Her mother chose her daughter's names to honour their Indian roots: Kamala means 'lotus' and is another name for the Hindu goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. Kamala studied political science and economics at Howard University, a historically Black research university in Washington, D.C. She then earned a law degree from Hastings College in Nebraska. She is very well-connected: her family includes members notable in politics and academia. However, her family [mistrusted](#) lawyers, she later admitted, and she had to convince them that her plan was to reform the legal system "from the inside."

## TOO TOUGH, OR NOT ENOUGH

Harris was attorney general of California from 2011 to 2017 and was elected to the US Senate in 2016. During her 2020 presidential campaign, her record [came under scrutiny](#) both by progressive activists and by [law enforcement](#) advocates, [the latter](#) questioning her position against the death penalty. While she [dropped out](#) of the race, Biden was sufficiently impressed with her as [to appoint](#) her vice president in 2021. Harris became the first Black woman and first Asian American to serve in the role.

## COMPLEX LEGACY

Harris holds liberal priorities and has [pledged to address](#) gun violence and promote workers [unions](#). She is committed to reproductive rights, an issue that has divided America since the US Supreme Court, with its three Trump-appointed justices, [removed](#) a nationwide right to abortion in 2022. Harris [builds on](#) Biden's legacy: his support for Ukraine in its war against Russia, and legislation he brought in to combat the climate crisis and expand healthcare access. But she has also inherited deeply divisive policies: Biden's administration's handling of the [surge](#) of migrants at the border with Mexico, and its unconditional military assistance to Israel despite widespread accusations of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

## NASTY NETWORKS

American politics has become more volatile, and notably more prejudiced. The Trump-instigated calls of voter fraud in the 2020 election resulted in the bizarre and shocking 6 January insurrection in 2021. On 13 July, an assassination attempt by a twenty-year-old man almost cost Trump his life. Some say that Harris [lacks gravitas](#) and is not authoritative enough to be president, although she was certainly incisive and [relentless](#) as a [prosecutor](#). Many women want Harris to break the ultimate US glass ceiling, although networked misogyny and racism, across multiple money-making global platforms, could distract voters.

## NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

So, can Kamala [bring a fractured America together](#)? “She’s experienced, she’s [tough](#) she’s capable. She’s been an incredible partner to me and a leader for our country,” Joe Biden has said. Hope [lies](#) in the traditionally marginalised, increasingly [vocal](#) groups: Biden enjoyed the support of Black and progressive voters, but Harris may be able to inspire Asian, Latino, LGBTQ+ and young voters, too. Many Republicans such as Tim Miller, who worked on the Jeb Bush 2016 presidential campaign, look to Kamala with [relief](#). There’s no more [stark](#) a contrast between Harris and Trump, Miller said: “a [prosecutor](#) versus a convicted criminal, a woman who wants to protect your freedoms versus an old man that wants [to take them away](#).”

## INDIAN HERITAGE

Kamala Harris’s mother, Shyamala Gopalan, was a huge influence on Kamala’s life. A biomedical scientist specialising in cancer research, she taught her daughters to be proud of both their Indian and Black heritage. Born in 1938 in Madras (now Chennai) in what was then British India, Gopalan was part of a privileged elite in Hinduism’s ancient caste hierarchy. At the age of nineteen, she travelled to the US to study a master’s degree and then completed a [PhD](#) at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1962 Gopalan met Jamaican-American graduate student Donald Harris, who was giving a speech on civil rights. They married in 1963, and divorced in the early 1970s. Kamala is [estranged](#) from her father, who is a prominent economist at Stanford University. While growing up, Kamala frequently travelled with her mother and sister to Chennai, in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, to visit her Indian family, writing in her 2019 memoir *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey* that “we were raised with a strong [awareness](#) of and appreciation for Indian culture”. When her mother died of cancer in 2009, Kamala returned there [to scatter](#) her [ashes](#) in her birthplace.

## OPERATION COCONUT TREE

If you're wondering why a palm tree or coconut emoji appears on tweets referring to Kamala Harris it's because of a [quote](#) she shared with a group of Latino kids: "You think you just fell out of a coconut tree?". As she explained, this was a line used by Kamala's mom to remind her daughters that their heritage will always influence their actions and ideals. The [quirky quote](#) was initially [mocked](#) by the Trump campaign, and became a viral meme. Earlier this year it [resurged](#) online in support of the Harris campaign, and as a positive [reminder](#) to put everything in context.

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# Glossary

- **surge** = impennata
- **to address** = affrontare
- **to appoint** = nominare
- **bring a fractured America together** = unire
- **reminder** = promemoria
- **reshaping** = rimodellare
- **pledged** = impegnarsi
- **gravitas** = serietà, solennità
- **relentless** = implacabile
- **to scatter** = spargere
- **quirky** = peculiare, particolare
- **dropped out** = abbandonare
- **the latter** = questi ultimi
- **lies** = essere, trovarsi
- **PhD** = dottorato di ricerca
- **awareness** = consapevolezza
- **funding** = finanziamenti
- **whirlwind** = frenetica
- **endorsement** = appoggio, sostegno
- **law enforcement** = forze dell'ordine
- **stark** = crudo, duro
- **estranged** = allontanata
- **be seeking** = cercare
- **unions** = sindacati
- **relief** = sollievo
- **mocked** = deridere
- **to step in** = intervenire
- **vocal** = espliciti
- **quote** = citazione
- **mistrusted** = diffidare
- **came under scrutiny** = essere sottoposto ad esame
- **removed** = eliminare
- **builds on** = basarsi su

- **lacks** = mancare
- **prosecutor** = pubblico ministero
- **tough** = tenace
- **to take them away** = togliere, sottrarre
- **melting pot** = crogiolo
- **ashes** = ceneri