

# The selection of Kamala Harris and the degradation of American politics

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With the selection of Kamala Harris to be the running mate of Joe Biden, the framework of the 2020 elections has been set. As was to be expected, the Democrats have chosen the most right-wing candidates to run the most right-wing campaign possible.

There is a certain inevitability to the choice of Harris. In July of last year, the *World Socialist Web Site*—based on a survey of who would be the worst, most reactionary and at the same time most suitable choice for second spot on the Democratic Party ticket—predicted that Harris would most likely be named the vice presidential candidate if she failed to win the nomination. She had all the ruthlessness, narcissism and careerism requisite for the job, plus the ethnic background to suit the Democrats' obsession with racial and gender identity.

Kamala Harris, offspring of a Jamaican father and Indian mother, is a dyed-in-the wool political reactionary.

This year has seen mass demonstrations throughout the country in response to the police murder of George Floyd. As a direct result of the policies of the ruling class, nearly 170,000 people have died to date in the coronavirus pandemic, with the daily death toll now at more than 1,000. There is growing anger in workplaces over the homicidal back-to-work campaign and broad opposition among teachers to the efforts to reopen the schools. Tens of millions of people are unemployed, and they have been cut off from federal benefits and face being evicted from their homes.

In the midst of this monumental political, economic and social crisis, and against the backdrop of so much suffering, the American people are to be offered the “choice” between the fascistic Trump, the conman from New York, and a Democratic Party ticket headed by a corporate shill from Delaware and an ex-prosecutor from California. This says everything about the degraded state of American politics.

Following the announcement by Biden on Tuesday, the media leapt into action with its nauseating effusion of state propaganda. The selection of Harris has been universally proclaimed to be “historic,” a watershed moment.

In terms of her politics, there is clearly nothing “historic” about Harris. As district attorney in San Francisco (2004-2011), attorney general in California (2011-2017), and, finally, US senator (2017 to the present), Harris has compiled a track record of backing the police, locking up workers and

immigrants, covering up for the banks and supporting militarism and war.

Wall Street is certainly happy with the choice. “A VP pick that big business can back,” ran a headline on the inside pages of the *New York Times*. As for the military, its main concern is what will happen if the aging Biden doesn't make it through a full term. Since the beginning of the Trump administration, opposition from the Democratic Party has been focused on issues of foreign policy. Harris, who has no other agenda than her own self-promotion, will be silly putty in the hands of the military-intelligence apparatus.

The “historic” character of the Harris nomination is premised entirely on her race and gender. She would be the “first African-American vice president,” the “first Asian-American vice president” and the “first female vice president.” She already is the “first Black woman on the national ticket of the Democrats or Republicans.” Everything is about the symbolism involved in the choice of Harris, with not a word about the program of a Democratic Party administration.

As if any of this makes a bit of difference for workers, whatever their race, gender or ethnicity. As if, moreover, the world has not already had the example of Obama, not to mention Clarence Thomas, Condoleezza Rice, Susan Rice, Hillary Clinton and many others.

The selection of Harris exposes the utterly reactionary character of politics that bases itself on race, gender and other forms of identity—anything but class. In response to the eruption of protests against police violence, the Democrats did everything they could to obscure the class issues, promote racial divisions and propagate the lie that the violence of the police is an expression of the oppression of “black America” by “white America.” The outcome of this racialist campaign is the selection as their vice-presidential candidate of a right-wing ex-prosecutor who once covered up evidence to keep an innocent man on death row and worked to tear immigrant children from their parents.

Those invested in the racialist campaign have jumped on the bandwagon to declare the selection of Harris “historic.” Ibram Kendi, author of *How to Be An Antiracist* and one of the chief inspirers of the *New York Times*' 1619 Project, wrote on Twitter that “the Democrats now have a presidential ticket that reflects the American people better than the GOP ticket and

every presidential ticket in US history.”

According to Kendi, politicians “reflect” the American people not because of the socioeconomic forces they represent, but solely by their racial and ethnic background and their gender. Interests are determined by race. This is not progressive politics, but right-wing and racialist politics, which shares much in common with the fascistic politics of Donald Trump.

Black Lives Matter activist Shaun King wrote that he was “incredibly proud to see a brilliant Black woman, and HBCU [historically black colleges and universities] grad, chosen as a vice presidential nominee.” This was, he added, the stuff “dreams are made of.”

Commenters on Twitter quickly pointed to the contrast between this statement and his declaration in November 2018 that he would never support Biden or Harris because “they both helped build & advance mass incarceration.”

Political principles have never been a strong suit of Democratic Party hacks. They look forward to positions within the Biden administration and other opportunities that will reap financial rewards.

Then there is Bernie Sanders. In the Democratic Party primaries, Sanders won widespread support for his attacks on social inequality and his calls for a “political revolution” against the establishment. On this basis, he emerged as the main contender against Biden for the Democratic Party nomination. In the end, however, the “Sanders wing” of the Democratic Party got nothing.

This has not, however, stopped Sanders from praising the outcome. Sanders tweeted that Harris “will make history as our next vice president.”

Since packing in his campaign in mid-March, Sanders has assumed his assigned role as principal cheerleader for the Biden campaign, along with Elizabeth Warren, et. al. The more that social anger grows, and the more the Democrats are exposed, the more determined is his support for the Democratic Party.

What an exposure of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), *Jacobin* magazine and other political agents of the Democratic Party who claimed that Sanders was the path to the transformation of American politics and even the realization of socialism! They make fools of themselves every election. They will tag along with the Democratic Party in one form or another, no doubt accompanied by talk about how they are building a “progressive movement” inside that party of American imperialism, along with other varieties of political fraud. Every four years, the same play is performed.

There is something incredibly degrading and shameful about the whole process, testifying to the intellectual and cultural collapse of American politics.

Certain conclusions must be drawn from this experience, not only about Sanders, but about an entire type of pragmatic politics that hopes for easy answers to the crisis confronting the

working class without a direct challenge to capitalism and its state apparatus.

The politics of the working class must begin with a serious theoretical understanding, rooted in a Marxist and class analysis. The Democratic Party is a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus. The politics of race and gender identity, which it relentlessly promotes, gives expression to the interests of layers of the upper-middle class, which employ this right-wing ideology in their fight for positions of power and privilege in the state, academia and corporate boardrooms. The pseudo-left, including the DSA and associated organizations, represent this social layer.

All of this is directed against the working class and the development of a genuine movement for socialism. Objective conditions, however, have created the conditions for a powerful eruption of class struggle, in the United States and internationally. The coronavirus pandemic, as the Socialist Equality Party has explained, is a “trigger event in world history that is accelerating the already far-advanced economic, social, and political crisis of the world capitalist system.”

Nothing progressive will emerge except through the intervention—the interference—of the working class. The Socialist Equality Party and our election campaign are oriented to the development of a socialist leadership in the working class. Our campaign is the only campaign that raises critical questions of perspective, exposing the reactionary promoters of racial conflict and the cheerleaders of Sanders’ “political revolution.”

The SEP is spearheading the organization of workers against the homicidal policy of the ruling elite, in opposition to all factions of the ruling class, on the basis of a revolutionary program to put an end to inequality, war, dictatorship and the capitalist system. This is the way forward.

*To support our election campaign and join the SEP, visit [socialism2020.org](http://socialism2020.org).*

Joseph Kishore: SEP candidate for US president

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